The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

JUNE 1962 35¢

BEST "FIRST STORY"

ALICE SCANLAN REACH

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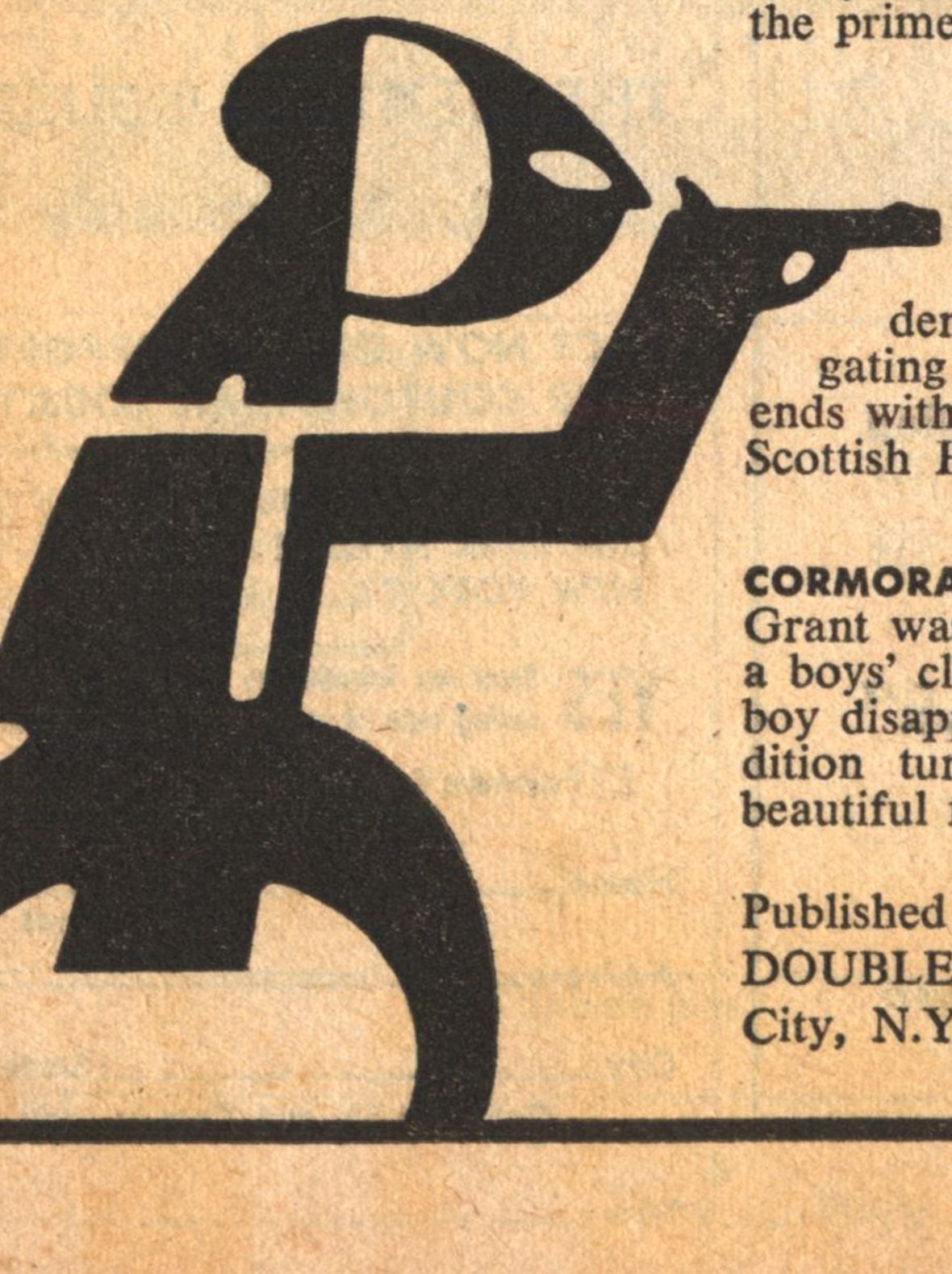

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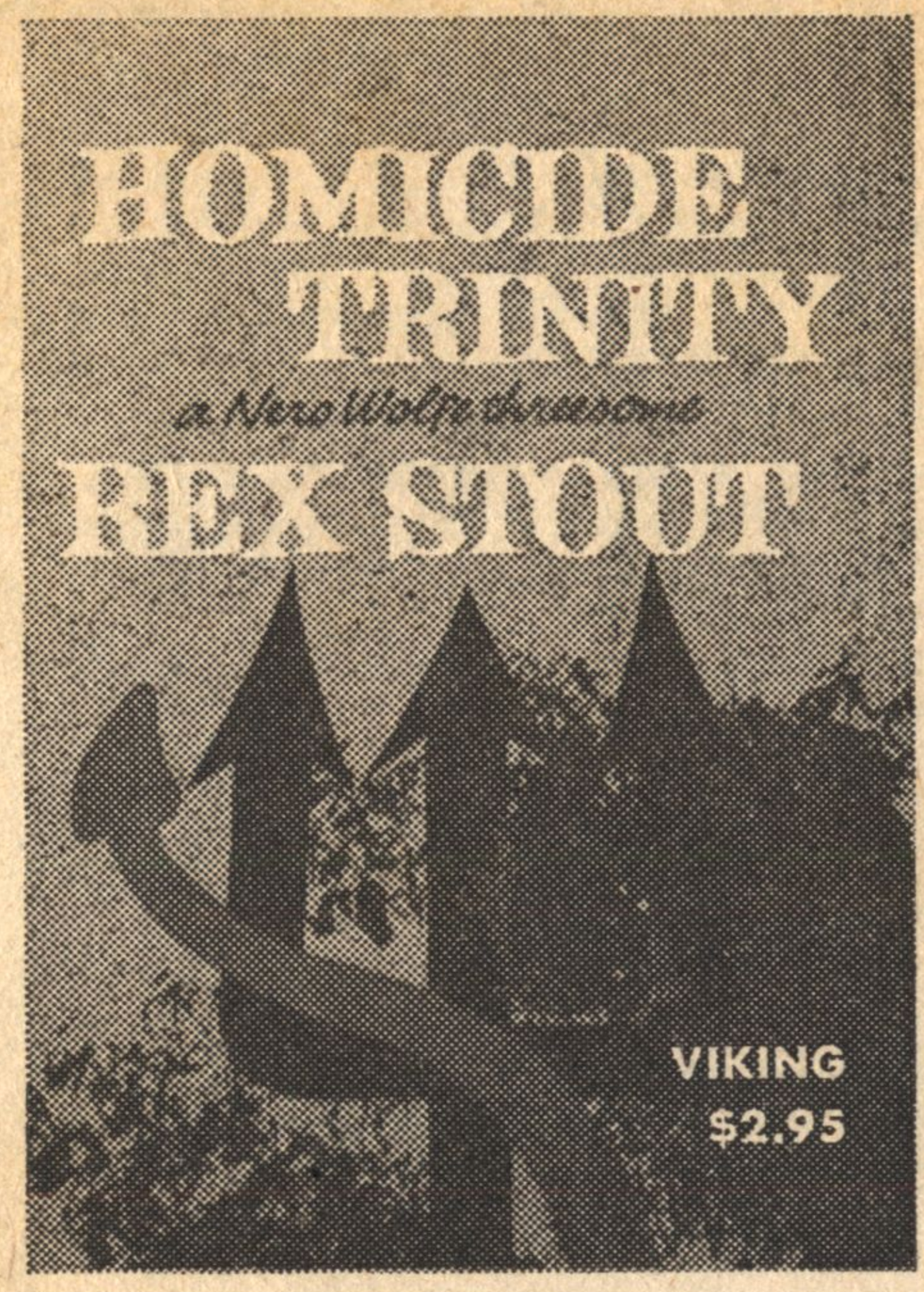

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BEST "FIRST STORY" IN EQMM'S 1961 CONTEST

This is the 230th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . Mrs. Reach's story about a wino is sensitive and tender and most acutely observed; and the miracle of the story is that the subject matter—the theme, background, and protagonist—is not the kind of material which normally lends itself to tender and sensitive treatment. Yet Mrs. Reach performs that miracle . . .

The author began to write at the age of 17—on her first newspaper job. She has been a feature writer for Scripps-Howard, a radio-script and speech writer for the OPA in Washington, and a public-relations writer in Buffalo, New York (her home town) and in New York City. She calls herself "a first-class 'ham' actress-singer-dancer-dramatist-lyricist," and tells us that all "phases of her on-stage yen" were given an outlet at the community theater in Buffalo. Since early in 1961 she has been "playing a lead role in a kitchen in Greenwich Village, New York, as chief potato washer" for her deeply understanding husband.

Congratulations, Mrs. Reach, on a splendid "first story"—and please keep on writing . . .

IN THE CONFESSIONAL

by ALICE SCANLAN REACH

BLUE SLIPPED IN THROUGH THE side door of St. Brigid's and stood motionless in the shadow of the Confessional. Opposite him loomed the statue of the Blessed Virgin treading gently on a rising bank of vigil lights. Blue's eyes, darting to the ruby fingers of flame flickering around the marble feet, saw that the metal box nearby with the sign *Candles—10¢* had not yet been replenished. Only a few wax molds remained. Had the box been full, Blue would have known he was too late—that Father Crumlish, on depositing a fresh supply, had opened the drawer attached to the candle container and emptied it of the past week's silver offerings.

So all was well! Once again, all unknowingly, the House of God would furnish Blue with the price of a jug of wine.

Now, from his position in the

shadow, Blue's red-rimmed eyes shifted to the altar where Father Crumlish had just turned the lock in the Sacristy door, signaling the start of his nightly nine-o'clock lock-up routine.

Blue knew it by heart.

First, the closing and locking of the weather-weary stained glass windows. Next, the bolting of the heavy oaken doors in the rear of the church. Then came the dreaded moment. Tonight, as every night, listening to Father Crumlish make fast the last window and then approach the Confessional, Blue fought the panic pushing against his lungs—the fear that the priest would give the musty interior of the Confessional more than a quick, casual glance.

Suppose tonight it occurred to Father Crumlish to peer into the Confessional's shadow to see if someone were lurking—

Blue permitted himself a soft sigh of blessed relief. He was safe! The slow footsteps were retreating up the aisle. To be sure, there were torturing hours ahead, but that was the price he had to pay. Already he could almost feel his arms cradling the beloved bottle, his fingers caressing the gracefully curved neck. He could almost taste the soothing, healing sweetness . . .

It was almost too much to bear.

Now came what Blue, chuckling to himself, called "the floor show."

Extinguishing the lights in the rear of the church and thus leaving it, except for candlelight, in total darkness, Father Crumlish, limping a little from the arthritis buried deep in his ancient roots, climbed the narrow, winding stairway to the choir loft.

Blue, hearing the first creaking stair, moved noiselessly and swiftly. In the space of one deep breath he flickered out of the shadow, entered the nearest "sinners'" door of the Confessional, and silently closed it behind him. Then he knelt in cramped darkness, seeing nothing before him but the small closed window separating him from the Confessor's sanctuary.

By now Father Crumlish had reached the choir loft and the "show" began. Believing himself alone with his God and Maker, the descendant of a long line of shillelagh wielders ran his arthritic fingers over the organ's keys and poured out his soul in song. Presently the church rafters rang with his versions of *When Irish Eyes Are Smilin', Come Back To Erin,* and *The Rose of Tralee.*

It was very pleasant and Blue didn't mind too much that his knee joints ached painfully from their forced kneeling position. As a matter of fact, he rather enjoyed this interlude in the evening's adventure. It gave him time to think, a process which usually eluded him in the shadowy, unreal world where he existed. And what better place to think than this very church where he had served as an altar boy

forty—fifty?—how many years ago?

That was another reason he never had the slightest qualm about filching the price of a bottle from the Blessed Virgin's vigil-light offering box. "Borrowing," Blue called it. And who had a better right? Hadn't he dropped his nickels and dimes in the collection basket every Sunday and Holyday of Obligation from the time he was a tot until—?

The Blessed Virgin and Father Crumlish and the parishioners of St. Brigid's were never going to miss a few measly dimes. Besides, he was only "borrowing" until something turned up. And some day, wait and see, he'd walk down the center aisle of the church, dressed fit to kill, proud as a peacock, and put a $100 bill in the basket for the whole church to see just as easy as you please!

A small smile brushed against Blue's thin lips, struggled to reach the dull sunken eyes, gave up in despair, and disappeared. Blue dozed a little.

He might more appropriately have been called Gray. For there was a bleak grayness about him that bore the stamp of fog and dust, of the gray pinched mask of death and destruction. His withered bones seemed to be shoved indifferently into threadbare coat and trousers; and from a disjointed blob of cap a few sad straggles of hair hung listlessly about his destroyed face. Time had long ceased to mean anything to Blue—and he to Time.

All that mattered now was the warm, lovely, loving liquid and the occasional bite of biscuit to wash it down. And thanks to St. Brigid's parishioners, thanks to his knowledge of Father Crumlish's unfailing nightly routine, Blue didn't have to worry about where the next bottle was coming from. The job was easy. And afterward he could doze in peace in the last pew of the church until it came time to mingle with the faithful, as they arrived for six o'clock morning mass, and then easily slip unnoticed out the door.

Now, kneeling in the confines of the Confessional, Blue jerked his head up from his wasted chest and stiffened. Sudden silence roared in his ears. For some unseen reason Father Crumlish had broken off in the middle of the third bar of *Tralee*.

Then, in the deathly pale quiet, the priest's voice rang out.

"Who's there?"

Sweet Jesus! thought Blue. Did I snore?

"Answer me!" More insistent now. "Who's there?"

Blue, his hand on the Confessional doorknob, had all but risen when the answer came.

"It's me, Father . . . Johnny Sheehan."

Sinking back to his knees, Blue could hear every word in the choir loft, clear as a bell, resounding in the shuttered, hollow church.

"What's on your mind, Johnny?"

Blue caught the small note of irritation in the priest's voice and knew it was because Father Crumlish treasured his few unguarded moments with *The Rose of Tralee.*

"I—I want to go to Confession, Father."

A long pause and then Blue could almost hear the sigh of resignation to Duty and to God's Will.

"Then come along, lad."

Now how do you like that for all the lousy luck, Blue thought, exasperated. Some young punk can't sleep in his nice warm beddy-bye until he confesses—

Confesses!

Blue felt the ice in his veins jam up against his heart. Father Crumlish would most certainly bring the repentant sinner to *this* Confessional since it was next to the side-door entrance. Even now Blue could hear the oncoming footsteps. Suppose he opens *my* door instead of the other one? Dear God, please let him open the first door!

Trembling, Blue all but collapsed with relief as he heard the other door open and close, heard the settling of knees on the bench, and lastly, the faint whisper of cloth as Father Crumlish entered the priests' enclosure that separated himself from Blue on one side and from Johnny Sheehan on the other by thin screened windows of wood.

Now Blue heard the far window slide back and knew that Johnny Sheehan was bowing his head to the screen, fixing his eyes on the crucifix clasped in the Confessor's hands.

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned . . ."

The voice pulled taut, strained, and snapped.

"Don't be afraid to tell God, son. You know about the Seal of Confession—anything you tell here you confess to God and it remains sealed with Him forever."

Confess you stole a bunch of sugar beets and get it over with, Blue thought angrily. He was getting terribly tired and the pain in his knees was almost more than he could bear.

"I . . . she . . ."

She! Well, what do you know? Blue blinked his watery eyes in a small show of surprise. So the young buck's got a girl in trouble. Serves him right. Stick to the warmer embrace of the bottle, my lad. It'll keep you out of mischief.

"I heard your first confession when you were seven, Johnny. How old are you now? Sixteen?"

"Y-yes, Father."

"This girl. What about her?"

"I—I killed her!"

In the rigid silence Blue heard the boy's body sag against the wooden partition and was conscious of a sharp intake of breath from the priest. Blue was as alert now as he ever was these soft, slow days and nights, but he knew that sometimes he just thought he heard words when actually he'd only dreamed them. Yet . . . Blue eased

one hurting kneecap and leaned closer to the dividing wood.

Father Crumlish shifted his weight in his enclosure.

"Killed?"

Only retching sobs.

"Tell me, Johnny." Father Crumlish's voice was ever so gentle now.

Then the words came in a torrent.

"She laughed at me . . . said I wasn't a man . . . and I couldn't stand it, Father. When Vera May laughed . . ."

"Vera May!" the priest broke in. "Vera May Barton?"

Even in the shifting mists and fog of his tired memory, Blue recognized that name. Who didn't these past few weeks? Who didn't know that every cop in the city was hunting Vera May Barton's murderer? Why, even some of Blue's best pals had been questioned. Alwas ready to hang a rap on some poor innocent.

Blue rarely read newspapers, but he listened to lots of talk. And most of the talk in the wine-shrouded gloom of his haunts these past weeks had been about the slaying of 16-year-old Vera May Barton, a choir singer at St. Brigid's. Someone had shown Blue her picture on the front page of a newspaper. A beautiful girl, blonde and soft and smiling. But someone, someone with frantic, desperate hands, had strangled the blonde softness and choked off the smile.

Blue was suddenly conscious once more of the jagged voice.

"She wasn't really like they say, Father. Vera May wasn't really good! She just wanted you to think so. But sometimes, when I'd deliver my newspapers in the morning, sometimes she'd come to the door with hardly any clothes . . . And when I'd ask her to go to a show or something, she'd only laugh and say I wasn't a man . . ."

"Go on," Father Crumlish said softly.

"I—she told me she was staying after choir practice that night to collect the hymnals—"

The priest sighed. "I blame myself for that. For letting her stay in the church alone—even for those few moments—while I went over to the rectory."

"And then—then when she left," the halting words went on, "I followed her out in the alley . . ."

Blue's pals had told him about that—how one of St. Brigid's early morning mass parishioners found Vera May lying like a broken figurine in the dim alley leading from the church to the rectory. She wasn't carrying a purse, the newspapers said. And she hadn't been molested. But her strangler, tearing at her throat, had broken the thin chain of the St. Christopher's medal around her neck. It had her initials on the back but the medal had never been found.

"What did you do with the medal, Johnny?" Father Crumlish asked quietly.

"I—I was afraid to keep it, Fath-

er." The agonized voice broke again. "The river . . ."

The weight of the night pressed heavily on Blue and he sighed deeply. But the sigh was lost in the low murmuring of the priest to the boy —too low for Blue to catch the words—and perhaps, against all his instincts, he dozed. Then there was a sudden stirring in the adjoining cubicles. Blue knelt rigid and breathless while the doors opened, and without turning his head toward the faint candlelight shimmering through the cracks in the door of his enclosure, he knew that Father Crumlish had opened the side entrance and released Johnny Sheehan to the gaunt and starless dark.

Slowly the priest moved toward the first pew before the center altar. And now Blue risked glancing through the sliver of light in his door. Father Crumlish knelt, face buried in his hands . . .

A wisp of thought drifted into the wine-eroded soil of Blue's mind. Was the priest weeping?

But Blue was too engrossed in his own discomfort, too aware of the aching, ever-increasing, burning dryness of his breath and bones. If only the priest would go and leave Blue to his business and his sleep!

After a long time he heard the footsteps move toward the side door. Now it closed. Now the key turned in the lock . . .

Now!

Blue stumbled from the Confessional and collapsed in the nearest pew. Stretched full length, he let his weary body and mind sag in relief. Perhaps he slept; he only knew that he returned, as if from a long journey. Sitting upright, he brought out the tools of his trade from somewhere within the tired wrappings that held him together.

First the chewing gum—two sticks, purchased tonight.

Blue munched them slowly, carefully bringing them to the proper consistency. Then, rising, he fingered a small length of wire, and leaving the pew, shuffled toward the offering box beneath the Blessed Virgin's troubled feet.

Taking the moist gum from his mouth, Blue attached it to the wire and inserted it carefully into the slot of the box. A gentle twist and he extracted the wire. Clinging to the gummed end were two coins, a nickel and a dime.

Blue went through this procedure again and again until he had collected the price of a bottle. Then he lowered himself into the nearest pew and rested a bit. He began to think of what had happened in the Confessional. But it had been so long since Blue had made himself concentrate on anything but his constant, thirsting need that it took a while for the rusted wheels to move, for the pretty colored lights to cease their small whirlings and form a single brightness illuminating the makings of his mind.

Finally he gave up. The burning dryness had gripped him again and he began to yearn for the long night to be over so that he could spend, in the best way he knew, the money he held right in his hand this minute.

Two bottles! I should have two bottles for all the trouble I've been through tonight, Blue thought. They owe it to me for making me kneel there so long and robbing me of my sleep. Yes, they owe it to me! And so thinking, he took out the gum once more from some secret fold, and bringing it to his mouth, chewed it again into pliable moistness.

The first try at the offering box brought him only a dime, but the second try—God was good—another dime, a nickel, and a dollar bill!

Too exhausted to drag himself to his customary last-pew bed, Blue stretched out once more on the nearest wood plank and slept.

Some time later, the unrelenting dryness wakened him. This "in-between" period was the only time Blue ever approached sobriety. And in the sobering, everything seemed terribly, painfully clear. He began to relive the events of the night, hearing the voices again with frightening clarity. Father Crumlish's and then the kid's . . .

Blue's own voice screamed in his ears.

"Out! I've got to get out of here! Nobody knows but me . . . nobody knows about the murder but me. I've got to tell . . . But first I'll have to have a little sip. I need a little sip. And then I'll tell . . ."

In a flurry of cloth and dust Blue rushed to the side door. He had never before tried to let himself out this way and had no idea if the door was locked. But the knob gave easily, and in an instant he had closed the door behind him and leaning heavily against it, was breathing the night's whispering wind.

It had been a long time since Blue had been out alone in the deep dark and suddenly, with the night's dreadful knowledge inside him, it was overpowering. Shadows rushed at him, clawed at his face and fingers, and crushed him so bindingly that he could scarcely breathe.

In an agony to get away, he plunged into the blackness and began to run.

And in his urgency Blue never heard the shout behind him, the pounding feet on the pavement. He never heard the cry to halt or risk a bullet. He only knew that he was flying, faster and faster, yet not fast enough, soaring higher and higher, until a surprisingly small, jagged thrust of sidewalk clawed at him and brought him to his knees. The bullet from his pursuer, meant to pierce his worn and weary legs, pierced his back.

Suddenly it was calm and quiet and there was no longer any need

for speed. He lay on his side, crumpled and useless, like a discarded bundle of rags. A wave, a wine-red wave, swept over him and Blue let himself rock and toss for a moment in its comforting warmth. Then he opened his eyes and, dimly, in the fast-gathering darkness, recognized Father Crumlish bending over him.

"Poor devil," Blue heard the priest say. "But don't blame yourself, Officer. The fellow probably just didn't know that you'd be suspicious of his running away like that. Particularly around here—now—after. the Barton girl. The poor devil probably just didn't know."

Didn't know? Blue didn't know? He knew, all right! And he had to tell.

"Father!"

Quickly the priest bent his ear to Blue's quivering lips.

"I . . . was in the Confessional too."

"The Confessional?"

The wave rushed to envelop him again. Before he could speak the urgent words he heard the officer's voice.

"He came out of the church door, Father. I saw him."

"I don't see how that's possible," the priest said bewilderedly.

Blue forced the breath from his aching lungs.

"I heard . . . the kid confess . . . I have to tell . . ."

"Wait!" Father Crumlish said sharply, cutting Blue off. "You have nothing to tell. Maybe you heard. But you don't know about that boy. The poor confused lad's come to me to confess to every robbery and murder in this parish for years. You have nothing to tell, do you hear me?"

"Nothing?"

Blue almost laughed a little. For the pain was gone now and he felt as if—as if he were walking down St. Brigid's center aisle, dressed fit to kill, proud as a peacock, and putting a $100 bill in the collection basket for the whole church to see just as easy as you please.

"There's something . . ."

His voice was strong and clear as he brought his fumbling fingers from within the moldy rags and stretched out his hand to the priest.

"I was 'borrowing' from the Blessed Virgin, Father. Just enough for a bottle, though. I need it, Father. All the time. Bad! . . . She caught me at it. And she was running to tell you. But if she did, where in the world would I ever get another bottle, Father? Where? . . . So I had to stop her!"

Fighting the final warm, wine-red wave that was washing over him, Blue thrust into Father Crumlish's hand a St. Christopher's medal dangling from a broken chain and initialed V.M.B.

"I've been saving it, Father. In a pinch, I thought it might be worth a bottle . . ."

EDITORS' FILE CARD

a new story by

AUTHOR: **HAROLD Q. MASUR**

TITLE: ***Squealer's Reward***

TYPE: Crime and Detection

LOCALE: New York City and environs

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *On the surface it looked as if Charles Larkin had only two weaknesses—but they were classic. One was the love of money, the other the love of a married woman . . .*

IN HIS SENIOR YEAR AT COLLEGE Charles Larkin was voted "the man whose personality was most likely to split."

At the time, his classmates believed they had originated a rather whimsical conceit. They had no way of knowing that the jest was more prophetic than fanciful. But their prediction required several more years to fertilize. By that time Larkin had been graduated from Law School and was firmly established in private practice.

Now, to all outward appearances he was a pillar of the community, a man of unimpeachable integrity, an officer of the court, a guardian of law and order. The trademarks of virtue and respectability were stamped on the surface only; in actuality, he was totally unprincipled and without a trace of conscience.

The pattern developed during his very first year as a lawyer. And almost on his first case. His client was a young man, a shipping clerk in a department store, who was accused of petty larceny. Larkin, conferring with the parents in his office, shook his head gravely and said, "I'm afraid we're in for some trouble. We got a very bad break. We drew one of the toughest judges on the bench. And the assistant D.A. means business. I'd hate to see your boy go to jail and be thrown in with hardened criminals."

He stood up, went to the door,

opened it to make sure they could not be overheard, then came back and spoke in a low voice. It might be possible, he suggested confidentially, to get the boy off. But it would cost money. Certain officials had their hands out and palms would have to be greased.

The alarmed parents, anxious to save their boy, went out and borrowed heavily. They turned the proceeds over to Larkin and needless to say, every penny wound up in his pockets.

