# ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE


**25 Cents** **Number 33**

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|---|---|
| *I Can Find My Way Out* | NGAIO MARSH |
| *Snob's Murder* | ROY VICKERS |
| *The Murder* | JOHN STEINBECK |
| *The Doctor's Double* | STUART PALMER |
| *The Flying Highwayman* | LILLIAN DE LA TORRE |
| *The Green Goods Man* | LESLIE CHARTERIS |
| *Tip-Off* | RICHARD CONNELL |
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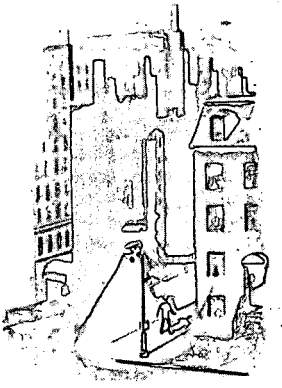

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# ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE




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## *THIRD-PRIZE WINNER: NGAIO MARSH*

*As time goes by, the accumulation of evidence proving that the detective story has grown up, that it has come of age, becomes more and more impressive. Here is further testimony — this time from "the bottom of the world." Beginning with 1887 (a fateful year in the history of the genre) and extending through the first decades of the 20th century, Australasia's representative in any world convention of crimeteers would have been, without question, the man known as Fergus Hume. Author of that fabulous book,* THE MYSTERY OF A HANSOM CAB, *the hyperbolic Hume was responsible for almost a full gross of detective-and-crime books. Even for his own time, fantastic Fergus was no more than a prolific hack: his style was pretentious, overwritten, and melodramatic. It would take a courageous fan, an omnivorous and carnivorous reader, to wade through one of Mr. Hume's homicidal horrors today. When your Editor used a Hume short story in the anthology,* THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, *it was critically necessary to perform a surgical operation on the selected tale, cutting out large gobs of prolixity with that editorial scalpel, the blue pencil.*

*The contemporary representative of Anzac detective-story writing is, also without question, Ngaio Marsh, born forty years after Fergus Hume. (We are not forgetting Michael Innes, another Australian standard-bearer, but more of him when we publish his prizewinning story, "Lesson in Anatomy," in our November issue.) To date Miss Marsh has written only the equivalent of a bare ten per cent of Hume's colossal wordage. Her round-dozen books are universally considered in the first rank, and reviewers all over the world have acclaimed her detective novels as "suave, intelligent, and amusing." When the final history of the detective story is written, Mr. Hume and his 130-odd books (and we use the word "odd" in its double meaning) will shrink to a mere footnote; Miss Marsh's achievements will grow in stature to a complete chapter. Howard Haycraft credits Miss Marsh with a vivid talent for picturization, an infallible sense of dramatic timing, and an excellent power of characterization.*

*Thus, the detective story reaches man's (and woman's) estate . . .*

*Invariably the first question asked about Miss Marsh is this: how does she pronounce her unusual first name, Ngaio, and what does it mean? Ngaio is the Maori name for a flowering tree; it is pronounced Maori-fashion — that is, three separate syllables (with the "g" silent); if you say ny'-o, you will be close enough. Born at Christchurch, New Zealand, Miss Marsh is a descendant of an ancient and romantic English family, the pirat-*

*ical de Mariscos, Lords of Lundy. Artist, actress, interior decorator, world traveller, Miss Marsh now lives in the city in which she was born, feeling (to quote her own words) rather as if she were in cold storage. Her preoccupation (she calls it mania) with the theatre reveals itself in the thematic backgrounds of some of her books; indeed, it was while she was heavily involved at home in a repertory production of Shakespeare's* HENRY V *that she wrote her prizewinning story for EQMM's first annual contest.*

*The detective-crime short story has never been a popular form in the antipodes. Forgetting the historical Hume, who despite his mass production wrote only two books of shorts (*THE DWARF'S CHAMBER, *1896, and* HAGAR OF THE PAWN-SHOP, *1898), there are only a handful of Australasian authors in your Editor's collection. Some of the earlier practitioners include Charles Junor (*DEAD MEN'S TALES, *Melbourne, 1898), Lux (pseudonym of Lucy M. Jones whose* A SECRET OF THE SEA *was published in Ngaio Marsh's home town, Christchurch, in 1889), and William McGuffin (*AUSTRALIAN TALES OF THE BORDER, *Melbourne, 1920). The current situation can best be summed up by quoting again from one of Ngaio Marsh's letters to your Editor; she wrote: "I know of no Australasian writer of crime shorts of any distinction, though there may be some whose work has not reached New Zealand. Here, down under, we seem to run to long novels, and our only short story writers are in the Saroyan manner, notably Frank Sargesson. But you may be sure that if anything turns up, I shall let you know."*

*Well, something did turn up, something extraordinarily welcome — Ngaio Marsh's own contribution to EQMM's first annual contest. "I Can Find My Way Out" is Miss Marsh's first short story to appear in the United States; also the first to present her famous detective, Inspector Roderick Alleyn, in the short form to American devotees. Like her splendid full-length tales, "I Can Find My Way Out" is suave, intelligent, and amusing — all that the critics have led us to expect!*

# I CAN FIND MY WAY OUT

*by NGAIO MARSH*

AT HALF-PAST SIX on the night in question, Anthony Gill, unable to eat, keep still, think, speak or act coherently, walked from his rooms to the Jupiter Theatre. He knew that there would be nobody backstage, that there was nothing for him to do in the theatre, that he ought to stay quietly in his rooms and presently dress, dine and arrive at, say, a quarter to eight. But it was as if something shoved him into his clothes, thrust him into the

street and compelled him to hurry through the West End to the Jupiter. His mind was overlaid with a thin film of inertia. Odd lines from the play occurred to him, but without any particular significance. He found himself busily reiterating a completely irrelevant sentence: "She has a way of laughing that would make a man's heart turn over."

Piccadilly, Shaftesbury Avenue. "Here I go," he thought, turning into Hawke Street, "towards my play. It's one hour and twenty-nine minutes away. A step a second. It's rushing towards me. Tony's first play. Poor young Tony Gill. Never mind. Try again."

The Jupiter. Neon lights: I CAN FIND MY WAY OUT — *by Anthony Gill.* And in the entrance the bills and photographs. *Coralie Bourne with H. J. Bannington, Barry George and Canning Cumberland.*

*Canning Cumberland.* The film across his mind split and there was the Thing itself and he would have to think about it. How bad would Canning Cumberland be if he came down drunk? Brilliantly bad, they said. He would bring out all the tricks. Clever actor stuff, scoring off everybody, making a fool of the dramatic balance. "In Mr. Canning Cumberland's hands indifferent dialogue and unconvincing situations seemed almost real." What can you do with a drunken actor?

He stood in the entrance feeling his heart pound and his inside deflate and sicken.

Because, of course, it was a bad play. He was at this moment and for the first time really convinced of it. It was terrible. Only one virtue in it and that was not his doing. It had been suggested to him by Coralie Bourne: "I don't think the play you have sent me will do as it is but it has occurred to me — " It was a brilliant idea. He had rewritten the play round it and almost immediately and quite innocently he had begun to think of it as his own although he had said shyly to Coralie Bourne: "You should appear as joint author." She had quickly, over-emphatically, refused. "It was nothing at all," she said. "If you're to become a dramatist you will learn to get ideas from everywhere. A single situation is nothing. Think of Shakespeare," she added lightly. "Entire plots! Don't be silly." She had said later, and still with the same hurried, nervous air: "Don't go talking to everyone about it. They will think there is more, instead of less, than meets the eye in my small suggestion. Please promise." He promised, thinking he'd made an error in taste when he suggested that Coralie Bourne, so famous an actress, should appear as joint author with an unknown youth. And how right she was, he thought, because, of course, it's going to be a ghastly flop. She'll be sorry she consented to play in it.

Standing in front of the theatre he contemplated nightmare possibilities. What did audiences do when a first play flopped? Did they clap a little, enough to let the curtain rise and quickly fall again on a discomforted

group of players? How scanty must the applause be for them to let him off his own appearance? And they were to go on to the Chelsea Arts Ball. A hideous prospect. Thinking he would give anything in the world if he could stop his play, he turned into the foyer. There were lights in the offices and he paused, irresolute, before a board of photographs. Among them, much smaller than the leading players, was Dendra Gay with the eyes looking straight into his. *She had a way of laughing that would make a man's heart turn over.* "Well," he thought, "so I'm in love with her." He turned away from the photograph. A man came out of the office. "Mr. Gill? Telegrams for you."

Anthony took them and as he went out he heard the man call after him: "Very good luck for tonight, sir."

There were queues of people waiting in the side street for the early doors.

At six-thirty Coralie Bourne dialled Canning Cumberland's number and waited.

She heard his voice. "It's me," she said.

"O, God! darling, I've been thinking about you." He spoke rapidly, too loudly. "Coral, I've been thinking about Ben. You oughtn't to have given that situation to the boy."

"We've been over it a dozen times, Cann. Why not give it to Tony? Ben will never know." She waited and then said nervously, "Ben's gone, Cann. We'll never see him again."

"I've got a 'Thing' about it. After all, he's your husband."

"No, Cann, no."

"Suppose he turns up. It'd be like him to turn up."

"He won't turn up."

She heard him laugh. "I'm sick of all this," she thought suddenly. "I've had it once too often. I can't stand any more. . . . Cann," she said into the telephone. But he had hung up.

At twenty to seven, Barry George looked at himself in his bathroom mirror. "I've got a better appearance," he thought, "than Cann Cumberland. My head's a good shape, my eyes are bigger and my jaw line's cleaner. I never let a show down. I don't drink. I'm a better actor." He turned his head a little, slewing his eyes to watch the effect. "In the big scene," he thought, "I'm the star. He's the feed. That's the way it's been produced and that's what the author wants. I ought to get the notices."

Past notices came up in his memory. He saw the print, the size of the paragraphs; a long paragraph about Canning Cumberland, a line tacked on the end of it. "Is it unkind to add that Mr. Barry George trotted in the wake of Mr. Cumberland's virtuosity with an air of breathless dependability?" And again: "It is a little hard on Mr. Barry George that he should be obliged to act as foil to this brilliant performance." Worst of all: "Mr. Barry George succeeded in looking tolerably unlike a stooge, an achievement that evidently exhausted his resources."

"Monstrous!" he said loudly to his

own image, watching the fine glow of indignation in the eyes. Alcohol, he told himself, did two things to Cann Cumberland. He raised his finger. Nice, expressive hand. An actor's hand. Alcohol destroyed Cumberland's artistic integrity. It also invested him with devilish cunning. Drunk, he would burst the seams of a play, destroy it's balance, ruin its form and himself emerge blazing with a showmanship that the audience mistook for genius. "While I," he said aloud, "merely pay my author the compliment of faithful interpretation, Psha!"

He returned to his bedroom, completed his dressing and pulled his hat to the right angle. Once more he thrust his face close to the mirror and looked searchingly at its image. "By God!" he told himself, "he's done it once too often, old boy. Tonight we'll even the score, won't we? By God, we will."

Partly satisfied, and partly ashamed, for the scene, after all, had smacked a little of ham, he took his stick in one hand and a case holding his costume for the Arts Ball in the other, and went down to the theatre.

At ten minutes to seven, H. J. Bannington passed through the gallery queue on his way to the stage door alley, raising his hat and saying: "Thanks so much," to the gratified ladies who let him through. He heard them murmur his name. He walked briskly along the alley, greeted the stage-doorkeeper, passed under a dingy lamp, through an entry and so to the stage. Only working lights were up. The walls of an interior set rose dimly into shadow. Bob Reynolds, the stage-manager, came out through the prompt-entrance. "Hello, old boy," he said, "I've changed the dressing-rooms. You're third on the right: they've moved your things in. Suit you?"

"Better, at least, than a black-hole the size of a W.C. but without its appointments," H.J. said acidly. "I suppose the great Mr. Cumberland still has the star-room?"

"Well, yes, old boy."

"And who pray, is next to him? In the room with the other gas fire?"

"We've put Barry George there, old boy. You know what he's like."

"Only too well, old boy, and the public, I fear, is beginning to find out." H.J. turned into the dressing-room passage. The stage-manager returned to the set where he encountered his assistant. "What's biting *him?*" asked the assistant. "He wanted a dressing-room with a fire." "Only natural," said the A.S.M. nastily. "He started life reading gas meters."

On the right and left of the passage, nearest the stage end, were two doors, each with its star in tarnished paint. The door on the left was open. H.J. looked in and was greeted with the smell of greasepaint, powder, wet-white, and flowers. A gas fire droned comfortably. Coralie Bourne's dresser was spreading out towels. "Good evening, Katie, my jewel," said H.J. "La Belle not down yet?" "We're on our way," she said.

H.J. hummed stylishly: "*Bella filia del amore*," and returned to the passage. The star-room on the right was closed but he could hear Cumberland's dresser moving about inside. He went on to the next door, paused, read the card, "Mr. Barry George," warbled a high derisive note, turned in at the third door and switched on the light.

Definitely not a second lead's room. No fire. A wash-basin, however, and opposite mirrors. A stack of telegrams had been placed on the dressing-table. Still singing he reached for them, disclosing a number of bills that had been tactfully laid underneath and a letter, addressed in a flamboyant script.

His voice might have been mechanically produced and arbitrarily switched off, so abruptly did his song end in the middle of a roulade. He let the telegrams fall on the table, took up the letter and tore it open. His face, wretchedly pale, was reflected and endlessly re-reflected in the mirrors.

At nine o'clock the telephone rang. Roderick Alleyn answered it. "This is Sloane 84405. No, you're on the wrong number. *No.*" He hung up and returned to his wife and guest. "That's the fifth time in two hours."

"Do let's ask for a new number."

"We might get next door to something worse."

The telephone rang again. "This is not 84406," Alleyn warned it. "No, I cannot take three large trunks to Victoria Station. No, I am not the Instant All Night Delivery. No."

"They're 84406," Mrs. Alleyn explained to Lord Michael Lamprey. "I suppose it's just faulty dialing, but you can't imagine how angry everyone gets. Why do you want to be a policeman?"

"It's a dull hard job, you know —" Alleyn began.

"Oh," Lord Mike said, stretching his legs and looking critically at his shoes, "I don't for a moment imagine I'll leap immediately into false whiskers and plainclothes. No, no. But I'm revoltingly healthy, sir. Strong as a horse. And I don't think I'm as stupid as you might feel inclined to imagine —"

The telephone rang.

"I say, do let me answer it," Mike suggested and did so.

"Hullo?" he said winningly. He listened, smiling at his hostess. "I'm afraid —" he began. "Here, wait a bit — Yes, but —" His expression became blank and complacent. "May I," he said presently, "repeat your order, sir? Can't be too sure, can we? Call at 11 Harrow Gardens, Sloane Square, for one suitcase to be delivered immediately at the Jupiter Theatre to Mr. Anthony Gill. Very good, sir. Thank you, sir. Collect. Quite."

He replaced the receiver and beamed at the Alleyns.

"What the devil have you been up to?" Alleyn said.

"He just simply wouldn't listen to reason. I tried to tell him."

"But it may be urgent," Mrs. Alleyn ejaculated.

"It couldn't be more urgent, really. It's a suitcase for Tony Gill at the Jupiter."

"Well, then — "

"I was at Eton with the chap," said Mike reminiscently. "He's four years older than I am so of course he was madly important while I was less than the dust. This'll larn him."

"I think you'd better put that order through at once," said Alleyn firmly.

"I rather thought of executing it myself, do you know, sir. It'd be a frightfully neat way of gate-crashing the show, wouldn't it? I did try to get a ticket but the house was sold out."

"If you're going to deliver this case you'd better get a bend on."

"It's clearly an occasion for dressing up though, isn't it? I say," said Mike modestly, "would you think it most frightful cheek if I — well I'd promise to come back and return everything. I mean — "

"Are you suggesting that my clothes look more like a vanman's than yours?"

"I thought you'd have things — "

"For Heaven's sake, Rory," said Mrs. Alleyn, "dress him up and let him go. The great thing is to get that wretched man's suitcase to him."

"I know," said Mike earnestly. "It's most frightfully sweet of you. That's how I feel about it."

Alleyn took him away and shoved him into an old and begrimed raincoat, a cloth cap and a muffler. "You wouldn't deceive a village idiot in a total eclipse," he said, "but out you go."

He watched Mike drive away and returned to his wife.

"What'll happen?" she asked.

"Knowing Mike, I should say he will end up in the front stalls and go on to supper with the leading lady. She, by the way, is Coralie Bourne. Very lovely and twenty years his senior so he'll probably fall in love with her." Alleyn reached for his tobacco jar and paused. "I wonder what's happened to her husband," he said.

"Who was he?"

"An extraordinary chap. Benjamin Vlasnoff. Violent temper. Looked like a bandit. Wrote two very good plays and got run in three times for common assault. She tried to divorce him but it didn't go through. I think he afterwards lit off to Russia." Alleyn yawned. "I believe she had a hell of a time with him," he said.

"All Night Delivery," said Mike in a hoarse voice, touching his cap. "Suitcase. One." "Here you are," said the woman who had answered the door. "Carry it carefully, now, it's not locked and the catch springs out."

"Fanks," said Mike. "Much obliged. Chilly, ain't it?"

He took the suitcase out to the car.

It was a fresh spring night. Sloane Square was threaded with mist and all the lamps had halos round them. It was the kind of night when individual sounds separate themselves from the conglomerate voice of London; hollow sirens spoke imperatively down on the river and a bugle rang out over in Chelsea Barracks; a night, Mike thought, for adventure.

He opened the rear door of the car and heaved the case in. The catch flew open, the lid dropped back and the contents fell out. "Damn!" said Mike and switched on the inside light.

Lying on the floor of the car was a false beard.

It was flaming red and bushy and was mounted on a chin-piece. With it was incorporated a stiffened mustache. There were wire hooks to attach the whole thing behind the ears. Mike laid it carefully on the seat. Next he picked up a wide black hat, then a vast overcoat with a fur collar, finally a pair of black gloves.

Mike whistled meditatively and thrust his hands into the pockets of Alleyn's mackintosh. His right-hand fingers closed on a card. He pulled it out. "Chief Detective-Inspector Alleyn," he read, "C.I.D. New Scotland Yard."

"Honestly," thought Mike exultantly, "this is a gift."

Ten minutes later a car pulled into the curb at the nearest parking place to the Jupiter Theatre. From it emerged a figure carrying a suitcase. It strode rapidly along Hawke Street and turned into the stage-door alley. As it passed under the dirty lamp it paused, and thus murkily lit, resembled an illustration from some Edwardian spy-story. The face was completely shadowed, a black cavern from which there projected a square of scarlet beard, which was the only note of color.

The doorkeeper who was taking the air with a member of stage-staff, moved forward, peering at the stranger.

"Was you wanting something?"

"I'm taking this case in for Mr. Gill."

"He's in front. You can leave it with me."

"I'm so sorry," said the voice behind the beard, "but I promised I'd leave it backstage myself."

"So you will be leaving it. Sorry, sir, but no one's admitted be'ind without a card."

"A card? Very well. Here is a card."

He held it out in his black-gloved hand. The stage-doorkeeper, unwillingly removing his gaze from the beard, took the card and examined it under the light. "Coo!" he said, "what's up, governor?"

"No matter. Say nothing of this."

The figure waved its hand and passed through the door. "'Ere!" said the doorkeeper excitedly to the stage-hand, "take a slant at this. That's a plainclothes flattie, that was."

"*Plain* clothes!" said the stage-hand. "Them!"

"'E's disguised," said the doorkeeper. "That's what it is. 'E's disguised 'isself."

"'E's bloody well lorst 'isself be'ind them whiskers if you arst me."

Out on the stage someone was saying in a pitched and beautifully articulate voice: "*I've always loathed the view from these windows. However if that's the sort of thing you admire. Turn off the lights, damn you. Look at it.*"

"Watch it, now, watch it," whis-

pered a voice so close to Mike that he jumped. "O.K.," said a second voice somewhere above his head. The lights on the set turned blue. "Kill that working light." "Working light gone."

Curtains in the set were wrenched aside and a window flung open. An actor appeared, leaning out quite close to Mike, seeming to look into his face and saying very distinctly: "God: it's frightful!" Mike backed away towards a passage, lit only from an open door. A great volume of sound broke out beyond the stage. "House lights," said the sharp voice. Mike turned into the passage. As he did so, someone came through the door. He found himself face to face with Coralie Bourne, beautifully dressed and heavily painted.

For a moment she stood quite still; then she made a curious gesture with her right hand, gave a small breathy sound and fell forward at his feet.

Anthony was tearing his program into long strips and dropping them on the floor of the O.P. box. On his right hand, above and below, was the audience; sometimes laughing, sometimes still, sometimes as one corporate being, raising its hands and striking them together. As now; when down on the stage, Canning Cumberland, using a strange voice, and inspired by some inward devil, flung back the window and said: "God: it's frightful!"

"Wrong! Wrong!" Anthony cried inwardly, hating Cumberland, hating Barry George because he let one speech of three words over-ride him, hating the audience because they liked it. The curtain descended with a long sigh on the second act and a sound like heavy rain filled the theatre, swelled prodigiously and continued after the house-lights welled up.

"They seem," said a voice behind him, "to be liking your play."

It was Gosset, who owned the Jupiter and had backed the show. Anthony turned on him stammering: "He's destroying it. It should be the other man's scene. He's stealing."

"My boy," said Gosset, "he's an actor."

"He's drunk. It's intolerable."

He felt Gosset's hand on his shoulder.

"People are watching us. You're on show. This is a big thing for you; a first play, and going enormously. Come and have a drink, old boy. I want to introduce you —"

Anthony got up and Gosset, with his arm across his shoulders, flashing smiles, patting him, led him to the back of the box.

"I'm sorry," Anthony said, "I can't. Please let me off. I'm going backstage."

"Much better not, old son." The hand tightened on his shoulder. "Listen, old son — " But Anthony had freed himself and slipped through the pass-door from the box to the stage.

At the foot of the breakneck stairs Dendra Gay stood waiting. "I thought you'd come," she said.

Anthony said: "He's drunk. He's murdering the play."

"It's only one scene, Tony. He

finishes early in the next act. It's going colossally."

"But don't you understand —"

"I do. You *know* I do. But your success, Tony darling! You can hear it and smell it and feel it in your bones."

"Dendra —" he said uncertainly.

Someone came up and shook his hand and went on shaking it. Flats were being laced together with a slap of rope on canvas. A chandelier ascended into darkness. "Lights," said the stage-manager, and the set was flooded with them. A distant voice began chanting. "Last act, please. Last act."

"Miss Bourne all right?" the stage-manager suddenly demanded.

"She'll be all right. She's not on for ten minutes," said a woman's voice.

"What's the matter with Miss Bourne?" Anthony asked.

"Tony, I must go and so must you. Tony, it's going to be grand. *Please* think so. *Please.*"

"Dendra —" Tony began, but she had gone.

Beyond the curtain, horns and flutes announced the last act.

"Clear please."

The stage hands came off.

"House lights."

"House lights gone."

"Stand by."

And while Anthony still hesitated in the O.P. corner, the curtain rose. Canning Cumberland and H. J. Bannington opened the last act.

As Mike knelt by Coralie Bourne he heard someone enter the passage behind him. He turned and saw, silhouetted against the lighted stage, the actor who had looked at him through a window in the set. The silhouette seemed to repeat the gesture Coralie Bourne had used, and to flatten itself against the wall.

A woman in an apron came out of the open door.

"I say — here!" Mike said.

Three things happened almost simultaneously. The woman cried out and knelt beside him. The man disappeared through a door on the right.

The woman, holding Coralie Bourne in her arms, said violently: "Why have you come back?" Then the passage lights came on. Mike said: "Look here, I'm most frightfully sorry," and took off the broad black hat. The dresser gaped at him, Coralie Bourne made a crescendo sound in her throat and opened her eyes. "Katie?" she said.

"It's all right, my lamb. It's not him, dear. You're all right." The dresser jerked her head at Mike: "Get out of it," she said.

"Yes, of course, I'm most frightfully —" He backed out of the passage, colliding with a youth who said: "Five minutes, please." The dresser called out: "Tell them she's not well. Tell them to hold the curtain."

"No," said Coralie Bourne strongly. "I'm all right, Katie. Don't say anything. Katie, what was it?"

They disappeared into the room on the left.

Mike stood in the shadow of a stack of scenic flats by the entry into the

passage. There was great activity on the stage. He caught a glimpse of Anthony Gill on the far side talking to a girl. The call-boy was speaking to the stage-manager who now shouted into space: "Miss Bourne all right?" The dresser came into the passage and called: "She'll be all right. She's not on for ten minutes." The youth began chanting: "Last act, please." The stage-manager gave a series of orders. A man with an eyeglass and a florid beard came from further down the passage and stood outside the set, bracing his figure and giving little tweaks to his clothes. There was a sound of horns and flutes. Canning Cumberland emerged from the room on the right and on his way to the stage, passed close to Mike, leaving a strong smell of alcohol behind him. The curtain rose.

Behind his shelter, Mike stealthily removed his beard and stuffed it into the pocket of his overcoat.

A group of stage-hands stood nearby. One of them said in a hoarse whisper: "'E's squiffy." "Garn, 'e's going good." "So 'e may be going good. And for why? *Becos* 'e's squiffy."

Ten minutes passed. Mike thought: "This affair has definitely not gone according to plan." He listened. Some kind of tension seemed to be building up on the stage. Canning Cumberland's voice rose on a loud but blurred note. A door in the set opened. "Don't bother to come," Cumberland said. "Goodbye. I can find my way out." The door slammed. Cumberland was standing near Mike. Then, very close, there was a loud explosion. The scenic flats vibrated, Mike's flesh leapt on his bones and Cumberland went into his dressing-rooms. Mike heard the key turn in the door. The smell of alcohol mingled with the smell of gunpowder. A stage-hand moved to a trestle table and laid a pistol on it. The actor with the eyeglass made an exit. He spoke for a moment to the stage-manager, passed Mike and disappeared in the passage.

Smells. There were all sorts of smells. Subconsciously, still listening to the play, he began to sort them out. Glue. Canvas. Greasepaint. The call-boy tapped on doors. "Mr. George, please." "Miss Bourne, please." They came out, Coralie Bourne with her dresser. Mike heard her turn a door handle and say something. An indistinguishable voice answered her. Then she and her dresser passed him. The others spoke to her and she nodded and then seemed to withdraw into herself, waiting with her head bent, ready to make her entrance. Presently she drew back, walked swiftly to the door in the set, flung it open and swept on, followed a minute later by Barry George.

Smells. Dust, stale paint, cloth. Gas. Increasingly, the smell of gas.

The group of stage-hands moved away behind the set to the side of the stage. Mike edged out of cover. He could see the prompt-corner. The stage-manager stood there with folded arms, watching the action. Behind him were grouped the players who

were not on. Two dressers stood apart, watching. The light from the set caught their faces. Coralie Bourne's voice sent phrases flying like birds into the auditorium.

Mike began peering at the floor. Had he kicked some gas fitting adrift? The call-boy passed him, stared at him over his shoulder and went down the passage, tapping. "Five minutes to the curtain, please. Five minutes." The actor with the elderly make-up followed the call-boy out. "God, what a stink of gas," he whispered. "Chronic, ain't it?" said the call-boy. They stared at Mike and then crossed to the waiting group. The man said something to the stage-manager who tipped his head up, sniffing. He made an impatient gesture and turned back to the prompt-box, reaching over the prompter's head. A bell rang somewhere up in the flies and Mike saw a stage-hand climb to the curtain platform.

The little group near the prompt corner was agitated. They looked back towards the passage entrance. The call-boy nodded and came running back. He knocked on the first door on the right. "*Mr. Cumberland! Mr. Cumberland!* You're on for the call." He rattled the door handle. "*Mr. Cumberland! You're on.*"

Mike ran into the passage. The call-boy coughed retchingly and jerked his hand at the door. "Gas!" he said, "Gas!"

"Break it in."

"I'll get Mr. Reynolds."

He was gone. It was a narrow passage. From halfway across the opposite room Mike took a run, head down, shoulder forward, at the door. It gave a little and a sickening increase in the smell caught him in the lungs. A vast storm of noise had broken out and as he took another run he thought: "It's hailing outside."

"Just a minute if *you* please, sir."

It was a stage-hand. He'd got a hammer and screwdriver. He wedged the point of the screwdriver between the lock and the doorpost, drove it home and wrenched. The screws squeaked, the wood splintered and gas poured into the passage. "No winders," coughed the stage-hand.

Mike wound Alleyn's scarf over his mouth and nose. Half-forgotten instructions from anti-gas drill occurred to him. The room looked queer but he could see the man slumped down in the chair quite clearly. He stooped low and ran in.

He was knocking against things as he backed out, lugging the dead weight. His arms tingled. A high insistent voice hummed in his brain. He floated a short distance and came to earth on a concrete floor among several pairs of legs. A long way off, someone said loudly: "I can only thank you for being so kind to what I know, too well, is a very imperfect play." Then the sound of hail began again. There was a heavenly stream of clear air flowing into his mouth and nostrils. "I could eat it," he thought and sat up.

The telephone rang. "Suppose,"

Mrs. Alleyn suggested, "that this time you ignore it."

"It might be the Yard," Alleyn said, and answered it.

"Is that Chief Detective-Inspector Alleyn's flat? I'm speaking from the Jupiter Theatre. I've rung up to say that the Chief Inspector is here and that he's had a slight mishap. He's all right, but I think it might be as well for someone to drive him home. No need to worry."

"What sort of mishap?" Alleyn asked.

"Er — well — er, he's been a bit gassed."

"*Gassed!* All right. Thanks, I'll come."

"*What* a bore for you, darling," said Mrs. Alleyn. "What sort of case is it? Suicide?"

"Masquerading within the meaning of the act, by the sound of it. Mike's in trouble."

"What trouble, for Heaven's sake?"

"Got himself gassed. He's all right. Good-night darling. Don't wait up."

When he reached the theatre, the front of the house was in darkness. He made his way down the side alley to the stage-door where he was held up.

"Yard," he said, and produced his official card.

" 'Ere," said the stage-doorkeeper. " 'ow many more of you?"

"The man inside was working for me," said Alleyn and walked in. The doorkeeper followed, protesting.

To the right of the entrance was a large scenic dock from which the double doors had been rolled back. Here Mike was sitting in an armchair, very white about the lips. Three men and two women, all with painted faces, stood near him and behind them a group of stage-hands with Reynolds, the stage-manager, and, apart from these, three men in evening dress. The men looked woodenly shocked. The women had been weeping.

"I'm most frightfully sorry, sir," Mike said. "I've tried to explain. This," he added generally, "is Inspector Alleyn."

"I can't understand all this," said the oldest of the men in evening dress irritably. He turned on the doorkeeper. "You said —"

"I seen 'is card —"

"I know," said Mike, "but you see —"

"This is Lord Michael Lamprey," Alleyn said. "A recruit to the Police Department. What's happened here?"

"Doctor Rankin, would you —?"

The second of the men in evening dress came forward. "All right, Gosset. It's a bad business, Inspector. I've just been saying the police would have to be informed. If you'll come with me — "

Alleyn followed him through a door onto the stage proper. It was dimly lit. A trestle table had been set up in the centre and on it, covered with a sheet, was an unmistakable shape. The smell of gas, strong everywhere, hung heavily about the table.

"Who is it?"

