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ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

FRANCES & RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

engrossing new story

FEBRUARY 35¢

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H. C. Bailey

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ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

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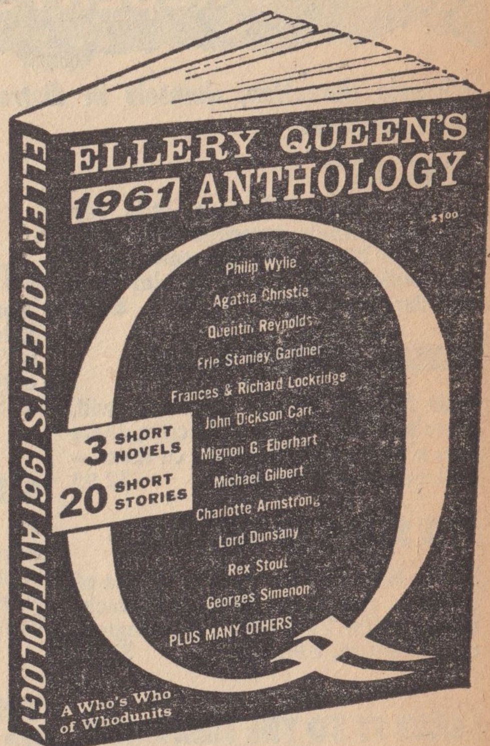

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a new story by

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHORS:	**Frances & Richard Lockridge**
TITLE:	***A Winter's Tale***
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Captain H.L. Heimrich
LOCALE:	Near Van Brunt, New York
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*The tale of an old man in an old barn of a house on a cold, cold winter's day . . . and of Captain's Heimrich's concern.*

At a quarter after one on a Wednesday afternoon in mid-January, Florrie Watson parked her battered sedan and for a moment sat in it shivering, hugging a worn cloth coat around her. But there wasn't any use sitting there dreading it.

So she opened the car door, stepped out into the raging northwest wind, and ran—was half blown, for she was a little woman and not a young woman—to the kitchen door of the big drafty house on the hilltop. She had her key ready, turned it in the old-fashioned lock, tugged the door open, and let the wind slam it to behind her. It made noise enough, she thought, to wake the dead.

It was warm in the house and she took her coat off and hung it up before she did anything else. She found that she was listening for the old man to growl at her, to tell her angrily that she was late again. But there was no sound in the house, except the sound of the wind.

Florrie went into the living room, where she always started, and there was Aaron Stark, lying on the floor, wearing a nightshirt and a bathrobe over it. The low winter sun glared in through a window and he was lying on a rug in a patch of sunlight.

She called his name and then, again, more loudly, "Mr. Stark!" Then she made herself touch him. She had wasted breath calling him.

She had to go back into the bitter wind—it had been eight above when she left home and didn't seem to be getting any warmer—and drive half a mile to the nearest house because there was no telephone in the old Stark house. There had been one until about a year before, but Aaron Stark had quarreled with the telephone company with everybody—and jerked the instrument out of the wall, carried it out to the road, and thrown it down hard on the pavement. Which, he told Florrie, would teach them.

At the nearest neighbor's house Florrie Watson called the State Police.

The news that old Stark had died alone in his big barn of a house, four miles or so from Van Brunt Center, spread quickly. It was, people said, an awful thing to happen to anybody—to any old man, alone in a big drafty house. When they said "anybody" there was a just perceptible emphasis on "any"—as if the term were being stretched to include Aaron Stark.

That was the way people who lived in the town of Van Brunt felt about Aaron Stark, the old skinflint. People who knew Mary Phipps and her daughter Joan had even harder words for him. A man who won't help out his relatives when they are in bad trouble and he's got plenty is "no kind of a man." This was freely said by friends of Mary Phipps while Stark was alive, and when he was dead there were some who said, and many who thought, that now his money—of which it was generally agreed he had plenty—would go where it was needed, where it would do some good.

Captain M. L. Heimrich, of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, New York State Police, heard of Stark's death at around eight o'clock Wednesday evening. He went out of the biting cold—the forecast was for zero to ten below in Northern Westchester and Putnam counties, and Heimrich didn't doubt it for a minute—into the warm taproom of the Old Stone Inn at Van Brunt Center. He went, as any sensible man would on such a night, to the bar and Harold, the barman, pouring, said, "Hear about old Stark?"

Heimrich shook his head.

"Dead," Harold said. "Bad thing to happen to *any*body, dying alone that way." And he told Heimrich that the doc—"this new man, Smith; Doc Bender's in town at a meeting or something"—said that Stark had been dead twenty-four hours when he, as acting coroner, examined the body. At least twenty-four hours.

"Except," Harold said, detective to detective, "I'd figure it was longer, because that would make it yes-

terday afternoon, and what was he doing in a nightshirt in the afternoon?"

Heimrich said "Hmmm" in appreciation of this reasoning. He took his drink over to the fireplace and stood with his back to fire. "Probably woke up in the morning not feeling so good," Heimrich said, "and had a stroke. He must have been near eighty."

Actually, Heimrich was not too interested; he had known of Aaron Stark, but not known him. Surely Stark had died of natural causes or Heimrich would have heard by now, and death from natural causes, however sudden, is not a concern of Heimrich's. His concern is with homicide.

So Heimrich warmed his back, and then the bar telephone rang and Harold said into it, "Yep. Just come in."

Heimrich sighed. He went to the telephone and listened to an official voice. He said, "Okay. May as well start at the house," and finished his drink and put the glass down on the bar. Harold was looking at him. Harold might as well know—everybody would know soon enough. Things get around.

"Stark died of a fractured skull," Heimrich said, and went out of the taproom into the cold night and drove four miles to a hilltop and a lighted house. It was warm in the house. Little shivers of cold air roamed through it, but it was warm enough. Hot air poured up from an old-fashioned floor register. Heimrich could hear the furnace throbbing in the basement, straining against the cold.

The body had been removed hours before. Two State Troopers were waiting for Heimrich. "Florrie Watson found him," one of them said. "She worked for him. Part time," and was asked if he knew where Florrie Watson lived. He did. She lived a mile and a half down the road.

"Go get her," Heimrich said and the trooper went, and Heimrich looked the house over.

It was a big house, an old house. Little money had been spent on it in many years, Heimrich thought. The wind whined in around loose-fitting windows, and scurried in under the kitchen door. It was surprising that it was as warm as it was, and Heimrich glanced at the thermostat and saw it was set for 80.

He went up a flight of stairs, opened a door, and a rush of cold air met him. The upper floor, evidently was not used; certainly was not heated. He went down the stairs, opened another door, and looked into darkness. The throbbing of the furnace was louder. He found Stark's bedroom, saw that the bed had been slept in but not made up.

Then the trooper brought in Florrie Watson—Mrs. Florence Watson, a little woman with red hands and straggling gray hair.

"I just thought he'd had a stroke or something," Florrie said. "I didn't dream."

Heimrich was gentle. He was sorry he had had to ask her to come out on a night like this.

"This *weather,*" she said. "Monday you wouldn't have thought it was January. Like April almost. And then like this."

People will talk about the weather under almost any circumstances, Heimrich thought; they will escape to the trivial, the safe.

"Yes," he said. "Where did you find him, Mrs. Watson?"

It had been about there, and she pointed. Near the center of the living room; near the center of an oval hooked rug. "In the sun." She had known at once that he was dead. She had called him, but known it was no good. Yes, the house had been locked when she came. The locks were not snap locks; you had to use the key. She came at one every afternoon, except Sunday, and worked until five, cleaning up and preparing dinner for Stark to warm up later when he wanted it. Breakfast and lunch he got for himself.

Heimrich said, "*Every* weekday? Then—"

"Not yesterday," she said. "I had one of my sick headaches. I started out and almost got here but I felt so sick—well, I just turned around and drove back home." She stopped suddenly. "If," she said, "if I'd come on I—I could have done something. That's what you mean?"

"Now Mrs. Watson," Heimrich said. "It isn't very likely you could have done anything for him. Just found him already dead, probably. He would have had to let in anyone who came? I mean, he always kept the doors locked?"

Always, so far as she knew. And she had the only extra key she knew about. Not that anybody ever came.

Somebody had come, Heimrich told her. That was clear enough.

"The trooper said he fractured his skull," Mrs. Watson said. "Couldn't he have fallen down and—?"

Heimrich shook his head. Stark had fallen, apparently, on the rug. If he had had a stroke, or merely fainted, he would almost certainly have slumped down, not fallen hard. And fallen on the padding of the rug. A fairly thick rug.

She didn't know. People never came. People didn't like him.

"You didn't like him?" Heimrich asked.

"Not to say liked," Florrie Watson said. "Put up with. It wasn't too far to come and I've got to work some place. Nag, nag, nag all the time, but I got so I didn't listen."

"About the way you worked?"

"About everything. Wasting things, mostly. I don't waste. Not what you'd call waste. But what he called it—Well, he's dead now. The poor old thing."

Speak no evil, however tempted.

"Somebody came," Heimrich said. "Somebody killed him. Who would want to more than anyone else?"

She didn't know. But she hesitated, so Heimrich waited.

"Well," she finally said, "I don't like to say it. The girl said some mean things to him. Monday afternoon, that was. I don't know as I blame her, but—"

The girl was Joan Phipps, Aaron Stark's second cousin. She had come about four o'clock on Monday afternoon. She had quarreled with the old man and said that men like him ought to be dead.

"Not that I listened," Florrie Watson said. "More than I could help, anyway. But she raised her voice. And not that I blame her, mind you."

But that was Monday. Twenty-four hours from early Wednesday afternoon do not stretch back to Monday. However—

Joan Phipps had still been in the house on Monday when Florrie left at five o'clock. Talking loudly. "About money," Mrs. Watson said. "I can't deny I heard that much. Or that she and her mother need it—need it bad. You'd think even *he*—but there, he's dead now, the poor old soul."

Heimrich had known Mary Phipps, Aaron Stark's cousin and now presumably his heir—known her slightly, incuriously, as one knows a pleasant, hurried waitress. She had sometimes served Heimrich at the Old Stone Inn. A plump, quick, smiling woman in her late forties she was.

Driving from the drafty house toward "The Flats," Heimrich recalled vaguely that she had quit the job sometime in the early fall. Something about her health. Yes, that was it.

He drove slowly on NY 11-F, which is Van Brunt Avenue through the Center, but only a number when it reaches the closely set, rundown little houses of "The Flats." He kept his spotlight on rural mail boxes. At one marked "Phipps" he pulled to the side of the road.

The little house seemed to shake in the wind as he stood on the porch and knocked. After some seconds the door opened with a kind of violence and a tall, gangling girl looked at him. She said, "What do you want?"—with anger in her young voice. Heimrich told her who he was. The girl said, "How do I know?"—and Heimrich showed his badge.

It was not warm in the room she led him into—the room reeked of kerosene from a two-burner heater, but the room was not warm. The girl wore sweater over sweater, and a woolen skirt. She was, Heimrich guessed, about sixteen—tall and thin, with high shoulders, with cheekbones which made her face a triangle, with very wide eyes. And with red hair. The mouth was wide, too, its corners turned

down—in a bitter mouth. Altogether, a sulky, angry girl. Quite possibly with reason, Heimrich thought, and asked if he could see her mother.

"No, you can't," Joan Phipps said. "She's sick. You can leave her alone." She did not suggest that he sit down; she stood herself. "Leave us both alone," she said. "That's what everybody does." She was a lean young cat, snarling and spitting at the world.

"It's about your cousin," Heimrich said. "Your mother's cousin."

"All right," the girl said. "So he's dead. How do they tell the difference?"

Heimrich said, "Now, Miss Phipps."

"You want me to cry?" she said. "Go boo-hoo? Because he was always so good to us? Helped when it happened to mother? When I had to quit school? When all he had to do—" She made an angry gesture with her thin hands.

"You told him this on Monday?" Heimrich said. "When you went there. When—"

"Say it," the girl said. "When I went begging. When—" Again she stopped, but this time, Heimrich thought, there was wariness in the wide, red-brown eyes. "So what?" she said. "He didn't give me anything. He didn't die of giving me something. Not that it wouldn't have killed him."

"He died," Heimrich said, "of a fractured skull. From a blow of some sort. You went to ask help. He refused. You were angry. You shouted at him."

"Florrie Watson," Joan said. "Couldn't wait to blab, could she?"

But the voice was not the same. She was keyed up to my coming, Heimrich thought, keyed up to attack. Only she's a hurt child. Not what she wants to think she is. And—a frightened child?

"A fractured skull?" she said, and Heimrich merely nodded his head. "It couldn't be," she said. "All I did—you're trying to trick me."

"No," Heimrich said. "You hit him?"

"She can't live like this," the girl said. "Look—she can hardly move. When I have to go to work and leave her and—" She changed again. "You're like all of them," she said. "People like us are made to be pushed around. Just the way he—"

There could be no doubt why she stopped this time.

"He pushed you?" Heimrich said. "And—"

"Said things," she said. "All right, you've got what you came after. Things about—about mother. And grabbed me and started to push and—I tell you, *I won't be pushed!* I won't—" But now she was near to tears.

"You hit him?" Heimrich said. "With what?"

"This," she said, and shook her closed right fist. Two knuckles of

the fist were still reddened, bruised.

"He fell?"

"Fell? Of course not. He said—he called me a name and started toward me again—and I ran. And he locked the door after me. I heard it. So he was all right and—" Once more she stopped. "He *was* all right?" she said, and questioned like a child.

"It doesn't always take much," Heimrich said. "How was he dressed, Miss Phipps?"

She repeated vaguely, "Dressed?" And then she said that Stark had worn ordinary things—gray trousers and a sweater, she thought.

"Joan?" a shaking voice called from another room—from, Heimrich suspected, the only other room. "Is somebody there?"

The girl looked at Heimrich. And Heimrich shook his head, turned to the door, and went out of the little house.

He would have to come back, of course—first check with the doctor and then come back—when he had verified formally what he knew to be true: that a relatively light blow may fracture a thin skull; that the victim may not lose consciousness for hours and then go into a coma and die; that a man hurt that way might very well lock a door and even undress and go to bed and wake up later and start a search for help. And die hours after the blow. Of—what was it?—a subdural hemorrhage in the brain. That was it. So an angry girl, striking back like a child, might have killed the old man.

The radio in Heimrich's car squawked at him. He was to telephone Dr. Robert Bender, county coroner, at his first opportunity. Heimrich telephoned from the inn. He listened. He said, *"What?"* in a tone of incredulity. Then, "Come again, Doctor."

"A quite easy mistake to make," Dr. Bender said. "Even a much more experienced man might have been misled during a preliminary examination. With further examination, Dr. Smith himself would—er—have realized that the fracture was post-mortem. I don't doubt that. I—"

"All right," Heimrich said. "I've no doubt Dr. Smith is a very able man. Ice in the skull expands and separates skull sutures and—"

"The coronal suture in this case," Dr. Bender said. "Very similar to an ante-mortem fracture on first—"

"All right, Doctor," Heimrich said. "What you're telling me now is that old Stark *froze* to death. And that his brain turned to ice, expanded, and broke his skull? And that if he was hit earlier, say, that had nothing to do with his death?"

"That's it," Dr. Bender said. "Got to you with it as fast as I could."

Heimrich thanked him for that much and put the telephone back in its cradle. He looked hard at it as if it were to blame.

It had been so simple—an angry child, a blow, an old man's thin skull. And now— Now he had a man freezing to death in a warm house—a house with a thermostat set at 80°. Because nobody would have gone out of a house in nightshirt and bathrobe with the bottom falling out of the thermometer and stayed outside long enough to freeze—and then— Then what? Walked back in again and lain down on the living-room rug?

A problem for a detective—a nagging problem. Nagging? Why —?

Oh, Heimrich thought, and made two telephone calls. Power had not been off Monday night in the area. The five hundred and fifty gallon oil tank in the basement of Aaron Stark's house had been filled only a week before. So.

Heimrich went back into the cold night and drove away. He drove past Stark's big, drafty house and a mile and a half on down the road. Florrie Watson was still up—it was as if she had been waiting. She looked up at him with fear, without surprise.

"Mrs. Watson," Heimrich said, and went into the very warm—the almost stifling—living room of her little house. "Mrs. Watson, Mr. Stark froze to death. You knew that, didn't you?"

She pushed at straggling gray hair and looked quickly away, and then nodded her head.

"You did go to the house yesterday," Heimrich said. "And turned the furnace on again, and the thermostat up high. When you found him dead. Thinking—thinking nobody'd ever know you'd turned the furnace *off* the day before?"

"He was always nagging," the little woman said in a voice from far away. "How was I to know it would get so cold?"

The radio had carried the forecast, the warning of a severe cold wave. It had been in all the newspapers. Which didn't matter too much.

"He always kept the place like a morgue," she said in the same distant voice. "Wouldn't let me turn the thermostat up—wasted oil, he said. Always nagging about it. I said, 'You want me to get pneumonia?' and—" Her voice died away. Heimrich waited.

"Put the mop and things back in the basement before I left Monday," she went on. "And there was the switch—the furnace switch—and I thought, I'll show him. I'll save his oil for him." Again she stopped. But then she put her hands up to her flat chest and began to back away from Heimrich.

"I didn't know!" she said, and her voice was almost a scream. "I didn't mean it to happen. *All I wanted was to teach him a lesson!"*

Drafty old houses on hilltops—such houses cool quickly when the wind rages and the temperature drops hard. Old men might wake up shivering in such houses, get

out of bed to find out what had gone wrong, get up too suddenly into bitter cold. Faint from shock, perhaps? They would never know, precisely. That, also, didn't matter too much.

Mrs. Watson had taught her lesson, if that was really all she had had in mind. Others would have to decide about that.

"You'd better come along with me, Mrs. Watson," Heimrich said kindly. "Wrap up warm. It's cold outside."

***Another one-page riddle story—and again* caveat lector!**

DEAD HEAT

by JUAN PAGE

THE RACE WAS FIXED. THE ORDER OF FINISH HAD BEEN SET, AND MONEY had changed hands before any of the riders had got a leg up on his mount. The jockeys were determined to make it look good, and only the horses seemed not to know that they couldn't win.

The foam-flecked black stallion, his eyes rolled back and showing only white, was making his bid on the outside. With the bit in his teeth, he was running neck and neck with the lovely little chestnut filly on the rail. The two seemed tied together, matching stride to stride—he, lunging roughly against the rein, his lips drawn tightly back revealing his wickedly clenched teeth, and she, skimming daintily along, gently playing with the bit between her soft velvety lips.

Just behind plunged a riderless horse in hot pursuit, and always ahead were the heels of the horses which were destined to finish in front of them.

On they ran, their jockeys wildly imploring even more speed, head and head, nose and nose, straining toward the finish, each calling on its utmost strength to forge ahead . . .

CHALLENGE TO THE READER: Place your bets, ladies and gentlemen. Study the form chart above and then turn to page 27 to see how successful a handicapper you are.

DISCOVERY

Meet an "unknown" lady detective

A new story by H. C. Bailey, creator of the famous Reggie Fortune? Well, no—not quite; but so far as we have been able to check, "A Matter of Speculation" has never been published in the United States before, and so far as we have been able to verify, this "unknown" story has never appeared in any of H. C. Bailey's published books. So "A Matter of Speculation" is a genuine detective-story discovery. Moreover, it introduces a "new" lady criminologist—the Hon. Victoria Pumphrey, in the case that started her career as a private inquiry agent.

SPECIAL NOTE: *This story has another important meaning for us. Publication rights were acquired early in 1960—in the 20th year of EQMM. "A Matter of Speculation" represents the 2500th story purchased by your Editors for EQMM . . . It seems especially fitting that Story Number 2500 should not only give you an opportunity to go back to The Golden Age of the Detective Story but should also be, in the 20-year tradition of "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine," a discovery of historical significance in the genre we all love so deeply . . .*

A MATTER OF SPECULATION

by H. C. BAILEY

THE PUMPHREYS CAME OVER WITH the Conqueror and did very well out of it. For many centuries they continued to prosper. Then they became respectable.

The cause of this unfortunate change in the character of the family is not known. The result was that the estate which had made the fourteenth Baron Pumphrey the richest man in the Midlands dwindled till the eighteenth (and last) Lord Pumphrey left his only daughter nothing but her name.

Priddle, Finch and Pollexfen did not come over with the Conqueror. Probably they were here before. Other lawyers who have had to do business with them declare that their methods were formed in the Stone Age. They have been family solicitors as long as families have had solicitors. Young Mr. Pollexfen (he is not much turned sixty)

had a great battle with Mr. Eldon Finch before he was allowed to bring a woman typist into the office.

You are now to behold Miss Pumphrey wondering why she ever asked for the job. A large, fair, benign girl, she sat doing nothing in the corner of a musty room, also inhabited by three aged clerks and a small boy. It was her usual occupation after lunch. She looked very inappropriate. The firm is not of those which spend money on premises or furniture. In the precincts of Gray's Inn there is no office more decrepit. And the Hon. Victoria Pumphrey is rather like an apple tree flowering in sunshine.

Into that office came a grave man who said mournfully that he was Mr. Wilson Ellis. He had little gray whiskers; he wore a frock coat as if he were born in it; he might have been a statesman of Queen Victoria's bright youth.

He saw the Hon. Victoria Pumphrey and was deeply affected. He blushed like a nice boy, but horror seemed to be what he felt most. He gobbled a little. And Miss Pumphrey smiled on him and he was led away to the presence of young Mr. Pollexfen and stayed till closing time.

But when he came out he looked still more unhappy. Victoria, emerging in her hat from the cupboard which she used as a cloakroom, gave him another smile of consolation. This sort of thing makes some women nasty about her. Mr. Wilson Ellis murmured, made way for her, and opened the door for her.

On the dark and creaking stairs he coughed, as one who humbly desires attention. Victoria waited for him. "I beg your pardon, Ma'am," he purred. "If quite convenient, could I speak to you?"

"Do speak, Mr. Ellis," said Victoria.

Mr. Ellis bowed and held up his cane to a taxi. He crowded himself into one corner, giving Victoria most of the seas. He looked at her with deferential devotion.

Mr. Wilson Ellis has been called the last of the butlers. Others may have as much of the technique, none so much of the spirit of that noble profession. While he was making the Marquess of Gloucester the happiest of men, Lord Pumphrey and his daughter were often at the house and won that devotion which Mr. Ellis always had to offer to an old title and a fine woman.

"I beg your pardon, Ma'am. I don't exactly know how to begin. I have got something in my mind, but I don't quite see my way. If you wouldn't mind taking tea in my little place—"

The taxi stopped at a large new stone building behind Piccadilly, a block of service flats. Victoria was escorted into a room on the ground floor which was a copy of Lord Gloucester's famous Adam library.

She gazed about her with big, wondering eyes, and turned them on Ellis; Ellis murmured that his gentleman had always been very kind and perhaps he had been a little fortunate, and it was drawn out of him that he managed the whole place—in fact, he owned it.

He gave her tea—very much the butler. And Victoria, who had not been so beautifully served for years, wondered what on earth the old fellow had up his sleeve.

So, after the last of the potted char sandwiches: "I didn't know you were a client of Mr. Pollexfen's Ellis," said she.

"Rightly speaking, I'm not, Ma'am."

"Did you come there to look for me?" Victoria smiled.

"No, Ma'am. I had no idea. It gave me quite a turn." He wrung his hands. "If I may say so, it don't seem right to me."

"One must live, Ellis."

"You and that Mr. Pollexfen—begging your pardon, Ma'am!"

"But he's a harmless little man."

Ellis sighed. "I put him down as having no feelings, Ma'am. No fine feelings." He shook a mournful head.

Victoria laughed. "Well, what are you going to do about it, Ellis?"

"I should judge there could be something more fitting," he coughed, "and more remunerative."

"My dear man, do you want a typist?"

"I wouldn't suggest it, Ma'am." Ellis was horrified. "I don't rightly see my way. But I'd be very thankful for your advice. And I don't know but what something might lead to something. Maybe you happen to remember the Madans, Ma'am? The Hereford Madans. Very old family."

"I thought they were extinct."

"Oh, no, Ma'am, not at all. Mr. Oliver Madan, he must be quite an old gentleman now—matter of seventy; he's always been a kind of hermit, so to speak. He's never had his health. A martyr to rheumatoid—rheumatoid arthritis: a kind of gout, so I understand, Ma'am."

"I remember. Very gouty indeed. Twisted and peppery. He's the only Madan extant, isn't he?"

"In a manner of speaking, Ma'am. He's the head of the family, and he never married. But there is a young lad who comes of a younger branch, such a nice boy, son of a naval officer who was killed at Jutland. His mother died giving him birth. He's quite alone, poor child, and the father left him very little."

"What's Mr. Oliver Madan doing about it?"

Ellis shook his head. "It's been very difficult to approach Mr. Madan. I'm afraid he's rather hard, Ma'am. He wrote that he could admit no claim."

"Dear fellow. And who's looking after the boy, Ellis?"

Ellis looked profound. "After all,

he's generally thought the heir to the Madan property. I consider it in the light of a speculation, Ma'am."

"Where is the boy?" said Victoria. Ellis murmured the name of a most exclusive and expensive preparatory school. "You do the thing handsomely don't you?"

"Oh, no, Ma'am, I assure you. It's just business with me—strictly business."

"Then let's come to it."

"Well, Ma'am, the trouble is there's another Madan cropped up, as you might say. Last month there was a gentleman came to Mr. Oliver Madan and said he was his grand-nephew from Australia." Ellis put his fingertips together and looked at them sadly. "That is what I went to see Mr. Pollexfen about, Ma'am."

"Help!" said Victoria. "It's like a telegram sent by someone saving money. I suppose it means something, but it doesn't make sense. You've left out too many words, Ellis. First question: where does Oliver Madan live? Secondly: how on earth do you know about this man coming to him? Thirdly and lastly, what do you want to do about him?"

Ellis smiled. "So kind of you to take an interest, Ma'am," he murmured. "Mr. Oliver Madan has a house at Babraham Hoo, near Peterborough, in the Fen country, I understand."

Victoria said, "My hat!"

"Quite a fine old house, I'm told. There is a friend of mine with Lord Thornley in the neighborhood who is so good as to let me know if anything occurs."

"Deeper and deeper. You've been having him watched?"

Ellis shifted in his chair. "In a manner of speaking. Just in the interests of the boy, you understand, Ma'am. Now, you see, if this gentleman from Australia who says he is Frank Madan, really is, then he would be the heir and—"

"And that's an end of your little speculation."

"Exactly so, Ma'am. You see, there certainly was a Madan who went to Australia. Quite a while ago, in the gold rush. And, of course, he may have married and—"

"And this man may be his lawful descendant, as right as rain. Bad luck, Ellis."

"Very bad luck for the boy." Ellis looked at her. "Such a nice boy, Ma'am."

"Ellis," said Victoria sternly, "don't be sentimental. I am not, I assure you. Has old Mr. Madan accepted this heir from Australia?"

"My information is that he has received him."

"Well, what about it? If the head of the family is satisfied, that's that."

Ellis coughed. "Mr. Oliver is a very old gentleman and an invalid. I couldn't say I'd take his judgment. There's been claimants to es-

tates before, Ma'am, and from Australia, too. And old folks have accepted them."

"What, like the Tichborne claimant? He came from Wagga Wagga, or somewhere, didn't he? Deeper and deeper."

"Just so, Ma'am. That was why I called on Mr. Pollexfen. His firm are the lawyers to the Madan family. They have been for generations."

"Well, did it cut any ice?"

"None at all, Ma'am. On the contrary, Mr. Pollexfen was extremely difficult."

"You surprise me."

"He seemed to me to suggest that I was impertinent," said Ellis sadly. "I put it to him, Ma'am, that I was only there in the interests of the boy—such a nice boy!—and the real interests of the family. I'm afraid he has not the feelings of a gentleman. He kept on telling me it was all quite irregular. He won't do anything."

"That seems quite like our Mr. Pollexfen," Victoria admitted. "But what about it, Ellis? Where do I come in?"

"I had hopes that you might be willing to undertake a little—er—a little commission. He hesitated over the word. "Something quite correct, Ma'am. I mean to say, if you could see your way to go down and take a look at things at Babraham Hoo and this Australian person, it would be a great kindness to me and the boy—such a—"

"Don't say that again or I shall scream. My good Ellis, how on earth can I go to Oliver Madan's?"

Ellis smiled. "You always had such tact, Ma'am. And you have met Mr. Oliver Madan, to be sure."

"Centuries ago. When I was a schoolgirl. What of it? How can I tell if his Australian is genuine or spurious?"

"Oh, Ma'am!" Ellis smiled. "That's just what you *would* know. A lady like you. If you could see your way, it would be the greatest service. And, of course, any fee—I should be only too happy—and the matter of expenses—I do assure you, Ma'am, it would be worth anything you please to me to get your opinion."

Thus, Miss Pumphrey is wont to say, was she launched on her present profitable career of crime. But she considers that she always had a bent for it.

In the morning Mr. Pollexfen received a telegram which said that Miss Pumphrey had influenza, while an express was carrying her to Peterborough. The well-fed Bradford merchant in the other corner of her carriage, faced by a large and comely woman who was continuously amused, became uncomfortable. He deceived himself. The smiles and little gurgles of Miss Pumphrey were not caused by any interest in him, but by concentration of thought, which often has this effect upon her.

She was endeavoring to make up her mind whether she was playing the fool. Why she had accepted Ellis's commission she knew very well. Six months of typing for Mr. Pollexfen had made her ready to do anything that might become a woman for a change. Whether Ellis was the simple, sentimental philanthropist he seemed, or the speculator he pretended, she had no opinion, but his rise to opulence impressed her.

Ellis seemed to be a man worth following by one who wanted a good bet, and Miss Pumphrey did. She was very tired of being poor. And, on consideration, the job did not seem so crazy as it looked at first.

She made herself comfortable in a hotel at Peterborough. She lunched wisely and well—Miss Pumphrey likes to take her time. She ordered a car and drove out to Babraham Hoo.

Miles of country lay flat as a floor, a melancholy country under the gray March sky, black earth without a hedge or a tree on it, marked geometrically by broad drain-cuts through which the fen water flowed, slow, slimy, and turbid.

"This is priceless," said Miss Pumphrey. "Like the works of the late Mr. Euclid painted in mud color."

A windmill stood with unmoving sails, a giant scarecrow, and leered at her. A scrap of wild marsh broke the tilled land, and beyond it, stunted birches stood white amid yellow moss and pools of oily, dark water, an uncanny goblins' wood.

The car checked, turned, and swung into the moss-grown drive of Babraham Hoo.

It stood among dense shrubs, a square house of yellow brick, like a box with windows cut in it. Miss Pumphray rang and rang a bell which had to be pulled hard and sounded far away. After minutes, a plump maid opened the door and stared vacantly.

Miss Pumphrey said that she wanted to see Mr. Oliver Madan, and gave her card. The rustic maid read it, and the name of the Hon. Victoria Pumphrey, or the regal presence, startled her. She gaped, hesitated, then led Miss Pumphrey to a drawing room, and left her without a word.