He had lied to them. He had known in advance that the defendant, a first offender, would probably receive a suspended sentence. And if it hadn't turned out that way—well, he could have returned the money and there was no harm done. But the judge, a kindly man, did suspend sentence, and Larkin was $1200 richer—and the parents thought him a legal wonder.

When Larkin perceived the vast profit potentially available to a man uninhibited by scruples, he sought additional methods of duplicity. And as his practice increased, his violations became more sophisticated. He committed barratry, suborned perjury, falsified documents, misappropriated funds, and on occasion he even double-crossed his own clients.

It was this last-mentioned talent that led ultimately, and appropriately, to a rather neat twist of the irony of fate.

The client was Alex Harvey, who lived in the adjoining apartment. Harvey, physically a bantam, compensated for his lack of bulk with an aggressive personality and a hearty, booming voice, sometimes audible through the common wall of their respective bedrooms. During the first year of tenancy they had passed each other frequently, with no sign other than the fatuous smile generally tendered between neighbors of a multiple dwelling. Harvey made no impression on Larkin at all.

On the other hand, Larkin became intensely aware of Harvey's wife. Kay Harvey was a tall, strikingly attractive woman with dissatisfied eyes and an air of impetuous vitality. Larkin felt oddly drawn to her. He had managed a few pleasantries and on one occasion, over her protests, had carried a package from the elevator to her door. There, however, she had thanked him with finality and ended the incident on a cool, impersonal note.

Larkin smiled to himself. Banked fires, he thought—and found himself speculating about her long afterward. A woman like that! Vibrant with the juices of life. How could she have married Harvey, that unimpressive little blowhard?

And then they met. Formally. All three of them. At a tenant's meeting convened for the purpose of blocking an increase in rent proposed by the landlord. Other tenants were there, of course, but it was Alex Harvey, the little bantam,

who took command. A committee was formed, with Harvey as chairman, and he appointed Larkin, the only lawyer residing in the building, to represent them before the State Rent Commission.

Everyone in the large apartment house was watching with interest. Larkin felt that success in this case might drum up considerable future business. He prepared for the hearing carefully and attacked the problem with characteristic shrewdness. He proved that the owner's operating expenses had been padded and that the property was yielding a legal income. The Commission was convinced and the landlord's application denied.

Larkin's expectations were achieved. As a result of his victory he got several new clients. The most notable of these was Alex Harvey himself. Within a week Larkin had been retained by Harvey to handle a number of legal matters.

Harvey owned a large automobile agency, with some ten thousand square feet of service area and a used car lot that covered half a block. Various problems continually arose and these all accrued to Larkin's practice.

Because they were neighbors, because they had to consult frequently, Larkin became a frequent visitor to the Harvey apartment. But the acquisition of Harvey's account was only secondary in Larkin's mind: his true target was Harvey's wife. For a long time he made no overt gesture. He was polite, affable, charming. But after a while he could sense a quickening of her interest and he knew that she was watching him, waiting.

Meanwhile Larkin had observed a number of encouraging signs. Kay was obviously being neglected. Her husband's primary interest was Harvey Motors, Incorporated. He was totally dedicated to the firm and its affairs. He lived and breathed automobiles. He read only trade periodicals. He was immersed in sales, shipments, trends, designs. At times he seemed barely aware of Kay's existence. He seemed to feel that his marital obligations ended with his providing of material comforts.

So Charles Larkin watched and waited.

As it turned out, the opportunity was presented by Harvey himself. A dealer meeting summoned him out of town. He had been pressured into buying theater tickets for a benefit performance that night and not wanting the tickets to go to waste, he asked his good friend Chuck Larkin to substitute. Naturally, Larkin was delighted to comply.

When he picked Kay up for dinner, she looked breath-taking. And after the performance he would have been unable to describe the play. The presence of Kay at his side made him oblivious to surrounding events. Later, in a cock-

tail lounge, they had one drink in silence, and then he said, "If you were my wife, I'd never let another man get within shouting distance."

"Why? Don't you think Alex can trust me?"

"I wish I knew."

"But you're his friend. Can't he trust you?"

"Not in this area."

"You're very frank, Chuck."

"Determined, too."

"I gathered as much. What do you suggest that I do about it?"

"Get up and walk out of here. Right now. By yourself. Go home —and lock the door."

"Is that your best legal advice?"

"Yes—but please ignore it."

She gazed at him unhurriedly over the rim of her glass. "You were a long time getting around to this."

"Then you've been expecting it?"

"I've been waiting."

His pulsebeat accelerated. He tossed off the remainder of his drink, stood up, and reached for her cloak. Without another word they left the restaurant.

That was the beginning—if anything so complex and subtle as a human relationship can be pinpointed to a precise moment in time. Larkin, generally prudent about such things, had assessed Harvey's preoccupation, and knew that a certain amount of incaution was comparatively safe.

Besides, the situation began to foster indulgence. There developed between Kay and himself a complete rapport of temperament and outlook. The concept of morality was alien to both of them. For the first time in his life Larkin found himself emotionally susceptible, and before he realized what was happening, he was totally committed to another human being.

His initial recognition that he was no longer in command of events came on a Sunday afternoon. It was a bleak day. The sky was overcast and a drizzly mist blanketed the city. Kay was tied to her own apartment with Alex. Larkin was alone. He had no appointment, nothing to occupy him.

He paced from room to room restlessly. He stared morosely out of the window. He tried to blame his dejection on the day of the week, which was often a doleful one for him. Coming as a letdown at the end of a week-end, with little to anticipate but another five days of routine and the petty tyrannies of employment, its depressing effects have long been noted by psychologists.

But when the advent of night, and succeeding nights, failed to improve his humor, Larkin suddenly recognized the truth. He was jealous. Jealous of even the minimal time Kay was forced to spend with her husband. Consumed with suspicion and doubts.

He would lie in bed, twisting and perspiring, his irritability feeding on itself. My God, he asked

himself, what am I thinking? She doesn't love the man. It's a marriage of convenience, nothing more. But he found no solace in this argument. Nor was Kay able to reassure him.

They were talking it over one afternoon when he suddenly leaned forward and said with unexpected intensity, "I can't take it any more. I want you to ask Alex for a divorce."

Kay was surprised. And pleased. After a moment she shrugged helplessly. "It's no use, Chuck. I tried once before, right after we were married. I knew then I'd made a mistake. But Alex was like stone. He said he would never let me go. And you know how stubborn he is." She studied Larkin briefly. "Couldn't I get a divorce without his consent?"

"The only grounds for divorce in this state are infidelity."

Her smile was brittle. "Haven't I given him enough cause?"

"Would he start an action if he found out?"

"I doubt it. He'd only become more insufferable."

"Then we've got to find some other way."

"How about Reno or Las Vegas?"

"Not unless he was willing to cooperate. New York might set the decree aside for lack of jurisdiction." Larkin sat back and stroked his closed eyelids. "Let me think about it. Perhaps I can figure an angle."

Once again, Alex Harvey himself supplied the solution.

The following day he appeared at Larkin's office without an appointment. When the secretary announced him, Larkin had a brief disquieting moment, but he quickly collected himself and managed a bland smile of welcome.

Harvey was obviously under a strain. His face was moist, his eyes haunted, his jaw muscles working. He opened up the moment he stepped through the door. "I'm in trouble, Chuck."

Larkin pulled a chair around. "Sit down, Alex. You look derailed."

"It's the Internal Revenue boys. They're after my hide."

"Tell me about it."

"They're making an audit. Complete. All the way back. They've already, subpoenaed my books, records, everything."

"Why come to me? Why not your accountant?"

"Because I need legal advice, not fiscal."

"How do you mean?"

Harvey swallowed. "I haven't been on the level with my accountant, Chuck. He doesn't know that I've kept two sets of books, one for me, one for the tax people. And he's too honest."

"Two sets of books," Larkin said, the wheels already turning in his brain.

"It's common practice, Chuck. A man's in business, he's got a part-

ner—Uncle Sam. You can't hold on to any money these days. You've got to skim the cream off."

"How?"

"Well, you fix the price on a car, then shave it a little on the books if the customer pays cash. Then, we make it a rule never to take checks for repairs—cash only—and not all of it goes down in the records." He took out a handkerchief and blotted his forehead. "Now they're checking. One of my former employees must have tipped them off—I think it was a salesman I canned a few weeks ago. They've got their noses in everything—sales, repairs, inventory, salaries, commissions, the works."

Larkin regarded him in long-faced deliberation and looked sympathetic.

"Look, Chuck," Harvey said desperately. "I'm willing to pay."

"Then what's your problem?"

"Fraud. Can they put me in jail, Chuck?"

"Depends on the amount involved, Alex. Undeclared income is a serious charge. Would it be more than twenty-five per cent of your net?"

Harvey closed his eyes and nodded.

"Where is all this money, Alex?"

"In a safe-deposit box at the Merchant's Trust."

Larkin pursed his lips in a silent whistle. Some obvious advice was called for. He was on the point of offering it, but immediately swallowed the impulse. The catharsis of confession, he thought: a man pours out the truth when he's frightened. Harvey should have said nothing. He should have cleaned out the box and salted the money elsewhere. If the tax boys found that cache, he would never be able to explain its source without incriminating himself.

Larkin built a pyramid of his fingers and looked thoughtful. "We must consider where you're most vulnerable, Alex. Where do you keep the second set of books?"

"I got panicky and burned them."

"Do you have a savings account?"

Harvey nodded.

"Have you paid taxes on the interest?"

"Yes."

"Have you declared all the dividends on your securities?"

"Yes. Religiously. My accountant insisted on it."

"No problem there. Does he know about the safe-deposit box?"

Harvey shook his head. "I never told him."

Larkin continued his questioning. He even managed to impart a false sense of security. What the government wanted, he said, was money. He had no doubt that a settlement could be made. He finally got Harvey calmed down and took him out to the elevator.

Back in the office, behind his desk, Larkin reached for the phone. He dialed the office of the Collector of Internal Revenue. He got

through to someone and then spoke rapidly, without identifying himself. He suggested, in connection with an audit they were making on the tax returns of Alexander Harvey, that an inspection of the subject's safe-deposit box in the Merchant's Trust might reveal hidden assets of considerable interest to the Department.

He hung up quickly, yet with a trace of reluctance. The reluctance stemmed from a knowledge of Internal Revenue procedures. A disclosure of fraud, he knew, was generally compensated with a certain percentage of the recovery. Squealer's Reward, it was called, though the Department frowned on this term, preferring to regard the information as a civic obligation. Larkin could have made a tidy sum by revealing his name. But this might have involved risks which he preferred to avoid . . .

When the case of the United States versus Alexander Harvey came to trial on charges of income tax evasion and fraud, Charles Larkin appeared for the defense. No lawyer, however diligent, could have saved Harvey. The figures were immutable, the evidence conclusive. Evasion of a man's responsibilities, the government attorney pointed out, placed an additional burden on his fellow citizens. He made it seem as if each juror was personally shouldering the extra load.

Before his arraignment, Harvey had been fingerprinted—a routine measure. But this procedure threw a spotlight on his past. It turned out that he had a criminal record. In the early Forties, at twenty-two years of age, he had served a brief term for robbery. This fact was used to discredit his testimony. The strategy of putting him on the stand was highly questionable, but it was Larkin's decision.

So the jury wasted no time on lengthy deliberations. It returned a verdict of guilty, and the judge passed sentence, and the marshal provided transportation.

Larkin spoke to Harvey before he left. One had to be realistic—a man couldn't expect his wife to be dependent on charity while he was in prison. There were the necessaries of food, housing, and clothes. And more important to Harvey, perhaps, there was the conduct of his business. You couldn't expect it to run without supervision.

So Harvey permitted Larkin to draw up the proper documents which gave Kay a power-of-attorney to handle everything.

Six months later Kay was a free woman. The disclosure of Harvey's record provided the lever. Larkin had brought suit to annul the marriage on the grounds of fraud. Kay's affidavit stated that Harvey had induced her to marry him by concealing his criminal past. Legal precedent on this point had long been established.

She had the grace to write Alex at the penitentiary, telling him that she felt sorry about the whole thing. Chuck, she added, had been a tower of strength—sympathetic, understanding, available in her every need.

By this time Harvey Motors, Incorporated, had been sold, and together with various other assets, converted into cash. Shortly afterward, Kay became Mrs. Charles Larkin. The couple spent an extended honeymoon in the West Indies.

The afterglow lasted until they returned to the United States. Now, constantly together, the magic began to diminish. Larkin had been a bachelor for too long a time. He had formed fixed habits that resulted inevitably in conflicts. Kay found him self-indulgent and dictatorial. He found her willful and capricious. There were considerable drinking and mutual recriminations, and on several occasions their voices reached such an alarming decible count that complaints were made by neighbors. The landlord, who had cause to remember Larkin without much pleasure, threatened him with eviction.

For a time this sobered both of them. "What's wrong with us?" Kay asked. "Why are we always fighting?"

"Is it my fault?"

"Partly. And partly mine, too. We've got to try harder, Chuck."

He was silent.

She said quietly, "Do you want me to leave you?"

He looked at her. He did not deny to himself that the thought had occurred to him more than once. But suddenly the prospect of regaining his freedom seemed less attractive. Being a bachelor, he remembered, was not unalloyed bliss.

"No." His voice was emphatic and he reached for her shoulders.

She came up against him. "You know what I think, Chuck. I think it's this building. It keeps reminding us of Alex. We ought to move —oh, just not to another apartment. Out of the city. Chuck, dear, I'd like a house in the suburbs."

He was surprised. And about this building—maybe she had a point. "Perhaps you're right," he said. "We'll see . . ."

Alex Harvey proved a model prisoner. He kept largely to himself and went about his tasks with resignation. He preferred the days when his mind was occupied. At night he would lie motionless on his cot, his brain free to brood.

After that first disquieting letter from Kay there had been no further word. And no communication at all from Larkin. But he had heard from his accountant, advising him of various developments. And for a time he was like a gas tank, waiting for a lighted match.

Time passed—weeks and months merging into one another—and Harvey waited, impatiently at first,

then with a kind of stolid implacability.

Finally he was recommended for parole. He had served two-thirds of his minimum sentence and they gave him additional time off for good behavior. The Parole Board considered his application favorably and one warm day in August he was set free.

He used part of his rehabilitation money to return to the city and to get himself settled in a rooming house. He spent a week appraising his position and his assets and then he knew exactly where he stood. The future appeared bleak, thanks to Larkin and Kay.

Prison had taught Harvey a few angles. For one thing, he knew how and where to obtain a gun. He was forced to pay a premium price, but he considered the money well spent. It was not much of a weapon—a misused automatic pistol of .32 caliber, its blue steel tarnished, but its lethal effectiveness unimpaired.

Alone in his room, with the shades drawn, Harvey loaded the clip, jacked a shell into the chamber, and tucked the gun under the waistband of his trousers. With his coat buttoned, the bulge was barely perceptible.

Shortly after eleven a.m. he reached the site of his former residence. He entered the self-service elevator and proceeded directly to the Larkin apartment. Nobody saw him enter. And apparently no one heard the shot. He had muffled the explosion with a pillow still warm from Kay's rudely awakened face . . .

Precisely at noon Charles Larkin left his office. He walked to the curb and waited for the traffic signal to change, then crossed diagonally to the other side and entered a parking lot. He had not noticed the shambling figure who stopped short, staring, when he had emerged from the building. Nor was he aware that the man had followed him and was now flagging a cab.

Larkin got his car, headed east, then drove north along the highway that skirted the river's edge. It never occurred to him that the cab which he occasionally glimpsed in his rear-vision mirror was headed for the same destination.

Beyond the bridge Larkin swung off the highway and followed the winding blacktop under the towering birches which lined both sides of the road. The homes in this area were set far apart, a factor that had persuaded Larkin to buy. A breeze stirred the leaves overhead and they shimmered in the sunlight.

Larkin pulled off the road onto a pebbled driveway and inched toward a split-level house set well back on a rolling lawn. He had bought the house three days before at a sacrifice sale from an oil executive who was being transferred to the Middle East. This was Larkin's first visit since closing the title.

As he twisted around in the car to reach for a magnum of champagne on the back seat he saw a cab driving slowly past the house. He gave it no particular attention. Both the house and the champagne were a surprise for Kay. He was thinking how delighted she would be when he brought her out on Sunday.

By then the champagne would be chilled and they could celebrate properly. And the change, he hoped, would put an end to their bickering. For some reason they had been unable to stop sniping at each other, nor, on the other hand, were they willing to give up the marriage.

He went into the house and raised the shades. The rooms were beautifully furnished. He had made an excellent buy. He walked around proudly, checking lights, windows, and appliances. He went into the kitchen, a white room equipped to the last gadget. He connected the refrigerator, listened to it hum for a moment, and then put the champagne inside. He looked out of the kitchen window at the rear terrace, shaded by a heavily wooded area beyond the flagstones.

"Nice layout," a voice said behind him. "Whose money did you use to buy it?"

Larkin whipped around and stood rooted.

"Surprised to see me, Chuck?"

"Alex! When—how—"

"I followed you here from the office." There was an odd stillness about Harvey. "No, Chuck. I didn't escape. I'm out on parole."

"Why didn't you let me know?"

"I didn't think you cared. After all, you never wrote to me in prison. You never came to see me." Harvey's eyes swept the room. "Quite a place! Are you planning to live here with Kay?"

Larkin managed a smile. The initial shock had passed and his brain was racing. He kept watching Harvey closely, trying to gauge his mood, to read his intent. He kept his voice casual, but every nerve was alert.

"That was the general idea, Alex. After all, we're married."

"So I heard. Congratulations. This is the first chance I've had to offer them in person."

"Look, Alex. Please try to understand. You were in prison. Kay was alone. She needed someone. I was around, involved in the whole affair. She came to me for advice and —well, something happened. We didn't ask to fall in love."

"This something that happened —did it happen before I went away or after?"

"That's a hell of a thing to say." Larkin tried to sound aggrieved. "Be fair, Alex."

"Fair!" Harvey's voice suddenly rose. "I lose my wife, my business, all my savings—and you ask me to be fair. You—the man who was behind it all!"

"Me, Alex? They sent you to

prison for income tax evasion."

"That's right." Anger mottled Harvey's face. "And who told them about my safe-deposit box? You, Larkin. You were the only one I told about it. Nobody else knew. And right after I left your office, they got a court order to open the box. It doesn't take a genius to figure the truth. You wanted Kay. You had to get me out of the way. So you violated a confidence and double-crossed me. You gave the tax boys their clincher."

"Alex, I—"

"Who sweet-talked me into giving Kay a power-of-attorney? Who helped her to clean me out—every last cent! Who wound up with my wife *and* my money? You had a great idea there, didn't you, Chuck? And it paid off. But the final installment is still due. That's why I'm here—to make delivery."

Harvey was trembling with rage as he started to unbutton his jacket. Larkin saw the gleam of a gun projecting from the man's waistband. He knew that he must act at once or forfeit his life. There would be no second chance.

He lunged with a recklessness born of desperation. Prison had blunted Harvey's reflexes: he was slow, awkward. Larkin hit him just above the knees and he crashed backward. The gun skidded across the floor and Larkin was on it like a cat.

He towered over Harvey, waiting for his hand to stop shaking. He looked down at the man and saw the hatred in Harvey's eyes. He knew he would never be safe —not so long as Harvey was alive. Somewhere, somehow, sometime, the man would catch him unawares.

Larkin fired the automatic three times in quick succession.

Driving back to the office, Larkin review his position. His hands were moist but steady on the wheel. His only emotion was a curious kind of excitement. Nobody would miss Harvey. Some parole officer, perhaps, but ex-cons were always disappearing.

All in all, Larkin was rather pleased with himself. He had spent the afternoon performing the necessary chores. He had dug a hole in the wooded area to a depth of three feet before the aching muscles in his back had screamed their protest. He buried Harvey and carefully concealed all traces of the grave.

Back in the kitchen he had vigorously scrubbed the vinyl tile floor. He had washed himself thoroughly and then surveyed the scene with a critical eye, certain that there was not a single trace of violence to be found.

Traffic began to thicken as the toll booths loomed ahead. He decelerated and glided into the file of cars. He reached for a coin and his heart suffered a lurching spasm. Sudden moisture bathed his tem-

ples. The hard steel of Harvey's automatic felt cold against his fingers and he jerked them out of his pocket.

The attendant seemed to be eyeing him queerly as Larkin fumbled for his wallet and extracted a bill. He handed it over and stepped on the gas.

"Hold it!" the attendant called sharply.

Larkin braked, his pulse racing.

The attendant came out of the booth. "Your change, mister," he said.

Larkin exhaled, feeling weak. He took the money and drove on. There was ah acid taste in his mouth. My God, he thought, what ails me? Am I getting old? He had intended getting rid of the gun—alongside Harvey in the grave. But lugging the body, digging the hole, filling it in, spreading leaves and branches around, had kept him busy. It was an eerie sunless spot. He'd been in a sweat to get away from there fast. The gun had completely slipped his mind.

After all, he told himself with a wooden smile, it isn't every day I commit a murder. Under the circumstances, perhaps one boner is permissible.

But only if the mistake can be rectified.

He took the gun out of his pocket and rested it on his lap. He cranked the window down. What if they found it along the road? An old beat-up automatic? Who would connect it with Charles Larkin, a respected citizen of his community? He drove with one hand, wiping the gun with the other. He knew they would never be able to lift an identifiable set of prints from the butt of a gun, but why take chances?

Larkin had been driving automatically, deeply preoccupied. Suddenly he became conscious of all the other cars on the road. He could see them stretched out ahead, and through the rear-vision mirror, behind him.

No good, he thought. Not here. Too great a risk. He must not act on impulse or in haste. He returned the gun to his pocket, left the highway at the next exit, and drove carefully through the streets to Van Courtlandt Park. It was a mild clear day and figures moved in groups across the golf course.

He parked at the base of a hill, left the car, and walked casually among the trees. Sparrows chirped and the air was fragrant. He bent down and started scooping a small hole in the earth. He reached for the gun and suddenly his hand froze in his pocket. High-pitched voices reached his ears, growing louder. A group of young hikers carrying knapsacks broke into the clearing. They stared at him for a moment, then trudged on.

Larkin wet his lips. He glanced around, shaken. The leaves seemed to be moving all around him. Who knew what eyes were peering from

behind all those trees? The woods might be filled with boy scouts, picnickers, romantic couples. He stood for a moment, indecisive, then went back to the car.

Behind the wheel, he reviewed his position again. Getting rid of a gun was not an insurmountable problem. He could drop it in an ashcan or down a sewer or into an incinerator. He shook his head—none of these solutions appealed to him. Then suddenly he smiled. A gun dropped from the Staten Island ferry into the middle of New York harbor would be irretrievably lost. But it would have to be done at night, very late, from an almost deserted boat. In the meantime he was safe enough.

He drove on with renewed confidence and reached the parking lot shortly before five o'clock. He was nearly jaunty when he stepped into the office. He saw the odd expression on his secretary's face as she half rose from her chair. And then he spotted the two men as they converged on him from opposite sides of the room.

"Mr. Larkin?" one of them asked.

"Yes."

The man flashed his wallet and Larkin saw the gold shield. "Detective-Sergeant Wienick. We'd like a few words with you."

Larkin's mouth felt cotton-dry. Easy now, he told himself. This has nothing to do with Alex Harvey. They can't possibly know what happened at the house. Nobody was near the place, nobody heard the shot, nobody saw me bury him.

He spread his hands in a guileless gesture. "I don't understand, gentlemen. What is this all about?"

"Your wife."

"What about her?"

"She's dead, Mr. Larkin."

His jaw fell.

"She was murdered," the sergeant said. "The maid found her when she got there at noon. What time did you leave your apartment today, counselor?"

Larkin could barely speak. "You—you don't think that I—"

"We're just checking, Mr. Larkin. The neighbors tell us that you and your wife didn't get along. Always fighting. And the landlord says he threatened to evict you."

The sergeant's partner moved quickly and ran his hands in a practiced motion over Larkin's pockets. He made a soft noise as he pulled out Harvey's gun.

Sergeant Wienick's eyes were suddenly cold and opaque. "A .32 automatic," he said evenly. "The same type of gun that killed your wife. We'll have to check this gun with ballistics."

Larkin's mouth worked spasmodically, his voice was a ragged whisper. "It—it isn't mine. Somebody gave it to me."

"That so? Perhaps you'd care to tell us who. We'd like to question the man."

Larkin stared at them through bankrupt eyes.

THE DEPARTMENT OF PATTERNS: ***a new story***

THE MISSING TINS OF CHICKEN BREASTS

by VICTOR CANNING

THERE ARE VERY FEW PEOPLE, EVEN in France, who know that there is such a thing as the Department of Patterns. It does not advertise itself and there is no sign outside the old house on the Quai d'Orsay where it occupies the top two floors.

When it solves a case the credit is always given to the police. The Department specializes in cases which it originates itself from its own research. Half a dozen young men sit sifting and working through masses of data, official records, press reports, and files, hoping that by arrangement and analysis some pattern of criminal significance will emerge.

Take the affair of the chicken breasts, for instance. Two weeks after I was seconded to the Department I was given the job of analyzing all the thefts of lorries in France. That's all!—just go through all the records for the past ten years, sort them out, shuffle them around, and see if a pattern existed.

Sometimes one does and sometimes one doesn't. But always you have to keep your eyes skinned for the one little fact, the one tiny thread which might start a pattern.

It was boring work, and I made endless lists, checking and cross-checking, seeking some hidden pattern.

Then, when I was on the point of giving up, a curious pattern emerged. In my list—*lorries, stolen, unrecovered*—I noticed that six came from one area, and in each case *the driver had also disappeared!* It was the beginning of an odd pattern.

The six lorries had belonged to different firms of truckers in Rennes, Nantes, Angers, St. Malo, Dinan, and St. Nazaire. From the old police records I made a map showing the positions where the lorries had last been reported, and that too made a pattern of a kind.

Every lorry had last been sighted within four kilometres of the Forest of Bougie-Villiers which lies some fifteen kilometres to the west of Rennes. And in the middle of this forest there is a very large and deep lake. That interested me and I thought I might have something for Papa Grand, but before I asked to see him I did some telephoning.

Papa Grand is Monsieur Alphonse Grand, the head of the Department of Patterns. You never ask to see him unless you think you

are onto something. He can be jovial and he can be tough, and in the course of the two years you spend in the Department, if you get more than two black marks against you, you go out with the rating of *Assez bien* only, which isn't by any means uncommon. Over this affair I actually got a black mark—but it was to be my only one.