"Canning Cumberland. He'd locked the door of his dressing-room. There's a gas fire. Your young friend dragged

him out, very pluckily, but it was no go. I was in front. Gosset, the manager, had asked me to supper. It's a perfectly clear case of suicide as you'll see."

"I'd better look at the room. Anybody been in?"

"God, no. It was a job to clear it. They turned the gas off at the main. There's no window. They had to open the double doors at the back of the stage and a small outside door at the end of the passage. It may be possible to get in now."

He led the way to the dressing-room passage. "Pretty thick, still," he said. "It's the first room on the right. They burst the lock. You'd better keep down near the floor."

The powerful lights over the mirror were on and the room still had its look of occupation. The gas fire was against the left hand wall. Alleyn squatted down by it. The tap was still turned on, its face lying parallel with the floor. The top of the heater, the tap itself, and the carpet near it, were covered with a creamish powder. On the end of the dressing-table shelf nearest to the stove was a box of this powder. Further along the shelf, greasepaints were set out in a row beneath the mirror. Then came a wash basin and in front of this an overturned chair. Alleyn could see the track of heels, across the pile of the carpet, to the door immediately opposite. Beside the wash basin was a quart bottle of whiskey, three parts empty, and a tumbler. Alleyn had had about enough and returned to the passage.

"Perfectly clear," the hovering doctor said again, "isn't it?"

"I'll see the other rooms, I think."

The one next to Cumberland's was like his in reverse, but smaller. The heater was back to back with Cumberland's. The dressing-shelf was set out with much the same assortment of greasepaints. The tap of this heater, too, was turned on. It was of precisely the same make as the other and Alleyn, less embarrassed here by fumes, was able to make a longer examination. It was a common enough type of gas fire. The lead-in was from a pipe through a flexible metallic tube with a rubber connection. There were two taps, one in the pipe and one at the junction of the tube with the heater itself. Alleyn disconnected the tube and examined the connection. It was perfectly sound, a close fit and stained red at the end. Alleyn noticed a wiry thread of some reddish stuff resembling packing that still clung to it. The nozzle and tap were brass, the tap pulling over when it was turned on, to lie in a parallel plane with the floor. No powder had been scattered about here.

He glanced round the room, returned to the door and read the card: "Mr. Barry George."

The doctor followed him into the rooms opposite these, on the left-hand side of the passage. They were a repetition in design of the two he had already seen but were hung with women's clothes and had a more elaborate assortment of grease paint and cosmetics.

There was a mass of flowers in the star room. Alleyn read the cards. One in particular caught his eye: "From Anthony Gill to say a most inadequate 'thank you' for the great idea." A vase of red roses stood before the mirror: "To your greatest triumph, Coralie darling. C.C." In Miss Gay's room there were only two bouquets, one from the management and one "from Anthony, with love."

Again in each room he pulled off the lead-in to the heater and looked at the connection.

"All right, aren't they?" said the doctor.

"Quite all right. Tight fit. Good solid grey rubber."

"Well, then — "

Next on the left was an unused room, and opposite it, "Mr. H. J. Bannington." Neither of these rooms had gas fires. Mr. Bannington's dressing-table was littered with the usual array of greasepaint, the materials for his beard, a number of telegrams and letters, and several bills.

"About the body," the doctor began.

"We'll get a mortuary van from the Yard."

"But — Surely in a case of suicide — "

"I don't think this is suicide."

"But, good God! — D'you mean there's been an accident?"

"No accident," said Alleyn.

At midnight, the dressing-room lights in the Jupiter Theatre were brilliant, and men were busy there with the tools of their trade. A constable stood at the stage-door and a van waited in the yard. The front of the house was dimly lit and there, among the shrouded stalls, sat Coralie Bourne, Basil Gosset, H. J. Bannington, Dendra Gay, Anthony Gill, Reynolds, Katie the dresser, and the call-boy. A constable sat behind them and another stood by the doors into the foyer. They stared across the backs of seats at the fire curtain. Spirals of smoke rose from their cigarettes and about their feet were discarded programs. "Basil Gosset presents I CAN FIND MY WAY OUT by Anthony Gill."

In the manager's office Alleyn said: "You're sure of your facts, Mike?"

"Yes, sir. Honestly. I was right up against the entrance into the passage. They didn't see me because I was in the shadow. It was very dark offstage."

"You'll have to swear to it."

"I know."

"Good. All right, Thompson. Miss Gay and Mr. Gosset may go home. Ask Miss Bourne to come in."

When Sergeant Thompson had gone Mike said: "I haven't had a chance to say I know I've made a perfect fool of myself. Using your card and everything."

"Irresponsible gaiety doesn't go down very well in the service, Mike. You behaved like a clown."

"I *am* a fool," said Mike wretchedly.

The red beard was lying in front of Alleyn on Gosset's desk. He picked it up and held it out. "Put it on," he said.

"She might do another faint."

"I think not. Now the hat: yes — yes, I see. Come in."

Sergeant Thompson showed Coralie Bourne in and then sat at the end of the desk with his notebook.

Tears had traced their course through the powder on her face, carrying black cosmetic with them and leaving the greasepaint shining like snail-tracks. She stood near the doorway looking dully at Michael. "Is he back in England?" she said. "Did he tell you to do this?" She made an impatient movement. "Do take it off," she said, "it's a very bad beard. If Cann had only looked — " Her lips trembled. "Who told you to do it?"

"Nobody," Mike stammered, pocketing the beard. "I mean — As a matter of fact, Tony Gill —"

"*Tony?* But *he* didn't know. Tony wouldn't do it. Unless —"

"Unless?" Alleyn said.

She said frowning: "Tony didn't want Cann to play the part that way. He was furious."

"He says it was his dress for the Chelsea Arts Ball," Mike mumbled. "I brought it here. I just thought I'd put it on — it was idiotic, I know — for fun. I'd no idea you and Mr. Cumberland would mind."

"Ask Mr. Gill to come in," Alleyn said.

Anthony was white and seemed bewildered and helpless. "I've told Mike," he said. "It was my dress for the ball. They sent it round from the costume-hiring place this afternoon but I forgot it. Dendra reminded me and rang up the Delivery people — or Mike, as it turns out — in the interval."

"Why," Alleyn asked, "did you choose that particular disguise?"

"I didn't. I didn't know what to wear and I was too rattled to think. They said they were hiring things for themselves and would get something for me. They said we'd all be characters out of a Russian melodrama."

"Who said this?"

"Well — well, it was Barry George, actually."

"*Barry*," Coralie Bourne said. "*It was Barry.*"

"I don't understand," Anthony said. "Why should a fancy dress upset everybody?"

"It happened," Alleyn said, "to be a replica of the dress usually worn by Miss Bourne's husband who also had a red beard. That was it, wasn't it, Miss Bourne? I remember seeing him —"

"Oh, yes," she said, "you would. He was known to the police." Suddenly she broke down completely. She was in an armchair near the desk but out of the range of its shaded lamp. She twisted and writhed, beating her hand against the padded arm of the chair. Sergeant Thompson sat with his head bent and his hand over his notes. Mike, after an agonized glance at Alleyn, turned his back. Anthony Gill leant over her: "Don't," he said violently. "Don't! For God's sake, stop."

She twisted away from him and gripping the edge of the desk, began to speak to Alleyn; little by little

gaining mastery of herself. "I want to tell you. I want you to understand. Listen." Her husband had been fantastically cruel, she said. "It was a kind of slavery." But when she sued for divorce he brought evidence of adultery with Cumberland. They had thought he knew nothing. "There was an abominable scene. He told us he was going away. He said he'd keep track of us and if I tried again for divorce, he'd come home. He was very friendly with Barry in those days." He had left behind him the first draft of a play he had meant to write for her and Cumberland. It had a wonderful scene for them. "And now you will never have it," he had said, "because there is no other playwright who could make this play for you but I." He was, she said, a melodramatic man but he was never ridiculous. He returned to the Ukraine where he was born and they had heard no more of him. In a little while she would have been able to presume death. But years of waiting did not agree with Canning Cumberland. He drank consistently and at his worst used to imagine her husband was about to return. "He was really terrified of Ben," she said. "He seemed like a creature in a nightmare."

Anthony Gill said: "This play — was it — ?"

"Yes. There was an extraordinary similarity between your play and his. I saw at once that Ben's central scene would enormously strengthen your piece. Cann didn't want me to give it to you. Barry knew. He said: 'Why not?' He wanted Cann's part and was furious when he didn't get it. So you see, when he suggested you should dress and make-up like Ben —" She turned to Alleyn. "You see?"

"What did Cumberland do when he saw you?" Alleyn asked Mike.

"He made a queer movement with his hands as if — well, as if he expected me to go for him. Then he just bolted into his room."

"He thought Ben had come back," she said.

"Were you alone at any time after you fainted?" Alleyn asked.

"I? No. No, I wasn't. Katie took me into my dressing-room and stayed with me until I went on for the last scene."

"One other question. Can you, by any chance, remember if the heater in your room behaved at all oddly?"

She looked wearily at him. "Yes, it did give a sort of plop, I think. It made me jump. I was nervy."

"You went straight from your room to the stage?"

"Yes. With Katie. I wanted to go to Cann. I tried the door when we came out. It was locked. He said: 'Don't come in.' I said: 'It's all right. It wasn't Ben,' and went on to the stage."

"I heard Miss Bourne," Mike said.

"He must have made up his mind by then. He was terribly drunk when he played his last scene." She pushed her hair back from her forehead. "May I go?" she asked Alleyn.

"I've sent for a taxi. Mr. Gill, will you see if it's there? In the meantime,

Miss Bourne, would you like to wait in the foyer?"

"May I take Katie home with me?"

"Certainly. Thompson will find her. Is there anyone else we can get?"

"No, thank you. Just old Katie."

Alleyn opened the door for her and watched her walk into the foyer. "Check up with the dresser, Thompson," he murmured, "and get Mr. H. J. Bannington."

He saw Coralie Bourne sit on the lower step of the dress-circle stairway and lean her head against the wall. Nearby, on a gilt easel, a huge photograph of Canning Cumberland smiled handsomely at her.

H. J. Bannington looked pretty ghastly. He had rubbed his hand across his face and smeared his make-up. Florid red paint from his lips had stained the crêpe hair that had been gummed on and shaped into a beard. His monocle was still in his left eye and gave him an extraordinarily rakish look. "See here," he complained, "I've about *had* this party. When do we go home?"

Alleyn uttered placatory phrases and got him to sit down. He checked over H.J.'s movements after Cumberland left the stage and found that his account tallied with Mike's. He asked if H.J. had visited any of the other dressing-rooms and was told acidly that H.J. knew his place in the company. "I remained in my unheated and squalid kennel, thank you very much."

"Do you know if Mr. Barry George followed your example?"

"Couldn't say, old boy. He didn't come near *me*."

"Have you any theories at all about this unhappy business, Mr. Bannington?"

"Do you mean, why did Cann do it? Well, speak no ill of the dead, but I'd have thought it was pretty obvious he was morbid-drunk. Tight as an owl when we finished the second act. Ask the great Mr. Barry George. Cann took the big scene away from Barry with both hands and left him looking pathetic. All wrong artistically, but that's how Cann was in his cups." H.J.'s wicked little eyes narrowed. "The great Mr. George," he said, "must be feeling very unpleasant by now. You might say he'd got a suicide on his mind, mightn't you? Or don't you know about that?"

"It was not suicide."

The glass dropped from H.J.'s eye. "God!" he said. "God, I told Bob Reynolds! I told him the whole plant wanted overhauling."

"The gas plant, you mean?"

"Certainly. I was in the gas business years ago. Might say I'm in it still with a difference, ha-ha!"

"Ha-ha!" Alleyn agreed politely. He leaned forward. "Look here," he said: "We can't dig up a gas man at this time of night and may very likely need an expert opinion. You can help us."

"Well, old boy, I was rather pining for a spot of shut-eye. But, of course —"

"I shan't keep you very long."

"God, I hope not!" said H.J. earnestly.

Barry George had been made up pale for the last act. Colorless lips and shadows under his cheek bones and eyes had skilfully underlined his character as a repatriated but broken prisoner-of-war. Now, in the glare of the office lamp, he looked like a grossly exaggerated figure of mourning. He began at once to tell Alleyn how grieved and horrified he was. Everybody, he said, had their faults, and poor old Cann was no exception but wasn't it terrible to think what could happen to a man who let himself go downhill? He, Barry George, was abnormally sensitive and he didn't think he'd ever really get over the awful shock this had been to him. What, he wondered, could be at the bottom of it? Why had poor old Cann decided to end it all?

"Miss Bourne's theory," Alleyn began. Mr. George laughed. "Coralie?" he said. "So she's got a theory! Oh, well. Never mind."

"Her theory is this. Cumberland saw a man whom he mistook for her husband and, having a morbid dread of his return, drank the greater part of a bottle of whiskey and gassed himself. The clothes and beard that deceived him had, I understand, been ordered by you for Mr. Anthony Gill."

This statement produced startling results. Barry George broke into a spate of expostulation and apology. There had been no thought in his mind of resurrecting poor old Ben, who was no doubt dead but had been, mind you, in many ways one of the best. They were all to go to the Ball as exaggerated characters from melodrama. Not for the world — He gesticulated and protested. A line of sweat broke out along the margin of his hair. "I don't know what you're getting at," he shouted. "What are you suggesting?"

"I'm suggesting, among other things, that Cumberland was murdered."

"You're mad! He'd locked himself in. They had to break down the door. There's no window. You're crazy!"

"Don't," Alleyn said wearily, "let us have any nonsense about sealed rooms. Now, Mr. George, you knew Benjamin Vlasnoff pretty well. Are you going to tell us that when you suggested Mr. Gill should wear a coat with a fur collar, a black sombrero, black gloves and a red beard, it never occurred to you that his appearance might be a shock to Miss Bourne and to Cumberland?"

"I wasn't the only one," he blustered. "H.J. knew. And if it had scared him off, *she* wouldn't have been so sorry. She'd had about enough of him. Anyway if this is murder, the costume's got nothing to do with it."

"That," Alleyn said, getting up, "is what we hope to find out."

In Barry George's room, Detective-Sergeant Bailey, a fingerprint expert, stood by the gas heater. Sergeant Gibson, a police photographer, and a uniformed constable were near the

door. In the centre of the room stood Barry George, looking from one man to another and picking at his lips.

"I don't know why he wants me to watch all this," he said. "I'm exhausted. I'm emotionally used up. What's he doing? Where is he?"

Alleyn was next door in Cumberland's dressing-room, with H.J., Mike and Sergeant Thompson. It was pretty clear now of fumes and the gas fire was burning comfortably. Sergeant Thompson sprawled in the armchair near the heater, his head sunk and his eyes shut.

"This is the theory, Mr. Bannington," Alleyn said. "You and Cumberland have made your final exits; Miss Bourne and Mr. George and Miss Gay are all on the stage. Lord Michael is standing just outside the entrance to the passage. The dressers and stage-staff are watching the play from the side. Cumberland has locked himself in this room. There he is, dead drunk and sound asleep. The gas fire is burning, full pressure. Earlier in the evening he powdered himself and a thick layer of the powder lies undisturbed on the tap. Now."

He tapped on the wall.

The fire blew out with a sharp explosion. This was followed by the hiss of escaping gas. Alleyn turned the taps off. "You see," he said, "I've left an excellent print on the powdered surface. Now, come next door."

Next door, Barry George appealed to him stammering: "But I didn't know. I don't know anything about it. I don't *know*."

"Just show Mr. Bannington, will you, Bailey?"

Bailey knelt down. The lead-in was disconnected from the tap on the heater. He turned on the tap in the pipe and blew down the tube.

"An air lock, you see. It works perfectly."

H.J. was staring at Barry George. "But I don't know about gas, H.J. H.J., tell them —"

"One moment." Alleyn removed the towels that had been spread over the dressing-shelf, revealing a sheet of clean paper on which lay the rubber push-on connection.

"Will you take this lens, Bannington, and look at it. You'll see that it's stained a florid red. It's a very slight stain but it's unmistakably grease-paint. And just above the stain you'll see a wiry hair. Rather like some sort of packing material, but it's not that. It's crêpe hair, isn't it?"

The lens wavered above the paper.

"Let me hold it for you," Alleyn said. He put his hand over H.J.'s shoulder and, with a swift movement, plucked a tuft from his false moustache and dropped it on the paper. "Identical, you see. Ginger. It seems to be stuck to the connection with spirit-gum."

The lens fell. H.J. twisted round, faced Alleyn for a second, and then struck him full in the face. He was a small man but it took three of them to hold him.

"In a way, sir, it's handy when they have a smack at you," said Detective-

Sergeant Thompson half an hour later. "You can pull them in nice and straightforward without any 'will you come to the station and make a statement' business."

"Quite," said Alleyn, nursing his jaw.

Mike said: "He must have gone to the room after Barry George and Miss Bourne were called."

"That's it. He had to be quick. The call-boy would be round in a minute and he had to be back in his own room."

"But look here — what about motive?"

"That, my good Mike, is precisely why, at half-past one in the morning, we're still in this miserable theatre. You're getting a view of the duller aspect of homicide. Want to go home?"

"No. Give me another job."

"Very well. About ten feet from the prompt-entrance, there's a sort of garbage tin. Go through it."

At seventeen minutes to two, when the dressing-rooms and passage had been combed clean and Alleyn had called a spell, Mike came to him with filthy hands. "*Eureka*," he said, "I hope."

They all went into Bannington's room. Alleyn spread out on the dressing-table the fragments of paper that Mike had given him.

"They'd been pushed down to the bottom of the tin," Mike said.

Alleyn moved the fragments about. Thompson whistled through his teeth. Bailey and Gibson mumbled together.

"There you are," Alleyn said at last.

They collected round him. The letter that H. J. Bannington had opened at this same table six hours and forty-five minutes earlier, was pieced together like a jig-saw puzzle.

"Dear H.J.

Having seen the monthly statement of my account, I called at my bank this morning and was shown a check that is undoubtedly a forgery. Your histrionic versatility, my dear H.J., is only equalled by your audacity as a calligraphist. But fame has its disadvantages. The teller recognized you. I propose to take action."

"Unsigned," said Bailey.

"Look at the card on the red roses in Miss Bourne's room, signed C.C. It's a very distinctive hand." Alleyn turned to Mike. "Do you still want to be a policeman?"

"Yes."

"Lord help you. Come and talk to me at the office tomorrow."

"Thank you, sir."

They went out, leaving a constable on duty. It was a cold morning. Mike looked up at the façade of the Jupiter. He could just make out the shape of the neon sign: I CAN FIND MY WAY OUT *by Anthony Gill.*

*Installment Two in the Life and Times of an English Crimeteer . . .*

*You will recall that we ended our last installment with Mr. Vickers, a failure in his first two years as a writer, deciding to strike out on a new line. He became a "ghost" writer for an eccentric solicitor (lawyer, in American terminology) who liked to sign his name to articles and books on philosophy. It is ironical that Mr. Vickers's ghost-writing proved instantaneously successful; he made a high-powered industry of his new line, expanding to sermons, speeches and lectures, all "strictly business" at four-and-sixpence per thousand words (including typewriting). But one day Mr. Vickers turned Machiavellian: he exceeded his instructions as the ghost of a minor politician and composed an article whose appearance in an influential daily newspaper nearly upset an election. Before the scandal could break over his own head, Mr. Vickers beat a hasty retreat, giving up the ghost racket in one fell swoop.*

*Mr. Vickers's next lance-thrust at the windmill of writing fame was a modest job on a popular weekly periodical at the magnificent salary of £1 per week. He was put in charge of "competitions." Now Mr. Vickers had always hated competitions, but with that magician's touch he was beginning to acquire, he created the illusion that all was going well — until that electric moment when 476 contestants all won first prize! Again Mr. Vickers retired precipitately — but this time he was beaten by the editor's phone.*

*His experience as a Competitions Editor, says Mr. Vickers, destroyed the fine, nervous prose of his earlier manner but gave him instead a sort of literary glibness. He started afresh with articles on those matters he knew intimately (insurance, cigarettes, houses, typewriters, time-recorders, and stationery) — and this time he sold most of them. Mr. Vickers was now on his way to becoming a Successful Writer.*

*(End of Part Two. To Be Continued in the Preface to Mr. Vickers's Next Story.)*

*In the meantime, read the ninth Department of Dead Ends tale — the story of the Dissolute Nobleman and the Beautiful Maid of Low Degree . . .*

# SNOB'S MURDER

*by ROY VICKERS*

One of the basic human stories, refurbished from generation to generation, is the story of the Dissolute Nobleman and the beautiful Maid of Low Degree, in which the Maid is, in modern jargon, bumped off when she becomes a nuisance. So when the whole thing seemed to re-

enact itself in modern London, interest soon became world-wide. The case was regarded by foreigners, quite mistakenly, as a test of British justice.

True that for every person who had heard of the existence of the Earl of Brendon probably a thousand had seen and, in a sense, loved or reprobated Nelly Hyde. But she was as indisputably the daughter of a casual laborer as Brendon was a blue-blooded aristocrat, though he was anything but dissolute.

When the scandal was at its ugliest, Sir James Harwick, of Scotland Yard, happened to be a guest of honor at a Rotary Club luncheon. He made his stock speech without realizing that the Nelly Hyde murder had given his amiable little platitudes an electric significance. There was, he said, no such thing nowadays as an unsolved murder mystery, though Judge's rules sometimes made it impossible to bring a known murderer to trial. At question time a bull-headed cotton-broker asked:

"Do the Judge's rules favor suspected persons who move in Court circles? I mean — well, as this is a privileged occasion — I mean, is some Influence stalling the prosecution of Lord Brendon for murdering poor Nelly Hyde? I mean, foreigners say we're a nation of snobs, and I'd like to know if there's anything in it when it comes to downright crime?"

Something like uproar followed. The member was expelled from the club for insulting the guest of honor. Moreover, a Rotary Club luncheon, however socially privileged is, in law, a public assembly. Lord Brendon promptly brought a slander action for one farthing damages and an apology — alternatively for fifty thousand pounds to be paid to the Actors' Benevolent Fund. The bull-headed cotton-broker resented his expulsion and determined that the Club should reinstate him. Against his lawyer's advice, he faced the action, pleading justification. In lay language, he was, in effect, betting fifty thousand pounds that he would prove Lord Brendon had murdered Nelly Hyde.

In the course of his opening, Counsel for the defense referred to the known facts of the murder. Nelly Hyde had been found dead in her flat in Westminster, in the hall, near the front door. She had been strangled with wire taken from a picture which had hung in the sitting room of the flat. The Brendon jewels, temporarily in her possession, had disappeared, which created the assumption that robbery had been the motive for the murder. The body had been found by a housemaid employed by the Service when she entered the flat at eleven in the morning. Death had taken place between eight and twelve hours previously.

"My client is not required to prove that Lord Brendon did in fact murder this woman," explained Counsel. "He is required to prove only that any reasonable man must draw the inference that Lord Brendon strangled her with the wire from the picture frame — Exhibit C — and him-

self secreted the Brendon jewels in order to support the theory of robbery and murder by person or persons unknown."

Formal questions elicited that Lord Brendon had been the deceased woman's lover for approximately three years; that on December 6th 1928 — four days before she had met her death by violence — he had announced their forthcoming marriage, by word of mouth and by publication in *The Times* newspaper.

Then came cross-examination, remarkable for the fact that every answer given by Lord Brendon was wholly truthful.

"I will remind you, Lord Brendon, of the evidence you gave in the Coroner's court. You had lent the deceased woman the Brendon jewels. She was wearing them when she entered the flat at about eleven o'clock on the night of December 10th. She was not wearing them at about eleven-thirty when you were both entertaining the Duke of Maensborough to supper. You left the flat with the Duke about midnight. Would you have had a chance to slip away for a minute or so and repossess yourself of the jewels without the Duke's knowledge?"

"Oh, yes. I knew where the jewels were."

"And — in the course of the same minute or so — you could have created disorder in the bedroom so as to suggest a jewel thief in a hurry?"

"I imagine that would have been quite possible."

"Thank you, Lord Brendon. I need trouble you no further with the jewels. We come to the picture. In your evidence you stated that, after the picture had fallen from its place on the wall of the sitting room, you yourself removed the wire from the picture frame. Why?"

"The wire was trailing awkwardly — my uncle caught his foot in it. So I pulled the second staple from the back of the frame and rolled up the wire. I do not remember what I did with the wire." Questioned, he admitted that it would have been possible for him to put the wire in his pocket unobserved by the others.

In the eyes of the public the cotton broker had already won his case. But Counsel, aware of shallows ahead, continued:

"You are a captain in His Majesty's Life Guards?"

"I am an officer of that regiment, and my rank is that of captain."

"Am I right in believing that, in the event of your making the deceased woman your legal wife you would have been required, by a standing rule, to resign from that illustrious regiment?"

"Yes."

"In the event of this marriage taking place would you also have sacrificed an income of some twenty thousands pounds a year?"

"Yes."

"I am now going to ask you a question, Lord Brendon, which — as your counsel will doubtless assure you — *you need not answer if you do not wish to.*" The last words were followed by

a well timed pause and then: "Lord Brendon, did you ever actually intend to marry Nelly Hyde?"

That is one of the questions which we today can answer better than Lord Brendon himself — provided we can escape from the Dissolute Nobleman angle.

Henry Ashwen, eleventh Earl of Brendon (to ignore his Scottish, Irish and Continental titles) was as good a specimen of manhood as you would find in any country. He was class-conscious only in the sense that he accepted a social discipline for himself which he would not have demanded of those outside his own immediate circle.

When he was seventeen and a member of the tiny club of seniors that rules the social life of Eton, he administered a snub to the Emperor of Germany on the latter's visit to the school during Coronation week, 1911. For this he neither expected nor received reproof from authority. By the rules of his caste, which he would have been temperamentally incapable of disobeying, the boy was right — as everyone knew, including the Kaiser. On the outbreak of the 1914 — 1918 war he was given a University cadet's commission in the Guards. The commission was confirmed at the end of his training — which means, in civil terms, that he had learnt to keep his mouth shut while being driven to the limit of physical endurance, subjected to hunger and thirst, bullied by N.C.O. instructors and insulted by officers. After four years of war service his commission was made permanent, which was military honor enough for a youngster of twenty-five.

The earldom of Brendon in the West country is about four times the size of London. Under the able management of a steward its revenue covered its costs. Brendon was entailed to the eldest son, as were the family jewels. But another estate had been free of entail. Henry's father had sold it, with its coal and its ore. After payment of taxation Henry received some twenty thousand pounds a year payable at the discretion of the trustee, his uncle, the Duke of Maensborough. It is of incidental importance that Henry was also heir to the dukedom of Maensborough.

He formed his intimate friendship with Nelly Hyde in 1925, some three years after Nelly's arrival as a top line comedienne in the music halls. Good-looking in a plump style but no beauty, Nelly was one of those rare personalities who contain in themselves the genius of the common people. Her vulgarity, which was almost free of obscenity, was of spiritual stature. One of her successes — *Put Your Weekly Rent On The Mantel-Piece* — was quoted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech in 1924.

When she had made up her mind to accept Henry, she dismissed her queue of lovers and took a service flat in Westminster in her own name which he was at liberty to regard as his home.

The life of a Guards Officer in

peacetime is only strenuous for about three months in the year, so they saw a good deal of each other. Their relationship was unmercenary. He gave her the usual presents, and whenever he saw a bill lying about he paid it.

Each respected — and in a limited sense admired — the position which the other occupied. Henry's room in the flat was littered with photographs of Nelly in character. Nelly, encroaching on their common territory, had adorned a wall of the living room with a picture, painted from a photograph, of Henry at an Investiture of the Knights of the Garter. Nelly had withheld her check until the unhappy artist had distorted perspective to the point where Henry's features were plainly recognizable.

The crisis came while they were having lunch. She had been more than usually nervy of late. From Hollywood had come the talkies to conquer the entertainment world and leave only a few isolated pockets of resistance. Nelly had been tried in the new medium, with somewhat humiliating results. Insult had been added, she thought, by an offer to appear in the flesh between films.

Henry had remarked that he would not be at home next Sunday and added: "Going down with my uncle on Friday night for a week. Probably get three days hunting."

"Hunting foxes! You in a red coat with brass buttons and a black topper! Or is it only the grooms do that? Cor, that reminds me! I meant to tell you last night, only something put it out of my head — *you*, I expect! Harry, old dear, I'm sorry and all that, but we gotter get married."

"You and I? Why? Who said so?"

"Shy Secret, stupid! — or I wouldn't be so fussy. You needn't get the wind up. I don't fancy myself as Lady Lah-di-dah, I can tell you, and we won't have any of that. Nelly Hyde's good enough for me because you can take it from me, and I oughter know, these talkies or whatever they call 'em aren't going to last, and we'll just go on as we are. If it's a girl I'll take care of her. If it's a boy I'll keep myself to myself and you'll bring him up as a gentleman or get the right colleges and things to do it for you. And I can't say fairer than that, seeing that it's your spot o' bother as well as mine."

Henry was not a garrulous man. He received the information with a grunt. Nelly rattled on:

"It's a bargain, mind, and I'll keep my part of it. And you needn't start worrying about my relations turning up to disgrace you because I haven't got any, not what you'd call relations. There's only poor dad, and he's been in the looney bin for nigh on twenty years, same as his father before him."

"What the devil is a looney bin?"

"Lunatic asylum, of course! Fancy you not knowing! Don't bolt your food like that or you'll get hiccups, same as the rest of us."

Henry pushed his chair from the table and without getting up lit a cigarette. In the official report that eventually came to the Department

of Dead Ends, more than four pages are devoted to that cigarette. The first page contains an analysis of his smoking habits and proves that he habitually smoked only with coffee and after his bath. The remainder elaborates the theory that, while smoking this cigarette in total silence — in the circumstances somewhat unnatural behavior — he was deciding that he would murder Nelly; a theory which seems to ignore that the sequence of events centering on the picture could not have been foreseen by Henry. When he had finished the cigarette she asked:

"What are you going to do, Harry? — now I've told you the Glad News?"

"Announce our engagement in *The Times*. I'll be back this evening before you leave." It is noteworthy that he did go straight to *The Times* to authenticate the announcement.

Nelly was appearing at the one West End house that was still running the old type of music-hall show. Shortly before she was due to leave the flat, Henry came into her room and put the Brendon jewels on her dressing table — a tiara, a collar, a star, and a bracelet. Nelly knew intuitively what they were, though she had never heard of them and could not guess that they occupied a tiny niche in English history.

"Cor!" For several seconds she was in danger of being overawed. "What's the idea, Henry?"

"The law doesn't allow me to give them to you, or I would. You have the use of them for life — or rather for my lifetime. After that, they'll belong to our son, if we have one. Why not try them on?"

"Not me! It'd bring bad luck. What you brought 'em here for I don't know. I told you I wasn't fool enough to think I could play Countess of Brendon."

Henry said nothing. Nelly's eyes were on the diamonds, and the diamonds won.

"Oh, all right then! I'll try anything once!" Her hands looked ugly as she snatched the diamonds. When she had put them on, the effect was unexpected.

"Well I'm damned!" exclaimed Henry. Her flamboyant physicality was able to absorb the preposterous illumination of all those diamonds. "My mother loathed them, but they suit you. Damned if they don't!"