It was a large room, but stuffy with the smell of yesterday's cigars. A smoky fire burned ineffectually in a vast, absurd grate, ancient paraffin lamps of china were the only lighting, and Mr. Oliver Madan had not been thorough with his furniture: much of it was dingy and uncomfortable in the austere taste of Queen Victoria; the rest of a modern and gaudy luxury.

Victoria had leisure to study it before a man came in. He was rather red and rather bald; he was in respectable black. His name was Price. He was Mr. Madan's secretary, which seemed to Victoria a

pretty word for valet, for such was his manner. He was afraid that the doctor had forbidden Mr. Madan to receive visitors. Victoria hoped it was nothing serious.

"Mr. Madan has been an invalid for a long time," the secretary said reproachfully. There was a pause. "You didn't know, Madam?"

"I knew his health wasn't good. Doesn't he ever see anybody now?"

"I'm afraid not, Miss Pumphrey." The secretary did not conceal that he thought her inconsiderate, but he was anxious to oblige. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I should like you to take him my card."

"Oh, you know Mr. Madan?"

"I think he will remember me."

"Yes, yes, of course." The secretary's eyes said that no man could possibly forget Miss Pumphrey. "Certainly, I'll take him your card. I'm sure he would like to know you called. And if there's anything else—I mean to say, if you would tell me the nature of your business—perhaps something could be arranged."

Victoria smiled on this obliging person. "You see, my business is rather vague." She smoothed down her dress.

Amazement was written on the secretary's red face. "Vague?" he repeated.

"I'm writing a book," said Victoria modestly, "about Herefordshire—the old families, you know—and I wanted to ask Mr. Madan some questions about the Madans." She clasped her hands. "Do you think you could arrange it, Mr. Price?"

Mr. Price stroked his back hair, which was all the hair he had. He really did not know. He didn't think it was at all possible. He would see Mr. Madan, but he really didn't think—and, still talking, he slid out.

Victoria was left alone long enough to grow very tired of that drawing room. She wandered about. She felt that she could make an inventory of its ugly contents, and finally another man came in. He was big enough to make two of Mr. Price and less than half his age—a dark fellow with a swagger and an engaging grin.

"'Morning. Put you in cold storage, what?" The fire leaped asunder in clouds of smoke as he poked it. "Say, this house wouldn't be warm if you set fire to it." He had a faint Cockney twang, yet not the true Cockney.

"A real English house," said Victoria.

"Oh, English! And then some."

"So am I," said Victoria.

"I should say so." His keen dark eyees examined her with approval. "I'll tell the world there's nothing better when it's good."

"That's very kind of you, if you're not English."

"Australian. English pedigree stock. I'm a Madan, of sorts. Frank Madan." He grinned broadly.

"Very pleased to meet you, Miss Pumphrey."

"Thank you, Mr. Madan."

"Tht thanks are on me. You don't know what it's like to see a human woman in this place."

"Of course I don't," Victoria admitted.

"Kind of puts in the central heating. I say, are you staying in these parts?"

"I wasn't thinking of it. But I really don't know. You see, I want very much to have a talk with Mr. Oliver Madan."

"Oh!" said the Australian.

"That's not very encouraging," said Victoria.

"Well, I mean to say, what's the matter with Mr. Frank Madan? I'll talk all you want."

"How nice of you! But do you know much about the history of the family, Mr. Madan?"

"Sure, lady. Sit down and hear the story of my life."

"Please be serious," said Victoria with dignity. "I am writing a book about your native county. I want Mr. Oliver Madan to help me with some points about his family. Don't you think he'll be able to see me?"

"He can see all right," the Australian admitted, "but he don't talk. Not so you'd notice it. He only groans. He's got his, you know, and got it bad. Gout, rheumatoid something. He don't show."

"I wonder if I can come down again," Victoria said sadly.

"Do you live in London? Say, I run up sometimes. I wonder if we could make a date?"

The door opened to let in Mr. Price. "Mr. Madan sends his compliments, Madam. He is much obliged to you, but he does not find himself equal to seeing anyone."

"I'm so sorry," said Victoria. "Perhaps I might call again."

"Sure," the Australian grinned.

But Mr. Price was less encouraging. "Really, I couldn't say. I shouldn't like to promise. You know, if you could write, Miss Pumphrey, I might be able to get the information you want. I'm sure that would be the best way."

Victoria thanked him, and with a hand tingling from the grip of the Australian, she went back to Peterborough.

Before the fire in her bedroom, placid in the comfort which comes from a bath and a dressing gown, she considered things. She likes to put business out of her head before she goes to dinner.

She is never in a hurry. She did not write to Oliver Madan. She stayed in Peterborough and waited. On the second day, as she was going to lunch, she saw her Australian come into the hotel and ask questions at the office. Two minutes later he was swaggering across the dining room to her table.

"Miss Pumphrey! Well, that's fine! May I have the honor?" He sat down grinning. "I say, this is on me, you know. I've been in about a horse and I was just com-

ing here for a spot of lunch. And here's you! Some lunch. Well, what's the best they've got? That's all right. And a bottle o' bubbly'll make it go. What say?" He gave the order before she said. "So you reckon to stay and have another try for the old man?"

"I do want to see Mr. Oliver Madan."

"Sure you do. You aren't here for your health." His small brown eyes gleamed.

"Dear me, no," Victoria smiled. "I shouldn't come here for my health. Would you, Mr. Madan?"

"Not. Many nots. If there's anything slower than these parts I guess it's hell." The champagne came and he grasped at the bottle. "Say, we've earned this." He filled her glass. "You put that where you need it, Miss Pumphrey. Here's luck."

Victoria smiled at him over the wine. "What luck do you want, Mr. Madan?"

"You go on looking like that."

"You didn't come to Babraham Hoo to see me."

"If I'd known where to find a peach like you I wouldn't have come to the old ash-pit. To think you spend your time writing books!"

"And how do you spend your time, Mr. Madan?"

"I'd hate to tell you, sister. I haven't got going since the war petered out. Pa went west while I was with the Light Horse, and my little gray home was bust. I've been knocking about—Kenya, the Cape. Couldn't strike it. So I kind of drifted back to Blighty to try my luck with old man Oliver. He's got the stuff, you see, and I could do with a bit."

"Yes, I see," said Victoria rather slowly.

"Well, it's got to come to me some day," the Australian protested. "What's the matter with a bit on account?"

"Dear me, Mr. Madan, I am not one of the family."

"You know all about us, don't you?" The Australian grinned.

"Only about the past."

"I thought you knew old man Oliver."

"I used to. But he is only one. I wanted him to help me about the others, you know. The by-gone Madans."

"What's the matter with 'em?"

"They had a way of vanishing, Mr. Madan."

"Most folks do—underground." He pointed downward and grinned.

"Underground," Victoria repeated, "as you say."

"My grandpa went out to Sydney in '49. Died up country prospecting. Pa took up land—sheep. He went out in '17. I'm the one they left. Not much to write a book about in that. What do you reckon to put into your book, sister?"

"Just history, Mr. Madan. Family history."

"Don't sound like a best-seller to me. Any money in it?"

"Thank you," said Victoria, "I do very well."

"I should say so," the Australian agreed. "I wonder, can't we do anything together?"

Victoria laughed. "What does one do here, Mr. Madan? Shall we go and look at the cathedral?"

"I don't think," said the Australian. "But say, sister, I'd love to make a date in London."

"Is there nothing doing at Babraham Hoo?"

The Australian looked at her queerly. He hesitated.

"Perhaps we shall meet there again," Victoria smiled. "Goodbye, Mr. Madan."

She left him at the table. As she went out she saw him drinking up the champagne. He seemed to need it.

Meditation in a long chair before her bedroom fire assured her that she was satisfied. The Australian had plainly come to Peterborough to look for her and to pump her. That meant he was frightened of her. And he would not be frightened unless he were a fraud.

Yes, she had done very well. Their little conversation frightened him even more. He would have something to think about at Babraham Hoo. Yes, the business was clearing up . . .

But she was rather sorry. Of course, the fellow was an outsider. And yet—well, she was sorry . . . She did not quite see her way.

It was not until the next afternoon that she drove out again to Babraham Hoo. Her chauffeur, a large and chatty youth, took a friendly interest in this second expedition. It seemed that no one ever went to Babraham Hoo.

The door of the yellow house was opened more quickly this time. The rustic maid had an embarrassed air. Mr. Madan could not see anyone, Ma'am. He was too ill. Mr. Price? Oh, she thought Mr. Price was out.

"I will wait for him," said Victoria, and swept in. She was left in the hall.

But Mr. Price was in. He was in that cavernous drawing room with the Australian. Victoria heard their voices, which were not friendly, but the Australian, when the maid took in her name, began to laugh. The maid came out again looking scared, and held the door open for Victoria.

The Australian was sprawling before the fire, Mr. Price on his feet, fidgeting with his coat, with his black hair, with his collar. "Come again, sister!" The Australian flung back his head to look at her with a grin.

"Really, Miss Pumphrey, this is quite useless, you know, quite useless," said Mr. Price.

"No, I don't think so," Victoria smiled.

"You can't see Mr. Madan. He's much too ill."

"But I'm afraid I shall have to," said Victoria sweetly. "You see, I have found out something—"

"What's that?" The Australian stood up.

"I thought you wanted to ask him questions," said Mr. Price.

"Not now," Victoria smiled. "This is something he'll have to be told. About the Madan family. I said I was making inquiries, you know."

The two men came toward her. She drew back to avoid them, but she was brought up by one of the big pedestal lamps.

"Let's have it, sister," said the Australian.

"What do you mean?" Mr. Price snarled.

"It's a matter for Mr. Madan."

"I act for Mr. Madan," said Price.

"And this gentleman—for whom does he act?"

Price licked his lips and looked at the Australian. "Ah, get to hell out of here!" the latter cried, and jostled him aside. "This is my show."

Price scowled at him and slunk out.

"The Australian grinned. Yellow, ain't he? Yellow all through. Now, my dear, what have you got?" He came nearer.

Victoria started away. The big lamp went down into the grate and crashed into potsherds. The fire caught the oil and a flood of flame streamed over the floor. Victoria swept out into the hall to cry, "Fire! Fire!"

Mr. Price, who was halfway upstairs, came tumbling down again. "What is it? What's happened, Miss?"

"The house is on fire!" Victoria screamed.

An oily smoke poured out of the drawing room. The Australian was heard stamping and swearing and shouting for water. The maid ran into the hall and fled again, screaming "Fire!" and Price looked into the room, gasped, coughed, and hurried after her.

There were more screams from the kitchen, a clatter of pails and the pouring of water. The smoke grew thicker and Victoria cried, "Fire! Fire!"

A man came running downstairs. He was gray, he was small, but he was very agile. Victoria stood aside and watched him. He called for Price as he came. He hesitated, looked at the smoke pouring from the drawing room, and made a dash for the hall door. He flung it open and stood panting, confronted by Victoria's ear and her bewildered chauffeur.

She swept through the smoke and joined him. "Mr. Oliver Madan?" she smiled.

The little man looked at her with unsteady eyes. "Another time, another time," he muttered, and turned away. "Price, damn you, where are you?"

Mr. Price, shuffling along with two pails of water, heard him, saw him, flung the pails into the drawing room, where the Australian received them with oaths, and hurried out. "What did you come down for?" he gasped.

"How was I to stay up there with the house afire?"

"You ought not to have come down. You know that. Get back quick."

"But you're very harsh, Mr. Price," Victoria smiled. "Isn't this Mr. Oliver Madan?"

Price did not answer. He stared into her wide eyes.

She turned to the little man. "Mr. Madan?" she inquired.

"Well, what do you want?" he muttered.

"It was delightful to see you run downstairs. When I saw you last you were quite a cripple."

"You made a mistake. You never saw me before. I don't know you."

"How horrid of you to forget! I am Victoria Pumphrey. When I saw you last you were Mr. Madan's valet. Sant, isn't it? Yes, Sant." She ceased to smile. She looked from the pallid little man to the crimson Price. "What have you two creatures done with Oliver Madan?"

"It's all a mistake, Ma'am," said Price eagerly. "I swear it is. Of course this isn't Mr. Madan. Mr. Madan's not at home."

"I believe you," Victoria said.

The Australian, hot and smoky, strode out with the invincible grin on his smudged face. "All clear," he said. "That was neat work, sister. You sure got to see him."

"This is Mr. Oliver Madan, is it?"

"Why, yes. That's old man Oliver all right. How goes it, Uncle? Found you could skip when you got warm?"

"This man is Oliver Madan's valet," Victoria said.

"The hell he is! He's the only Oliver Madan here. Say, what have you boys been giving me? Where's my uncle? What have you done with my uncle."

"Your uncle!" Price snarled.

"Ain't you been standing in with us?" the valet cried. "Don't hand us that stuff!"

"I thought so." Victoria turned away to her chauffeur. "Police is what I want—the nearest policeman."

"That's right, Miss!" He jumped into the car.

"Here, Miss Pumphrey, don't you do that!" The little man caught at her. "We have done nothing wrong, I swear we haven't. The old man died natural, quite natural. I have only been acting for him."

"Where did he die? When?"

"In Droitwich, it was. Three years ago. I'll tell you—"

"You can tell the police," said Victoria, and got into her car.

"You win, sister," the Australian said, and kissed a sooty hand to her.

When a village policeman had understood enough of the story to be persuaded to come to Babraham Hoo, no one remained there but an hysterical maid and a prostrate cook, who complained that their wages had not been paid.

Mr. Wilson Ellis was at home. Mr. Wilson Ellis, in evening dress, is the exquisite, ideal butler. He wished to know if Miss Pumphrey had dined. He could hardly bear it when she said she didn't know. He said vain things about soup and cutlets.

"You may give me," said Victoria, "one American cigarette." She lolled on a couch in his little Empire drawing room and sighed satisfaction and smoke. Ellis was afraid she had had a distressing time. "My dear man! The time of my life." Ellis hoped that everything was all right. "You're all right. You and your nice boy. He's the heir of all the Madans, safe enough."

Ellis murmured, "Thank God!" Then he asked if she was quite sure.

Victoria laughed. "Don't worry. You've backed a winner. I suppose you always do."

"I've been very fortunate," Ellis admitted. "Then this Australian, Ma'am, is an impostor?"

"Oh, the Australian is an extra turn. He wasn't in the program. I always thought that Didn't you?" It was obvious that Ellis did not. "Oliver was the real mystery. Would Oliver let a young nephew come and live with him, genuine or spurious? I think not! Then why did he? I went after Oliver. And he was invisible. Very interesting and suggestive. Do you know his man."

Ellis gasped a little. "That would be Price, Ma'am? Not to say know him. He is not well liked."

"You surprise me. But Price is the secretary. What about Sant?"

"Sant is dead. He died three years ago." Ellis shook his head. "I don't want to say anything unkind, but Sant wasn't straight. He did what he liked with Mr. Madan."

"Poor old thing," Victoria sighed. "Well, as I was saying, I went to Babraham Hoo and Mr. Oliver Madan wouldn't see me. He was too ill. But I got him downstairs today. I had to set fire to the house to do it. No wonder he didn't want to show! He wasn't Oliver Madan. He was Sant.

"Don't you see? It wasn't Sant who died three year ago: it was Oliver Madan. These two beauties, Sant and Price, they had him sick in a strange place. They called him Sant and buried him as Sant, and Sant lived on as Oliver Madan—*and* drew the income.

"He never had to appear. The old man had been an invalid and hermit for umpteen years. Only a matter of forging his signature. It was too easy—till the Australian blew

in and spoiled it. I don't know whether he got wind of something queer or whether he was just trying his luck. And he saw through them quickly enough. I dare say he bluffed them out of a good share of the swag."

"Well, upon my word!" said Ellis. "But this must have been very unpleasant and dangerous for you, Ma'am. I am extremely sorry. I had no idea. I—"

"My dear man, I loved it!"

"God bless my soul!" said Ellis. "Pray, Ma'am, where are they now?"

"Bolted. I told the county police, of course. They're about as quick as a glacier. You'd better take your solicitor to Scotland Yard in the morning. I'll go too. Then we'll call on Priddle, Finch and Pollexfen and make them sit up. Little Mr. Pollexfen won't like it at all. You'll prove Olive Madan's death and your nice boy will come into the estates. But I don't think I shall be going back to Priddle, Finch and Pollexfen."

"No, Ma'am?" said Ellis. "I—I am sure I hope not. Something more becoming. If I could be of any assistance, I—I should be proud."

"You can. I shall set up on my own. The Hon. Victoria Pumphrey, Friend of the Family: relations discovered or destroyed; domestic quarrels settled; mysteries solved—family skeletons a speciality."

And that is how Miss Pumphrey made her debut as a private inquiry agent . . .

Answer to riddle story on page 13

DEAD HEAT

by JUAN PAGE

Suddenly the pace broke. The two horses, side
by side, cantered easily,
slower
and slower
until
the merry-go-round
stopped.

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**HUGH PENTECOST**
TITLE:	***The Rubber Doorstops***
TYPE:	Detective Novelette
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Newspaperman Alan Quist started it all by exposing Zorn as head of a rackets mob. Then the Governor appointed brilliant Warren Cuyler as Special Prosecutor. But when the case was ready for the Grand Jury, murder struck . . .*

EDDIE MADDEN SAT IN THE BASEment of the Shropshire Building, muttering to himself. Ordinarily the Sunday night stretch of duty was one he looked forward to. The women who cleaned the offices were usually through by nine in the evening at the latest. That meant that after nine o'clock he could settle down in his snug quarters in the basement, listen to the radio, and drink a little beer.

It was almost nine now, and he was waiting for the last of the cleaning women to signal him from the seventeenth floor that they were ready to be brought down. The trouble was that on this particular Sunday there were two people working in the offices of Cuyler, Trent & Leland on the fourteenth floor, and there was no telling when they'd decide to go home.

The signal came from the women on the seventeenth floor, and Eddie went up for them in the elevator. As the car passed the fourteenth floor, he thought he heard an unusual sound—a sort of thumping. He couldn't place what it was. At the seventeenth, three elderly women carrying mops and pails got into the car, and Eddie started down. As they passed the fourteenth floor he heard the thumping sound again. He thought maybe they were

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building something in the Cuyler, Trent & Leland office—bookshelves or something. He muttered to himself that they'd probably be at it all night.

The women got out in the basement and went to the lockers where they kept their street clothes. Eddie stood in the elevator glancing upward, thoughtfully. The people in the office up there were the big boss himself—the famous Warren Cuyler—and a young woman lawyer who worked for him.

"They wouldn't be likely to be building no bookcases," Eddie told himself. "Not them two."

He started to go to his room for a swig of beer, but something made him stop. Maybe he ought to make sure about that thumping. This unusual sense of responsibility made him mad at himself. Muttering again, he closed the car door and started up.

At the fourteenth floor Eddie got out of the car, hooking the door back so that it wouldn't close. The thumping was very loud now—and it came from the main entrance to Cuyler, Trent & Leland. It sounded like someone pounding on the door from the inside. Eddie went to the door. "Hey, is somethin' wrong in there?" he shouted.

"Thank Heaven!" a man's voice said from the other side of the door. "Is that you, Madden?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Cuyler."

"Get this door open. Have you got your passkey?"

"You don't need a key to get it open from the inside, Mr. Cuyler."

"I know that—but I can't get it open. Do something!"

Eddie fished the ring of passkeys out of his hip pocket, selected the right one, and put it in the door lock. He turned it and pulled on the handle. Nothing happened.

"It ain't bolted on the inside or something, is it, Mr. Cuyler?"

"No!"

"Well, I got the catch released. Push, sir."

The door shivered as the man on the inside seemed to hurl his body against it—shivered, but didn't budge.

"That's crazy," Eddie said. "Try again, sir."

Eddie tried pulling out at the same time, but the door wouldn't open. Eddie lowered his head and yanked. And then he saw. Three small rubber doorstops were wedged under the door from the outside. The more they pushed and pulled, the tighter the door wedged shut.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Cuyler. I see what it is," Eddie said.

This was crazy, he told himself as he tugged at one of the doorstops. Why would anybody wedge the door shut like this from the outside? If it was a joke, it was a pretty cockeyed one. The wedges were so tight he had to take the screwdriver from his overall pocket and pry them loose.

"Okay, Mr. Cuyler," he said,

breathing hard. And as the door burst open he held up one of the doorstops. "Some joker wedged these things—" He stopped, staring at Warren Cuyler.

The famous lawyer, tall and broad-shouldered, leaned against the doorjamb. His gray, crew-cut hair shimmered in the light from the hall brackets. His eyes were two black smudges in his face. Sweat ran down his lined cheeks. He looked like death.

"Gee, Mr. Cuyler, you sick?"

Cuyler drew a deep breath. "There's been a terrible accident, Madden. I can't use the phone in here. I want you to get to a phone and call the police."

"Is somebody hurt? The lady? You want I should call a doctor?"

"It's too late for a doctor," Cuyler said. "Tell the police it's murder."

Lieutenant Paul Molloy had settled in a comfortable armchair in his apartment for one of his rare evenings off from his duties on the homicide squad. The phone rang and his wife answered it. "It's the Police Commissioner, Paul," she said.

"Oh, brother! What now?" Molloy went to the phone. "Hello, sir."

The Commissioner's voice crackled with anxiety. "Carl Zorn tried to get Warren Cuyler about an hour ago, just as he promised he would," the Commissioner said.

"He got him?"

"No. But one of Cuyler's staff was killed. I don't know the full details, Molloy, but I want you on it. You know more about Zorn than any other cop on the force."

Molloy's face had hardened. "He sure waited till the last minute," he said. "Warren Cuyler goes before the grand jury tomorrow with his case, doesn't he?"

"He does if we keep him alive," the Commissioner said grimly. "He's at his office in the Shropshire Building. That's where the murder happened. Get rolling, Molloy."

In a studio of the local radio station the regular Sunday night program of recordings was in progress. A staff announcer came into the control room and signaled to the disc jockey with a couple of sheets of paper he was carrying. He sat down at the table microphone and the disc jockey faded out the record on the turntable. A moment later thousands of people heard the announcer's voice:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt this program to give you a flash bulletin from our newsroom. An attempt to murder Warren Cuyler, the Governor's special prosecutor in the market rackets, backfired a little while ago but resulted in the death of one of Cuyler's staff members. The name of the victim has not yet been revealed by police. Cuyler and his assistant were working in the lawyer's office in the Shropshire Building when the murderous assault was made. Police

have sent out a general alarm for Carl Zorn, notorious underworld figure, who has repeatedly stated that he would 'get' Cuyler.

"Most of you are familiar with the story behind Zorn's threats. About three months ago Alan Quist, well-known syndicated newspaper columnist, wrote a series of articles exposing racketeering in the city's markets. He named Carl Zorn as head of a criminal ring and charged that both the police and the District Attorney's office had been lax in dealing with the situation. The Governor took immediate notice of these charges and appointed Warren Cuyler, famous criminal lawyer, as Special Prosecutor to investigate the situation.

"Cuyler selected a staff, including Alan Quist, and has been preparing a case to present to the Grand Jury. He was, in fact, to appear tomorrow morning to ask for indictments against Zorn and his lieutenants. Zorn has boasted that he would never be indicted and has been quoted as saying that he would get rid of Cuyler if necessary. Police believe he attempted to make good his threat tonight and, though he failed to get Cuyler, the result is murder. Other members of Cuyler's staff are being sought so that they may be placed under police protection, on the theory that they may also be in danger of gangster vengeance.

"As soon as there are further details about the murder of Cuyler's staff assistant we will bring them to you. Meanwhile, the Governor, the Mayor and the Police Commissioner have all promised swift action against Zorn and his mob . . ."

Seven members of Warren Cuyler's staff sat around a table in a private dining room at Mario's, quite unaware of the drama being played out in the Shropshire Building just four blocks away. Alan Quist, the columnist who had started the ball rolling with his exposé of the market racket, was the host. His job, once he testified before the Grand Jury tomorrow, was over. It had been his idea to give this party for Cuyler and the whole staff, but it hadn't worked out that way.

Cuyler had refused at the last minute. He expected to work in his office all day Sunday on his opening speech to the Grand Jury. He had said he would come if he could. Then, around noon, he'd called Alan and told him he just couldn't make it.

"I am a man of very little character," Cuyler had said in his pleasant, vital voice. "If I came I'd probably talk myself out of going back to work. Give me a rain check, Alan."

Without Cuyler the party lost much of its point. Also, there was another absentee, this one unexplained. Portia Denmarc, a brilliant woman lawyer who worked in Cuyler's office, simply didn't show

up. The lovely Portia had lunched with Bill Leland, a junior partner in Cuyler's firm, and had told him she planned to go home, soak in a hot tub, and would see him later at Alan's party. She didn't come, and no one answered her telephone when they tried to reach her to find out why. So the party was without two of its brightest lights, and it wasn't going well.

Betsy Collum, for one, felt ill at ease. She didn't really belong in the group. She was the switchboard operator for Cuyler, Trent & Leland, and while she had done some overtime work for the special staff on week-ends, she was not a part of it. Alan Quist had insisted on her coming, however, and at the moment Betsy's life was very much involved with Alan. Tomorrow would be a critical time. After he testified he might just say to her, "Well, it's been fun, Collum. Be seeing you around sometime." That could happen, or the humorous twinkle might fade from his eyes and he would say, "This isn't the end, Collum. It's just the beginning for us."

When Alan had come to help Cuyler prepare his case, he had spotted Betsy as a sympathetic personality. They had spent a lot of time together. Now—tomorrow—Betsy would know just how much it had meant to him. She had come to the party, even though she felt she didn't belong. Miss Moffat's presence didn't ease things. She obviously felt that Betsy's being there was not protocol.

Sarah Moffat was the office manager and treasurer for Cuyler, Trent & Leland. A tall, silver-blonde woman of fifty-odd, Miss Moffat was cordially hated by all the office force. She was a severe, emotionless disciplinarian. Betsy had once heard Warren Cuyler describe the main office, with its two rows of stenographers' desks, as "the galley, with Moffat cracking her whip over the slaves who are, naturally, chained to their typewriters.

Miss Moffat had been with the firm for thirty years, coming there as a stenographer in the days when Warren Cuyler's father was head of the firm. She had a secret, which Betsy had guessed.

For thirty years Sarah Moffat had been secretly in love with Warren Cuyler. He was the center of her life, yet it was doubtful if he had the slightest notion of it. To him, she was simply an efficient and loyal employee who had earned his respect and trust over the years. And Miss Moffat had lived off that respect and trust all her adult life.

Betsy knew that two of the guests were more than a little distressed by Portia Denmarc's unexplained absence: Bill Leland, the dark, sleek grandson of one of the founders of the firm and now a junior partner, and Johnny Arcus, a young lawyer employed by Cuyler, who

was a member of the special prosecution staff.

Johnny Arcus, always tense as a violin string, took off his heavy rimmed glasses and polished them within an inch of destruction. Betsy knew that the casual remark Bill Leland had made about lunch with Portia had been like a skewer pushed into Johnny's vitals. Johnny spent every moment of his spare time trailing after the beautiful, self-contained Portia. Betsy knew a little about Johnny's terrible insecurities. In her first weeks at Cuyler, Trent & Leland he had tried to date her. Instinct told her that she would be caught up in a molasses-like sentimentality if she followed her impulse to be kind to him.

Roger and Gloria, the two other guests, had their own problem. Roger Trent, like Leland a junior partner, was the exact opposite of the suave Leland. Roger was blond, aggressive, with a perpetual, anxious scowl that made him look almost comically serious. His hair was constantly rumpled, his expensive tweeds seemed never to have been pressed. Alan had described him as a "toy bulldog." In spite of his tenaciousness Roger had not, as yet, persuaded Gloria Spence, Warren Cuyler's attractive, red-haired private secretary, that she ought to marry him. It hadn't helped his case that he constantly accused her of having a "papa fixation" on Cuyler.

He and Gloria sat side by side now, at the table in the private dining room, carefully avoiding each other. There must, Betsy thought, have been a serious argument before they arrived at the party.

Betsy sat between a silently brooding Bill Leland and Johnny Arcus, who had taken very little food and was engaged in dissecting a lone string bean into a couple of dozen tiny cubes. Alan Quist caught Betsy's eye and made a wry face, as if to say, Something's got to be done about this party; it's laying an egg.

"A man in my trade," he said to the table at large, "is basically greedy. My particular greed is for facts about people. As a newspaperman, I make people my business."

"You certainly turned this town upside down with your facts about Carl Zorn," Roger Trent said. "He must have nightmares about you."

Alan leaned back in his chair and lighted a cigarette. "Zorn doesn't interest me any more," he said. "Warren Cuyler does."

Bill Leland's eyes widened. "Warren? What about him?"

"Everything. I've known him for two months, and yet I don't know anything except what I see on the surface. All of you except Betsy have been close to him for a long time. Who and what is Warren Cuyler?"

"He is the most brilliant legal mind of our time," Miss Moffat said quietly.

"He is the kindest, most gener-

ous, most thoughtful man I have ever known," Gloria Spence said, her eyes bright as stars.

Johnny Arcus looked up from his mangled string bean. "Just to make it interesting," he said, "he is a colossal phony."

Miss Moffat turned her cold blue eyes on Johnny. "You've been drinking again," she said. "Will you never learn that you and alcohol don't mix?"

Alan had started something.

"Johnny can't let himself believe what a great guy Warren is because it would make Johnny look too insignificant to himself," Roger Trent said. He glared at Johnny, who picked up his knife and fork and began to work on another string bean. Roger relaxed a little. "Warren was a hero of mine when I was a kid. Now that I've grown up, the gilt hasn't tarnished."

"He was something of an athlete, wasn't he?" Alan asked.

"All-America end at the university. Olympic skier. But for some bad luck he might have been the first man to climb Mount Everest. He took up mountain climbing in the late thirties; he and John Cramden, the famous explorer, financed an expedition in nineteen forty. They were only a few hundred yards from the top when Cramden had a fall. Warren nearly lost his own life trying to save him."

"Cramden was killed," Bill Leland said. "They never recovered his body. Warren had to give up the climb. He was pretty badly banged up going after Cramden."

"He never tried again?" Alan asked. "Somehow he strikes me as a man who doesn't turn away from a challenge."

"The war," Roger said. "He enlisted in the paratroopers. Came out a Colonel, with decorations from here to there. He has amazing vitality, physical and mental."

Gloria Spence turned her bright eyes to Alan. "He's hardly changed a bit since he was in college—thirty years ago," she said. "I've seen some old pictures. Same crew-cut hair, same broad shoulders. Oh, maybe the lines of his face are a little deeper—his hair turned gray when he was thirty." She laughed self-consciously. "The handsomest and most elegant man I've ever known."

"He never married?" Alan asked.

Johnny Arcus looked up, and then his eyes, behind the thick glasses, turned for a second to Gloria. "Why should he?" he asked. "He doesn't have to marry them."

Roger Trent, his face dead-white, started to get up from his chair. Alan's hand closed tightly over his wrist. "That'll be about enough of that, Johnny," he said.