When I went in to see him he was sitting at his desk with his back to the little attic window which overlooks the Seine. He was a big, fleshy, white-haired man of about sixty, and although nobody knew how it had happened, the back of his right hand was badly scarred and one of its fingers was missing. He looked like a jovial, blue-eyed farmer who knew a good glass of Calvados when he tasted it. He came from Normandy.

He said, "Ha, Portois, how are you getting on in the stewpot?" The stewpot was our slang name for the section of the department where one just sat and went through stacks of data in the hope of finding a pattern. It could drive you to climbing the walls.

I said, "*Patron,* I think I have discovered something—but I would very much like to get out of it."

"You shall, you shall, in time. Now let us have this titbit."

I told him then about the lorries, and I concluded, "The significant thing is that none of them has ever been recovered. And nothing has ever been heard again of the drivers. And there is this lake in the Forest of Bougie-Villiers. Do you think the Rennes people might take a day off to drag it?"

He smiled at me. "I know the lake well. Sixty metres deep in places. I've fished it as a boy. Yes, why not? I'll speak to Chenot at Rennes. But before I do, let me have the rest of it."

"The rest, *patron?*"

"The rest, Portois. You young men are all the same. You come in here with a pattern, but to begin with you only give me half of it. You stand there like dogs with two tails and don't know you're wagging both of them, and always—it is practically a ritual—I have to ask for it. Now, the rest."

I grinned. "Well, *patron,* it is about the drivers. I've spoken on the telephone to the firms concerned, and each one has given me a description which is fuller than the routine police report. Every driver was about forty-five. Every driver was a bachelor and had no local friends. Every driver spoke with a local accent. Some of them were dark-haired, some brown, and some blond. All of them were quiet, sober, undistinguished men. And every driver had a dog that traveled with him in the cab, a terrier kind of dog. And sometimes the dog was white, sometimes brown, sometimes black."

Papa Grand looked up at me and nodded. "You think every driver

could have been the same driver? Why not? A man with a white dog —a color that takes dye. A man who changes his hair color and style with wigs. Very good. A nice pattern leave it with me."

I didn't hear anything from him for over a week and then I was called to his office.

He said, "Portois, do you like shooting—partridge shooting?"

I said, "No, *patron*."

"Excellent. It is now the partridge season. I always go down to Rennes at this time of year and have a few days with Chenot. We'll go together and since you won't want to shoot you can do the work on this lorry mystery. We leave in two hours and I'll tell you about it in the car. We'll stay at the Du Guesclin at Rennes, but we'll eat at the Ti-Koz. Their *crêpes* and their *caneton Duchesse Anne* are superb."

On the way down in the car he gave me the results of the dragging of the lake. The six lorries had been found. They had all been driven over a high bluff between the pine trees and into the lake. No bodies had been discovered. Each lorry had been carrying a full load at the time of its disappearance, and all their loads were still intact—except for one consignment from each lorry.

In each instance the missing consignment was the same—a packing case of tinned chicken breasts from a processing firm outside Rennes. Every case had been on its way to a shop in a different town—their addresses were given on the manifests; but Chenot's men had checked and found that all six addresses were false—no such shops existed. Chenot's people had certainly worked hard and quickly.

"I've told Chenot," said Papa Grand, "that you will handle this affair—as a reward for turning it up." He smiled. "But you will report to me every evening. How fortunate that you do not like partridge shooting! This," he handed something to me, "proves, I think, your theory about the six drivers being the same man."

I had in my hands a rather shabby, water-stained brown wig.

"It was found, Portois, in the cab of one of the lorries. I imagine that the driver in sending this lorry over into the lake was still wearing his wig. Jumping backwards as he released the handbrake, it must have caught on some projection and been pulled off. No maker's name. But if the driver were a local man he probably bought the wig and the others he used locally. Chenot is preparing you a list of wig-makers and sellers in Brittany and Normandy. There shouldn't be more than a couple of dozen. You chase wigs and I'll chase partridges." He patted me benevolently on the back.

I was a long time going to sleep that night. Not because of the dinner we had eaten at the Ti-Koz, but because I was thinking about the wig wearer and the chicken

breasts. What Frenchman would have a passion for tinned thicken when he could get fresh chicken? Yet a case of tinned chicken had been stolen from each lorry. Just that. Nothing else.

At dinner, Chenot, who was the head of the Ille-et-Vilaine police department, told us that the canning firm outside Rennes—Gustrom Frères—sent practically the whole of their chicken breast output abroad, chiefly to Morocco and Algeria. The orders for the missing consignments were by local letters which they had had no reason to discredit.

In the last few days Chenot had got a Food Inspector to carry out a spot check on the Gustom Frères products. Over three hundred tins had been sampled at random and they were all exactly what they were labeled to be.

I lay awake for a long time, wondering about it all, and wondering where to start. This was my first job with the Department of Patterns and I had Papa Grand with me—shooting partridges, but missing nothing.

The next morning I decided to start with the Gustrom Frères place. From Chenot I already had a dossier on the brothers. Hans and Felix Gustrom, formerly Austrians, concentration camp victims of Hitler; after the war they had come to France, obtained citizenship, and started their factory.

At the factory I saw Hans Gustrom. He was a short, barrel-shaped man near his sixties, bald, his face a whitish, unhealthy color, and he fiddled nervously most of the time with large horn-rimmed spectacles. His brother Felix, he explained, was now an invalid and had little to do with the business. Both were unmarried, and they lived together in a house about a mile from the factory.

I wasn't impressed with Hans and his nervous manner. But it could have been that he had had too long and too painful an experience with officials and police under Hitler and could no longer be at ease with any authority.

"Why should one man get a series of different lorry-driving jobs every six months or so just to steal a packing case full of your tinned chicken breasts each time he got the job?"

"I have no idea, monsieur."

"Strange, isn't it? He fakes orders to get you to consign the cases to non-existent firms. Don't you usually check the credit standing of new firms that apply to you for goods?"

"No, monsieur—not unless we have good reason. All business is an act of good faith."

"Haven't you kept the letters containing the orders? The last was only nine months ago."

He pushed his glasses to the top of his high forehead and I could see his pallid skin sweating. "We keep our records for many years.

Unfortunately the file with these letters was destroyed by fire some time ago."

These office fires—how does one tell the truth about them? Gustrom didn't impress me, but it could have been only his understandable nervousness.

"And you've never come across a man—someone who could have some connection, business or personal, with you—who owns a small white dog? An undistinguished sort of man and clearly a native of Brittany or Normandy?"

"No, monsieur."

After that I was left with the wig. There were forty names on the list, from wig-makers to barbers who sold wigs and old ladies in novelty shops who stocked them. By the end of the second day I began to wish that I liked partridge shooting. *Do you recognize this wig? Have you ever sold three or four or five wigs to the same man, a man with a little dog?* On and on . . .

But in the Department of Patterns this was the kind of thing we were used to doing. We had all the time in the world; we just kept on. Not like the police whose time is limited, who have a hundred other matters crowding on them every day.

And every evening I reported to Papa Grand, a beaming, happy Papa Grand who came always into my room after his evening bath to take me to the Ti-Koz.

Eventually I got my break—in a small barber's shop on the outskirts of Vannes. I dropped the wig in front of the proprietor and said, "Have you ever seen this before, or sold wigs in quantity to—"

"A moment, monsieur," he interrupted me. "I have only bought this business three weeks ago. It is the previous owner you should question."

"Where and who is he?"

"Torlo Sparini—he's a good Frenchman despite his name. But he let the business fall apart. He lives in a bungalow over near Rennes—Les Trois Pins at Montalon."

It was already very late, so I drove back to Rennes with still another dozen names on my list.

The next morning it was raining hard. At breakfast Papa Grand said, "This wig search is showing on you, Portois. I will be noble and come with you—for the morning only."

I said, "I understand, *patron,* from the weather forecast that this heavy rain will clear by mid-day."

He smiled, "Quite right, Portois. An excellent thing, the weather forecast. It enables us to arrange our lives comfortably."

So we went to Montalon together in the car. It was still raining hard. The house was at the end of a long lane off a side road. It was quite a big bungalow with three pines in the front garden. Papa Grand told me to go ahead by myself. He had a file of stuff which had come

down from Paris that morning and he sat in the car reading.

An elderly woman answered the door and I was shown into Torlo Sparini's bedroom whose windows looked out over the front garden. He was lying in bed, a middle-aged man with dark hair, and a thin, humorous face. Perched on a chair by the bed was a small white terrier kind of dog. It was the sight of the dog which made me cautious, so cautious that I did not go into my usual routine of questions —usually I explained the whole set-up and described the wig-wearing driver and his dog.

This time, after introducing myself, I said, "You had a barber's business near Vannes recently and made and sold wigs. We are trying to trace this wig. Is it one of yours?"

I handed the wig over to him and he examined it. Then he shook his head.

"Not mine, monsieur. That's all you have, just a wig?"

"That's all. Just the wig."

"I'm sorry, monsieur."

He called through the open door for the elderly woman and insisted on serving me a glass of Calvados. I stayed and chatted for a while because I had a strong feeling that this was my man, and I wanted to learn what I could about him.

When I got back to Papa Grand it was to find him out of the car and looking around. I told him of my suspicions and as we drove back to Rennes he said, "He's in bed with a broken leg, you say? Then he can't move. Now, Portois, I suggest you go to Gustrom and ask him about this Sparini. See if he knows him. Watch his reactions carefully. When you've done that we can make a decision over our *crêpes* at the Ti-Koz this evening. Very possibly he's our man. I found this in his garbage pail in the rear." He held up a used tin of Gustrom's chicken breasts. "There were others there, too. Look—a break in the clouds. The weather clears. You can drop me at the hotel before you go on to Gustom."

So Papa Grand went off to his partridge shooting and I went back to see Hans Gustrom. I was quite frank with him.

"I think we've found the man we want. His name is Torlo Sparini and he now lives at Les Trois Pins in Montalon. He's a bachelor and an old woman comes in and looks after him during the day. At the moment he's got a broken leg, so we can pick him up when we want to. He fits the description of the driver we want and he's got this small white terrier dog, and there are empty tins of your chicken breasts . . ."

As I spoke, I watched him closely, but he just fiddled nervously with his glasses and I had no way of telling what he was thinking. "He used to have a small business near Vannes. Does he mean anything to you, Monsieur Gustrom?"

He was silent for a moment, his high forehead creased with a frown, a man thinking hard, and then he shook his head. "No, monsieur. He means nothing—nothing."

"You're sure? He probably used a different name. A tallish, dark-haired man with a thin, humorous kind of face, and this dog?"

"No, monsieur."

And that was it. Gustrom couldn't help us. Or wouldn't. I didn't know which, and wasn't prepared to guess. Still, we had Sparini and once Papa Grand himself began to talk to him it wouldn't take long to break him down.

I made a few more wig-maker calls that afternoon—after all, Sparini might not be our man—and it was nearly seven when I returned to the hotel. The clerk at the desk handed me a telephone message. He had taken it about ten minutes before I got in and it read, "Monsieur Sparini telephoned. There is a matter which he would like to discuss with you urgently and immediately."

There it was. Papa Grand wasn't back yet, so I left a note on his bed, together with the message I had received, saying that I had gone out to Les Trois Pins, and that I might be a little late for dinner.

I was at the bungalow within half an hour. I could see the crests of the pines etched against the bright starlit night. Lights showed from the bungalow windows of Sparini's room.

I knocked on the front door but when there was no answer, knowing he lived alone and was temporarily bedridden, I pushed open the front door and went in.

When I opened his bedroom door I heard the dog barking furiously. The lights were on and one of the French windows was half opened, the night air making the thin curtains sway.

Sparini was lying on his bed and there was a small black hole in his right temple, and around the hole were the dark stains of powder, but surprisingly little blood. The dog sat on the end of the bed barking furiously.

I began to move across to the bed although I knew there was nothing I could do. But as I moved, a man stepped out from behind the curtains.

A voice said, "Raise your hands, monsieur. High, very high."

A gun was leveled at me and Hans Gustrom came slowly across the room.

"Turn round."

He slipped his hand over my pockets and relieved me of my own gun. Then he stepped away from me. As the barking dog relapsed into a thin, melancholy whimpering, Gustrom said, "All right. Now sit down over there."

I turned and he was motioning me to a chair in the middle of the room. I sat down and Gustrom

stood between the bed and the chair.

For a moment I saw his shoulders relax and sensed the weariness of a man under great strain. Then he said quietly, "I am sorry about all this. But it is the only way—the only way I can see to save more suffering—yes, suffering that I have caused. We get caught, monsieur—caught by our own natures, and we make others suffer for us."

I said, "You've killed Sparini. Why?"

"Because he was a blackmailer, monsieur. He never intended to be, but it happened. The chance came and his nature did the rest. Years ago he was driving along behind a lorry when a packing case fell out of the lorry. He stopped, put it in his car, but couldn't catch up with the lorry. So he took the case home. It proved to be a case of tinned chicken breasts which he used to feed to his dog. All this he explained to me long ago, but guarding his identity and whereabouts. Only today did I know who he was or where he lived."

"What was in the case?"

"Three hundred tins. But two hundred of them had false bottoms—meat only halfway down. In the false bottoms were wads of American dollar bills. Forgeries. But not high-class forgeries, monsieur, only good enough for places like North Africa. My brother made them, monsieur. He had made forgeries for the Nazis during the war—under pressure, you understand. But he went on doing it after we came to France—that was his nature. We sold them abroad, but when he wanted to stop, when we had our factory going and prosperous. It was I who made him go on—that was my nature. Yes, I made him, monsieur, and so we make other people suffer. And then Sparini discovered our secret . . ."

I watched him closely as he spoke, seeking some chance to get at him; but he kept his distance, and the gun was always pointed at me. Sparini had recognized the forgeries and had blackmailed the brothers. But he never revealed himself. He did the blackmailing through letters and telephone calls and he scared the daylights out of them.

Six times in four years he took a month off from barbering and got himself a lorry-driving job with Gustrom's; and six times he sent the Gustroms an order and they had to put a special packing case aboard a lorry on a certain day. But each of the three hundred tins had to contain real Bank of France notes.

Sparini bled them for four years and although they gave up the counterfeiting, the fear and worry ate into the two brothers, making an invalid of Felix. Hans knew there would be no rest for them until he discovered the identity of their blackmailer and killed him. I had given him that chance. But

he still meant to preserve himself and his brother.

"I telephoned the message to your hotel, monsieur—it was not Sparini. You had to be here, because it must look as though Sparini, after your first visit to him, knew that his days were numbered. You would come back and he would know he was finished. So presumably he called you back, and you came into this room and he shot you. His last act. Revenge on you because you were the instrument of his destruction. And then he shot himself. I am sorry, monsieur. But it has to be this way—largely for my brother's sake. I have to shoot you with the same gun that killed Sparini—revenge and then suicide, and then no one will be left to tell the story and finally my brother and I can live in peace."

I started to stand up and he let me rise. "You could just have shot Sparini—simply made it look like suicide alone."

"No, monsieur. Would you have accepted that? I don't think so. But an act of revenge, then suicide—that will be much more convincing. I'm sorry."

He raised the gun a little and I felt the sweat begin to break out on me. This barrel-shaped, white-faced, nervous, harassed man was quite inflexible.

On the bed the dog whimpered gently at the feet of its dead master and behind me I heard the soft swish of the curtains in the night draft.

I couldn't just stand there and be shot. I had to make a bid.

I saw his eyes narrow as he brought himself to the brink of decision—and I jumped for him, flinging myself sideways. There was the roar of a shot, swamping the room with noise, and I felt the searing passage of a bullet close to my neck, and then I was lying outstretched on the floor, with Gustrom standing above me.

He stared down at me, and then the gun fell from his hand, hitting the floor near my face. He swayed a little, his eyes closing, and then very slowly he collapsed on the floor close to the bed. Blood welled from a wound in his high wide white forehead.

I pulled myself to my knees, my body shaking, and I was aware of Papa Grand and Chenot, still in their shooting clothes, standing above me. Papa Grand held out a silver flask to me.

Papa Grand never said that it was because of this case that I got my black mark—never said it directly, but I knew that it was so. What he did say, as we drove back to Rennes, was: "Everything, everybody has a potential—clearly marked potentials, Portois—and you must train yourself to observe them. Take Sparini and Les Trois Pins. You went into the house and I stayed outside. I walked around

it. You saw a man in bed who said he had a broken leg. Did you ever check this?"

"No, *patron*."

"You should have. I did. I phoned the doctor at Montalon. His leg *was* broken. So, potentially, he could not walk anywhere. Next: he was always alone after his serving woman left at about six. Did you *check* that she left him alone? No, but I did—through the same doctor. So when I found your note waiting for me at the hotel and a copy of Sparini's telephone message to you to come at once, I knew that Sparini could not have made that telephone call."

"But how, *patron?*"

"Because there is no telephone in the house. I could see that from outside. That too was a potential—his ability to telephone—a potential that didn't exist. And he couldn't walk to a call box. Then how did he send you the message? He didn't. So I got Chenot to come along."

He smiled and put a big hand on my shoulder. "Cheer up, Portois. On the whole you did very well. And anyway, potentially, we're all dead men, aren't we?"

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **HELEN McCLOY**

TITLE: ***The Shadows Outside***

TYPE: Detective Novelette

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *"In that golden peace it was hard to believe in anything ugly." But Lucy saw Shotten and Gryder, and the others saw only shadows . . . Where there are shadows, must there be substance?*

EMMA HEARD A LIGHT, SIBILANT step on the terrace outside. Surely that was Mrs. Moberly? But the step went on.

Now there was no sound but the humming of a lawn mower beyond the long windows that framed the twilit sky.

Another step came—crisp, almost staccato, on hard-wood floors stripped for summer. "Miss Emma Clare? I'm Lettice Moberly."

Emma was aware of arching brows and dark hair, silvered with the luster of a black pearl. "Do sit down." Cool eyes measured Emma's pink-and-white face, her round blue eyes, her suit worn thin from careful cleaning and pressing.

"I think we've covered most of the important details about the position in our letters. I am very pleased that you have decided to be with us for the summer," Mrs. Moberly said. "Sari is such an enthusiastic girl she made you sound almost too good to be true. I see now that she didn't overestimate you."

"Thank you," Emma said.

"Lucy, my nephew's daughter, needs someone like you Miss Clare. Someone with nursery school training. For the last few weeks she's been left with a maid. Just a country girl who did housework. Shirley. Lucy was fond of her but . . ."

Mrs. Moberly's rapid tongue faltered for the first time. "I had to get rid of the girl for other reasons. And one thing that bothers me began when Lucy was under Shirley's care, Shotten and Gryder . . ."

"I don't think I . . ." Emma began.

"Lucy's imaginary playmates," Mrs. Moberly explained. "She has two—Shotten and Gryder."

Emma smiled. "But that is nothing to become too concerned about. Many children who are denied the company of other children their own age create unseen playmates. It is usually a phase they outgrow."

"That's what Dr. Collier feels," Mrs. Moberly said vaguely. "But I do wish you would try to discourage it in Lucy." She stood up abruptly. "Now, let me show you to your room. Yours and Lucy's are on the ground floor."

Mrs. Moberly led the way down the hall, past the stair, into a passageway, and opened a door. There was a whisper of rushing water. Emma crossed wide floorboards, painted terra-cotta red, to an open window, and the whisper became a chuckle, loud as a waterfall. Beyond the window four ancient pines, tall and thick as oaks, shaded a slate-paved terrace, carpeted with brown needles. The edge dropped sheerly, forty feet or more, to a rocky mountain stream.

"West River is right under our windows," Mrs. Moberly said.

A man came into the room carrying Emma's suitcases. "Miss Clare? I am Lucy's father, Ted Jermyn. Welcome to Millbourne."

A young father who would carry the burden jauntily, thought Emma. His smile was an offer of friendship. "You come well recommended," he said. "Sari Kiliani thinks very highly of you."

Emma smiled. "I'm glad. I'm marrying her brother, Nicky, in the fall."

"Oh?" There was a little flurry of laughter and felicitation.

"Well," said Mrs. Moberly, "this works out nicely for all of us. The Kilianis are going to be our neighbors here this summer, you know. Last winter they bought a cottage just up the hill."

"I know." Emma spoke so demurely that Ted Jermyn laughed again.

"Nick is lucky! But Sari will be lonely without him. It's odd she hasn't married. I really believe she is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen."

"Magyar blood," said Mrs. Moberly. "All Hungarian women are beautiful."

The doorknob rattled. A child came into the room wearing slippers and a gown of quilted silk over seersucker pajamas. A child so small that she stood on tiptoe to reach the doorknob.

"Miss Clare," Ted Jermyn said, "this is Lucy."

The child's hair was fair; the eyes dark, large, serious.

"At school the children call me Emma." She looked at two dolls propped up on a Mexican chair painted white with gay red flowers. "Won't you introduce me to these friends of yours?"

A droll spark danced into Lucy's eyes. Slowly her lips curved and a dimple dented one cheek. "This is Ra." She touched the rag doll. "And this is Essie." The carved wooden doll was large and heavy, painted with round, red cheeks. It wore a Breton peasant's aproned dress and a quaint cap.

"Ra is short for Little Red Riding Hood," explained Ted.

"Ra is a very bred girl," volunteered Lucy. "But Essie is a trouble-maker. She has neasles."

"Measles," corrected Mrs. Moberly. "This is the log-book, Miss Clare. A daily record of Lucy's routine—what she eats, how long she sleeps, and so on."

"What a good idea when more than one person is taking care of a child! Lucy's mother will know everything that happened while I was here." Emma spoke lightly. Her soft breath scarcely troubled the air. But the silence that followed gave her voice the effect of loudness. She seemed to have shouted.

Ted Jermyn looked at her sharply.

Mrs. Moberly spoke without emphasis. "Lucy's mother is no longer with us . . . You must be hungry, Miss Clare."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Moberly, I had early dinner on the train."

Emma unpacked after Mrs. Moberly and Ted Jermyn had left, but her thoughts were elsewhere. *Lucy's mother is no longer with us* . . . Errant fancy conjured up a vision of the woman—narrow eyes and hips; full mouth painted an off-beat shade of red. A woman who would skim through bridge luncheons and cocktail parties like a racing sloop flying before a breeze, while Lucy was "left with a maid."

"Now! That's all the unpacking. Shall I sing you to sleep, Lucy?"

"No, thank you. Please sing to Ra and Essie."

Emma took the dolls in her lap.

"Oh, no! That's not the way!" Lucy was imperious as a Hollywood director confronted with an actor who won't follow the script. "Ra and Essie turn their backs. Then you say, 'Lucy isn't in my lap!' "

"Lucy isn't in my lap," Emma informed the dolls.

Lucy smiled her shining smile as she scrambled onto Emma's knees. "Now! You hold Ra turning around and saying, 'Oh, Lucy! You got up in her lap when we weren't looking!' "

"Is this a game you used to play with Shirley?"

"No. With Mommy."

That vision of a narrow-hipped woman, fast and taut as a sloop

sailing close to the wind, faded away.

"Now you tell us a story we never heard before. That's what Mommy used to do."

"Once upon a time there was a little, black dog . . ."

"Gryder doesn't like black dogs. He throws stones at them."

Emma kept her voice casual. "Who is Gryder?"

"A boy." Lucy made it sound like "buoy."

"Where does he live?"

"I don't know. He doesn't talk to me. I've only seen him once. He's not friendly like Shotten."

"Who is Shotten?"

"A girl." It came out "gyurl."

"A bred girl, like Ra?"

"No. A troublemaker. Like Essie." Again the droll sparkle, the lurking dimple.

"Where does Shotten live?"

"In the springhouse, up the hill. That's what she says, but I don't believe that. I think she's joking."

Emma probed gently. "Shotten and Gryder are a pretend boy and girl."

"No, Emma." The spark was quenched. The small brow puckered. "Shotten and Gryder are really, really real. And Shotten is afraid of Gryder . . ."

The black lashes drooped. Emma tucked Lucy into the small bed in the next room, left the door ajar, and tiptoed back into her own room. Her glance fell on a photograph framed in silver on the mantelpiece. *To Lucy from Mother.*

It was Lucy's face, expanded and matured—the same fair hair and dark, serious eyes, the same laughter-loving lips, even the dimple.

Emma picked up a well-thumbed copy of a book on child care. *If the adults around him are undemonstrative, the child dreams of comfy, understanding playmates as the hungry man dreams of food.* But Shotten wasn't "comfy" at all. She was a troublemaker and afraid of Gryder . . . *If the parents are always disapproving, he invents a wicked companion whom he blames for the naughty things he himself has done or would like to do* . . . That was more like it, only—who had been disapproving?

Emma switched off her bedside lamp. Darkness did not bring sleep at once . . . *Sari Kiliani thinks highly of you . . . I'm marrying her brother, Nicky, in the fall . . .*

"But I don't really know you, Nicky," she thought. "How can anyone like me ever really know anyone like you? This friend of yours, Mrs. Moberly, whom I met for the first time today, is already more understandable than you are. I'm Yankee, born and bred. All the men in my family have been teachers and preachers, careful, sober, law-abiding. And you? A gypsy at heart, a concert violinist living from hand to mouth. Do you remember that first meeting on the

Cape when I said I liked water lilies? You jumped into a pond and pulled an armful, though you were wearing the only decent suit you owned and the pond belonged to somebody else. And I fell in love with you."

Afterward, Emma had no idea how long she slept or what woke her so suddenly. Moonlight shone on a blue-and-white armchair. And on something else: a small figure kneeling in that chair, close to the open window, face pressed against the screen.

A childish treble came clearly above the sound of rushing water. "She's nice. You'd like her. And her name is Emma Clare."

Emma bounded across the room. "Lucy! Who's there?"

"Nobody."

Beyond the window, the four great pines cast pillars of shadow across the moonlit terrace. A gossipy wind whispered among the tall shrubs close to the house.

"You were talking to somebody! Who was it?"

Lucy squirmed. "Shotten."

"You'll catch cold without robe or slippers." Emma chafed the small, chilly feet between her hands. "Lucy, games are all very well when you know they are games, but you mustn't believe in them as if they were real."

"Why not?"

"It's dangerous."

"You mean it's danish like standing in a rocking chair?"