"Henry!" Nelly's magnetism was at its highest power. "I believe I could pull it off as a Countess in spite of all I've said. I feel different somehow. It's the jools I expect. Oo! I'm doing Uncle Fred's Lady Friend for my second number tonight and these 'ud look lovely 'on.' D'you mind if I wear 'em?"

Henry did not mind. She wore the Brendon jewels on the stage that night while Henry discussed her future and his own with his uncle, the Duke of Maensborough.

The conference between uncle and nephew can be viewed from the outside as the commiseration of a couple of snobs — or, at best, as the needless

preoccupation of two votaries of an Order which, for centuries, has stood for nothing but its own privileges and today has no meaning except to the idle-minded.

But this approach ignores the truism that a point of view which appears idle-minded to one man may be a religious ideal to another man which he will defend with his substance and his life and even, by a common confusion of thought, with his honor.

"My dear fellow!" The Duke spoke as to one bereaved. "I don't know what the devil we're going to do. It would mean you would have to leave the Regiment" — the words hurt him for he was himself a retired lieutenant-colonel of the Guards — "that is, if you really intend to marry her?"

"Can't exactly let her down."

"Of course not! Everything is getting so morally complicated nowadays. There's this young woman with her indisputable claim — I take it, it *is* indisputable? — and there's Brendon, to say nothing of Maensborough, whose claims, my dear boy, are also indisputable."

"Vicious circle!" contributed Henry. "Something's got to snap."

"If she's a bad woman she'll accept a settlement," said the Duke. "And if she's a good woman she won't want to spoil your life and — and she'll accept a settlement."

"She isn't either. She's very like us."

"It might have been all right but for the medical record," said the Duke. "Father and grandfather certified lunatics! Forget everything else. What the devil can we do?" The Order, it seemed, was in peril.

It is in this conversation that we must look for the genesis of the murder, though it would be absurd to suppose that the Duke was consciously inciting his heir to a deed which he would have viewed with appropriate horror. Henry's next remark was unfortunate.

"Well, I suppose we're out of date anyway."

"We may have been out of date in Victoria's time. But we're beginning to be useful again. Look at this feller the Germans are putting up — Hitler. Hindenburg will probably have to make him Chancellor. Then you'll get another war — whole world in it. Everything in the melting pot. And afterwards — science everywhere and manners nowhere. Engineer's paradise, but nobody knowing what to do when they aren't driving the engines. We represent social continuity. Show 'em how to keep their heads. How to get beauty and amusement out of life instead of cutting each other's throats. What about my having a talk with the lady — in your presence, of course?"

"She isn't easy to talk to. Come and have supper on Friday night and we can go on to Maensborough afterwards. She gets back from the theatre about eleven."

That, of course, was the night of the murder, though, guilty or not, Henry could not have been any more aware of this than the Duke himself.

In seeing his nephew out, the Duke stopped in the hall by the picture of

the third Duke of Maensborough. It might almost have been a portrait of Henry in Stuart period dress.

"He was an old scoundrel, y'know," chuckled the Duke. "Lent Charles II money and blackmailed Nell Gwynne into making him give the country its canals. Brought coal to London on a big scale — father of the industry — took his duty seriously in his own way. Charles got his own back by planting one of his ex-mistresses on him as a wife. Most unsuitable marriage, but it only lasted three weeks. The old villain got himself up as a highwayman and scuppered her." He patted the frame affectionately. "I'm writing his biography. I say, Henry, if this marriage comes off I shall have to cut off your income. Unsuitable marriage — definitely mentioned in the deed. But of course you can draw on me. I'll fix something with your bank if the worst comes to the worst. But we'll see whether I can do anything on Friday night."

On Friday night the Duke actually did nothing — which was Nelly's fault rather than his. Normally, she had one bottle of stout after her 'turn.' Tonight this was supplemented with a couple of whiskies.

"I was rotten tonight," she told Henry, who was waiting for her in the flat. "It's these jools. Brought me bad luck, same as I said they would. As I got out of the taxi I saw a man slip into that sort of alleyway — you know, by the stage door — 'Lone Jim' they call him because he always works by himself. And they say he was the one who did in that old girl at Highgate, strangled her with a bootlace, and then took her diamonds. And between you and I, Henry, he used to be Aggie's fancy man. If Aggie's been talking about these jools I'll break her blasted neck."

Henry disentangled it. Aggie was the dresser.

"Did you tell Aggie they were the Brendon jewels?"

"I may have mentioned it. And if you can't mention a thing like that to your very own dresser, who can you mention it? to I want you to take 'em back, Henry. This minute." She put the collar into his hand, thrust the tiara into one of his pockets and the star and bracelet into another.

Henry went to his room, where a modern suitcase and an old-fashioned portmanteau of a rich, mellow brown stood packed in readiness for him to take to Maensborough. He unlocked the portmanteau, unstrapped it, put the jewels inside, then relocked and restrapped. In the meantime Nelly was seeking to restore her nerve with a liberal gin-and-orange.

She had a second gin-and-orange when the Duke arrived which, for a normally abstemious woman, was a great deal. It meant that she spent her last hour of life in a state of fuddled excitement. She received the Duke self-consciously, addressed him as 'Your Grace' and asked him if he would 'partake of supper.' Then she dropped that sort of thing, adopted him as an uncle and kept him in roars

of laughter until she became maudlin.

"Now listen to me, Uncle — I should say Duke, begging your pardon. Maybe you've been thinking about Henry and me. Well, I know what's what — always have. Ask Henry if I haven't. Why look at that picture over there of him doing his act! Cost me forty quid and worth it. That'll show you I wouldn't disgrace him for the world."

The Duke murmured assurances. It would have been useless to attempt a serious conversation with her.

"It's a lovely picture!" enthused Nelly. "Shows you what's what. Come and look at it, Uncle."

She importuned him to an examination of the ridiculous picture at close quarters. She put her hand on a corner of the frame — no doubt with more weight than she intended, for the picture crashed.

Henry came to the rescue, shuffled the broken glass on to the skirting board, stood the picture flush with the wall. As the Duke moved away, he caught his foot in the wire and nearly tripped. Henry jerked the second staple from the back of the frame and was coiling the wire round his hand when the Duke said:

"I think we'll have to make a move, Henry. It's past midnight and the drive takes nearly an hour. Can you get Marples up to take your luggage."

"I can ring him from the hall. I'll bring my stuff out for him."

"And ask Service to come up and clear the supper things," put in Nelly.

On the house telephone in the hall Henry told the porter to ask the Duke of Maensborough's chauffeur to come up to the flat.

"The chauffeur won't want to leave his car, my lord. The police've been making a fuss about parking around here. I'll be up meself in a couple o' minutes."

Henry thanked him and replaced the receiver. He did not ask Service to come up and clear the supper things. In the witness box he told Counsel that he forgot. Counsel preferred to believe that, as he intended to murder Nelly before he left the flat, he did not want Service to find the body too soon. But Counsel, of course, did not know what happened in the few minutes that followed Henry's order to the porter.

Having replaced the receiver of the hall telephone he went to his room. But he found the door locked on the inside, so that he could not enter it from the hall.

He tried Nelly's door, which was also locked. He went into the bathroom and through it into Nelly's room, which he found in some disorder. Two drawers had been emptied onto the floor. A third drawer was open. Without touching anything, he went through the communicating door, which was open.

In his own room the portmanteau was gaping and he could see at once that the Brendon jewels had been taken. Nelly herself had not left the sitting-room. He remembered Nelly's rambling about a jewel thief called Lone Jim.

His first thought was to telephone the police — his second was to close the portmanteau. Then he noticed that the straps had been cut instead of being unbuckled, and guessed that this was to avoid leaving fingerprints which would be difficult to rub out after the complicated process of unbuckling. From under the bed he dragged another portmanteau. This one had never mellowed like the other — it was still a harsh yellow. He intended to transfer the contents. But the yellow portmanteau was full of spare military kit.

Those cut straps had taught him something. He went into the bathroom, held his hands under a tap, then, while his hands were still dripping, transferred the straps. He put the lengths of cut strap through the slots of the yellow portmanteau containing his military kit, which he left in the middle of the room.

Then he strapped the mellow brown portmanteau containing his clothing and locked it, since the lock had not been damaged by whatever treatment it had received.

He left Nelly's outer door locked. When he unlocked and opened the door of his own room, the porter was already in the flat. Nelly was standing by the outer door, one hand on the latch. The Duke, near her, was murmuring that he had had an extremely pleasant evening.

The porter took Henry's luggage, preceded the party to the elevator, a dozen feet along the landing.

"Well, goodbye, Miss Hyde — or may I say good night, Nelly — and thanks again."

"Good night, Duke. Drop in any time you're passing. S'long, Henry. I'll try to be good till you come back next Friday." She lifted her face to be kissed. The Duke turned his back.

A few seconds later the Duke heard his nephew say: "All right, dear. I'll shut the door."

Then his nephew joined him and together they strolled to the elevator, where the porter was waiting.

"Between the Duke turning his back on you, Lord Brendon, and your joining him in the corridor, how much time elapsed?"

"I don't know." Henry seemed to be visualizing the scene. After a long pause he added, "At a guess, about ten to fifteen seconds."

"Ten to fifteen seconds," repeated Counsel. "In the late war, Lord Brendon, did you obtain your promotion by strangling a German sentry, thereby enabling your men to surprise a machine-gun post?"

"No." With that frankness which at times seemed like sheer lunacy, Henry added: "But I see the drift of your question. During my period of training I was taught how to strangle a man quickly so that he would not be able to cry out."

"By the method which you learnt as a soldier, Lord Brendon, how long would it take to strangle — let us say — a man, with — let us say — a length of picture wire?"

"You could do it in a second or so,

or not at all," answered Henry.

"Thank you, Lord Brendon. I need trouble you no further."

Counsel sat down. It was now five-thirty and the Judge adjourned to the following day. The reporters were already transmitting the copy which was to mislead the public into the belief that Brendon would not only lose his case but would inevitably be brought to trial for the murder and convicted. A shudder went round exalted circles, for the Duke of Maensborough was deeply committed. A dukedom is serious. No dukedom has ever been bought, nor even conferred for distinguished service since Wellesley was made Duke of Wellington for his share in the defeat of Napoleon.

In the corridor, Counsel told the cotton broker that he thought it would be all right "bar accidents" — in ignorance that the accident was at that moment in course of occurrence. Back in his rooms Counsel meditated on the speech to the jury he would make on the following day. The speech, as a speech, would be foolproof. Brendon could have strangled the girl in silence and laid her behind the door and would still have had five or six seconds in hand. The stale old trick of stealing his own jewels — the stale crudity of it — would be worked up. They were not even ordinary jewels, for they were entailed to the earldom of Brendon. No jewel thief would be such a fathead as to steal them. They would be itemized in the standard reference books. If some bungler had taken them, the fence would refuse to deal — which meant that the fence would at once tip off the police.

At six-fifteen that evening a junior Scotland Yard man burst into Counsel's rooms.

"You're unlucky this time, Mr. Manders. Lone Jim has been pinched at Southampton with the Brendon jewels — all, that is, but for two diamonds missing from the collar."

Lone Jim pleaded guilty to the theft of the jewels but not guilty to the murder. He had entered the flat by the fire escape, he asserted, at eleven-twenty, and had left it by eleven-thirty-five. After looking in Miss Hyde's room and pulling out all the drawers, he had found the jewels in the adjoining room inside a locked portmanteau of which he had cut the straps and turned the lock with a skeleton key. He knew nothing of the two diamonds missing from the collar.

Lone Jim's counsel emphasized that it was true that in Nelly Hyde's room all the drawers had been pulled out, true that there was a portmanteau in the adjoining room, true that the straps had been cut. But in attempting to build up his client's truthfulness he tripped, as it were, over those two missing diamonds.

Prosecuting Counsel has admitted in his Memoirs that he was puzzled by those two missing diamonds. They had no relevance to the charge of theft. Feeling that they might have some roundabout bearing on the murder he rattled them about in cross-examination.

"You want the jury to believe that you are putting all your cards on the table, but you are parrying my question as to what you did with those two missing diamonds. I ask you — "

"I've told you I didn't do anything with them. They weren't in the collar when I pinched it. I noticed they were missing as soon as I got home."

"You have heard the evidence of Lord Brendon and of Agnes Cope, the dresser. That collar had its full complement of diamonds as late as eleven o'clock. You assert that you stole the jewels some half an hour later. Do you ask the jury to believe that, in something less than half an hour, some *other* jewel thief entered that flat and contented himself with prising off two of the diamonds — when he might have taken the lot?"

Prisoner did not answer. Counsel had dazed him — and knew that he had made a tactical mistake in doing so. Something like a wave of sympathy for the prisoner swept over the court, carrying the impression that the prisoner was, after all, telling the truth — an impression strengthened by his outburst as he left the witness box.

"You done what you're paid to do and I know what's coming to me," he shouted at Prosecuting Counsel. "All the same, since I been in that there witness box I haven't uttered a word of a lie."

Even some of the police representatives thought that this might get him off the murder charge. They were holding in reserve an indictment for the robbery and murder of an elderly lady at Highgate. But this was never used. Lone Jim was unable to produce any witness or any circumstantial evidence to rebut the contention of the Prosecution that he must have entered the flat later than midnight — that is, after Brendon and Maensborough had left it. The judge summed up against him and he was convicted of the murder of Nelly Hyde and in due course hanged.

Aristocracy throughout the world sighed with relief. The Order was no longer in peril of public contempt. The pendulum swung heavily in Lord Brendon's favor. His damaging admissions in the witness box were recognized as the uncalculating honesty of an innocent man. His generous waiver of damages against the cotton broker proved him a sportsman. The impropriety of living without benefit of clergy was slurred over. His reckless behavior with the family jewels was not mentioned. He retained his commission in the Guards and his hereditary footing in what is vaguely described as the highest circles.

For a year he lived very quietly. Actually he was mourning Nelly, though many maintain that this is incredible. A couple of years after the execution of Lone Jim for the murder of Nelly Hyde, Henry became engaged to Lady Aileen Jarroman, a delightful unspoilt girl of twenty-five. They were married in June at St. Margaret's, Westminster, and went for a three months' honeymoon in Europe.

In the meantime, contrary to poor Nelly's prediction, the talkies had virtually assassinated the old music halls — a fact that had a catastrophic effect upon the lives of the Earl and Countess of Brendon, though neither had ever witnessed a film.

In August 1931 a West End pawnbroker rang up Scotland Yard. A rather seedy woman, giving the name of Agnes Cope, had asked for a loan of one hundred pounds on two diamonds of the first water. The pawnbroker had detained the diamonds on a pretext.

Scotland Yard found the name and address genuine. The woman was a respectable theatrical dresser whose last employer of any note had been the late Nelly Hyde. As the two diamonds missing from the Brendon collar had never been found, the dossier had gone to the Department of Dead Ends. Inspector Rason lost no time in calling on Agnes Cope, who protested that she could not understand what all the fuss was about.

"I can't show a receipt for 'em, but that doesn't mean I've stolen them. I've had them a long time and never meant to part with them and wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been for these talking films upsetting things so."

"Yes. Bit rough on the oldtimers, I must say. But the one thing I want to know, Aggie, is when Lone Jim gave them to you."

"He didn't give them to me. He never gave me anything in his life." Then as if she were too tired for further invention: "I lent him forty quid on them."

"When?"

"A month to the day after poor Nelly was done in. He had tried to sell those two diamonds, but no one would buy. He was desperate."

"So you received them knowing they were part of the Brendon jewels with a murder tied on to them? That looks bad for you, Aggie."

"Not if you look at it straight, it doesn't. I thought Brendon had murdered poor Nelly and pinched his own jewels — same as you clever detective gentlemen thought. All the same, I did ask him straight out if they were part of the Brendon jewels, as I had a special reason for thinking they might be. But he told me they were not."

"And you believed him, Aggie?"

"Yes, I believed him — and I still do." She added: "He was such a liar that you could always tell when he was telling the truth."

Rason discounted that and harked back. "What was your special reason for suspecting they might be the Brendon diamonds?" he asked.

Her answer was rambling and full of personalities. In his report, Rason compressed it, but faithfully preserved the essentials.

"Nelly had been sort of worked up and nervy for a long time, as she knew she wasn't getting over so well as she used to. Well, the last night of her life, poor thing, just as she was coming to the theatre she saw Lone Jim skulking about and it frightened her. She wore the jewels in her first turn and when

she came back into the dressing room for a quick change she says, 'I nearly got the bird just now — it's these jewels — they're unlucky.' It was the first time I'd ever seen her really nervous. While I took her dress off, she undid the jewels and she dropped the collar — not on the rug but on the parquet flooring, which is hard. We left it there while I finished changing her. When she'd gone, I picked it up, and I saw that two of the settings had been damaged. I tried 'em with my fingers. When she'd finished I says, 'Nelly, my dear,' I says, 'You give those diamonds back to Lord Brendon the very moment you set eyes on him,' I says, 'and tell him to have his jeweller run over the settings, else you'll get trouble and plenty of it,' I says. But she must've forgotten until he'd gone and then put 'em in his bag — which was the sort of silly thing she would do, poor darling!"

Personal impressions that people are telling the truth or lying are rarely accepted at headquarters as a substitute for action.

"I'm afraid I shall have to pull you in, Aggie. You can bet your sweet life those diamonds *are* Brendon's. We'll soon find out for you."

He learnt that the Brendons would arrive at Southampton the following Tuesday night and go straight on to Brendon where they would shortly entertain a shooting party.

In a three months' honeymoon in Europe the Earl and Countess of Brendon had about a fortnight to themselves. Brendon was a social ambassador of his country; for, even in the 1930's, that sort of thing was still considered politically important. There was a royal wedding in the Balkans at which the Countess necessarily wore the Brendon jewels. She had to wear them again in Belgium during their last week.

Henry accepted responsibility for them. In the car that took them from Southampton to Brendon they were beside him in an attaché case. They would have to stay in the safe at Brendon until he went to London, when they would be returned to the Safe Deposit. To Henry the Brendon jewels were a nuisance and to his Countess a horror which ruined her normally delectable appearance.

On Wednesday morning Inspector Rason, accompanied by a colleague knowledgeable in precious stones, presented himself at Brendon Castle.

When he had explained his errand Brendon took him to the library and unlocked the safe.

"It's the collar, isn't it? I had to have the two diamonds replaced, as the jewels have been in use. Frankly, Inspector, I'm sorry the wretched business has cropped up again — though, of course, I appreciate the efforts of the police."

Rason was murmuring platitudes when Sergeant Detective Edwards interrupted:

"These two diamonds I have in my hand could never have sat in that collar," he announced.

Rason controlled his disappoint-

ment. In the Department of Dead Ends things hardly ever ran in a straight line. By the time real evidence reached him it had generally turned a somersault. In this case it proved that Lone Jim had told the truth to Agnes Cope. *Suppose Lone Jim had been telling the truth throughout?*

"Well, that lets me out, doesn't it!" said Brendon, good-humoredly, as he returned the collar to the safe.

"Hm! I'm afraid our people will start raking over the ashes," said Rason. "Anyhow, they won't want you to come up to London, Lord Brendon. They'll come down here."

"Good heavens! Why should I be dragged in if those stones belong to someone else?"

"The fact that those diamonds are not yours," explained Rason, "will make our people believe that Lone Jim was telling the truth when he said the two diamonds were missing from the collar when he stole it. If you remember, it was proved that when Miss Hyde brought them into the flat that night at eleven the collar was intact. That means *the two missing diamonds must have been detached in the flat by Miss Hyde or yourself!*"

"But that would be perfectly ridiculous behavior on the part of either of us!"

"So ridiculous that our people will try to find out exactly what did happen. It's all red tape, of course, but it's ten to one they'll want to examine any effects you still possess which were at any time in that flat."

"I haven't any effects that were at that flat — except a couple of portmanteaux and a suitcase, a map case — oh, yes, and a canvas bed, Army pattern."

"Well, it won't take 'em long to run through those," said Rason, preparing to go. "There's a local train at one-fifteen from Brendon station, I believe."

"Couldn't you examine the stuff now and get it over?" asked Henry. "The Daimler can run you to Taunton to catch the connection and there'll be time for lunch here first."

Rason accepted the invitation to lunch. The butler mobilized a valet and two maids and within five minutes the library was littered with a canvas bed, a map case, a suitcase and two portmanteaux. Rason turned his attention to the latter when the servants had gone. One was a pleasing, mellow brown; the other a harsh yellow. Rason picked up the brown one.

"I fancy I recognize this one, Lord Brendon. Wasn't it an exhibit at Lone Jim's trial?"

"No. The other one was — the yellow one."

Rason contemplated the brown portmanteau as if he doubted Brendon's statement. On one side was an initial. A "B" between two periods. But the second period had been grazed off. He had recognized it from a written description in the dossier — a statement by the porter of the flats in Westminster: "*I then carried down his lordship's suitcase and a portmanteau. I would know the portmanteau again because I happened to notice it*

*had a period on the wrong side of the initial.*"

"Was this portmanteau — this brown one — in the flat at the time when the murder was committed?" asked Rason.

"No," answered Henry. "I took it with me when I left the flat that night. It contained my clothes. I was going down to Maensborough with the Duke."

"Ah! Then we can put this on one side. It's the yellow one we want — the one that was in the flat at the time — the one from which Lone Jim cut the straps — the one he found the diamonds in."

He hoisted the yellow portmanteau on to the writing table.

"Before we examine that portmanteau, Lord Brendon, I'll tell you what's in my mind. First — we know those two diamonds were in the collar when Jim stole it. Second — we're going to assume that Jim was telling the truth when he said they were not in the collar when he got home. Very well! That leaves only one possibility. Those two diamonds must have left the collar at the moment when Jim was stealing them — *without his knowing it!* You'll say that's impossible, but it isn't — because those two diamonds were loose in their setting." He told them what Agnes Cope had told him.

While Edwards gaped and Brendon looked bored, Rason went on: "If I am right, it means that in snatching the collar out of this yellow bag, Jim caught the thing against the underside of the lock and the two loose diamonds were wrenched off."

Brendon raised his eyebrows. "Then you think they're still in the bag after nearly three years of packing and unpacking?"

"Have a look, Edwards," ordered Rason. "Feel under the lock. Look for a hole in the lining under the lock."

Edwards opened the yellow portmanteau.

"I can't feel anything, Mr. Rason. And there's no hole in the lining. And — I'm afraid I don't feel anything through the lining. No, sir. I'll swear there are no diamonds anywhere in that portmanteau."

Rason collapsed, somewhat theatrically, into an armchair.

"That's the sort of thing that happens in my job, Lord Brendon. You blow off a beautiful theory and just make an ass of yourself. I was absolutely convinced that the only place on earth where those two diamonds could possibly be was in that bag — where they'd been accidentally hidden. While you're at it, Edwards, you might as well go through the other bag — the brown one."

"Not much point in that, is there?" suggested Brendon. "As I told you, that's the one I took out of the flat at midnight."

"Go through it all the same, Edwards," ordered Rason.

Edwards changed the position of the portmanteaus, setting the mellow brown one on the writing table.

"Phew! There is certainly a hole in the lining just where you said, Mr. Rason," reported Edwards.

"Good! Just go on feeling for the diamonds and when you feel 'em, cut the lining." Rason sounded satisfied rather than surprised. "Lord Brendon, you've no idea what a lot of trouble crooks give us when they tell the truth. We take the line that they're sure to be lying — "

"I've got something here, Mr. Rason!" cried Edwards. A pocket knife was inserted. "Diamonds — two!"

We imagine Edwards flushed with excitement, Brendon still looking bored while Rason's voice breaks the silence.

"I think you said, Lord Brendon, that this was the portmanteau you took with you out of the flat at midnight. If those diamonds are yours it will prove that Lone Jim completed his robbery *before you left the flat.* It only remains for Edwards to tell us whether those diamonds could have 'sat' — as he calls it — in the collar."

"By Jove! That's a clever bit of work, Mr. Rason!" murmured Brendon. He went to the safe. But instead of producing the collar he shut the door of the safe and locked it on a combination. Then he faced Rason in silence, perfect understanding in the eyes of both men.

To the Earl of Brendon, aristocratic calm was no pose.

"That fellow — Lone Jim — murdered a woman at Highgate, didn't he?"

"You can take it that he did. He'd have been hanged for that anyway. But I'm afraid that won't save you from the charge of procuring a miscarriage of justice, resulting in the wrongful execution of Lone Jim."

"In plain English, I shall be charged with murdering Lone Jim and then with murdering Nelly Hyde. But not, I think, until Mr. Edwards has proved that those two diamonds could — er — 'sit' in the collar. It will take you twenty-four hours, won't it, to get a judicial order to open that safe?" As Rason nodded, Henry rang the bell.

"These gentlemen will have lunch at once in the morning room. And see that the Daimler takes them to Taunton in time to catch the two-thirty."

"Very good, my lord."

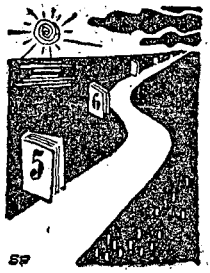
The Order was again in peril of public contempt and must be saved. It would be hard not even being able to say goodbye to Aileen, but that would be impossible.

"Do you think, darling, that you could amuse yourself this afternoon until tea-time?" asked the Right Honorable Henry Ashwen, Earl of Brendon, Knight of the Garter, Warden of the King's Pleasaunces, heir to the dukedom of Maensborough. "I want to do a spot of work on the guns in case I don't get time before Tuesday. I always clean the guns myself."

In her hearing he told the butler to tell the chauffeur to send him some petrol in an egg-cup with which to clean his hands.

Nobody outside the Department of Dead Ends had any doubt that he merely intended to clean his guns and that he blew his brains out by the purest accident.

## *IN OUR OWN TIME WE ADD SLOWLY*




*Can you look backward into your earlier reading years, when reading was the most exciting adventure of living, and recall your personal landmarks of literature—the books that literally knocked you over? What books in your past measured up to Emily Dickinson's unforgettable definition of poetry? Remember, she once said that if a book made her whole body so cold no fire could ever warm her, if she felt physically as if the top of her head had been taken off, then and then only she knew she had read poetry. "Is there any other way?" The milestones in our own past mark a long road of precious reading . . . What boy, country-bred or city-raised, will ever forget his first reading of Mark Twain's* HUCKLEBERRY FINN? *What adolescent will ever forget Samuel Butler's* THE WAY OF ALL FLESH *and Somerset Maugham's* OF HUMAN BONDAGE? *What man among us will ever forget the four great books that made 1920 a golden year? — F. Scott Fitzgerald's* THIS SIDE OF PARADISE, *Knut Hamsun's* GROWTH OF THE SOIL, *Jacob Wassermann's* THE WORLD'S ILLUSION, *and Sinclair Lewis's* MAIN STREET. *(It is interesting to note that none of these was actually one of the ten bestsellers of 1920; the four leading books of that year were Zane Grey's* THE MAN OF THE FOREST, *Peter B. Kyne's* KINDRED OF THE DUST, *Harold Bell Wright's* THE RE-CREATION OF BRIAN KENT, *and James Oliver Curwood's* THE RIVER'S END. *Do you remember vividly any of these four bestsellers in the year of our Lord 1920, when women voted for the first time and helped inaugurate Warren G. Harding and the Prohibition Era?)*

*Other great modern books surge in our memory — Hudson's* GREEN MANSIONS, *Rolland's* JEAN CHRISTOPHE, *Blasco Ibáñez's* THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE, *and those two memorable volumes that appeared in 1919, Sherwood Anderson's* WINESBURG, OHIO, *and the "high school boys' bible," James Branch Cabell's* JURGEN. *In the 1920s came Proust's* REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST, *Mann's* THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN, *Huxley's* POINT COUNTER POINT, *Hemingway's* A FAREWELL TO ARMS.

*Yes, there were giants in those days. The great books may seem relatively old in years but they remain forever young in spirit, and unlike Villon's snows, the books of yester-year are always with us. You have but to visit a public library and in ten minutes you can fill your arms with a dozen masterpieces — by Shakespeare, Rabelais, Homer, Dostoevsky, Swift, Dickens, Dante, Cervantes, Tolstoy, Melville, Whitman, Anatole France. (We confess humbly that the greatest master of them all, Shakespeare, never knocked us over: we simply haven't grown up to him yet.) Yes, the true*

*treasures of the world are free for the asking — you have but to draw on the heritage of the past. In our own time we add slowly: count a year fruitful if in that year one — just one — really great book is born in print.*

*In the 1930s a single volume stands out in your Editor's memory. We read it during a long convalescence in Florida, and it knocked us for a literary loop. The book was John Steinbeck's* GRAPES OF WRATH. *It is, in your Editor's opinion, a truly great book. Imagine, then, how we feel welcoming Mr. Steinbeck's first appearance in EQMM . . .*

*"The Murder," which was originally published in the April 1934 issue of "North American Review," is not a "popular magazine" story; yet, in a strange way, it meets the chief requirement usually laid down for crime stories by "slick" editors. Commenting on what they "want" in a detective story, slick-paper editors agree almost unanimously that the murder and its solution should not be merely the basis for an intellectual puzzle; it should be that part of the plot which resolves all the other, and more important, elements. As an example of what they mean, "class" editors often give this illustration of the "perfect" magazine story: a man and a woman are in love, but someone stands in their way — the man's wife, or the woman's husband, or a third person (a blackmailer, say) who can prevent the consummation of their great love; the barrier (wife, husband, or blackmailer) is murdered; now, apparently, the man and woman can enjoy their heart's desire; but no; the woman (heroine) is suspected of committing the murder, or the man (hero) is suspected, or they are both suspected; so the murder must first be solved in order to resolve the hero's and heroine's problem; in other words, the murder and its solution are only a means toward an end, a means by which the hero and heroine achieve happiness.*

*Well, believe it or not, that is precisely the theme of John Steinbeck's story. The murder is a means toward an end; through murder Jim and Jelka Moore find understanding and through understanding, happiness. But Mr. Steinbeck, of whom it has been said that he is "preoccupied with physical suffering, cruelty, and violence," still did not write a story that would have satisfied the standards of any "slick" magazine we know . . .*

# THE MURDER

*by JOHN STEINBECK*

THIS happened a number of years ago in Monterey County, in central California. The Cañon del Castillo is one of those valleys in the Santa Lucia range which lie between its many spurs and ridges. From the main Cañon del Castillo a number of little arroyos cut back into the moun-

tains, oak-wooded canyons, heavily brushed with poison oak and sage. At the head of the canyon there stands a tremendous stone castle, buttressed and towered like those strongholds the Crusaders put up in the path of their conquests. Only a close visit to the castle shows it to be a strange accident of time and water and erosion working on soft, stratified sandstone. In the distance the ruined battlements, the gates, the towers, even the arrow slits require little imagination to make out.

Below the castle, on the nearly level floor of the canyon, stand an old ranch house, a weathered and mossy barn and a warped feeding shed for cattle. The house is empty and deserted; the doors, swinging on rusted hinges, squeal and bang on nights when the wind courses down from the castle. Not many people visit the house. Sometimes a crowd of boys tramp through the rooms, peering into empty closets and loudly defying the ghosts they deny.

Jim Moore, who owns the land, does not like to have people about the house. He rides up from his new house, farther down the valley, and chases the boys away. He has put "No Trespassing" signs on his fences to keep curious and morbid people out. Sometimes he thinks of burning the old house down, but then a strange and powerful relation with the swinging doors, the blind and desolate windows forbids the destruction. If he should burn the house he would destroy a great and important piece of his life. He knows that when he goes to town with his plump and still pretty wife, people turn and look at his retreating back with awe and some admiration.