The thick lenses turned toward Alan. "I'm sorry. I apologize. And I shouldn't have called him a phony. He's an opportunist and a first-rate organizer of other people's brains. No crime in that. I wouldn't be here if he wasn't. He hates my guts—just as you all do."

"Nobody hates you," Leland said. "It's just that sometimes—"

"Oh, don't bother to be polite," Johnny said. "Cuyler keeps me in his office because my particular kind of mind is useful to him." He turned back to Alan. "You're an outsider, Quist, but surely you've seen how it works in the two months you've been on his staff. Who provided the facts for Cuyler's case against Zorn? You did. Who plans the legal strategy? Roger Trent does. Who roughs out the courtroom speeches, the famous Cuyler oratorical wit and keenness? Bill Leland does that. Who has prepared his legal precedents, the cases he'll have to refer to during the trial? Portia. Who will sit at his elbow in court with a fabulous memory for everything we've discussed for the last two months and for every word that is spoken in court—so that our boy will never miss a trick if there is an unexpected turn of events? I will. Who makes the whole machinery run like a timekeeper's watch? Miss Moffat."

Johnny took a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped his forehead. "You want to know who and what Warren Cuyler is, Quist? He's right here in this room. *We* are Warren Cuyler."

In the moment of silence that followed, the door to the private dining room opened. Mario, the proprietor, came in looking worried, followed by a man in a raincoat and a uniformed policeman.

"I am sorry to break in, Mr. Quist," Mario said, "but the police —" He shrugged.

"You are all members of Mr. Warren Cuyler's staff?" the plainclothesman asked.

"That's right," Alan said.

"You're all wanted at the Shropshire Building. There's been a homicide in your office."

They sat there, turned to stone. Then suddenly everybody began to talk at once. Betsy was vaguely aware that someone, either Roger or Bill, asked, "How did it happen?"

She remembered, afterward, that no one asked *what* had happened. They were all very much aware of the threat that had been made on Cuyler's life. All seven of them seemed to assume without question that the victim of the homicide must be Warren Cuyler.

"I've got three prowl cars outside," the detective said. "I got orders to ride you. The lieutenant's afraid Zorn may go real haywire and try to wipe out the whole staff."

Betsy, like an automaton, let Alan help her into her coat. Two months ago, after Zorn's threats, they'd lived in the shadow of imminent danger to Warren Cuyler. But, as time went on, the danger had seemed to grow less. Betsy remembered a press conference the day Cuyler had announced his acceptance of the job as Special Prosecutor. A reporter had asked

whether he intended to have police protection. Cuyler had laughed. "Police protection? No, gentlemen. You know and I know that if Zorn is determined to get me he will. So if somebody drops a brick on my head you'll know who did it."

Now, at the last moment, the brick had been dropped.

Out on the street the three prowl cars waited. As Alan and Betsy got into the first one, Betsy saw Sarah Moffat walking toward the next car, erect as a ramrod, without a sign of weakness. This must be the most dreadful moment of her life.

"Poor Miss Moffat!" Betsy said.

Alan, staring straight ahead, his face pale, his jaw muscles knotted, didn't answer. He was lost in his own thoughts, and Betsy could guess what they were. He had started this trouble with his articles. In a way he was responsible for the murder. He had put the forces of violence into action.

Outside the Shropshire Building there was a convention of prowl cars and official automobiles. The others were already there. Bill Leland and Miss Moffat had been taken up. Roger, Johnny, and Gloria waited.

Somehow, they all seemed separated from one another, remote, frightened. The man in the raincoat got them into the elevator and they were whisked up to the fourteenth floor. Outside the office door a uniformed patrolman waited, lists in his hand. The raincoated man checked with him, and he pulled the door and they all went in.

The reception room, with its modern furniture and paintings, was deserted. The receptionist's semicircular desk was as neat as she had left it Saturday noon. The left-hand corridor, which led to the private offices, was dark. The right-hand one, which led to the general office and the law library, was brightly lighted. The raincoated man gestured that way.

The "galley" was not in Miss Moffat's charge now, although she was there, rigid, emotionless, a figure carved out of rock. The place swarmed with anonymous-looking men, dusting desks and furniture for fingerprints. A photographer was packing up his equipment, his pictures already taken. Then Betsy saw that someone was inside her soundproofed switchboard booth fiddling with the machinery. Science was at work.

Betsy's eyes moved away from the booth and were suddenly fixed on a piece of canvas, which obviously covered a body. It lay just a few feet from the door of her switchboard booth. As she stared at it, Betsy was aware of the unpleasant odor of burned flesh. Her fingers tightened around Alan's.

Miss Moffat and Bill Leland were talking to a pleasant-faced man with a fringe of red hair showing under the brim of his hat. The raincoated one interrupted and the

red-haried man glanced at the newcomers and nodded. He was obviously in charge.

They stood in the doorway, staring at that grim canvas covering. Then, suddenly, Gloria Spence propelled herself forward, before Roger, who was standing next to her, could stop her.

She dropped on her knees beside the canvas and pulled one end of it back.

Then she screamed.

Betsy had never heard any sound to compare with it. Gloria screamed again. Then she began to laugh—a highpitched, hysterical cascade of laughter.

Alan reached her first, took her by the shoulders, pulled her to her feet. Then he seemed to freeze as he looked down at the body. Betsy, crowding in behind him, saw why. Unbelievably, it was not Warren Cuyler. The face was twisted in some final, awful agony. It had been a beautiful face in life—the face of Portia Denmarc.

In that moment of shocked surprise Gloria Spence broke away from Alan. She ran down the aisle between the rows of typewriter desks, and a moment later strong arms were around her and her face was buried against the shoulder of a rough tweed coat. Her screams had brought Warren Cuyler from his private office. He looked over Gloria's copper-colored hair at his associates, and his face was a death's-head, gray as his cropped hair, dark eyes sunk in smudged hollows.

Sarah Moffat walked briskly down the aisle, took the sobbing Gloria by the shoulders, turned her around and slapped her face hard. "Stop that nonsense!" Miss Moffat said.

Roger Trent and Bill Leland hurried across the office to join Cuyler. Johnny Arcus leaned against the wall, staring down at Portia Denmarc's dead face. He ought to go somewhere, Betsy thought. He's going to be sick. The red-haired man came over and covered Portia's face again. Johnny turned to the wall, and his shoulders shook.

The red-haired man looked at Alan, and his cold blue eyes were not friendly. "You're Quist," he said, "the guy who started all this. I'm Lieutenant Molloy, Homicide—in charge. Mr. Cuyler told me you were all at Mario's. I had you brought here because Zorn may strike again."

Alan's voice was unsteady. "Will you please tell us what happened here, Lieutenant? We all assumed that it was Mr. Cuyler who—"

"It was meant to be Cuyler," Molloy said. He turned to Betsy. "You're Miss Collum, the switchboard operator?"

She nodded.

"Place look normal to you?" Molloy nodded toward the booth.

Normal? The switchboard, the index file of numbers, the chair . . . "That chair doesn't belong

there," Betsy said. "That metal chair is usually in the law library. It's used as a sort of stepladder. My regular chair is wooden, with a rubber cushion."

Molloy nodded. His eyes went back to Alan. "I have no reason to like you, Quist. No one on the police force has any reason to like you after those articles."

"I'm sorry," Alan said. "I wrote the truth as I saw it."

Molloy grunted. "Just remember, you're not here as a reporter, Quist. You'll print only what I tell you you can print."

"I understand," Alan said. "Now, will you please tell us what happened?"

Molloy pushed his hat back on his head, revealing that the red fringe was really just a fringe. Otherwise he was egg-bald. "Darnedest thing I've ever run across in my whole career," he said. "Complicated—yet simple. A twelve-year old child who knows how to run his own electric train could have done it. You ever notice anything odd about the front door to this office, Quist?"

"No."

"It opens out," Molloy said. "That's a violation of the building code. It's supposed to open in. Miss Moffat tells me that Richard Cuyler, the original head of the firm, was a firebug. He thought people might get trapped in here if there was a fire and the door opened in. He was a big shot, so the authorities overlooked the violation. That door's opened out for thirty-odd years."

"Interesting, but what of it?" Alan Quist said.

"Just this. Portia Denmarc wouldn't be dead if that door opened in." Molloy turned to the switchboard booth. "Down on the baseboard behind that machinery is an ordinary wall plug. Someone detached the main plug-in cord and connected it with the main electric current. It was, in effect, a live wire. When anyone plugged in the board they'd get a jolt."

"A hundred and ten volts," Alan said. "It wouldn't kill anybody."

"It would and it did," Molloy said. "When they sat down in that metal chair and took hold of it, it became a sort of private electric chair."

Alan shook his head. "But how could anyone be sure that someone would sit down in that chair and make a call? How could you be sure you got the right person?"

"I'll answer those one at a time," Molloy said. "The murderer was sure someone would make a call. That's where the door comes in. Cuyler was working here alone. Around six he went out for a cup of coffee. While he was out they got in here and rigged the switchboard and put that metal chair in there. Then they went out of the office and waited for Cuyler to return. He came back shortly before seven. As soon as he was in the office they

took three little rubber doorstops" —Molloy took one out of his pocket and held it up—"and wedged the front door shut from the outside. Finally—this is the way it was supposed to work—Cuyler would be ready to go home. He'd get to the front door and find he couldn't open it. The harder he pushed, the tighter it would wedge shut. So what does he do?"

"He pounds on the door to attract attention," Alan said. "The elevator man—"

"Only one man in charge of the whole building on Sunday. One chance in fifty he'll hear you. After you've pounded and hollered for a while, and nothing happens, what do you do?"

Alan moistened his lips. "I—I telephone for help."

Molloy nodded. "And you are dead," he said flatly. "It was set up for Cuyler—but without Cuyler's knowing it and without the killer knowing it, Miss Denmarc was in the office. She's the one who tried to leave—and she got what was meant for Cuyler." Molloy wiped the inside of his hatbrim with a handkerchief. "Every cop in this city is looking for Zorn and his boys. We may pick 'em up in the next hour—the next day. Until we do, watch your step. Zorn may try to wipe out the whole lot of you."

Betsy's head was whirling. There was something wrong about Molloy's story, but she couldn't put her finger on it. Something about it didn't make sense, but she was too tired and too frightened to make it come clear.

Miss Moffat joined them. "Mr. Cuyler wants you all to know exactly what happened," she said. "If you'll come to his office now—he doesn't want to have to tell it all over and over again."

Betsy, Alan, and Johnny Arcus followed Miss Moffat to Cuyler's office. Betsy thought she had never seen a man so crumpled in crisis as Cuyler. His tall, muscular figure seemed to have shriveled inside his gray tweed suit. His deep voice, usually rich and buoyant, was harsh and unsteady.

The rest of them, sitting in a semicircle around his desk, all seemed dazed. Young Roger Trent, chewing on an empty pipe, turned his head occasionally toward the sound of muffled weeping that came from the adjoining office—Gloria Spence's office. He looked helplessly angry.

Bill Leland, sunk deep in his chair, stared at the tips of his polished shoes. Johnny Arcus, the light reflected in his heavy spectacles, fiddled and twitched, his hands never still. Sarah Moffat stood in the doorway, a bleak sentinel.

Cuyler lifted a trembling cigarette to his lips, drew deeply on it, and lowered his hand to the desk, as if to make certain it wouldn't shake. "I always knew I was running personal risks when I accepted this job," he said. "I knew

Alan was running risks, but I assumed he was willing. After all, he ran risks when he wrote his articles. But I swear—I swear before Heaven—I didn't think any of the rest of you were running any—any physical risks."

"We all went into it with our eyes wide open," Bill Leland said.

"I think it has been explained to you how—how it happened," Warren Cuyler said.

"You could have made a call any time during the day," Roger said.

Cuyler shook his head. "No. It was set to happen when it happend. I got here just after noon—made a couple of calls. Everything was all right then. About six I decided to go out for a sandwich and a cup of coffee. I made a call on the way out. It was all right then."

"You sat down in the chair both times?" Alan asked.

"Yes. I practically have to crawl into that booth on my hands and knees. I guess I was out for about an hour. I walked up the Avenue to the club and had a sandwich and coffee in the grill. Ran into a couple of fellows I knew and we talked for a while. It was just before seven when I came back."

"No wedges in the door?" Roger asked, rumpling his blond hair.

"Naturally not," Cuyler said dully. "I came back in here and went to work on my opening speech. I—I cut through the main office instead of going down the private hallway to get here. It—it's shorter and there wasn't anyone around." His voice broke. "I *thought* there wasn't anyone around. I didn't walk past Portia's office, you see. Well—it was a little after eight o'clock and I'd just decided to quit when she—she screamed."

Cuyler lifted his hands to his face and they were shaking. Nobody moved or urged him to go on. Finally he lowered his hands. "I—I ran out there. She was lying on the floor, that metal chair tipped over on top of her, and her hand still gripping that wire. Her hand was—was sizzling . . ."

Cuyler suddenly swung around in his desk chair and sat with his back to them, staring out into the black night. They waited.

His voice sounded muffled. "I realized—instinctively, I guess, that it was electricity. I—I knew better than to touch her. I ran to the front door to get help and I—I couldn't open it. I—I pounded on it with my fists. Then I realized the night man was probably in the basement. Couldn't have heard me if I'd fired off a cannon. I—I went back to Portia. Somehow she'd let go of the wire. Molloy tells me she must have made a—a convulsive movement that pulled the wire out of the wall plug. She'd let go of it and—and her hand was smoking. She—she was dead."

There was another long wait, and then Cuyler swung his chair slowly back around and faced

them. His eyes were red, as if he had been fighting tears.

"Of course, I didn't know what was wrong with the switchboard except that it was deadly. I—I went back to the door and tried to force it, pounding and yelling. It was half to three quarters of an hour before the night man heard me." Cuyler drew a deep breath. "When he got the wedges out and the door open I sent him to phone for the police. I came back and waited—with Portia."

There was a long silence before anyone spoke. It was Johnny Arcus, twisting in his chair, who asked the question. "How do you account for her being here without your knowing it, Mr. Cuyler—or your being here without *her* knowing it?"

Cuyler's red-rimmed eyes blinked at Johnny Arcus. It was clear that Johnny had been right when he said that Cuyler respected his legal talents but didn't regard him too highly as a man. Some of the old bite was back in Cuyler's voice.

"There's only one way it could have happened, Johnny. Portia must have come in while I was having my sandwich at the club. She may have looked in here and seen I was gone. When I came back I went through the main office, as I told you. Evidently she didn't hear me. When she tried to leave she couldn't get the door open and came back to the switchboard to get help."

"You made a phone call just before you went out, Mr. Cuyler," Johnny said. "So the fellow who rigged the switchboard did it after you left—and after Portia came in."

"If Portia didn't go into the main office he could have been working on it when she came in," Cuyler said.

Johnny Arcus's voice rose peculiarly. "Why did Portia come in this evening, Mr. Cuyler?"

"Heaven knows," Cuyler said.

"She knew you were working here. We all knew you were working here." Johnny's voice rose still higher. "Did you ask her to come in? Did you send for her?"

"What's the matter with you, Johnny?" Bill Leland asked.

"I want to know why she came in here," Johnny said. "She was supposed to come to Alan's party."

"Maybe she wanted to check her precedents before we go into court tomorrow," Roger said.

Johnny's near hysteria seemed to act as a tonic on Warren Cuyler. The dark eyes had come to life, half amused, half angry. "What are you trying to get at, Johnny? That there was something between Portia and me beyond our office association?"

Johnny was suddenly on his feet. "Well, was there?" he cried.

Cuyler's voice was silky calm. "And what business would it be of yours, my friend, if there were?"

Great tears ran down from behind Johnny's glasses. He choked

as he tried to speak. "B-because Portia and I were engaged to be m-married," he said.

Five faces stared at Johnny as if he'd just announced the discovery of a uranium deposit under the rug. Surprisingly, Cuyler was the first to recover. He moved quickly out of his chair and went to Johnny. Betsy watched, fascinated, as if she were seeing a play on the stage. Cuyler's arm went around Johnny's shoulder.

"My dear boy, I didn't know," he said. "Of course there was nothing between Portia and me. She's—she was a good lawyer. I respected her. What do you think has knocked me for such a loop? That girl died for me, Johnny! I can't bring her back—but I promise you I'm going to square it for her when I get Zorn in court. I promise you that."

Johnny stared at Cuyler. "You liar!" he whispered, and then he turned and ran out of the office.

Cuyler watched him go, and he was tall and straight and alive again. "Poor kid," he said. "I never dreamed Portia cared for him."

"She didn't," Bill Leland said, still staring at his well-shined shoes. "She hated his guts. Told me so a hundred times."

Cuyler shook his head, as if to clear it. "But why would he say they were engaged if they weren't?"

Roger Trent gave a short, sharp laugh. "Portia was nice to him for a while, and then she couldn't stand his clinging to her like a leech. She gave him the air, but good. But you can bet he dreamed of being —engaged—of marrying. Now that she's dead—" He shrugged. "Who can contradict him when he says she loved him? It's a way of bolstering his nonexistent ego."

Johnny's outburst had revived Cuyler, and Betsy thought she understood why. This was a man whose whole life had been involved with unexpected emergencies. When there was something to cope with, Cuyler's internal machinery was geared to "cope." There was a problem they all had to cope with now, quite apart from the solution of the murder—to go or not to go before the Grand Jury tomorrow as planned.

"We can easily get a postponement on the basis of what has happened," Roger said. "And to be brutal about it, what has happened won't hurt our case."

"It would seem we owed Portia a little respect," Bill Leland said, still staring at his shoes.

"She would want us to go ahead if we thought it was the best way to get Zorn," Cuyler said.

Leland's eyelids flickered. "There's a great deal of nonsense talked about what dead people would wish if they could only tell us," he said.

Cuyler gave his young partner a puzzled glance. "What's eating everyone here?" he asked. "First Arcus and now you, Bill."

Leland gave the older man a

ghostly smile. "Your recuperative powers are better than mine, Warren. I had lunch with Portia today. We—we had a pleasant, gay, relaxed time."

"Did she say anything about coming here to the office later?" Cuyler asked.

Bill Leland lowered his eyes. "She did not. As a matter of fact, she remarked how pleasant it was to have a day off from the case. When she left me—about three o'clock—she said she was going home, be very female and soak in a hot tub loaded with expensive bath salts for hours, and then go to Alan's party."

Betsy, watching and listening, had the peculiar sensation still of being the audience at a play. For some strange reason nothing rang quite true. She couldn't put her finger on it.

In the silence following Bill Leland's statement they could all hear the sounds of hysteria from Gloria Spence's office. Roger Trent glanced angrily in the direction of the closed door, teeth biting down on his pipestem.

"Quite apart from any tactical considerations," he said, "we'll need at least a day or two to reorganize Portia's material so that we can present it properly in her place. We'll have to ask for a postponement."

Cuyler seemed back at the problem. "I agree," he said.

The clamor from Gloria's office increased. Cuyler turned impatiently to Betsy. "See what's eating Gloria, will you, Miss Collum?" he said.

Betsy nodded, crossed the room, and opened the door to the secretary's private cubicle.

What was eating Gloria was downright terror. Molloy was with her, and Molloy had asked a favor. They needed to use the telephones. A police technician had the switchboard in working order again, and Miss Moffat, knowing that Betsy was with Cuyler, had informed the Lieutenant that Gloria knew how to handle the board.

Gloria took off in a wild torrent of weeping. They had tried to murder Mr. Cuyler with that "thing." She wouldn't touch it if her life depended on it. Was the Lieutenant out of his mind? Did he think anyone should ever be asked to touch that "murder machine" again?

Betsy was surprised to see that even in tears Gloria Spence was an extraordinarily attractive girl. As she was thinking this, Roger Trent burst into the room, his expression thunderous. He walked straight over to Gloria, took her by the shoulders, and shook her. "Will you stop that caterwauling?" he shouted at her.

She was instantly silent, staring at him with her mouth half open. It was, Betsy thought, a certainty that no man had ever spoken to Gloria like that before. Roger didn't let it ride there.

"Just bear the facts in mind," he said in the same angry voice. "Papa isn't dead." The papa fixation again. "Papa is alive and kicking. You've got nothing to worry about. Maybe you're not a big girl but you're supposed to act like one. Now just shut up—and do what they tell you!" With which he turned and stalked out of the office.

Twenty-four hours ago, Betsy reflected, Cuyler's staff had been a closely knit unit working out a strategy to bring a criminal to book—or so it had seemed. Now the raw edges of personal relationships were showing.

"I'm perfectly willing to operate the switchboard for you, Lieutenant," said Betsy. "It's my job."

They had brought the proper chair back to the switchboard. The murderer had left it in the law library when he got the metal chair from there. Molloy wanted a report from headquarters on how the search for Zorn was going.

Betsy gave him a wire to one of the phones in the general office and she saw him sit down, receiver propped on his shoulder. As she watched him she realized what it was that had been bothering her ever since Molloy had described the murder device.

The police were hunting for the wrong man!

And while they were hunting for Zorn, the real murderer was being given time to plan a second attack on Warren Cuyler!

Betsy sat at the switchboard, her fingers ice-cold. It was suddenly so clear—so terrifyingly clear. She had to tell someone. She didn't want to talk to Molloy until she'd tried it on Alan. Alan was the someone who would tell her she was crazy—if she was.

How long it was she didn't know, but she sat there, facts tumbling into place. Then, providentially, she saw Alan coming across the office carrying two paper cartons of coffee. "Do you good," he said, offering her one of the cartons.

"Alan, I've got to talk to you. They're hunting for Zorn, and all the time he had nothing to do with it. Somebody right here in this office—someone we all know—and Mr. Cuyler is still in danger—and—"

"Easy, Collum, easy," he said, smiling at her. "What kind of wild talk is this?"

"This wasn't a gangster killing, Alan," she said urgently. "Everyone's jumped to the conclusion it was Zorn because we've been expecting him to strike at Mr. Cuyler. But he didn't. Oh, please, Alan! Isn't there some place we can talk? They're hunting for the wrong man!"

He saw that she was serious. "There's the office I've been using down the hall," he said.

She came out of the booth and they walked out to the reception room and down the other corridor

to his office. Alan switched on the lights and put the two cartons of coffee down on his desk.

"I think you're out of your mind, Collum, but I'd like to listen to your reasons," he said.

She took a deep breath. "Would Carl Zorn have waited till the very night before Mr. Cuyler was to present his case to try to kill him?"

"He might," Alan said.

"If he did, wouldn't he have made dead certain of it?"

"The mistake was the purest chance," Alan said.

"But you would have expected him to use another kind of method, wouldn't you, Alan?" Her voice shook slightly. "Something more direct and less risky? There was all kinds of chance that whoever set that trap would be caught while he was working at it."

Alan's face showed nothing. "I'll concede it for the sake of argument," he said quietly. "But Zorn might have tried it this way to throw suspicion off himself and his mob."

"Alan, suppose he thought of this way of doing it. I can't imagine it, but suppose he did. He had to know a lot of things. He had to know the door opened out."

"He could easily have sent someone to the office and found that out."

"But would he think of sending someone to find out such a thing? Wouldn't he assume the door opened in—like all other office doors? Thinking about this trap had to begin with that door, knowing about it."

Alan reached for his cigarette. "So, let's suppose somebody told him about the door and that's how his thinking *did* start."

"I don't believe it, but I'll concede it," she said. "So he knows about the door. Now he had to know about the switchboard and the fact there was a wall plug in the booth."

"A fake repairman."

"There wasn't any repairman, fake or otherwise—but let's suppose it was something he could find out some other way—maybe some kind of floor plan of the office. So now he knows about the door and the plug—although I won't concede it. Next are the rubber doorstops."

"Almost any visitor to the office might have noticed the doorstops."

"But no visitor ever goes to the law library. He couldn't have known about the metal chair."

"He would have had time to look when he rigged the trap."

Betsy shook her head stubbornly. "That's my whole point. Zorn wouldn't have sent anyone who wasn't equipped to do the *whole* job, Alan. If he didn't know about the chair he would have brought one. Don't you see? *Everything came from the office.* No one from outside would have been certain of *all* the things."

"Anything else?" Alan asked.

"Zorn had to know for certain that Mr. Cuyler was going to be working alone in the office tonight. It was his last chance. If the whole staff had been working here—and it might well have been—it wouldn't have worked."

"We all knew Cuyler was going to be here alone," Alan said.

Betsy asked urgently, "But how could Zorn know—unless somebody told him? And how could you or anyone know that something wouldn't happen to change the plans? Mr. Cuyler, working on the case, might have suddenly decided he needed help from someone."

"But he didn't. He didn't call anyone. He didn't send for Portia."

"But how could Zorn be sure he wouldn't? Don't you see, Alan? Zorn would never have run so *many* risks, even if he could have known all the things I say he *couldn't* have known!"

"So?" Alan said softly.

"So it had to be someone who knew all those things, Alan—someone who would plan that kind of trap because he *did* know them. Someone who knew Mr. Cuyler was going to be there alone, and felt certain he could count on it."

"Someone," Alan said tonelessly, "on the inside. Someone in the office."

"Don't you see?" It was almost a wail from Betsy. "And if I'm right, Mr. Cuyler is still in danger. The murderer failed, but while Lieutenant Molloy is hunting for Zorn he has a chance to try again." A shudder ran over her. "Alan, it's someone we know. Probably someone who is here—among us—tonight."

Alan was silent for a long time. Then he said, "Why?"

"Oh, Alan, I don't know. It's all seemed like a comedy until tonight. I mean—the way people in the office feel about one another. It's been like watching a show. Mr. Cuyler has an eye for a pretty girl. I know. He's looked at me. He's looked hard at Gloria. Roger Trent's in love with Gloria. He looked at Portia. Both Johnny Arcus and Bill Leland are—were goofy about Portia. And there's Miss Moffat."

"Moffat! She worships Cuyler!"

"Of course! She's been in love with him for thirty years. Anyone watching her knows that. But he's never been serious about anyone. Suppose she thought he was serious about Gloria—or about Portia? Or Gloria—suppose she thought she was losing him to Portia?"

"Sounds like a soap opera."

"There can be a hundred other reasons I couldn't guess," Betsy said. "The point is, someone is still free to try again, and the police aren't even giving them a tumble!"

Alan pushed back his chair. "Let's get going," he said.

"To where, Alan?"

"To warn Cuyler."

(*continued on page 84*)

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **WALT SHELDON**

TITLE: ***Always Keep Running***

TYPE: Cop Story á la **Black Mask**

COP: Hannihan

LOCALE: Tokyo, Japan

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *Hannihan knew how his fear had started, why he always felt inadequate. He had put 5000 miles between himself and home—but he had not been able to forget . . .*

THE FIRST THING WAS THE POURing of pale green tea, smoking hot, into little cups for the four of them. That was always the first thing over here in Japan. The waitress in the bright kimono bowed and melted out of the room, and Hannihan sipped his tea with the others.

There was not much tea taste. He glanced into the cup, saw the residue of fine, green powder, then he looked up again.

The fat man in the hand-stitched cashmere jacket was speaking in Japanese. He apparently did not speak English, and the well-fed, muscular Nisei, Hannihan guessed was here to translate for him. The Nisei wore a silk sports shirt with Hawaiian flowers printed on it. Flashy.

"Mr. Taneki pays for what he wants," translated the Nisei. "He wants to be left alone a little more, and he'll pay for it. Understand?"

Hannihan nodded. He understood, all right. In fact, it was all very familiar. Even the fourth man in the room, the American with the hollow, tubercular-looking cheeks and the sleepy eyes, was familiar. The American had told Hannihan just to call him Johnny. He was across from Hannihan at the low, lacquered table, and he was just as uncomfortable as Hannihan squatting cross-legged on

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the grass-mat floor. He seemed warm in his double-breasted jacket with its well padded shoulders and long, rolled lapels, and he wasn't talking much now; he was mostly staring at Hannihan.

The Nisei continued, "Mr. Taneki's got friends in the Metropolitan Police—no sweat there. Now he wants a friend in the C.I.D."

"Me," said Hannihan.

"That's right," said the Nisei.

"A good friend."

"Naturally."

"How good?"

"What do you mean, how good?"

"You know what I mean." Hannihan made a circle of thumb and forefinger, the Japanese gesture that meant *okane*—money.

The Nisei spoke to Taneki, got an answer, and looked at Hannihan again. "Seventy-two thousand yen a month. That's two hundred bucks American. That's a lot of dough for over here."

"Yeah," said Hannihan. He looked at the three of them in turn—Taneki, the Nisei, the hood who said his name was Johnny. And here they were, all of them, in this Japanese room, and now it had come to this.

The room was part of a restaurant in an alley in Tokyo's downtown Shimbashi section. Typical Japanese room with a vase of carefully arranged flowers and a stiff, silk tapestry in an alcove at one end, cushions around the low table in the center. And sliding doors.

Hannihan had never guessed it would happen again so quietly and conversationally and in such a dainty place.

He heard the rain outside. Still raining. It had been raining when he'd left the Field Office of the Military Police Criminal Investigation Detachment earlier that evening. The office was in a small, gray building on the Sumida River, and the river breeze was cool in the summer but unpleasant when it came directly from the south where the big fish market stood.

Hannihan's desk was in a large, bare room upstairs, along with the desks of the other investigators, and the last thing he had done there this evening was to finish typing a Criminal Investigation Report, W.D.A.G.O. Form sixteen-dash-ninety-five on a finished case. Then he had gathered all the other papers on the case, the M.F.R.—Complaint, the hold orders, the progress reports, the statements of witnesses, the sketches, the photos, the copy of the six-two-eight for Washington, and he had clipped everything together into a neat sheaf with the completed sixteen-dash-ninety-five on top.

At that point Captain Barker, Military Police Corps, came by. Captain Barker was in command of the Field Office. He was putting on weight over here.

"That the final on that phonograph record case?" he said to Hannihan, without greeting him.

"Yes, sir," said Hannihan. He was not a soldier; he was civil service with a rating of Investigator, GS-9, $5050 per annum—but around here you acted like a soldier when Barker came around.

Barker took the sheaf of papers, studied the cover sheet with its synopsis of the case, and grunted, "Okay."

"Just okay, huh?" said Hannihan and glared quietly at Barker. He'd worked a month on that case, with plenty of unclaimed overtime. Some sergeant in the postal section had been getting phonograph records shipped in duty-free through the Army Post Office from the States and selling them on the black market, making close to a buck and a half on each record. Hannihan thought he'd done a pretty thorough job cracking the thing.

"What do you want, a medal or something?" said Barker, and turned and walked away.

Hannihan put on his hat and raincoat and went wearily into the gray evening. He was lonely again. He called a taxi, a small, rickety Japanese Datsun, and told the driver to go to the Nights of Paris Club in the Ginza section.

He lit a cigarette, twisting and fumbling in the small taxi to get his lighter from under the raincoat. On an impulse he took his wallet from his inner jacket pocket and flipped it open to Lily's picture. He stared at Lily's picture for some moments. She was small and short in that new style and she was blonde and had her hair clipped standing by the gate in the small back yard wearing a summer housedress. Hannihan had snapped this one last summer with a Brownie, and Lily always insisted it was her best photograph.