"Sort of. In another way."

The feet were warm now. Emma wrapped Lucy in her own robe. "You know that Shotten is just someone you made up."

"And Gryder, too?"

"And Gryder, too. When you want to talk to them, talk to me instead."

"Gryder never talks. But Shotten does. I was telling her about you. I couldn't tell *you* about *you*, could I?" Lucy's voice ran out suddenly. "There she is now!"

Emma looked. She saw only willows nodding in the breeze. But Lucy's eyes turned as if they followed a movement Emma couldn't see. "You do see her now, don't you, Emma?"

"No, I don't." Emma's shiver wasn't entirely chill. "Now, off to bed with you."

Back in her own room, Emma sat in the armchair, looking at the empty moonlit terrace that Lucy had peopled with—what? She leaned forward. Something was moving out of the darkness under the willows—the shadow of a woman in full-skirted summer dress and wide-brimmed shade hat. It seemed to drift with a gliding motion to the edge of the riverbank. Then it was gone.

Moments later, another shadow passed the same way, vanished where she had vanished, silent as she, but more stealthy—the shadow of a man in a visored cap.

A man and a woman. A "buoy"

and a "gyurl." That step heard on the terrace this evening while Emma waited for Mrs. Moberly, so light, so sibilant. Not like Mrs. Moberly's own staccato step, or Ted Jermyn's firm tread.

Where there is shadow there must be substance. Could it be that Shotten and Gryder *were* real? Why had no one else seen them?

Stone steps led down the bluff to the water's edge, below the house. In the morning Lucy stood among the willow trees at the head of the steps. "Here's where Shotten was last night."

Emma looked for some sign of mischief, but the small face was serene. "What was she doing, Lucy?"

"I don't know."

"And Gryder? What does he do?"

"He watches Shotten. He never talks to me. He never comes close to me. I've only seen him twice. Last week and once, long ago, when we first came here from New York. He spoke to Shoten then. That's how I know their names. He called out: 'Shotten! It's Gryder!' But she didn't answer. She hid in the bushes under my window. When she saw me at the window, she whispered, 'Don't let him know I'm here.' So I didn't."

"What does Shotten look like, Lucy?"

"She smiles all the time."

"What is Gryder like?"

"He's big. He wears a cap with a brim."

"Yesterday you said he was a boy."

"Tomorrow he's going to be a tiger."

Emma sighed and changed the subject. "Time for lunch and nap now."

"Oh, Emma!" Lucy cried. "See? On that rock! Ptolemy Tortoise! He must have come up from the river!"

Lucy ran to a flat rock where a turtle was sunning himself.

"Don't touch him, dear. He might snap."

"Miss Clare!"

Emma turned. Mrs. Moberly was standing a little way behind them, immaculate in a sheer yellow dress and a wide straw hat. The merciless sun brought out lines in her face that the kinder light of last evening had hidden. Only her lips smiled. Her eyes were anxious. "One moment, please."

Emma walked back to Mrs. Moberly. "Yes?"

"I was behind you just now. I heard what Lucy said. And —I don't know what to think. You see, I saw—something last night. Shadows here at the edge of the terrace, a man and woman. I didn't associate them with Lucy's Shotten and Gryder then, but now—"

"Lucy did talk to someone outside my window," said Emma. "When I went to the window I couldn't see anyone and I thought

Lucy was just pretending. But afterward I saw the shadows too."

"It could be coincidence," said Mrs. Moberly. "Lucy pretending and then—two trespassers on the terrace. Do you know where my nephew is?"

"I haven't seen him all morning."

"Fishing, no doubt. I suppose he was up and out at five o'clock." Mrs. Moberly sighed. "Dr. Collier is coming to meet you this afternoon," she went on more briskly. "He and his wife are neighbors and dear friends. Dr. Collier looks after Lucy during the summer. I wish you'd tell him about this. I have to be in the village. I have an important errand there."

When Lucy was finally settled for her nap, Emma took some knitting out on the sunlit terrace to wait for Dr. Collier. There were no sounds but the fluting of birds, and the soft rush of water from the river that had already become as much a part of silence as her own pulse-beat.

In that golden peace it was hard to believe in anything ugly, until a raucous blast from an upstairs window shattered the illusion of an older, wiser world. Mary, the cook, had gone to her room for her afternoon rest. To Mary "rest" meant just one thing—television, preferably a comedian with a leather lunged audience. But Lucy slept on, conditioned to this sort of racket.

A car came up the drive and stopped at the edge of the terrace, instead of going around the house to the front door. A man got out, hatless in the sunshine, and came toward Emma.

"Miss Clare? I'm Dr. Collier."

"How do you do, Doctor?" Emma said. "I'm glad you've come while Lucy's asleep, so that I can talk to you alone."

"Oh?" He was full-bodied, almost stout, and his hair was thinning, but his alert eyes had a boyish twinkle that made her forget the signs of middle age. "Something more about the unseen playmates, Shotten and what's-his-name?"

"Gryder." She took the cigarette he proffered. "Dr. Collier, have you considered the possibility that Shotten and Gryder may be real?"

His frown was quick. No twinkle now. His eyes had the steady, blue gleam of steel. "What makes you think that?"

She told him.

"What about Mary, the cook, and a young man?"

"Mary is thick-set and walks heavily. This woman's shadow was slender."

"You have a theory of your own?"

His penetration startled Emma. "Yes." She paused to gather courage. "Lucy has talked about her mother. There seems to have been a close bond between them. In cases of divorce or separation, if the break is embittered and the fa-

ther has sole charge of the child, the mother may be tempted to—come back now and then, just to have a glimpse of her child, secretly. I don't like being a spy, but if it's upsetting Lucy, what should I do?"

"Don't worry." There was irony in Dr. Collier's smile and a certain relief. "Jane Jermyn isn't coming back."

"How do you know?"

"Because she is dead."

Emma was speechless.

"I signed her death certificate. Whomever you saw last night, it wasn't Jane."

"How did she die?"

"It was a rainy night in June, two months ago. Jane came down here from New York alone, by train. There was no taxi at the station. She walked half a mile to a garage to get one. This house had been empty all winter, except for a few week-ends, so she asked her taxi driver to wait while she unlocked the front door and made sure the electricity was turned on.

"The taxi driver was able to fix the time, because the clock in the hall struck eight just after she switched on a light there. And that was the last time anyone ever saw her alive.

"Ted came from New York by car that same night. At seven thirty he was held up by a flat tire in Brookfield, forty-five miles away. A garageman there remembered him. When he reached the house, at eight thirty, the hall light was burning, but there were no lights elsewhere in the house. The door was locked and he let himself in with his key.

"He found Jane at the foot of the stairs. Judging by her position, she had fallen the full length of the staircase and the fall had broken her neck. She was still wearing her outdoor clothes—rain-coat, overshoes, hat and gloves—all muddy and wet from the rain.

"The police said she must have run upstairs when she first arrived, in such a hurry to get dry clothes from her own room that she didn't even pause to switch on a light in the upper hall. In the dark she tripped and fell backward, down the stairs."

"But—yesterday Mrs. Moberly spoke as if Lucy's mother was still alive! She didn't say, 'Lucy's mother is dead.' She said, 'Lucy's mother is no longer with us.'"

"Was Lucy herself present?"

"Yes."

"That explains it. Lucy is too little to know the meaning of death. We told her that her mother had gone away. It's become a verbal habit to avoid the word 'dead' when we speak of Mrs. Jermyn in Lucy's presence."

"Then . . ." Emma groped among her overturned thoughts. "Who were those two I saw in the moonlight?"

Collier shrugged. "Tourists from some motel or boarding house.

Young people from a neighboring farm."

"At night?"

He laughed. "The only nocturnal sport I know, outside baseball, is what we provincials still call 'petting.'"

Emma joined in the laughter. "How silly of me not to have thought of that!"

They heard a car climbing the steep drive in second gear. Mrs. Moberly's station wagon passed the trees at the edge of the terrace and disappeared behind the house.

"It seems odd," said Emma, "to have the kitchen door and living room windows both on the terrace, and the front door on the other side."

"This house wasn't built according to an architect's plan," explained Collier. "It's an old millhouse that's been remodeled. There's a door in the kitchen on the other side that serves no useful purpose now. It used to lead into the mill, which was torn down years ago."

"The shadows I saw were on this side." Emma frowned. "If they were just casual trespassers, would Lucy have talked to one of them?"

"I don't believe she was talking to any real person. You happened to see a couple of trespassers afterward and jumped to conclusions. I don't think it's anything to be concerned about."

He had risen, but Emma detained him a moment longer. "What about this maid, Shirley, who had charge of Lucy before? Is it possible she might be visiting Lucy secretly?"

"I doubt it." Dr. Collier was frowning again, arrested by a voice from the house. "So I says to this sailor," the voice screamed. He laughed. "Television?"

"The cook's. Does Shirley live near here?" Emma was looking up the hillside meadow, beyond the drive. At its crest, about a mile away, she could see a white house with a red roof.

"That's my own place, High Mowing," said Collier. "Shirley lives with her father, a farmer, on the other side of the hill. There are no other neighbors except Sari and Nicky Kiliani, who only come for week-ends. You can't see their cottage because it's right in the woods . . . Well, I must be off. Call me if you need me."

He lifted one hand in salute and walked quickly to his car in the drive. Emma turned and went down the terrace to the kitchen door at its farther end, hoping to consult the cook about Lucy's supper. But the kitchen was empty and a burst of television music from the back stairs informed Emma that Mary was still "resting."

A door brought Emma into the passageway that led past the nursery to the front hall. As she hurried toward the nursery she heard a clock chime in the front hall. Time to wake Lucy.

At the nursery door Emma paused. Lucy was already out of bed, standing in the open doorway.

"Emma . . ." She blinked as if she were just awake. "May we go down to the river now? And find that turtle again?"

"We can try. Shall we take Ra and Essie?"

"Essie is gone away."

"What do you mean, Lucy?"

"Essie went outdoors and I don't know where she is."

A quick search of toy cupboard and treasure chest failed to reveal Essie.

"Did you leave her upstairs this morning when you went to see Aunt Lettice?"

"I think she is visiting friends," Lucy laughed.

"All right, we'll just take Ra," said Emma. "Let's go through the kitchen and see if Mary is ready to talk about supper. Would you like peas or beans?"

"I'd like chocolate pudding."

Emma nodded abstractedly. She was thinking about the hall clock that chimed so clearly, and the hall stair, a wide half-spiral with broad, shallow steps. Hardly the sort of stair where you would expect anyone familiar with the house to stumble and fall. Even in the dark . . .

The sun had left the river, but it was still shining on the hills above the opposite bank when a man's voice called, "Hello, there! Wading or swimming?"

Ted Jermyn had come around the bend in the river curve, silently, on sneakers. He carried fishing rod and creel.

"Technically wading. Actually —" Emma cast a rueful glance at Lucy's spattered shorts. "It must be time for her real bath now."

"I don't want a bath, Daddy."

Ted laid rod and creel on a flat rock and stretched out both arms. "Time to go up!"

"One for the bunny!" shouted Lucy, and Emma realized this must be another of her rituals.

"Two for the show!" responded Ted.

"Three to get ready . . ." She jumped.

"And four to *GO!*" He swung her onto his shoulder and ran up the steps to the terrace.

"Daddy, may I run on the grass darefoot?"

"Barefoot, Punkus—just like the bare in bear. You may, if Miss Clare agrees."

Emma nodded, and Lucy ran toward the kitchen door. As Emma followed, Ted Jermyn called after her, "Will you ask Mary to bring me some iced tea here on the terrace?"

After the bath Mary brought a supper tray to the nursery for Emma and Lucy. Lucy ate heartily. She was asleep in the next room by the time Mary came to take away the tray. Mary's broad face shone as she saw Lucy's empty plates. "Appetite's back."

"Hasn't she been eating well?"

"Not too well since her mother—passed away."

Emma said the conventional thing. "It must have been horrible for all of you—especially for Mr. Jermyn."

"He managed to survive." The sudden look of cynicism sat oddly on Mary's good-natured face. "I wasn't here then. I came after Shirley left. But she told me that the Jermyns were talking about a divorce at the time. That's why they had planned to meet down here while the house was empty, before the family arrived. So they could talk things over without being disturbed."

She shrugged and went out, closing the door softly. Emma picked up Lucy's "logbook" and turned to the month of June. The first entries were written in a neatly concentric backhand. Lucy's mother? On the 10th, the script changed to a more old-fashionedd style, tall and angular. Obviously Mrs. Moberly.

On June 16, the move from New York to Millbourne was noted. On the next day, the handwriting changed again, without explanation, to a script less formed and fluent. Shirley, of course.

On the 19th came the first reference to Shotten, terse and enigmatic as any utterance of an inarticulate mind: *Lucy says Shotten hid from Gryder last night.*

It couldn't have been more matter-of-fact if Shotten had been a real person.

June 21. Lucy says Shotten was outside again last night.

July 2. Lucy still talking about Shotten and Gryder. Told Dr. Collier.

July 14. Shotten again.

July 22. Shotten and Gryder. Dr. C. says don't encourage it.

July 31. Shotten.

August 2. Shotten.

On August 4, Mrs. Moberly's writing replaced Shirley's. That must have been the day Shirley was dismissed. Today, August 10, came the first entries in Emma's own hand. She took up her pen and wrote at the bottom of the page: 6:30 P.M. *Slept.* She hesitated, then added: *Two unidentified trespassers seen by Mrs. Moberly and myself late last night.*

Emma started as a light tap fell on the door.

"Miss Clare?" It was Ted Jermyn, smiling, at ease, with a grace that gave him a certain unstudied charm, though he still wore his rough fishing clothes. "Sari Kiliani is here, asking for you. Won't you come out on the terrace?"

"But if Lucy wakes—?"

"You'll hear her. Come out for a while, anyway." He turned down the passage toward the kitchen. "I came in to replenish drinks."

He took a tray from Mary and held the terrace door open for Emma.

In the narrow valley, dusk came

nearly an hour earlier than elsewhere. It was just dim enough now to see fireflies as tiny flashes of gold on the hillside beyond the drive, but, after the brightly lighted house, it seemed like night to Emma. She made her way toward three figures at the other end of the terrace.

"Darling!" Sari's voice had the sweet modulations of bird-song. "How good to see you. Nicky will be so pleased. He'll be here soon."

As Sari moved forward, her hair caught the glow from the kitchen windows, black hair bright with bronze lights, like the plumage of a dark bird. Even her step was birdlike, buoyant and swift.

"Mrs. Collier, this is Miss Clare," said Ted Jermyn. To Emma he added, "The doctor you know already."

Emma's eyes had grown used to the dusk now. Mrs. Collier was a slim figure in linen the pale tone of pink chalk. Any stronger color would have killed the silvery blondness of her hair—long, straight hair, worn close to the head in a coronet of braids that bared the clean line of her nape and the neat shape of her ears. She smiled warmly at Emma.

"You might as well call me Lottie. Everyone else does."

"And I'm Rory to my friends," put in Collier. "Where is your aunt, Ted? I was hoping for a word with her this evening."

"I haven't seen her all day," Ted answered. "She's probably resting now, but I expect she'll be down at any moment."

A little later, when the first star had turned twilight to night, Emma rose. Sari and Ted protested. "Leaving us so soon?"

"I want to see if Lucy is covered, said Emma. "Sari, do give my love to Nicky."

Ted Jermyn called after Emma, "will you tell my aunt that Sari and the Colliers are here?"

Emma crossed the terrace to one of the French windows of the living room. It was in darkness. So was the front hall. She pressed a switch in the living room that lighted a lamp in the hall. If Mrs. Moberly was resting she would be upstairs in her own room.

Emma hurried across the hall toward the stair, and tripped. She looked down. She had stumbled over Mrs. Moberly's straw handbag.

Mrs. Moberly lay on her back, one foot on the last step, her hat knocked aside, her silvery hair, usually so sleek, now crumpled and trailing. Her eyes were wide open, staring directly at the light from the single lamp, glassy and unwinking.

Emma knelt to touch the cold hand.

She didn't hear the front door open. She started violently as a shadow loomed up and fell over the lifeless body. She looked up.

A man stood in the lamplight,

his lean face as brown as his amber eyes, his dark brows as black as his hair.

"Nicky . . ." Her lips moved, but no sound came. She realized that he could not see her clearly as she knelt there in the deep shadow.

But she wasn't prepared for his cry, quick and cruel as a blow. "Shari! What have you done?"

Emma looked at him mutely. His voice was clear and steady in every other way, yet she was certain he had said Shari, not Sari . . .

In the living room, waiting for the police report, Ted Jermyn sat apart from the others, one hand shading brow and eyes. Mrs. Collier was in a wing chair, curled up. Sari sat cross-legged before the hearth, as if it were a campfire, the leap and glow of flame reflected in her eyes. Emma sat beside Nicky on a small sofa. His hand held hers tightly, but his eyes avoided her.

She looked at Sari again. Her dress of tawny, Persian-printed silk, hung loose and low on shoulders creamy as old marble. There were no angles in that clean profile. It was a thing of firmly rounded curves. Who could associate such a look of wholesome intelligence with anything sordid or—Emma's thoughts shied away from the next world, but it was there, in her mind—*anything criminal?*

Again she seemed to hear that strange cry of Nicky's: *Shari! What have you done?*

Emma had said, "It's I, Nicky—Emma. Please call Ted Jermyn. I think Mrs. Moberly is dead."

Nicky had gone without another word and they hadn't been alone together since.

It was nearly an hour before the hall door opened. Dr. Collier came in first. The eyes that had twinkled so boyishly this afternoon were still and watchful now. Behind him came a man in the uniform of a Captain of State Police, a man who looked lean and tough and supple as a leather whip.

In one hand he carried a small, oblong clock. Its round, white face was encased in blue enamel and gold leaf that suggested Sèvres porcelain. On each corner of the case was a semiprecious stone carved to look like a rosebud, in each of the four rose colors—garnet, rose quartz, topaz, and crystal.

"Captain Grant"—Ted was on his feet—"can you tell us what happened now? Did my aunt trip and fall?"

"Just as your wife did," Grant said, and he set the clock down carefully on a table in the middle of the room. "An odd coincidence, isn't it?"

Ted winced, but went on steadily, "Did the fall kill her?"

"It's hard to tell. There's a depressed fracture that could have happened when her head struck one of the steps. But it could have been caused just as easily by a blow from some heavy object. We have-

n't found anything of the sort. If there was a weapon, whoever used it probably brought it and certainly took it away."

"When did my aunt die?"

"As nearly as Dr. Collier can determine, it was not earlier than one, not later than four. No doubt the police doctor will confirm that. Were any of you here at the time?"

"I was on the river, fishing from dawn till late afternoon," answered Ted. "I had a lunch basket with me. About five o'clock I met Miss Clare and my daughter on the riverbank and carried the child back to the terrace."

"And then?"

"I sat alone on the terrace, relaxing, until nearly six, when the Colliers and Miss Kaliani joined me."

"You had no occasion to go into the front hall after you came up from the river?"

"No." Ted's voice was hoarse. "Would I have sat on the terrace, talking calmly to my friends, if I had known my aunt was lying dead in here, at the foot of the stair?"

"And you, Miss Kiliani?"

"I was at my cottage, up the hill, all day. The Colliers drove up at half-past five and suggested that we all come over here to see my friend, Miss Clare, who arrived last night. My brother, Nicky, was coming up from New York this evening, so I left a note for him, telling him where I had gone. When we got here, Dr. Collier stopped his car halfway up the drive, because Mr. Jermyn hailed us from the terrace where he was sitting. We sat there with him for half an hour. None of us went into the house, except Mr. Jermyn, and he went through the kitchen door to get us drinks. It was then that he asked Miss Clare to come outside. He didn't have to go into the front hall for that. She was in the nursery between the kitchen and the living room."

"Mr. Kiliani?"

"My train got me here at 5:45. I took a taxi from the station and found Sari's note at the cottage. I took her car and drove over here, taking the road that leads to the front door. I knocked, but no one answered. I knew the door wouldn't be locked while Ted was here, so I opened it, and found Miss Clare kneeling by Mrs. Moberly's body in the front hall."

"Miss Clare?"

Emma tried to control her shaking hands and voice. "Lucy and I were outdoors most of the morning. Just before luncheon Mrs. Moberly came out on the terrace. She was on her way to the village on some errand she called 'important.' She stopped to tell me that Dr. Collier was coming over this afternoon. While Lucy was taking her nap I came out on the terrace. Dr. Collier arrived about two thirty and we sat on the terrace, talking. Shortly before three, Mrs. Mober-

ly's station wagon came up the driveway and went out of sight behind the house, as if she had driven up to the front door."

Captain Grant's direct look was disconcerting. "Then presumably Mrs. Moberly was still alive just before three. Did you see her or anyone with her in the station wagon?"

"No. Just the station wagon. A few minutes later Dr. Collier left. I watched him drive away. Then I went into the house by the kitchen door and down the passage to the nursery. Lucy had just wakened. She and I went out the kitchen door, down the steps to the river. We didn't come back until nearly five."

"And afterward?"

"I gave Lucy her bath in the nursery and we had supper there together about five thirty."

"Didn't Lucy usually have her meals with the family?"

"No. Mrs. Moberly liked a late breakfast and dinner at eight. A child as young as Lucy has to have breakfast by seven and supper by five or five thirty, so she will be asleep by six thirty, at the latest. After Lucy had gone to bed Mr. Jermyn came down the passage from the kitchen and asked me to come out on the terrace. We went out the kitchen door, but when I returned to the house I went through a French window into the living room, because it was nearer that end of the terrace.

"In the front hall I stumbled over Mrs. Moberly's handbag and then—I saw her body. The front door opened, and it was Mr. Kiliani."

"What did you say when you saw him?"

"I tried to say 'Nicky,' but I was so short of breath I couldn't make a sound."

"And what did Mr. Kiliani say?"

Emma hesitated. Her hand was still in Nicky's. She felt a gentle pressure on her fingers. "He didn't say anything. He was as dazed as I, probably. After a moment I found my voice and asked him to call Ted Jermyn."

Grant had turned to Collier. "Did you hear any sound from the house while you were talking to Miss Clare this afternoon? A cry? Or a fall?"

"No." Collier weighed his answer thoughtfully. "We were quite absorbed in our talk, of course—"

"And the television," put in Emma. "Mary, the cook, was upstairs in her room and she had her television set turned on very loud. Every now and then there were shouts of laughter. I doubt if we could have distinguished a scream."

"That's why Mary says she didn't hear anything herself." Grant sighed audibly. "And you, Mrs. Collier? Alone in your own home all day?"

"No. I went for a walk in the woods this afternoon and gathered wild raspberries. I was walking up the drive to our house when my

husband came in from a round of house visits and suggested we come over here and pick up Sari along the way."

"So none of yoy has anything that can be called an alibi," said Grant. "Even Mr. Kiliani could have taken an earlier train from New York. No one admits going to the front of the house between three and four, but any one of you could have done so without being seen or heard."

Ted Jermyn threw back his shoulders. "Then you don't believe my aunt's death was an accident?"

"No." The word was like a dash of ice water. "And I may as well tell you why. I know all about that 'important errand' of Mrs. Moberly's in the village today. She came to see me in order to make formal charges against a blackmailer. She had written evidence—a letter. I'll read it."

They could all hear the little clock ticking softly on the table as Captain Grant extracted the letter from its envelope. The paper was pink, a piece of frivolity that seemed to heighten the crudeness of the message.

"'Mrs. Moberly,'" Captain Grant read. "'I want a thousand dollars. If you don't get it to me in the next three days I will go to the police and tell them all about the clock.'

"Postmarked yesterday. No date or address inside and the signature is simply: 'Shirley.' Your aunt identified her as a former maid. Do you know anything about all this, Mr. Jermyn?"

"Of course." Ted Jermyn passed both hands through his hair in a gesture of utter weariness. "My aunt dismissed Shirley a few weeks ago for this very reason. She made up a story to get money out of us. She tried me first. I told her to go to the devil. Then she went to my aunt, believing my aunt would pay blackmail to protect me. Aunt Lettice came straight to me with Shirley's story and I told her it was all nonsense. We agreed not to prosecute if the girl would drop the whole thing. But, apparently, she didn't. Aunt Lettice didn't show me this note. I suppose she got it this morning, after I left the house, and decided to teach the girl a lesson by turning it over to the police."

"Do you know the gist of Shirley's accusation?"

"Something about winding the clock."

"Is this the clock?"

"Yes."

"Are the four rosebuds purely ornamental?"

"No. The red rose is for winding, the pink rose for setting. The clock chimes on the hour. It's an old French bedside clock that belonged to my grandfather."

Captain Grant turned the pink rose. There was a faint whir. Then, clear and tinkling, came the chiming of the clock—one, two, three, four, five, six . . .

"Why, that's the clock in the front hall!" exclaimed Emma. "I've heard it striking, but I never saw it."

"It stands in a niche, at the head of the stair," Ted said.

"The clock in the front hall," repeated Grant with a certain emphasis. "How often do you have to wind it, Mr. Jermyn?"

"Every eight days."

"How many people know how to wind this clock?"

"I'm the only one, now Aunt Lettice and my wife are gone. And, of course, Shirley herself. She must have watched me wind it a dozen times last summer. . . . Why all this interest in the clock?"

Grant studied Ted for a moment. "I think you should hear Shirley's story again from her own lips."

He crossed the room to the hall door and opened it. "Cummings!" he called to one of his men. "Ask Miss Totten to step in here."

She was pretty in the outmoded style of the silent film stars: a shapeless tangle of fluffy hair, home-curled; the round-eyed look once known as the "baby stare"; an upper lip with a sharply cut "Cupid's bow" that had not been overlaid with lipstick in the modern fashion.

There was gilt beading around the high neck of her sleeveless white dress and she wore flat sandals made from straps of gilded leather. Inappropriate, but, somehow, its very garishness was innocent and appealing, thought Emma.

"Please sit down," said Captain Grant. "I want you to repeat the story you told me a little while ago."

Obviously, Shirley hadn't expected this confrontation. She darted a sly look at Ted Jermyn, then dropped her eyelids, and Emma realized that what she had taken for innocence might be merely an artless corruption.