Jim Moore was born in the old house and grew up in it. He knew every grained and weathered board of the barn, every smooth, worn manger rack. His mother and father were both dead when he was thirty. He celebrated his majority by raising a beard. He sold the pigs and decided never to have any more. At last he bought a fine Guernsey bull to improve his stock, and he began to go to Monterey on Saturday nights, to get drunk and to talk with the noisy girls of the Three Star.

Within a year Jim Moore married Jelka Šepić, a Jugo-Slav girl, daughter of a heavy and patient farmer of Pine Canyon. Jim was not proud of her foreign family, of her many brothers and sisters and cousins, but he delighted in her beauty. Jelka had eyes as large and questioning as a doe's eyes. Her nose was thin and sharply faceted, and her lips were deep and soft. Jelka's skin always startled Jim, for between night and night he forgot how beautiful it was. She was so smooth and quiet and gentle, such a good housekeeper, that Jim often thought with disgust of her father's advice on the wedding day. The old man, bleary and bloated with festival beer, elbowed Jim in the ribs and grinned suggestively, so that his little dark eyes almost disappeared behind puffed and wrinkled lids.

"Don't be big fool, now," he said.

"Jelka is Slav girl. He's not like American girl. If he is bad, beat him. If he's good too long, beat him too. I beat his mama. Papa beat my mama. Slav girl! He's not like a man that don't beat hell out of him."

"I wouldn't beat Jelka," Jim said.

The father giggled and nudged him again with his elbow. "Don't be big fool," he warned. "Sometime you see." He rolled back to the beer barrel.

Jim found soon enough that Jelka was not like American girls. She was very quiet. She never spoke first, but only answered his questions, and then with soft short replies. She learned her husband as she learned passages of Scripture. After they had been married a while, Jim never wanted for any habitual thing in the house but Jelka had it ready for him before he could ask. She was a fine wife, but there was no companionship in her. She never talked. Her great eyes followed him, and when he smiled, sometimes she smiled too, a distant and covered smile. Her knitting and mending and sewing were interminable. There she sat, watching her wise hands, and she seemed to regard with wonder and pride the little white hands that could do such nice and useful things. She was so much like an animal that sometimes Jim patted her head and neck under the same impulse that made him stroke a horse.

In the house Jelka was remarkable. No matter what time Jim came in from the hot dry range or from the bottom farm land, his dinner was exactly, steamingly ready for him. She watched while he ate, and pushed the dishes close when he needed them, and filled his cup when it was empty.

Early in the marriage he told her things that happened on the farm, but she smiled at him as a foreigner does who wishes to be agreeable even though he doesn't understand.

"The stallion cut himself on the barbed wire," he said.

And she replied, "Yes," with a downward inflection that held neither question nor interest.

He realized before long that he could not get in touch with her in any way. If she had a life apart, it was so remote as to be beyond his reach. The barrier in her eyes was not one that could be removed, for it was neither hostile nor intentional.

At night he stroked her straight black hair and her unbelievably smooth golden shoulders, and she whimpered a little with pleasure. Only in the climax of his embrace did she seem to have a life apart and fierce and passionate. And then immediately she lapsed into the alert and painfully dutiful wife.

"Why don't you ever talk to me?" he demanded. "Don't you want to talk to me?"

"Yes," she said. "What do you want me to say?" She spoke the language of his race out of a mind that was foreign to his race.

When a year had passed, Jim began to crave the company of women, the chattery exchange of small talk, the shrill pleasant insults, the shame-

sharpened vulgarity. He began to go again to town, to drink and to play with the noisy girls of the Three Star. They liked him there for his firm, controlled face and for his readiness to laugh.

"Where's your wife?" they demanded.

"Home in the barn," he responded. It was a never failing joke.

Saturday afternoons he saddled a horse and put a rifle in the scabbard in case he should see a deer. Always he asked, "You don't mind staying alone?"

"No. I don't mind."

And once he asked, "Suppose some one should come?"

Her eyes sharpened for a moment, and then she smiled. "I would send them away," she said.

"I'll be back about noon tomorrow. It's too far to ride in the night." He felt that she knew where he was going, but she never protested nor gave any sign of disapproval. "You should have a baby," he said.

Her face lighted up. "Sometime God will be good," she said eagerly.

He was sorry for her loneliness. If only she visited with the other women of the canyon she would be less lonely, but she had no gift for visiting. Once every month or so she put horses to the buckboard and went to spend an afternoon with her mother, and with the brood of brothers and sisters and cousins who lived in her father's house.

"A fine time you'll have," Jim said to her. "You'll gabble your crazy language like ducks for a whole afternoon. You'll giggle with that big grown cousin of yours with the embarrassed face. If I could find any fault with you, I'd call you a damn foreigner." He remembered how she blessed the bread with the sign of the cross before she put it in the oven, how she knelt at the bedside every night, how she had a holy picture tacked to the wall in the closet.

On Saturday of a hot dusty June, Jim cut hay in the farm flat. The day was long. It was after six o'clock when the mower tumbled the last band of oats. He drove the clanking machine up into the barnyard and backed it into the implement shed, and there he unhitched the horses and turned them out to graze on the hills over Sunday. When he entered the kitchen Jelka was just putting his dinner on the table. He washed his hands and face, and sat down to eat.

"I'm tired," he said, "but I think I'll go to Monterey anyway. There'll be a full moon."

Her soft eyes smiled.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "If you would like to go, I'll hitch up a rig and take you with me."

She smiled again and shook her head. "No, the stores would be closed. I would rather stay here."

"Well all right, I'll saddle a horse then. I didn't think I was going. The stock's all turned out. Maybe I can catch a horse easy. Sure you don't want to go?"

"If it was early, and I could go to the stores — but it will be ten o'clock

when you get there."

"Oh, no — well, anyway, on horseback I'll make it a little after nine."

Her mouth smiled to itself, but her eyes watched him for the development of a wish. Perhaps because he was tired from the long day's work, he demanded, "What are you thinking about?"

"Thinking about? I remember, you used to ask that nearly every day when we were first married."

"But what are you?" he insisted irritably.

"Oh — I'm thinking about the eggs under the black hen." She got up and went to the big calendar on the wall. "They will hatch tomorrow or maybe Monday."

It was almost dusk when he had finished shaving and putting on his blue serge suit and his new boots. Jelka had the dishes washed and put away. As Jim went through the kitchen he saw that she had taken the lamp to the table near the window, and that she sat beside it knitting a brown wool sock.

"Why do you sit there tonight?" he asked. "You always sit over here. You do funny things sometimes."

Her eyes arose slowly from her flying hands. "The moon," she said quietly. "You said it would be full tonight. I want to see the moon rise."

"But you're silly. You can't see it from that window. I thought you knew direction better than that."

She smiled remotely. "I will look out of the bedroom window then."

Jim put on his black hat and went out. Walking through the dark empty barn, he took a halter from the rack. On the grassy sidehill he whistled high and shrill. The horses stopped feeding and moved slowly in toward him, and stopped twenty feet away. Carefully he approached his bay gelding and moved his hand from its rump along its side and up and over its neck. The halterstrap clicked in its buckle. Jim turned and led the horse back to the barn. He threw his saddle on and cinched it tight, put his silver-bound bridle over the stiff ears, buckled the throat latch, knotted the tie-rope about the gelding's neck and fastened the neat coil-end to the saddle string. Then he slipped the halter and led the horse to the house. A radiant crown of soft red light lay over the eastern hills. The full moon would rise before the valley had completely lost the daylight.

In the kitchen Jelka still knitted by the window. Jim strode to the corner of the room and took up his 30-30 carbine. As he rammed shells into the magazine, he said, "The moon glow is on the hills. If you are going to see it rise, you better go outside now. It's going to be a good red one at rising."

"In a moment," she replied, "when I come to the end here." He went to her and patted her sleek head.

"Good night. I'll probably be back by noon tomorrow." Her dusty black eyes followed him out the door.

Jim thrust the rifle into his saddle-scabbard, and mounted and swung his horse down the canyon. On his right, from behind the blackening hills, the

great red moon slid rapidly up. The double light of the day's last afterglow and the rising moon thickened the outlines of the trees and gave a mysterious new perspective to the hills. The dusty oaks shimmered and glowed, and the shade under them was black as velvet. A huge, long-legged shadow of a horse and half a man rode to the left and slightly ahead of Jim. From the ranches near and distant came the sound of dogs tuning up for a night of song. And the roosters crowed, thinking a new dawn had come too quickly. Jim lifted the gelding to a trot. The spattering hoofsteps echoed back from the castle behind him. He thought of blonde May at the Three Star in Monterey. "I'll be late. Maybe some one else'll have her," he thought. The moon was clear of the hills now.

Jim had gone a mile when he heard the hoof-beats of a horse coming toward him. A horseman cantered up and pulled to a stop. "That you, Jim?"

"Yes. Oh, hello, George."

"I was just riding up to your place. I want to tell you — you know the springhead at the upper end of my land?"

"Yes. I know."

"Well, I was up there this afternoon. I found a dead campfire and a calf's head and feet. The skin was in the fire, half burned, but I pulled it out and it had your brand."

"The hell," said Jim. "How old was the fire?"

"The ground was still warm in the ashes. Last night, I guess. Look, Jim, I can't go up with you. I've got to go to town, but I thought I'd tell you, so you could take a look around."

Jim asked quietly, "Any idea how many men?"

"No. I didn't look close."

"Well, I guess I better go up and look. I was going to town too. But if there are thieves working, I don't want to lose any more stock. I'll cut up through your land if you don't mind, George."

"I'd go with you, but I've got to go to town. You got a gun with you?"

"Oh yes, sure. Here under my leg. Thanks for telling me."

"That's all right. Cut through any place you want. Good night." The neighbor turned his horse and cantered back in the direction from which he had come.

For a few moments Jim sat in the moonlight, looking down at his stilted shadow. He pulled his rifle from its scabbard, levered a shell into the chamber, and held the gun across the pommel of his saddle. He turned left from the road, went up the little ridge, through the oak grove, over the grassy hog-back and down the other side into the next canyon.

In half an hour he had found the deserted camp. He turned over the heavy, leathery calf's head and felt its dusty tongue to judge by the dryness how long it had been dead. He lighted a match and looked at his brand on the half-burned hide. At last he mounted his horse again, rode over the bald grassy hills and crossed into his own land.

A warm summer wind was blowing on the hilltops. The moon, as it quartered up the sky, lost its redness and turned the color of strong tea. Among the hills the coyotes were singing, and the dogs at the ranch houses below joined them with broken-hearted howling. The dark green oaks below and the yellow summer grass showed their colors in the moonlight.

Jim followed the sound of the cowbells to his herd, and found them eating quietly, and a few deer feeding with them. He listened long for the sound of hoofbeats or the voices of men on the wind.

It was after eleven when he turned his horse toward home. He rounded the west tower of the sandstone castle, rode through the shadow and out into the moonlight again. Below, the roofs of his barn and house shone dully. The bedroom window cast back a streak of reflection.

The feeding horses lifted their heads as Jim came down through the pasture. Their eyes glinted redly when they turned their heads.

Jim had almost reached the corral fence — he heard a horse stamping in the barn. His hand jerked the gelding down. He listened. It came again, the stamping from the barn. Jim lifted his rifle and dismounted silently. He turned his horse loose and crept toward the barn.

In the blackness he could hear the grinding of the horse's teeth as it chewed hay. He moved along the barn until he came to the occupied stall. After a moment of listening he scratched a match on the butt of his rifle. A saddled and bridled horse was tied in the stall. The bit was slipped under the chin and the cinch loosened. The horse stopped eating and turned its head toward the light.

Jim blew out the match and walked quickly out of the barn. He sat on the edge of the horse trough and looked into the water. His thoughts came so slowly that he put them into words and said them under his breath.

"Shall I look through the window? No. My head would throw a shadow in the room."

He regarded the rifle in his hand. Where it had been rubbed and handled, the black gun-finish had worn off, leaving the metal silvery.

At last he stood up with decision and moved toward the house. At the steps, an extended foot tried each board tenderly before he put his weight on it. The three ranch dogs came out from under the house and shook themselves, stretched and sniffed, wagged their tails and went back to bed.

The kitchen was dark, but Jim knew where every piece of furniture was. He put out his hand and touched the corner of the table, a chair-back, the towel hanger, as he went along. He crossed the room so silently that even he could hear only his breath and the whisper of his trousers legs together, and the beating of his watch in his pocket. The bedroom door stood open and spilled a patch of moonlight on the kitchen floor. Jim reached the door at last and peered through.

The moonlight lay on the white bed. Jim saw Jelka lying on her back, one soft bare arm flung across her forehead and eyes. He could not see who the man was, for his head was turned away. Jim watched, holding his breath. Then Jelka twitched in her sleep and the man rolled his head and sighed — Jelka's cousin, her grown, embarrassed cousin.

Jim turned and quickly stole back across the kitchen and down the back steps. He walked up the yard to the water trough again, and sat down on the edge of it. The moon was white as chalk, and it swam in the water, and lighted the straws and barley dropped by the horses' mouths. Jim could see the mosquito wigglers, tumbling up and down, end over end, in the water, and he could see a newt lying in the sun moss in the bottom of the trough.

He cried a few dry, hard, smothered sobs, and wondered why, for his thought was of the grassed hilltops and of the lonely summer wind whisking along.

His thought turned to the way his mother used to hold a bucket to catch the throat blood when his father killed a pig. She stood as far away as possible and held the bucket at arm's length to keep her clothes from getting spattered.

Jim dipped his hand into the trough and stirred the moon to broken, swirling streams of light. He wetted his forehead with his damp hands and stood up. This time he did not move so quietly, but he crossed the kitchen on tiptoe and stood in the bedroom door. Jelka moved her arm and opened her eyes a little. Then the eyes sprang wide, then they glistened with moisture. Jim looked into her eyes; his face was blank of expression. A little drop ran out of Jelka's nose and lodged in the hollow of her upper lip. She stared back at him.

Jim cocked the rifle. The steel click sounded through the house. The man on the bed stirred uneasily in his sleep. Jim's hands were quivering. He raised the gun to his shoulder and held it tightly to keep from shaking. Over the sights he saw the little white square between the man's brows and hair. The front sight wavered a moment and then came to rest.

The gun crash tore the air. Jim, still looking down the barrel, saw the whole bed jolt under the blow. A small, black, bloodless hole was in the man's forehead. But behind, the hollow-point bullet took brain and bone and splashed them on the pillow.

Jelka's cousin gurgled in his throat. His hands came crawling out from under the covers like big white spiders, and they walked for a moment, then shuddered and fell quiet.

Jim looked slowly back at Jelka. Her nose was running. Her eyes had moved from him to the end of the rifle. She whined softly, like a cold puppy.

Jim turned in panic. His boot-heels beat on the kitchen floor, but outside he moved slowly toward the watering trough again. There was a taste of salt in his throat, and his heart heaved painfully. He pulled his hat off and

dipped his head into the water, then he leaned over and vomited on the ground. In the house he could hear Jelka moving about. She whimpered like a puppy. Jim straightened up, weak and dizzy.

He walked tiredly through the corral and into the pasture. His saddled horse came at his whistle. Automatically he tightened the cinch, mounted and rode away, down the road to the valley. The squat black shadow traveled under him. The moon sailed high and white. The uneasy dogs barked monotonously.

At daybreak a buckboard and pair trotted up to the ranch yard, scattering the chickens. A deputy sheriff and a coroner sat in the seat. Jim Moore half reclined against his saddle in the wagon-box. His tired gelding followed behind. The deputy sheriff set the brake and wrapped the lines around it. The men dismounted.

Jim asked, "Do I have to go in? I'm too tired and wrought up to see it now."

The coroner pulled his lip and studied. "Oh, I guess not. We'll tend to things and look around."

Jim sauntered away toward the watering trough. "Say," he called, "kind of clean up a little, will you? You know."

The men went on into the house.

In a few minutes they emerged, carrying the stiffened body between them. It was wrapped up in a comforter. They eased it up into the wagon-box. Jim walked back toward them. "Do I have to go in with you now?"

"Where's your wife, Mr. Moore?" the deputy sheriff demanded.

"I don't know," he said wearily. "She's somewhere around."

"You're sure you didn't kill her too?"

"No. I didn't touch her. I'll find her and bring her in this afternoon. That is, if you don't want me to go in with you now."

"We've got your statement," the coroner said. "And by God, we've got eyes, haven't we, Will? Of course there's a technical charge of murder against you, but it'll be dismissed. Always is in this part of the country. Go kind of light on your wife, Mr. Moore."

"I won't hurt her," said Jim.

He stood and watched the buckboard jolt away. He kicked his feet reluctantly in the dust. The hot June sun showed its face over the hills and flashed viciously on the bedroom window.

Jim went slowly into the house, and brought out a nine-foot, loaded bull whip. He crossed the yard and walked into the barn. And as he climbed the ladder to the hayloft, he heard the high, puppy whimpering start.

When Jim came out of the barn again, he carried Jelka over his shoulder. By the watering trough he set her tenderly on the ground. Her hair was littered with bits of hay. The back of her shirtwaist was streaked with blood.

Jim wetted his bandana at the pipe

and washed her bitten lips, and washed her face and brushed back her hair. Her dusty black eyes followed every move he made.

"You hurt me," she said. "You hurt me bad."

He nodded gravely. "Bad as I could without killing you."

The sun shone hotly on the ground. A few blowflies buzzed about, looking for the blood.

Jelka's thickened lips tried to smile. "Did you have any breakfast at all?"

"No," he said. "None at all."

"Well, then I'll fry you up some eggs." She struggled painfully to her feet.

"Let me help you," he said. "I'll help you get your waist off. It's drying stuck to your back. It'll hurt."

"No. I'll do it myself." Her voice had a peculiar resonance in it. Her dark eyes dwelt warmly on him for a moment, and then she turned and limped into the house.

Jim waited, sitting on the edge of the watering trough. He saw the smoke start up out of the chimney and sail straight up into the air. In a very few moments Jelka called him from the kitchen door.

"Come, Jim. Your breakfast."

Four fried eggs and four thick slices of bacon lay on a warmed plate for him. "The coffee will be ready in a minute," she said.

"Won't you eat?"

"No. Not now. My mouth's too sore."

He ate his eggs hungrily and then looked up at her. Her black hair was combed smooth. She had on a fresh white shirtwaist. "We're going to town this afternoon," he said. "I'm going to order lumber. We'll build a new house farther down the canyon."

Her eyes darted to the closed bedroom door and then back to him. "Yes," she said. "That will be good." And then, after a moment, "Will you whip me any more — for this?"

"No, not any more, for this."

Her eyes smiled. She sat down on a chair beside him, and Jim put out his hand and stroked her hair, and the back of her neck.

*Hildegarde Withers can't even walk down Riverside Drive, on her way home from a musicale with the long-suffering Inspector Piper, without bumping into a murder. And this one proved to be a strange case indeed. Consider the sleeping habits of some of the people involved: the old man went to bed surrounded by horses; the young man went to bed attired in a dress shirt and a black bow tie; and the young lady went to bed and after she got in it, the bed was still empty!*

*And so to bedlam with one of our favorite female ferrets — irrepressible, irresistible, irreproachable Hildy.*

# THE DOCTOR'S DOUBLE

*by STUART PALMER*

"And people think they must go to the country to find peace and quiet!" Inspector Oscar Piper gestured toward the lonely curves of Riverside Drive, glistening wet under the street lamps.

It was well after midnight, an unwonted hour for both the grizzled Inspector and the angular school teacher who was his best friend and severest critic. But Miss Hildegarde Withers had finally persuaded him to attend a performance of chamber music, for the good of his soul, and it had continued late.

"Manhattan is never really quiet or peaceful, Oscar," Miss Withers told him. "Sometimes it is hushed — but only with the hush that comes just before the crescendo movement of a Wagnerian opera."

Suddenly a light flashed on in the second story window of a sober brownstone house.

"There, Oscar!" said the school teacher. "If we only knew what scene is being played in that lighted room above us! Perhaps it is a lovers' meeting, or a bitter quarrel. Perhaps an assassin waits . . ."

The Inspector snorted.

"I can imagine what's going on in that house because I know the place and the old codger who lives there. Johan Wurtz is the name — retired brewer. A hundred to one that he got up to take some bicarbonate of soda. . . ."

The Inspector was rudely interrupted by a shrill trumpet-like scream which exploded from a window above them.

"Help! Police! Poli-i-i-i-ice!" It was a woman's voice — a woman who leaned from the second story window.

The Inspector spat out his cigar and made a dive for the door of the brownstone house.

He leaned on the bell, and when the door opened he flashed his badge. "What's going on here?"

A fat woman in a shapeless wrapper flung the door wide, and Piper was somewhat nettled to see Miss Hildegarde Withers sail past him.

"Upstairs!" gargled the fat woman.

They ran up a thickly-carpeted stair, turned, and burst into a library where every light blazed.

It was a long and narrow room, crammed with bookshelves, tables, and massive chairs. The tops of the cases and almost every available inch of table space had been given over to tiny statuettes of horses.

One small table was overturned and its models scattered across the rich yellow rug. A man lay sprawled in the shadows.

It was the woman who spoke, disjointedly. "I heard the noise — poor Mister Wurtz — dead as a stone he is . . ."

Piper faced her. "You the maid?"

"Housekeeper," she said. "Miss Emmy Marvin is me."

Piper knelt, ignoring the spilled statuettes. The body was dressed in long underwear beneath a silk dressing gown. It was a thin old body, the face dark and puffy, with an imperious beak of a nose.

The Inspector stood up. "Phone for a doctor, Hildegarde — he isn't even dead." Piper motioned to the housekeeper. "Help me get him to that sofa over there."

There was a telephone in the lower hall, above it a card with a list of phone numbers. One, outlined in red ink, was "Dr. Peter French." Miss Withers dialed the number.

Dr. French's voice was sleepy, but it changed at once to a reassuring professional crispness. "Be there in ten minutes," he said. "Meanwhile, I want you to dig out what we call a 'capsule', a silk-covered glass vial from Mr. Wurtz' vest pocket and break it under his nose. It should revive him."

Miss Withers hurried up the stairs, wondering where the sick man's bedroom might be. After discovering that the only other room on the second floor was the dining-room, she hurried on up to the third.

She burst into the first door she found, and fumbled until she found the light switch. Then as the room was flooded with brilliance, she stood stock-still and gaped.

In the middle of a large four-poster bed a young man hurriedly sat up, clutching the covers around him. His wispy red hair hung over his forehead.

"Wha-wha ——" he gurgled.

He turned, and with one arm fumbled beneath the pillow. But Miss Withers backed swiftly out through the door, without further delay. Oddly enough, that young man was wearing a white shirt and a black bow tie.

The next bedroom was far down the hall. She entered a delicately feminine bedroom, all white and gold. Bits of silk and lace were scattered everywhere, but the bed was empty.

There was one other door in the hall, beside the bathroom which stood open.

This last was a square cell-like chamber with a hard-looking bed, a small chest of drawers, and no decoration except a pair of pied majolica stallions who reared at each other on the bedside table.

There was a worn brown suit on a chair back, and in a pocket Miss With-

ers discovered the tiny tube for which she was searching. As she drew it from the pocket a voice spoke behind her.

"Stick up your hands!"

She whirled to face a bedraggled, sandy-haired young man whose lower lip trembled with excitement. His hand held a very ugly-looking automatic pistol.

"Stuff and nonsense!" snapped Miss Withers. "Let me take this capsule down to the sick man in the library . . ."

"Huh?"

"Mr. Wurtz has had an attack!" she advised him. "If you know what's good for you, young man . . ."

She advanced toward the door, hoping that she showed none of her inner panic.

"Wurtz?" echoed the young man. "My uncle?" He looked amazed.

The young man stood back out of the way. "It isn't loaded, anyway," he told her with a faint grin. "See?" He pointed the gun at the ceiling and pulled the trigger. Then he dropped his jaw in surprise as the room echoed to a resounding explosion.

"Well!" he muttered, as Miss Withers went down the stairs three at a time.

The Inspector met her, flanked by the housekeeper. "Only the family idiot," snapped Miss Withers, unkindly. "Playing with his empty gun. . . ."

She pushed past them, and hurried to the side of the old man who lay on the sofa in the library. With an efficient snap she broke the enclosed glass tube, and let the fumes of amyl nitrate fill the stricken man's nostrils.

There was a voice in the doorway — the wispy young man was grinning. "Sorry, ma'am, I misjudged you. How's uncle?"

The Inspector went into action. "You can give me that gun," he ordered, and moved forward.

"Okay," said the young man. "But it isn't loaded now — there was just one shell in the chamber. . . ." He handed it over.

Piper dropped the automatic into his capacious pocket. "Anybody else likely to start potshooting at us? Whoall's in the house?"

The housekeeper shook her fat, frightened face.

"Nobody but just us — and Miss Maida, sir, Master Franzel's sister."

"And where is Miss Maida now?" barked the Inspector.

"In her bed, the darling child," the housekeeper informed him belligerently. Miss Withers' eyebrows went up at least an inch.

The young man addressed as Franzel was standing near the figure of old Johan Wurtz, whose breathing had suddenly begun to fill the room.

"Uncle's coming out of it," he announced. He turned to face the Inspector and Miss Withers. "Many thanks for your help, but I don't see that we need the police. Marvin, will you show these people out?"

"Not so fast!" the Inspector objected.

"Well, why not? My uncle is subject to these attacks, which is why he carries these capsules about with him.

He often has trouble in sleeping, and I suppose he came down to amuse himself with his toys." The young man gestured toward the statuettes. "Any signs of foul play in that?"

"This way," said the housekeeper firmly. The Inspector and Miss Withers followed her down the stair, but in the lower hall they heard the ring of the doorbell.

"The doctor, praise be!" gasped the housekeeper. She admitted a large, soft-looking man in a plaid overcoat, who stared at them curiously through thick glasses.

Piper introduced himself, and Miss Withers. "Turned out to be pretty much of a false alarm, doctor," he said.

But the doctor's hand was on his arm. "Inspector, do you mind?" begged Dr. French. "I'm not satisfied — I mean, I'd like you to wait for just a few moments . . ."

They came into the library again, to find Franzel gathering up the spilled ornaments, and a slim and very lovely, young girl kneeling beside Johan Wurtz' couch. She rose as they entered, pulling a thin negligee around her.

"Maida," said the doctor, as if the name meant something to him.

"I'm glad you're here, Peter," said the girl, looking rather strangely toward Miss Withers. "I must have been sleeping very soundly, not to hear anything . . ."

"Especially the sound of a shot in the next room," Miss Withers told her.

The sick man's eyes opened, and he stared up at them, slow recognition dawning on his face.

"My children!" he said hoarsely, and smiled. "I'd like — I'd like to go upstairs. . . ." His voice died weakly away.

The Inspector moved to help Dr. French, but Franzel shouldered him aside.

Maida started as if to follow, and then stopped. "You — you mustn't mind Franzel." She gave them a very sweet smile. "You see, he's upset because he's so fond of uncle!"

The Inspector and Miss Withers exchanged a long and dubious look, as the girl's light slippers clicked on the stair.

"If she was asleep in her bedroom," said Miss Withers, "she slept in a bureau drawer! Because when I went upstairs looking for the medicine her room was empty!"

They came out onto the landing just in time to catch a glimpse of Dr. French as he took a quick kiss from the lips of the lovely Maida, and then came hurrying down toward them.

"I'll be back first thing in the morning!" he called to the girl on the third floor. "And tell Miss Marvin to go to bed, we'll let ourselves out."

"Well, doctor?" Piper queried. But the doctor placed his finger to his lips, and led them out of the house.

"I asked you to wait because for some weeks I've had a suspicion that Johan Wurtz was in danger of his life ——"

"You mean — murder?" cut in Piper.

"I mean murder," said the doctor.

"But who'd want to murder him?" Miss Withers put in. "Is he rich?"

The doctor shook his head. "On the contrary, he has very little except this mortgaged house. The only heirs are Maida and her brother, and they'd get everything anyway in the course of a few months. With his heart, Johan Wurtz cannot live to see another Spring, which makes it all the more damnable that some one wants to murder him."

"Yeah," objected Piper, "but how do you know that some one wants to bump him off?"

"I'll tell you," said Dr. French. "While he was convalescing from his last attack the old man's appetite was pickish. He complained that some calf's foot jelly had a funny taste and put it aside. Just for fun I took it to the laboratory and tested it. The stuff ——" Dr. French paused for dramatic effect —— "the stuff contained about half a gram of digitalis!"

"But that's not poison!" objected Piper.

"Not unless you've got the kind of heart that Johan Wurtz has," said the doctor. "I didn't dare to tell him, naturally. But I warned the Marvin woman not to give him anything more to eat that had been sent in by the neighbors . . ."

"What?" interrupted Piper. "Now we're getting somewhere."

Dr. French indicated a narrow building which stood next door to the Wurtz brownstone, wall to wall. "I think the jelly came from there," he said. "A Mr. Alison lives there, I believe; his cook sent it over as a friendly gesture."

Piper snapped his fingers. "Hildegarde! Remember my telling you I knew who lives in the brownstone? It happened ten years or so ago, before I got on the Homicide Squad. There was a big lawsuit between Wurtz and his next door neighbor."

"That was the elder Mr. Alison, now dead," said the doctor. "Wurtz is a stiff-necked old chap, and he got indignant about the damage dogs were doing to his two foot square of lawn here. So he put up an iron fence and charged it with electricity, just enough to give the pups a sharp shock when they paused here . . . and Alison caned him for it."

Piper nodded. "Wurtz won the suit, with damages of six cents. But Alison had to pay the terrific costs, and the blow hastened his death."

Dr. French moved toward his neat little roadster. "If anything happens to Johan Wurtz I'm not going to sign a death certificate until we know darn well what killed him!"

He whirled away with a roar of gears.

It was at precisely seven-fifteen next morning that Miss Emmy Marvin, the Wurtz housekeeper, hurried to answer a ring at the front door. She was positive about the time, and not even the cross-examination which she was destined to face in a certain court room ever shook her certainty.

She opened the door, and the worried look left her fat face. "Good morn-

ing, doctor! I'm so glad you're here — not that the master isn't looking better this morning, but what I say is, you never know."

"True, Miss Marvin," said the doctor as he hurried down the hall.

Miss Marvin trotted after him. "Nasty weather, isn't it, doctor? I see you have a bit of a cold yourself — your voice is all hoarse. Wise you are to wrap up in that muffler . . ."

"Never mind showing me the way up," said the hoarse voice.

Miss Marvin stared after him, with a certain surprise. Dr. French was wearing heels almost as high as a woman's on the neat brown brogues which were disappearing up the staircase.

"Vanity!" observed Miss Marvin to herself. "Imagine him wanting to be took for a taller man!"

She went quietly on with her labors, which for the moment consisted of using the vacuum on the hall carpet.

The doorbell rang again, and the housekeeper put the vacuum aside and hurried along the hall, wiping her forehead. She flung open the door, and gibbered like an idiot.

There on the step stood Dr. Peter French, glasses, plaid coat, and all. "Good morning, Marvin," he said, cheerfully, before he saw the look on her face. His voice was clear, and he wore no muffler.

"Oh, God!" cried Miss Emmy Marvin. "I'm — I'm crazy, I am! Doctor, I tell you as God is my judge, fifteen minutes ago I let you in through this door — and you ain't gone out yet"!