She *did* look good in it, by golly. You could see more than just her face and figure in this picture. You could see and remember how she moved quickly and surely all the time, and she could do most anything, like cooking and making dresses and typing and taking shorthand and helping Hannihan with his police examinations and mostly remembering the answers one hell of a sight quicker and better than he could.

Maybe that had been part of the trouble—her being so capable. He always felt like a bewildered, clumsy kid in front of her. He had always had the feeling that if he could stop feeling that way, things would have been a lot better between them.

And now they'd made the break—not divorce, of course, but Hannihan was over here and she was still back home, and he hadn't made any moves yet to send for her.

"Night of Pah-riss Crub," said the driver, stopping, and Hannihan paid his seventy yen and a thirty-yen tip and got out.

It was much like any of the other clubs that had opened in Tokyo during the Occupation—American-

style, overdone. Dim lights, clashing colors, a swing band, a dance floor, tables and booths, and hostesses you could dance or talk with for five hundred yen an hour.

Hannihan took his usual booth, ordered *tempura*-style fried shrimp and a bottle of beer, then looked across the room where the dance girls stood in their tight evening dresses, and signaled to Tomiko.

Tomiko came to his table immediately. She was a remarkably beautiful girl.

"Hi, Tommy. Sit down," said Hannihan.

"How are you, Bob-san?" Her English wasn't too bad, either. She'd studied it three years in business school. She was a qualified secretary and had a second-class certificate to operate an abacus, and she could have worked in a bank or a counting house; but she wouldn't have made a living that way, and she did as a dance girl.

"Want something to drink?"

"Scotch and soda."

He laughed and she laughed. It would be colored water, not Scotch and soda, and she knew he knew it. That was all right. He had no illusions about Tomiko, and she didn't pretend he swept her off her feet.

While he was paying her five hundred yen an hour she was as faithful as any lovestruck schoolgirl, and what she did on her own time was her business. It was a comfortable arrangement. It wasn't any more expensive than staying drunk all the time.

"Busy today?" she asked.

"Yeah."

She looked sympathetic. "Want to dance?"

"After I finish eating." He liked dancing with Tomiko. She had a talent for making him think he was dancing well, when he really wasn't.

Now she looked at him thoughtfully for a moment. The inscrutable Oriental look, he supposed. Presently she said, "You work tomorrow, Bob-san?"

"No. Holiday. For a change."

"How about you come with me tonight?" she asked quietly.

"What?"

She startled him; she'd never asked anything like that before.

"How about we go seashore? I know very nice place."

"All right," he said slowly, trying to contain his rising excitement. "All right, Tommy—"

Maybe this was what he'd been needing all along, he was thinking. Not a real deep affair or anything, but something to put his self-confidence solidly on its feet again, something to help him forget even more easily.

He hadn't really been able to forget just by putting five thousand miles between himself and home. He hadn't been able to forget Lily, or Lieutenant Thomas, or Frankie Dowd, or the gym at St. Francis Parochial School or any of it. He

hadn't forgotten that he had always been afraid to die.

That was behind the whole business, he supposed.

His fried shrimp came, and he ate slowly, and sipped beer, and glanced up every once in a while at Tomiko, admiring her quiet, dark eyes, like delicate brush strokes on the silk screen of her face; she in turn watched him quietly and said nothing.

According to psychology, you were supposed to be able to get rid of your fears when you know how they had started. Well, he thought he knew how his had started, but it didn't do much good. Reluctantly, resignedly, he let the bitter memories come over him again . . .

His old man had been a plumber, and they had lived in a small house on a block with a lot of other small houses.

Hannihan had two older brothers and one younger sister. His was always the feeling of being overlooked in the shuffle. He spent a lot of time by himself. Read a lot. The Rover Boys, Tom Swift, Don Sturdy, Pee-wee Harris, and the Frank L. Packard sports books. He was good at thinking games; he could beat his old man at checkers. Easy.

He was big enough, strong enough, but he always felt too clumsy for most athletics. He was best at gym—rope climbing and horses and the parallel bars—where he had only himself to think about.

That week he was supposed to appear with the gym team at St. Francis', and all the parents were supposed to come. But his father, out on a job, fell down a flight of cellar stairs and broke his hip. At first his mother didn't want to come—she was all upset because his father hadn't carried insurance —but he coaxed and she finally agreed to come to the gym with his older brother.

In the rope-climbing event that night he started out climbing faster than anybody in sight. Then, when he got to the top, something happened. He never knew exactly what. The noise of the crowds, maybe, or the bright lights, or the ocean perch they'd had for supper. Anyway, everything went whirly and black, and when he woke up he had fallen and his arm was broken.

After that his mother treated him like an invalid. Even long after the arm had healed he wasn't allowed to be on the gym team any more, cross the street by himself, climb trees, or slide down the banister. She took his hand whenever they crossed the street together, embarrassing him no end. Once, when he fought outside and came home scratched and bloody, she wept for two hours. She kept telling him about somebody she had known, or heard of, who fought in the street and fell and hit his head on a curb and died.

So maybe that was the beginning

of it. Maybe the other things—joining the force, finding and marrying Lily, selling out to Frankie Dowd, and, now, running away halfway around the world—maybe they all just followed inevitably from that beginning.

Take being a cop. Most people would say you'd have to be a cold, fearless sort of character to want to be a cop in the first place. But maybe some guys became cops just to prove what they themselves doubted—that they were equal to it.

He knew some guys he thought might be that kind: Kessler, who had been on homicide, and at night went to a voice teacher and wanted to be an opera singer; Jennings, who raised mushrooms in his cellar and played chess with Hannihan.

Only there was one thing he didn't really know about any of the others. He didn't know whether or not they feared death as much as he did, and thought about it as often as he did. Bob Hannihan had been a cop for ten years now, but he had been close to dying only once, and that was not as unusual as it sounded, because with average luck a police officer could go from probation to retirement without ever really being in mortal danger; it all depended on the breaks.

And this was another of the reasons he'd resigned from the bureau back home and had taken this job overseas. Another reason he was sitting now with an exotic dance girl in a Tokyo dive called the Nights of Paris, eating and drinking but still feeling lonely.

"You looking tired, *neh?*" said Tomiko.

"Yeah." He poured the last of his beer. Nippon brand in a bottle almost quart-size. Not bad beer. "That Barker. That fat Captain Barker. No imagination. Just because I pull a black-market case first time, he keeps throwing every black-market assignment on me—got me handling three cases at once now."

"*S'koshi* I don't understand," said Tomiko.

"You don't understand a little, huh?" Hannihan grinned at her. "That's okay. I just feel like griping to somebody whether they understand or not."

"Ah, so," she said gravely.

Incredible, he thought, looking at her, that this lovely creature had invited him to a rendezvous. He wasn't so much—big, deliberate, Irish-faced, and a rotten dancer—and she was lovely enough to make heads turn wherever she went. Not only lovely—charming; look how she hung on his every word.

"Barker's going at it the wrong way," he said, needing to say it. "We can arrest a thousand military guys for black-market dealing—two-bit stuff all the time—but who we really need is the guys controlling the buying. They got it organized over here—don't think they haven't. It's big business."

"Ah, so," she said again.

"We can't pinch a Japanese national, of course, but we can get evidence if we want to spend the time on it, and turn it over to the Metropolitan Police to make the pinch. That's what we ought to be doing."

"So?" she said, drawing the word out, looking deeply interested.

He laughed. "You don't know what the devil I'm talking about, do you?"

She smiled and said, "No, Bob-san. I am only woman, *neh?*"

"Come on," he said, suddenly gruff. "Let's get out of here."

He signaled the waiter for the check, and beckoned to the manager so that he could pay him for the rest of Tomiko's evening.

It was still raining outside, a pearl-gray drizzle cool on the cheek, glossy in the streets. Hannihan waved at a taxi parked a few yards from the door of the night club. Tomiko, a transparent plastic raincoat over her bare shoulders, stepped back a bit.

Hannihan jerked open the taxi door and started to step inside. There was a young American already there. He had very thin cheeks and sleepy, thick-lidded eyes. He was dressed in an expensive dark suit with lots of padding in the shoulders. Hannihan was going to step back again. The young American said, "Don't go 'way, Hannihan, come on in."

Hannihan stared at him. His voice had been easy, pleasant enough, the accent faintly midwestern, not at all like the pseudo-tough accent of a hood in the movies or on television. Just the same, Hannihan knew he was a hood. He had the cold self-assurance of a hood.

Hannihan said, "How'd you know my name?"

"What's the difference? I know it, I been waiting for you. So take a seat."

"Waiting?" Hannihan turned quickly to look at Tomiko. She was running back into the club. Just before she got to the door she turned and looked at him once, and he couldn't decide whether it was a sympathetic look or not.

He stared at the hood again. "The dame was supposed to bring me out here. You got her to do it —is that it?"

"That's it, pal."

Hannihan looked at the young man curiously. "You wouldn't be off your rocker, would you? Why get the dame to bring me out here?"

The hood smiled. "We figured you might not want to come otherwise."

"What makes you think I want to come now?"

The hood leaned forward and Hannihan saw that he had a gun in his hand. "I've got a rod," he said cheerfully.

It was crazy, thought Hannihan.

It shouldn't happen like this. It didn't happen often back home and it shouldn't happen at all overseas in Tokyo. That was partly why he'd taken this job.

He knew what it was like because a friend of his with the C.I.D. had been writing, telling him all about it. C.I.D. men didn't carry weapons because they didn't ordinarily need them: ninety per cent of their work was with petty stuff, larceny and assaults, and you found very few professional thieves in the military service and virtually never a hophead with a real habit. You signed up for two years and it could be a vacation.

Hannihan was sick inside, but he kept his voice steady and his face expressionless. He'd been a cop long enough to be able to do that.

"Okay," he said, "I'll go along," and got in the cab.

"That's better." The young man smiled, and as soon as Hannihan was in the cab he poked the gun into his lower ribs and kept it there.

Hannihan tried to look like a man used to having guns poked into him. It had never happened before, never in his life. The cab driver started off without directions; evidently he knew already where he was going.

Hannihan said to the man with the gun, "What are you doing here in Tokyo?"

"Working."

"Who for?"

"You'll meet him."

"This is crazy. What's it all about? Who are you, anyway?"

"Call me Johnny."

"Okay, Johnny. Is this a—is this a ride?"

"Not if you play ball."

"With who?"

"The guy I'm working for. You ask a lot of questions."

"Wouldn't you?"

"Yeah, I guess I would, at that."

The taxi charged through the traffic-filled streets, horn squawking loudly and often. Everybody else was blowing his horn. The trolleys were all clanging their bells. At the intersections policemen in black raincoats were turning traffic with ballet-like posturings, and blowing whistles with every change.

They passed dance halls and open-front restaurants and *pachinko* joints filled with Japanese pinball machines, and everywhere loudspeakers blared full-volume with cheap jazz. Neon reflections shimmered in the wet streets.

Johnny became conversational. "Some city."

"How long you been here?"

"Six months."

"Working?"

"Yeah." Johnny grinned. "I'm an American import. Look—don't get ideas just because I'm talking nice. Don't try anything."

"Wouldn't dream of it," said Hannihan.

"Sure," said Johnny. "You're

smart. You've been around. You never saw anything like the boss, though. Some guy."

"Your boss?"

"Who else?"

"The one we're going to meet now?"

"Natch."

"You wouldn't know his name, would you?"

"Sure. Taneki. That's Japanese. Quite a guy. Always showing me off, know what I mean? But I don't care. The pay's good and like I said, Tokyo's some city. You had a hot bath in a geisha house yet?"

"No. How'd this Taneki find you, anyway?"

"Oh, he's got connections in the States. Or they got connections with him. What's the difference?"

Yeah, thought Hannihan, what's the difference? What's the difference between being a cop in a big city back home and a cop with the well-ordered security forces overseas. There was no difference now.

The Big Man wanted to talk to him. He remembered the last time a Big Man had wanted to talk to him. Remember? He'd never forget it. That was the only other time in his life he was in real danger.

A Big Man named Frankie Dowd had killed somebody, another rat like himself, but still the bureau wanted very much to pin it on him. And then one of Hannihan's private informers called him one night and in a shaky voice said to meet him. He'd come onto the gun Frankie used on the job; there would be prints on it. Hannihan bought the weapon—he was eligible for promotion at the time, and he couldn't have made a better investment. He bought it and went home, planning to turn the evidence in, along with a good story in the morning.

And in the morning, while he was still shaving, his phone rang. Lily answered it and called him. "Some man for you, Bob," she said. They were talking to each other politely even though they weren't getting along. He picked up the phone and put it to his ear, still wet with shaving cream.

"Your stoolie's dead," said the strange voice, "and Frankie wants to see you." The man hung up.

At breakfast Lily said, "Something wrong?"

He said, "No," and scowled at her, and knew from the look in her eyes that she didn't believe him.

He knew where to find Frankie Dowd, and his knees shook secretly when the elevator took him up to the eighth floor of the Shoreline Hotel.

But Frankie surprised him. Frankie took the gun, peeled some bills from a roll, and gave them to him. "We'll get along," said Frankie. "Any time you need anything, Hannihan, just come see me."

"Sure," said Hannihan, his throat dry.

"And if I need anything," said Frankie, "I'll come see you."

That evening he made his decision to quit the bureau, take the government job, and come to the Far East. His friend had been urging him to come, saying it was a soft touch, and saying they needed experienced men in the C.I.D., couldn't get enough of them. It seemed such a beautiful out—such a perfect escape from Lily, from his own fears, and from the thing he had just done in taking dough from a mobster.

That was almost a year ago. And now, riding in a taxi with a hood named Johnny holding a gun to his ribs, he had the sudden queer feeling that he'd come around in a circle.

The taxi turned into a series of narrow alleys in the downtown Shimbashi section. It honked at pedestrians and scattered them. Once it sideswiped a boy on a bicycle balancing a tray of noodle bowls on his upturned hand and sent him sprawling. Finally it pulled up in front of a small, two-story Japanese restaurant.

Johnny made Hannihan get out first. In the vestibule they took off their shoes, and the kimono-clad maid gave then cloth slippers and took them up a flight of narrow, polished stairs to the private room on the second floor.

And he was in this room now, at the low table with Taneki-san, olive-skinned and fat—he didn't look like a big black-market man; he looked like a prosperous silk exporter, or the mayor of some lesser city in Tokyo for a convention—and the Nisei interpreter in the flowered sports shirt, and Johnny, looking happily out of place in his dark double-breasted suit and hand-painted silk tie. Hannihan tasted his tea again; it was getting cool.

Taneki spoke in Japanese to the interpreter, not moving his eyes, scarcely moving his lips.

"He says," the interpreter told Hannihan, "he thinks he's making you a very good offer. It won't be hard for you. All you got to do is keep his name out of things and lay off people when he tells you to."

"Look," said Hannihan. "Why me? What do you put me on the spot like this for? There's twenty guys in my office. Why me in particular?"

The Nisei relayed that, got an answer, and then smiled when he translated it. "Mr. Taneki says he knows you can be fixed. He heard you were working for Frankie Dowd in America one time. He's got a lot of respect for Frankie Dowd."

"I see," said Hannihan.

So it stayed with a man. Everything stayed; you didn't get away. Ever.

There was a pack of American cigarettes Taneki had put on the table. Hannihan lit one and tried to keep his fingers from trembling.

"And what if I don't want to work for Mr. Taneki?"

Before the Nisei could say anything Johnny smiled at Hannihan. "Now, pal, you know better than that," he said.

Hannihan was sick—sicker than he had ever been. Here he was talking to them in a perfectly even voice, but he was rotten sick inside. He knew his knees would shake when he got away from here tonight, just as they had shaken the time he saw Frankie Dowd.

Suddenly he wished he had Lily to come home to tonight. Wished he had another chance not to feel inadequate before her. Wished he had never come overseas, wished he had never run away.

And then he stopped wishing abruptly and knew that he could not possibly run away because he would always take his fear with him.

Unless—he tingled with the excitement of this sudden idea—he could discharge his fear and leave it in this place tonight, once and for all.

"Well? Yes or no?"

Taneki, like a placid Buddha, watched him softly, fatly. The Nisei looked at him impersonally. Johnny almost grinned at him.

Johnny, he knew, had a gun; he had watched him tuck it back into the holster under his jacket. The Nisei might or might not have a gun under the hem of that flowered sports shirt. Taneki? Hard to say.

Hannihan felt the beat of his pulse hard and clear in his temples. There was a prickling sensation in the back of his neck. and high in his stomach there was the start of a wild, exultant feeling.

He was beginning to understand why he had always felt so inadequate in front of Lily, in front of Lieutenant Thomas at the bureau, in front of Frankie Dowd, in front of Captain Barker at the Field Office—even, at times, in front of the beautiful tart, Tomiko.

He was beginning to understand that until a man actually risked danger or ruin or death for what he really believed, he never would feel strong, and would always keep running.

And now he realized he could solve everything in the next ten seconds—one way or another.

Funny, thinking of Lily, wishing he had her again, had made him realize all this. He'd have to send for Lily to come over here now. That would be one of the first things he'd do in the morning—if he got away tonight.

He drained the last of his tea.

"Well?" said the Nisei.

Taneki and Johnny watched him closely, waiting for his answer.

He came up from his squatting position slowly, as though to crush his cigarette in the ashtray, and then he threw himself at Johnny, slugging as he came.

He felt very strong. He had never felt stronger in his life.

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **GORDON R. DICKSON**

TITLE: ***Out of the Darkness***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: Near Bellisle Point

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *The old lighthouse keeper, considered too old for his job, was alone on the tiny island. Crime in a lighthouse? Then two strangers came out of the darkness . . .*

THE BRIGHT SUN OF NOON SLANTed through the lower-floor window of the lighthouse and lay square across the letter he was writing. But the pen wavered in his fingers and the inked lines blurred through the quick soft tears of age. He blinked his eyes clear and read again: "*—so thank you again, Maddy, but I cannot come. It would not work out. You have always been a wonderful niece to me and I would like to see the boys again; but after twenty-nine years my heart is hear*"

He paused to cross out the last word and write it correctly. In little things he was failing too. He licked dry lips and his throat was stiff with pain. He went on: "*here. Possibly they can find something for me to do on shore around the harbor up at Lynd. I do not see why they could not let me stay at least a few years more but it is the government that sets the retirement age and they do not make exceptions, even if you have a perfect record.*"

He stopped, drew a heavy breath, then set the pen to paper again.

"*I will try to come East for a short visit after they have put a new man on here. But do not count on it too much. If something should happen or you should hear of my early demise—for I am not as young as I used to be, Maddy, and it is true that anything can happen. God bless you and the boys. It is hard for me to imagine that they are both grown up now*

and have homes of their own. I think of you all often.

Your loving uncle,
Charles Merriot Blyne

He folded the letter, put it in an envelope, addressed and stamped it. Leaving it there to lie in the sunlight, he got slowly up from the walnut writing table and turned to the tall, old cupboard on the wall behind him. Around him, the old-fashioned furniture of the lighthouse parlor, waxed and polished to a finer sheen by the timeless years, breathed permanence. He thought, fumbling with the knob on the cupboard, that it would stay on when he was gone; and the sudden delicate chime of the square clock on the mantel above the fireplace, striking the third quarter of the hour, pierced him with an almost unbearable cruelty.

He opened the cupboard and took out a thick glass tumbler and a thick-bellied bottle of rye whiskey. His hands shook as he set them on the table. The top of the bottle had been unsealed; but the high level of the liquid, seen through the dark glass, showed nothing taken. In twenty-nine years no liquor had been poured in this building, on this small rocky island. He had kept his light in perfect order, in strict accordance with the regulations—and now they were turning him out, and only because of an arbitrary figure of years.

He closed his eyes against the inner hurt, opened them, and picked up the bottle. More steadily than he had held the pen, he poured half a glassful of the whiskey. He set the bottle down and reached for the glass. It was a little distance, but twenty-nine years of habit weighed down his hand. He could not touch it—not just yet. He let his hand drop and turned away from the table.

He wandered across the room and looked out to the south. The weather was fair and the barometer high. Far shoreward, he could see the faint line of the coast, stretching away, curving away to the south and Bellisle Point. Past that point and past his lighthouse the coastwise ships had gone safely all these years up to the big harbor at Lynd—millions of dollars worth of cargo and thousands of lives, all dependent on him. If his light had ever failed, there would have been a boat out from the mainland in two hours to see what had gone wrong. But it had never failed—not in twenty-nine years.

Tonight it would be fair, with a bright moon. And no ocean-going vessels were scheduled to pass until eleven that night; and the sleek yacht out there belonged to some fabled man of millions whose strange network of commerce ran underground even in the open light of day, and all over the world.

But by the time the yacht passed, the light would be burning again.

Those on shore who watched would have noticed its failure to go on at dusk—his first dereliction of duty in almost a generation of years. They would come out to encounter his protest and set the light to work again. Yes, everything would be as it was—except for him. Except for him.

He roused suddenly from his thoughts. Caught in the long rays of the afternoon sunlight, a small cabin cruiser he had thought to be quartering past his rock had turned and was now making for his landing. It was an ordinary inboard cruiser built for fair weather and inshore fishing; and there were two men visible in the open cockpit. And there was no doubt about it, they were headed right for his landing.

Starting, he turned back and hurried across the room. He snatched up bottle and glass, held them clumsily in one arm and jerked open the cupboard door. It swung wide and he thrust them in. There was a clatter and a small multitude of odds and ends rolled out to scatter on the rug below—medicine bottles, pill boxes, a roll of adhesive tape and another of bandage. Sweating, he dropped to his knees and began to gather them in, scratching the small objects together, cramming them into his hands.

One empty pill box had flipped under the table and he had to crawl after it. He rose with burdened arms and shoved everything helter-skelter out of sight in the cupboard and closed the cupboard door just as feet sounded on the cement walk leading to the front door. Then the door opened without the courtesy of a knock and a tall, broad-shouldered young man in waterproof jacket and duck pants stood looking in, his broad mouth curved in a pleasant grin.

"You Blyne?" said the young man. He had a harsh, not unpleasing voice, and there was a sort of friendly contempt in the brown eyes under his wavy hair. He wore a sweat shirt under the jacket.

"Yes," said the old man.

"You alone here?"

"That's right," said Charles Blyne. "What is it?"

The man with the grin turned his head. "All right," he said to someone outside the house. The young man came the rest of the way in, followed by a short stocky man in early middle-age with a quiet face and thinning black hair. The stocky man wore a suit with a trench coat over it. He closed the door behind him.

"What is it?" demanded the old lighthouse keeper.

"Nothing for you to worry about," said the young one. "Nothing at all. Just sit down, Blyne. Take it easy." He began to circle the room. In a moment he came to the door leading to the second story and the light above. He pulled the door open, looked at the stairs

going up, nodded, and shut the door again. He turned back to the old man, who was still standing.

"Sit down," he said.

The old man felt his knees suddenly weaken. He sat—in the same chair in which he had been writing his letter a few minutes before. He looked for the letter now, then remembered he had put it with the bottle and the glass in the cupboard. His hands clenched into two knubbled fists.

"What's your business?" he said. "What's your business here?"

The stocky older man was taking off his trench coat, shaking the dampness of spray from it, hanging it methodically on the clothes tree inside the door. The young one unzipped his jacket and came across the room to sit down at the table opposite Blyne.

"Now we're just going to stay for a while," he said. "Nothing for you to get excited about."

"You can't come on Coast Guard property like this," said the old man, a quaver in his voice.

"We'll be gone by midnight," said the young man.

"I'll have to ask you to leave," said Blyne determinedly.

The young man shook his head. He turned to the other. "You'd better take a look upstairs."

"Right." The stocky man opened the door to the tower, and they heard his steps going up.

"Now I'll tell you what," said the young man, looking across the table at Blyne. "That boat of yours has a hole in the bottom—that is, it has now—and ours is padlocked to the dock. So I think it's all right for you to go around the rock, if you want. And you can come and go in this bottom floor as much as you like. But no going above stairs. When it's time to light the light, one of us'll go upstairs with you and bring you down again."

"Do you know this is a Federal offense—this is trespass?" cried Blyne. The young man patted him on the shoulder and stood up.

"Easy," he said. "Take it easy, old man."

The stocky man came down. "All clear," he said. "The big boat's already in position. It'll be dark in half an hour."

Blyne got up and crossed the room to them.

"Listen to me—" he said shakily.

"Here," the young man turned him about and shoved him toward the door. His strong hand opened the door and his other palm pushed Blyne through. "Go walk around a little bit. You'll feel better."

Blyne found himself on his own front walk, his own door shut behind him. He whirled about, but the quick flame of anger in him sputtered helplessly, and died. Buttoning his jacket automatically, he went slowly down the walk toward the landing.

When he got there he saw that his own boat was now sunk—all except for a section of the bow which

was held out of water by the mooring chain. The strangers' cabin cruiser rolled next to it in the slight waves, its mooring chain fast around one of the pilings of the dock and secured by a lock inboard. The lock was visible and far too heavy for him to break.

He stood there, feeling the evening chill bite through his jacket. The sunset was fading. The waves had gone gray. A broad band of rose held the western horizon, but this was slipping, off and down, around the world and out of sight.

All small boats had gone in. Two miles to the south, halfway to Bellisle Point, there was the low gray hull of a commercial fishing boat, red-washed by the late rays of light. It was close inshore, lying idle where there would be no fishing. As he watched, the sunset light slipped off and it disappeared in the gathering gloom that came quickly across the water.

He went back up the concrete walk, up the rock slope to the lighthouse. The yellow gleam of the windows and the chugging of the generator, muted behind the thick stone walls, greeted him as he approached the door. He opened it and stepped inside, into the well-known room now cozy with electric light. The young man and his companion were settled—the stocky man in the wing chair and the young man stretched out on the couch. The young man had his shoes off.

Blyne thought of the revolver in the dresser drawer of his bedroom upstairs, but he put the thought away with a weary sort of despair.

"What are you up to?" he asked them, standing squarely in the middle of the room. "What's this all about?"

"Now don't you worry about it," said the young man, unmoving on the couch. "Just pretend everything's normal."

"I've got to turn the light on," he said.

"Good. You do that," said the young man. He looked across at the stocky man. "Go up with him."

Without a word the stocky man followed Blyne upstairs. Passing the first floor landing, Blyne looked down the hall to his closed bedroom door and again thought of the revolver. But the stocky man's footsteps were close behind him and Blyne kept on climbing the clean, well-varnished steps.

At the top he went rather hesitantly to the big lamp and fussed for several moments with the panels and mirrors, as if searching them for some defect. Meanwhile, he was thinking desperately for a means of using the light itself as a signal—but nothing came to him.

Finally, in defeat, he crossed the room, threw the switch that would activate the submarine power cable running underwater to the mainland, and set the light to going, sending out its steady six flashes every quarter minute.

Heavily descending the stairs with the silent man behind him, Blyne came out on the ground level and saw that the young man had produced a deck of cards. He was sitting at the table, shuffling and reshuffling them.

"Gin?" he said to the stocky man.

The stocky man grunted and pulled up a chair. "Five bucks a game," he said. It was the first time Blyne had heard him speak and at the unexpected sound of his voice the old man jumped in spite of himself, although the voice itself was ordinary enough.

The young man shifted his chair slightly so as to hold both the upstairs and the outside door within his field of vision, and began to deal. Blyne sat down on one end of the couch. He looked at his hands, lying loose-skinned and big-veined in his lap. Then suddenly he stood up.

"I'm going outside," he said.

"Okay." The young man nodded, not looking up from the game.

Blyne buttoned his jacket and went out. As he closed the front door behind him, the night darkness flowed in around him. He felt cold and his head was clearing. He had not stopped to think until now. When the men had first come he had felt guilty—because of the bottle—then bewildered, then stunned. He had been too wrapped up in his own problem. And now—

He looked toward the mainland and saw the far lights of the shore buildings. The waves were washing with their steady noise against the rock. The tide would be rising. Above, the moon had risen, but she was a sickle moon, and the sky would be slightly overcast after all. The sea was dark. He looked off toward Bellisle Point and strained his eyes to make out the lights of the commercial fishing boat that had been lying in line with it. As he watched there was a faint fugitive gleam from high on its single mast. Something was going on aloft there.

The night wind blew chilly about Blyne. He thought, no man comes and takes over a lighthouse unless he has a need for a lighthouse. And the need for a lighthouse is to light ships away from danger—or to fail to light them away from it. The kelp-cold smell of the sea came up in his nostrils. He remembered the yacht that would be coming along before midnight, on its easy step down the coast.

He remembered now all that he had read about the man on the yacht—the strange multimillionaire who had made his first fortune before he was twenty-one. He had come up out of the Levant to flash with a rich and strangely secret gleam from time to time on the front pages of newspapers. A man of legend whose career, perversely, had attracted Blyne as any completely incomprehensible thing attracts—and fascinates. It had been

something to read about a man like that, a man so different from a solitary, Puritan-minded lighthouse keeper. His name, Blyne remembered, standing in the darkness and the wind, was Nagi—Lester Nagi.

Would such a man have enemies? Blyne wondered. Enemies who played gin rummy, waiting in a lighthouse? Enemies who anchored a fishing boat with a false light that could bring a million dollar yacht onto rocks that would sink her? All it would take was fifteen minutes of darkness from his own light and a false light blinking six flashes every quarter hour. Then the sudden striking on the rocks and—perhaps the man somehow deserved to die.

How sacred was the life of a stranger?—and the lighthouse keeper was amazed at his thought.

The wind and the night gave him no answer. He went back inside. The two men were immersed in the slap and shift of the cards. Casually he slipped out of his jacket as he walked across the room in the direction of the door to the upstairs and the two telephones to the mainland—one in his bedroom and one beside the lamp at the tower's top. He laid his hand on the knob.

"That's far enough," said the young man.

Blyne turned about with his hand still on the knob. The young man was leaning across the table toward him, still smiling, a ridiculously small gun in his large hand.

"You can't operate the light without me," said Blyne. He jerked open the door, hurling himself up the stairs. Behind him there was an explosion and something slammed against his left shoulder, knocking him off balance. He fell and slid down the steps back onto the carpet.

He felt suddenly dizzy and a little sick, as if he had hit his head on something. He was aware of the two men lifting him up and placing him on the couch.

"Leave me be," he said thickly. The young man's face, smiling, bobbed like a balloon in front of him, then steadied; and the room came back to normal.

"You see," said the young man gently. "Now if you'd done right you wouldn't have been hurt."

Blyne put a hand up to his shoulder. It felt numb.

"Just a scratch," said the young man. "I shoot good." But the other man was already ripping Blyne's sleeve and binding a wad of cloth against the shoulder. Very quickly he was finished.

"Good for a couple hours," he said, speaking for the second time. "By then we'll be out of here."

"What do you want me for?" said Blyne. "What do you want me to do?"

"Just cut the light when we say so—for a few minutes. It won't be long now." The young man stood

up, smiling down at him. "That's not so much, is it?"

Blyne stared at the wall. He felt his world turn and steady. The shock of being shot had cleared everything up. The immediate future was a tunnel down which he was groping, guided only by the single rope of conscience. Clumsily he pushed to his feet and staggered a little, over to the cupboard. He opened it and closed his good hand on the bottle and the glass. Turning, he set them on the table and unscrewed the bottle cap.