"I began working for Mrs. Moberly last summer. When she went back to the city in the fall, she told me I could have the same job this summer, when she came back. Early in June she telegraphed asking me to get the house cleaned before the family came up. I didn't finish until five o'clock that Friday afternoon. I was tired out and went to bed right after supper. Then, next morning, I pick up the Brookfield paper, and what do I see? Mrs. Jermyn dead and policemen all over the house, only three hours after I left!

"Dad came in then with a State Trooper who wanted to question me. Dad and I both told him I had got home at five thirty, and he seemed satisfied. He said it looked like an accident because, so far as they could tell, no one else was in the house when she died. I said, 'How do you know when she died?' He said, 'Her taxi man heard the clock in the hall striking eight just after she unlocked the front door and switched on the light in the hall. It stands to reason that she died a few minutes later, because she hadn't taken off her muddy galoshes or her wet hat and raincoat. None of the other lights in the house had been turned on.'

"Something about that sounded funny to me. I didn't realize what it was until Mrs. Moberly herself came up here three days later and I went back to work for her. I was dusting in the front hall and the clock struck ten. Suddenly I remembered. That clock in the hall wasn't an electric clock that runs by itself. It was a fancy clock that you had to wind every eight days and—who had wound that clock the day Mrs. Jermyn died? I hadn't wound it when I cleaned the house that afternoon.

"I guess the police thought I had, because they never asked me about it. But that clock wasn't running when I left the house. Even if I had wanted to wind it, I couldn't, because I didn't know how. Someone else must have wound it, and it couldn't have been Mrs. Jermyn, because the taxi driver heard the clock striking before Mrs. Jermyn would have had a chance to wind it.

"So there must have been someone else in the house that afternoon after I left—someone who waited there for Mrs. Jermyn until she arrived at eight o'clock. That meant it didn't have to be an accident, after all. It could be murder and, if it was, the murderer had to be someone who knew how to wind that clock.

"I didn't say anything to anybody about it then. I was too scared. But I kept an eye on that clock to see when it would run down. It stopped eight days after Mrs. Jermyn died. I told Mr. Jermyn, 'That hall clock has stopped.' He said, as calmly as you please, 'I'm afraid I forgot to wind it. I'll do it now.'

"Next day I got up my nerve to tell him what I suspected, and he told me I was imagining things."

Ted Jermyn's voice lashed out at her: "Why don't you tell them that you offered to keep quiet if I gave you a thousand dollars? Your statements that you hadn't wound the clock and didn't know how to wind it are completely unsupported. When you found you couldn't intimidate me you tried to blackmail my aunt, hoping a woman would prove more gullible. But you underestimated her character. The first time, she dismissed you; the second time, she reported you to the police. Did you know she had already done so this afternoon? Or did you only know of her intention? Where were you between three and four P.M. today?"

Tears stood in Shirley's round, shallow eyes. "I didn't wind that clock." Her small chin jutted stubbornly.

"Your story would carry more weight if you had come to the police instead of demanding money from Mr. Jermyn and his aunt," said Grant. His gaze shifted. "Mr. Jermyn, I'm going to ask you again: Who else could have known how to wind that clock?"

Abruptly, Ted crossed the room to the fireplace. The flames had died down to a throbbing, red glow

between charred logs. He poked them into new flame. As he turned to replace the poker in its stand Emma saw his face—set and haggard.

Why had it changed so utterly in the last few moments? *"He knows,"* thought Emma. "It has come to him suddenly and he isn't going to tell."

"Sorry." Ted looked at Grant defiantly. "I can't think of anyone outside the family, except Shirley herself, who might have seen me wind the clock. I do it once a week, on Sunday morning. It isn't a time when a neighbor is likely to drop in. I can't recall anyone doing so. We haven't had house guests here. The cook, Mary, came after my wife died. And I'd like very much to hear one good reason why a murderer, waiting in an empty house for his victim to arrive, should risk betraying his presence by winding an eight-day clock?"

(*continued on page 73*)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *In New York's Metropolitan Museum there is a drawing in red chalk, by Watteau, of a youngish man who looks upward, with his head tilted. It is a sketch for a painting, but the sketch is the more lifelike—yet at the same time the pose is contrived and theatrical. However, this is as it should be, for the subject of the sketch is Luigi Riccoboni, in his day the greatest actor of a certain kind. Molière would never have hired him, and neither would any actor-manager in England, for he was the leader and chief exponent of the* commedia dell' Arte.

We no longer see much nowadays of Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, and the rest; but these dim immortal characters are the last gasp, as it were, of a theatrical tradition that was old in Shakespeare's time. The troupe that Riccoboni led had its origins in the Oscan Plays—the Attelanæ Fabulæ *of ancient Rome . . .*

COSTUME PIECE

by STEPHEN BARR

THE ENGLISH MILORD DISEMbarked at Le Havre on a dark overcast morning in June, and with his obsequious companion got into the coach for Beauvais. He was an immortal character: a Gentleman—which meant to him someone who is never unintentionally rude. His companion, Crawley, was not quite a Gentleman—he was never rude to anyone.

Crawley had glanced into the coach first, to see that all was well. "There is . . . a Young Person in there, Mr. James," he said. Mr. James was the name under which the milord was travelling.

The milord raised his eyebrows and got in, followed by Crawley. The coach smelled of straw and old leather, and a certain perfume. It lurched as the driver mounted the box, and they started off.

Mr. James was put out that they did not have the coach to themselves; but he liked the perfume, even if he could see no more of its wearer than a dim, though promising, outline. *"Ah . . . Mademoiselle,"* he said, with polite condescension. *"Comment vous portez-vous?"*

"I am well, thank you, Sir." A musical voice, not English, but not French, either. It never occurred to Mr. James that his own accent had been identified. Doubtless his fine clothes and forthright bearing had proclaimed his origin.

"Do you travel to Beauvais?" he said in English.

"No. Only as far as Yvetot. I am

with the *commedia*—the duc d'Orleans is entertaining friends at the chateau."

"The Regent, eh? Well, young lady, Yvetot is where *we* are bound. The Duke is, ah, a friend of mine." The perfumed outline seemed not to be impressed, and there was no answer. The girl is shy, he told himself. "You are, one supposes, the Columbine," he said kindly. "I have witnessed the *commedia dell'-Arte*—when I was at Rome. Very clever, very effective. Particularly your Mister Riccoboni."

"Oh, yes!" she said. "But I am not Columbine—just a dancer."

There was another silence, and then the sun came out and the dim outline was filled in. Mr. James smiled and took a pinch of snuff. He got up and sat next the girl—she was in the front seat, travelling backwards. She withdrew, and Mr. James moved into the vacancy. A front wheel of the coach went over a stone, and he was thrown to his knees. He shouted an oath at the driver, and got back on the seat, straightening his full-bottomed wig. Crawley's more modest scratch wig was not discomposed.

Mr. James sought to recapture his dignity and resume his attempted dalliance, but the girl gazed out at the passing scenery. Her name, he was able to elicit, was Giulia Frascati—she was not married—she dined with her fellow-performers—Signore Riccoboni was strict—one went to bed early—no, thank you, Sir, I do not drink. Oh, yes, it is true: we do not work from a written script—just a scenario—the rest is improvised on the stage.

Mr. James was secretly pleased to learn that she was not staying at the Chateau itself, but in one of the lodges—he and Crawley were to bed at the inn. "So, Signor Riccoboni is strict, eh?" he said.

"Ah, but he is so—*simpatico*. How can I describe it?" she answered. "To us he is an inspiration—and a beloved father! He is not only our director, but by far our best actor. He can do everything—he writes our scenarios, he acts, he dances—everything."

Mr. James was never very happy to hear the praises of another, and he started to say something, but Giulia went on. "He can almost read one's mind! He has but to watch one act, and from one's movements he knows at once if you are in low spirits, or thinking of something else. Why, he could even be a doctor of medicine!"

"Mighty me!" exclaimed Mr. James, and took snuff. "A juggler, too, no doubt."

The Italian girl smiled. "I'm sure he could," she said. "But the jugglers are under another manager, and the performing bears and the marionettes under still others."

"It sounds like a fair, like a circus," Mr. James observed. "It should interest my friend Crawley, here."

Giulia Frascatti turned with ani-

mation. "You work for a circus, Signore?" she asked Crawley. "A director, perhaps?"

"No," explained Mr. James for his companion. "Just marionettes. Mr. Crawley has displayed them. I do not think he would take kindly to performing bears, eh, Crawley? Too dangerous, I warrant!"

Mr. James winked at Crawley, who being not quite a Gentleman, concealed his chagrin. Giulia's animation waned, now that her paragon Riccoboni was no longer the topic. She was polite, but Mr. James was unable to establish a *rapport*. It was ridiculous—she was a mere dancer.

He was furious, and even more so when they arrived at the small town, because a confounded young man interposed himself between him and the girl when Mr. James offered her his arm. She took the young man's instead.

"Marcel!" she exclaimed to him —a dissipated young fop, to be sure. She smiled sadly as she looked at him. His face was suffused with eager adoration, and she shook her head. "Always so constant!" she said, and they turned to leave, but Mr. James stood in their way.

"Your pardon, Monsieur," Marcel said politely.

Mr. James stood his ground. "I, ah, don't know you, Sir," he said. "Mademoiselle will, I am sure, prefer *my* arm." He pushed forward, hustling the young man, but suddenly he found himself off-balance, and his wig slipped again. Marcel was astonishingly firm and solid.

"Damme, Sir!" Mr. James cried. "Look to your manners!"

Marcel smiled and bowed. "Monsieur's wig is crooked," he said. "Perhaps one could help straighten it, later?"

Before Mr. James could answer, they were doubly interrupted: by a burly individual in an impressive uniform and huge curled military wig, who clapped Mr. James on the back and greeted him warmly, and by a dark man of about forty, with an interesting, vital face. The latter came up to Giulia Frascati with outstretched hands. Mr. James instantly recognized him as the great Riccoboni himself; but it was the burly Le Brun, the Captain of the Guards, who claimed his attention.

"My friend!" Le Brun said robustly. "You are here! I have engaged the best available rooms at the inn for you." He bowed towards the leader of the *commedia*. "And are you acquainted with our other distinguished visitor, Monsieur Riccoboni?"

Riccoboni turned with a brilliant smile and held out his hand. Thus distracted, Mr. James was unable to deal with young Marcel, who was now in the background. He heard Marcel say to Giulia, "Then later, perhaps?" and her reluctant reply, "Perhaps." And now Riccoboni took charge of her, and she stayed

by his side as Marcel went away, across the square and to the inn.

Mr. James found himself shaking hands with the actor—vastly odd, as foreigners usually confined themselves to bowing. Still, he *was* an actor, and well-travelled, so that might explain it. And he was more than that: he was a Gentleman. Like speaks to like, and Mr. James knew it at once.

"Servant, Sir," said Mr. James.

After an exchange of civilities, Riccoboni gave Giulia his arm, and bade the others adieu. The girls eyes were lowered, and Mr. James, with the greatest gallantry, said, "I apprehend with pleasure witnessing your performance, my dear."

She frowned and turned her head away in silence—the hustling had displeased her. Riccoboni looked at her quickly and his expressive face clouded. He bowed to the two men, and left with the girl. As he bowed, he had not looked at Mr. James—it was a subtle point, but if he had, it would have conveyed a reproof to the Englishman.This way, it was only a concern for the girl's feelings. Mr. James was sensitive to such refinements—after all, they were both Gentlemen.

Mr. James turned to Captain Le Brun and said, "Confound the young moll! What forward and impudent behaviour!" The public rebuff was insupportable.

Le Brun raised an eyebrow. "For her, my friend, that was modesty itself. She has a fiery temper, that one—as I know." He pulled his military moustache complacently —Guardsmen are used to fire—but Mr. James was shaking with rage.

"And that young jackanapes who spoke to her—I'll teach him a lesson in manners if I see him again!"

Crawley came upwith their baggage, and the Captain led them towards the inn. "You will no doubt see him again, for he has the rooms directly below yours, here." He pointed up at the inn's façade. "And I think you had better reconsider teaching him manners—he is noted for his manners, and he is the finest swordsman in France."

"A fine swordsman, eh?" Mr. James said, and became silent.

"And the best pistol shot. He has a fortune, but his time is spent in practice with the foil and the épée, and at target. That, and following the *commedia* all over Europe. He has pursued Giulia Frascati since first seeing her in Italy, but she will have none of him. She was unexpectedly gentle with him, just now —she usually stamps her foot and tells him to be off."

They went in, and after showing the travellers to their rooms, Captain Le Brun departed, saying they would take *déjeuner* together later downstairs.

The rooms were large and comfortable, but it stuck in Mr. James's mind that they were only the best "available," and obviously not so

grand as the ones below, on the second floor. Those were Marcel's —another black mark! Mr. James looked out of the window, where the streets had a holiday air. "You have my fishing rods safe, Crawley?" he said.

"Yes, Mr. James. They stand in the corner." Mr. James was a determined angler.

"Good. I have in mind the trout to-morrow morning."

It was now sunny and warm, and after changing their clothes they went down the narrow stairs. As they reached the floor below, a door opened and Marcel came out. He had not heard them, and in his attempt to avoid a collision with Crawley, he trod heavily on Mr. James's left foot. He at once apologized and looked genuinely contrite, but the left foot was the one with the corn.

A certain kind of pain can completely dissipate caution, and Mr. James struck Marcel across the face. The young man went pale and said, "I shall expect to meet you to-morrow morning, Monsieur. Do you prefer steel or gunpowder?"

Mr. James settled for gunpowder at dawn—unavoidably. He was a poor marksman, but a worse fencer. He went back to his rooms to change into less fashionable shoes. "Not a word of this to anyone, Crawley!" he warned.

"But can Marcel's silence be counted on, Mr. James?"

"God's teeth! I must get out of it! I—I am not well enough for such encounters . . ."

They went downstairs and joined the Captain at table. Marcel was in a far corner, but he never so much as glanced in their direction. Mr. James considered confiding in Le Brun—perhaps he would stop the duel—but one had heard that duelling was becoming popular again since the death of the old King, in spite of numerous edicts.

In the far corner Marcel got up, paid his account, and started to leave. He paused at the door to speak to someone: it was Riccoboni, who then came to their table and sat down at Le Brun's invitation.

"Poor young man," he said, glancing at the door. "If he would only abandon his hopeless quest! Now he wants *me* to intercede with Giulia. I told him it was quite unavailing—she is married to her art. I think a clean break is best, and I told him I had persuaded her to see him this afternoon at three. In his rooms, where they will have privacy." Riccoboni shrugged and made a gesture of resignation.

"She'll just lose her temper," said Le Brun.

"I think not. To-day she is in a gentle mood—she seemed almost glad to see him. I think this time she will convince him that he must cease pursuing her, that she does not—cannot—love him, and that he drives her to distraction. He wastes his life."

Riccoboni's fluent face and brilliant eyes made his words eloquent, and Crawley watched his significant gestures with a professional eye. Mr. James became withdrawn —he seemed to be thinking of something else.

As they finished their meal, Marcel reappeared, carrying a bouquet of wild flowers, and went to the staircase. The Captain and Riccoboni started for the front door, and Mr. James drew Crawley aside. "I am going up," he said, and then bent his head to whisper in his ear. Crawley looked astonished, and forthwith left the restaurant.

Outside in the square the scene was gala—the imminence of festivities at the Chateau gave the town an air of gaiety. Le Brun and the actor sat on the stone edge of the fountain, enjoying the sun and postponing their duties. Across from them some acrobats were practising their tumbling.

"I told the company to forego their rehearsals to-day," Riccoboni said. "I do not want their movements to become too formal—too *inflessible, e troppo rigido* for this evening's performance. Art must not totally eclipse Nature!"

A little later, when Crawley passed carrying a small parcel, they were talking of Mr. James, and scarcely noticed him. "He is strange—rather abrupt, your Englishman," Riccoboni said.

"Well, you know how they are," replied the Captain.

"I think living on an island compresses them," Riccoboni said with a smile. "They have no room for gestures. Ah," he added, looking over Le Brun's shoulder at the inn. "Poor Marcel! That will do no good, even though she adores wild flowers."

The Captain turned and saw Marcel at his second-floor windows, arranging the bouquet in a vase on the sill. When this was to his taste he sat down in a low armchair with his back to them. He was evidently waiting, and from time to time they saw him raise a small goblet to his lips.

"Calvados," Riccoboni said. "In Siena it was the chianti and in Athens the arrack. Poor fellow!" He shook his head sadly. "I see he does not like the calvados very much."

"How can you possibly tell that?" asked Le Brun in amazement. "His back is turned to us."

"It is the way he moves his arm," replied the other. "It hesitates—and then the Will commands it, and it moves abruptly to his lips."

The Captain raised his eyebrows, and they turned back to watch the square. Some time later Le Brun glanced up again and saw that the curtains had been drawn. He looked at the church clock, but it was only half-past two—too soon for Marcel's appointment with Giulia.

The next time Le Brun glanced up at the inn, the curtains in Marcel's room had been pulled back

again, and Marcel was sitting where he had been before, sitting with what seemed rigid attention, his head unmoving; but now, standing before him and facing the windows, was Mr. James. He also had a glass in his hand, and nodded and smiled quite gaily at Marcel, who in turn raised his glass to him.

"Look," Riccoboni said. "Does not that surprise you? I thought our Englishman was angry at Marcel."

"They've probably patched things up," Le Brun said. "I told you that Mr. James is not a bad fellow. The English take some knowing—they may be reserved, but they do not easily hate people. I must confess that he seemed angry enough—but they cool off, the English."

"But I think it is a mistake to call them cold," Riccoboni said, his eyes still on the window. "Ah, he is leaving . . . It is all rather odd."

Le Brun looked again and saw Mr. James put down his glass and raise his hand in a friendly salute. Marcel in his chair raised his own glass, and the Englishman turned and disappeared. A few moments later he came out of the inn and walked over to Le Brun and Riccoboni. He addressed himself to the former.

"The young man's behaviour may at first have been less than civil, but he *is* young. I was, ah, a little hasty . . . At any event we are friends now!" He smiled, pointing back at the windows, with a flourish of lace wristbands.

Riccoboni, after a slight bow, was still watching Marcel with a puzzled frown. The young man sat as before, raising his glass from time to time. "I hope he does not drink too much," the actor said. The others followed his eyes, and saw Marcel take another sip. "He *must* stay clear-headed—otherwise they will quarrel. She is hot-tempered—people never come to an understanding in a quarrel."

As he spoke, Giulia Frascati herself appeared, walking towards the inn, and entered through the front door. The church clock struck three.

Mr. James nodded agreement with the Italian. "You are in the right, Sir. She is a hot-head!"

Riccoboni frowned: this was not quite precisely what he had meant. Mr. James did not perceive the distinction, or the frown. He took off his three-cornered hat and fanned himself.

"It grows rather warm," he observed, and his hat slipped from his fingers and fell in the fountain. "God's teeth!" he cried, and clutched at it clumsily, knocking it further out of reach.

The Lower Orders had not yet reached the point of combustion that they did seventy years later—in 1789—but the sight of Nobility in awkward circumstances was delightful, and they crowded around,

pretending to help retrieve the hat. Just as it was finally handed, dripping, to its owner, there was a scream from upstairs in the inn.

Le Brun wheeled to see Marcel, still in his chair, but beyond him he could make out the figure of Giulia, who stood with a look of horror, one hand pressed against her mouth.

The Captain ran, followed by the other two, and they dashed up the open door into Marcel's rooms.

Before them stood the girl, a poignard in her hand. By the window Marcel sat with closed eyes, his hand still holding the glass. The front of his white, long waistcoat was covered with blood.

Riccoboni went to Giulia and led her to a chair.

"Oh, Luigi!" she gasped. "He was like that when I came in! I—picked this up from the floor."

Riccoboni took the dagger from her hand, and gave it to Le Brun. Giulia began to weep as the actor comforted her in Italian.

Le Brun examined Marcel for a moment. "Dead," he said, and looked sternly at the girl. "These fiery Romans!" he exclaimed under his breath. There was the sound of a closing door from above, and footsteps as Crawley came downstairs and paused by the open door.

"I heard unseemly quarrelling," he said. "And then a scream."

"You heard quarrelling?" Mr. James asked.

Crawley nodded most positively

"But we never spoke!" Giulia cried. "He was . . . like *that* when I came in!"

Le Brun shook his head, and started towards her, but Riccoboni jumped up, his eyes flashing. Somehow, by merely raising his face, he commanded the group.

"Are your rooms above these?" he asked Mr. James. The Englishman stared at him fixedly, and then gave a grudging nod. Riccoboni widened his eyes, then went over to the corpse and to Le Brun's surprise, began to scrutinize the ceiling. Finally he turned his attention to the floor in front of Marcel, and suddenly bent over. He picked up something from the floor.

"Plaster!" he said, and showed the fragment to Le Brun. "Bring everybody upstairs at once, Captain —I have something to show you."

Le Brun was nonplussed for a moment. Mr. James seemed to be edging towards the door, and Crawley had already backed out of it.

"I shall not allow—I shall not brook entrance to my suite!" Mr. James's face was dark.

"*Allow,* Monsieur?" Le Brun said quietly, but he still looked puzzled.

Riccoboni went first, and at the Captain's request Mr. James unlocked his door. Crawley was inside, pushing the rug back into position. The actor darted forward and pulled it aside. In the floor-

boards near the window they could see two small holes, and on a table lay a gimlet and a length of fishing line.

"Are you not the Mister Crawley who conducts a puppet show—a marionette theatre in London?" Riccoboni asked. He turned to the astonished Captain. "Mr. James killed Marcel while the curtains were drawn. Then he made these holes in the floor—one to peer through—and passed the line through the other and around Marcel's wrist and back again. The glass was still clasped by the poor corpse, otherwise wax could have been used. Then—how dramatic! —the curtains are pulled back, and behold, we see the two friends as they drink together!

"But did you not notice that something had changed? How, when we beheld Marcel, as he drinks with his friend, *he never moved his head?* And now he appears to like the calvados—there is no longer any hesitation. Ah, perhaps you are not as conscious of movement, of gesture, as I am. When the glass is full we tend to lean a trifle forward, and when it grows empty, we tend to put our head back. Did it not strike you how very *mechanical* were his actions?"

Le Brun looked amazed, but he kept a firm grip of Mr. James, who said to Crawley, "You fool! Why did you not replace the carpet before leaving the room?" Crawley was white and silent.

"But there was another thing," Riccoboni went on. "It was something which should have been instantly obvious to anyone who was watching. To know that it was false did not require the practised eye of an actor."

"I see what you mean about the drinking," Le Brun said, "but to my eye we saw two friends behaving in a customary way—nothing more."

"Perhaps among the set that Mr. James frequents in London it would be regarded as customary, as correct behaviour, but in Italy, and especially in France—" he bowed to Le Brun"—when a guest takes his leave, *we rise.*

"To me it was incredible that when we saw the Englishman take his leave, in apparent friendship, the Frenchman *remained seated.* Yes, it was beyond belief—Marcel had the most perfect manners in the world."

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: HENRIETTE MCCLELLAND

TITLE: ***The Finisher***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: Near New York City

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *Meet a man teeming with ideas—a gusher of creativity; and meet another man who had a knack for taking half-baked ideas and developing them to perfection . . .*

LARRY AND JUDY ARE COMING TO dinner tonight," my wife announced at breakfast. "I hope you can finish work early."

"I'm glad you warned me," I said. "I'll try to hide anything he might be interested in stealing." I hadn't slept well, and my nerves were on edge.

"Honestly, Jack!" my wife exclaimed, setting down the coffee pot and a plate of toast. "Larry never actually stole any of your ideas."

"Oh, no?" I nodded at the lamp on the table. "Do you remember the day I remarked that I was tired of visiting people whose idea of an entertaining evening was to drag out a screen, turn off the lights, and show their latest colored slides?"

"Yes. So Larry went home and designed a lamp shade with a lot of little slots in it so people can insert their favorite pictures and display them by merely switching on the light." Frowning, she began buttering the toast. "I should think you'd be delighted, dear," she added. "Now when we go visiting you don't have to grope in the dark for your drink."

"That's not the point," I retorted. "My remark led to his designing the 'Shade of Memory,' which was one of the fastest selling novelties that year. And what about the story he wrote? Whose idea was that?"

"Oh, Jack! You'd been talking about that idea for years. But the way you had it outlined it was kind of silly. Larry took only part of your idea, and he made it into a completely plausible story."

"So plausible it was bought by the movies!" I pushed my plate away, no longer hungry.

"You know you never would have written it, Jack."

"Well, take the picture he painted for the champagne account. It certainly bore more than a superficial resemblance to the one I did for the sparkling water company."

My wife hesitated. "That was years ago," she said, "and, after all, when two artists work on pictures for similar products there's bound to be a certain amount of coincidence."

"Especially if one sees the other's sketches. Look, Marie, I'll admit Larry's clever, but he creates the impression that he's a great genius —a supermind of some sort. He even has Barton eating out of his hand. I introduced them, and now Larry and Barton are buddy-buddies—and I'm on the outside."

"Barton's still your agent," Marie said. "He gave you a lot of work last year."

"I know, but now he and Larry eat lunch together once a week. Don't tell me Larry isn't getting the best jobs through friendship rather than ability!"

"Have you seen Barton lately?" Marie was trying to be casual.

"I saw him last week when I was in the city. He promised me something big—that is, if it comes through. It's so big I don't want to talk about it."

Marie, being used to my superstitions, nodded. "I'll keep my fingers crossed." She smiled reproachfully at me. "If you'd be honest, Jack, I think you'd admit that the real reason for your attitude toward Larry is the fact that business is slow and you feel humiliated painting those signs for Hartney's Department Store." There was a lot of truth in her words. I hadn't had a good assignment in months, and I was afraid I was slipping. "But," she continued, "if you're in one of your 'I hate Larry' moods, I'll phone Judy and we'll call it off for tonight."

"No, don't do that," I said, realizing I sounded unreasonably temperamental. "I'll just put my work away and lock the studio door."

Marie refilled my coffee cup. "Do as you like," she said, "but I'll wager that before the evening's over *you'll* be dragging everything out to show him."

"Could be," I admitted. "An hour with Larry and I'm as charmed by him as everyone else is."