The soft face of Dr. Peter French hardened suddenly, and his arm thrust her rudely aside. He went up the stair in four great strides, turned, and raced up the second flight.

His feet pounded in the hall as he headed for the door of Johan Wurtz' room. A door crashed open, and then Dr. French stopped short.

John Wurtz lay in his narrow bed beside the two pied majolica horses. But never again would he handle their pottery figures, for around his thin throat had been tied the cord of his dressing gown, so tightly that the silken rope was almost hidden in the flesh.

Dr. French went out into the hall to meet the housekeeper, who was puffing up the stair. When she saw his face she screamed.

"Take hold of yourself," he snapped at her. "Get down to the telephone and call the police — call Inspector Piper at Headquarters and tell him that it's happened!"

"No, we've got nothing to hold you for," Piper told Dr. French some time later. The doctor was pathetically relieved.

"I'll wait down in the library with Maida, if I may," he suggested. "We — we're engaged to be married."

"Okay," said Piper. The house swarmed with detectives, but Miss Hildegarde Withers moved quietly to and fro among them, on mysterious errands of her own.

She approached the Inspector. "Oscar, what do you make of this? I found

it in the bathroom upstairs." She showed him a hand towel, stained with pinkish-brown. "It's grease paint. Some one touched up his makeup in the bathroom after doing in the old man!"

"And he got in disguised as the doctor!" Piper plunged in. "That accounts for the high heels Miss Marvin saw him wearing — and the hoarse voice . . ."

Miss Withers nodded slowly. "Oscar, do you happen to know if Mr. Alison next door happens to be an actor by profession?"

Piper stared at her. "We can find out!"

"Boys, get Sergt. Krim here right away," roared the Inspector.

Finally a broad-shouldered young officer, wearing a very self-satisfied smile, came into the dead man's bedroom, which happened to be the place Piper had chosen for a headquarters.

"No fingerprints anywhere," said Sergt. Krim. "But I did find this on the rear staircase . . ."

He held out a silver cigarette case. It bore a monogram, and the initials were W-F-A.

"William F. Alison," said the Inspector slowly. "Go get him, Krim."

"Huh?"

"Next door, sergeant. He lives there." Piper gestured with his thumb.

"Okay, Inspector." The sergeant hurried away.

"He made his getaway down the rear stair just as the real doctor came in the front," Piper decided. "A lot of nerve the guy had, but of course he knew the housekeeper was in the front hall, and that Maida and her precious brother wouldn't be awake yet. But to get to that rear stair he had to go up to the fourth floor, through the housekeeper's rooms, and down — because the rear stair doors are blocked up on the second and third floors."

"But suppose he got to the kitchen," Miss Withers objected. "Where could he go from there?"

"There's a rear door opening into a tiny court," said Piper. "The court is fenced, but an agile man could get over the fence into Alison's rear yard, or into the service yard of the apartment on the other side."

"Hmm," observed Miss Withers dubiously. "Murder for revenge, eh?"

"Why else?"

Miss Withers stood aside to allow Sergt. Krim and a uniformed patrolman to drag up the steps a white-faced, very handsome young man.

"I won't talk!" shouted William Alison, but he was optimistic. Miss Withers hurried on down to the library. As she came to the open door she saw that Maida lay on the yellow rug, in a faint, with her brother and the worried doctor ministering to her.

Back up the stairs went Miss Withers, but the door was closed. She knocked imperiously, and in a moment the Inspector opened it a crack.

"Alison's played leading roles in a stock company," Piper whispered. "One of the boys recognized him — go take a walk for yourself, and when you get back we'll have a confession."

"Confession!" spoke Miss Withers angrily, but the door closed again. "Just because he's an actor doesn't mean he deserves to go to the chair — or does it? Anyway, Maida fainted when she saw him under arrest!"

She amused herself by wandering through the old house. It took her, she found, exactly four minutes to go from the dead man's room up one flight to the housekeeper's quarters, down the rear stair and into the court. She also satisfied herself that it would take a good bit of gymnastics to climb any of the rear fences — a task quite beyond her powers, or those of any average woman.

"Then where was Maida last night?" Miss Withers asked herself.

She went back to the girl's room and began a methodical search. She poured the powder from a pink box, dug the cold cream from a jar. In the bottom of the jar was a ring.

She turned her attention to the clothes closet, but found nothing out of the ordinary. There was another closet, from which emanated the faint smell of cedar. It bore a stout lock of the Yale variety, quite beyond the power of Miss Withers' hairpin.

Taking a long chance, she felt along the top of the door frame, where from experience she knew that many optimistic persons hide their keys. Nor was she disappointed — the closet-door yielded and she disappeared inside for a long half hour.

When Miss Withers came back into Maida's bedroom her face was flushed and there was an icy glint in her blue eyes. Her expression did not change when she saw that a girl was sitting on the bed, staring at her.

"So you found it!" said Maida savagely. "Well . . .?"

Miss Withers did not answer. "How old are you, child?"

"Twenty — but I don't see —"

"Did you love him such a lot?"

"Did I?" The clear, young eyes clouded. "Did I!"

"And then the doctor came along, and you changed your mind?"

Maida began to laugh, hysterically.

"I suppose you thought it was very romantic, like Romeo and Juliet? Having an affair with the son of the man your uncle hated most in the world! Who thought of digging out the bricks and making a passage from your closet to his bedroom, you or he?"

Then Maida was hysterical. Miss Withers left her and went away. She spent the next half hour closeted with Marvin, the housekeeper.

"Strict with her? Let me tell you, she walked a chalkline all right."

"They used to quarrel?"

"Not exactly. Miss Maida is very sweet, you see. She couldn't bear to hurt anybody's feelings — not much like her brother. Why, if you ask me, I think that she promised to marry the doctor mostly because her uncle kept after her so. She was afraid he'd fret himself into his coffin if she didn't."

"I see," said Miss Withers, who didn't see at all. All she could think of was the damning fact that Will Alison was an actor, that he stood just enough

shorter than the doctor to need high heels to match Dr. French's height, that only one person could have dropped that tell-tale cigarette case with its initials, W-F-A . . .

Miss Withers then remembered that there was a desk in the library. Hurrying there, she found Franzel busily engaged in going through the drawers.

"You needn't spy on me!" he hurled at her. "I don't know anything about this. Why don't you go find that doctor — they told him he could go, but he's still hanging around. He knows . . ."

"You mean you suspect Dr. French?" she asked.

Franzel backed water. "I won't say that — but for the last few weeks he's been snooping around. He's got wind of something, but he's close-mouthed."

"Too bad you're not," murmured Miss Withers softly, as the young man brushed past her. She bent over the desk and found that young Franzel had been engrossed in reading his deceased uncle's insurance policies.

Miss Withers emulated him, not without profit. The results of her study showed that Johan Wurtz had carried twenty-five thousand dollars in insurance. "With double indemnity in case of accidental or sudden death," she noted. All policies showed Franzel and Maida as joint beneficiaries.

She hurried upstairs, and finally managed to get the Inspector to come out into the hall. "Oscar, listen to me! Here's something — if Wurtz died from heart failure he'd leave $25,000 insurance, but if he died from sudden or accidental death — including murder, I assume — the policies would be doubled!"

"So what?" said Piper cheerily.

Miss Withers shrugged, smiled sadly, and started out on a new line of endeavor. Suddenly she heard her name called in a familiar voice. The Inspector was eager and excited.

"Hildegarde! Come and bring your notebook!" She hurried down the hall and into the dead man's bedroom. Against the window Will Alison was standing, looking like a young man who had been recently in hell and expected to return there.

"Take his confession in long-hand," ordered the Inspector jubilantly. "He's decided to make it easy for himself, haven't you Alison?"

The young man nodded woodenly and spoke in a rapid sing-song. "I, William Alison, of my own free will and volition, do hereby confess to the murder of Johan Wurtz, alone and unaided . . ."

"Wait a minute," cut in Piper. "Hildegarde, you're not taking this down!"

"Of course not," said Miss Withers pettishly. "It's stuff and nonsense. This boy didn't kill Wurtz, either alone or with the help of Maida. I can prove he didn't do it. In the first place he wouldn't have made his getaway via the back stairs, where the cigarette case was dropped. Not when there's a neat little passage cut in the adjoining walls between Maida's bedroom and his own!"

"What?"

"I just went through it, and spent

some time in the Alison house next door," said Miss Withers calmly. "It was a very convenient idea, as well as a romantic one. But love is no crime, Oscar. We must look elsewhere for our murderer . . ." She heard the faintest of noises . . .

Miss Withers' voice trailed away. "Unless I am very much mistaken," she said in a whisper, "we may look for our murderer just outside the door of this room!"

"Franzel, eh?" Piper understood at once. With one long stride he was at the door, the sergeant close behind.

No one was in the hall but Dr. Peter French, who was walking quickly away.

"Wait a minute!" roared Piper, but the doctor couldn't wait. He turned and sprinted up the stairs to the fourth floor, and they heard him pounding across the housekeeper's room.

"After him!" shouted the Inspector. "To the back door — quick!" There was much hubbub in the halls, with detectives swarming up from the ground floor, shouting in the corridor . . .

"Take your time," Miss Withers advised as soon as she could make herself heard. "He can't escape over the rear fences — because I locked the rear door and broke off the key in the lock. Just to make sure. . . ."

She saw Dr. French dragged away by detectives, without a qualm. She shook hands with Franzel, who said, "I told you so! But I didn't think you were paying any attention."

She even watched the lovely Maida come out of her hysterics with miraculous swiftness in the arms of young Alison.

"You two ought to get married right away," the Inspector suggested.

"Oscar!" gasped Miss Withers. "What a thing to say!"

He shrugged. "Well, with that passage between the houses and all that — when it gets into the newspapers . . ."

"I think the proprieties will be taken care of if Maida will simply dig the wedding ring out of her cold cream jar and wear it so it will show," Miss Withers suggested calmly. "They've been married for weeks . . ."

"Months," sang out Maida, through her tears of relief. "Since last Spring, but we knew it would kill uncle if he knew. You see, he hated the Alisons!"

The Inspector felt himself being shoved out of the room by Miss Withers. "The newspaper boys are clamoring," she told him. "Hadn't you better find out how you solved the Wurtz murder before you talk to them?"

"I — I guess so," said Piper. "It was the doctor all right, but I don't see how he could have done it or why he would want to. Otherwise I have a perfect case . . ."

Miss Withers smiled. "All the time," she said, "it seemed a bit thick to me that a man, even an actor, could disguise himself as some one else well enough to fool the old housekeeper in broad daylight. There was only one man, Oscar, who could be sure that he would succeed in disguising himself as Dr. French — and that was the doctor himself.

"The wily doctor knew that the housekeeper would notice the changed voice, the muffler and the raised heels. He intended us to find the grease paint, because every one of those clues pointed away from him! Besides, he'd already awakened official suspicion in the wrong direction with his story of the poisoned jelly — a very unlikely story, too!"

"So he sneaked out the back way after murdering the old man, and came in the front after disposing of the shoes and muffler?"

She nodded. "And he planted the cigarette case, as part of the frame he was trying to build against young Alison. He knew of the family feud, the Montague-Capulet affair. But he didn't know about Romeo and Juliet, Oscar. That tripped him, because if Alison had a secret entrance to the Wurtz house he would hardly risk going through the open court in the rear!"

"Yeah," protested Piper. "But you're giving me everything but the motive."

"Don't you see that?" said Miss Withers wearily. "Dr. French thought he was going to marry Maida. Her uncle had bullied her into half-promising — again I suppose she thought that if she refused, the old man might fret himself into collapse. Silly, but we do lots of silly things at twenty . . . and afterward, for that matter.

"It was silly of Dr. French, for all his cleverness in executing a plot, to decide to murder an old man — and in such a way that it could be nothing but murder — so that he would marry a girl who brought a dowry of half of fifty thousand instead of half of twenty-five!"

They went down the stairs, and found Franzel waiting for them in the lower hall.

"I'd like you to have these — as a souvenir," he said. Into Miss Withers' hands he put a pair of delicately carved horses, cut from clear rose quartz.

She hesitated. "Take them," he urged. "They were the prize of uncle's collection, and he'd want you to have them."

"I will," agreed Miss Withers, "if you'll tell me why you sleep with your clothes on."

"It saves time dressing and undressing," said Franzel solemnly. "Besides, I'm afraid I'd had a few drinks . . ."

"I'll send you a physiology text, with pictures of a drunkard's liver in color," she promised him. "Come, Oscar — we haven't had breakfast and it's almost tea time."

"I am hungry," he admitted. "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!"

Miss Withers held out to him a single carved lump of bright rose quartz. "Try this?" she invited.

# HIJACKER, 18TH CENTURY STYLE

*You will find two detectives in Lillian de la Torre's "The Flying Highwayman" — Dr. Sam: Johnson, 18th century lexicographer, the Great Cham of Literature and the Sage of Fleet Street; and that other great character of the times, the famous blind magistrate, Sir John Fielding, brother of Henry Fielding the novelist. And it is curious almost beyond belief that these celebrated figures of history should represent the two chief types of fictional detectives as we know them today: Dr. Sam is the active investigator, visiting the scene of the crime, laying a trap for the culprit, actually grappling with the criminal "in a grip of iron" — the physical sleuth as symbolized currently by the hardhitting, hardboiled, Hammett creation; and Sir John represents the pure intellectual, the perfect armchair detector who, in this wondrous tale, is the real-life prototype of fiction's first blind criminologist, Max Carrados.*

*It is curious too that there actually was a gentleman of the road who earned the sobriquet, "The Flying Highwayman." His name was Thomas Boulter. He came from a thieving stock, his father having been transported to His Majesty's colonial plantations and his uncle having been convicted for highway robbery. Boulter's first criminal exploit, as a Captain Teach of the Turnpike, occurred in 1775 near Salisbury, and his subsequent hold-ups spread over a period of three daredevil years. He was known as "The Flying Highwayman" because of the speed with which he danced a lively jig across countryside, both in pursuit and being pursued. He was first arrested in 1778, confined in Clerkenwell, from which he made an ingenious escape, but was again captured. He was executed in 1778, and that same year the following book made its appearance:*

> THE LIFE OF THOMAS BOULTER, THE NOTED FLYING HIGHWAYMAN; Who has for some time past committed numerous Highway Robberies in all parts of this Kingdom; Convicted at the Castle of Winchester, on Friday the 31st of July, 1778, before the Hon. Sir Francis Buller, Knt., of robbing William Embery on the King's Highway, near Horn-Dean Hants., And of stopping and robbing the Passengers in the Bath Diligence, between Romsey and Southampton, in the same County. Together with a short Narrative of the life of James Caldwell, his Accomplice.
>
> First Edition, 8vo, half calf, lower edges uncut. Published in Winton, by John Wilkes, 1778, with an Advertisement certifying the authenticity of publication.

*A copy of this rare and interesting book was sold by Maggs Bros., Ltd. of London in 1936; it fetched a price of £2 2s.*

*Of such magic material Lillian de la Torre has fashioned one of her finest historical detective stories. . . .*

# THE FLYING HIGHWAYMAN

## (as related by James Boswell, October, 1763)

*by LILLIAN DE LA TORRE*

SIR," remarked my illustrious friend Mr. Sam: Johnson, "I am sorry to hear of the insolent behaviour of your landlord; but you need not take the law of him in order to be quit of your bargain. For consider: if he determines to hold you, and the lodgings must be yours for a year, you may certainly use them as you think fit. So, sir, you may quarter two life-guardsmen upon him; or you may send the greatest scoundrel you can find into your apartments; or you may say that you want to make some experiments in natural philosophy, and may burn a large quantity of assafoetida in his house."

I was torn between laughter and admiration at the wonderful fertility of Johnson's mind; but betwixt the two I was determined still to carry the matter before the magistrate, if only to acquaint myself at first hand with the police of the great metropolis. I had not resided in London many months, and being a raw Scotch lad of twenty-three, I still looked with eagerness upon the crowded scene and desired to be a part of it.

Yielding to my whim, Dr. Johnson carried me with him to the publick office in Bow street, and thus I came to have a part in the strange affair of the Flying Highwayman.

"You will find here," he instructed me as we turned out of Drury Lane, "the most famous magistrate in the kingdom. Henry Fielding the novelist sat here till his death, and now his brother John sits in his room. Stay, this is the house."

I looked with interest upon the tall, narrow structure, and hastened to mount the exiguous stair and come into the presence of the magistrate.

We found Sir John Fielding in the publick room. 'Twas a long, empty chamber. At one end and along the sides extended benches, now deserted, for 'twas past dinner-time. One or two nondescript men stood about; but 'twas upon Sir John Fielding, seated in his great chair, that my eyes became rivetted.

I saw a burly man in middle life, with a strong, handsome face. He was decently attired in brown stuff with horn buttons, and wore his own hair, prematurely white, combed in loose curls. In his hand he held a light wand, and about his head over his eyes he wore a narrow band of black silk. He turned towards us as we entered —

not his eyes, for they were tight shut; but he turned his whole frame and inclined towards us with parted lips. I saw with a shock that the famous Westminster magistrate was blind.

Sir John greeted Sam: Johnson as an old friend, and me as a new one; and of my vexatious affair it need only be said, that by Sir John's instructions all went off to a wish, and by my impertinent landlord I was plagued no more.

"Pray, Sir John," said I then, "will not you acquaint me with the police of this metropolis?"

"I will do better than that," replied the blind magistrate with a smile. "You shall see it at first hand. I am now to visit the watch at Stamford Hill turnpike, and I shall be honoured if you and Dr. Johnson will accept of a place in my carriage."

We consented eagerly, and soon we were bowling briskly along on the Hertford Road, leading north out of London. As we rode, Sir John explained our errand.

"You must know, Mr. Boswell, that the metropolis is plagued by miscreants of every description, by Abram coves, by sky-farmers, by the running-smobble; most of all by the gentlemen of the high toby."

"(highwaymen)" glossed my learned friend.

"To remedy which evil," pursued the blind magistrate, "there has recently been established the horse patrole, thief-takers in my employ, well mounted, who patrole the turnpikes and raise the hue and cry so soon as they hear of any robbery upon the highway; for now every idle 'prentice who can come by a horse takes to the high toby, and that with too little fear of capture. One such, whom we have striven in vain to capture, is he whom we know only as the Flying Highwayman. He haunts this very road, out Enfield way. The horse patrole watches for him at the Stamford Hill turnpike to the south of Enfield, and mans a barrier by Turner's Hill to the north; but barrier nor pike stays him no more than a bird; he comes and goes at will like a ghost. I am resolved he shall be taken, and I make this visit to the turnpike and the barrier to hearten up my brave lads of the patrole."

Chatting thus, we came to the turnpike. 'Twas but a long pole across the road, fitted to swing upon a stock or stump at one side. Barriers on either side prevented the wayfarer from going around and so cheating the turnpike man of his toll. The house of the turnpike man was close by. A man on horseback was at the alert by the side of the road. Our chaise drew up at the pike, and the man came to the chaise-side and saluted Sir John.

"Ah, Barrock," said Sir John at the sound of his voice, "and where is Watchett? Sure you have not permitted him to leave his post?"

"He's rid on patrole, if you please, sir," replied the fellow hoarsely. He was a stumpy, powerful fellow in middle life, with a broad blank face. "Being," he added, "but a young 'un, d'ye see, and new to the patrole, and

having scant patience for waiting here at the barrier."

"Very good, Barrock, so he's not doing his patrole at the Rose and Crown with the serving-wench on his knee. Is all quiet here?"

"Dead quiet, sir. Never a rider has past over the barrier since dinner-time."

'Twas as the man spoke that Sir John lifted his head and listened.

"Here's a rider coming now," said he.

I listened, and heard nothing. 'Twas a full minute before my less sharp ears caught the beat of horse's hoofs, and longer before the animal appeared, coming towards us from the Enfield side of the turnpike. For a moment I thought we might be face to face with the Flying Highwayman. The rider was young and strong-built, with heavy dark brows and a resolute jutting chin. He wore a long sand-coloured horseman's greatcoat; on his shoulders the dust of the road lay thick, though by its dun colour scarce visible. As he drew near the pole I saw the wicked long horse-pistols riding loose in his saddle-holsters. He put his grey to the barrier, cleared it at a bound, and came to us in the chaise.

"All's clear, sir," he reported to Sir John in a piping boyish voice, "'twixt here and the barrier; and no rider has come over the barrier this two hours past."

'Twas Watchett, the restless lad of the horse patrole.

Instead of answering, Sir John once more raised his head to listen.

"Here's a wayfarer coming," said he, "and this time on foot."

Dr. Johnson peered near-sightedly into the gathering gloom; from which gradually emerged a strange and bedraggled figure.

'Twas a woebegone young man of fashion that stumbled towards us. His attire was rich, but marred with dust and disarray, and indecorously scanty. He wore once-snowy buckskins, and boots of Russia leather, and a shirt of finest linen, richly embroidered and beruffled with lace — and nothing else. As to his person, he was of middle size, and well-made. He had a noble profile and a handsome head, but made strange and bare by the fact that he had no wig, only his own fair hair in short curls. He smelled of otto.

'Twixt chattering teeth he cursed the Flying Highwayman. Watchett and Barrock exchanged glances of dismay as the newcomer approached the chaise-side. When he saw my venerable companions, he gave over his profane swearing and altered his tone.

"Your pardon, gentlemen," he said suavely, "for appearing before you in this disarray; for which you must not blame me, but the Flying Highwayman, whom I have but now to my disadvantage encountered upon the road. The scoundrel has had, not only my purse, but my phaeton and pair, and my very garments as well. Pray, can you not help me to some rag to cover me?"

Almost before he spoke I had doffed my greatcoat and thrown it around him, a courtesy which he acknowl-

edged with a grateful salute.

"Sir," replied Sir John "you have fortuned to come upon the right man, for I can help you to what you stand most in need of, namely, justice, and your goods again. Sir John Fielding, at your service, sir."

The modish young fellow bowed low.

"William Page, of Waltham Cross; yours to command."

"Say, then, Mr. Page, where you had the misfortune to encounter this pernitious miscreant."

"Not a quarter-mile below the Rose and Crown."

Without more ado Sir John despatched the men of the horse patrole to ride thither in pursuit. Then we repaired into the house of the turnpike man to hear the story at large.

The turnpike keeper was a little weasel of a man with quick, beady eyes. He set before us gin and small beer, a meagre entertainment which appealed to none of us save the shivering victim. Of the gin he downed a full four fingers, not without a grimace of distaste, before he told his tale.

"You must know, Sir John, my elder brother is Lord Mountcairn. My father being lately dead, Mountcairn takes the estate, d'ye see, and I'm left with my choice of the horses or the women. I take the horses, they're the less kittle cattle. I've as pretty a pair of matched blacks to my phaeton as you'll see in Middlesex, and I drive them myself, and now this confounded knight of the pad has got 'em, curse him!

"Well, sir, I left my house at Waltham Cross to drive to London, and coming over the barrier I most particularly enquired if the road were clear, for this Flying Highwayman is the scourge of that stretch of road. O yes sir, says they, for here's Watchett has ridden off but now, and he says all's quiet as the grave. You may drive to London in peace. Peace! Ha! I had scarce passed the Rose and Crown, when out of a copse steps this black-avised scoundrel. He'd a dun great-coat about him, and a half-mask over his eyes, and dark hair tied behind, and a chest like a barrel. He rode a grey horse, and presented two deuced long horse-pistols, and Stand, says he, Stand and deliver. A brace of horse-pistols is a great persuader, Sir John and gentlemen. I stood, and I delivered. I delivered my purse, and my phaeton and pair, and the clothes off my back, and the very wig off my head, and trudged off down the London road with the great black-browed scoundrel laughing behind me."

"Sure, sir," said Dr. Johnson thoughtfully, "this is something new in highwaymen. I muse what he wants with your clothes and your wig."

"Sir," replied Sir John, "the whims of these gentry are past finding out. I have known in my time one knight of the high toby, that absolutely required two ladies, whom he robbed, to walk a minuet before him; and another who at pistol's point forced a clergyman, his victim, to preach him a sermon upon the text, *Thou shalt not steal.*"

"'Tis well, at that rate," remarked Mr. Page, "that the Flying Highwayman proved a fancier neither of religion nor of dancing, but only of Horseflesh and haberdashery; I had scarce satisfied him else."

Suddenly Sir John turned his closed eyes toward the door. It opened, and Barrock entered.

"Your phaeton, sir," he cried to Mr. Page, "I've brought it back safe and sound; as likewise, sir," turning to Sir John, "we've taken him that had it."

With that through the open door stepped Watchett, urging by the collar a bow-legged youth in the striped vest of an hostler. He bent his black brows in a dark scowl upon his captive, and shook him a little as if to shake speech out of him.

"Which I am hostler at the Rose and Crown," the bandy-legged fellow whined, "and I'm innocent, me lord."

"Innocent!" cried Watchett, "when I caught him in the inn yard, red-handed with the phaeton! One of the horses was gone, and he was just upon loosing the other from the traces when I rode in and caught him at it."

"One of the horses was gone!" cried young Page in agony, "the finest matched pair in the county, and one gone. Where is my horse, villain?"

"I don't know indeed, your honour," cried the miserable boy, "I found the phaeton in a copse, indeed, indeed I did, with one horse gone and the other standing in the traces, and so led him gently to the inn, where indeed, me lord, I meant only to refresh the beast before informing the horse patrole."

"Pray, Watchett, did not you search the stables?"

"I did, sir, but never a black horse did I find."

"'Cause why?" retorted the young hostler stubbornly, "'cause never a black horse was there, bar him was still in the traces."

Sir John probed the youth with rigour, but no better answer could he get, and at last we all trooped out to inspect the recovered phaeton.

'Twas a luxurious vehicle, fit for a lord, and the single black in the traces was a glossy, handsome animal. I noted the empty pistol-holders by the side of the vehicle. The seat was richly upholstered, and on it, neatly folded, reposed Mr. Page's missing clothes. All was there — the brocaded coat, the laced waistcoat, the fine cocked hat, even the handsome powdered wig. Only the purse full of guineas was still missing. Sir John, though he could not see the equipage, inspected all with nose and fingers, even going so far as to inhale the otto given off by the powdered wig.

"Past question," he remarked, "Mr. Page, this gear is yours."

The young fellow laughed as he donned his coat once more.

"And happy am I to have it," he replied. "Depend upon it, from this day I'll take good care to carry pistols in yonder empty holsters. I'll not rest, till this miscreant of the pad be laid by the heels."

"I muse," replied Sir John, "how it is to be done; for the man wears a cloak of invisibility."

"He must be decoyed into the open," declared Dr. Johnson.

"How, decoyed?"

"We must provide him a traveller to rob, who shall take care to be well armed in secret. Once he has come forth, he may be taken, be he never so invisible at the turn-pikes and barriers."

"How shall I find such a traveller? My men are known."

"I will gladly make one on the scheam," cried young Page eagerly.

"No, sir," replied Dr. Johnson, "for having once been robbed, you also are known. But come, Mr. Boswell, let us take this adventure upon ourselves; 'twill be something to tell in Edinburgh."

"With all my heart, sir," I cried.

"You must take care to have gold about you," suggested Watchett, "and shew it at the inns and turnpikes; for I am perswaded, that the scoundrel hath friends at both, who keep him advised, and it may be turn the other way as he goes past the barriers."

Ay, thought I, picturing the weasel-face turnpike man and not a thousand miles from here.

"Gold!" exclaimed Dr. Johnson, "Nay, sir, if I must find gold, the adventure is ended before it begins."

"It is for the magistrate to find the gold," replied Sir John, "for Watchett is in the right, you will scarce flush the Flying Highwayman from his covert without it. The men of the horse patrole shall be close at hand to take the scoundrel."

"No, sir," replied Dr. Johnson, "for the same spies who report the gold, are sure to report also that Sir John Fielding's people are on the roads, and so our scheam will fail. No, sir, we shall be very well. Mr. Boswell, in the character of a postilion, will be armed with a pair of horse-pistols, and between us we shall take him."

"You must have help, sir," cried Sir John.

"If we are to have help, it must be of a private person," replied Johnson firmly.

"You are right," cried Page, "and in this I may be of use to the scheam; for if the Flying Highwayman will scarce assail me a second time, he can be under no apprehension if I am seen on the road; for on that road, and at the inns and turnpikes, I am as well known as the Hertford coach, passing nigh as often between my house in the country and my house in town."

We accepted of this offer. Sir John promising us a purse of twenty guineas, we parted to prepare against the adventure of the morrow, Dr. Johnson and I to Fleet Street, Mr. Page to Waltham Cross. We agreed to rendezvous betimes the next evening at the Rose and Crown.

The next day's sun was setting as we paid our toll at the Stamford Hill turnpike. The lad Watchett of the horse patrole sat on the stile eating an apple; his horse cropped grass. The boy ignored us ostentatiously. I did not see Barrock. With one of his frequent convulsive starts, Dr. Johnson contrived to spill his purse of guineas, at which the turnpike man stared. Then he turned the long pike, and we rolled

into the stretch of road haunted by the Flying Highwayman.

'Twas a new experience for me, riding postilion on the lead horse in my buckskins and tight cap. I touched the horse-pistols in their holsters, and was reassured. I longed to be riding in the chaise with my illustrious friend, who never discoursed better than when elevated and inspired by the pleasures of rapid motion to which he was so addicted; but it was not to be, and I kept the horses at a lively trot, wondering every minute whether we should ever reach our rendezvous at the Rose and Crown.

I wondered the more as twilight fell, for slowly the conviction was growing upon me that we were being followed. I seemed to hear our horses' hoof-beats re-echoed from a distance; yet when I turned, the road was bare and empty. I fear I turned often to stare along the dusty road, with its dark copses on either side, its squalid little hedge-ale-houses sheltering who knows what? It was with relief that I saw ahead the lights of the Rose and Crown.

I left the chaise standing in the yard, and together we entered the common room of the inn and called for refreshment. A buxom, masterful woman presided at the tap — Hester Palmer, hereditary mistress of the old house. The pot-boy took the filled tankards from her brawny hand, and slapped them down on the bare oaken table before us. Dr. Johnson regarded the man with interest. He was no boy, being on in years, lame in one leg, and but sparsely provided with teeth. But for us the room was empty. The antient drawer leaned against the table, ready for a bit of talk.

"Ye'll be London gentlemen?"

"Ay," said Dr. Johnson, according to plan, "we're for London tonight, and sorry I am to be benighted, for we carry a purse of gold, and here's an ill strip of the road by reputation."

"'Tis so, sir," assented the pot-boy eagerly, "'Tis the worst stretch of road north of London and has been since the great days of Dick Turpin. Ah, Turpin! There was the greatest of all the lads on the scamp. I mind him many a time, striding into this very inn with his pockets full of gold."

"This very house!" I exclaimed.

"And why not?" croaked the antient pot-boy, "for he married the landlord's daughter, and more by token there she stands at the bar, Mrs. Richard Turpin as ever was, though the name's forgotten these many years."

The door creaked open. On the threshold stood a sturdy young man muffled to his lips in a long sand-coloured horseman's greatcoat. He wore a flapped hat pulled down about his brows, presenting to our gaze no more than a bold nose and a bit of tanned cheek. He was as swarthy as a gipsy.

He stood motionless in the doorway and swung his eyes slowly about the room. He raked with his glance the virago at the bar, the empty tables, and ourselves in our corner. Satisfied, he strode in and took a place in a shel-

tered settle well back from the fire. Mistress Palmer brought him a pot, and for a while their heads were together in close converse.