"I need a drink—" he said.

Later that night the Coast Guard patrol boat that happened to be up along this part of the coast on special business finally found time to investigate the diaphone of the lighthouse. The diaphone had been sending out the moaning grunt of its fog warning for an hour—though the night was clear. The patrol boat would have got around to it sooner except for its special business and the wild goose chase that had led it past a fishing boat with a tall mast and a surprising turn of speed.

When it approached the lighthouse rock, all the lights were on. They were white in the tower and brilliant on the landing where an old man stood in a bloody shirt. The lighthouse foghorn moaned above them. A young ensign was the first to reach the old man and he saw that Blyne's eyes were glazed with shock. He put out his hand, but Blyne waved it away.

"No," the old man said dully. "No. I want to live."

A tall man with a lieutenant's bars came up behind the ensign.

"We better get you to the doctor," he said.

"No—" Blyne shook his head. He lurched away from them, up the slope toward the lighthouse. "Here—"

They followed, along the cement path and in through the door. What they saw in the room brought them up short. Two men lay sprawled over the table, an empty bottle of whiskey between them.

"I never knew their names," Blyne murmured. "Never knew—"

"It's them!" said the ensign.

He stepped forward, but the lieutenant caught his arm. "Don't touch them." He turned to Blyne. "What happened?"

"Them?" murmured Blyne. "You know— Who are they?"

"The two we're after," said the lieutenant. "We've been chasing them all night. What happened here?"

"You know?" said Blyne. "They were going to wreck the ship?"

"What ship?" cried the ensign. "These two are spies trying to get out of the country. Nagi was going to pick them up and—"

"Clauson!" The lieutenant's voice chopped like an axe across the conclusion of the ensign's sentence.

"They wanted me to turn off the

light." Blyne swayed. "For a signal? Then what about the boat, the fishing boat? What was that for?"

"What happened?" the voice of the lieutenant cracked like a whip through the fog surrounding Blyne's thoughts. "How'd they get drunk."

"Drunk?" Blyne looked at the two men and choked suddenly on laughter that sounded something like a sob. "They're dead."

"Dead?" The two coast guard officers stared.

"I never knew their names. And I killed them."

"You?" The lieutenant turned on him.

"The whiskey." The old man sat down suddenly and heavily in the wing chair. "It was for me. It was full of sleeping pills."

The lieutenant and the ensign stared at each other.

"For you?" said the lieutenant.

Blyne nodded.

"They were retiring me. I—" His voice stumbled. "I wouldn't know what to do. So I picked a time when someone would be due by who would make a fuss about the light, if it wasn't on. This man, Nagi— And then I was going to kill myself." He looked at the two younger men, appealingly. "And then—when these two came, I couldn't do—what I shouldn't. But I was going to drink the whiskey anyway, to kill myself, so they wouldn't know how to handle the light, how to turn it off, without me."

The lieutenant took a step forward and stared at the old man's eyes. There was a still glaze on them.

"Then what happened?" said the lieutenant. "You offered it to them, instead?"

"No, no!" Blyne's voice broke. "I was going to drink it myself—because of all the people on that boat." He stared at the two coastguardsmen with a tragic face. His voice rose. "But they took it away from me! They wouldn't listen to me. They took it away from me and wouldn't let me have any, and drank it all themselves. They drank it—every drop!"

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **JACK LONDON**

TITLE: ***The Dead Do Not Come Back***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: United States

TIME: Always

COMMENTS: *If there was ever the slightest doubt in your mind of the vigor and subtlety of Jack London's imagination, then read this little-known story of his, written half a century—or more—ago!*

A STRANGE LIFE HAS COME TO AN end in the death of Mr. Sedley Crayden, of Crayden Hill. Mild, harmless, he was the victim of a strange delusion that kept him pinned, night and day, in his chair for the last two years of his life. The mysterious death—or, rather, disappearance—of his elder brother, James Crayden seems to have preyed on his mind, for it was shortly after that event that his delusion began to manifest itself.

Mr. Crayden never gave any explanation of his strange conduct. There was nothing the matter with him physically; and, mentally, the alienists found him normal in every way save for his one remarkable idiosyncrasy. His remaining in his chair was purely voluntary, an act of his own will. And now he is dead—and the mystery is unsolved.

—*Extract from the Newton Courier-Times*

Briefly, I was Mr. Sedley Crayden's confidential servant and valet for the last eight months of his life. During that time he wrote a great deal in a manuscript that he kept always beside him, except when he drowsed or slept, at which times he invariably locked it in a desk drawer close to his hand.

From THE TURTLES OF TASMAN, *originally titled "The Eternity of Forms"*
© 1916 by the Macmillan Company; renewed.

I was curious to read what the old gentleman wrote, but he was too cautious and cunning. I never got a peep at the manuscript. If he were engaged on it when I attended him, he covered the top sheet with a large blotter. It was I who found him dead in his chair, and it was then that I took the liberty of abstracting the manuscript. I was very curious to read it, and I have no excuses to offer.

After retaining it in my secret possession for several years, and after ascertaining that Mr. Crayden left no surviving relatives, I have decided to make the nature of the manuscript known. It is very long, and I have omitted nearly all of it, giving only the more lucid fragments. It bears all the earmarks of a disordered mind, and various experiences are repeated over and over, while much is so vague and incoherent as to defy comprehension. Nevertheless, from reading it myself, I venture to predict that if an excavation is made in the main basement, somewhere in the vicinity of the foundation of the great chimney, a collection of bones will be found which should very closely resemble those which James Crayden once clothed in mortal flesh.

—*Statement of Rudolph Hickler*

(Here follow the excerpts from the manuscript, made and arranged by Rudolph Hickler)

I never killed my brother. Let this be my first word and my last. Why should I kill him? We lived together in unbroken harmony for twenty years. We were old men, and the fires and tempers of youth had long since burned out. We never disagreed even over the most trivial things. Never was there such amity as ours.

We were scholars. We cared nothing for the outside world. Our companionship and our books were all-satisfying. Never were there such talks as we held. Many a night we sat up till two and three in the morning, conversing, weighing opinions and judgments, referring to authorities—in short, we lived at high and friendly intellectual altitudes.

He disappeared. I suffered a great shock. Why should he have disappeared? Where could he have gone? It was very strange. I was stunned. They say I was very sick for weeks. It was brain fever. This was caused by his inexplicable disappearance. It was at the beginning of the experience I hope here to relate that he disappeared.

How I have endeavored to find him! I am not an excessively rich man, yet I offered continually increasing rewards. I have advertised in all the papers and sought the aid of all the detective bureaus. At the present moment the rewards aggregate over fifty thousand dollars.

They say he was murdered. They also say murder will out. Then I

say, why does not his murder come out? Who did it? Where is he? Where is Jim? My Jim?

We were so happy together. He had a remarkable mind, a most remarkable mind, so firmly founded, so widely informed, so rigidly logical, that it was not at all strange that we agreed in all things. Dissension was unknown between us. Jim was the most truthful man I have ever met. In this, too, we were similar, as we were similar in our intellectual honesty.

We never sacrificed truth to make a point. We had no points to make, we so thoroughly agreed. It is absurd to think that we could disagree on anything under the sun.

I wish he would come back. Why did he go? Who can ever explain it? I am lonely now, and depressed with grave forebodings—frightened by terrors that are of the mind and that put at naught all that my mind has ever conceived.

Form is mutable. This is the last word of positive science.

The dead do not come back. This is incontrovertible. The dead are dead, and that is the end of it, and of them.

And yet I have had experiences here—here in this very room, at this very desk, that— But wait. Let me put it down in black and white, in words simple and unmistakable. Let me ask some questions. Who mislays my pen? That is what I desire to know. Who uses up my ink so rapidly? Not I and yet the ink goes.

The answer to these questions would settle all the enigmas of the universe. I know the answer. I am not a fool. And some days, if I am plagued too desperately, I shall give the answer myself. I shall give the name of the one who mislays my pen and uses up my ink. It is so silly to think that I could use such a quantity of ink. The servant lies.

I have procured a fountain pen. I have always disliked the device, but my old stub pen had to go. I burned it in the fireplace. The ink I keep under lock and key. I shall see if I cannot put a stop to these lies that are being written about me.

And I have other plans. It is not true that I have recanted. I still believe that I live in a mechanical universe. It has not been proved otherwise to me, for all that I have peered over his shoulder and read his malicious statement to the contrary. He gives me credit for no less than average stupidity. He thinks I think he is real. How silly! I know he is a brain figment, nothing more.

There are such things as hallucinations. Even as I looked over his shoulder and read, I knew that this was such a thing. If I were only well, it would be interesting. All my life I have wanted to experience such phenomena.

And now it has come to me. I shall make the most of it.

What is imagination? It can make something where there is nothing. How can anything be something where there is nothing? How can anything be something and nothing at the same time?

I leave it for the metaphysicians to ponder. I know better. No scholastics for me. This is a real world, and everything in it is real. What is not real, is not. So he is not.

Yet he tries to fool me into believing that he is . . . when all the time I know he has no existence outside of my own brain cells.

I saw him today, seated at the desk, writing. It gave me quite a shock, because I had thought he was quite dispelled. Nevertheless, on looking steadily, I found that he was not there—the old familiar trick of the brain. I have dwelt too long on what has happened. I am becoming morbid, and my old indigestion is hinting and muttering. I shall take exercise. Each day I shall walk for two hours.

It is impossible. I cannot exercise. Each time I return from my walk, he is sitting in my chair at the desk. It grows more difficult to drive him away. It is my chair. Upon this I insist. It *was* his, but he is dead and it is no longer his.

How one can be fooled by the phantoms of his own imagining! There is nothing real in this apparition. I know it. I am firmly grounded with my fifty years of study. The dead are dead.

And yet, explain one thing. Today, before going for my walk, I carefully put the fountain pen in my pocket before leaving the room. I remember it distinctly. I looked at the clock at the time. It was twenty minutes past ten.

Yet on my return there was the pen lying on the desk. Someone had been using it. There was very little ink left. I wish he would not write so much. It is disconcerting.

There was one thing upon which Jim and I were not quite agreed. He believed in the eternity of the forms of things. I had little patience with him in this.

I laughed at the unseen world. Only the real was real, I contended, and what one did not perceive, was not and could not be. I believed in a mechanical universe. Chemistry and physics explained everything. Oh, believe me, I know my logic, too. But he was very stubborn.

Once I made my confession of faith to him. It was simple, brief, unanswerable. Even as I write it now I know that it is unanswerable. Here it is. I told him: "I assert, with Hobbes, that it is impossible to separate thought from matters that thinks. I assert, with Bacon, that all human understanding arises from the world of sensations.

I assert, with Locke, that all human ideas are due to the functions of the senses. I assert, with Kant, the mechanical origin of the universe, and that creation is a natural and historical process. I assert, with Laplace, that there is no need of the hypothesis of a creator. And, finally, I assert, because of all the foregoing, that form is ephemeral. Form passes. Therefore we pass."

I repeat, it was unanswerable. Yet he answered with Paley's notorious fallacy of the watch. Also, he talked about radium, and all but asserted that the very existence of matter had been exploded by these laterday laboratory researches. It was childish. I had not dreamed he could be so immature.

How could one argue with such a man? I then asserted the reasonableness of all that is. To this he agreed, reserving, however, one exception. He looked at me, as he said it, in a way I could not mistake. The inference was obvious. That he should be guilty of so cheap a quip in the midst of a serious discussion astounded me.

The eternity of forms. It is ridiculous! Yet there is a strange magic in the words. If it be true, then he has not ceased to exist. Then he does exist.

This is impossible.

I have ceased exercising. As long as I remain in the room, the hallucination does not bother me. But when I return to the room after an absence, he is always there, sitting at the desk, writing. Yet I dare not confide in a physician. I must fight this out by myself.

He grows more importunate. To day, consulting a book on the shelf, I turned and found him again in the chair. This is the first time he has dared do this in my presence. Nevertheless, by looking at him steadily and sternly for several minutes, I compelled him to vanish.

This proves my contention. *He does not exist.* If he were an eternal form I could not make him vanish by a mere effort of my will.

This is getting damnable. Today I gazed at him for an entire hour before I could make him leave. Yet it is so simple. What I see is a memory picture. For twenty years I was accustomed to seeing him there at the desk. The present phenomenon is merely a recrudescence of that memory picture—a picture which was impressed countless times on my consciousness . . .

I gave up today. He exhausted me, and still he would not go. I sat and watched him hour after hour. He takes no notice of me, but continually writes. I know what he writes, for I read it over his shoulder. It is not true. He is taking an unfair advantage.

Query: He is a product of my

consciousness; is it possible, then, that entities may be created by consciousness?

We did not quarrel. To this day I do not know how it happened. Let me tell you. Then you will see.

We sat up late that never-to-be-forgotten last night of his existence. It was the old, old discussion—the eternity of forms. How many hours and how many nights we had consumed over it!

On this night he had been particularly irritating, and all my nerves were screaming. He had been maintaining that the human soul was itself a form, an eternal form, and that the light within his brain would go on forever and always.

I took up the poker.

"Suppose," I said, "I should strike you dead with this?"

"I would go on," he answered.

"As a conscious entity?" I demanded.

"Yes, as a conscious entity," was his reply. "I should go on, from plane to plane of higher existence, remembering my earth-life, you, this very argument—ay, and continuing the argument with you."

It was only argument. I swear it was only argument. I never lifted a hand. How could I? He was my brother, my elder brother, Jim.

I cannot remember. I was very exasperated. He had always been so obstinate in this metaphysical belief of his.

The next I knew, he was lying on the hearth.

Blood was running. It was terrible. He must have fallen in a fit and struck his head. I noticed there was blood on the poker. In falling he must have struck upon it with his head.

And yet I fail to see how this can be, for I held it in my hand all the time. I was still holding it in my hand as I looked at it.

It is an hallucination. That is the only conclusion of common sense. I have watched the growth of it. At first it was only in the dimmest light that I could see him sitting in the chair. But as the time passed and the hallucination, by repetition, strengthened, he was able to appear in the chair under the strongest lights.

That is the explanation. It is quite satisfactory.

I shall never forget the first time I saw it. I had dined alone downstairs. I never drink wine, so that what happened was eminently normal. It was in the summer twilight that I returned to the study. I glanced at the desk. There he was, sitting. It was so natural that before I knew, I cried out, "Jim!"

Then I remembered all that had happened.

Of course it was an hallucination. I knew that.

I took the poker and went over to it. He did not move nor vanish.

The poker cleaved through the non-existent substance of the thing and struck the back of the chair. Fabric of fancy, that is all it was. The mark is there on the chair now where the poker struck. I pause from my writing and turn and look at it—press the tips of my fingers into the indentation.

He *did* continue the argument. I stole up today and looked over his shoulder. He was writing the history of our discussion. It was the same old nonsense about the eternity of forms. But as I continued to read, he wrote down the practical test I had made with the poker. Now this is unfair and untrue. I made no test. In falling he struck his head by accident on the poker.

Some day somebody will find and read what he writes. That will be terrible. I am suspicious of the servant, who is always peeping and peering, trying to see what I write. I must do something. Every servant I have had is curious about what I write.

Fabric of fancy. That is all it is. There is no Jim who sits in the chair. I know that.

Last night, when the house was asleep, I went down into the cellar and looked carefully at the soil around the chimney. It was untampered with. The dead do not rise up.

Yesterday morning, when I entered the study, there he was in the chair. When I had dispelled him, I sat in the chair myself all day. I had my meals brought to me. And thus I escaped the sight of him for many hours, for he now appears only in the chair.

I was weary, but I sat late—until eleven o'clock. Yet when I stood up to go to bed I looked around—and there he was. He had slipped into the chair on the instant.

Being only fabric of fancy, all day he had resided in my brain. The moment it was unoccupied, he took up his residence in the chair.

Are these his boasted higher planes of existence—his brother's brain and a chair? After all, was he not right? Has his eternal form become so attenuated as to be an hallucination? Are hallucinations real entities? Why not?

There is food for thought here. Some day I shall come to a conclusion upon it.

He was very much disturbed today. He could not write, for I had made the servant carry the pen out of the room in his pocket. But neither could I write.

The servant never sees him. This is strange. Have I developed a keener sight for the unseen? Or rather does it not prove the phantom to be what it is—a product of my own morbid consciousness beyond doubt?

He has stolen my pen again. Hallucinations cannot steal pens. This is unanswerable. And yet I cannot keep the pen always out of the room. I want to write myself.

I have had three different servants since my trouble came upon me, and not one has seen him. Is the verdict of their senses right?

Nevertheless, the ink goes too rapidly. I fill my pen more often than is necessary. And furthermore, only today I found my pen out of order. I did not break it.

I have spoken to him many times, but he never answers. I sat and watched him all morning. Frequently he looked at me, and it was obvious that he knew me.

By striking the side of my head violently with the heel of my hand, I can shake the vision of him out of my eyes. Then I can get into the chair; but I have learned that I must move very quickly in order to accomplish this. Often he fools me and is back again before I can sit down.

It is getting unbearable. He does not assume form slowly. He pops. That is the only way to describe it. I cannot stand looking at him much more. That way lies madness, for it compels me almost to believe in the reality of what I know is not. Besides, hallucinations do not pop.

Thank God he only manifests himself in the chair. As long as I occupy the chair I am quit of him.

My device for dislodging him from the chair, by striking my head, is failing, I have to hit much more violently, and I do not succeed perhaps more than once in a dozen trials. My head is quite sore where I have so repeatedly struck it. I must use the other hand.

My brother was right. There is an unseen world. Do I not see it? Am I not cursed with the seeing of it all the time? Call it a thought, an idea, anything you will, still it is there. It is unescapable. Thoughts are entities. We create with every act of thinking. I have created this phantom that sits in my chair and uses my ink. Because I have created him is no reason that he is any the less real. He is an idea; he is an entity: therefore, ideas are entities, and an entity is a reality.

Query: If a man, with the whole historical process behind him, can create an entity, a real thing, then is not the hypothesis of a Creator made substantial? If the stuff of life can create, than it is fair to assume that there can be a He who created the stuff of life. It is merely a difference of degree.

I have not yet made a mountain nor a solar system, but I have made a something that sits in my chair.

This being so, may I not some

day be able to make a mountain or a solar system?

All his days, down to today, man has lived in a maze. He has never seen the light. I am convinced that I am beginning to see the light—not as my brother saw it, by stumbling upon it accidentally, but deliberately and rationally.

My brother is dead. He has ceased. There is no doubt about it, for I have made another journey down into the cellar to see. The ground was untouched. I broke it myself to make sure, and I saw what made me sure.

My brother has ceased, yet have I recreated him. This is not my old brother, yet it is something as nearly resembling him as I could fashion. I am unlike other men. I am a god.

I have created.

Whenever I leave the room to go to bed I look back—and there is my brother sitting in the chair. And then I cannot sleep because of thinking of him sitting through all the long night-hours.

And in the morning, when I open the study door, there he is, and I know he has sat there the night long.

I am becoming desperate from lack of sleep. I wish I could confide in a physician.

Blessed sleep! I have won to it at last.

Let me tell you. Last night I was so worn that I found myself dozing in my chair. I rang for the servant and ordered him to bring blankets. I slept. All night he was banished from my thoughts as he was banished from my chair. I shall remain in it all day. It is a wonderful relief.

It is uncomfortable to sleep in a chair. But it is more uncomfortable to lie in bed hour after hour and not sleep, and to know that he is sitting there in the cold darkness.

It is no use. I shall never be able to sleep in a bed again. I have tried it now, numerous times, and every such night is a horror.

If I could but only persuade *him* to go to bed! But no. He sits there and sits there—I know he does—while I stare and stare up into the blackness and think and think, continually think, of him sitting there.

I wish I had never heard of the eternity of forms.

The servants think I am crazy. That is but to be expected, and it is why I have never called in a physician.

I am resolved. Henceforth this hallucination ceases. From now on I shall remain in the chair. I shall never leave it. I shall remain in it night and day, day and night, and always.

I have succeeded. For two weeks I have not seen him. Nor shall I ever see him again. I have at last attained the equanimity of mind necessary for quiet philosophic thought.

I wrote a complete chapter today.

It is very wearisome, sitting in a chair. The weeks pass, the months come and go, the seasons change, the servants replace each other, while I remain. I only remain. It is a strange life I lead, but at least I am at peace.

He comes back no more.

There is no eternity of forms.

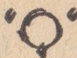
I have proved it.

For nearly two years now I have remained in this chair, and I have not seen him once. True, I was severely tired for a time. But it is clear that what I thought I saw was merely hallucination.

He never was.

Yet I do not leave the chair.

I am afraid to leave my chair.



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THE TRUELOVE CHAIR

by SUSAN THIMMESCH

THAT GRANT TOOK RICHMOND IS known by every schoolboy, but the tradition is especially cherished in the sleepy little town of Galena, Illinois.

Galena's bluffs are dotted with once lovely old houses going to seed, relics of a time when Galena's government-protected lead mines lined pockets with gold. Along one street, riverfront-style buildings look out across dried bottomland, like widows still watching for the safe return of a Mississippi steamboat.

But though Galena is no longer the bustling riverport of the Nineteenth Century, it holds a historic card which it plays with all the resourcefulness of a Gaylord Ravenal. For this was the home of that general remembered as "the soldier who won the Civil War"—and almost as an afterthought, the 18th president of the United States.

"Grantburgers, my God!" Kay and Johnny Lark were seated in the small "cafe" which had once been just a roomy sunporch of a private home. Kay Lark, rising young singer, didn't even know what they were doing in this hot, dusty town.

They had been driving west from Chicago, intending to spend the night with friends in Dubuque across the river on the Iowa side, when Johnny Lark, rising young agent-manager, had the bright idea of stopping in Galena. It was more a hunch than an idea, but Kay had been following Johnny's hunches since before he made it legal, and the hunches had usually paid off.

You might even say they had left Chicago on a hunch, for Kay had been doing well enough at the little jazz joint in which she had worked, and the chances for landing a recording date had been good. But Johnny had wangled her a job in an even smaller place in Las Vegas on the hunch that her brassy good looks would catch on faster there.

Then Johnny had remembered Galena and since there was no rush to get to Vegas, he thought there might be a way to pick up a little extra something to add to their grubstake. Kay often thought that if Johnny hadn't been so busy furthering her own career, he might have become an excellent con man. He had acquired a superficial polish and education doing odd jobs at exclusive resorts, hotels, night spots, and the like, but along the way he had also acquired a marked ability to rook the unsuspecting rich. Galena meant tourists and in Johnny's mind, tourists meant easy money.

Now, drinking homemade lemonade after a futile afternoon's stalking, Johnny had come to the same conclusion that Kay had reached when she first laid eyes on the town: nothing doing.

Galena had tourists all right, even some obviously well-to-do ones, but their interest seemed limited to testing General Grant's bed. There were no nice places to stay over in Galena—it was a few hours of sightseeing, then hit the road for most visitors. Johnny needed a little healthy boredom with the local attractions to complement his own talent.

The Larks shrugged it off as just one of those things and went out to the car. They were back on the main road for only a few miles when the right front tire went flat. Johnny pulled over to the side and climbed out.

The tire had picked up some small nails and was in bad shape. It might hold up for a short distance, but he'd never make it to the next town. He looked around and just ahead he saw a weather-beaten sign fastened to a birch tree.

VANDERS GARAGE. 50 FEET. A red arrow pointed to an unpaved side-road running diagonally off the highway.

Johnny Lark got back into the car and turned onto the dirt road. "We're in luck," he said to his wife. "There's a garage just down here."

There was no other business at the garage when they pulled up.

Johnny reflected that they probably didn't get much, being off the main road and with only the one hand-painted sign to recommend them. Still, the place looked neat enough, with fresh white paint on the station in front as well as on the two-story house set back on the lawn.

Mr. Vanders could have been created by Grant Wood, if the artist had painted him while over the boundary line on a wet-state binge. The long, bony frame was there, and the gaunt face, but wisps of pinkish-red hair stood in tufts on both his head and chin, and his mouth showed a deplorable lack of coordination. Johnny noted three separate and distinct twitches as he told the man about the flat tire. But Mr. Vanders seemed capable enough when it came to cars, so Johnny joined Kay where she stood talking to Mrs. Vanders.

At least Mrs. Vanders' appearance was reassuring. She was as plump as her husband was thin. She must have been in her fifties, but her skin was as creamy as a girl's and her cheeks looked as if they had been dabbed with crab-apple jelly.

In a timid, yet friendly manner, she asked the Larks to come over under the shade tree and rest while her husband repaired the tire. Johnny was about to sit down when he noticed one of the chairs pulled up to the trestle table.

It was a small chair made of pine and finished with a dark, ancient-looking stain. Its design was simple, almost crude, except for the bow of its back, which was shaped like the top of a heart. On the left side was carved the name *R. E. Lee,* and on the right, in a different hand, *U. S. Grant.*

Johnny felt that old jump in his stomach, but turned calmly enough and said, "Ulysses Grant?"

Mrs. Vanders beamed, "Yes, he was from near here, you know."

Kay's tone was acid. "I've heard it mentioned." She turned on her heels and went over to where a boy was playing mumblety-peg.

Johnny casually fondled the chair. "This been in your family long?"

"Lands yes, long as I can remember. My grand-dad used to work around the Grant place and we figure it was one of the hand-me downs he brought home." Mrs. Vanders made a doublewink smile that puckered her face like a mischievous child's. "Must have been embarrassing for them when Ulysses brought his wife to Galena from St. Louis."

Johnny was bewildered. "Embarrassing?"

"Why, yes, with R. E. Lee carved next to his name on a truelove chair and *her* name being Julia Dent."

"A truelove chair?"

Mrs. Vanders finally seemed to realize that Johnny didn't know what she was talking about.

"Haven't you ever seen a true-love chair?"

Johnny shook his head.

"Well, it's sort of like cutting your initials in a tree, only it's more special. You vow eternal friendship. Eternal friendship!" Mrs. Vanders threw up her hands in glee. "I'll bet there's many a boy who grew up to regret that. And it isn't as though Ulysses was just a sprout when it happened, either, 'cause he didn't stop being Hiram Ulysses until he went to West Point."

"You think he carved his name with some girl's, then."

Mrs. Vanders looked astonished. "Course he did. You certainly don't think the other's a man's name, do you?"

Johnny cleared his throat. "No. No, of course not. No reason why it should be."

Mrs. Vanders appeared mollified and a little ashamed of her sharpness. "Well, I guess you city folks miss a lot of things you can't help."

"That's just it, Mrs. Vanders. We do miss a lot. And that's what gave me an idea I've just had. Maybe you wouldn't mind selling me this truelove chair."

"Sell grandpa's chair! I couldn't do that. It wouldn't seem right."

"But you must have lots of other things of your grandfather's, and it would make me feel more—well, more *American*—to own something like this."

"Well, I can see how you'd feel, but . . . Willard!" Mrs. Vanders called to her husband who was just walking toward them. "This young man says as how he would like to buy the truelove chair."

Kay Lark and the boy got up from their game and joined the others.

"What's he want to buy that old thing for?" grunted Mr. Vanders. "Looks of his car, I'd think he'd wand something a bit brighter."

The boy gave the chair rung a kick that made Johnny shudder. "Miss Langworthy down in Galena gets lots of money for junk worse than this. Calls them antics. Gets a hundred dollars for everything she sells folks that stop by."

His mother gave him a smack that grazed the seat of his pants. "Hush up with your stories. You know what I told you about telling lies."

The boy stuck out his chin. "Ain't a lie. I was in there twice with Dinny Sullivan and both times she was telling somebody a hundred dollars was what it would be."

Mrs. Vanders looked doubtfully at her son and Mr. Vanders gave another disgusted grunt. But Johnny quickly broke in.

"The boy's right, Mrs. Vanders. A hundred dollars is exactly what you do pay for an antique. And if you'll just let me put the chair in the back of my car, I've got the cash right here."

"For God's sakes, Johnny," ex-

claimed Kay, "if you've got to throw away our money, wait until we hit Vegas. At least there's a chance you'll get some back there."

Johnny gave his wife the look that meant, "I know what I'm doing."

Kay shrugged and went to the car. "A truelove chair, yet," she muttered.

Johnny took Mrs. Vanders' hands in his. "Please, won't you let me invest in our country's roots? In the *real* America."

Mrs. Vanders flushed and even her husband seemed taken aback. "Why, how beautifully you put it! I would be proud to sell you my truelove chair and if you say a hundred dollars is right, I'm sure you know best."

Mr. and Mrs. Vanders watched the Larks drive away with the truelove chair. Mrs. Vanders sighed and looked questioningly at the sky.

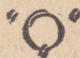
"Do you think there's time for one more before dark, dear?"

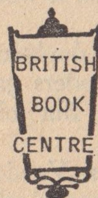
"We've got another hour yet, anyway," said Mr. Vanders. He turned to his son. "Go tell your brother to bring down another chair from the storeroom, then you get down to the lookout. Better take along a fresh box of tacks. That fellow must have used up what was left on the road of the last box."

Mr. Vanders looked at his wife, and they laughed softly at a joke that pleased them no less for being familiar.

"Grant took Richmond," he said, dropping the "d" in his quaint midwestern way, "and so do we."

"And so do we," echoed his wife.





The London House selection for this month is
"SAY IT WITH FLOWERS"
BY
GLADYS MITCHELL
$3.50
Available at
122 East 55th Street
New York 22, New York

RARE BOOKS

OUT OF PRINT MYSTERIES? Our specialty. Aardvarks Book Detectives, Box 668, San Diego 19, California.

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

Lillian de la Torre's DR. SAM: JOHNSON, DETECTOR (1946; Queen's Quorum # 100) was described by Ellery Queen as "the finest series of historical detective stories ever written—in scholarship, humor, flavor, and compelling detail." The same words are true of her new THE DETECTIONS OF DR. SAM: JOHNSON (Crime Club, $2.95), 8 stories from EQMM which are ideally satisfactory as ingenious detection and as ripe Johnsoniana.

★★★★ **LUST FOR INNOCENCE,** ***by Dianne Doubtfire*** (Morrow, $3.50)

Subtle and powerful story, at once warm and chilling, of a child entangled in adult desires and cruelties.

★★★★ **SAY IT WITH FLOWERS,** ***by Gladys Mitchell*** (London House & Maxwell, $3.50)

One of the very best of the quirkish, cryptic, devilish and fascinating cases of psychiatrist Dame Beatrice Bradley—not for all palates, but strongly recommended to those jaded with standard fare.

★★★ **SLEEPING DOGS,** ***by E. X. Ferrars*** (Crime Club, $2.95)

Five-year-old murder casts its menace into the present in an admirably constructed puzzle, a shrewdly motivated novel.

★★★ **FALL GUY,** ***by Jerome Barry*** (Crime Club, $2.95)

Firm plotting and a well-characterized murderer distinguish this story of life (and death) in a vast Manhattan housing unit.