She gathered up the dishes and I went to my studio and began to work on the department store signs. When Don Hartney had given me the order, with a hint of more to come, he had in the same breath asked me to accept the thankless

job of ticket chairman for the annual picnic sponsored by our lodge. And of course, he had added, I wouldn't object to painting a few posters advertising the event, would I? That was the way things were lately, I thought bitterly. I had to go out of my way to grant favors and let myself be imposed upon just to make a living.

As I painted, my mind kept going back to Larry. It was impossible to convince Marie—or anyone else for that matter—that I wasn't downright jealous of him. I had met Larry in an art school in St. Louis twenty years ago and we had discussed the merits of going into the freelance art profession. I had felt that talent and determination were the most important attributes for an artist, but Larry had maintained that, in order to make a success of such a precarious business, one should back up his creative powers with a wealth of knowledge.

So Larry not only proceeded to become proficient in all forms of art, interior decorating, package designing, and other fields too numerous to mention, but he also developed poise, charm, and a knack for clever repartee which gave him a veneer of distinction. I couldn't tell Marie how many times Larry had outshown me with his flashy personality and his quick wit. Nor could I tell her that seventeen years ago I had been in love with Judy, and during the period I was trying to work up enough nerve to tell her of my affection, she had met Larry, and before I knew what was happening, they had become engaged. Although I was no longer in love with Judy, and was quite happy with Marie, who was Judy's best friend, I felt this was a perfect example of Larry's ability to win people from me.

Ten years ago, to get away from him, I had moved from St. Louis to the suburbs of New York City, and after five years of struggle and effort to become established, just when I had begun to win recognition, Larry had moved East and bought a house in the town where I lived. I took him to a local club for artists, and within two years he was elected president; I was still on the telephone committee. Then at his insistence I introduced him to my agent, and over the years their friendship grew, while I was now reduced to painting signs.

I realized that with Larry, although it may have been unintentional, he thrived on my simplest thoughts; somehow my most casual remarks stimulated his creative powers. The fact was evident that I was an "idea man" for Larry; yet in all honesty I had to admit I liked the man, and since our wives were inseparable, the friendship continued over the years . . .

When I had finished the signs, I turned my attention to my latest effort, the creating of a new shade of pink. I took out my canvas and

began working on a study I had begun a few days before, using all combinations in an attempt to achieve the exact hue I had in my mind's eye.

Barton had mentioned the possibility of an assignment from a leading cosmetic company, advertising their latest product, Pink Panic. Although the job had not yet come through, I had painted a picture of the early morning sky, with delicate shades of pink reflected in a brook, pink roses on a hedge, and a wisp of a pink-complexioned girl wearing a flowing, filmy pink gown. But hard as I worked, the precise shade of pink I had in mind continued to escape me.

Marie's tap on the studio door brought my concentration to an end. I put the canvas and the signs into a storage closet and locked the door of my studio.

Judy and Larry arrived early, and all of us went into the basement playroom for cocktails. After the second round of drinks our voices and spirits soared merrily. "Are you going to the college reunion this year, Marie?" Judy asked. "We can drive up in my car."

"I'm going to skip it this time," my wife replied. "Give my love to the girls."

"Oh, come on," Judy urged.

I knew that, much as Marie wanted to go, she was too concerned over our financial status to spend the money on a week-end.

"I'd like you to go, Marie," I said. "You haven't been anywhere lately." She glanced at me nervously, but I became insistent. "Buy yourself a new dress and send in your reservation. You send it in for her, Judy."

Marie broke into a happy smile. "If the boss says so."

"Speaking of reunions," Larry said, "the other day, when I was in Hartney's, buying an air conditioner for the front bedroom—incidentally, Jack, what a difference it makes! You should look into one—I happened to meet Old Joe. Remember him?"

He began to reminisce about the old days. I chose to ignore the insinuation that my house was uncomfortably hot and mixed another round of drinks as we plunged into the platter of hors d'oeuvres Marie set before us. We were chattering gaily—comfortable, relaxed, and slightly inebriated—when we were disturbed by the ringing of the doorbell.

"Oh, for a butler!" I sighed, turning to Marie. "Who in the world could that be?"

"Probably the paper boy. He's been coming late on Saturdays—his collection day."

"If it's the paper boy, let him collect next week. I don't feel like budging."

"Maybe it's a gorgeous blonde in distress, searching for two able-bodied men," Larry suggested.

"Or a magazine salesman," Judy

chimed in. "It's quicker to take a subscription than to get rid of one of them."

"The bell always rings when I'm busy in the studio," Larry said.

"It rings whenever I settle down for a nap."

"When I'm pulling on my girdle!"

"Think how many times it must ring when we're out and that never bothers us."

"Maybe it should!" I said. "Who knoweth who cometh—"

We had reached the silly stage. The bell rang again.

"I can't bear the suspense," Marie said, getting up. She returned a moment later. "For you, Jack," she said. "It's Mr. Hartney."

"Don Hartney?" Larry asked quickly. "What a coincidence! I've been trying to get in touch with him all day. He asked me to do a still life for his dining room, and I wanted to speak to him about it."

He followed me out of the room and up the stairs. So! I painted signs for a Grand Sale—and Larry was commissioned to paint a picture for the house!

"I happened to be in the neighborhood," Don said, "so I thought I'd drop off the tickets I just picked up at the printers, and take the posters, if they're ready. Oh—and if the signs are done I'll take them too—save you a trip. Why, Larry! I heard you called today when I was out."

The two men shook hands and trailed me up the stairs to my studio. I felt embarrassed when Larry looked at the signs I had painted, knowing his quick mind would instantly recognize how desperate I was for business. As soon as possible I showed Mr. Hartney to the front door, but Larry stubbornly remained behind in the studio, and when I returned he was holding my new canvas to the light.

"Very interesting," he said as I entered the room. "A new approach. I like it."

"Thank you." I enjoyed his praise, but I wasn't completely easy as I watched him examine my work.

"Those were snappy signs you did for Hartney," he said casually. My face flushed with the sting of humiliation, but although I felt my temper flare I said nothing. We returned to the playroom, but the earlier mood of joviality was gone, and the evening was ruined for me.

Two weeks later, on a Friday morning, Marie and Judy took off for the class reunion. "I hate leaving you at this time," Marie said, hesitating at the door.

"Don't worry about me," I replied. "Mr. Hartney very graciously recommended me to all the merchants in town, and now I have enough work to keep me busy all week-end—and stop worrying about money. Barton's sure to call next week."

"He will," she whispered, kissing me goodbye.

She drove off with Judy, and I

applied myself to the art of luring customers into hardware stores, beauty parlors, dress shops, and the cheap eating places of the village.

On Saturday morning the phone rang, and Larry's voice, pleased and excited, boomed at me.

"Come over and have dinner with me tonight," he said. "I've invented a recipe that would tempt the appetite of even the most jaded gourmet."

"Not tonight," I said, although Larry was an excellent cook. "I'm too busy."

"Oh, come on," he urged. "I've got something to tell you and something to show you. I feel like celebrating."

"What's up?" I asked.

"Won't tell. You've got to come over."

I became the victim of curiosity. "I'll be over about eight," I said.

I strolled over to Larry's house, rang the bell, and waited a minute for Larry to open the door. He enjoyed keeping his guests waiting so that they could fully appreciate the unique design of his garden, the bubbling fountains, and the woodland nymph he had sculptured. Through the glass in the front door I saw him run down the stairs, and bowing low as he opened the door he said in an overdone English accent, "The chef is expecting you, sir."

"I hope the chef's been busy," I said. "I'm as hungry—"

My voice died in my throat.

Ahead of me, in the living room, stood Larry's easel, holding a stunning pink painting—*pink!* There was the exact shade I had worked for; there was the shade that had stubbornly evaded me.

"What do you think of it?" Larry asked innocently. "I'd like your honest opinion. It's not the same color you used," he added. "It's really quite different."

I walked up to the canvas. Where I had used the pink of dawn, he had chosen the pink of sunset; where I had been subtle, he had been flagrant; where I had been discreet, he had been brazen. The girl in his painting was vivid, mine was pastel; his flowers were big and bold, mine were the merest suggestions of petals.

He picked up his brush and bent over the still-wet canvas. "It's for a new account I just got—a cosmetic firm—for a product called Pink Panic." He began to touch a few spots lightly. "I saw Barton on Wednesday, and he happened to mention it. I begged him for a chance to work on it, although he said it was half promised to someone else."

I felt my head swim. Pink Panic, my last hope, was gone. Barton would certainly favor Larry's brilliant painting—not my quiet one. I could never succeed with Larry around. I had begun, he had finished; I had the basic ideas, he perfected them.

"Do you really like it?" he asked.

Suddenly a blinding rage swept over me. I grabbed a heavy, brass bookend from the table next to me and hit him with all my strength. He swayed, and clutching his painting, he crumpled to the floor, completely lifeless.

I don't know how long I stood there, but eventually the realization of what I had done came over me. I took a dish towel from the kitchen and wiped my fingerprints off the bookend. I took away one place setting from the table Larry had unfolded in the living room—so that we could admire his picture throughout dinner—and set about making Larry appear to be the victim of a robbery.

I ransacked the desk drawers, took $70 in cash that I found in an envelope, and a ring Judy had left on the coffee table, and not bothering with the second floor, decided to leave, hoping no one would see me slipping away. I left by the cellar door, but not before breaking the lock from the outside—to give the impression of a forced entry.

When I got home I destroyed my canvas. I knew now which shade of pink to use when Barton called to give me the assignment.

On Sunday afternoon Marie came home, flushed from a pleasant weekend with her former classmates.

"We had a wonderful time!" she chattered. "What fun! And what did you do? Did you go over to Larry's?"

"No, I was much too busy."

"You poor dear! He was so anxious to show you his latest creation. Judy told me all about it—it's really very clever—and amusing."

Amusing? Larry would never have called a new shade of pink "amusing."

"What is it?" I tried to be casual.

"I can't tell you, it's a surprise."

"Give me a hint."

"Well, promise not to let on I told you. It's called the Automatic Butler!"

"What's that?" My pulse began to pound. "Tell me!"

"Jack, let go of my arm! Do you remember how we all wondered who was at the door a few weeks ago? We agreed it was so annoying to be bothered by a paper boy or a salesman or a neighbor when we were busy, but still everyone wants to know who's at the door—and who's been there while you're out.

"Well, Larry built a little weatherproof case for his polaroid camera and attached it, at the correct angle, to his bedroom air conditioner. Then he fixed up a special gadget to the release button on his camera which works electrically when the doorbell rings. In a few seconds Larry can tell who's at the door, and whether he should bother going downstairs. He can also find out who called while he was out. Judy can't wait to see if anyone came while she was away."

Her voice grew dim in my ears. Once more, one of my remarks, one of my ideas—

PETIT GUIGNOL

How many of you remember "Gil G. Graystone"? He was a prolific writer of pulp mystery stories . . .

THE LAST MANUSCRIPT

by SIDNEY PORCELAIN

BECAUSE THIS IS A TRUE STORY I'd better not use my friend's real name. I'll call him Gil G. Graystone—he won't mind because he used many different names to write under and he sold a great many stories that were also true, though disguised as fiction for detective pulp magazines.

Gil lived in the middle of Manhattan—in one of those walk-up apartment houses that have slim difficult mailboxes. At first, when Gil's rejected manuscripts were returned, he was forced to retype them, a job that cost him money. For every script he retyped he could have written a new story and been paid for it.

Consequently it was more profitable for Gil to have his stories returned to an address where the envelopes would remain flat and undamaged. Not usually talkative, he went out of his way to make friends with the candy store owners on the corner. He could do this because so often he had to buy extra copies of the magazines in which his stories were published.

Often, too, Gil went on trips to do research and he didn't have to worry about mail accumulating if it was sent to him in care of the candy store. The proprietors would keep his manuscripts stacked on a table in the back room, and Gil would come in from time to time to retrieve them. If it took him a month to put in an appearance they thought nothing of it. To them time meant very little. The candy store was open every day, and late into the night, and one day was like any other except when the Sunday papers needed assembling while people were lined up waiting for them.

Sometimes Gil lingered over a coke while he perused new magazines for possible markets. He wrote so many stories that he needed many pseudonyms, and every month there would be at least half a dozen Gil G. Graystone stories in print.

After a while, of course, the returned manuscripts became fewer. The editors knew him so well and he knew what they wanted so accurately that nearly all his stories were accepted. It got so that there would be only an occasional package waiting to be picked up by him.

The candy store couple did not care one way or another. In fact, I never could figure out what they did care about. They seemed to operate on a continuous beltline, without private lives or private emotions. Yet they had a family and a home somewhere, and one of the sons and a married daughter would come in at busy times to lend a hand. But they didn't say much to each other. I guess they were just too tired to talk.

Not that Gil would mind their not talking. He was rather busy himself fulfilling all his assignments. And he was able to produce quite a bit because he was orderly about his records. He had several file drawers and he respected neatness, though he was much too busy to dress as neatly as he kept his workroom.

His clothes were often neglected and there was always a tail of gray hair swinging at the back of his head. His work was a kind of assembly line, too. He felt sometimes that he was in its way and he said if he ever died, he wanted to be cremated just so he wouldn't take up space.

And then, one day, suddenly, he did die.

His sister came when she was notified by the superintendent that her brother had just keeled over climbing the stairs. His doctor knew it would happen sooner or later and there was no question about his death. The cremation arrangements were made and nobody thought of notifying the candy store owners about Gil's death.

So when weeks went by and Gil didn't come in to pick up the package which had arrived they thought he was away on another trip. To them, it was just a rejected manuscript and he would find out soon enough.

It wasn't until queries were made about Gil's ashes that we discovered the last manuscript was Gil himself, waiting in the back room of the candy store—waiting to be picked up.

THE SHADOWS OUTSIDE

by HELEN McCLOY

(continued from page 54)

"Murderers make mistakes," said Grant. "If the murderer learned how to wind the clock because he happened to see you do it, he might not suspect how few people knew the trick. And he could have no idea that a taxi driver would hear the clock's striking just after Mrs. Jermyn unlocked the front door. If it hadn't been for that, everyone would have assumed that Mrs. Jermyn herself wound the clock."

"But why was the clock wound at all?"

"There are many possible reasons. The murderer had to be in a certain place as soon after the murder as possible in order to establish a pseudo-alibi. He would have to time his actions in minutes. Or suppose he —"

"But how," Ted interrupted, "could this hypothetical murderer know that my wife would be there at all that evening?"

"You knew. Do you realize that your statement is limiting suspicion to yourself?"

The despair of the trapped came into Ted Jermyn's eyes. "I can't help that. You want me to tell the truth, don't you? I still think both deaths were accidental—my wife's and my aunt's. As for the clock, I think that Shirley wound it herself the day she cleaned house, and that she lied about that afterward because she wanted to blackmail us. Good Lord, Captain Grant, do you realize that if Aunt Lettice was murdered it would have to be one of us who did it?" His glance swept the room, taking in the Kilianis, the Colliers, and even Emma. "No one else has been here for days!"

Inspiration came to Emma. "Oh, but they have!"

"Who else has been here?" demanded Grant.

"I—" Emma nerved herself and plunged. "I was thinking of Shotten and Gryder."

Grant broke the silence. "Shotten and Gryder? Who are they?"

Ted Jermyn was looking at Emma intently. "Are you serious?"

"I'm afraid she is." Collier sighed.

"What on earth are you talking about?" said Mrs. Collier.

"Lucy's unseen playmates." Collier turned to Grant. "A lonely child creates imaginary playmates whom she talks to and plays with. Pretend playmates, invisible to the child and everyone else."

"But not to me," said Emma.

"You've seen them?" Grant's stare silenced her.

Collier sighed. "When Lucy began talking about two people whom she called Shotten and Gryder, we all assumed they were imaginary playmates, for none of us had ever seen them. Miss Clare thinks they may be real people. She says she saw their shadows last night on the terrace from her window. It seems more likely that she saw a pair of actual trespassers, who had nothing to do with Lucy's Shotten and Gryder at all."

"Or with Aunt Lettice," added Ted Jermyn.

"But they did, in a way." Emma was thinking aloud, hardly aware now of the ring of faces, intent, anxious, wary. "This morning, before she left, Mrs. Moberly told me she had seen the two I saw last night at the same time and place. Now Mrs. Moberly is dead. I can't help wondering—is she dead because she was beginning to realize that Lucy's Shotten and Gryder were real people who had something to do with Mrs. Jermyn's death? And, somehow, today, they found out that she realized this?"

Emma looked at Shirley. "You were in charge of Lucy when she began talking about Shotten and Gryder. Do you remember what she said about them?"

Shirley liked the role of witness. "I didn't pay much attention. I thought it was just a kid's silliness. Shotten, the girl, was the only one you could call a playmate, I guess. According to what Lucy said, she came here about two or three times a week, always outdoors, always at night, and once or twice, when she found Lucy had seen her, she talked to Lucy through the window screen. Once Lucy tried to point her out to me. I couldn't see a thing, but Lucy said Shotten was in the bushes."

"And Gryder, the other one, was a boy?" put in Grant.

"Or a man," answered Shirley. "It was never clear which. He only came once, at the very beginning. He never talked to Lucy, she said, and she never saw him close to."

"When did all this begin?"

"Why . . ." Shirley hesitated. "It was in June, just after the family got here, just after Mrs. Jermyn's death."

Grant rose. "I'd like to talk to the child."

"Oh, no!" protested Emma. "She's only three and a half. You can't wake her in the middle of the night and expect her to answer intelligently."

"Miss Clare is right," said Collier quickly. "As Lucy's doctor, I can't urge too strongly that you wait until tomorrow. You won't get a thing out of her otherwise."

"All right." Grant yielded reluctantly. "I'll be here the first thing in the morning. And I'll leave a man outside on the terrace tonight."

Footfalls dwindled. At last came the humming of police cars as they went down the drive. Shirley had gone with them.

Ted crossed the room to a bar. "I could do with some coffee. Anyone else?"

"No, thanks," said Nicky. "I am taking Sari home."

"We must go, too." Mrs. Collier rose. "Ted, I can't tell you how sorry I am. . . . If you need anything . . ." Her voice trailed away helplessly.

"And we are sorry—about everything." Sari took both Ted's hands.

This time Ted smiled. "Thank you, Sari, dear. You always understand. Nicky, take care of her!" Ted held out his hand.

But Nicky turned away as if he hadn't seen the hand. "I'll take care of her . . . Emma, you heard what Grant said? There'll be a trooper on the terrace tonight. Call him if anything disturbs you."

"Yes." Emma was a little surprised at his concern. "I'll be all right."

They were in the front hall now. Again footsteps receded, cars came to life.

Ted Jermyn closed the front door and looked at Emma quizzically. "Afraid?"

"No." She found it hard to meet those brown eyes that had seemed so bright and engaging when she first saw him yesterday. Now his face was like parchment, his smile thin and shaky.

"Your friend Nicky seems to think I'm a murderer. At least, I can't think of any other reason why he won't shake hands with me."

"Nicky's temperamental. All musicians are."

"I forgot. You're engaged to marry him. Take my advice: Don't. Marriage is always a mistake. It ruined me."

"You can hardly expect me to agree." Emma managed a smile.

"Perhaps it isn't fair to expect you to stay—after this."

"I'm not leaving Lucy just yet," she said quickly. "Good night."

In the passage a draft of dank air laid chilly fingers on her face. She went into the kitchen. A door was standing open. Not the door they used regularly that led to the terrace, but another door, on the other side of the house, which Emma had taken for a cupboard this afternoon when it was closed.

Now it was open. In place of shelves and crockery, she saw stars shining through the branches of a willow tree. This must be the old mill door that Dr. Collier had mentioned. The steep riverbank was only a step or so beyond the door, but there was a path and, halfway down, a stone wall that must be the foundation of the old mill.

Emma looked up at the stars. Ted's voice rang in her ears: *Marriage is always a mistake. It ruined me.* How could marriage have ruined Ted Jermyn unless he actually had killed his wife? He was free now that she was gone. He had a child he loved, money, a home. Yet he had spoken like a man defeated and hopeless.

Emma shut the door and went back, down the passage, to the nursery. Her room was colder than it had been when Lucy went to sleep. And Lucy's room? Perhaps an extra blanket . . .

Emma went into Lucy's room, where a night lamp burned dimly. She took a blanket from the chest and went over to the child's bed.

It was empty . . .

Emma was alone in the nursery, waiting for the telephone to ring. Captain Grant had promised to call at once if one of his search parties found Lucy tonight. Emma had hated him for that "if."

Had Lucy been taken while Emma lingered in the living room talking to Ted Jermyn, after the others left? Had there been time for one of them to slip away from the rest and go around to the other side of the house to bring Lucy out by the mill door?

Certainly that door was the one used. The trooper stationed on the terrace could see the kitchen door. No one could have used the French windows in the living room or the front door while Emma and Ted were in the living room.

Mary came to the doorway, her wide, pleasant face creased in lines of worry. "Just wondered if you'd like a nice cup of tea. I'm making some for myself. It's nearly midnight, but I can't get to sleep."

"No, thank you." Emma rose. "I'm going out."

"Out?" Mary was amazed. "But then—I'll be all alone. Mr. Jermyn has gone out, and they've taken that trooper away from the terrace."

"You'll be safe, Mary. You have nothing to do with this. You came here weeks after Mrs. Jermyn's death. Can you tell me how to reach the Kilianis' cottage?"

"You go down the drive and take the path past the springs."

The path was rough. When Emma came to a patch of sodden ground she knew she must be near the three springs that supplied Millbourne with water. At each step her foot broke from viscous mud with a sucking sound and the lush ferns stood as tall as her own head.

At last the earth grew hard again and she came out of the woods into a hilltop pasture. A small cottage crowned the hill, black against a starry sky, a glint of light edging its curtained windows. Emma found an old-fashioned brass knocker and tapped it lightly. Nicky opened the door.

"Emma!" He drew her inside, one arm about her shoulders. "Do you know it's nearly midnight?"

Emma stood still and unresponsive. "Have you heard about Lucy?"

"Yes. The police were here, searching. All the more reason for you to stay safely indoors."

"I had to talk to you. Where is Sari?"

"In her room. Asleep. Sit down, Emma."

She sat stiffly on a sofa while he shut the door and mended the fire. His profile was toward her as he knelt on the hearth rug. Firelight modeled his lean face with shadow, set a ruddy glow on his high forehead, left his light eyes in pools of shade that darkened them.

"Nicky! I lied for you—I have to know why. What did you mean when you cried out: *Shari! What have you done?* Now Lucy's gone, I'd never forgive myself if I didn't do everything I could. And I haven't said a word to the police—yet."

Nicky stretched his legs along the rug and crossed his ankles, one elbow braced against the floor. His eyes were withdrawn. "You don't trust me, do you? I'm still a stranger—a crazy musician, half Hungarian, a foreigner."

"Don't." Tears blurred Emma's vision.

"Isn't it rather foolish for us to marry?"

"Perhaps." Emma didn't know what else to say.

"Shall we call it off?"

"I don't want to, but if you do . . ."

"I think we'd better."

"All right." Emma's voice was almost inaudible. Can so much end so quickly? What will life be like without Nicky?

"And now that's settled, I'll tell you about Sari."

In one swift, supple movement he sat up, facing her, looking into her eyes. "I've always thought Jane Jermyn's death was—fortuitous. We know they were discussing divorce. Then she died. Suppose she refused Ted a divorce? Suppose she wanted to keep Lucy's father as well as Lucy? That would be a motive for Ted, wouldn't it? Can you think of anyone else who would want to kill her?"

"No. But Ted's alibi . . ."

"Let's say he contrived that. But what was his motive in asking Jane for a divorce? Have you ever wondered about that?"

"No. After all, it's none of my business."

"It's your business now you're trying to find Lucy, because it may be the crux of the whole thing. There's only one real motive for divorce in a case like this—a young man with plenty of money and an attractive wife and child."

"You mean—some other woman?"

"Obviously. What else could it be?"

"And . . ." Emma's voice sank to a whisper. "You think she was Sari?"

Nicky nodded slowly. "Last winter Ted came to our apartment in New York a great deal. I wasn't always there. Even when I was, Jane didn't come with him. Then—Jane died. And Sari was here, at the cottage, the night Jane died. She came down to make a list of things we would need for this summer. The police never knew. But I knew and —it wasn't pleasant.

"I couldn't believe Sari had killed Jane. But how much did she know about Jane's death? If Ted were her lover, she would never give him away, even to me. If she had supplied the motive for killing Jane she was morally guilty. She could have discouraged his visits, if she had wanted to. So—now you see. When I came suddenly on Mrs. Moberly's body, lying beside a slight brown haired girl whom I took for Sari, wasn't it natural that I should cry out: *Sari! What have you done?"*

"Only, you said Shari, not Sari."

"In Hungarian, the name is pronounced Shari. I've learned to say Sari over here. In a moment of shock the old Shari slips out."

"And this is why you wouldn't shake hands with Ted Jermyn tonight?"

"Yes. Sari was happy until she met him."

"I'm glad you told me," said Emma. "And I'm glad I didn't tell the police. I can see Sari falling in love with a married man. I can't see her killing anyone. Even if she does love Ted Jermyn, I don't think she's guilty. It would be monstrous to find that someone you loved had killed for love of you. What could you do? Go to the police and betray him? Or keep silent and become an accomplice? Either way would be agony."

"That wasn't Sari's first visit to the cottage alone last winter." Nicky spoke tonelessly. "And it wasn't the first time Ted had come down to spend a week-end at Millbourne alone. He liked skiing. Jane didn't. I don't remember now if his visits coincided with Sari's, but—isn't it possible Ted showed Sari how to wind that clock? Who can say what anyone will do, even a sister?" He turned away. "If Jane and Sari came suddenly face to face at the head of the stair . . . Jealousy is an ugly thing."

"But what about Shotten and Gryder?"

"Shari . . . Shotten. Say them quickly. There is a resemblance. Lovers have pet names for each other. Suppose she has been meeting him secretly after dark."

"Wouldn't Lucy recognize her as Sari?"

"I doubt it. We all see very little of the child. I don't believe Sari's been over there in the daytime. Only for cocktails or dinner. Lucy is always in the nursery by five. It would be easy for Sari to avoid meeting Lucy in the daytime."

"Then Gryder is Ted Jermyn himself?"

"Why not? Gryder never spoke to Lucy or came closer to her. Gryder could be Lucy's version of some nickname we don't know. Doesn't she distort words sometimes?"