"Ah, Turpin!" the antient was rambling on, "no thief-taker ever took Turpin. He lay snug in his cave, him and Tom King, just over the river —" he pointed in the general direction of east — "and Mistress Hester victualled them from the inn. I was the hostler's boy then, and many's the time I've carried the hamper, ay and eat with Turpin and King too, and drunk at the mouth of the cave."

"Where is this cave?" enquired Johnson.

"'Tis but a trot, sir, for a man on a horse, but for all that 'tis not so easy found, I'll warrant you, without you was shewed the way."

"Yet if no thief-taker ever took Turpin," I struck in, "how came he to be hanged at last?"

"Alack, sir, 'twas all along of his high spirits. He went down into Yorkshire, d'ye see, for the better presarving of his health; swinging in a rope, said he, he had a mortial aversion to, for his prophetical great-grandmother had formerly told him, it was a plaguy dry sort of death. Well, sir, here he was, living quietly at York, when he takes a notion to a bit of sport, and discharges his piece at his landlord's cock. You do me wrong, sir, to shoot my fowl, cries the landlord. O ho, says bold Turpin, is it you? Do but stay till I have charged my piece again, I'll shoot you too. Sir, the curmudgeonly old hunks swore the peace against him; and when they had him, by ill luck they learned who he was. Oh, sir, he swung with spirit! Don't hurry, says he to the crowds hastening gallows-wards, there'll be no fun till I come! On the scaffold he kicked off his boots among the crowd, to make a liar of his old mother, who often said, he was a bad lad, and would die in his boots."

To all of this discourse Dr. Johnson listened with rapt attention, as the fowler learns the habits of the birds, or the courser notes the ways of the hare. Now, however, the discourse was cut short by the arrival of William Page.

He came in with a rush. Under the brooding eye of the brown young man Dr. Johnson tried to frown him off, but to no avail. He rushed up to us.

He was splendidly attired in a raspberry-coloured coat with gold upon it, a laced waistcoat, a great cocked hat, and a pea-green greatcoat reversed with fawn. His freshly-powdered wig, clubbed behind, set off his handsome, fresh-coloured face.

"All is well," he cried, "I came over the Turner's Hill barrier but now, and no such horseman as we seek has passed the barrier. Neither did I pass any one on the road, save an old clergyman ambling along on his pad. Depend upon it, our man, if he but comes, will come from another direction."

"Ay," cried I, "from Turpin's cave may be."

"There's no great mystery in this," mused Dr. Johnson. "In my early days in London, just such a Flying Highwayman exercised the wits of the town.

'Twas simple in the end — the daring miscreant would put his horse to the turnpikes, and so clear them while the turnpike man was still withinside. The great thing is, not to worry our wits in surmise, but to lay the fellow by the heels, and so resolve all at once. Come, let us go."

He paid the scot accordingly, with a great display of guineas, and we descended to the inn yard. There we found our chaise, Mr. Page's phaeton, and the stranger's grey, all under the care of our acquaintance of Stamford Hill, the bandy-legged hostler who had been found in possession of the phaeton.

Mr. Page scowled upon him. I felt for the sporting gentleman, for in the traces of his phaeton, instead of his darling matched blacks, stood an ill-assorted pair — the remaining black, incongruously yoked to nondescript bay. He was a man of action, however; instead of mourning over his severed pair, he strode to the phaeton-side and without a word corrected the priming of his pistols.

"Allow me, Mr. Boswell."

He did the same for mine. Somehow the action pierced me with a new realization of the danger involved in our nocturnal adventure.

"Let us go," said Johnson resolutely. "Do you, sir, follow us. 'Tis a matter for nicety, to keep so far behind, that the Flying Highwayman will not take alarm at our confederacy, yet so close that one may come to the assistance of the other. Pray look to it, gentlemen."

"Trust me, sir."

With these words I leaped to horse and in my character of postilion guided our chaise out of the inn yard. Mr. Page mounted his phaeton and followed. The bandy-legged hostler watched us go.

We turned into the road and proceeded at a good pace towards Stamford Hill. No sound was to be heard save the jingle of our harness. On either side we passed darkened cottages or quiet fields and copses. I loosened my pistols in the saddle-holsters.

We had passed Houndsfield, and were proceeding through dark coverts, when behind us I heard the hoof-beats of a horse ridden hard. Another moment, and the beast had drawn up level with the lead horse.

"Stand!" cried the rider, and caught my bridle, "Stand and deliver!"

My reply was resolute. I snatched the loosened pistols and fired point-blank at the menacing figure. I heard the highwayman laugh as my pistols flashed in the pan. He dragged our team to a stop, and pranced his horse to the chaise-side.

"Pray, sir," says he to Dr. Johnson in a soft, light, caressing voice, shewing pistols in his turn, "pray oblige me with your purse, for you see there's no help for it."

My usually intrepid friend shewed no fight. He regarded the pistols the highwayman presented, and handed out his purse without a word. I stared at the highwayman as he weighed it.

He sat like a centaur upon William Page's black. He was well-set and elegant, modishly attired in a long

dun horseman's greatcoat reversed with some dark material. Lace ruffles fell to his knuckles. He wore dark hair, unpowdered and clubbed behind, and his laced hat was flapped. His shoulders were dusted with white, and he smelled of otto. His face was entirely covered by a black lace mask. Behind the cobwebby thing his eyes gleamed.

"What's this, Dr. Johnson," says he softly, "Cockleshells? Curling-paper money?"

"As to that," says my friend, "I am but a poor man — "

"You are richer than this," cut in the highwayman, "by Sir John's twenty guineas; so out with them, for I'll not be trifled with."

"Sir," said Johnson heavily, "I'm loath to have it known that I delivered Sir John's guineas without striking a blow for them. Pray, give me such a Gadshill scar as I may shew — oblige me by putting a ball through the crown of my hat."

The highwayman gave a chime of laughter.

"'Tis a shrewd old fogram. Well, sir, so be it."

The blast of the horse-pistol was deafening. It tore a gaping hole through Dr. Johnson's respectable old cocked hat.

"Here's your battle-scarred bonnet," said the highwayman contemptuously, "so you may deliver with a clear conscience. Over with it."

"Sir, my friend Boswell has also a character to lose. Come, Bozzy, reach him your coat that he may put a ball through the tail."

At this outrageous proposition I stiffened.

"'Pon honour, sir," I began haughtily.

"No words, sir," thundered Dr. Johnson, "do as you are bid."

"Ay," seconded the highwayman with a sneer, "do as your governor bids you, for by God if you don't reach it me, I'll as lief put the hole into you as into your coat."

Sullenly I obeyed, and a second blast shook the copses as the highwayman emptied his second pistol into my coat.

Here was an ignominious ending to our adventure! I strained my ears to hear if our ally in his phaeton were not at hand; and sure enough I heard far off the beat of horse's hoofs.

"Now, sir," says the Flying Highwayman in his affected, girlish voice, "I've obliged you by marring your apparel, do you oblige me with Sir John's guineas."

"Pray, satisfy my curiosity in one thing," replied Dr. Johnson, "say, how you contrive to come over the turnpikes?"

"I jump them," replied the knight of the road shortly, "and so no more words, but out with your gold, for I'm not such a fool as to stand here prating while your ally approaches."

"If I must," said Dr. Johnson, and slowly drew Sir John's purse from his breast. The highwayman leaned forward impatiently to snatch it. The hoof-beats were nearing now at a gallop.

As the highwayman stretched forth

his hand, suddenly my burly friend caught his wrist in a grip of iron. With an oath the highwayman set spurs to his horse, an ill-considered act which merely served to seal his doom; for as the startled creature shied, my muscular friend, so far from relaxing his grip, with one powerful impulse fairly pulled the marauder from his horse.

"Yield!" cried Dr. Johnson triumphantly. "Yield, for you've shot your bolt!"

The breath was out of him. In a trice I had leaped to earth and secured him, just as still another rider galloped up and reined in beside us.

"You have taken him!" he cried.

'Twas Barrock, the thick pursuer of the horse patrole. I looked at him astonished. He wore a venerable full-bottomed wig and clergyman's bands.

"Disguise," said he with a grin. "Sir John set us to watch over you, but in our own persons 'twould not do."

I thought privately that no clergyman's blacks could make the man look other than a thief-taker. He looked precious odd as he competently took up the sullen highwayman, masked as he had fallen, and bound him securely into his saddle, and thus we drove him before us towards Stamford Hill. I momentarily expected the phaeton to catch us up, but it never appeared; though as we neared the turnpike I again had the disagreeable sensation of a horseman at our backs.

At Stamford Hill Sir John Fielding awaited us, taking his ease in the keeper's house. He turned his closed eyes towards us as we entered.

"Well, Mr. Page," he said, "have you had good sport, and did you take your quarry?"

"Mr. Page is not with us, sir," I explained regretfully, "here are only Dr. Johnson and myself, and honest Barrock, and" I added with pride, "the Flying Highwayman, whom we have taken."

"Mr. Boswell is mistaken," said Dr. Johnson instantly, "Mr. Page *is* of our number, as I have known from the first."

I stared. My companion turned to the pinioned malefactor and stripped the lace mask from the face, the wig from the head. I looked into the pink-and-white countenance of William Page Esq; the sporting gentleman. His spirit was unbroken; he laughed in my thunder-struck face.

Before a word was spoken, there was a diversion. Into the room strode the gipsy-face young man of the inn. He plucked off his hat to Sir John, and I saw his face. 'Twas Watchett — stained, and by the light of the candles hastily and inexpertly stained, with some dark dye — but indisputably Watchett.

"Here's a coil, sir," he cried. "Here's your phaeton left in a copse, Mr. Page, sir, and your other black gone from the traces; for though I followed you I did not follow close enough, and when I came up with the phaeton the mischief was done."

"The mischief was done indeed," said Dr. Johnson grimly.

"So," said Sir John to our captive,

"this was your scheam, eh, for coming over the barriers?"

"By jumping?" I puzzled.

"No, sir," replied Dr. Johnson, "I fed him that explanation, and then gave him cause to feed it back again in his guise as the Flying Highwayman. No, sir, he passed the barrier driving his phaeton, in his character as sporting younger son. Once past, he had only to conceal the phaeton in some copse, turn his coat, change his wig, and ride off on one of his blacks. The robbery done, back to the phaeton, and whisk! the Flying Highwayman had once more flown away."

"Yet, pray, sir," demanded the magistrate sternly, "how were you so foolhardy as to complain to me, that you had yourself been robbed by the Flying Highwayman? Do you hold so low an opinion of Sir John Fielding, as to court his investigation?"

Dr. Johnson forestalled the highway man's answer.

"He could do no other. Yonder hostler lad found his phaeton and his discarded clothes hid in the copse, and made off with them. How else account for them, if the truth were not to be suspected, than to complain that they had been stolen? Nor did he single you out for his dupe, but rather complained to all he might meet."

Boswell: "Yet how could you smoak Mr. Page in this disguise?"

Johnson: "Sir, I was on the lookout for a vehicle or cart which might pass the barriers unsuspected. Now in this whole affair we had no other vehicle than the phaeton. My attention was thus drawn to the victim of the robbery himself. To what end would his clothes and phaeton be first taken, at risk to the thief, and then abandoned? But suppose they had been, not taken, but *left*. Then all becomes clear. I watched Mr. Page carefully. I could not prevent him drawing the charge from Mr. Boswell's pistols; but I could, and did, devise a scheam for the harmless discharge of *his* pistols; which you, Mr. Boswell, thought very ill of me for carrying out."

Boswell: "How came it, that at the turnpike Mr. Page —" at the respectful appellation the detected highwayman bowed ironically — "the masquerading highwayman," I amended, "when he described the Flying Highwayman, described Watchett to the life?"

Johnson: "Why not, when Watchett in the flesh had been by so recently? I'll ask you suddenly to describe a non-existent person, what can you do better than to limn the last stranger you have seen?"

Boswell: "Yet what thought you, sir, when you beheld our highwayman to be a girlish youth with dark hair?"

Johnson: "A girlish voice may be assumed; and as to dark hair, he who doffs a powdered wig may don a black one; yet cannot pass safe from detection, if he turns his greatcoat before he changes wigs, and sprinkles his shoulder with powder."

Boswell: "Dust, surely?"

Johnson: "No, sir. The greatcoat was dust-coloured; 'twas the white

powder of a wig that marked it so plainly. Yet the fellow wore a black wig."

"Yet Sir John Fielding," I marvelled, "though he could mark none of these things, knew the man at once."

The great Middlesex magistrate smiled.

"I know 3,000 malefactors by ear—"

"Yet Mr. Page did not speak."

"—and many more by *nose*. The man reeks of otto. Take him away."

In fine, all was as Dr. Johnson said. The pseudo-gentleman's first missing black was found straying under saddle by the riverside, and his highwayman's disguise and his pistols finally came to light in the haystack where he had hidden them. Sir John was prodigiously gratified, and in deference to the request of Dr. Johnson, the Flying Highwayman was spared hanging, that plaguy dry sort of death, in favour of transportation to his majesty's plantations in America; where I hear he hath turned honest, and raises a numerous progeny.

*There may be various mysteries connected with Leslie Charteris — with his personality, his work habits, his "fierce and fantastic" background — but of one thing we can be absolutely certain: we know beyond the shadow of doubt which detective-story writer Leslie Charteris likes best. In his autobiographical notes for* TWENTIETH CENTURY AUTHORS, *Mr. Charteris wrote, and we quote him exactly: "My favorite writer is myself" . . . Irrefutable confirmation of this preference is to be found in the series of magazine-anthologies which Leslie Charteris edits under the general title of* THE SAINT'S CHOICE. *At the time of this writing there have been five issues of* THE SAINT'S CHOICE. *The first contained five stories representing Mr. Charteris's favorite tales of crime, mystery, and terror written by English authors; one of the five stories was Leslie Charteris's own "The Million Pound Day," a novelette which occupied almost one-half the pages in this first issue.*

*Volume Two was "compiled entirely from" American fiction. Again there were five stories, and again one of the five was a story by Leslie Charteris himself. So we knew that Leslie Charteris was not only his own favorite English author but also his own favorite American author — in a phrase, his own favorite Anglo-American author. But Mr. Charteris's prejudice in favor of himself goes much further than that.*

*Volume Three offered The Saint's Choice of True Crime Stories. This time Mr. Charteris selected eight stories reported (and again we quote exactly) "by some of the best writers in the field, with the egregious addition of that guy Charteris who never does seem to be able to keep himself out of these books." We cannot go so far as to say that Mr. Charteris is his own favorite true-crime writer, but surely he is one of them.*

*Volume Four in the Charteris Cavalcade of Self-Esteem was The Saint's Choice of Humorous Crime. Of the six stories in this collection one is naturally by Leslie Charteris (a novelette again, monopolizing slightly more than half the book's contents) and a second is a parody of — you've guessed it! — "the Old Maestro himself." This double-barreled affection obviously makes Leslie Charteris his own favorite humorist.*

*Volume Five was called The Saint's Choice of Impossible Crime. Again Mr. Charteris elects himself — another novelette, this time running only one-third through the book. In this volume of five "science fiction" stories, Mr. Charteris barely made the grade. As he himself expressed it, readers "must sometimes have been impressed by the awful determination*

*Richard Connell, the author of the classic short story, "The Most Dangerous Game," and creator of detective Matthew Kelton, gives us that comparatively rare* avis, *the code story in short-short form . . . Judge Corbaley had presided over "a fair-enough trial" — even Maccam, the self-confessed murderer, admitted that; but somehow Maccam had escaped. Now, without jury or police guards, the Judge and the murderer engaged in a second duel — this time, of wits. And under the murderer's nose, in front of his eyes, the elderly gnome of a judge managed to tip off his daughter . . .*

# TIP-OFF

*by RICHARD CONNELL*

IN THE library of his old house on the hill Judge Corbaley was arranging books, on that tar-black, soundless November night. "Fine mess these books are in," he mused. Blackstone blushed in the midst of *Arabian Nights Entertainments*; Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* rubbed covers with Dreiser's *The Genius*; Henry James shuddered palely between *Dracula* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

So the judge took the books, hundreds of them, from their shelves, piled them on the floor and set about sorting them.

As he squatted there, looking like a benign, elderly gnome, he was so engrossed in his task that he did not hear the stealthy opening of the French window, nor the swift, light step of the man who stole up behind him. But he did hear the harsh whisper:

"Don't move! Keep your face shut or I'll blow your heart out!"

"What — what do you want?" The judge's words came out faintly, jerkily.

"Turn round," grated the man. The judge pivoted slowly. He saw two hard eyes in a face lined as if by a chisel. He saw a long raincoat. He saw in the man's steady hand an automatic.

"Yes. You're right, Judge," the man said. "You've seen me before. I'm Joe Maccam."

"What do you want?" the judge said again, his voice even fainter and jerkier than before.

"Take it easy," said Maccam. "I ain't going to put a slug in your pump — unless I have to. I ain't sore at you for sending me to the hot seat. You gave me a fair-enough trial. I croaked Bergman and that cop, all right. But I ain't going to fry —"

"How did you escape?"

Maccam showed yellow teeth in a grin.

"Never mind," he said. "I'm out — and I'm going to stay out. Now get this and hold on to it: Any killing I do now is just velvet. I can only sizzle

once, no matter how many more I bump. So do what I say or I'll let you have it. I mean that."

"I know you do," the judge said. "Well?"

"Three things," said Maccam: "Jack — all you got of it; the key to that sixteen-cylinder job in your garage; and clothes."

He opened his raincoat. He showed his shapeless, shoddy gray prison uniform.

"Get going," Maccam said. "And no false moves or else — First, hand over that car key —"

He stopped. They heard the sound of footsteps coming downstairs.

"Listen," hissed Maccam. "If anybody comes in and you tip 'em off, I'll plug both of you. Now, act natural. Go on fixing those books, and talk to me like a friend or —"

Maccam sat down. The judge could see the bulge the pistol made in his pocket. The door opened and the judge's daughter came in. She hesitated when she saw the stranger.

"I'm sorry, Dad," she said. "I didn't know you had a visitor."

"Quite all right, dear," said the judge, busy with books. "This is Mr. Robinson, an old friend who dropped in for a chat — about books. Mr. Robinson, this is my daughter, Evangeline."

Maccam smirked and bowed; but not for an instant did he take his wary eyes off the judge, who was placing volumes on an empty shelf.

"I just wanted a book," the girl said, "to read myself to sleep with. A novel — not too exciting —"

"That's easy," smiled the judge. "But it may be a hard job to find the right book in all this jumble. You see, Mr. Robinson," he explained, "we had a house party of young people here last week, and they amused themselves by turning my library upside down. They were playing a silly game with books that my daughter invented —"

"Shall I show you how it's played, Mr. Robinson?" the girl asked.

"Never mind," he said gruffly. "I ain't got time for games."

"Mr. Robinson has a lot of business to transact tonight," said the judge, and stopped when he saw the ever-so-slight movement of the hidden gun. "So, dear," he finished, "pick your book and run along. On this shelf, now, I think you'll find something to interest you."

She ran her eyes along the row of books he had just put there. She shook her head.

"I guess," she said, "I won't read tonight, after all. I think I'll call up the Sawyers and see if I can get up a bridge game."

"Fine idea," said the judge. "Good night, Evangeline."

"Good night, Dad. Good night, Mr. Robinson."

She went out. The library door clicked behind her.

"Now snap into it," said Maccam. "Give me that key."

The judge handed it over.

"Better wait till my daughter goes up to her room," advised the judge.

"She might get suspicious."

"I'll give her five minutes. Where do you keep your clothes?"

"Front room. Second floor."

"I'm going to cut the phone wire. Then tie you up. I'm taking no chances."

"Very sensible," said the judge. Maccam waited, watching the clock. At last he said, "Guess I'll knock you out — just to make sure."

He raised his heavy pistol; but he never brought it down on the judge's head; for a crisp "Drop that rod!" made him wheel toward the window and face the muzzles of shotguns in the hands of Sheriff Sawyer and two burly sons. Handcuffed, Maccam growled: "Played me for a sucker, didn't you, Judge? Tipped off that girl somehow. I'd like to know how."

"Then look," said the judge, waving his hand toward the shelf of books. "My daughter's silly game — but, well, you get the idea —"

The books Maccam stared at were: *Evangeline; Look Homeward, Angel; Our Mutual Friend; Robinson Crusoe; Crime and Punishment; Twenty Thousand Years in Sing Sing; Escape; Mantrap; Under Fire; The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; Bring 'em Back Alive.*

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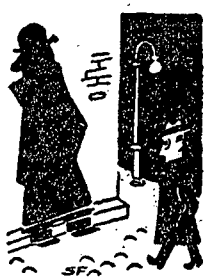
# FOURTH-PRIZE WINNER: JEROME AND HAROLD PRINCE



*Jerome and Harold Prince, brothers, are an EQMM discovery. They wrote their first story, "The Man in the Velvet Hat," sent it to EQMM in the mail, then suffered all the tortures of 'tec tyros while the manuscript slowly vanquished one office-reader after another. That first story — about Inspector Magruder, a metropolitan manhunter — cracked EQMM's outer line of defense, penetrated the inner line, and finally stormed the Editor's own citadel. We published the tale in our May 1944 issue — and thus a pair of unknowns, with only their bare hands and brains for weapons, won their first major skirmish in the literary wars.*

*Less than a year later, the brothers Prince again challenged our editorial forces. This time they submitted a story titled "The Finger Man," again about Inspector Magruder, and again we had no adequate defense against the Princes of Darkness. For there was something dark and brooding in the first two Magruder murder cases: a merging of detection and horror in a staccato style that was blood-brother to the stream-of-consciousness technique.*

*Scenting total victory, the Princes then entered their third story in EQMM's first annual contest. This time, changing both tactics and strategy, they broke away from experimental phrasing and word-color probing — no more typographic tricks or moving-picture moods; this time they marshalled their talents in more orthodox array, contriving a straight story of mystery, suspense, and mounting terror. But like the first two stories, "The Watchers and the Watched" is impregnated with an almost undefinable quality — the quality of being intellectually disturbing and of lingering long in the memory.*

*"The Watchers and the Watched" won a fourth prize in EQMM's short story contest. Beaten for the third time, EQMM concedes. The brothers Prince and Inspector Magruder are here to stay; they have arrived; they came, they saw, they conquered . . .*

# THE WATCHERS AND THE WATCHED

*by JEROME & HAROLD PRINCE*

The train lurched. The eyeglasses slid across the lacquer-smooth, girl-covered page of the magazine, then fell from the arm of the parlor-car chair to the floor. Haggerson leaned forward in the chair, then bent — red-faced, with a grunt — until his fingertips grazed the rough carpet, groping.

Something touched him.

He looked up. In front of him, he could see — squinting — only faint shadows and the yellow trainlight, fading. He said:

"Yes — ?"

A male voice said: "I have your eyeglasses, Mr. Haggerson."

Haggerson straightened sharply. He stretched out his hand. He felt something placed gently against his palm: the metal-touch of the earpiece, the cool-glass surface of a lens. He said:

"Thank you, thank you."

The eyeglasses were unbroken. He put them on. Now he could see clearly again:

A man was sitting opposite him. No one had been there before. The man was young. His face was awed, self-conscious, covered with pimples. He was leaning forward, trying to grin, very pale, his hands clasped tightly in front of him, his muscles stiff with embarrassment.

Haggerson turned his head away.

"I'm very grateful, young man," he said, casually. "Now — if you'll excuse me . . ."

The pale young man said: "Don't thank me. It's me who should thank you. . . . I mean," the young man went on, "meeting you like this — Why, it's the most wonderful thing — I never thought when I got on this train — Gee, there isn't anybody who doesn't know Robert W. Haggerson. I mean — you say Ford and Rockefeller and J. P. Morgan and — and Mr. Haggerson in the same breath. I mean everybody's used to it —"

Haggerson picked up his magazine and began to read.

"Well, gee —" the young man said. "I'm sorry. Honest. Honest I am. I hope I'm not pestering you. You go right ahead and read. I mean — is it all right for me to sit here? I hope I'm not pestering you. I mean — if I am — I want you to tell me so. You won't hurt my feelings. What I mean is — I hope I'm not — ?"

"Of course not."

"Thanks. Thanks a lot. I don't mind you reading. You just go right ahead. I like to see people read. I got a kid sister — you'd like her — who reads all the time. She just won't take her nose out of a book. . . . Oh, gee, Mr. Haggerson, there's lots of people — just nobodys — who wouldn't be anywheres near as democratic as you. When I spied you — just above Al-

bany — I said to myself — maybe I got a nerve wanting to butt in on a man's privacy — particularly, I said, a really big man like Mr. Haggerson — but — well — there's one or two things — and when I saw the glasses fall . . . Sure I'm not — ?"

"No, no. Not at all."

"Look, Mr. Haggerson — just as soon as I get to be a nuisance, tell me so. No, no, Mr. Haggerson, don't put down your magazine just for me. You go right ahead and read. I'll just sort of ramble on. But — honest — when I get on your nerves, tell me so."

"I will."

"Well — you see how it is, Mr. Haggerson. I'm a student of psychology — psychiatry — stuff like that — *you* know. Oh, I can guess what you're thinking — pretty young to be a student of human nature. Well — naturally — I'm not a doctor or anything — but — well — my boss, Dr. Keller, is — and it means a lot to me. Whenever I see somebody that interests me — like you — I say to myself — I've *got to know* what makes him tick. Oh, I haven't got a long gray beard or a couple of degrees after my name — but I have got a few good ideas up here under my noble dome. . . . O.K., I said to myself when I saw you in the diner — maybe he'll tell me to go chase myself — that's the chances I take — but — before I leave this train, I've got to have a heart to heart talk with Mr. Haggerson. Sure you don't mind me sort of running on like this? Honest? Sure?".

"Enjoying it."

"I'm glad. Well — like I said — ever since I first saw you — you know what I've been doing? Sizing you up. Yeah. Well — maybe that's a lot of gall — *me* — sizing up Mr. Haggerson! But I told you — I'm a student of human nature — and a *real* scientist doesn't let anything stand in his way. You've *got* to size them up — that's the psychologist's job — and that's what I've been doing to you right along. I've even been doing it the last couple of hours in this car. Does that surprise you?"

"Umh'm."

"Sure. . . . Well — I thought it would. I bet you thought I just wanted to meet you — you know — to get your autograph — and stuff. Oh, no — not me. That's not the way *I* operate. I'm a *real* scientist. I go after the *truth* — and I don't care who it hurts. You know — You know something, Mr. Haggerson? It's going to hurt you."

"Really!"

"Well — gee — no offense. It's all in the cause of science. And — besides — it'll help you too. . . . O.K., O.K., maybe it serves me right — getting my knuckles slapped. Maybe I did go too far. After all, it is kind of personal — and you don't know me from a hole in the wall — and —"

Haggerson put down his magazine. He said:

"Apparently, you know who I am. In that case, you should also know that you'll be much better off if you don't try to start anything funny."

"*Funny!* Who's trying to start any-

thing funny! I came over here of my own free will — nobody asked me to do you a favor — and then you get all excited — *All right!* If that's the way you feel —"

"Don't try to tell me I'm excited, young man. I'm annoyed — but I'm quite calm. Now what's on your mind?"

"I don't know if you really want to hear it."

"I do."

"All right. You dropped your timetable."

"What!"

"*Four* times."

"Even if I did, young man — and I don't remember doing it — what of it?"

"You dropped your timetable four times in the last hour, Mr. Haggerson — and you *don't remember?*"

"What of it?"

"Well, there you go again. I'm trying to tell you, and you fly up in the air. That's the worst thing in the world for you, Mr. Haggerson. Calm down — *please.*"

"I'm perfectly controlled."

"Sure, sure. . . . O.K., I'll take your word for it. I'm not a man to beat around the bush, Mr. Haggerson. You're a sick man, Mr. Haggerson. I've watched you on this train. I've sized you up. You're very sick."

"You're crazy!"

"I don't care if you insult me, Mr. Haggerson — I must tell the truth. Maybe nobody else would notice, but you can't control your eyelids — they twitch — not much — nobody would notice — but they twitch. And your leg bounces up and down — am I right, Mr. Haggerson? — even when the train isn't jostling it — it bounces up and down. You dropped your timetable four times. You know what it means? It means you're losing control — your finger muscles won't respond — you can't hold onto things. And whenever you exert yourself — like just now bending over to pick up your glasses — your head begins to throb and you can't see much. How about it? Am I right?"

"Get out!"

"Not now, Mr. Haggerson, I won't — not until I've finished. I've read about cases like yours — I've never seen one before — but I tell you this: you're going mad."

"Get out of here!"

"No, I won't. Maybe you don't like it, but I'm really helping you. I can't tell you how you'll go mad — I don't know what forms it will take — but I'm warning you — for your own good —"

Haggerson jumped to his feet. He looked about him. Only he and the pale young man were in the parlor car. Haggerson shouted:

"Porter! Porter!"

No one answered.

"*Porter!*"

Haggerson walked rapidly, almost ran, down the aisle. Then he remembered that this was the last car of the train, and that there was nothing but night beyond the door toward which he was walking. He spun around and ran in the opposite direction, flinging

open the door separating the interior of the parlor car from its platform.

"Porter! Porter!"

His voice rose almost to a scream. "*Porter!*"

A conductor, blinking sleep from his eyes, came forward from the adjoining car. He glanced into the parlor car, then he looked at Haggerson and said quietly,

"Yes, Mr. Haggerson?"

"Throw him out!" Haggerson cried. "He's insulted me! I won't have him on the train! Go ahead!"

The conductor said softly, "Don't get excited, Mr. Haggerson. You're in no danger. Nobody's going to hurt you."

"But I tell you he's mad," Haggerson said. "I want him out! . . . Here, you," he shouted at two men in slippers and dressing gowns who had just come on the platform. "There's a madman in there! I want him put off the train!"

The men looked into the parlor car, then at each other. One of them said briefly, "O.K., Mac —" then lit a cigarette and lounged against the wall. The other began to go back to his berth.

The conductor said kindly, but with embarrassment, "Mr. Haggerson, if you'll please —"

"Do you hear me!" Haggerson shouted. "All of you — I tell you —"

"Mr. Haggerson, *please* . . ."

Then Haggerson saw the expression on the face of the man leaning against the wall. He turned from it slowly, and looked into the conductor's face. He heard the trainwhistle low-wailing through the night. He knew now — even without turning around to see — that there was no one in the parlor car.

That was a week ago. What had happened on the train Haggerson had thrust back into the hinterland of his mind — but it remained, still fresh, unchanged, itching beneath the skin of his consciousness.

Now it was night. Haggerson was sitting at a table in an exclusive Italian restaurant. On the wall in front of him hung a gilded, baroque mirror. Haggerson couldn't keep his eyes off it.

Just behind the surface of the mirror was his own face — hard and sharp as an Indian arrowhead, a chin deadly willful, a mouth that seemed to have just tasted quinine, eyes dusty now and disturbed. And behind his own face, a little to the left, was the face of a man whom Haggerson had never seen before.

The man was middle-aged, hypothyroid, comic-ugly like a good-natured cinema gangster. His large body sagged and spread like a ball of asphalt on a hot day. There was a wire-thin scar across his right cheek, and his nose was broken. He was seated at the table just behind Haggerson's.