To return to short stories, mostly from EQMM: Rufus King's THE STEPS TO MURDER (Crime Club, $2.95) contains 6 clever stories of crime among the rich in Halcyon, Florida, plus a less effective novella of Washington, D. C. Theodore Mathieson's stories of da Vinci, Khayyam and others—ambitious, if a far cry from de la Torre in literary and historical quality—are gathered as THE GREAT "DETECTIVES" (Simon & Schuster, $2.95), with an introduction by EQ himself. SOME LIKE THEM DEAD (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 15 sh.) is well worth ordering through a book-importer: 13 stories of unusually even high quality by the members of England's Crime Writers Association—Rov Vickers, Janet Green, Julian Symons, etc. (and American affiliates Ellin, Queen, Boucher).

THE RUBBER DOORSTOPS

by HUGH PENTECOST

(continued from page 46)

As BETSY AND ALAN WALKED DOWN the hall she saw Roger Trent and Bill Leland in a huddle in Bill's office, evidently preparing for tomorrow's postponement request. Sarah Moffat, gaunt and exhausted-looking, stood watch outside Warren Cuyler's office.

"He can't see you," she said. "He's preparing a statement for the press."

"It's a must," Alan said.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Quist, but—"

"I'm sorry too," Alan said and, grasping Betsy firmly by the hand, brushed past the outraged Miss Moffat.

Warren Cuyler looked up from the paper he was writing. There was a deep scowl between his eyes.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Cuyler," Miss Moffat said. "I told Mr. Quist—"

"And I very rudely pushed my way in," Alan said. "We've got to talk to you, Warren."

Cuyler put down his pen and leaned back in his chair with a sigh. "Make it snappy, Alan. I've just about had it."

Alan turned to Betsy. She opened her mouth to speak, and nothing happened at first. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Miss Moffat glaring at her. "Alone," Betsy whispered.

"Do you mind, Miss Moffat?" Alan said, and taking the older woman by the arm he escorted her out. He came back in and closed the door.

"I must say—" Cuyler began.

"You must listen," Alan said. "Go on, Betsy."

She shook her head. She suddenly couldn't. Warren Cuyler was a stranger. Alan understood, and he began to talk. He stated the case well and eloquently. Cuyler never once interrupted, but the lines of his face deepened and his dark eyes were fixed on Betsy, not Alan. "It's inconceivable," he said, when Alan had finished. "Who, and why?"

"You can answer that a great deal better than we can, Warren," Alan said. "But before you brush it off, go back over the facts as we've put them. So help me, once you see it there's no argument. It had to be an inside job."

For a moment anger darkened Warren Cuyler's face. He lifted his hand and pressed his finger tips against his closed eyes.

"You've been here only six months, Miss Collum," he said. "You've known us for only two, Alan. I admit the logic of your argument—but it won't stand up

against other facts. I know the people in this office. There isn't one of them who—"

"Johnny Arcus called you a liar not long ago," Alan said. "He implied there was something between you and Portia."

"The boy was beside himself," Cuyler said. "He was engaged to Portia."

"Bill says he wasn't. Bill says she hated him. Your life may be at stake, Warren. You've got to look below the surface. You've got to see more than you want to see. There's Roger—obviously and angrily jealous of Gloria."

Cuyler shook his head slowly. "If you're right, Alan, I'd rather be dead. My whole life has been built around the associations in this office. I simply can't bring myself to believe your theory. I would stake my life—" He hesitated and smiled, grimly. "I *am* staking my life on my belief in the people here. I trust them just as I trust and believe in you two."

"I'm going to have to pass this theory along to Molloy," Alan said.

"I can't stop you," Cuyler said. "I shall be sorry to have Roger and Bill and the rest know that I even listened to you."

It came, unexpectedly, out of Betsy, "Please, Mr. Cuyler! Please don't be so stubbornly loyal. Miss Denmarc is dead, and the person who killed her meant to get you, and he's still free to try again."

"My dear Miss Collum," Cuyler said, "I appreciate your concern, but—"

"Come on, Collum, we're wasting time," Alan said.

But they had taken too long. Lieutenant Molloy had already gone, leaving word that they were free to go home for some rest.

Betsy clung tightly to Alan's arm. "I'm sorry, I just couldn't talk," she said. "He was like a stranger. He wasn't the boss. He was a man somebody wants to kill."

"I'll take you home now and then chase Molloy down. He's probably gone to his office to wait for reports on the search for Zorn."

Betsy lived in a remodeled brownstone on West Oak Street. Alan took her there in a taxi. On the way downtown she leaned her head back against the seat and closed her eyes. She couldn't get the image of Warren Cuyler's gaunt, deeply lined face out of her mind.

"I keep going over it and over it in my head," she said. "First I thought I must be crazy. Everybody was at your party. But that was no alibi. The murderer had done his job by a little before seven. Mario's was only four blocks away, and nobody got there till seven. It could have been anyone there—but you and me. Roger, Bill, Gloria, Johnny, Miss Moffat, any of them."

"Have you figured why Portia went to the office?" Alan asked. "If we knew that—"

"We can only guess, Alan. But

suppose she suspected—at the last minute—that somebody was going to try to murder Mr. Cuyler—"

"Who?"

"She had lunch with Bill Leland. If Bill was jealous of Mr. Cuyler, maybe he said something. Maybe she just got worrying about it—"

"We've got to stick to facts, Collum, or we'll get nowhere," Alan said.

"Yes," she said in a small, tired voice. "We've got to stick to facts."

The cab pulled up in the deserted street outside Betsy's building. Alan walked up the steps to the front door and stood there while she dug her key out of her bag. She unlocked the door and then turned to say good night. He was smiling at her.

"You're quite a gal, Collum," he said, and he reached out and gave her arm a little squeeze. "Get yourself some rest. Molloy may take some convincing. I may have to turn you loose on him in the morning."

"Good night, Alan."

Betsy wanted to hold onto him tightly, so instead she turned and went quickly into the house. As she started to climb the first flight of thickly carpeted stairs she could hear the taxi pull away from the curb.

The stairway at night had always been an irritation to her. The landlord, with an overdeveloped sense of economy, had low-watt bulbs in the orange-shaded wall brackets. It was always too dark for comfort.

Tonight Betsy was too tired to feel her usual anger. She trudged wearily up the first flight, turned around the second-floor corridor, and started up the next flight. About three steps from the top she came to a dead stop. Her eyes were just above the third-floor level and she could see her own doorway at the end of the hall—and in front of it a pair of dark-blue trousers and black shoes.

Betsy lifted her eyes quickly and had to stifle a scream. Staring at her out of the gloom was a pair of huge orange eyes.

Her instinct was for flight, and she had actually started to turn when the voice, hoarse and urgent, called out to her, "Betsy!"

The figure moved forward, and then the orange eyes disappeared and she saw Johnny Arcus's thick-lensed spectacles. "I've been waiting for you," Johnny said. "A long time."

Betsy took a deep breath. "You nearly scared the daylights out of me," she said. "The reflection of those orange lights on your glasses—you looked like a Halloween spook!"

"Sorry," he said.

She went the rest of the way up and stood beside him in the hall. "How did you get in?" she asked.

"Rang someone else's bell. I've got to talk to you, Betsy."

"Look, Johnny, it's been a long, hard night."

"You think I don't know?" He lifted the back of his hand to his mouth to wipe away the beads of perspiration on his upper lip. "I was sitting in my office in the dark tonight." She was too tired to get it for a moment, and then he went on, "My office is next to Quist's. I heard what you said. I've got to talk to you about it."

"Well, we can't talk here in the hall," Betsy said. She walked past him, unlocked the door to her apartment, and switched on the living-room lights.

He was right behind her—almost pushed her into the room, and closed the door behind them. "So you and Quist know," he said.

"Know?"

"That it wasn't Zorn."

Very slowly Betsy put her bag and gloves down on the end table by the couch. For a sickening moment she thought: I am alone with a killer! "It's only a theory," she said.

"It's a fact," he said. "How did Cuyler go for it?"

"He—he—"

"He talked big about how we're all one big happy family and he loves and trusts everyone."

"Johnny, I'm tired. If you have something definite you want to say—"

"Oh, I'm not here for a bull session! What you think is true; it *was* someone in the office. After they've chased Zorn over half the world they'll find it out. And do you know who the person is they'll try to pin it on?"

"No."

"Me," Johnny said. "Have you ever lifted the lid and looked down into the cesspool that's the average big, happy family?"

"Johnny, if you—"

"Hate and hostility and jealousy and greed—a hundred motives for murder. And I have them all. I'm not country club, and so they laugh at me behind my back. Even Portia. We were engaged, and all the time she was carrying on with Cuyler."

"I thought it was Bill Leland who—"

"That's what he thought—as I did in the beginning. But it was always Cuyler. And when I told Portia he was making a play for Gloria, she didn't care! It was still Cuyler. And every time he looked at me or spoke to me I could see it in his eyes, hear it in his voice. He was laughing at me. Oh, I had motive, all right,"

"Johnny, why are you telling me?"

He looked at her, and to her amazement tears started to run down his cheeks. "Because you were the only one who ever showed me any consideration. When I—I tried to date you, you turned me down. You didn't like me enough, but you didn't play games with me. You showed me the respect one human being deserves from another. That's why I'm here."

He put his hand in the pocket of his coat. When he brought it out he was holding a small flat automatic.

"Johnny!"

"Oh, no! Not you, Betsy. I—was just showing you. You mustn't be afraid. Not of me."

Betsy sank down on the couch. She had to, because her legs wouldn't hold her up.

Johnny's eyes, behind the thick lenses, looked magnified—big as black half dollars. "I know who killed her, Betsy," he said, and his voice shook. "I'm not going to wait for them to pin it on me. I'm going to settle it before morning. But I wanted to be sure that you were home first—that you were home and safe."

"But, Johnny—"

"I don't know who you and Quist have told about your suspicions. It doesn't matter, really, because you told Cuyler, and he will have spread the news. If the murderer found you and Quist snooping around, you wouldn't be safe. I had to be sure you were safe and out of trouble before I did anything else. It was the least I could do for the only person who treated me like a human being."

"Johnny, listen!"

"You listen," Johnny said. "Nobody knows just how much you and Quist really know. It may be they won't take chances. When I leave here, you lock your door—put the chain on it. Don't let anybody in—not anyone, except Quist or Molloy, or—or me."

"Johnny, whatever you think you know, you can't handle this by yourself. Go to Molloy."

"And give them hours and hours more, while Molloy asks a lot of fool questions, to destroy any evidence there may be left? I've got to protect that evidence."

"Johnny—"

He was at the door and the huge black eyes had a wild look in them. "You'll know all about it in the morning," he said. Then he laughed. "You and Quist were very clever, Betsy—but you weren't quite clever enough." He smiled, a mirthless smile. "Like everyone else, you missed the whole point."

"What point, Johnny?" Somehow Betsy knew she mustn't let him go. "Come back and tell me what you know."

"Sorry," Johnny said. "You stay here, and stay locked in, and if it doesn't rain before morning the whole thing will be finished."

"Johnny!"

He was gone, and she could hear the thud of his running feet on the carpeted stairs.

Betsy stood staring at the closed door, her heart thumping against her ribs. Johnny, definitely treading on the edges of hysteria, and armed, was nobody to be running around loose. The violence of his feeling against Warren Cuyler was obvious. All his talk about missed points, evidence to protect—and if

it didn't rain! Crazy talk—dangerous talk. Why had he come here to see her? There had never been anything between them except "Good morning" and "Good night."

An off-base killer might well have decided to go to the one person he thought "respected" him before he embarked on a new crime. Was that what Johnny's visit had been—to advertise further violence? After all, she wasn't really in danger from anyone. She only had a theory—no facts.

Betsy sat down by her telephone and called police headquarters. Alan, she thought, would be there talking to Lieutenant Molloy. But Molloy wasn't there nor Alan—and no one seemed to know where the Lieutenant could be reached.

She explained carefully, keeping her voice as steady as she could, that she worked for Warren Cuyler and that she had some evidence in the murder that Molloy should get at once. "We'll broadcast word to him through our prowl cars, miss," the Sergeant on the other end promised. "Where can he reach you?"

She gave her number and hung up. She sat for a moment, wondering. If Johnny had it in his twisted head that Portia Denmarc had gone to the office to see Cuyler, he might decide Cuyler, indirectly, was responsible for her death. At this moment he might be gunning for Cuyler.

Warren Cuyler's home telephone was unlisted, and nothing she could do would persuade the telephone supervisor that she must have it. As a forlorn hope she called the office. It was a quarter to three in the morning—Cuyler would certainly have gone home by now. Then she thought—Miss Moffat!

Sarah Moffat lived on Bond Street, only a few blocks away. She would certainly have Cuyler's private number. Betsy fumbled through the phone book and found Moffat's number.

She dialed it and promptly got a busy signal. At any rate, Moffat was at home. She tried again in thirty seconds. Still busy. She tried twice more. Busy, busy.

Panic was beginning to take charge of Betsy. While she just sat here, a crazy Johnny Arcus might be getting closer and closer to Cuyler, the automatic ready for use. She tried Moffat once more and the phone was still busy. Then she snatched up her purse and gloves and ran out and down the stairs to the street.

Four short blocks and she was standing outside the brownstone where Sarah Moffat lived. There were lights in one pair of windows on the second floor. In the foyer she found Miss Moffat's name on the brass plate and rang the bell. A moment later she heard Miss Moffat's cold flat voice on the house intercom system. "Yes?"

"Miss Moffat, it's Betsy Collum. It's terribly important—"

There was a moment's silence and then the click of the front-door buzzer. Betsy let herself in and ran up the flight of stairs to the second floor. Miss Moffat was standing in the hall—dressed, as always, in the severe black suit that was like a uniform to her.

"I've been trying to get you on the phone, Miss Moffat, but your line's been busy. It was so urgent I came over."

"What could possibly be so urgent?"

"I'm afraid Mr. Cuyler may be in danger—real danger."

Miss Moffat's face was stony. "Mr. Cuyler told me what you and Mr. Quist believe. If you've come here at this time of night to try to convince me that—"

"Something's happened since then," Betsy said. "Johnny Arcus—half crazy—armed—saying he'll settle everything by morning."

Sarah Moffat looked past Betsy. A little shudder seemed to run over her; then she said in her flat voice, "You'd better come inside."

Betsy had never given any thought to what Sarah Moffat's private life might be, or to the kind of place in which she'd live. If she had, she would have missed the target entirely.

Miss Moffat's apartment—at least, the living room into which Betsy was ushered—was incredible. The furniture was nondescript, without style or taste, but comfortable and well worn. But the walls! Every inch of wall space in the room was covered with photographs, framed press clippings, and framed telegrams.

Even though she couldn't see them in detail from the doorway, Betsy realized that every single picture in the room—perhaps more than a hundred of them—was of Warren Cuyler. They must have covered the last thirty years of the man's life: pictures of him as a football player, as a skier, as an Army officer. A crew-cut boy here, laughing, bubbling with vitality. A crew-cut man of fifty there, very little changed except for the gray hair and the lines around the mouth.

The sound of the door closing made Betsy turn. Moffat stood with her back to it, a blush coloring her cheeks. "A pictorial record of Warren Cuyler, the finest man I know," Moffat said, and for the first time since Betsy had known her she detected a defensive note in the older woman's voice. "Now, please, what is this danger you are talking about?"

Betsy told her about Johnny's visit, his wild talk, his gun. She told of trying to reach Molloy. "Of course, Mr. Cuyler had left the office, and naturally I don't have his private number. You were the only one I could think of, and I could get to you faster than I could to Mr. Cuyler's apartment to warn him."

"Arcus hasn't the courage for violence," Miss Moffat said.

"He's evidently been living with a persecution complex," Betsy said, "and I think he's dangerous. Please, Miss Moffat, call Mr. Cuyler. At least, if you warn him I'll have done all I can."

Sarah Moffat hesitated, then walked to the table behind the couch and picked up the telephone. Her back was to Betsy as she dialed a number and waited. "You may look at the pictures if you care to," she said dryly, and Betsy realized that in spite of herself she had been drawn to look at the walls again.

She went over to get a closer view. There was a picture of Cuyler with a championship Olympic team, and one of him being decorated by a general; there was an astonishing picture of a man spread-eagled against the face of a cliff, and the caption, in Miss Moffat's bold hand, indicated it had been taken with a telescopic lens on one of Cuyler's mountain-climbing trips—this one in Switzerland. Then there was a group picture, taken at an airport somewhere, of Cuyler, another man, and a child—a little girl.

"Mr. Cuyler?" Miss Moffat's voice was crisp.

Betsy turned, and Miss Moffat smiled reassuringly. She had Cuyler on the phone.

Betsy looked back at the group picture. Again Moffat's bold hand had titled it: *Mr. Cuyler and John Cramden, ready to take off on Everest expedition. The child is Mr. Cramden's daughter, Patricia.* Betsy felt her muscles stiffening. She could hear Miss Moffat telling Warren Cuyler about Johnny Arcus, but her eyes were riveted on Patricia Cramden.

The little girl in ribboned pigtails was Portia Denmarc—at about age twelve!

Moffat's voice went on with the story of Johnny Arcus. Betsy moistened her lips. She even saw the inversion of the last name. Cramden—Denmarc, a rearrangement of the letters.

The receiver clicked behind her. Betsy turned quickly. "Mr. Cuyler wants me to express his appreciation," Miss Moffat said. "He'll be prepared if Arcus shows up." She came toward Betsy with a strange expression on her face. "You recognized Portia?"

"Yes."

"It was a tragedy—her father's death."

"But the—the name?" Betsy said.

"She is—she was a strange girl," Moffat said. "Her father left her well fixed, financially. When she was old enough she went to college—studied law. She applied to Mr. Cuyler under the name of Portia Denmarc for a job. He had no idea who she was. I don't think he had ever seen her but that one day when the expedition took off. He didn't recognize her as a grown woman—a lawyer. She changed her name because she wanted to get the job on her merits, and not be-

cause she was John Cramden's daughter." Miss Moffat drew a deep breath. "Quixotic but commendable. And now I think you can rest easy about Mr. Cuyler. Whatever Arcus has in mind, he won't be able to get to him. Thank you for your prompt action. Good night."

Betsy went to the door and out into the hall. Miss Moffat followed her. Betsy started down the stairs, and something began to fight for recognition in her mind. Halfway down the stairs she stopped.

"Something wrong, Miss Collum," Miss Moffat asked.

"No—good night."

Down she went, step by step, aware that Miss Moffat watched her all the way. When she reached the street she didn't look back, but she knew Miss Moffat would be looking out at her from between the curtains of her living room, wondering if Betsy had fallen for it. If not, Betsy would be running for a phone, or a taxi to take her to police headquarters.

So Betsy walked, no faster, no slower than would seem normal. She would have to cross the square before she would be out of Miss Moffat's view.

Betsy had been so absorbed by the Cramden-Denmarc picture that she had only half listened to Miss Moffat's efficient recital of the facts to Warren Cuyler. It wasn't until she was halfway down the stairs that she realized that all the while Miss Moffat had been talking to Warren Cuyler there had been the steady hum of the dial tone.

Miss Moffat had made no call at all.

A taxi cruised by. Betsy hailed it. She was fighting back a hysterical need to weep as she asked to be taken to police headquarters.

When she got there she found that no one had so far made contact with Lieutenant Molloy.

As briefly as she could, she told about Johnny Arcus, urged them to try to pick him up, urged them to send police to Warren Cuyler's apartment to protect him. Meanwhile, she was going to the office in the Shropshire Building. Warren Cuyler's private telephone was listed there in her card index file. It would be quicker to go there and phone him than to taxi uptown to his apartment, forty or fifty blocks farther north.

She pleaded with the Sergeant to keep trying to reach Molloy and to tell him she would be at Cuyler, Trent & Leland.

Her taxi swept her uptown through the deserted city streets. It was nearly three thirty. Moffat! Sarah Moffat, whom Betsy had included in her list of suspects to Alan, but who she'd really believed would have given her life for Warren Cuyler. Miss Moffat faking the phone call that would have warned him of danger, deliberately withholding the warning that might save Warren Cuyler's life!

It seemed incredible, but was it

possible that Moffat and Johnny Arcus were working together? Betsy was too emotionally exhausted to try to think it through. She kept her mind focused on the card index file in her booth at the office. In five minutes she would be able to warn Warren Cuyler. If she wasn't too late!

There were no police cars outside the Shropshire Building now. The night man was surprised to see her but took her up when she said she had to get a telephone number from the files.

"Everyone else cleared out quite a while ago," he said. "You coming right down again?"

"I have some calls to make," Betsy said. "I'll ring for you."

She fished her office key out of her handbag and went to the door—the old familiar door that opened out. She pulled it toward her.

The reception room was pitch dark. She remembered there was a light switch to the left of the door, found it, and turned on the lights. She closed the door and made sure it was locked. A wave of relief swept over her.

She turned down the right corridor toward the main office. It was dark up ahead, but again she remembered there was a switch at the end of the corridor. She reached it and turned it on—and nearly fell headlong over the body.

Johnny Arcus lay face down on the floor. His glasses had fallen off and one of the lenses was cracked. The back of his head had been smashed in.

Betsy tried to force air into her lungs. Despair closed over her. She wasn't sure she could make her legs work. She should phone the police. Then she should call Mr. Cuyler. Then she should— There was a quick, shuffling sound behind her and the lights went out.

Betsy screamed, loud and shrill and clear. The shuffling sound moved toward her. A hand fumbled at her shoulder.

Betsy bolted into space, ricocheting painfully off the front desk in the left-hand row in the main office. She blundered down the center aisle.

Behind her was the shuffling—and a heavy breathing.

She came up hard against the closed door of the law library. She thought of running in, closing the door, and locking it, but she couldn't remember if there was a key to the door.

The shuffling sound came closer.

She could imagine hands reaching out for her in the darkness.

To her right was the corridor leading past the private offices. It went past five offices, turned at right angles, and led back into the reception room and the door out into the hall—and the stairway to the street. A cold draft of air struck her face. Someone had left a window open in one of the offices.

Behind her she heard the labored breathing of the shuffler.

Gasping, Betsy ran past the offices to the corner. She could hear the shuffler running behind her. She turned the corner and headed for the reception room. It was still lighted, as she'd left it. She was only a few feet from it when the light went out.

Betsy stopped in her tracks. There were two of them—or had she only imagined the shuffler behind her? Had he cut across the main office, knowing where she was headed? She strained to hear something. The shuffling had stopped.

Betsy leaned against the wall, trembling. If there were two of them she was hopelessly trapped. There was no way out except through the reception room. One of them was there. The other was in the corridor behind her.

Slowly she sank down to her knees. There was nothing she could do but wait for it to happen.

Then she heard a sound—a sound she hadn't dreamed she would ever hear.

Someone was putting a key in the front door of the office. The person who had switched off the lights in the reception room was hurrying back to the darkened main office. Betsy was suddenly on her feet, screaming.

The door opened. There were lights. "Betsy! Where are you?" It was Alan Quist.

"Alan! *Alan!*"

She saw him at the end of the corridor, hundreds of miles away, coming toward her. Molloy was with him. Then she heard the steps behind her.

Betsy whirled around. Sarah Moffat, her face the color of gray marble, was coming toward her from the other direction. Miss Moffat's hands were curled like the talons of a bird, reaching for Betsy—reaching for her face.

Betsy staggered toward Alan and felt his arms go around her and heard his voice, low and soothing, "Easy, honey."

A terrible animal sound came from Miss Moffat's throat as Lieutenant Molloy bore down on her. Betsy turned in Alan's arms. Miss Moffat was fumbling for something in her handbag, and just as Molloy reached her she produced it.

It was a small, compact automatic—the same one, or the twin of the one that Betsy had seen earlier in Johnny Arcus's possession. She could have killed the Lieutenant if that had been her intention. Instead, she hesitated a moment and then turned the gun toward her own head. With a sweeping blow of his hand Molloy knocked the gun to the floor.

Miss Moffat stared at him, swaying. Then, with a little moan, she collapsed in a heap on the floor.

Having to do something kept Betsy from going entirely to pieces herself. Lieutenant Molloy had her busy on the switchboard, getting

Warren Cuyler, Roger, Bill, and Gloria back to the office.

The last three she contacted at once. The reactions were all the same when she told them they were wanted, that Johnny Arcus had been murdered. "Do they know who did it, Betsy?"

"They think," Betsy said, in a small voice, "that it was Miss Moffat!"

"Moffat!" Total, blank disbelief.

Warren Cuyler's telephone was busy. For the second time that night Betsy heard the monotonous busy signal over and over. She got the operator to dial the number for her. Still busy. The news of the earlier crime was out, of course. Hundreds of Cuyler's friends must know by now.

Betsy reported to Molloy. "Keep trying," he said. "Meanwhile, I'd like a preliminary statement from you."

She told him—everything that had happened to her from the time Alan had left her at her own apartment until he and Molloy had arrived in time to save her from Moffat's attack.

It had taken Betsy a good ten minutes to tell her story, and during it she kept dialing Cuyler's number. At last he answered, crisp, angry-sounding, "Yes?"

"Mr. Cuyler," she said, "this is Betsy Collum. I—"

"My dear Miss Collum, if you are going to try to sell me on that theory of yours—"

"I've been trying to reach you, sir, but your line's been busy. There's been another murder. Johnny Arcus."

"What!"

"Lieutenant Molloy wants you here. They think Miss Moffat did it."

"Miss Moffat!" He sounded stunned. Then suddenly he laughed. "They *are* crazy!" he said. "I'll be there right away."

Sarah Moffat, pale and unsteady, revived a little by spirits of ammonia, left them no room for doubt. They had all gone to Warren Cuyler's big office. There was an assistant D.A., a police stenographer, Alan and Molloy. And there was Roger Trent, his arm around a dazed Gloria, and Bill Leland. Cuyler hadn't arrived.

Miss Moffat sat in Cuyler's desk chair, staring straight ahead of her, through people, into space. "I killed them both," she said matter-of-factly. "I planned to kill Portia. Arcus brought it on himself by meddling."

When she paused, no one spoke. The people who knew her stared at her, not believing what they heard. The people who didn't know her had the same doubting look on their faces. It was almost impossible to believe it of her. Only Betsy accepted it. She remembered that fake call—the calmness of Miss Moffat's duplicity.

"Portia deserved to die," Sarah Moffat said.

"Why?" Molloy asked.

"She deserved to die," Miss Moffat said doggedly. "I'm glad I killed her."

"If you won't tell us why, perhaps you tell us how," Molloy said.

"I waited almost too long," Moffat said. "I'd been thinking about it a long time. I knew if I was going to do it I'd have to act while people might still think Carl Zorn had tried to carry out his threat. I had planned the way to kill her. It was easy for me. I could go over it day by day—be sure there was no chance of a slip-up. Finally, last evening, I phoned her and told her Mr. Cuyler wanted her here at the office at six. I knew he would go out for supper about six. If he hadn't I would have got him out somehow."

"Miss Moffat!" It was a whisper from the doorway. Warren Cuyler had joined the group while she talked. At the sight of him a spasm of pain twitched her face. Then she looked away from him. Betsy saw grief and pity in Cuyler's eyes.

"Portia came a little late, Miss Moffat said. "I was watching for her down on the street. I didn't see Mr. Cuyler come back. Somehow I missed him . . ."

"I—I came in the service entrance," Cuyler said.

"So I didn't know he'd come back," Moffat said tonelessly. "But I saw *her* arrive. When she'd gone up in the elevator I climbed the stairs. I wedged the door shut and I went home—not dreaming that I'd locked Mr. Cuyler in with her. When I think that it might have been he who went to that switchboard—"

"But *why*, Miss Moffat!" Roger Trent cried out.

It was Warren Cuyler who spoke. "My dear, dear Miss Moffat," he said gently. "I would have faced it through. I told you! I told you over and over!"

Everyone turned to look at the tall gray man. He lifted a hand and pressed his fingertips against his eyes, then he spoke in a toneless voice, "I take it you all know that Portia was John Cramden's daughter. She came here, using a false name, with excellent recommendations. I had no idea of her real identity. I hired her, and she was a highly efficient member of our team. Then, six months ago, she revealed herself—revealed herself as a deadly enemy."

"No, Mr. Cuyler!" Sarah Moffat cried. "There's no point in going into it. She's dead. And the story died with her."

"We have to save you, Miss Moffat, if we can," Cuyler said gently. "To have a chance, we have to know that you acted as a brave and loyal friend.

"You all know how John Cramden died," Cuyler said. "We were only a few hundred feet from reaching the top of Everest—a few hundred terribly dangerous feet—when Cramden fell, tumbling into

a deep crevasse. I nearly lost my own life trying to get him out—my oxygen was running low. I finally had to leave him there.

"There was a young man in our party, an Australian. He was a paid camp hand. I had several run-ins with him. He was lazy and inefficient. Unknown to me, this Australian boy wrote a letter to John Cramden's daughter, not realizing that she was a child. He'd heard Cramden speak of her and evidently assumed that she was a grown woman.

"He wrote, because he was afraid for his life. He said that I knew that *he* knew the 'truth'—which was that I could have saved Cramden but that I had left him to die while I went on with the climb. He said he was afraid I might kill him to keep him from telling the 'truth.' "

Cuyler's lips curled each time he pronounced the word "truth." "He also said there was a Tibetan guide in the expedition who could vouch for the 'truth.'

"Portia was twelve," he went on. "She had no one in whom she could confide. She built up some kind of childish fantasy to the effect that I was a villain—her father's murderer. When the war was over she tried to get in touch with the Australian boy. She learned that he had been murdered in some back alley in Hong Kong the day before I'd sailed for home after the failure of the expedition. Her fantasy grew—and she was set on revenge.

"She came here, her name changed so I wouldn't know who she was. She hoped to find some sort of proof of her absurd fantasy through associating with me. All the while, she was spending money to find that Tibetan guide.

"A few months ago she located him. He made a sworn statement substantiating the Australian boy's letter." Cuyler laughed shortly. "Portia must have paid him handsomely. Then she came to me, revealed who she was, showed me photostats of the letter and the guide's statement, and threatened to make a public scandal unless"—again Cuyler laughed— "unless I would conduct my life exactly as she ordered.

"I told Portia her charge was a fantastic lie," he went on. "I told Miss Moffat the whole story, and we discussed what we would do if Portia carried out her threat. Portia gave me a deadline—tomorrow morning's hearing before the Grand Jury. I laughed at her. She could prove nothing."

Sarah Moffat broke in. "Revenge was all she wanted! I tried to reason with her. I knew she would go through with it, and I—I have known Mr. Cuyler for thirty years. I—I have loved him all that time."

"Miss Moffat!" Cuyler whispered.

"I loved him," she said grimly, "and I knew what this would mean to him. His whole life has been

built on success, on a kind of heroism. I couldn't let this thing happen to him! *I couldn't!* So I killed her."

She lowered her head for a minute and then continued, "When Miss Collum came to see me tonight and told me about Johnny Arcus I knew I had to deal with him, too. Johnny couldn't stand rejection, and when Portia rejected him—which she did after stringing him along for a while in the hope he might be useful to her in finding evidence against Mr. Cuyler—he began trying to find a way to get even. He was his own private detective. He said to Miss Collum that she had 'missed the point.' I knew what he meant. He meant that there had been no accident—that Portia had been the intended victim of the trap. How he knew I couldn't guess, nor what evidence he thought he had to 'protect.' But I had to find out.