"She says 'danish' for 'dangerous.'" Emma sighed. "But Lucy told me Shotten hid from Gryder once."

"Sari might have hidden from

Ted once, not sure the man approaching was Ted. Certainly a man and woman, wandering so stealthily at night, suggests the stealth of lovers, doesn't it?"

"Does it?" The fluting voice startled both. Sari stood in an open doorway. Her leopard skin robe seemed to heighten the savage glint in her eyes.

"You've been listening?" Nicky's voice was flat.

"How could I help it in a cottage where the walls are so thin? You thought I was asleep? I wasn't. I heard everything. Now I know what you two really think."

"Sari, we were only worried about you, trying to protect you!" urged Emma.

"I do not need protection!" Sari's voice trembled. "The only person I know who thinks me capable of murder is my own brother! But you didn't complete your case against me, Nicky. What have I done with Lucy? Why should I kill her?"

"I never suggested—"

"You implied that either Ted or I killed Jane! Do you seriously maintain that her own father would carry her off?"

"No, but—Sari!"

She had turned back to her room. Nicky sprang after her, laid a hand on her arm. She shook it off, fury blazing in golden eyes. Her hand flashed and there was a sharp crack. She had struck Nicky across the mouth. Then she was gone.

Nicky looked ruefully at Emma. "She has a point. She wouldn't harm Lucy or hide her. Neither would Ted. Who can there be with a motive for harming Lucy?"

"I don't know unless— Could it be Shirley? Did you hear Captain Grant call her by her last name tonight? It's Totten."

"Shirley Totten. Shotten." Surprise brought a spark to Nicky's eyes. "Murder and blackmail both? It could be. In a maid's dress and apron, without make-up, Shirley would look quite different from the way she did tonight. A different appearance might seem like a different person to a small child, especially if someone called the unfamiliar person by an unfamiliar name.

"You see? By day, the girl would be Shirley, the maid. Seen dimly at night, with a wide-brimmed hat shading a face masked by heavy cosmetics, she would be another person—Shirley Totten or Shotten. It was a little game that Lucy played with Shirley."

"But then—who is Gryder?"

"That's the whole question now. Shirley is quite pretty. If Gryder is her lover, he could be any man, even Ted Jermyn."

"You said he loved Sari."

"Love?" Nicky shrugged. "Ted is a ladies' man. Or rather a woman's man—any woman's man. And Jane Jermyn wouldn't like the idea of Shirley as a stepmother for Lucy. Unless Jane died, Shirley would have little chance of marrying Ted. Has Lucy never said anything that

gives any clue to Gryder's identity?"

"No. I tried to question her. I asked her what Shotten and Gryder looked like and where they lived, but Lucy's answers were just nonsense and—" Emma stopped suddenly. "Maybe they weren't nonsense. She said Shotten lived in the springhouse. Shotten had told her so. Even Lucy doubted it, but—there might be a seed of truth in it. If Shotten and Gryder are lovers, the springhouse might be a meeting place. Oh, Nicky! Let's go there now and see if there's any trace of anyone having been there!"

"All right." Nicky took a flashlight from a table near the door. They didn't really need the flashlight. The moon had risen high, flooding the pasture with the ghost of sunlight.

Emma's footfalls scraped on pine needles, but Nicky moved beside her without making a sound.

"There's a low, peaked roof at quite a distance. The path is overgrown," Nicky said.

"We can force our way through."

But Nicky's hand on her arm detained her.

"Wait. There's someone there."

"Who?"

"I can't see. The ferns are too high. But there is no breeze and the ferns are moving." He stepped off the main path. Ferns closed around him.

Emma shivered inside her warm coat and looked at her watch: 12:50. Waiting was intolerable. Two people had been murdered and now Nicky, unarmed, was walking into a mystery that might be dangerous.

She couldn't even hear the faint rustling of his passage through the ferns. Everything was still in the windless, moonlit night.

Emma looked at her watch again. He had been gone ten minutes. Emma called softly, "Nicky!" No answer. She left the path and plunged into the underbrush.

Raspberry thorns choked her passage. Swampy ground yielded sickeningly at each step. Suddenly she was in a clearing, facing a small, low stone house with a peaked roof of slate. There was a gleam of white in the moonlight on the stone ledge under the low roof.

She plunged across the clearing and knelt on muddy ground. "Lucy!"

The small figure, in dressing gown and pajamas, was sleeping as peacefully as if she lay in her own bed, but here it was chilly and dank. Emma took off her coat and wrapped it around the child. Lucy opened heavy-lidded eyes.

"Lucy, darling, who brought you here?"

"Nobody. I came alone. I was trying to find Shotten. I wanted to ask her—why she didn't speak to me—when I woke up from my nap."

Lucy's head nestled against Emma's shoulder. Already she had fallen back into the deep sleep of early childhood.

"Emma!"

She looked up. Nicky was standing beside her. She could hardly see his face in the filtered moonlight, only a blur of paleness in the dark where his face must be and a firefly gleam of eyes. She hadn't heard his approach. She didn't know how long he had been there.

"Thank God!" he cried fervently as he saw Lucy. "Is she all right?"

"Just cold and damp. I must get her home at once."

"Millbourne is a good way from here," said Nicky. "But the Colliers' place is just at the top of the next ridge, and the path is better."

"I'd rather take her to her own home."

Nicky sighed. "Emma, I didn't want to tell you. But we'll have to get Rory Collier here at once."

"Why?"

"I'll show you." Nicky led the way across the clearing. At the edge, ferns were trampled and broken. Among them lay a man, motionless, face down.

"Ted Jermyn," said Nicky in a level voice. "I can't find his pulse. I think he's dead."

The house looked like a hilltop farm. Lights from long, low windows shone on a grassy slope below. A flagstone walk led to the little cloister between house and woodshed that Yankees called a "breezeway." This one was screened and furnished like a porch. Nicky found a bell button and rang.

Light flooded the breezeway. Mrs. Collier came through the door, neat hair pale and polished as her house coat of ice-green taffeta half hidden by an apron of checked gingham. She carried a wet dishcloth.

"Oh . . ." As she saw Lucy her face went white and stiff. "Is she—?"

"Just asleep," whispered Emma. "And cold."

"Quickly," Nicky said in a low, urgent voice. "We need Rory at once. We found Ted on the hillside by the springhouse."

"Oh, Nicky—Rory isn't here." She swayed. "He's out with the police, searching for Lucy."

"Where's your telephone"

"In the hall."

She led the way through a spotless, white kitchen, down a passage to the front hall. "Why don't you put Lucy in here?" She opened a door, switched on a shaded lamp. "This is the examination room for child patients."

There were *Alice in Wonderland* characters on the wallpaper. There was a rocking horse and some dolls. Emma put Lucy on the couch.

"I'll heat some milk and make cocoa for her."

Lottie Collier hurried away toward the kitchen.

Emma pulled gently at one sleeve of the damp dressing gown. Lucy's arm slid out limply. The pajamas underneath were dry.

In the hall Nicky was saying, "Operator! Operator!" Outside the open window, tires purred on grav-

el and came to a stop. The front door opened.

"Rory!" Nicky slammed down the telephone. "I was trying to call you. Lucy's all right, but Ted Jermyn's on the hillside, near the springhouse."

"Ted Jermyn?" Collier stood in the doorway, frowning. "I thought he was safe in his own house."

"Perhaps he was searching for Lucy alone and someone else found him before he found her. She was asleep near his body."

"His body?"

"Don't you understand? I'm afraid he's dead or dying. Hurry!"

"My car's outside."

"There's no road. We'll have to walk."

Brisk steps, receding, as Rory followed Nicky down the passage. Nicky's voice from the kitchen. "You had better call Captain Grant. Tell him Lucy is safe and Ted Jermyn is hurt. Ask Grant to meet us at the springhouse as soon as he can."

The kitchen door closed with a slam. Lucy opened her eyes.

"You're all right, darling. This is Emma. There's hot cocoa coming."

Lucy stared at the wallpaper. "Where are we?"

"At Dr. Collier's. Lucy, why did you go outdoors alone?"

"I was looking for Shotten. I woke up. I thought I heard her voice. I looked out the window, but she wasn't there. So I went outdoors."

"By the old mill door? The door in the kitchen that isn't used much?"

"Yes. Shotten went out that door this afternoon. I saw her. So, when I heard her voice tonight, I went out the same door and up the hill to the springhouse, where she said she lived. But—she wasn't there . . . Whose doll is that?" Lucy blinked sleepily at a rag doll, a boy in overalls.

"Let's call him Bongo." Emma brought the doll over to Lucy.

"Are Bongo's eyes black?"

"No, dark blue. What color are Shotten's eyes?"

"I don't know." Lucy yawned, cradling Bongo.

"Does Shotten wear slacks?"

"No. She wears pretty dresses."

Emma thought of a loose, low-necked dress of Persian-printed silk, sliding down sloping shoulders.

"But Gryder wears slacks," said Lucy. "Like Bongo. Slacks and a shirt, so dark you can hardly see him if he doesn't move. I guess that's why Shotten doesn't know when he follows her at night."

"Are you sure she doesn't know?

"I don't think so. Because she was afraid when she knew he did—and she isn't afraid any more."

"Then Shotten and Gryder aren't friends?"

"They don't act like friends."

"Why were you so anxious to see Shotten tonight, Lucy?"

"I told you. I wanted to ask Shotten why she didn't speak to me

when I woke up from my nap this afternoon."

"This afternoon?" For the first time the full implication of Lucy's words came to Emma. "You saw Shotten in the house when you woke up from your nap this afternoon?"

"Yes. I woke before you came in."

Emma nodded, remembering.

"I heard somebody in the front hall," went on Lucy. "I got out of bed and went to the door. Shotten was coming down the passage. She smiled, but she didn't say anything. She went right past me into the kitchen. She was carrying Essie."

"The doll?" cried Emma incredulously.

"Yes. I told you I left Essie alone and she went away. She went outdoors with Shotten. I looked after Shotten and I saw her go out the mill door."

"You didn't mind her taking Essie?"

"Oh, no. She'll bring Essie back some day."

"You didn't speak to her to try to stop her?"

"No. I just stood there, wondering."

"About what?"

"About why she was in the house in the daytime. She never came inside the house before. Even when she came near the house it was always at night. Then you came and I forgot about Shotten. I wanted to find that turtle we lost."

"But you remembered when you thought you heard Shotten's voice again tonight? And you went out to look for her because you wanted to ask her why she had been in such a hurry this afternoon?"

"Yes." Lucy sighed. "She smiled, but she didn't say anything. That was funny, wasn't it?"

"Usually she talks to you?"

"Oh, yes, she always talks to me, but she didn't this afternoon."

"Lucy, what woke you from your nap? A cry? Or a fall?"

"I don't remember. I just woke and heard someone in the front hall. I went to the door, and then I saw Shotten coming down the passage." Lucy's eyelids dropped. Her lips parted. She was breathing lightly and regularly.

Emma tiptoed out of the room and almost collided with Lottie Collier in the passage carrying a cup of steaming cocoa on a tray.

"Too late?" she whispered.

"Sleep will do her more good now than a warm drink," answered Emma.

"I'm sorry. I got to the door when she was telling why she wanted to see Shotten tonight. I didn't want to interrupt. It seemed important. And then, quite suddenly, she was asleep."

"They go off very suddenly at her age."

"Won't you have the cocoa? Or would you rather have sherry? You look exhausted, Emma."

"I'd like the cocoa. I'm cold and sleepy."

"Let's go into the living room."

They went through a lighted doorway across the hall. Emma sank into a deep chair and sipped the hot drink gratefully.

"It was important, what Lucy said, wasn't it?"

"Yes." Emma tried to focus her wavering attention. "Lucy was out of bed when I went back to the nursery this afternoon, just at three, after talking to your husband on the terrace. Lucy is supposed to sleep until three, but she must have wakened a few minutes earlier than usual. Do you realize that it was just about the time Mrs. Moberly must have been killed? After her car came back from the village and before four o'clock?

"I think Lucy was wakened by the sound of Mrs. Moberly's fall. Or by a cry from Mrs. Moberly, just before I went into the house. A cry I didn't notice because I was farther away and the cook's television set was going full blast. I think it was Mrs. Moberly's murderer who came down the passage from the hall and smiled at Lucy."

"You're sure of the time?"

"Yes. Because of Lucy's logbook. I remember writing in it this afternoon: *Nap, slept at 12:45. Found awake at 3:00.*"

"A murderer and a child . . ." Lottie Collier looked as shocked as Emma felt. "Then there really is someone named Shotten? She's not just a fantasy of Lucy's?"

"I'm sure she's real. And she murdered Mrs. Moberly, and Lucy is the only person in the world who can place Shotten at the scene of the crime."

She smiled, but she didn't say anything . . . she always talks to me, but she didn't this afternoon . . .

Fearful as a nightmare, the whole swift, silent scene unrolled in Emma's mind: The little girl, rosy and tousled from her nap, waking and hearing a step, running to the door of her room with a welcoming smile. The woman whose shadow Emma had seen once by moonlight —a woman of desperate daring, quick and dangerous as a cobra, slipping down the hall, as noiselessly as she could, leaving death behind her. And then—her heart stopping as the nursery door opened.

For an instant Lucy's life must have trembled in the balance.

But the woman's wits were sharpened by her own peril. To pause for one more moment here was impossible, unless she paused to kill. Even that would double her own danger of discovery. It was only the child. The child was alone and the child knew her only as "Shotten."

Everyone else believed that "Shotten" was a figment of Lucy's imagination. All that must have flashed through her mind with the speed of light as she managed to smile and move on without uttering a word that would delay her.

If Lucy had spoken or followed her—Lucy hadn't, so she was still alive . . .

But why the doll, Essie? What could Shotten want with a doll?

"But who is Shotten?" Lottie Collier was asking

Emma started from her reverie. "Only Lucy knows. It might be the maid—Shirley Totten."

"Condensed to Shotten! I never thought of that. I never heard her called anything but Shirley until Captain Grant spoke to her tonight. Then—who is Gryder?"

"I have no idea . . . If Shotten knew that Lucy had talked . . . But she can't know. We are the only ones who heard Lucy and—Oh!"

"Oh what?"

"Nicky Kiliani was with me when I found Lucy. She talked a little then. He heard her. So he knows that Lucy saw Shotten when Lucy woke up from her nap. If he happens to mention what he heard to someone else . . ."

"To whom?"

Emma hesitated. "I was at the Kiliani house tonight, before I came here. I only saw Sari for a few moments. She could have been at the springhouse with Ted Jermyn afterward."

"Are you suggesting that Sari might be Shotten and that Gryder is Ted Jermyn himself?"

"I think Ted knew of someone else who could have wound the clock that struck before Jane Jermyn died. Someone he was protecting, even after his aunt was killed. Whom would he protect? A woman, of course. A woman for whom he had killed his wife. But he wouldn't go on protecting her when Lucy disappeared. He would go to her and demand what she had done with Lucy. She couldn't tell him where Lucy was because she didn't know. He wouldn't believe her; he would refuse to protect her any longer. There might be a violent quarrel. She might kill him."

"Sari? Oh, no!"

"Have you ever seen her in a temper? Oh, I'm so mixed up! Nicky left me on the path when he went through the ferns to the springhouse. It was ten minutes before I followed him. Suppose he found Ted struggling with Sari? Anything could have happened.

"And now Lucy's in horrible danger. Once you admit Shotten and Gryder are real, Lucy becomes the one witness who can identify her aunt's murderer. When the police realize that . . . I almost wish you hadn't called them."

"I haven't yet," said Lottie, rising. "But I must do it now. They're still searching for Lucy." She hesitated. "But you're right. She's going to be in danger from now on. The police will promise protection, but—their primary purpose is to catch a killer. They'll set a trap for Shotten, and there's only one bait they can use—Lucy."

"Is there no way we can stop them?"

"There is a way, but—it's a pretty desperate scheme."

"How?"

"Get Lucy away from here and hide her until the case is solved. I know a place where you and Lucy would be safe—a hunting lodge in the mountains that belongs to one of Rory's patients. Thank heaven, Rory left the car! I can take you there by back roads where there'll be no highway patrol to notice our license number. I'll tell Rory and the police that you insisted on my driving you and Lucy back to the Jermyn house and that's the last I saw of you. I'm willing to risk it, if you are."

"I'd do anything to protect Lucy."

"Then we'd better get along. Rory or Nicky may be back here at any moment, wanting to know why Captain Grant hasn't reached the springhouse. I must get out of this housecoat."

Lottie tossed her apron aside and hurried into the hall. In less than five minutes she was back, wearing a camel's-hair coat over a linen suit. Her movements were hummingbird-quick as she opened a closet door in the hall.

"A steamer rug for Lucy. An overnight bag for you with my own night things. A picnic basket with jars of food for Lucy, and a vacuum bottle of fresh milk. Car keys. Flashlight. . . . Can you carry Lucy out to the car without waking her?"

"I think so."

Rory's car stood under a rowan tree. Lottie held the door open for Emma. She climbed inside and eased Lucy gently into her lap. Lottie got into the driver's seat. Without lights, the car coasted soundlessly into the woods.

It was like a dream, this flight through the cool summer night.

They left the rough country road for an uneven track that turned and twisted uphill. Lottie took each sharp curve with speed and skill. They glided to a stop in a clearing at the edge of a bluff, surrounded by pine trees. Lottie's flashlight beam flickered over a log cabin.

"There's always a key left on the lower beam of the porch roof." She stood on a porch chair to find it, unlocked the door, struck a match.

An oil lamp, with a yellow porcelain shade, shone softly on log walls and fieldstone fireplace.

"Kitchen and bath on the left," said Lottie. "Bedrooms on the right. You can relax now. You're really safe here."

Emma found a double bed in the middle bedroom. Lucy wriggled as Emma laid her down, but the child didn't open her eyes. There was no window. A door led to a side porch. When Emma saw that there was a screen door securely locked, she opened the door itself, for the disused room had a musty smell.

She moved about the room quietly, thankful she need not light a lamp because of the moon shining through the screen door. The bag Lottie had packed for her held a nightgown of light-blue silk. Satin slippers and a robe of thin, fleecy

wool were the same blue, embroidered with a monogram *C. C.* Why not *L. C.?* Lottie must be a nickname for Charlotte.

The bedsprings creaked. Emma turned.

Lucy was sitting up in bed, looking toward the living-room door. There was warmth and pleasure in her voice as she said, "Hello Shotten."

Lottie Collier stood in the doorway. Her pale eyes dwelt on Emma's face. She spoke in a slow, bitter voice.

"Now you know."

Both hands pushed the braids back from her forehead as if their weight vexed her in this moment of crisis. Pins loosened and her fair hair tumbled to her waist in loose waves. Her whole character seemed to change now that the severe hairdress was gone. Disheveled, she was a woman of fierce, untamed feelings with that touch of strangeness that enhances beauty.

"Yes." Emma's own voice was thin and light. "Now I know. Gryder? Your husband, of course! Rory is a nickname for Gregory. And Lucy heard him call out to you: 'Charlotte! It's Gregory!' The names became Shotten and Gryder on her tongue, just as she twisted dangerous into 'danish.' But your friends call you Lottie and your husband Rory, so no one connected Shotten and Gryder with you or your husband. You killed them both, didn't you?"

"Yes," Lottie said calmly, "though I didn't want to kill Mrs. Moberly." Her voice was detached. "I had to. I had walked to the village. She insisted on driving me back as far as her house and asked me to come in. I knew it was Lucy's nap time, so I thought I could do so without Lucy's seeing me and recognizing me as Shotten.

"At the head of the stair Mrs. Moberly said, 'The clock is slow, it needs winding.' I said, 'Let me do it for you,' and I started to wind it. Only then, when I saw the amazement in her eyes, did I remember the story about the clock that Shirley had told Ted and Mrs. Moberly.

"Ted had come directly to me when Shirley tried to blackmail him and his aunt, accusing me of having murdered Jane because he knew that I knew how to wind that clock. I had often seen him do it when we met secretly in the house last winter.

"You see, it was I, not Sari, he came to see. I admitted killing Jane, but I warned Ted that if he went to the police, I would tell them that he and I had planned Jane's murder together after she refused him a divorce. He knew I could make it stick because he knew I could prove that we were lovers.

"But now I had given myself away to Mrs. Moberly, and she was a stronger character than Ted. She would expose a murderess to the police even if it involved her nephew in scandal and worse. I saw all that in her eyes as she cried out:

'So you are one other person who knows how to wind this clock! Lottie, where were you the night Jane died?' "

"I was frightened. I didn't stop to think. I saw a wooden thing on the window sill in the upper hall. It looked heavy. I snatched it up and brought it down on her head with all my force. She screamed and fell backward down the stair, just as Jane did.

"It took all my nerve to walk down that stair, knowing I might meet someone at any moment. And it would never have happened if I hadn't broken the mainspring of my watch while I was waiting for Ted the night Jane died."

"Waiting for Ted?" said Emma.

"Yes. It was I he was coming to meet there—not Jane. He lied about that afterward to the police in order to protect both of us. Actually, we had no idea Jane was coming. While I was waiting for him I wound my watch too tightly and heard the mainspring snap. So I wound the clock.

"I was in one of the upstairs rooms when I heard a car stop outside. Of course, I thought it was Ted. I ran a comb through my hair and hurried into the upper hall. There, at the head of the stair, I came face to face with Jane. She had heard a sound above and rushed upstairs, hoping to find me with Ted. She wanted to keep him. She thought I would give him up if she threatened me with a nasty divorce. So she had come to surprise us together. She had always been very suspicious of those skiing trips.

"Words led to blows. I struck her. I had no wooden doll that time, but her foot slipped and—"

"Doll?" Lucy caught the familiar word. "A wooden doll? Do you mean Essie? Where is she now?—Where is she?"

"I threw her in the river."

"Please," begged Emma, "we're both forgetting Lucy."

"Oh, no! I'm not forgetting her." The light eyes took on a strange glitter. "Without Lucy, you might struggle or get away; with her, you can't do either." Lottie took a step forward. "We are alone—"

Lucy's small voice, tranquil, almost gay, stopped her, "No, we're not alone, Shotten. There's somepling you don't know," Lucy said.

Lottie's look at Lucy was so sharp that Emma moved a little closer to the child.

But Lucy was untroubled. "Somepling I never told you." The dimple flashed out merrily. "Gryder still follows you at night sometimes. He's outdoors now."

"Yes." The man's voice startled all three. On the other side of the screen door stood Gregory Collier. "Let me in, Charlotte."

"Stay where you are!" Lottie screamed.

"Let me in, Miss Clare. Nicky is with me. He has a gun."

Slowly Emma moved to the

screen door and unlocked it. Dr. Collier stepped quickly between Lucy and the murderess. One of Nicky's hands gripped Emma's shoulder tightly, but his other hand kept the gun trained on Lottie.

"How did you know we were here?" Emma's voice trembled.

"Nicky and I brought Ted to the house," Dr. Collier told her. "We didn't wait for the police at the springhouse. You and the car were gone. I realized my wife had driven you and Lucy away—to kill you. I knew she wouldn't dare to take you too far away if she intended to get back to the house before the police arrived, as she would have to, to avoid suspicion. I thought of this place, close at hand, deserted for the summer. I know very well how my wife's mind works."

"You know nothing," Lottie sneered, "nothing at all."

"I know more than you imagine," Dr. Collier said quietly. "I knew of your affair with Ted Jermyn, but I needed evidence for a divorce—without alimony. Twice this summer I followed you when you went to meet Ted. The first time, I wasn't sure it was you. That was when I called to you. I knew you were Lucy's Shotten, but I didn't suspect you of murdering Jane or Mrs. Moberly, because I didn't know about the clock until Ted told me tonight."

"You didn't kill him, though you tried. He told us he arranged a meeting with you at your old trysting place, the springhouse. He threatened to tell the police everything he knew unless you brought Lucy back to him. You tripped him in the dark and beat his head with a rock when he fell. But Nicky and Miss Clare interrupted you."

"That's ridiculous," Lottie said. "I was home—"

"In a housecoat," Emma said, remembering, "and an apron. Over your suit. That's why, afterward, you were able to change so quickly!" She reached down and took Lucy into her arms. "Nicky, please take us home. . . ."

Hours later, Lucy snuggled down in her own little bed. Nicky stood beside Emma, an arm about her waist. Lucy was fascinated by the new ring on Emma's hand. "Where did you get it, Emma?"

"Nicky brought it to me."

"Why?"

"Because we're going to be married."

"Then why didn't he give it to you right away when he got here?"

Nicky laughed. "I wasn't sure she wanted it then. Would you like to live with us for a while, Lucy? After we're married? We would love to have you."

"Yes." Lucy sighed and lay back on the pillow. "I like you both. And I like Gryder. I didn't know he was the Doctor. He looked so different in the dark, with that cap hiding his face . . . but I was right about Shotten. She is a troublmaker, isn't she?"

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE HARDCOVERS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	ON SALE
Boucher, Anthony	THE QUINTESSENCE OF QUEEN	Random House	$4.95	May 1
Dewey, Thomas B.	HOW HARD TO KILL	Simon and Schuster	3.50	May 11
Gardiner, Dorothy and Walker, Katherine Sorley	RAYMOND CHANDLER SPEAKING	Houghton Mifflin	4.00	April 24
Lockridge, Frances and Richard	FIRST COME, FIRST KILL	Lippincott	2.95	May 25
Moyes, Patricia	DEATH ON THE AGENDA	Holt, Rinehart & Winston	3.50	May 21
Williams, Brad	THE WELL-DRESSED SKELETON	M. S. Mill	2.95	May 23

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE PAPERBACKS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	ON SALE
Barrett, Michael	ESCAPE FROM ZAHRAIN	Gold Medal	35¢	April 26 O
Bennett, Jay	MURDER MONEY	Crest	35¢	May 15 R
Brackett, Leigh	13 WEST STREET	Bantam Books	40¢	April 30 R
Disney, Doris Miles	DID SHE FALL OR WAS SHE PUSHED? BLACK MAIL	Ace	50¢	April 5 R
Mathieson, Theodore	THE DEVIL AND BEN FRANKLIN	Popular Library	40¢	May 22 R
Mooney, Booth	HERE IS MY BODY	Gold Medal	35¢	April 26 Reissue
Prather, Richard S.	KILL THE CLOWN	Gold Medal	35¢	April 26 O
Simenon, Georges	MAIGRET RENTS A ROOM	Popular Library	40¢	May 22 R

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

America's two great masters of "hard-boiled" detection are dead; but two posthumous volumes offer a wealth of material new to book form. Dashiell Hammett's A MAN NAMED THIN (Mecury 233, 50¢) contains 8 stories from the early 1920's, acute and characteristic, with valuable bibliography and notes by Ellery Queen, RAYMOND CHANDLER SPEAKING (Houghton Mifflin, $4), edited by Dorothy Gardiner and Kathrine Sorley Walker, includes letters, working notes, stories, articles, fragments—always vividly readable and often illuminating such topics as mystery technique, Hollywood writing, murder in real life, and the nature of cats.