In his left hand he held the stub of a tooth-marked pencil. He brought it to his mouth, wrapped his lips around it, and sucked it pensively. Then, with a sudden gesture of excitement, he tore his hand away from his mouth and began to write rapidly on a small lined

pad which lay open before him. He had done this three or four times before, and soon he was doing it again. The waiter brought him his meal — but he merely played with it, and all the while, in abrupt and hectic packages of energy, he made hasty scribbles in his notebook.

Haggerson drained the last of his coffee and paid his check. He heard the metal-sound of his tip falling into the waiter's outstretched tray. He rose, then walked rapidly toward the exit. The man with the broken nose continued to write.

*But why*, thought Haggerson as he stepped into the heat-heavy street, *why did he have to look at me that way each time before he made a note?*

He went back to his office, pulling the cover of lights and authority over his head. The entire staff was working late. He walked through the busy outer offices, nodding at the obsequious "good-evenings," watching the bustle and excitement, the batteries of typewriters in action, clerks scurrying, papers fluttering in their hands. It filled him now, as it always did, with a sense of ownership and privilege, and with it, pride and daylight-confidence, a feeling of security and power. By the time he had reached his private office, the man with the broken nose had joined the pale young man in his subconscious.

He plunged into his work with characteristic electric energy. For three hours he dictated with only momentary pauses, and then — it was about eleven — he said jocularly,

"Ann, take five."

Ann, suburban-plain, small, dressed in a severe black business suit, flexed her fingers, stretched her stubby legs, and smiled. Haggerson smiled back at her and snapped a red-plastic lever on a gauze-faced mahogany box on his desk. The box crackled, then said:

"Yes, sir?"

Haggerson said: "Martin?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let me have the file on the Norris-Buchanan deal."

"What file, sir?"

"Norris-Buchanan."

"Why — Yes, sir. I'll try to find it."

"*Try* to find it! You ought to have these things on your fingertips. Bring it in immediately."

"Yes, sir."

Haggerson clicked the machine into silence.

"Ready, Ann?"

"Yes, Mr. Haggerson."

The door opened gently and Martin slipped in. He was a ruddy, plump man, no taller than a fourteen-year-old boy. He had that type of obesity that dulls the masculine outlines and grafts a cherubic benevolence onto the face. People knew, just by looking at him, that he was shy, good-natured, and a lot of fun once he had a drink or two under his belt. Now, he stood in front of Haggerson's desk, his face greasy-glistening with perspiration, his eyes shifting uneasily, embarrassed, uncomfortable, jiggling nervously from one foot to another.

Haggerson said: "Yes? Where's the

file?"

"I'm — I'm afraid, sir, that the file isn't here."

"Not here? Where is it?"

"In Long Island."

"In Long Island! What's it doing there? Did you send it there?"

"Yes, sir. I —"

"What's the matter, Martin?" Haggerson asked with ironic geniality. "Don't you like it here any more? Do you need a rest? Are you tired of working?"

"Why — No, sir. No."

"No? Well, I never would have guessed. It seems to me that when a trusted employee misplaces an important file, he's just about lost all interest in his job."

"Oh, no, sir. I —"

"Look here, Martin —" Haggerson's voice rose high and sharp. "There's not a damn bit of excuse for your behavior. You've been here long enough to know better — two years. But don't think that's any protection. A lot of better men than you were here longer and were tossed out."

"But, sir — I thought —"

"It doesn't matter a damn to me what you thought. You muffed the ball — that's all. There's no place in this organization for drones. You produce or you get out."

"But — You see — I try —"

"You *try!* Hell is paved with good intentions. I don't know what I'm going to do with you, Martin. But I tell you this frankly — I think you're just too stupid for this job."

"I'm not stupid, sir," Martin said, distinctly aggrieved now. "I just do what I'm told. I didn't think it was sensible to send the file to Long Island, but I'm not paid to comment on what you order."

"Are you trying to tell me *I* told you to send the file to Long Island?"

"Yes, sir. Last Tuesday. And only again this morning, you said, 'Are you sure you sent —' "

"You're a liar! Why can't you own up to your mistakes like a man? There's one thing I won't stand for and that's lying — and you know it."

"I'm not — I'm sorry — Maybe —"

"Get the hell out of here!"

Martin's face had turned the color of dirty muslin. He tried to smile, but his muscles contorted the attempt into a caricature. He left, walking backwards, closing the door noiselessly.

Ann smiled, supercilious, amused. She said:

"Don't be too hard on him, Mr. Haggerson. He means well. It's just that he isn't very bright. He probably misunderstood what you told him."

"But I haven't said a single word to him for weeks, Ann — not a single word."

Ann bent her head and began to scrutinize the notebook in her lap.

Haggerson said: "Did I?"

She looked up.

"What, sir?"

"Did I speak to him?"

"To whom, Mr. Haggerson?"

"*To Martin! To Martin!*"

"Why, *no*, Mr. Haggerson."

But her eyes, Haggerson saw, said something quite different.

He left about an hour later, profoundly disturbed, thoughts stinging like acid spray on the skin. As he walked through the night streets of Manhattan — glutted with shadows, silent and deserted as a theatre after midnight — he made effort after effort to force his thoughts back, to keep his mind blank, until the muscles in his larynx grew taut, began to ache. But no matter what he did, memories pushed up into his consciousness, slowly, like heavy wire springs uncoiling.

When he reached the corner of Madison and Forty-sixth, he saw the Armenian for the first time. He was leaning rakishly against a lamp-post, the light from the frosted globe overhead filtering down through the summer heat-haze, sickly-yellow, drenching his face. It was a young face, dark and sallow, shaped like a V, eyes glittering and inflamed, mouth twisted in a sneer, twitching in spasms. He wore a black slouch hat, brim snapped down, slanting over his right eye.

Haggerson walked toward him slowly, passed him at arm's length, crossed the gutter, continued to walk toward Sutton Place . . . when, suddenly, he heard behind him, soft as pulse beats in repose, the rubber-soled footsteps of a man.

Instinctively, he quickened his pace. The footsteps broke into the accelerated cadence. He stopped.

A cat screamed. There was no other sound.

He began to walk again, slowly. The footsteps followed — faint, almost unreal, like an echo in a dream — *pat-pat . . . pat-pat . . . pat-pat . . .*

Then Haggerson did something he hadn't done since he was a child. To drown out the footsteps, to shut out the world and the memories of the last week, he began to tell himself a story: *I'm down in Florida and nobody knows I'm R. W. Haggerson. I go to the Yankee training camp wearing a mask.* "*Who are you?*" *McCarthy says.* "*Men call me the masked marvel.*" "*What do you do?*" "*I'm only the best pitcher you'll ever see.*" *McCarthy laughs and the whole team crowds around and laughs.* "*Laugh!*" *I say.* "*Go ahead and laugh! But line up three of your best sluggers and I'll bet you ten thousand dollars they can't touch my fast ball.*" "*Let's see the color of your money.*" "*Here it is.*" "*It's a bet.*"

. . . pat-pat . . . pat-pat . . .

*Ruth. Gehrig. DiMaggio. In that order. I go up to the mound.* "*Want to warm up?*" "*What do you think I am — a bushleaguer?*" *I wind up. There's the pitch! Right across the plate. Called strike one!*

. . . pat-pat . . . pat-pat . . .

*I wind up. The pitch! A beauty! Knee-high! Called strike two! Ruth grins. He's sure of himself. I take my time. I rub the ball in my glove. The count's two and nothing on Ruth. Here comes the one that counts. Ruth points to the right field bleachers. I wind up. I pitch!*

The light of a cigar store window crashed into his retina.

The store was on the other side of Third Avenue, under the el. He

walked faster, stumbled, fell to one knee, picked himself up. Then he began to run. He raced across the gutter, his breath coming now in short, dry gasps. At the door, he paused, trying to breathe, his hand closing on the handle, pushing, pushing hard. . . .

The door was locked.

. . . *pat-pat* . . . *pat-pat* . . .

"Let me in!" he shouted, hammering on the glass. "Let me in!"

The old man behind the counter looked up startled, then turned away in disgust. Another drunk, he said to himself.

"Let me in! Open up! I'm R. W. Haggerson! I tell you —"

The footsteps were crossing the gutter. They were coming closer.

The man behind the counter reached up and snapped off the light.

Darkness.

. . . *pat-pat* . . . *pat-pat* . . .

"For God's sake! Open up! Do you know who I am?"

On the sidewalk now.

. . . *pat-pat* . . . *pat-pat* . . .

Haggerson, pounding against the door. Footsteps right behind him now.

Then —

A slamming, crashing racket. Metal bumped, banged, clanged, and shrieked. Steel ground, smashed against steel, roaring, bellowing, moaning, screaming, shaking the windows of the store, setting the ground trembling.

Haggerson spun around. Blood pounded into his head, blinded him.

Then the noise of the el train receded, faded into a soporific clackety-clack, clackety-clack, a gentle hum in the distance . . . and soon the street was quiet as before.

Haggerson stood, pasty-faced, empty-eyed, pressing the dark glass of the door, trembling. Now he could see again — but there was no one in the street.

After that, he slept badly. He drank warm milk, took opiates, but nothing helped. At night, he would awake, stunned, sweating, listening to the footsteps pacing up and down in his room. He had only to stretch out his hand a few inches to snap on the light — but he never did. He was afraid of what he would see . . . or what he would not.

One night, he cried out, "Who's there?" — and the footsteps stopped abruptly. But they began again soon afterwards, and he crossed himself as he had when he was a child, and muttered, "Please, God, make the footsteps go away. Please God. Please."

In the daylight, though, he tried to behave as he always had, but he knew there was a difference. He sensed it in the way people — even strangers who passed him on the street — looked at him. He felt it in the tone of their voices.

Then little things began to happen. Telegrams would come to his desk, saying, "In reference to your recent letter . . ." But he had never sent a recent letter, he was sure of that, and yet when he looked in the files, there it was. He would find his scratch pad partially erased. He would be able to make out a word or two, but never

the full text, and he would sit over the pad for hours trying to remember what he had written. People would come to him, talking about previous appointments, arrangements — were there any? And why, this morning, did he find his shirts in the bread box, his toast in the humidor? What was this thing closing in around him?

He decided not to think about it. He was sitting now in the exclusive Italian restaurant where he had dined every night he had been in New York for the last eleven years. For a moment or two he succeeded in sweeping his mind clean and escaping into nothingness . . . and then, in the gilded, baroque mirror in front of him, he saw the man with the broken nose enter the restaurant.

For three weeks now, night after night, this man had come in just as Haggerson was finishing his cocktail, had taken a seat at one of the nearby tables, and had made frequent notes in that nervous manner of his. Tonight, though, as he approached his table, he paused, looked up into the mirror, and smiled at Haggerson. The smile, Haggerson saw, was smug, without humor, filled with pity.

The man with the broken nose sat down and drew out his notebook.

Suddenly Haggerson couldn't stand it any longer. He sprang to his feet. He had to know why he was being persecuted like this, why he was being watched, why notes about him were being made. He was sure, in that moment, that the secret of whatever was attacking him was in that notebook.

He walked to the adjacent table.

"Let me have that notebook."

The man looked up, surprised.

"Notebook . . .? What . . .?"

"Give it to me."

"Give it to you? Why?"

"Never mind. That's my business."

Haggerson reached out, wrapped his fist around one end of the notebook, and yanked it off the table. The man with the broken nose grabbed for it, caught the other end in midair, clutched it firmly.

"Take your hand off it!" he shouted at Haggerson, pushing his chest across the table. "Take your hand off or I'll break it off."

"You'll do *what*?"

"You heard me. You're not deaf."

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" the little Italian waiter pleaded. "This is a respectable restaurant. *Please!*"

Haggerson and the man with the broken nose glared at each other, tugged viciously at the notebook.

"Leave it alone," the man with the broken nose said between grunts. "I'll knock your teeth in!"

"If it's a fight you want, I'll give it to you," Haggerson said.

"O.K., bud; you asked for it."

The man with the broken nose tried to unwedge himself from between the table and chair, and rise at the same time. As he got up, off balance, Haggerson shot out his arm, straight and hard, his open palm thudding against the other's chest. The man with the broken nose made a noise like an injured dog, toppled over backwards, crashed to the floor, his chair cracking

and splintering beneath him.

Haggerson had the notebook.

Women made high-pitched excitement sounds. A few men jumped to their feet. One rushed over, tried to pin down Haggerson's arms. Haggerson shook him off. A woman said, "Why don't you call the police?" The little waiter said, "No, no. We don't want any trouble."

Haggerson opened the notebook, a clutch in the pit of his stomach. He thumbed through it rapidly, found a page on which there was writing.

Two men were helping the man with the broken nose to his feet.

"I want an apology!" he was crying. "You'll hear from my lawyer!"

Haggerson began to read. The notebook said:

*Dear son, I am taking a few minutes from my dinner to send you a note about the family. I try to do this for you every day. I know how lonely you GI's get out there in the Pacific. Mother is well. Little Butch is beginning to talk. Sister Ann expects to be marri —*

Haggerson placed the book back on the table slowly. He paid his check without saying a word, then left.

He stopped at several bars, went home sober, and sat up all night in an armchair in his library. When morning came, he knew that he would never sleep again unless he were so physically exhausted that nature would make it impossible for him to stay awake. At nine, he called the tennis pro and made an appointment for later that morning. Then he went to his bedroom closet, selected his racket, his tennis balls, and his playclothes. This kept his mind pleasantly occupied for a while, and he was sorry when his bag was packed and it was time to go.

He took his bag and racket with him, hailed a cab, and went to his office. He read his mail, dictated a few replies, then told Ann that he'd be gone for the rest of the day — a little exercise now and then is always good.

"Are you sure you have everything?" Ann asked.

"Yes, I think so. . . . Maybe, I had better check. Might as well be sure before I leave."

"Yes, sir."

Haggerson opened his bag. In it was a house slipper and part of a deck of pinochle cards. There was nothing else. Haggerson closed the bag and locked it. He said:

"Yes, Ann, I have everything."

*But I couldn't have done this. Not this! Someone in the office is playing a practical joke on me. Who would dare? Maybe it isn't a practical joke? That couldn't be. That* couldn't *be! If it is a practical joke, then my things are hidden someplace here in the office. How will I know? I can't search. If it isn't a practical joke, then my things are still at home. If it isn't a practical joke . . .*

"Goodbye, Ann."

"Have a nice time, Mr. Haggerson," she called after him.

He went down in the elevator, hurried through the lobby. There was a lamp-post just outside the entrance to the building. The Armenian was leaning against it.

Haggerson stopped, then walked past. At the corner, he turned his head and saw the Armenian following him. Haggerson hailed a cab.

In five minutes, he was home. He stepped out of the cab, looked up and down the street anxiously — there was no sign of the Armenian — and went up to his apartment. He poured himself a stiff drink, lingered over it, then opened the door of his bedroom.

There on the floor, stacked neatly, were his tennis shoes and clothes. Pinochle cards were strewn on the bed haphazardly, as if by a child, and the tennis balls were arranged in small pyramids on the night table.

Haggerson ran around the room wildly, his lips almost bloodless, making sounds of pain. Then he tore open his collar, ran out.

Downstairs in the lobby, the Armenian was waiting.

Haggerson walked past him rapidly, strode down the street, turned the corner and waited. When he saw the Armenian turn the corner, too, he broke into a half-walk half-run, crying, "Cab! Cab!" — and saw them whizz by, none stopping. Then Haggerson bolted. He ran, without knowing where he was going, until each breath became a torture and he couldn't run any more. He stopped, leaning against a window of a store, his lungs stinging, breathing hard, his clothes limp, soaked with perspiration. Then, as slowly as a locomotive on a turntable, he pivoted about, faced in the direction from which he had come. There were dozens of people on the street, he saw, but there was no Armenian.

He slouched, relaxed, a sigh escaping him, long, lingering, filled with pleasure. His mind, though, was still in a turmoil, and to steady himself, he looked into the window, began to examine the display. Up front, there was a realistic mannequin dressed in black silk panties and a brassière to match. She was apparently boasting about her lingerie to another mannequin wearing a flesh-colored slip, beige stockings, and white mules. On the surface of the plate glass window was the reflection of the lamp-post across the street. Leaning against it was the Armenian.

Haggerson spun about, his face white. Halfway down the block, he saw a policeman step out of a patrol car.

"Officer!" Haggerson shouted, running to him. "Officer! Officer! Arrest him! Arrest that man!"

"Arrest who? What man? Take it easy, mister," the policeman said.

"He's following me! He's always following me! Arrest him, I tell you!"

"Arrest *who*?"

"The Armenian! Stop him! I tell you —"

"*What* Armenian? *Where*, mister?"

Haggerson whirled about, shot his index finger out toward the lamp-post.

"*There!*"

Under the lamp-post, a girl in a red dress was fixing her stocking.

Haggerson, wild-eyed, shaking, turned to the policeman.

The policeman looked at him, lowered his eyes, stared at Hagger-

son's hands.

Haggerson looked down.

In one of his hands, he saw, he was carrying a tennis ball. In the other, the ace of spades.

"I think, mister," the policeman said, "you'd better come with me."

After that, consciousness was like the rapid cross-cuts of a Russian cinema: disjointed images, lasting fractions of a second, pouring like a cataract across his mind: the policeman, another, faces: laughing, jeering, scowling; the car, streets, buildings, stairs, faces of men: eyes hard, lips moving; rooms, corridors, policemen: questioning, writing, shouting, shoving . . . and then a small room, quiet, and a man coming in, sitting behind a desk, big, tough-faced, crew haircut, and Haggerson blurting out the whole story, talking his heart out, sobbing, exhausted, finally calm.

"Do you feel better?" the big man said. "You look better."

"Yes, much — thanks."

"That's good. Now let's get down to cases. I'm a police inspector. I want you to answer one or two questions. Did you go to the police before about this?"

"No."

"Did you hire private detectives?"

"No."

"Did you plan to?"

"No."

"Did you see a doctor?"

"No."

"Are you going to?"

"No."

"I see."

The big man filled his pipe.

"Let me tell you this," he said. "If your name wasn't R. W. Haggerson, I'd have you committed to the psycho ward at Bellevue for observation, but I like my job too much. There's absolutely nothing I can do for you now,— and we won't hold you or anything of the sort — but why don't you take some advice?"

"What is it?"

"Go away. Take a vacation."

"Do you think it will help?"

"I'm no psychiatrist. Don't *you* think it will?"

". . . Yes. It sounds good."

"Will you do it?"

"Yes. I think I will."

"It should help. One more question: Do you have a standard procedure for booking hotel rooms, getting railroad tickets, that sort of thing? Your secretary, perhaps — ?"

"Yes, I have."

"Well, keep things normal. Don't change your routine any. Go ahead just as you have been doing."

"I would anyway."

Haggerson got up. He said:

"Thank you, Inspector —? What was the name?"

"Magruder."

"Thank you, Inspector Magruder — and goodbye."

"Goodbye," Magruder said. "Good luck."

Then the train again.

Haggerson sat in the parlor car, reading a magazine. For three days

now — ever since he had seen Magruder — things had snapped back to normal, and tonight he was starting on his trip with a schoolboy's sense of exhilaration. He had, apparently, not only recovered from the haunting depressions of the last few weeks, but he was now experiencing an entire reversal of emotions. He was excited, happy, buoyant: there was a sparkle in his eye, a vivaciousness about him that he himself knew came only rarely.

He glanced through his magazine, idly read an ad:

*The Fifth Freedom*, it said, *Freedom from High Plumbing Costs.*

He chuckled, and in his exuberance, thought the joke good enough to share.

"Look," he said to the man sitting next to him. "Here's a real funny —"

He stopped abruptly.

The man in the adjoining seat was leaning forward, watching Haggerson closely, making notes in a small notebook, like an artist sketching.

Haggerson picked up the magazine. He read the bold-face copy on the opposite page. It said:

*The slumbering fire of* CARIBBEAN NIGHT *attacks a man's heart . . . a woman's . . . until the two merge in a flame of ecstasy. Wear this perfume* only *if you dare risk the danger and dark delight of stirring primitive emotions. At all ten cent stores.*

Haggerson looked up.

The man making notes *was* the man with the broken nose.

Haggerson thumbed through the magazine nervously. He read:

*Your man is holding you tight . . . Rapture . . . Ecstasy . . . Shimmering Music . . . You're whirling through space . . . The planets are dancing . . . This is* love . . . love . . . LOVE . . . *and it can be yours, all yours, when you use* ZIT, *the modern deodorant.*

Haggerson swung about and looked at the chair on the other side of him.

The Armenian was sitting in it.

Haggerson leaped to his feet, ran down the aisle.

"Conductor!" he cried.

He threw open the door of the parlor car.

"Conductor! Conductor!"

A hand shot out, grasped his.

Haggerson made a sound, half-whine, half-scream.

"Well! Well! Well!" said the pale young man, shaking Haggerson's hand. "*Mis-ter* Haggerson! Imagine meeting *you* again!"

The phone on the desk rang. Magruder picked it up. He said:

"I've been expecting him. Send him in."

The door opened and Haggerson came in.

Magruder said: "I'm glad to see you. Sit down. You're looking well."

Haggerson sat down. He said: "Thank you. I never felt better in my life."

"That's fine. The vacation must have agreed with you. How long were you away? Four weeks? Have good weather? Catch up on your sleep?"

"It was just what the doctor ordered."

Magruder filled his pipe.

Haggerson said: "I've come here today, Magruder, because I realize I must have a serious talk with you. When I left here the last time, I assumed that you were going to let this matter drop. It seemed to me that you implied that. Now I'm not so sure. Magruder, I want this matter dropped."

"What makes you think I'm interested?"

"I took the trouble to have my research staff draw up a complete report on you. I think I know more about you now, Magruder, than you do yourself. Here are the facts that bother me: You're apparently one of these new-type civil service career men — Phi Beta Kappa, C. C. N. Y. — A.M. in psychology, Columbia. You entered the police force as a rookie cop, not because you needed a job, but because you're in love with the work you do. In the last twenty years or so you've built up a pretty fine reputation for yourself. When John Reynolds went to the electric chair last month, *Time* called you — see if I have it right — 'Magruder, the metropolitan manhunter — the sleuth with the high I. Q.' They also said one reason for your success is that no matter how trivial or ridiculous a case looks on the surface, you never give it up until you've investigated it thoroughly. You take your job too seriously, Magruder. You're beginning to believe your press clippings. That's why I've come to make sure there'll be no investigation in my case at all."

Magruder looked at him, but said nothing.

"You're a lawyer, too, aren't you, Magruder? You went to Brooklyn Law School at night while you pounded a beat in Staten Island during the day. You're ambitious. How would you like to be a magistrate?"

"I'd like it — some day before I retire. But not today. Thanks just the same."

"Magruder, I will *not* under any circumstances have this case investigated. If you've started already, I want it stopped. No matter how discreet you are, there are bound to be rumors, and a man in my position can't afford them. Here's what I'm prepared to do: I'll save you the trouble of an investigation by telling you precisely what happened. I'll explain everything. Then you'll see that there's no reason to poke your nose in my affairs. What happened to me is completely out of your line."

Magruder said: "O.K. Shoot."

Haggerson said: "All right. As you know, I took your advice and went off on a vacation. I went by train — that's the way I usually go — and my secretary bought the tickets. On the train I met this pale young man I told you about. His name is Harry Carlson. We sat and talked for a while. He told me again that I was ill and that I ought to take care of myself. He suggested that I see the man he worked for, a Dr. Barnet Keller. I thought it might not be a bad idea — I owed it to myself — and I went. He came with me and took me to Keller's sanitarium, in a small town below Albany.

"I waited in an anteroom while the pale young man went in and saw Keller. In a little while he came out and said Keller would see me, and then he took me into a darkened room where I was interviewed. Apparently, Keller had diagnosed my condition just from what the pale young man had said, and he knew that lights of any sort would be injurious to me. I didn't see Keller then. As a matter of fact, I never really saw him. We always met in darkened rooms — we had to — but I heard his voice, and I heard him talk to me, and I knew immediately he was a great and wonderful man. He made me feel utterly at ease — restful — at peace. I never felt that way before in my life. He asked me a few questions, let me talk freely for a while — and then he told me what was wrong with me."

The telephone rang.

Magruder said: "Yeah . . . O.K. . . . Keep him entertained. I'll be down in a little while."

He slipped the phone back.

"Sorry," he said to Haggerson. "Go ahead. I'm listening."

Haggerson said: "He told me there was nothing wrong with me — that is, nothing wrong with me as such. It appears that I had had an accident when I was a child, and now there was a bone pressing on my brain. I couldn't remember the accident, but Keller said that that was all right — that was part of my trouble. You see, Magruder, there was nothing wrong with me. It was an accident. It came from the outside.

"Keller did say, though, that if I hadn't caught it in time, it might have developed into something serious. Actually, I had plenty of warning. He said my subconscious was warning me about it all the time. All those queer things that happened to me — the people disappearing, my memory playing me tricks — you know — well, they were actually danger signals invented by my subconscious to warn me that I was ill and that I should do something about it. Keller said that the man with the broken nose was real most of the time, but the actions I ascribed to him were always inventions of my subconscious.

"The Armenian, on the other hand, was never real at all. He was *pure* invention. Why even the pale young man — Carlson — there's nobody more substantial — I know him well — why, my subconscious made *him* disappear.

"You remember, Magruder, that I saw lots of things happening in mirrors — the man with the broken nose spying on me, the Armenian leaning against the lamp-post that afternoon when I was picked up — well, Keller said that that was perfectly normal in my condition. The subconscious mind finds it easier to create images in mirrors. They focus the psychic energies — like a crystal ball, I should imagine. Do you remember the legend of the *Student of Prague* — the evil image that walked out of a mirror and terrorized the town? Well, that's how it originated. A long time ago somebody was warned by his subconscious just as

I was, but there was no Keller then to explain it, so it grew into a legend.

"And all those other things that happened to me — forgetting appointments, misplacing files, putting the wrong things in my bag — they were warnings, too — a different sort, of course, but they meant the same thing. Keller knew what they meant, and he knew it almost at a glance. He asked me if I was willing to place myself in his hands. I said 'Yes.' I had no hesitation. I felt he was a great man.

"He treated me and cured me. That's all there is to it."

Magruder said: "Anything else?"

"No. Nothing. Nothing at all."

"Well," said Magruder. "That's that."

He rose, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, reached for his derby.

"Except for one thing," he said. "The inventions of your subconscious are now in the Allen Street jail. I can't stop to talk about it now. I'm in a hurry to go downtown. Come along."

They went downstairs, flagged a cab. Magruder gave the address. The cab turned down Broadway.

"All right, Magruder," Haggerson said. "What's it all about?"

Magruder said: "I think I can give you all the details by the time we get there. Here they are: To begin with, there were never more than two broad possibilities in this case — either you were going mad and seeing phantoms — or you weren't. If you weren't — and as a cop that's the only path of inquiry I could follow — then what were these men — the Armenian, the man with the broken nose — trying to do? Spy on you? I couldn't believe that. They *wanted* to be seen. Drive you mad? Why? Who would gain? Nobody I knew of. And besides, it can't be done. I mean, it can be done if you can control the environment completely. You can do it at Dachau, or in a lonely house in Angel Street. But in New York? Never.

"Well then, what were they trying to do? I said to myself, let's take a look at the material they're working with — R. W. Haggerson. From the interview we had that day — from the things you said and the way you said them — from what I could pick up from other sources — it seemed to me that you're one of the most arrogant men I've ever met. You believe that you're far superior — spiritually, morally, intellectually — to almost everybody else. The way you treat your employees — your former clerk, Martin, for example — is sufficient evidence of that. But this sense of superiority of yours is no surface thing. It's the mainspring of your life. Without it, you're nothing. It's something that you'll preserve at all costs.

"Now it struck me that someone else understood this basic element of your character, and was attacking you through it. He began by suggesting — through the pale young man on the train — that you were going mad. He knew you wouldn't believe it — it's not the sort of thing a casual stranger can sell you easily — and, as a matter of fact, you fought the suggestion of

madness bitterly — pushed it back in your subconscious — never even permitted yourself to think about it as such — *but* — he also knew that he was planting in your mind the idea that there was *something* mentally wrong with you. What that something was didn't matter. For his purpose, *anything* was sufficient — because a mental deficiency, no matter how slight, would make you no longer the superior, or even the equal, but rather the inferior of the lowliest clerk on your staff. He knew that that was a thought you couldn't live with.

"If my basic assumption were right — if he were attacking you through your sense of superiority — then everything that happened to you after you talked with the pale young man was easily explained. Once the initial suggestion of mental derangement had been made, he would have to repeat it again and again, in various ways, until it produced results. For example, he'd hire a man who, at the proper moment, would disappear — dodge behind a pullman chair, like your pale young man — or slip into a doorway, like your Armenian — or pretend to spy on you and write notes to a fictional son in the Pacific, like your man with the broken nose. He'd get a key to your apartment, disarrange your things, walk outside your bedroom door at night — audacious, but it worked. He'd spread some money around your office — you have plenty of underpaid and dissatisfied employees who'd leap at a chance to be disloyal, especially for profit — and then he'd get these people to misplace files, mark up your scratch pad, make appointments for you without your knowledge, sign your name to letters, even empty out your bag and replace your tennis things with a house slipper and half a deck of pinochle cards. Incidentally, he probably picked up your tennis things that day and brought them back to your apartment before you got there.

"It was easy enough to explain *what* had happened to you. But *why*? *Why* was he attacking you? It struck me that the attacks would mean nothing to him unless he were prepared to take advantage of your reactions to them. But, if he were prepared to take advantage of your reactions, he must have known — *in advance* — how you would react. Could he really predict your behavior? I think he could. He knew — that like all men who draw their arrogance from their positions — you would be utterly lost once you were faced with a major problem that could not be solved by the authority of your position. You'd go to pieces. And that's just what you did. *But* — and now I began to see what he was after — if I, or any of my friends, had taken the mental beating you had taken, we would have looked for help. But not you. Your superiority complex was so fixed in your mind that you would never voluntarily admit any sign of weakness to anyone. You wouldn't go to the police. You wouldn't see a doctor. You told me so. And he knew this, too. But you were being

driven so hard that, sooner or later, you would have to do something. And here's what he was driving you to do: At the psychological moment — when you couldn't stand any more — he would channel your activities in such a way that *you would have to come to him.*

"I knew this instinctively — not in this reasoned form — immediately after you spoke to me that day. But there were two things I didn't know: Who was he? And what did he want with you after he got you? My thought was that the easiest way to find out was to bring about the climax — the events that would drive you to him — as rapidly as possible. I thought, getting you away from New York — permitting him greater control over the environment — might do the trick. I asked that you make no secret preparations for the trip because I wanted to be sure he knew where you were going, and when. I was right. He played it smart — left you alone for a few days, knowing that it would produce a heightened sense of relief, almost gaiety, that would make you all the more susceptible to the shock that came when the man with the broken nose, the Armenian, and the pale young man ganged up on you in the train. After that, when the pale young man suggested Keller, you were putty in his hands.

"The first part of his scheme had worked perfectly. He had driven you to him. But what did he want? I still didn't know. We picked up the Armenian and the man with the broken nose, but they weren't much help. They were private ops who had been hired, instructed, and paid by mail. Later on, though, we picked up the pale young man and he told us what went on in Keller's sanitarium.