"As soon as Miss Collum left me I came up here—and found Johnny snooping around. He said he knew I had done it. I didn't give him a chance to say any more. There was a water carafe on the desk out there. I killed him with it. I was wiping away my fingerprints on the bottle when Miss Collum came. I took Johnny's gun—"

She stopped. It was the end of her story. She lifted her eyes to Warren Cuyler. "I would have died for you, Mr. Cuyler. I—"

Then Betsy heard a strange sound, which was her own voice saying, "No!" It couldn't have been that way at all."

It was, Betsy thought, like living in a nightmare. Eyes stared at her from everywhere—startled eyes, frightened eyes. Only Alan seemed real as he moved closer to her and she felt his strong fingers lock themselves in hers.

"Go on, Collum," he said gently.

She found herself focusing on the white-faced, frightened Sarah Moffat.

"You see, Miss Moffat," Betsy said, "there were *two* people who tried to catch me when I came here to the office tonight. After—after the lights went out, I ran through the main office and then turned down the private corridor. And just as I was in sight of the reception room the lights went out there—and yet there was someone just behind me. That was you, Miss Moffat. You were right behind me when Alan turned on the lights again. Someone else had cut through the main office to the reception room and switched the lights off, and then ducked back into the main office when he heard Alan's key in the lock."

"There was no one else in the office when we got here," Molloy said.

"There wasn't anyone else here when you looked, Lieutenant," Betsy said, her fingers tightening around Alan's. "But quite a lot happened before you looked. You and

Alan came running down the hall to me, and Miss Moffat got the gun out of her purse, and you knocked it out of her hand when she tried to shoot herself, and she fainted, and you and Alan carried her into her office. There was a long time during which someone could have left by the front door, gone down the fire stairs, and disappeared."

"Suppose you're right," Molloy said. "Do you have any idea who it was?"

Betsy's fingers ached from the pressure, but she hung on to Alan for dear life. "Mr. Cuyler's phone was busy when I tried to call him, Lieutenant. It was busy for about fifteen minutes."

Warren Cuyler gave a short laugh. "Is there something wrong with my phone being busy?"

"No, Mr. Cuyler, but—"

"The story of the murder has been on the radio," Cuyler said, "and in the papers. A lot of people called. I—"

"I checked with the telephone company supervisor, Mr. Cuyler," Betsy said, almost inaudibly. "She said no one was talking. That—that the receiver must have been off the hook."

Cuyler's mouth was a straight slit. "This is absurd, Lieutenant," he said. "I don't see the point Miss Collum is trying to make. People called —I got sick of it and finally left the receiver off the hook."

"And finally put it back on again?" Alan asked. "And answered it when Betsy kept on trying?"

"Yes, I—"

"It should be easy enough to check," Molloy said. "Just give us the names of the people you talked to and we can establish your alibi."

"Alibi? What do I have to have an alibi for?" Cuyler asked.

"Miss Collum thinks you were the other person here in the office with Miss Moffat. If you did come back here after you went home earlier, Mr. Cuyler, you might have left your receiver off so that in case I or someone else called you, we'd think you were at home, talking on the phone."

"Now, just a minute," Cuyler said.

"If the Lieutenant suspects you, Warren," Bill Leland said, "you ought to know as a lawyer, that you don't have to answer questions."

"Please," Betsy said. "If you'll just let me finish, then—"

"By all means finish—as quickly as possible!" Cuyler said.

"Earlier, Miss Moffat's phone was busy. I didn't check that time, but when I got to her apartment she was dressed—ready to go out. I think—"

"We're not interested in what you think, Miss Collum," Cuyler said. "If you have any facts—"

"I think," Betsy said, "that the person who killed Johnny here in the office had phoned her, told her what he'd done, and asked for help. I think she was on her way to

help when I interrupted her. She pretended to telephone Mr. Cuyler to warn him, but she faked the call. I thought *she* was the person who had tried to kill Mr. Cuyler—I thought that then. But now I think she faked it because Mr. Cuyler wasn't at home—she knew he was here—and she didn't have to warn him because he'd already killed Johnny."

Cuyler spread his hands in a comic gesture of despair. "The implication being that I killed Johnny because he accused *me* of killing Portia?"

"Yes, Mr. Cuyler," Betsy said.

"Haven't we had enough of this fanciful young woman, Lieutenant? The one thing I couldn't have done was kill Portia. I was trapped in the office with her!"

Everyone was watching Betsy. "I think Mr. Cuyler was counting on that," she said. "According to Miss Moffat, Portia had to be silenced before tomorrow morning. He hoped everyone would assume that Carl Zorn was the murderer and that Portia had been killed by mistake. But he must have known there was a chance someone would realize that it couldn't have been Zorn—that it had to be someone who knew all the little details about the office. If that happened he would still be safe, because we would know he was *inside* the office and the murderer had to be on the *outside* to wedge the door shut."

Betsy moistened her lips. "Miss Moffat's apartment is full of pictures of Mr. Cuyler. There is one —"

"We know about that," Molloy said. "The picture of Miss Denmarc as a little girl—the picture that told you she was really Patricia Cramden."

"No," Betsy said. "It was a picture taken with a telescopic lens of Mr. Cuyler climbing in Switzerland."

"What about it?" Cuyler asked.

"Johnny Arcus wasn't killed because he was crazy," Betsy said. "He was killed because he knew something."

"That's something you overlooked telling me," Molloy said.

Betsy shook her head. "I told you. Johnny said we'd missed the point. He said he was going to protect the evidence. He said if it didn't rain, everything would be settled by morning.

"Don't you see, Lieutenant? The point we missed was that Portia's death wasn't an accident. We know that now. Johnny came here to the office, to protect the evidence. And yet the evidence that was so important was outside—outdoors."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because rain couldn't destroy any evidence indoors," Betsy said. She felt Alan's hand tighten.

"By George, Collum, I think you've done it!" he said.

"I remembered the picture of Mr. Cuyler on the face of that cliff," Betsy said, "and I got thinking

about the narrow ledge that runs around the building just under our windows. Then I realized that Mr. Cuyler could have killed Portia, could have wedged the door shut from the outside, and could have had himself found *inside* again by crawling along that ledge."

Warren Cuyler snorted. "Fourteen floors up?"

"Everest was higher," Alan said.

"I think Mr. Cuyler came back here tonight to wait for daylight—to make sure there were no traces of that journey along the ledge. I think Johnny came here to make sure that no one destroyed those traces. If it didn't rain, Johnny said—don't you see, Lieutenant?—if it didn't rain there should be marks in the dirt on that ledge."

"And it hasn't rained," Alan said.

Miss Moffat burst out in a shrill voice. "I told you what happened!"

She stopped because Lieutenant Molloy was not listening. He was walking slowly over to the window.

He pulled up the Venetian blind, opened the window, and looked out. With the blind up, the room was suddenly filled with the light of early morning. Molloy turned. "See for yourself, Mr. Cuyler."

"You're kidding," Cuyler said. He walked briskly across the room to the window. As he passed the desk he patted Miss Moffat's shoulder in a gesture of affection.

"Of course, there isn't a word of truth in what Miss Moffat has been telling you," he said almost jauntily. "Substitute my name for hers and you just about have it. She never knew anything about it until a few hours ago, after I'd killed Johnny. I phoned her because I needed help. I told her the whole story. If there was anyone I could trust, it was Sarah Moffat."

The long time Miss Moffat's phone had been busy, Betsy thought.

Cuyler's eyes shifted to Miss Moffat. "I would have tried to get you off, Miss Moffat, if they'd accepted your story. But if I couldn't, you know I wouldn't have let you take the rap."

"Did you leave John Cramden to die?" Roger asked, his voice hoarse.

"Would I have committed two murders to cover up a falsehood?" Cuyler laughed. "I'm afraid you'll have to find yourself a new hero, Roger. Yes—Cramden was standing on the edge of the crevasse, he lost his footing, his body twisted round—"

"No, Mr. Cuyler! *No!*" Miss Moffat screamed.

Warren Cuyler sprang out into space—and down, and down.

Betsy was suddenly in Alan's arms, her face buried against his chest, sobbing. And above the sound of her own weeping, she heard Sarah Moffat's voice.

"He didn't have to do that," she said, like a puzzled child. "I would have helped him. No matter what he did I would have helped him. I would have died for him."

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **JUNE McMAHAN ROY**

TITLE: ***The Marvelous Mundo Case***

TYPE: Detective Story

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *It was one of the darnedest cases in the whole history of crime. And Mundo would have got clean away with it—except for one colossal bad break . . .*

No, you don't need the body to prove murder, but it's a help. Although in the Mundo Case they had the body all right—the trouble was, it was a different man who had been murdered.

I was still a rookie then, pounding a beat on the South Side, but I often heard my old Chief tell about it. He'd get this look—admiring, like—as if that's what he'd do if he had a body to dispose of. And actually, you couldn't help admiring Mundo, in a way, because it showed a lot of imagination. Easy, too, and yet something nobody's ever thought of before.

Mundo hadn't been in from the country long—only five or six months—and he was living over on Tenth Street at a boarding house called Mother Boone's. A crummy place, but I suppose the ivy on the porch looked like home to Mundo, so he moved in and got a job at the mill working nights.

That's how he was able to do all that running around in the daytime. He came off shift at eight in the morning, slept till lunchtime, and was free to do what he wanted in the afternoon. Then he had supper, loafed around with the other boarders, and hit the sack again until it was time to go to work at midnight.

Not that Mundo was that chatty about what he did. No, they had to dig everything up the hard way, and it's wonderful what they did dig up, considering.

Why Ricci—that's the late lamented—picked a dump like Mother Boone's they never knew, except

that there was a convention going on and every place was full. Or maybe he liked the ivy, too. He was an old Italian from the Napa Valley in California, on his way back to Naples, and they never knew, either, why he stopped off here instead of going on to New York to catch his boat. Maybe he was tired of sleeping on trains.

Anyway, he broke his trip here, spent the evening at Ma Boone's chewing the fat with Mundo—and that's the last anybody ever saw of him.

According to Mother Boone, Mundo told her that Ricci had decided to leave early, and since he'd paid in advance and she'd save the price of his breakfast egg, she forgot all about him. She forgot about a lot of things, seems to me, because they figured Mundo must have kept Ricci around in his closet for a couple of days, but she never noticed him. Not that he'd get too noticeable in that time, but still—makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Oh, it was love of money that was the root of this particular evil. Very likely Ricci got to bragging, because they found out from his bank that he'd left California with all his life's savings. Didn't trust Travelers Checks, it seems, and a pity, too, because Mundo up and killed him for the cash.

How he killed Ricci is a mystery, too. There were a lot of loose ends because Mundo didn't spill much. But it must have been some quiet way, since in a rickety place like Ma Boone's if you sneeze in the basement, somebody in the attic says Gesundheit. There was no blood around, and Mundo had those tremendous hands—very powerful. So the Chief always figured that Ricci was strangled to death.

Now at that point, Mundo was sitting pretty—not a worry in the world. Nobody missed Ricci because everybody in California thought he'd gone to Italy. And since his trip was a surprise for his mama's 85th birthday, the folks in Naples thought he was still in California. And Ma Boone thought he'd gone on to New York.

So Mundo had Ricci's money and his train ticket, and he checked Ricci's luggage at the station. If Mundo had left then, they might never have found him. But he felt safe, you see, so he applied for a passport and went right on living, nice and quiet, at Mother Boone's.

My old Chief always thought that the reason Mundo stuck around was vanity, pure and simple. That he wanted to follow the case in the newspapers and see what the police made of it. But if that was so, he was disappointed because the whole thing was hushed up. A terrible scandal, it was, and they didn't dare print a word—not until after they'd arrested Mundo.

The body? Well, actually, I was

the one who found the body. My beat took me across the City Park where there was a quiet corner with a bench under some trees. It was private like, and shady, and very popular with cuddlers. So I was surprised to see this old man sitting there—I mean, old people like to sit in the sun, not in a dark corner. I gave him a good look and saw right away that he was dead.

Well, every so often you find some poor old soul like that, dead unexpected, like, or maybe dying. So we always checked for those little cards diabetics carry, in case they've gone into a coma, and I was a bit worried not to find *anything* in the old man's pockets.

I mean, he didn't have anything at all. No wallet, no watch, not even a dime or a cigarette or a handkerchief—just nothing.

Right away I knew something was wrong, but being just a rookie I didn't try to figure it out. I called for the meat wagon from the box on the corner and then went back and stood looking at the old man. He was big and dignified, with white hair, and he looked—well, kind of attractive, in a way, sitting there all dressed up. No, no signs of violence. But strange, somehow.

Then the wagon took him away and as it was time for me to go off duty, I went back to the station. And while I was telling about the old man dead in the park without even a hanky on him, the Chief came in—he'd been out that afternoon—and gave me a big grin.

"He won't be needing to blow his nose where he's going," the Chief said, "so stop worrying about it. Still, if he was rolled after he died, why take his hanky?"

That was the end of my part in the marvelous Mundo Case, but right after I left, the City Morgue called the Chief.

"You know that guy we just picked up in the park?"

The Chief said yes, he'd heard.

"Well, a lot of people die out in public, but they don't usually prepare themselves for burial. This guy is *embalmed!*"

The case really got off the launching pad then, because the embalming wasn't any Do-It-Yourself job, but high-class professional work. That explained his empty pockets—you don't need change and cigarettes in a coffin.

Within an hour they'd checked every funeral parlor in the city to see if a customer was missing. Very quietly done, this was, but fast, so they could return the body before the relatives dropped around to pay their respects and found the deceased had picked himself up and gone to the park.

At first they thought it was somebody's idea of a joke, but with everybody accounted for in all the funeral parlors it was no longer funny. Then they checked Missing Persons. But nobody of the man's

description was listed as missing, and as he'd been gone long enough to be embalmed, he'd sure been gone long enough to be missed.

Now, ordinarily, the Chief didn't look at any more stiffs than he had to. But he was reading the description of this one when he got a strange feeling—maybe because of where he'd been that afternoon. So over he went to see for himself.

"That's Big Bill Nicholson!" he said, going cold and dizzy. "Why, I went to his funeral this afternoon!"

And with that he went hell for leather to the funeral parlor, gathered up the manager, and the two of them tore out to the building on the back of the lot.

"According to this," the manager said, picking up a certificate from the desk in the lobby, "William Nicholson is in there now." And he pointed toward the back of the building.

"He ought to be," the Chief agreed, "but he's not. He's over in the City Morgue."

"Holy smoke!" the manager said—and the Chief always remembered how appropriate that sounded. "Then who's in there?"

And he stared at the door to the crematory.

You can see now why Mundo felt so safe. If nobody was looking for Ricci, nobody was looking for Nicholson, either. Nicholson's friends—he had no family, just a cousin—had seen him safely through the funeral, so even if they read about an unidentified man in the park, they wouldn't connect it with Nicholson—you know what official descriptions are like, anyway. And the cousin wouldn't be particularly interested because he'd have Nicholson's ashes. You know, some people keep them around the house instead of burying them? On the TV or something? Ghoulish, isn't it?

Anyway, Ricci, who could be connected with Mundo, was reduced to ashes, and even if he was reported missing, nobody would look for him on the cousin's mantelpiece; and Nicholson had no connection with Mundo and had died a natural death. So apparently Mundo figured that when the body in the park wasn't identified, he'd be buried quietly in Potter's Field.

And I can tell you there was a strong official impulse to do exactly that. A corpse getting away from a funeral parlor is a terrible scandal, and of course the manager of the crematory was all for keeping it quiet. He said his business would be ruined. And being Nicholson made it worse. Oh, you knew him? Well, I didn't. Rookie cops don't hobnob with big wheels. Well, it was a big temptation, but since it was Nicholson they had no choice.

Actually, Mundo would have got away with it if Nicholson hadn't been embalmed. But Mundo didn't know that it's customary to em-

balm even when cremation follows—unless they're going to be put away with no services. But it was the embalming that aroused the Chief's curiosity, so the police got the ashes instead of Nicholson's cousin and that's how they identified Ricci.

Oh, it was his teeth. And that was Mundo's second mistake. They don't burn, you see. After the description went out, a dentist in California identified them as Ricci's, and then, with his name, a check of hotel registrations turned up Ma Boone's—and Mundo.

The Chief said Mundo seemed a little troubled when they explained about the teeth, but he never said a word. However, they had him cold with Ricci's money and train ticket, so it was just a matter of figuring out how he'd rigged the substitution.

The crematory was new then, and there was an article in the paper about it—so that's probably where Mundo got his idea. The attendants remembered him very well, showing up for funerals during the next couple of days after Ricci was killed. But they didn't give him any thought because they had a lot of others doing the same—curiosity seekers, you know. Then, when he had the routine all taped, he brought Ricci on for the last act.

The hearses, it seems, go to the side door, unload the late lamented onto a wheeled carriage, and then roll them into the chapel for the funeral. Afterwards they're wheeled out the same door and down the path to the crematory and placed in that lobby I spoke of, where a couple of attendants take over and finish the job. But sometimes, when there's a couple of funerals in a row, one of the attendants in the crematory goes to the main building to help unload flowers, leaving his buddy busy in the back room and the lobby clear.

So what Mundo did was get one of those motorcycle delivery trucks, with a box on the back, and take a night off from work to load Ricci in while the other boarders were asleep. It was a good touch, his stealing the truck from a florist. With flowers being delivered all the time, nobody paid any attention when it rolled up the driveway next day between two funerals.

By watching the papers, he'd found out that two men were being cremated one after the other, so that he'd have two chances. They had to be men, of course, just in case one of the attendants peeped at the dear departed and found they had a certificate for a lady and here's an old Italian man.

All that part of the premises is behind thick shrubbery, so when one attendant went to the main building, Mundo was able to drive unseen to the crematory, swap Ricci's body for Nicholson's, put Nicholson in the delivery truck, and drive him over to the park. Mundo

was even lucky with the truck because it was one of a fleet and wasn't missed until it turned up downtown, over-parked.

Actually, Mundo would have kept on being lucky if he'd read anything but the obituary notices. You know—Nicholson, William, died yesterday, aged 62, no survivors, services Thursday at 2:00 p.m., cremation follows . . . If he'd read the news columns, he would have picked somebody else to substitute Ricci for, and then he might have got away with it. Because, like I said, there was this strong temptation to hush the whole thing up.

My old Chief always thought it was a pity that Mundo made that third mistake. But with Big Bill Nicholson being the Police Commissioner, they really didn't have any choice.

A Reader-Service Directory—

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **HENRY SLESAR**

TITLE: ***The Man in the Next Cell***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: Perryville, United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *When Gorwald was arrested for speeding, he thought it was just a nuisance—delay, small-town jail, at worst a heavy fine. But then the unexpected happened . . .*

GORWALD'S FOOT STAYED HEAVY on the gas pedal, even after he heard the imperative wail of the siren behind him. He had no hope of outracing the gray-and-white patrol car that was looming in his rear-view mirror, but his foot wasn't taking any notice. The State Trooper was nudging his bumper before Gorwald lightened the pressure and slowed to a halt.

He kept his eyes straight ahead, listening to the officer's boot soles scraping on the country highway, and didn't look up until the State Trooper said, "You take a lot of stopping, mister. Didn't you hear my siren?"

Gorwald sighed. "Let's get it over with, huh? I'm in a hurry." He fished for license and registration, with an air that indicated experience. The State Trooper examined the documents, then pulled a small, fat book out of his hip pocket.

"Leon Gorwald, Philadelphia. You're a long way from home, Mr. Gorwald. You weren't leaving our state, were you?"

"Fast as I can make the line."

"You'll have to wait a while. I'm giving you a ticket, payable within five days. My speedometer says you were doing seventy."

"Look, I'm a businessman," Gorwald said, touching the brief case on the seat beside him. "I've got important things to do. Maybe we can handle this another way." He took out his wallet. There was a twenty-dollar bill peeking out of a pigskin fold. He removed it, and said, "Sup-

pose I pay *you* the fine, how would that be?" He winked awkwardly.

The Trooper slammed the book shut and stepped away from Gorwald's car. "All right, step out," he said.

"Wait a minute—"

"Step out, mister, I'm taking you in."

Gorwald cursed his mistake, and climbed out. On the road, he was a foot shorter than the officer, and next to the Trooper's lean, muscular body he looked pudgy and ineffectual. "I was only trying to save myself some trouble," he said.

"You just bought yourself some more trouble. I don't like bribes, mister." He jerked his thumb toward the patrol car. "Get in there. I'll put a chain on your car and we'll all take a ride into Perryville."

"Perryville? Where the hell is that?"

"You passed through it five minutes ago. At the speed you were making, it was probably just a blur. It's not a big town, but it's got one important thing. A jail."

Perryville had a jail, all right, and when Gorwald saw it his expression alternated between contempt and dismay. The prison building was a whitewashed stucco cheesebox, by all odds the cleanest exterior in the town. But that was all you could say for it. Inside, the Perryville jail was dank and sunless, with sweaty green walls, a battered monster of a desk, a dented wooden filing cabinet, and two heavily barred cells running the length of the outer room.

There was no one in attendance when the Trooper brought Gorwald in, so he did the honors himself. He took the key ring from the dripping wall, opened one of the cell doors, and nodded in Gorwald's direction. The businessman, grumbling, walked in.

"When do I see a magistrate?" he said. "I'm entitled to a hearing."

"You'll see the Judge when I can find him. It's Sunday, mister. Things are quiet around here on Sunday." He walked to a back door and opened it. "Hey, Montague!" he shouted. "Sandy! Anybody here?" Then, getting no response, he shrugged. "Guess they're all out to supper or something. I'll go over to Judge Webster's house and tell him you're here. Sit tight."

When he reached the front door Gorwald protested. "Hey! You can't just leave me here!"

"You'll keep, mister." He looked at the rear door again, his face puzzled. "Can't understand where they all went to. Unless—"

He was cut short by the inward explosion of the front door. The man who had burst into the room was old and white-haired, but excitement had transformed his wrinkled, grizzled face into something resembling youthful exuberance.

"Carlie!" he cried. "Man, am I glad to see you! Minute I spotted that car of yours outside. I said

thank the Lord. This fella's a rough one—"

"What in Sam Hill you talking about, Montague?"

"For God's sake, Carlie, we got the worse crime in Perryville in fifty years happen this morning—didn't you even hear about it?" He coughed asthmatically, and slapped the gun holster that was loosely buckled around his waist. "Only we got the fella that did it—me and Sandy, that is—so don't try and take credit. All you got to do is help us drag him in here, so we can lock him up." He stopped, and gawked at Gorwald. "For the love of Pete, Carlie, what's *he* doin' in there?"

"Prisoner," the Trooper said curtly. "Now will you please make some sense, Sheriff? Who you aiming to lock up? And what's he supposed to have done?"

The old man walked to the desk, sat on the edge, and mopped his forehead with his palm. "Worse thing I ever saw, Carlie," he whispered. "Lord knows, I seen lots in France that time, but nothing as bad as this. All cut up she was . . ." He paled noticeably. "It was the Fremont girl. You know her? The one called Susie?"

"No, I don't know her."

"Folks run a poultry farm. Her kid brother found her in the woods, about a quarter of a mile behind their house. She was out looking for kindling, or wildflowers, or something. Wasn't exactly a pretty girl, but not so bad. But what a sight she is now, Carlie! God forgive that crazy man."

"Who's the man?"

"Must have been hitchhiking his way through town—none of us ever saw him before. He was trying to pick up a ride, not thirty yards where we found the body, but we stopped him. He ran like hell, but we caught up. I mean Sandy did—I don't run so good any more. Put up a fight, too, so Sandy pistol-whipped him a little. He's a tramp, all right, but he must have been a mechanic once. Still wearing an old pair of white coveralls—name on front and back says Seneca Garage, if you can make it out."

"Where is he now?"

"Outside, in Sandy's car. He came to about ten minutes ago and started giving us a hard time, but he's quiet now. You want to help fetch him in?"

"All right. Then I better get a report into headquarters—maybe they'll want me to go out there. Body still where you found it?"

"Course, Carlie—I know my business. Left two deputies." He looked again at Gorwald. "But what about that one? What's he done?"

"Speeding and attempted bribery," the Trooper snapped. "He'll be okay. We'll just put your mechanic in the other cell."

Gorwald, who had been listening intently to their conversation, now broke out with a wail.

"I want a judge! Let me pay the fine and get out of here!"

The old man looked worried. "Look, Carlie, under the circumstances . . . I mean, what the heck, a traffic violator. Don't you think —"

"What's the matter, Sheriff?" the Trooper said irritably. "Two prisoners too much for you to handle?"

"It's not that—"

"No dice, Montague—a prisoner's a prisoner. I'll go see Judge Webster and get him a hearing, and then we'll see."

The old man grunted. "You always were the damnedest stickler, Carlie. Just like your Pop." He sighed, went to the desk, and dropped into the creaking swivel chair. "All right, you and Sandy bring in the mechanic and I'll try to reach the Judge by phone. And watch out for that fella, Carlie, he's a tough one."

The Trooper went to the door. Gorwald kicked the bars of his cell and the old man glared at him like an angered turkey. "Now you cut that out, mister," he said.

The Sheriff's telephone call produced nothing. Gorwald could hear the ring on the other end, but there was no reply. Three minutes later, the door opened again. The businessman's mouth twitched when he saw the hulking form that was being supported on the arms of the Trooper and a sandy-haired stout man.

The prisoner's hair was matted, and hung over his beetling brows without diminishing the glare in his eyes. He was big in the shoulders, but not tall, and the filthy, once-white mechanic's uniform that he wore sagged on his frame. He strained against his captors' grip, but with nothing more than token resistance.

Then the old man was unlocking the adjacent cell, and Gorwald found himself no longer the sole resident of the Perryville jail.

"Don't think he'll give us any more trouble," the sandy-haired deputy panted, with a hint of pride. "Think I knocked some of the fight out of him, back on the road."

The Trooper looked though the bars at the new occupant, and said, "What's your name, mister?"

"You go to hell!" the man snarled.

Gorwald, staring through side bars that separated the iron cages, cleared his throat nervously. It made the mechanic's head spin around, and there was so much animal fury in his eyes that Gorwald instinctively backed away.

"You won't get anywhere that way," the Trooper said quietly. "A little cooperation might help you out."

The mechanic spat expertly, and the stout, sandy-haired deputy shot a thick arm through the bars and struck the man's dusty shoulders with a hard, flat palm. The prisoner staggered backward, then flung himself at the door of the cell until the steel rang. He cursed unintelligibly, then stopped in mid-sen-

tence, turned, and shuffled to the bunk. He sat down, put his shaggy head into his hands, and grew quiet, like a man accustomed to jail cells.

Gorwald, round-eyed, watched him.

"What about the Judge?" the Trooper said. "You try and reach him?"

"You won't reach him," Sandy drawled. "Him and his missus went to Blanton to visit her folks—they go there about every other Sunday. He ought to be back around eight thirty. Course you could try calling him there."

"Heck," Montague said, "it'll take almost three hours for him to get back—that'll be eight o'clock. Might as well let him have his dinner." He looked toward Gorwald apologetically. "Sorry, mister, we're doing the best we can."

The Trooper grimaced. "He can wait—I don't think he's in such a hurry any more. Sandy, how about going out with me to this Fremont place?"

"Sure, if it's all right with Monty."

"It's all right with me."

"I'll make my report to headquarters from there," the Trooper said. "You sure you can handle things all right?"

"Don't worry about that," the Sheriff said confidently. "I'll get along fine."

It was almost half an hour before another word was spoken in the Perryville jail. The mechanic, his head buried in his arms, remained on the bunk. Gorwald, unnerved by the presence of his dangerous neighbor, remained at the farthest corner of his cell. The old Sheriff, now the solitary guardian of the small prison, sat at the battered desk and seemed to be composing a lengthy letter.

The mechanic stirred only once. He uncovered his face and stared at Gorwald for such a long, agonizing moment that the businessman whimpered aloud. Then the mechanic, with a snort of contempt, swung his legs off the floor and stretched out on the bunk, turning his face to the wall. The light was too dim to be certain, but Gorwald thought he detected caked blood on the matted hair.

When the mechanic stopped moving, Gorwald stepped cautiously to the door of his cell, and whispered, "You. Please."

The old man looked up blankly.

"I want to talk to you. Please."

The Sheriff sighed and got up from the creaking chair. "What do you want, mister?"

"Look, it's been hours—"

"Not even an hour."

"I'm *entitled* to a hearing, damn it. That's the law!"

The old man scratched his chin. "I know you're entitled to one phone call, that's for sure. Anybody you want to call?"

"No," Gorwald grated. "Nobody

I want to call." He gestured despairingly. "Look, all I did was speed through your rotten little town. You understand that? I was just *speeding*."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"No, wait." Gorwald dug for his wallet. "Listen, how would it be—"

The Sheriff gaped at him, in genuine astonishment. Immediately, Gorwald knew it was another mistake. He stuck the wallet back in his pocket, cursing the dumb honesty that had put him in this plight. He was just starting to curse the Sheriff, too, when the front door opened and the stout deputy came in, looking flushed and bursting with news.

"You back?" the old man said. "Thought you went with Carlie to the Fremont place?"

"I didn't go with Carlie—he went out alone. He thought I ought to hang around here, when he saw that bunch over at McMurtrie's—"

He pulled the Sheriff's arm and drew him aside, but Gorwald, pushing against the bars, had no trouble eavesdropping. "I tell you something's goin' on, Monty. When we come outside we see this big gang hanging around outside McMurtrie's, talking it up—you know how they get. Mac, happy as a jaybird, he's selling drinks like it's New Year's Eve. Carlie thought maybe there might be some trouble, so he told me to hang around and keep an eye on them."

"What kind of trouble?" the old man said stupidly. "What are you actin' so mysterious for?"

"Quiet!" Sandy whispered. He jerked his thick thumb toward the mechanic's cell, meaningfully. "Look, Monty, you know some of the guys in this town—you know how mean they can get when they're likkered up. Well, don't think they don't know about the Fremont girl and everything—you can't keep that kind of thing a secret. That's what they're all talking about. You understand?"

"So what's so damned strange about that? It's the biggest thing happened around here since Teddy Roosevelt went through town. What do you think they're gonna talk about now—fishing?"

"Monty, you been Sheriff a long time, but you never saw any real trouble around here."

"Get to the point." The old man scowled.

"Those guys in there are putting away a lot of drinks, and they're talking real crazy. You know what I mean? About *him*." Again the thumb hooked toward the prison cell. Gorwald, at his own cell door, gasped.

"You're crazy," the Sheriff snapped. "You telling me they're working up a lunch mob out there?" He clucked. "Sam Dugan and Vince Merritt and *those* jokers? You're out of your head, Sandy."

"I was there," Sandy said grimly, tightening his grip on the old man's reedy arm. "I was at the bar. Most

of those guys been out of work so long, ever since the flood, they're ready to bust loose at anything. You don't know how fast these things can happen. I saw it once, at Riverhead, back in 1937. I mean it, Monty—we got a problem."

The old man shook loose from the deputy's grip and went to the small window near the door. He peered out into the oncoming darkness, but saw nothing that gave him cause for concern. He returned to the desk and put his hand on the telephone. "Maybe if I called Mac —"

"Take my word for it, Monty, I heard those guys. We've got to do something, and we've got to do it now."

"What can I do? Call the Staties? They could be here in half an hour."

"Too long. Maybe if we got Carlie back in town—"

"Sandy, I just don't believe all this!"

Sandy snorted. "When you see him at the end of a rope—will you believe it then?"

His words were loud, so loud that they snapped the mechanic out of his trance. He sat up on the bunk, his matted hair fanning out wildly, his eyes and mouth opening in an expression of sudden terror.

"Rope?" he muttered. "Who said rope?"

He stood up, and went to the cell door.

"Who said rope?" he yelled, grasping the thick iron bars.

"You quiet down," the Sheriff said calmly. "This is nothing to do with you."

The telephone on the Sheriff's desk jangled off-key. Sandy grabbed the receiver, listened for one second, and covered the mouthpiece.

"It's McMurtrie," he said. "Yeah, Mac, what's up?"

He listened for another ten seconds, then slammed the phone down.

"If you're gonna do something, Monty, do it now. Mac says a bunch of 'em are coming over here. They got three rifles between 'em, and the way they been drinking and working themselves up, I wouldn't be surprised if they used them."

"For the love of Pete," the old man said.

"Let me out!" the mechanic yelled, trying to shake the bars of his cell. "Let me outa here!"

The old man was at the window again. "Don't see nothing. They're not coming from this side, if they're coming. Sandy, you better get that shotgun in back." He unstrapped his holster and began to count the bullets in his revolver.

Sandy went at a trot to the back room and came out a moment later with a heavy-gauge shotgun and a box of shells. He loaded up, and said, "Look, Monty, if you're thinking of holding off that bunch, just you and me—"

"What the hell do you expect me to do?"

"Get me out of here!" the prisoner screamed. "Get me out! They're not lynching me! Nobody's lynching me!"

The old man looked at him, frowned, and said, "Maybe he's got the right idea. Maybe we ought to get him out of here before we shoot some of our old friends, savin' his worthless neck—"

"What about me?" Gorwald cut in. "You can't leave me in here!"

They ignored him—there was too much else on their minds. Sandy said, "Let me get out there and see if I can slow 'em down a bit. Then you take the prisoner out the back, get in the Ford, and head for the Fremont place. You can pick up Carlie there—he'll know what to do."

"All right." The old man nodded. "We'll try it. Sure you can handle them, Sandy?"

The deputy slapped the butt of the shotgun. "Not too long," he said tightly. "So you better move fast."

The mechanic was panting against the bars, his eyes darting between the two men. Then, when Sandy left through the front door, he began rattling the bars again.

"Okay, okay," the old man grumbled. "You'll get your wish, bud—just take it easy and no funny stuff."

He took the key off the wall, drew his pistol, and unlocked the cell door. As he opened it, the mechanic moved with the striking surprise of a serpent. He put his palms together in an attitude of prayer, raised his hands over his head, and then brought them down sharply, cracking the sides of his palms against the old man's neck. Without a moan the Sheriff slumped to the concrete floor and lay still, keys and pistol clattering.

It happened so swiftly that Gorwald was more baffled than surprised. He looked dumbly at the old man on the floor, then at the prisoner. The mechanic stooped down, picked up pistol and keys, and came toward Gorwald's cell door.

Gorwald stepped back, watching the mechanic insert the key in the lock and swing the door open. Gorwald thought he was being liberated, in some inexplicable act of generosity on the mechanic's part; but then he saw the gun muzzle trained on the middle button of his business suit.

"Take it off," the mechanic rasped.

"What?"

"Take it off, buddy. Suit, pants, shirt. Off!"

"What are you talking about?" Gorwald said. "I won't do it!"

The mechanic cocked the pistol: it was like the crack of a whip.

"All right!" Gorwald said. "All right!"

Fumbling, he took off his jacket and placed it on the prison bunk.

Then he stepped out of his trousers, reaching down instinctively to preserve the crease, but the mechanic snatched them from his hands. Gorwald, trembling in his underwear, started to remove his shirt and tie.

"Hurry!" the mechanic said. "Hurry, damn you!"

When the clothes were removed, the mechanic switched the pistol from his right to his left hand, and began taking off his grimy coveralls. It took the mechanic's next command to make Gorwald understand the meaning of the act.

"Put these on!" he said, tossing the coveralls at him.

"Why?" Gorwald said, fearful because he knew. "Why should I?"

"Because I'll kill you if you don't!"

Gorwald put them on.

When the transformation was complete, the mechanic waved Gorwald out of his cell and into the adjoining cage. Then he slammed the door shut, locked it, and tossed the keys and gun beside the fallen Sheriff.

"No," Gorwald said pleadingly. "Don't—"

But now the mechanic was in Gorwald's cell, pulling the door shut, without locking it. His timing was good. A moment later the jailhouse door was shattered open by the blow of a rifle butt.

The room quickly filled with howling men, and Gorwald screamed at the sight of them, screamed an explanation that they couldn't hear. He screamed when the keys went back into the lock and a dozen arms reached for him, clutched at him, then moved him along on a tide of purposeful anger toward the doorway.

He tried to tell them who he was, tell them the mistake they were making, and then speech and sight failed him as his head hit the hard, cold earth outside the Perryville jail . . .

"Don't talk," the Trooper said. He pressed Gorwald's mouth gently with the damp cloth in his hand, as if to emphasize the order. Then he smiled, with the first hint of good humor Gorwald had seen in him since they met on the highway.

The back half of Gorwald's head felt twice its normal size. But the pain was bearable. He looked past the Trooper's khaki shoulder, and saw that he was back in his jail cell, but that the door was open. His hand felt the rough texture of the prison blanket beneath him.

"What happened?" he said feebly.

"You can thank Sandy for saving you," the Trooper said. "He fired some shots over the heads of the crowd and that scared them off for a while. I was just driving into town, and when they saw the patrol car they sobered up in a hurry."

Gorwald struggled to sit up. The Trooper told him to take it easy, but Gorwald got up anyway. He

looked around the room, and then at the Trooper, who frowned.

"Yeah, we lost our pigeon, all right. He got away in all the fuss. But we'll catch up with him, don't you worry about that." He stood up and hooked a thumb in his belt. "I think we've given you enough of a hard time, Mr. Gorwald. You can forget about that speeding ticket, and I'll forget about that—loan you offered me." He grinned. "But when you leave this town, don't let me catch you hot-rodding again."

"I won't," Gorwald said fervently. "You can bet on that."

Gorwald made an early start the next morning. There was a bandage on his head, and the suit donated by the town fitted him too snugly under the arms and at his waist.

When he saw the young woman on the side of the road, with her imploring thumb, her tight blue sweater, her dusty suitcases, he slowed instinctively, and then shot past her. He didn't want any more trouble—he'd had enough.

But when he was a hundred yards in front of her, her trim, forlorn figure growing smaller in the rear-view mirror, he stopped the car and threw it into reverse.

He backed up slowly, and saw her thickly made-up face break into a smile. She wasn't beautiful, but he could have done worse. He was glad now that he had left the knife in the glove compartment.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**JACOB HAY**
TITLE:	***Exploit of the Embalmed Whale***
TYPE:	Spy Story
AGENT:	Colonel Valerian Twentypenny
LOCALE:	Europe
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*A delightful tale of espionage behind the Iron Curtain . . . Meet an irresistible secret service agent, Alfred Henry Nail, otherwise known as Colonel Valerian Twentypenny.*

HAWKER WAS IN TROUBLE, AND furious thrice over. He was first furious at himself for permitting himself to be furious—for an agitated mind is not the mind one wishes to take into the assault on an impossible problem.

He was secondly furious at his superiors for wishing the problem on him in the first place. Leave it to good old Hawker, they'd told one another, and had all gone off to tea, complacently certain that good old Hawker would wangle it somehow.

Most of all he was furious at Twentypenny, who sat superbly at ease across the cluttered desk, peering at him genially, his monocle twinkling, a Turkish cigarette wisping fragrance aloft.

"The trouble with you intelligence people is your basic dishonesty," Twentypenny observed. "Given the simplest problem, you feel duty-bound to complicate it. Why, for example, do you call yourself the Tropical Rations Evaluation Board when, in point of fact, no one would be the wiser if you called yourself M.I. 5½? The truth is, my dear old Hawker, that yours is a case of nature imitating art; you've been reading too many spy novels."

This, coming from the deepest-dyed fraud he'd ever encountered in his career, was almost too much, Hawker thought. He glared fiercely from beneath the most fearsome

pair of eyebrows in the War Office, and a small vein in his temple began to throb visibly.

It served him, he decided, bloody well right for ever having allowed himself to become involved with this insufferable little man. Colonel Valerian Twentypenny, forsooth! Born Alfred Henry Nail, sometime draper's clerk, lately Second Lieutenant (Hostilities Only), Royal Army Supply Corps, more recently unlicensed purveyor of dainties, by appointment to the more elegant black markets, and rogue errant. And still more recently involuntary consultant to the Tropical Rations Evaluation Board, whose precise function it is unwise to describe at any length, in view of the provisions of the Official Secrets Act.

"The man is a scoundrel," Hawker later had occasion to remark to his opposite number in the Admiralty, "but not a blackguard. More important, he gets results, although I'd rather not know just how he manages it. How he got Bultanyi out of Budapesth passes the imagination. And that incident in Istanbul—amazing." And Hawker had chuckled with satisfaction.

Now, however, he felt far from that smug satisfaction.

"Spare me your lectures," he rasped, "and for Heaven's sake, do take that ruddy monocle out of your eye. What I want to know is whether you have any suggestions as to how we are to remove from a warehouse in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, one ton of some new type of rocket propellant? Not an ounce of the stuff, mind you, nor a pound, but one bloody ton, and right out from under the Czechs' noses."

Valerian Twentypenny folded his fingers across his superlatively tailored waistcoat and pursed his lips beneath his enormous black Guards mustache. "That does seem rather a lot," he murmured. "May one inquire why so much?"

"Because our rocket people are desperately eager to put a fast one over on our American cousins, that's why. According to the reports, this new staff is pretty sensational—makes anything the Yanks have look feeble. So our boffins want more than enough for analysis; they want enough to put into one of their own playthings. Then they can send it up and cry triumphantly, 'See, we knew how to do it all along.' "

"Absurd," Twentypenny said decisively.

"Not so much as you might think. The Americans are getting a bit restive about our research programs, militarily speaking. And the Russkies are getting more and more convinced that we're letting the whole business go by default to the Yanks. In any event, ours not to reason why; ours but to produce."

"How much time have we?"

"As usual, none."

"In that case, I'd best be off," Twentypenny said, rising from the depths of the battered leather armchair which was Hawker's furthest concession to office luxury.

"Where the devil to?" Hawker asked, taken aback. "You can't quietly walk away from this, confound it!"

"You *are* edgy, old boy," Valerian Twentypenny reproached, resuming his monocle and settling his splendid jacket on his shoulders. "I'm going to Prague. When one intends to steal something from the Czechs, one should start at the top. And by the way, there's something you can be doing for me meanwhile."

"Name it."

"Set your people to finding me an embalmed whale," Twentypenny replied pleasantly. Hawker turned a curious shade of purple. "No, really, I'm quite serious."

"Now see here, dammit!" Hawker exploded.

"I should prefer a largish whale," Twentypenny said at the door. His smile was sunny, his manner serene. "I have always wanted a whale of my own."

And he was gone from the seedy chamber which housed the Tropical Rations Evaluation Board, the grimy windows of which rattled in their ancient frames as Hawker's fist slammed down on his desk.

Much restored by an excellent lunch served by a courteous attendant, Twentypenny relaxed in his seat and gazed unseeing from the window of his Berlin-bound plane, pondering the military mind. Hawker had told him earlier of the elaborate negotiations between the junior British air attaché and the group of anticommunist Czech scientists who had carefully and cunningly contrived to secrete a hoard of their newly developed rocket fuel in the Pilsen warehouse.

There had been endless furtive meetings, the giving and taking of intricate passwords, and all manner of ponderous nonsense, each bit of which endangered the whole operation. How far simpler it would have been if Hawker had come to him in the first place!

A simple, businesslike transaction would have arranged matters beautifully. A bank account of no inconsiderable size would have been established in Switzerland; the cooperating Commissar for Rocket Propellant Production would have found good and official reason to attend a scientific congress in Zurich, and the incident would have been closed. Of course, the Commissar might later meet with an unavoidable accident; but that was his affair.

But the military were like small boys playing at hide and seek; they would insist on the devious approach. They would somehow involve a group of rank amateurs like the Czech scientists.

Twentypenny lit a cigarette and sighed.

At Berlin there was a message from Hawker. An embalmed whale had been located at Amsterdam, where it was on display for the astonishment and edification of the Dutch. The whale and the giant lorry on which it was transported had been forthwith purchased and awaited Twentypenny's pleasure, together with a certain Captain Lars Bjornsson, a Norwegian and the whale's former owner, who had been retained in an advisory capacity. "Embalmed whales require careful handling," Hawker's message noted gravely. "Urge you make fullest use Bjornsson's technical knowledge."

"Bjornsson and whale to proceed soonest to Regensburg and await further orders," Twentypenny cabled Hawker. "Many thanks for prompt action. Do you fancy Daphne as a name, provided whale of proper gender?"

Hawker's remarks on receipt of this communication will not bear repetition. And his fist ached until late that evening.

During the flight from Berlin south to Prague, Twentypenny took the opportunity to brief himself on the British whaling industry with the help of an excellent pamphlet prepared by the Ministry of Trade and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. This done, he rechecked the really admirable credentials prepared for him by the Documents Branch of the Tropical Rations Evaluation Board—elegant forgeries which attested him to be the official European representative of the British Fisheries Industrial Council.

"And I was so hoping they'd send the London Philharmonic," muttered Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the Czechoslovak Republic wistfully as he finished his perusal of Twentypenny's imposing papers. "However, I suppose they know what they're doing. I'll arrange an appointment for you with the Minister of Culture and Education in the morning. Good day to you, Colonel." As the door closed behind Valerian Twentypenny, the Ambassador pressed a button, picked up his telephone, and spoke sadly to his cultural attaché. "They've sent us a whale," he said.

"Monstrous," said the cultural attaché, his tone bitter.

"Quite," said the Ambassador, his tone resigned.

"I shall take but little of your Excellency's time," Twentypenny said briskly the following morning to the People's Minister of Culture and Education, "for I realize how busy you must be. To be blunt, I'm selling the British whaling story. You Czechs have sent us your outstanding athletes, your wonderful folk dancers, your finest concert artists." The Minister of Culture and Education beamed. "Indeed," Twentypenny continued, warming to his theme, "our program of cul-

tural exchanges is, I firmly believe, an example to the world. But—and who knows it better than your Excellency—there is more to culture than folk dancing. A nation's industry is a part of its culture, too.

"And that is why my government has asked the industry of which I am proud to be European representative to prepare an exhibit to be displayed in Czechoslovakia."

"And this exhibit would consist of . . . ?" the Minister of Culture and Education inquired tentatively.

"A British-caught whale," Twentypenny replied, his voice ringing with the pride instinct in the son of a maritime people. "Suitably mounted for public display and demonstrating the whale's many contributions to our modern world. If it is said that tne American pork packers use all of the pig but its squeal, it may be said with equal truth that we in British whaling use all of the cetacean but its spout, as it were."

"Amazing," murmured the Minister of Culture and Education. "One has read Melville, of course, but—amazing!"

"Consider the corset industry," Twentypenny bored inexorably ahead, "which despite all the advances in the manufacture of elastic yarns still requires an annual production of twenty thousand tons of whalebone." (And whoever was responsible for updating the Ministry of Trade's pamphlets, Twentypenny decided, had slipped badly on that one. 20,000 tons! Ridiculous!)

"Naturally," the Minister of Culture and Education observed, remembering his duty to his doctrine, "your exhibit will also point out that, under your capitalist system, no provision is made for whale conservation and repopulation; that the world's whales are being exploited for the benefit of the few, rather than the general good."

"We are prepared to go that far," Twentypenny conceded gravely, "in the interests of mutual understanding between our two great nations. Indeed, Excellency, I would be grateful if your own experts prepared a number of banners on which the facts you have outlined would be fully set forth. These will be displayed as part of the exhibit. Thus we can both be assured of satisfaction."

"A second-class power," the Minister of Culture and Education sneered to his First Deputy after Twentypenny's departure. "In the old days the British would never have knuckled under like that. I remember when I was desk clerk at the Bristol back in the bad old days—the British were intolerable." He smiled complacently. "But, my dear Ploski, we can afford to be generous to them in their decline. You will arrange to have banners prepared. Be sure they state clearly that this English whale died a victim of the class struggle."

"Where will this exhibition tour begin, Excellency?" asked the faithful Ploski, opening his notebook.

"Klatovy, since I understand the exhibit itself is now at Regensburg. Thence to Pilsen, and thence here to the capital. After that, we shall see."

The way thus prepared, Twentypenny had further cemented international relations by the purchase of a Skoda sedan, and it was in this vehicle that he traveled from Prague to the border at Zelezna Ruda where, in accordance with his telegraphed orders, Captain Lars Bjornsson awaited with the giant mammal that Twentypenny had fondly determined would be named Daphne, and gender be blowed.

Lars Bjornsson's size and appearance were such as to suggest that he had captured his awesome prize barehanded, with the odds heavily against the whale. His English was so heavily accented that he might have been mistaken for a Scot, although the fashion for immense red beards has passed its zenith north of the Tweed.

"Mighty 'tam fine beast, not so?" Bjornsson asked proudly, and Valerian Twentypenny could not but agree. They were standing inside the titanic lorry which housed a truly magnificent specimen of *physeter catodon*, or sperm whale, fully 50 feet long and resembling a thoughtfully disposed armored cruiser. It was, happily for Twentypenny's hopes, a girl whale. Large and black and prodigiously ugly, her huge bulk nearly filled the lorry's body, leaving only room for narrow walkways along her gleaming flanks. Even in repose, the giant head looked brutally dangerous.

From the forward end of the enormous van came the businesslike hum of a small petrol-driven generator which powered the refrigerating machinery by means of which Daphne was preserved. "Much better than embalming," Lars Bjornsson declared, his great voice reverberating dismally off the lorry's metal sides. "Sometimes embalming yust can't do the yob."

"And what happens then?" Twentypenny asked.

Bjornsson held his prow of a nose and assumed an expression of profound distaste. "You get yourself a new whale," he replied. "Fast."

"Hmmm," Twentypenny mused, gnawing the end of his mustache. "I suppose much the same thing would happen if anything went wrong with your refrigerating gear, eh?"

"Only faster. But don't you worry while Lars Bjornsson is on the yob. That machine will run forever, by golly." The Norwegian patted Daphne's towering snout. "Once she was full of oil, now she's full of copper tubing. At that, it's better than being boiled down for fertilizer."

"Oh, infinitely," Twentypenny agreed.

They stepped out of the van and inhaled deeply. The aroma inside Daphne's traveling home, all compound of cold whale and petrol, was not invigorating.

Along the sides of the lorry, again according to telegraphed directions, Bjornsson had caused to be painted legends informing the public that this was the International Traveling Exhibit of the British Whaling Association, a member in good standing of the British Fisheries Industrial Council. Beneath this statement was the stirring legend: *When You Think of Whales, Think Big—Think British.* Twentypenny had been absurdly pleased at this fancy. It was all, he told himself, most impressive.

"Now," he said to Lars Bjornsson as they strolled toward the none-too-inviting hotel in which, according to a plaque over the door, the Zelezna Ruda Junior Chamber of Marxist Dialecticians met for luncheon every Thursday, "I think it is time you knew more of my plans. I suggest that we share a bottle of the native brandy in my room."

At the conclusion of Twentypenny's recital the bearded Norseman silently drained his glass of brandy and refilled it. "That," he said solemnly, "was to honor a gallant whale. Now I drink to our survival."

"Our survival," Twentypenny echoed.

To say that Daphne's initial appearance in the town square of Klatovy was a thundering success would be to understate the case. Even a small whale is an uncommon spectacle in Klatovy, and Daphne was, as *physeter catodon* females go, no mean *physeter catodon.* From early in the morning until late in the evening Klatovy's residents queued in scores to see the whale in their midst.

Some days later Twentypenny, his whale, and his Norseman proceeded to Pilsen where Twentypenny promptly got in touch with the local representative of the tropical Rations Evaluation Board, a dental surgeon named Novotny, who was thin and tall, terribly nervous and badly in need of a shave.

"Which one?" Novotny asked, peering uneasily into Twentypenny's mouth and fumbling with a long, gleaming steel probe.

"Right bicuspid," Twentypenny gargled. This absurd business of passwords again; this sham of seeking an appointment and waiting in Novotny's unreasonably depressing reception room.

"The warehouse at Number sixty, Griesecki Street," Novotny whispered hoarsely, his Adam's apple bobbing in an ecstasy of terror. He reached for his drill. "Please to scream," he whispered as he pressed a switch and the drill began to whirr.

"Have you no pride of workmanship?" Twentypenny demand-

ed sharply. "Stop that wretched noise, and stop quivering. I shall have my truck at the warehouse tomorrow evening. See that your friends are ready to load it."

"Please," Novotny pleaded, his forehead beaded with perspiration, his eyes liquid with anxiety, "just a small scream . . ."

Hell, thought Twentypenny, taking a deep breath.

Outside in the waiting room the last patient of the day, a clerk in the State Tobacco Monoply, leaped like a stricken doe, took one horror-stricken glance at the door to the dentist's operating chambers, and fled. It sounded as if Novotny were killing somebody in there.

"It is not beer as we understand the term in Oslo, but it is not bad," Lars Bjornsson said later that evening after a prolonged sampling of the produce of Pilsen's famed breweries. "Here's to tomorrow, and our grand openings—both of them." He winked as Twentypenny raised his glass in response to the toast.

In Pilsen no less than Klatovy, Daphne proved an immediate popular success. The immense lorry was parked in Lenin Place (formerly Adolf Hitlerplatz, once Stefanik Square), and the ancient buildings surrounding the tree-shaded square echoed and re-echoed to the recorded lecture on British whaling techniques which had been provided by the Special Effects Branch of the Tropical Rations Evaluation Board. Long queues formed as Pilsen lined up to file slowly through the lorry past Daphne's lowering glare and down her leathery sides. Twentypenny accepted with becoming modesty the congratulations of the Pilsen Regional Sub-Director of Culture and Education, who had come to make a personal inspection of the display.

At 2:30 P.M., shortly after the Regional Sub-Director had finished his tour of Daphne's remains, there occurred a breakdown in the refrigerating machinery which maintained her even temperature and, with expressions of regret courteously translated and delivered to the waiting public by the Regional Sub-Director himself, the exhibition was temporarily closed.

"But you must not trouble yourself further, Excellency," Twentypenny declared. "It is a minor matter and easily remedied, I'm sure. My driver—the big chap with the beard—tells me he has already arranged to move our lorry to a warehouse in Griesecki Street where we can effect the necessary repairs. It is advisable, you comprehend, to get our vehicle under cover, out of the sun."

"But you are most welcome to the use of the facilities of the People's Tractor Works, Comrade Colonel."

"Wouldn't dream of it, my dear chap. But I really think we'd best be getting on with the job. Warm day, and all that . . ."

Once inside the large, dimly lighted shed at 60 Griesecki Street, it was but the work of seconds for Lars Bjornsson to replace the bit of wiring he had removed from the refrigerating machinery. At the rear of the van Twentypenny and Dr. Novotny, his teeth a-chatter, concluded arrangements for the transfer of the rocket propellant with Korovnic, chief research chemist of the People's Rocket Works.

Then, atop Daphne and roughly amidships, Bjornsson strained briefly and removed a large square hatch by means of which he was enabled to descend into Daphne's hollow, rib-vaulted interior to check on the copper tubing through which flowed the coolants so vital to her preservation. The Norwegian flicked a switch inside the hatch and Daphne's innards glowed eerily. Then he vanished below decks, as it were.

"Plenty room," came his voice, much muffled.

Now from the shadows at the rear of the warehouse emerged a small band of men bearing stout wooden crates. Twentypenny mounted the ladder leaning against Daphne's side, and swiftly and efficiently the crates were passed up to him and by him lowered into the waiting arms of Lars Bjornsson.

An hour later the job was done. Daphne was loaded to what would have been the gills had she not been a mammal.

"Free Czechoslovakia will never forget this," Korovnic declared, his voice vibrant with emotion.

"I don't suppose," Dr. Novotny put in wistfully, "there's an extra bit of room inside there? I mean, there's bound to be a stench about this affair, and perhaps one would be well advised to . . ."

Twentypenny surveyed the dentist with distaste. It would, he thought, serve the man right. On the other hand, Novotny had rendered an important service to the Tropical Rations Evaluation Board.

"Climb aboard," he said brusquely. "But remember, you asked for whatever you get. He lit a cigarette and inhalted deeply. Despite its size, the warehouse was already richly redolent of cetacean. It was the first fish-flavored cigarette Twentypenny had ever tasted.

The hum of the refrigerating machinery took on an eccentric note as Lars Bjornsson climbed down from the lorry, looking shaken.

"Not even the man who invented it could fix it now," he said heavily. "I give it about six hours and then—" He shrugged.

With the lorry once more installed in Lenin Place, Twentypenny sought out the Regional Sub-Director of Culture and Education and once more apologized for the interruption to the exhibit. "We haven't quite been able to overcome a slight malfunction," he said

soothingly, "but we mustn't let that interfere with our mission of bringing the whale's fascinating story to the good people of Pilsen. I feel certain that we'll have everything tickerty-boo by tomorrow, or the day after at the latest."

"I am sure you will," said the Regional Sub-Director, quietly pleased at this demonstration of the marked inferiority of British refrigerating devices. "You would not object, I trust, to hanging another banner on your van, pointing out that such failures would never happen in a Russian-made machine?"

"It will be a moral lesson to us all," Twentypenny replied.

Attendance that day, which was warm for the season of the year, dropped sharply. The following day was still warmer. Lenin Place was deserted; its windows stood closed and curtained.

Twentypenny and Lars Bjornsson stood stubbornly by their van, wreathed in great clouds of pipe smoke. The recorded lecture boomed remorselessly on. The refrigeration machinery had long since ceased even its tubercular coughing.

Daphne was going.

"Hang on, old boy, and breathe slowly," Twentypenny grated around the stem of his pipe. "They can't hold out much longer."

"I wouldn't mind so much if it didn't burn my eyes," the Norseman said grimly, exhaling a jet of smoke.

Unheard beneath the roar of the lecture came a series of thumps from Daphne's interior. Gradually they grew weaker and then ceased altogether.

A breath of air stirred the wilted leaves on the ancient trees bordering the square. Several blocks away a policeman named Josef Hrudlic paused in his dutiful pacing, sniffed and sniffed again. Then he shook his head as if to clear it. Today was not Friday. It was absurd. But there it was again. Patrolman of the Second Grade Hrudlic began to walk away from it. He increased his stride, but to no avail. It was still with him, only more powerful now, it seemed. He began to run.

How unfair it was, he thought, that he, Josef Hruldic, who had just passed his examination for promotion to Patrolman of the First Grade, should be the first to die as the Western Imperialists launched World War III in the form of a poison gas attack on the innocent city of Pilsen.

Thereafter, events moved forward with eminently satisfactory speed. Let no one declare that, given a crisis, the Czechs cannot react swiftly and decisively.

At the border crossing at Zelesna Ruda, Twentypenny crawled down from the lorry's cab and confronted the Regional Sub-Director of Culture and Education, who was nattily attired for the occasion in the gilt-braided uniform of his office and a gas mask.

"For the last time, I protest this high-handed and outrageous expulsion," Twentypenny said loudly and harshly. "I shall complain to the Minister himself that our agreement has been violated. Our whole program of international cultural exchanges is endangered by your foolhardy actions. And furthermore, what about my Skoda?"

By way of reply, the Regional Sub-Director raised his arm and pointed west. "Out!" he yelled, although the effect he had intended was somewhat marred by the gas mask.

"I demand to be permitted to telephone Prague," Twentypenny thundered. "I am a British citizen and I have my rights."

The Regional Sub-Director turned in the seat of his official limousine and raised his right arm. From the turret of the medium tank just to the rear, a lieutenant of the Second Light Armored Division nodded briskly, gas mask bobbing, and the tank's long-barreled gun swung purposefully toward Twentypenny.

"Out, out, out!" howled the Regional Sub-Director as the facepiece of his overburdened gas mask sprang a small leak.

Engine roaring, the huge lorry trundled slowly out of Czechoslovakia, gathering speed as it approached the border station of the West German Federal Republic. From its sides streamed the tattered banners proclaiming Daphne's identity. Now they were utterly redundant. Daphne's identity was unmistakable for miles around.

From the interior of his impeccably maintained check point, *Oberleutnant* Friedrich Shaffer of the Border Police stared through the eyepieces of his gas mask and grinned gleefully. *Der Englischer* was coming through exactly as planned.

Two miles down the road waited a squad of his men, suitably protected. There the Englishman's mysterious cargo was to be unloaded and transferred to another van, after which the lorry now careening past was to be doused with petrol and burned. The plan was simple and efficient, and *Oberleutnant* Shaffer's tidy Teutonic soul was soothed at its smooth functioning. As to what it all signified, a simple lieutenant of Border Police did not question the instructions he had received from Bonn.

Overcome by a sudden whim, *Oberleutnant* Shaffer slipped his gas mask off momentarily. *"Lieber Gott,"* he whispered, awed, as he hastened to resume its aroma-proof safety.

"It was, my dear old Hawker, simplicity itself," Twentypenny told his chief that evening at the hotel in Regensburg, whither he and Lars Bjornsson had repaired to refresh themselves. "Although I shall never be able to face a fish again as long as I live. Poor No-

votny will live, they tell me from the hospital, but he needs a long rest and plenty of fresh air. And I suspect that Bjornsson here has rather had the whale and its finny friends."

"There are other careers yust as rewarding," said the Norwegian, taking a large sip of his brandy and wincing.

"I know," Twentypenny said hurriedly. "Everything will taste like bouillebaisse for a few days, and then things will come back to normal." He turned back to Hawker. "But the real credit is yours, old boy."

"Mine!" yipped the Chief of the Tropical Rations Evaluation Board, bristling fearsomely. "Mine! Of all the idiotic schemes I've ever heard of, this tops the wildest. And you accuse me of it! Ha!" His snort was ferocious.

"But after all, old son," murmured Colonel Valerian Twentypenny reproachfully, his eye wicked behind his gleaming monocle, "it was you who said the problem was merely one of getting the stuff out from under their noses. And that's all we've done, really. You see how simple these things become if you avoid complicating them?"

He raised his glass. "To Daphnee," he said quietly. "I shall miss the old girl."

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