"The sanitarium, incidentally, is an old country estate that Keller had rented for four weeks. By the time you got there, the pale young man had convinced you that Keller was the only man in the country who could cure you. He would do it privately and no one would ever know. When you got to the sanitarium, Keller met you in the dark room you told me about, heard your story, then told you politely that he was much too busy with important research to be bothered with you. You offered him money. He refused. You offered him more. He still refused. You went higher and higher. When you reached a quarter of a million, he conceded that the money might help his researches and agreed — but reluctantly. You paid him off with a check on your private account. Then he told you that fantastic yarn you told me, put you under drugs for three weeks, and sent you home — apparently cured — actually, swindled out of a quarter of a million dollars."

For a while Haggerson said nothing. Then he said:

"You've caught him, of course."

"Well —" Magruder said. "There's a little story attached to that. We closed in on the sanitarium after you left. We caught the pale young man,

but Keller had already gone. It didn't worry me, though. I knew we'd get him. You see, he didn't know anything had gone wrong — and he wouldn't. He had paid off his associates, and even if they wanted to warn him, they didn't know if Keller was his real name or where they could get in touch with him. He would never suspect the police were on his trail, because only you could give him away, and he knew you would never go to the police. Your being picked up that day and brought to me was the merest chance and he had no way of knowing it. He would think he was perfectly safe — and, sooner or later, he would try to negotiate your check. When he did, we would be waiting for him.

"As a matter of fact, they just picked him up in your bank on Nassau Street. The call came through while you were talking to me. That's where we're heading."

In a few minutes, the cab pulled up at the curb. They got out. In the lobby a policeman pointed with his head, said to Magruder: "In there."

They walked toward a door marked *Private.*

Magruder said: "You know, Haggerson, this case is only another example of a general tendency in crime. It's a type of crime where the criminal uses his victim's mind. It's amazing what he can do with it. Up to now, though, I've only met amateur criminals of this type. One of these days, I'm going to meet a professional — a real master — a sort of Moriarty of the mind. Off the record, I'm looking forward to it."

"You think Keller is an amateur?" Haggerson said acidly, his voice rising. "You know very well, Magruder, no amateur could have taken me. Plenty of people on the Street have tried it and couldn't. Keller may have tried to swindle me. He may almost have succeeded. But I talked to him. I know him. My opinion of him hasn't changed. He's a great man — a great mind. He's an aristocrat to his very fingertips. He's a man worthy of almost having beaten me."

Magruder opened the door.

Inside the office a man was sitting in a leather-covered chair many sizes too large for him. He was surrounded by four plainclothes men.

When he saw Haggerson, he grinned sardonically, rose, clicked his heels, and bowed stiffly from the waist.

"You two have met before," Magruder said. "May I introduce you formally? Mr. Haggerson — Dr. Keller — Dr. Keller — Mr. Haggerson. If I'm not mistaken, Dr. Keller, your real name is Harry Martin, and you were — until about a month ago — a file clerk in Haggerson's office."

Martin nodded.

Magruder smiled, turned to Haggerson. He saw the look on Haggerson's face — frightened, pained, shocked, like that of a man who had just stopped a sudden, vicious blow with his stomach. Then Magruder realized that for a policeman, the case was over. For a psychiatrist, it had just begun.

*More gleanings from MacKinlay Kantor's copious Notes, Explanations, Digressions, and Elucidations, in his fascinating personal anthology,* AUTHOR'S CHOICE *. . . Mr. Kantor believes that the great majority of readers have an amazing curiosity about how writers work. He goes on to say that most writers are compelled to keep their pencils to the grindstone because of sheer economics. "Most good writers, and bad ones too, are poor people. Their earlier stories get written because they need food and shelter. Their later stories are written because they want Capeharts or Cadillacs or want to go hunting moose.*

*"Occasionally the writer is driven to the creation of a short story solely because of a yeasty emotional fermentation within his soul: his dog has just been run over, a blonde has broken his heart, or he's just visited the children's ward in a hospital. He has witnessed or experienced something which has impelled him to speak out in the only way he knows. Still, most of the stories inspired in such fashion are seldom fit for the pages of popular magazines."*

*In Mr. Kantor's opinion, there are three classes of writers who contribute to the so-called pulp magazines. The largest group are the professional pulp writers — men and women each of whom writes hundreds of thousands of words every year. "Most of them never land in the big money, but average from two to ten thousand dollars a year. A very few, relying on dictaphones and batteries of stenographers, manage to make considerably more . . . But these are minor, unsung Edgar Wallaces, who work by graph and by chart, who manufacture stories at a sweat-shop pace."*

*The second class consists of young writers on the way up — "who regard the cheap magazine market solely as a means toward an end . . . As their skill improves, more and more frequently these writers have their stories accepted by the better magazines and eventually the . . . crime and detective and adventure story magazines become stained little steps in the ladder beneath and behind them."*

*The third group is the most pathetic of all: "a few unfortunates who may have achieved a certain popularity in slick paper at one time . . . but now — unable to continue meeting the excruciating demands of the 'class' editors — are compelled to slide back into the pulp field . . ."*

*Gilbert and Sullivan once said: "A policeman's lot is not a happy one!" A writer's is often worse . . .*

*MacKinlay Kantor belongs to Group Two. He rose from the pulps to*

*become one of the most distinguished and successful "slick-magazine" writers of our time, but always, at one cent a word or at one dollar a word, he wrote with personal integrity and literary sincerity. That is why his early detective stories "stand up"; that is why we have dug into Mr. Kantor's salad-day efforts — to bring you the work of a young writer on his way up. But we disagree with Mr. Kantor that his saga of the Glennan brothers, from "Detective Fiction Weekly" of the early 1930s, is merely a series of "stained little steps in the ladder beneath and behind him." The rungs are not "stained" and while the ladder is undoubtedly behind him, it is certainly not "beneath" him. No really fine story — no, not even a detective story — is beneath any writer . . .*

# SOMETHING LIKE SALMON

*by MacKINLAY KANTOR*

THEY came out of the bank shooting. They had sixty-five thousand dollars in cash and negotiable securities, and they considered that such a sum was worth shooting for.

Even so, everything might have gone smoothly, if old Bradley, the paying teller in cage Number Four, hadn't tried to call the police. Bradley had been with the Millfield Trust Company for a long time, and he had a strong sense of duty. Too strong for his own good.

He staggered back and leaned against the grating, both hands slapping at his round stomach. Then his knees gave way, and down he went.

"Damn lice!" shrieked Ireton, the cashier, with his hands still in the air.

Just for luck, they pounded a couple of bullets toward Ireton and shattered the window behind him. One of the bullets *znnged* close above the head of an attendant at a filling station across the side street. The attendant had been with the Hundred and Twenty-second machine gun battalion, and he knew bullets when he heard them. He ducked behind the station and began to yell at Officer Wean, who was standing down in the next block by a drugstore. Wean started up the street slowly, looking puzzled, and then he heard more shots. He hauled out his gun and began to run.

By that time two of the men had tumbled into the brown sedan in front of the bank, where their driver sat waiting, and the last man was covering their retreat with a noisy Thompson gun. High up under the eaves of the bank, a siren began to squawl; Miss Luella Conway, of the savings department, had overcome her terror and pulled a hidden switch.

Wean stepped behind a lamp-post in front of the filling station and began to shoot. He was a smart old

fellow, and he shot, not at the gunner on the sidewalk, but at the car. It offered a larger target, and if he could puncture the gas tank — He took the glass out of the rear window and put another chunk of steel through the body before the machine gun raked his side. He emptied his gun, hiccoughing and bleeding as he was, before he died.

By that time the big car was halfway up the block, with its machine gunner safe aboard, and people were willing to give it room. Plenty of room. It went through the light at Route 29, and swung east toward Plainfield.

The whole business didn't take more than four minutes. Then the bandits were gone, old Bradley was dead inside the bank, and Officer Joe Wean was dead in front of the gas station. Millfield shook itself and tried to think. . . .

Gus Annas, it turned out, was the only witness who had seen the men enter the bank and seen them come out again. All the time he stood there just inside the window of his Handy Lunch Counter, straight across the main street and on the corner, with a spatula in one hand and a fork in the other, and a hamburger steak burning up behind him. There was one customer in the place, and he saw the bandits go out, but he hadn't seen them go in.

Gus moved as far as the open door, when the crowd began to gallop together, and that was as far as he went. Maybe he thought that more bandits might be waiting to tap his cash register, and he didn't want to take a chance. He scratched his ugly, close-clipped head and pushed his black brows together. This was a bad business, thought Gus Annas. He had been there at that location for twelve years, and never before had he seen the bank robbed. And a lot of people must have been killed . . . yes, it was very bad.

He squinted dourly at the crowd, the running officers, the snorting cars that ranged off in pursuit, the futile doctors who dashed hopelessly from Wean to Bradley and back again. He was still standing there, thinking savagely, the corrugations of his brain seeming to ripple visibly beneath his scalp, when Sergeant Cormaney came over to question him.

Sergeant T. A. Cormaney was the one plainclothes man boasted by the Millfield police force. He was square-shouldered, gray-eyed and muscular, with a thick brown mustache and an immaculate black felt hat too small for his head.

"Well," he said heavily, "they got Wean."

Gus nodded and blinked. "They got him — dead?"

"Yeh. He's dead, all right. Four kids — lucky they're almost grown. And old Bradley, in at the bank."

Gus Annas clicked his tongue. "That all?"

"That's two," Cormaney grunted, "and it oughta be enough. What I wanta know is, did you get a good

look at those guys?"

"Shoo-er," said Gus.

"Tell me about 'em. The folks in the bank say they had handkerchiefs tied around their faces. That right?"

"Yes. They have handkerchiefs on their faces when they get out of the car and run inside."

Cormaney exploded: "Well, why in hell didn't you phone the police?"

Mr. Annas waved his hands sadly. He was overcome, he explained briefly; he had never seen any bank robbers before. He was dazed. First he thought it must be a joke, and then he decided that it wasn't a joke. But by that time all the shooting had begun, and the bandits came running out.

The sergeant grunted and sat down on the stool nearest the cigar counter. Gus looked sheepish and ashamed.

"Gus, you sure haven't been much help. Describe these guys. Go on."

One was tall and thin. He had a — a black suit. And a cap. Another was tall but not so thin, and he wore a gray topcoat. The driver — well, he didn't notice him. But the fourth fellow — the fellow in the blue suit and gray hat with a black band: that fellow Gus knew. Knew him on sight. He had red hair.

"Yeh. Red hair. That's what they told me over there. But you said you know him?"

Gus shrugged. "He come in here and eat."

"When?"

"All days. A week, maybe. Every day he come in here and eat. I look over there and see him just then and I think, shoo-er, that is the fellow that come in here and eat all week."

Cormaney nodded. "Well?"

The bandit in the blue suit, expounded Mr. Annas, had green eyes as well as red hair. And a few freckles. He was a stranger in town, and Mr. Annas had first served him about a week before. He saw him on the street a time or two, and each day the man came to the Handy Lunch for his meals.

"Stranger," echoed the sergeant. "I see. He was the guy who laid out the job for them. Then the whole bunch was strangers. They had him come on to Millfield and look over the place, and get everything sized up, and then he sent for them and the whole bunch pulled the job. Think some more, Gus."

Gus thought, to no great avail.

"I'll go up to the Millfield Hotel," decided Cormaney. "That's the only place that takes transients."

He was back, twenty minutes later. "Yeah. He stayed there, Gus. Millfield Hotel, all week. Registered under the name of John R. Small, Boston, Massachusetts. Maybe that's a lead. Did he give you any name?"

Mr. Annas said: "No." And he suggested that the stranger might have been guilty of false registration — in short, maybe he hadn't used his right name and address.

"Gus," sighed Sergeant Cormaney, "sometimes you make me want to lay down and go to sleep."

Gus knotted his dark brows and looked sad. "I think," he said slowly,

"that his name was something like Salmon."

Cormaney snorted. "Whoever heard of somebody named Salmon!"

"Maybe it was — Catfish. Or Bullhead," suggested Gus feebly.

The sergeant groaned and departed. He went down to the police station, talked to the man at the desk, who had just received a telephone call, and went out to the innocent-looking, high-powered police coupé at the side of the station. He drove rapidly east on Route 29, turned off at the Mountain Forge road and headed up into the Watchung hills.

A few minutes later he stopped his car and got out to join a party of Millfield policemen and state troopers who had surrounded an abandoned brown sedan. There was a bullet hole beside the spare tire, and a dirty handkerchief flung over one of the spokes of the steering wheel.

"You know what that was?" said an officer, authoritatively, as he pointed to the handkerchief. "Fingerprints. Wiped 'em all off, you can bet. Look, that door is even smeared where they wiped it. Bet you won't find a finger-mark on this car."

As it turned out, they did not.

"Hot car," decided one state trooper.

"We'll know as soon as Polson comes back. He went to get a list."

"Probably," adjudged Sergeant Cormaney, "there was a fifth man, who waited here with another car."

Men agreed. "Yeah. And this road is lonely as hell. Likely nobody saw them change cars."

"Anyway, it's on the teletype . . ."

Trooper Polson came shooting around the curve on his motorcycle. He halted, lifted the machine upon its standard, and approached the group. "Here we are. This number. Stolen late last night or early today, in Trenton. Licensed to George MacCracken, a barber."

"We'll get Trenton busy on it," said a captain. But there was no tenor of hope in his voice. A New York gang or a Chicago gang or a Baltimore gang could steal a car in Trenton and drive it up to the Millfield bank. Trenton wouldn't help them any.

Sergeant T. A. Cormaney tugged at his mustache, and thought that he ought to go back and talk to Gus Annas some more. Gus had said . . . "a name like Salmon . . ."

"Gus," Cormaney said plaintively, settling himself upon his favorite stool, "they've been up to that guy's room at the hotel, and they can't find a damn fingerprint. Not that it would help any, maybe, but it's told us this much. The guy is an ex-convict."

It was 3 P.M., a slack hour at the Handy Lunch, and there were no other customers present.

Mr. Annas was standing on a chair, lifting the soggy, hot coffee sack out of the shining urn. He turned and stared down at Sergeant Cormaney. "How you know, huh?"

"Because if he wasn't an ex-con, he wouldn't take the trouble to get rid of 'em. At least he's got a police

record — he's been Bertilloned, somewhere or other, if he never did any time . . . About twenty-eight years old, the folks in the bank said."

Gus shrugged. "Maybe so. Maybe thirty. Maybe twenty-five. And now I think about it a long time" — he gestured expressively with the dripping strainer — "and now I decide he is for sure got a name like Salmon!"

"How you know, huh?" Cormaney gave him a grim leer.

"I know, because —"

Two customers clattered in and demanded hot dogs. The sergeant shook his head at Mr. Annas, and slid off his stool.

"See you later, Gus. Positive about that?"

"Shoo-er. I know. And," Gus bellowed after him, "and from the west, too. I know. I tell you I know!"

Cormaney stared at Gus's strained, scowling face and decided that Gus did know. "I'll be back later," he said, and went out. Down at the station, they talked of the dead Wean in close-clipped monosyllables. Sergeant Cormaney lounged in a wooden chair and whittled dolefully at a match, and nodded or shook his head whenever any remark was addressed to him. "Boys," said the Chief, clearing his husky throat, "I want you to work your tails off on this. We've got to get those —"

The three officers off duty and the three attached on station duty, shuffled their feet. Glancing from face to face, the Chief finally let his eyes come to rest on Cormaney. "Speak up, Tom," he snapped. "Give us the dirt! You've got something under that graveyard hat of yours, or I've known you nine years for nothing."

"Well." The sergeant closed his knife with a click. "We've all guessed that the red-headed guy was an ex-convict, if the rest weren't. We know that job wasn't pulled by amateurs. And on top of that, Gus Annas tells me that he was from out West."

In spite of himself, the Chief grinned. "Annas! What the hell does that Russ Biff Greek know about it?"

"Dumbbell," grunted Officer Borden. "Stood there in the window and watched 'em go in, masked, and never had sense enough to use the phone. Gus is a pretty good fellow, but his brains was left behind him when he come over from the old country."

Cormaney sighed. "We'll see. Some customers came in and interrupted us. I'm going back up there, now."

"Pick him up and bring him down here," said the Chief.

The sergeant displayed mild insubordination. "All right, sir, I will — if you want to have burnt steak and soap in your potatoes. If we treated Gus like we were suspicious of him, he wouldn't never forgive us.

"We eat there and eat right. No, sir, you've got to baby Gus along."

"All right." The Chief scowled. "Chances are he doesn't know beans about it." Then he laughed long and merrily over what he considered an unconscious pun and a very good one. His subordinates sat around and

looked grim. Cormaney strolled up to the Handy Lunch again.

This time Gus was alone once more, but preparing for the early evening rush. He had a great platter of pink tenderloins before him, and was rolling the fragments, patting them into shape with a paste of cornmeal. There was a far-away look in his eyes, a rigidity along his spine. And Cormaney observed that Gus was not at his usual place for such activities, but further down the inside counter next to the pie cabinet and coffee urns. Between these two, directly beneath the painted Bill of Fare which adorned the wall, there hung a colored map of the United States, donated to Gus by an insurance company.

"Gus," began the sergeant, "I want you to tell —"

Annas snapped his warning finger into the air, and Cormaney checked himself. The restaurant proprietor was staring intently at the big map, and was reciting a strange litany under his breath. "Missouri," whispered Mr. Annas. "Nee-braska . . . I'wah — Kansas —"

He swung around and glared fixedly at Sergeant Cormaney. "You must have to work quick, you. Because I have think very hard all day. I have think and remember and think until my head is — ooh! Well, what you do is spend a lotta money for a telegrams."

"Telegrams?"

"A lotta telegrams — many — for maybe ninety cents apiece! You send telegrams to all the jail men in those places" — he motioned to the map — "those places out there, what you call I'wah and Nee-braska and all those towns and places. Right quick!"

The sergeant nodded, humorously. "Suppose I begin west of the Mississippi River, eh? And go up and down a dozen states. Suppose I send a telegram to the warden of each state penitentiary?"

"Shoo-er!" And there was no clownishness about Gus Annas at this moment. He had dropped his tenderloins, and he was leaning across the little counter, his black marble eyes starting in their sockets. "Because I think all day, and I think hard! And maybe you have to send a telegrams to places east of that Old Man River, too. But not so far east as Millfield. No. Not New Juzzy or New Yawk or such far places as us."

Cormaney shivered suddenly — he didn't know why. Gus was in earnest; this was on the square, there could be no doubt of it. "What do you want us to say in the telegrams, Gus?"

"Say —" He pressed his greasy hands against his forehead, and shook his shoulders, as if such concentration must call forth a physical exertion as well. "Say like this: Who is that redhead guy what is got a name like some fish — maybe Salmon — and was in your jail, maybe, and his number it begins with six, five and then I don't know what? Say like that, maybe. And find out if he come from New Juzzy, one time, or why he is here. Six, five — is the number. It begins so. And then, I don't know what. But he is from off there some places."

Cormaney bit his lip. "I've got a good notion to take you up on that, Gus. But first you'll have to come down and tell it to the Chief, so he'll okay the idea. Tell him how you come to think that this guy —"

"No!" howled Mr. Annas. He pointed a stiff finger at the big clock above the pie cabinet. "Maybe I should not be here, when all those guys from the dye works and the roundhouse come here to eat some suppers? Maybe I should lose a lotta money, and not be here? They push and crowd and fight to sit down — a big crowds. No! I tell you tomorrow. You send those telegrams. Quick!"

Sergeant Cormaney went outside, scowling darkly, and with hesitant step he started toward the police station. Halfway down the block he stopped and shoved a hand into his pocket, bringing out a thin wad of bills. "By God," he said softly, "I'm gonna take a chance on that Greek, anyway. Do it on my own, and say nothing. Then there won't be a kick from anybody. I'm a dirty so-and-so if I don't think Gus has got something."

He turned, went up to the telegraph office and despatched a brief and identical telegram to each of nine different state penitentiaries. That was as far as his money ran. But he followed instructions faithfully, if not word for word. A red-headed man, young, name similar to Salmon, recently released or escaped. Prison number beginning with six and five. Wire reply at once if you recognize this description.

A night letter from Lincoln, Nebraska, was handed to Sergeant Cormaney early the next morning. He read it through three times, and then started for the long distance telephone. Only when he had taken the receiver off the hook did he recall that owing to the difference in time, the warden of the Nebraska penitentiary would probably not be in his office at that hour. So he contented himself with sending another telegram.

The answer came several hours later.

HAS SISTER LISTED NEXT OF KIN MRS. ALICE FIGGIS ONE FOUR ONE NINE WYANDOTE STREET NEWARK N J

"Well," muttered Thomas Aquinas Cormaney, as he drew out his service revolver and examined it for possible defects, "I suppose us Irish have got to admit that sometimes a black sheep does creep in. It begins to look like Gus Annas is a spirit medium, or something."

He went in to the Chief, told a vague story about a lead pointing to Newark, and received permission to take the coupé. Twenty-five minutes after that, he was conversing with two detectives at Newark headquarters.

"Yeah," said a veteran Newark detective, holding a typed card close before his eyes, "we got those Figgis's down here. He did a three-year stretch in Pennsylvania, ending in 1923, and was up for questioning a couple of times in booze murders. A bad actor, but we watch him. The woman's got a record in Chicago and Scranton, but

we never hung anything on her here."

"I'd like to go out and take a look," said Cormaney softly.

"Look away, my boy, look away. I'll send Teed and Olson with you. Wish you luck. Probably it won't be anything, but —" He waved his scabby fist. "You never can tell, my boy."

It was still the noon hour when the three men reached Wyandote Street. The dingy factories had a few stray workmen loitering near the entrances, or ambling across the street from lunch rooms and bars. Number One Four One Nine was a scrawny frame house with broken shutters beside the windows; it had been bathed for an eternity in soot and coal smoke.

In a muddy driveway beside the house was parked a battered green Oldsmobile.

Cormaney's eyes narrowed when he saw that car. "He's got a car, eh?"

"Yes," said Teed and Olson.

They circled three-quarters of the way around the block, and parked their own car near the corner of a side street, screened by a brick grocery store from the sight of 1419 Wyandote Street.

"Mind if I — handle this?" asked Cormaney.

"You tell us what to do," said Olson bluntly. "I hate to read about an old cop like your Millfield guy getting pushed off, just when he's ready to retire. If these are the guys, we'll stick right beside you."

Teed grunted. "Probably nothing to this, Sergeant. But — tell us what you want."

For reply, Cormaney fumbled in his pocket and found a large, nickel-plated badge which bore in bold letters, "Fire Inspector." He pinned the badge carefully on his vest. "This is a fake," he explained. "Once I took it off a guy I pulled in. But it's come in handy once or twice. Now, I'm going up to that front door and I'm going in. You," he directed Olson, "hang in the doorway of that grocery and watch the front. You — what's your name? Teed? — you park yourself behind that garage in back, but keep an eye on the rear.

"I may give a high sign, front or back. And if you hear any shooting, of course —"

The front door was of solid wood, unpainted and marred about the base by the marks of many dirty feet. Since there was no glass panel, no one could see T. A. Cormaney, and he kept close to the wall so that he could not be studied from behind the dingy windows.

He had to knock twice before any one answered. It seemed to him that after his first knock, some vibrant life within that house was suspended — some multiple organisms ceased their functioning, and waited in a death trance. Then, the second knock.

A woman's voice said, shrilly, "Who is it?"

"Fire inspector, lady," replied the sergeant in comforting tones.

She seemed to mutter, whether to herself or to someone else he could not be sure. Then there was the scraping of a safety chain inside. The door

opened in a two inch crack; there was a woman's face revealed, fat and dissipated and ugly. "Huh. What do you want, anyway?"

"Lady," said Cormaney, touching his hat, "I'm from the Fire Marshal's office. We got orders to inspect all houses in the factory area."

He waved a leather-covered notebook; it was a police notebook, but she would not know that — it looked innocent enough. He showed his fire badge, . . . "Just take a minute, please —"

She grunted, but the suspicion in her voice was dead, and there was only a stubborn surliness. "I'm sorry, but it ain't convenient to have you come in today."

"Oh, that's all right." He made a show of wiping his feet on a rotting fibre mat beside the door. "Don't mind a muss, lady. I'm used to —"

"No. You can't come in now. My — my daughter's taking a bath —" And then, since Sergeant Cormaney had learned at headquarters that the Figgis family consisted of only Mr. and Mrs., he knew that he was growing warm.

He chuckled: "Lady, I don't have to go in the bathroom —" and when he said "bathroom" she tried to slam the door. She succeeded in giving his foot a pinch, but not a very serious one.

"Sorry." Then he was inside, there in that stuffy, cold hallway with the door open behind him. "You're liable to get into trouble," he warned her. "This here fire inspection is orders, and we got to —'

Then there was a man who opened a door at the rear of the hall. It was Figgis — they had his picture downtown. "What the hell's coming off?"

"Kick this bum outa here," she screeched, and the man slid a hand toward his coat.

"Fire inspector, mister. We got to look at —"

The man snarled, "Alice." And his manner was fawning and supercilious as he dropped his hand and turned, grinning, to face Cormaney. "We was just having a friendly little game, buddy. Hope you don't mind —"

"Naw." The sergeant laughed easily. "I ain't a cop, hunting for gamblers — though I do use a drink now and then . . . Just let me look at your furnace and chimney pipe —"

"In here." Figgis stood aside and motioned for Cormaney to come through the door. Its solid blankness masked the larger half of the room, but the crack between door and casing, spread by wide hinges, gave Cormaney a brief and narrow flash at the space beyond. There were men there, some sitting and some standing, and he caught the dull flash of a blue-steel gun . . .

He caught Figgis by the wrist, swinging him into a jujitsu spin that brought the man's back against his chest. His own gun was out, and slid between Figgis' arm and side before the man could more than gasp.

"Come out, boys," he said calmly. "There's more of us outside, and I got your man right in front of me —"

A gun *bammed*. "The hell you say," cried an hysterical voice, and Cormaney felt the jar as a bullet planted itself in the body of his prisoner and shield. He fired twice, through the crack of the door. Someone hooted — a body tumbled, and there was the crash of heavy steel. "That's the Tom-gun," thought Cormaney, "on the floor —" He fired again. Something clipped his ear; a heavy timber seemed to slam against his left arm. He dropped the reeling Figgis and fell back beside the staircase.

The woman had gone out of the front door, screeching, crazy and dangerous, but unarmed. Olson met her on the steps and thoughtfully tripped her over on the turf below as he plunged upon the porch. Teed, with his mighty weight, caved in the flimsy kitchen door. Someone bawled, "Okay," and through the rank haze they could see two men with their hands up. The other two were on the floor. One was dead, killed by Cormaney's first shot, and the other was a young red-head with green eyes and an evil mouth, who lay there gasping for breath. The dead Figgis lay in the doorway, and the blood from Cormaney's forearm splashed down upon him.

"God," breathed Cormaney, grinning painfully, "you Newark cops — are — fast on your feet. I forgot to tell you. We'll split a grand — on these guys. We and — another guy."

By nine o'clock that evening, his forearm was still paining him, but it was safely wadded in splints and gauze and cotton; Cormaney felt that a little walk would do him good. He found Gus Annas in the Handy Lunch Counter, leaning hairy arms on the counter and grinning sagely.

"Well," said Cormaney, "I suppose you heard all the news."

Annas nodded. "How is it your arm, huh?"

"Won't be able to use it for weeks." Cormaney swore, and not unhappily.

"You know, they had the whole sack right there in that kitchen. The woman had got a little split, and the money was in her dress, but they hadn't carved up the rest of the roll yet." He added absently, "I just phoned the Chief. The red-head died in the hospital an hour ago. Cussing hell out of New Jersey."

Gus Annas lit a cigarette.

"Well?" urged the sergeant. "Spill it. How'd you know that guy was an ex-con with number six five and the rest?"

"You know, there are big crowds in here for supper, huh? I only got fourteen stools. The guys what like my food, they come here in a crowds. I give out numbers — like this." He exhibited several squares of greasy red cardboard. "Like a barber shop what is crowded, see? A man get up from the stool. I say Number One, and Number One he sits down to eat. Another man get up. Number Two —"

He scrolled up the tight skin on his forehead. "So one night last week, the red-head he is here. He waits in the crowd against the wall. We got

rotten restaurants in town, huh? Except mine . . . And I think it is his turn, and I say, quick, 'What is your number?' He stand up quick and stiff and look at me and he says, 'Six five —' and some more. I think that is funny. And then I forget. He laughs and then says: 'Oh, I didn't know what you meant. I got Number Eight.'

"But I remember that, when you say ex-convict from a jails. I know about numbers. My cousin he was in jails for bootleg."

Cormaney sighed, and rubbed his bandaged arm with tender fingers. "They spotted that number and the description out at Lincoln, right off. He lammed outa there a month ago. So when I asked them if he had any yen for New Jersey, they shot me that Newark address. I just followed it up and —"

"And from the West," chanted Gus Annas. "Nee-braska. Once I have a place in Omaha. I work in Des Moines and Saint Jo and Topeka, too, when I first come here. Out there it is chili, chili, chili — all the time chili."

Sergeant Cormaney wagged his head. "What you mean? Chili sauce?"

"No. The Mexico stuff — chili con carne. Everybody! Some lunch room have nothing else. But here, no. Nobody eat chili here — not much. No diners got any chili. So one time, when he first come in here, I know he is from away out West. He say, 'Give me chili.' Like that. 'A bowl of chili. Give me.' He is not from New Juzzy."

Cormaney slid slowly off the stool "Gus, you got too damn many brains. More than two hundred and fifty dollars' worth, anyway — which is what we drag out of the bank's first offer. And maybe more! Now comes the saddest part. I want you to tell me," said Thomas Aquinas Cormaney, "how you remembered that Irishman's name. Like salmon, you insisted. And it was Lawrence Tooney."

Gus nodded soberly, and pushed out his cigarette. "I cannot remember so good, see. I think maybe that day we have salmon and potato salad — then I think maybe codfish in tomato sauce. But no. It was tuny fish. Tuny fish and potato salad. Every once in awhile I call back to the kitchen for an order: *Russ pork! Vill cutlets!* And for tuny fish with potato salad, all I call, always is *tuny!* I say it: *tuny!* This fellow jump out of his stool like I have call his name; he look at me — he look at the menu — then he sit down again, see. And I know then that his name, it is something like salmon!"

"Tuna fish!" gasped Cormaney. "*Tuny.* . . ." And then for the first time, he nearly fainted away.

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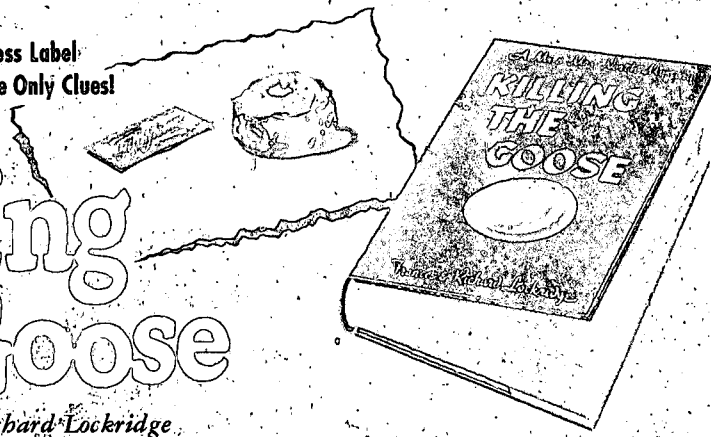


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