★★★★ **THE QUARRY, by Friedrich Duerrenmatt, translated by Eva H. Morreale** (New York Graphic Society, $3.50)

Controversial Swiss writer of off-beat thrillers turns the pulp cliché of the Mad Surgeon into a symbol of a world gone horribly mad.

★★★★ **GIDEON'S MARCH, by J. J. Marric** (Harper, $3.50)

Magnicide, with JFK as intended victim, is among the many crimes here frustrated by the unexcelled Gideon of Scotland Yard.

★★★★ **THE BALLAD OF THE RUNNING MAN, by Shelley Smith** (Harper, $3.50)

Odd and effective blend of tragedy and light comedy in story of the consequences of an elaborately ingenious insurance fraud.

★★★ **THE SILENCERS, by Donald Hamilton** (Gold Medal s1194, 35¢)

This department will match Matt Helm with any six other secret agents in today's fiction and give odds on him against the field.

★★★ **TRIAL BY AMBUSH, by Leslie Ford** (Scribner's, $2.95)

Honest and vigorous suspense novel in which the crime is not murder but rape—a far cry from Miss Ford's early gentilities.

The annual award of London's Crime Writers Association, as important as Mystery Writers of America's Edgars, goes to Mary Kelly's excellent and many-leveled THE SPOILT KILL (British Book Centre, $3.25). The runners-up, so far unpublished here, are John le Carre's CALL FOR THE DEAD (Gollancz) and Allan Prior's ONE WAY (Eyre & Spottiswoode).

QUEEN'S QUICKIES: *Be Your Own Detective!*

SEVEN DEAD WOMEN:

Who Killed Nora Burkey?

by EDWARD D. RADIN

POLICE CHIEF MORAN OF BELLAIRE, Ohio, stopped short as he headed a contingent of officials into the three-room apartment over a private garage on Harrison Avenue. A large dog, growling menacingly, stood guarding the body of Mrs. Nora Burkey, 37-year-old attractive divorcee.

Henry Miller, who had been waiting for the police, hurriedly snapped a restraining leash on the dog's collar. "Everything's just the way I found it," he said.

The body of the woman lay face down on the bed, the cord of a bedside lamp knotted tightly around her neck. Coroner Clyde Hardesty noticed a discoloration on her temple and examined her head. "The strangling was just added insurance by the murderer," he said. "He shattered her skull with heavy blows."

There was no signs of a struggle in the apartment.

On a small table in the kitchen were an egg-stained plate, an opened package of bread, two jars of different kinds of jam, a serving dish containing vegetables, and an unsliced apple pie. Stacked in the sink was another plate holding remnants of food, and a soiled pot and some silverware.

"Looks like she ate with her killer," an officer said.

Miller had telephoned headquarters on Wednesday afternoon, March 9, 1938. Visibly nervous, he explained that the victim had rented the apartment from him and that the entrance to it was through a narrow alley separating his house and his garage. He said that his wife became worried when she failed to see Nora around for five days—since Friday morning. After noticing that newspapers had collected on Nora's doorstep, she asked him to investigate. He used his key to enter the apartment and found the body.

"*Your* key?" Chief Moran asked.

"Of course," the other replied. "I own the place."

When morgue attendants began to remove the body, the dog lunged at them. Asked if the animal belonged to Mrs. Burkey, Miller shook his head. "We got him as a pup two years ago," he replied.

"Nora was living here then and the dog considered her as part of the family. He has free run of the alley and is a good watchdog. He won't bother callers he knows well, but he barks at everybody else."

Mrs. Miller said she had not heard the dog bark on Friday. Autopsy surgeons agreed that the victim had been dead about five days but could not narrow the time any further. "But we can tell you this," one of them reported. "Mrs. Burkey was killed about six hours after she had eaten her last meal."

Shortly after local newspapers published details of the murder, reporting that police were seeking the person who had eaten with Mrs. Burkey on Friday, a man named Francis Smith hurried into headquarters.

"I must be the guy you're looking for," he told Moran, "but I didn't kill Nora."

Smith said he and Nora Burkey had been dating for several years but he had walked out the previous month when he learned she was seeing another man. Nora had telephoned him on Friday, inviting him for supper. "She had the table set up real pretty," he recalled.

He said they ate at about six o'clock, and he had to leave soon after that because he was working on the night shift, starting at eight o'clock, at a mine near Powhatan.

Since Mrs. Burkey had died six hours after eating, this set the murder time at about midnight on Friday. Investigators checking Smith's alibi quickly verified that he had worked all night in the mine.

Because Miller had a key to the apartment, officers also delved into his movements on Friday night. Both he and his wife insisted they had spent a quiet evening at home and had been in bed by 10 o'clock.

Detectives located a man named Charles Bristol, who admitted having dates with the divorcee. Bristol said that Nora had hinted she would have him over to dinner for the first time on Friday night; but she hadn't phoned him since. He said that he spent Friday night visiting taverns, and despite repeated questioning he could not be shaken from his story.

The puzzled officers turned to Chief Moran. "The fact that the dog didn't bark pretty well eliminates Bristol," he pointed out. "It has to be somebody the dog knows well."

"That leaves us with Smith, who has a perfect alibi, and Miller, whose wife backs him all the way," an officer responded. "What now?"

Chief Moran studied the photos of the murder scene. "The killer was clever," he said, "but the answer was in the apartment all the time."

How good a detective are you? You have all the essential facts that Chief Moran had in this actual case from official files. Who killed Nora Burkey? . . . You will find the real-life solution on page 102.

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: LILIAN JACKSON BRAUN

TITLE: *The Sin of Madame Phloi*

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *It is not a paradox to say that this story can be read with equal interest by both ailurophiles and ailurophobes—much of life is paradoxically dual . . .*

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING MADam Phloi felt an instinctive distaste for the man who moved into the apartment next door. He was fat, and his trouser cuffs had the unsavory odor of fire hydrant.

They met for the first time in the decrepit elevator as it lurched up to the tenth floor of the old building, once fashionable but now coming apart at the seams. Madame Phloi had been out for a stroll in the city park, chewing city grass and chasing faded butterflies, and as she and her companion stepped on the elevator for the slow ride upward, the car was already half filled with the new neighbor.

The fat man and the Madame presented a contrast that was not unusual in this apartment house, which had a brilliant past and no future. He was bulky, uncouth, sloppily attired. Madame Phloi was a long-legged, blue-eyed aristocrat whose creamy fawn coat shaded into brown at the extremities.

The Madame deplored fat men. They had no laps, and of what use is a lapless human? Nevertheless, she gave him the common courtesy of a sniff at his trouser cuffs and immediately backed away, twitching her nose and breathing through the mouth.

"*GET* that cat away from me," the fat man roared, stamping his feet thunderously at Madame Phloi. Her companion pulled on the leash, although there was no need —the Madame with one backward leap had retreated to a safe corner of the elevator, which shuddered and continued its groaning ascent.

"Don't you like animals?" asked the gentle voice at the other end of the leash.

"Filthy, sneaky beasts," the fat man said with a snarl. "Last place I lived, some lousy cat got in my room and et my parakeet."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Very sorry. But you don't need to worry about Madame Phloi and Thapthim. They never leave the apartment except on a leash."

"You got *TWO?* That's just fine, that is! Keep 'em away from me, or I'll break their rotten necks. I ain't wrung a cat's neck since I was fourteen, but I remember how."

And with the long black box he was carrying, the fat man lunged at the impeccable Madame Phloi, who sat in her corner, flat-eared and tense. Her fur bristled, and she tried to dart away. Even when her companion picked her up in protective arms, Madame Phloi's body was taut and trembling.

Not until she was safely home in her modest but well-cushioned apartment did she relax. She walked stiff-legged to the sunny spot on the carpet where Thapthim was sleeping and licked the top of his head. Then she had a complete bath herself—to rid her coat of the fat man's odor. Thapthim did not wake.

This drowsy, unambitious, amiable creature—her son—was a puzzle to Madame Phloi, who was sensitive and spirited herself. She didn't try to understand him; she merely loved him. She spent hours washing his paws and breast and other parts he could easily have reached with his own tongue. At dinnertime she chewed slowly so there would be something left on her plate for his dessert, and he always gobbled the extra portion hungrily. And when he slept, which was most of the time, she kept watch by his side, sitting with a tall, regal posture until she swayed with weariness. Then she made herself into a small bundle and dozed with one eye open.

Thapthim was lovable, to be sure. He appealed to other cats, large and small dogs, people, and even ailurophobes in a limited way. He had a face like a beautiful brown flower and large blue eyes, tender and trusting. Ever since he was a kitten, he had been willing to purr at the touch of a hand—any hand. Eventually he became so agreeable that he purred if anyone looked at him across the room. What's more, he came when called; he gratefully devoured whatever was served on his dinner plate; and when he was told to get down, he got down.

His wise parent disapproved this uncatly conduct; it indicated a certain lack of character, and no good would come of it. By her own example she tried to guide him. When dinner was served, she gave the plate a haughty sniff and walked away, no matter how tempting the dish. That was the way it was done by any self-respecting feline. In a

minute or two she returned and condescended to dine, but never with open enthusiasm.

Furthermore, when human hands reached out, the catly thing was to bound away, lead them a chase, flirt a little before allowing oneself to be caught and cuddled. Thapthim, sorry to say, greeted any friendly overture by rolling over, purring and looking soulful.

From an early age he had known the rules of the apartment:

"No sleeping in the cupboard with the pots and pans."

"Sitting on the table with the inkwell is permissible."

"Sitting on the table with the coffee pot is never allowed."

The sad truth was that Thapthim obeyed these rules. Madame Phloi, on the other hand, knew that a rule was a challenge, and it was a matter of integrity to violate it. To obey was to sacrifice one's dignity . . . It seemed that her son would never learn the true values in life.

To be sure, Thapthim was adored for his good nature in the human world of inkwells and coffee pots. But Madame Phloi was equally adored—and for the correct reasons. She was respected for her independence, admired for her clever methods of getting her own way, and loved for the cowlick on her white breast, the kink in her tail, and the squint in her delphinium-blue eyes. She was more truly Siamese than her son. Her face was small and perky. By cocking her head and staring with heart-melting eyes, slightly crossed, she could charm a porterhouse steak out from under a knife and fork.

Until the fat man and his black box moved in next door, Madame Phloi had never known an unfriendly soul. She had two companions in her tenth floor apartment—genial creatures without names who came and went a good deal. One was an easy mark for between-meal snacks; a tap on his ankle always produced a spoonful of cottage cheese. The other served as a hot-water bottle on cold nights and punctually obliged whenever the Madame wished to have her underside stroked or her cheekbones massaged. This second one also murmured compliments in a gentle voice that made one squeeze one's eyes in pleasure.

Life was not all love and cottage cheese, however. Madame Phloi had her regular work. She was official watcher and listener for the household.

There were six windows that needed watching, for a wide ledge ran around the building flush with the tenth floor window sills, and this was a promenade for pigeons. They strutted, searched their feathers, and ignored the Madame, who sat on the sill and watched them dispassionately but thoroughly through the window screen.

While watching was a daytime job, listening was done after dark

and required greater concentration. Madame Phloi listened for noises in the walls. She heard termites chewing, pipes sweating, and sometimes the ancient plaster cracking; but mostly she listened to the ghosts of generations of deceased mice.

One evening, shortly after the incident in the elevator, Madame Phloi was listening, Thapthim was asleep, and the other two were quietly turning pages of books, when a strange and horrendous sound came from the wall. The Madame's ears flicked to attention, then flattened against her head.

An interminable screech was coming out of that wall, like nothing the Madame had ever heard before. It chilled the blood and tortured the eardrums. So painful was the shrillness that Madame Phloi threw back her head and complained with a piercing howl of her own. The strident din even waked Thapthim. He looked about in alarm, shook his head wildly, and clawed at his ears to get rid of the offending noise.

The others heard it, too.

"Listen to that!" said the one with the gentle voice.

"It must be that new man next door," said the other. "It's incredible."

"I can't imagine anyone so crude producing anything so exquisite. Is it Prokofieff he's playing?"

"No, I think it's Bartok."

"He was carrying his violin in the elevator today. He tried to hit Phloi with it."

"He's a nut . . . Look at the cats —apparently they don't care for violin."

Madame Phloi and Thapthim, bounding from the room, collided with each other as they rushed to hide under the bed.

That was not the only kind of noise which emanated from the adjoining apartment in those upsetting days after the fat man moved in. The following evening, when Madame Phloi walked into the living room to commence her listening, she heard a fluttering sound dimly through the wall, accompanied by highly conversational chirping. This was agreeable music, and she settled down on the sofa to enjoy it, tucking her brown paws neatly under her creamy body.

Her contentment was soon disturbed, however, when the fat man's voice burst through the wall like thunder.

"Look what you done, you dirty skunk!" he bellowed. "Right in my fiddle! Get back in your cage before I brain you."

There was a frantic beating of wings.

"*GET* down off that window, or I'll bash your head in."

This threat brought only a torrent of chirping.

"Shut up, you stupid cluck! Shut up and get back in that cage, or I'll . . ."

There was a splintering crash, and after that all was quiet except for an occasional pitiful "Peep!"

Madame Phloi was fascinated. In fact, when she resumed her watching the next day, pigeons seemed rather insipid entertainment. She had waked the family that morning in her usual way—by staring intently at their foreheads as they slept. Then she and Thapthim had a game of hockey in the bathtub with a ping pong ball, followed by a dish of mackerel, and after breakfast the Madame took up her post at the living-room window. Everyone had left for the day but not before opening the window and placing a small cushion on the chilly marble sill.

There she sat—Madame Phloi—a small but alert package of fur, sniffing the welcome summer air, seeing all, and knowing all. She knew, for example, that the person who was at that moment walking down the tenth floor hallway, wearing old tennis shoes and limping slightly, would halt at the door of her apartment, set down his pail, and let himself in with a passkey.

Indeed, she hardly bothered to turn her head when the window washer entered. He was one of her regular court of admirers. His odor was friendly, although it suggested damp basements and floor mops, and he talked sensibly—indulging in none of that falsetto foolishness with which some people insulted the Madame's intelligence.

"Hop down, kitty," he said in a musical voice. "Charlie's gotta take out that screen. See, I brought you some cheese."

He held out a modest offering of rat cheese, and Madame Phloi investigated it. Unfortunately it was the wrong variety, and she shook one fastidious paw at it.

"Mighty fussy cat," Charlie laughed. "Well, now, you set there and watch Charlie clean this here window. Don't you go jumpin' out on the ledge, because Charlie ain't runnin' after you. No sir! That old ledge, she's startin' to crumble. Some day them pigeons'll stamp their feet hard, and down she goes! . . . Hey, lookit the broken glass out here. Somebody busted a window."

Charlie sat on the marble sill and pulled the upper sash down in his lap, and while Madame Phloi followed his movements carefully, Thapthim sauntered into the room, yawning and stretching, and swallowed the cheese.

"Now Charlie puts the screen back in, and you two guys can watch them crazy pigeons some more. This screen, she's comin' apart, too. Whole buildin' seems to be crackin' up."

Remembering to replace the cushion on the cool, hard sill, he then went on to clean the next window, and the Madame resumed her post, sitting on the very edge of the cushion so that Thapthim could have most of it.

The pigeons were late that morning, probably frightened away by the window washer. It was while Madame Phloi patiently waited for the first visitor to skim in on a blue-gray wing that she noticed the tiny opening in the screen. Every aperture, no matter how small, was a temptation; she had to prove she could wriggle through any tight space, whether there was a good reason or not.

She waited until Charlie had limped out of the apartment before she began pushing at the screen with her nose, first gingerly and then stubbornly. Inch by inch the rusted mesh ripped away from the frame until the whole corner formed a loose flap, and Madame Phloi slithered through—nose and ears, slender shoulders, dainty Queen Anne forefeet, svelte torso, lean flanks, hind legs like steel springs, and finally proud brown tail. For the first time in her life she found herself on the pigeon promenade. She gave a delicious shudder.

Inside the screen the lethargic Thapthim, jolted by this strange turn of affairs, watched his daring parent with a quarter inch of his pink tongue hanging out. They touched noses briefly through the screen, and the Madame proceeded to explore. She advanced cautiously and with mincing step, for the pigeons had not been tidy in their habits.

The ledge was about two feet wide. To its edge Madame Phloi moved warily, nose down and tail high. Ten stories below there were moving objects but nothing of interest, she decided. Walking daintily along the extreme edge to avoid the broken glass, she ventured in the direction of the fat man's apartment, impelled by some half-forgotten curiosity.

His window stood open and unscreened, and Madame Phloi peered in politely. There, sprawled on the floor lay the fat man himself, snorting and heaving his immense paunch in a kind of rhythm. It always alarmed her to see a human on the floor, which she considered feline domain. She licked her nose apprehensively and stared at him with enormous eyes, one iris hypnotically off-center. In a dark corner of the room something fluttered and squawked, and the fat man waked.

"SHcrrff! *GET* out of here!" he shouted, struggling to his feet.

In three leaps Madame Phloi crossed the ledge back to her own window and pushed through the screen to safety. Looking back to see if the fat man might be chasing her and being reassured that he wasn't, she washed Thapthim's ears and her own paws and sat down to wait for pigeons.

Like any normal cat, Madame Phloi lived by the Rule of Three. She resisted every innovation three times before accepting it, tackled an obstacle three times before giv-

ing up, and tried each new activity three times before tiring of it. Consequently she made two more sallies to the pigeon promenade and eventually convinced Thapthim to join her.

Together they peered over the edge at the world below. The sense of freedom was intoxicating. Recklessly Thapthim made a leap at a low-flying pigeon and landed on his mother's back. She cuffed his ear in retaliation. He poked her nose. They grappled and rolled over and over on the ledge, oblivious of the long drop below them, taking playful nips of each other's hide and snarling guttural expressions of glee.

Suddenly and instinctively Madame Phloi scrambled to her feet and crouched in a defensive position. The fat man was leaning from his window.

"Here, kitty, kitty," he was saying in one of those despised falsetto voices, offering some tidbit in a saucer. The Madame froze, but Thapthim turned his beautiful trusting eyes on the stranger and advanced along the ledge. Purring and waving his tail cordially, he walked into the trap. It all happened in a matter of seconds: the saucer was withdrawn, and a long black box was swung at Thapthim like a ball bat, sweeping him off the ledge and into space. He was silent as he fell.

When the family came home, laughing and chattering, with their arms full of packages, they knew at once something was amiss. No one greeted them at the door. Madame Phloi hunched moodily on the window sill staring at a hole in the screen, and Thapthim was not to be found.

"Look at the screen!" cried the gentle voice.

"I'll bet he got out on the ledge."

"Can you lean out and look? Be careful."

"You hold Phloi."

"Do you see him?"

"Not a sign of him! There's a lot of glass scattered around, and the window's broken next door."

"Do you suppose that man . . . ? I feel sick."

"Don't worry, dear. We'll find him . . . There's the doorbell! Maybe someone's bringing him home."

It was Charlie standing at the door. He fidgeted uncomfortably. "'Scuse me, folks," he said. "You missin' one of your kitties?"

"Yes! Have you found him?"

"Poor little guy," said Charlie. "Found him lyin' right under your windows—where the bushes is thick."

"He's dead!" the gentle one moaned.

"Yes, ma'am. That's a long way down."

"Where is he now?"

"I got him down in the basement, ma'am. I'll take care of him real nice. I don't think you'd want to see the poor guy."

Still Madame Phloi stared at the hole in the screen and waited for Thapthim. From time to time she checked the other windows, just to be sure. As time passed and he did not return, she looked behind the radiators and under the bed. She pried open the cupboard door where the pots and pans were stored. She tried to burrow her way into the closet. She sniffed all around the front door. Finally she stood in the middle of the living room and called loudly in a high-pitched, wailing voice.

Later that evening Charlie paid another visit to the apartment.

"Only wanted to tell you, ma'am, how nice I took care of him," he said. "I got a box that was just the right size. A white box, it was. And I wrapped him up in a piece of old blue curtain. The color looked real pretty with his fur. And I buried the little guy right under your windows behind the bushes."

And still Madame searched, returning again and again to watch the ledge from which Thapthim had disappeared. She scorned food. She rebuffed any attempts at consolation. And all night she sat wide-eyed and waiting in the dark.

The living-room window was now tightly closed, but the following day the Madame—after she was left by herself in the lonely apartment—went to work on the bedroom screens. One was new and hopeless, but the second screen was slightly corroded, and she was soon nosing through a slit that lengthened as she struggled out onto the ledge.

Picking her way through the broken glass, she approached the spot where Thapthim had vanished. And then it all happened again. There he was—the fat man —reaching forth with a saucer.

"Here, kitty, kitty."

Madame Phloi hunched down and backed away.

"Kitty want some milk?" It was that ugly falsetto, but she didn't run home this time. She crouched there on the ledge, a few inches out of reach.

"Nice kitty. Nice kitty."

Madame Phloi crept with caution toward the saucer in the outstretched fist, and stealthily the fat man extended another hand, snapping his fingers as one would call a dog.

The Madame retreated diagonally—half toward home and half toward the dangerous brink.

"Here, kitty. Here, kitty," he cooed, leaning farther out. But muttering, he said, "You dirty sneak! I'll get you if it's the last thing I ever do. Comin' after my bird, weren't you?"

Madame Phloi recognized danger with all her senses. Her ears were back, her whiskers curled, and her white underside hugged the ledge.

A little closer she moved, and the fat man made a grab for her. She jerked back a step, with unblinking

eyes fixed on his sweating face. He was furtively laying the saucer aside, she noticed, and edging his fat paunch farther out the window.

Once more she advanced almost into his grasp, and again he lunged at her with both powerful arms.

The Madame leaped lightly aside.

"This time I'll get you, you stinkin' cat," he cried, and raising one knee to the window sill, he threw himself at Madame Phloi. As she slipped through his fingers, he landed on the ledge with all his weight.

A section of it crumbled beneath him. He bellowed, clutching at the air, and at the same time a streak of creamy brown flashed out of sight. The fat man was not silent as he fell.

As for Madame Phloi, she was found doubled in half in a patch of sunshine on her living-room carpet, innocently washing her fine brown tail.

Real-Life Solution to

Who Killed Nora Burkey?

by EDWARD D. RADIN

"The setup on the table is the key," Chief Moran went on. "Two jars of jam, the unsliced pie, and the remains of egg on the place indicate it was *no supper Smith had*—but an early meal, like lunch. I doubt that he was invited. The fact that one dish was in the sink shows that Mrs. Burkey already had eaten. Women don't take one dish at a time from a table.

"Smith came to us with his story only after newspapers published the autopsy report. By lying about the time he was there, *saying it was later,* he gave himself a perfect alibi."

Stunned by the sudden collapse of his story, Smith confessed. He told the police that he went to the apartment to beg for a date, but Nora turned him down. He fixed his own lunch but Nora wouldn't let him cut a piece of the pie. They began quarreling over her dating Bristol and he picked up a piece of wood and crashed it down on her skull. He then carried her into the bedroom and strangled her.

Placed on trial in April 1938, Smith pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

a new story by

AUTHOR: **HELEN NIELSEN**

TITLE: ***The Hopeless Case***

TYPE: Detective Story

DETECTIVE: Lawyer Simon Ingersoll

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *Everybody felt sorry for the ambitious, young criminal lawyer—Captain Chance at headquarters, District Attorney Nelson, even his landlady Angelina!*

EVERYBODY HATES A CROOKED COP. If an impetuous redhead pumps a bullet through her boy friend, or if a man with a nagging wife terminates an unpleasant conversation by some non-legal method, each will receive ardent fan mail from every corner of the globe; but a crooked cop is an insult to the taxpayer, and taxpayers are sensitive.

Timothy Benedict was an ex-cop of just two weeks' standing on that stormy night when he was arrested with a florist's box filled with $100 bills and an explanation implausible even to himself. He was as fine an asset to an ambitious young criminal lawyer's career as a testimonial from an occupant of Death Row.

"You hate yourself," Angelina said. "That's why you punish yourself by taking hopeless cases."

Angelina was a landlady; but she was much more. Her rents were reasonable; her location was good; and her lasagne, served in the kitchen to a shaggy, semi-cadaverous waif of 29, was the best this side of Bologna.

The 29-year-old waif was Simon Ingersoll, attorney-at-law. He raised his troubled eyes from the plate of lasagne and frowned at Angelina.

"Benedict says he's innocent."

"Innocent! A man is a policeman for twelve years. Why? Because he gets rich on a sergeant's pay? No! Because he's building up for a pension. But Timothy Benedict quit after twelve years, and then he gets married and buys an expensive motel—"

Simon could have stopped Angelina; but he didn't. *Vox populi.* He wanted her to set it all up for him, less euphoniously but just as thoroughly as District Attorney Nelson would do in the courtroom.

"Two weeks later," Angelina added, "Benedict is picked up on a parking lot outside of a swanky downtown restaurant carrying a box with $50,000 inside of it, which just happens to be the amount of the mortgage on his motel! Too bad the crook who delivered the money escaped with that syndicate gangster."

Judge, jury, and verdict. With enough Angelinas on the panel, Nelson could coast Benedict to prison. And then Simon's troubled mind caught on her last provocative statement.

"Syndicate gangster?" he repeated. "Where did you hear that?"

"It was in the papers this afternoon. The two cops who arrested Benedict told the reporters they recognized the driver of the getaway car as one of the syndicate men."

"Fine!" Simon exclaimed, "Evidence that will never hold up in court, but it's already in everybody's parlor! Do you remember how it was raining that night?"

"It's been raining all month," Angelina said.

"Exactly. How could Paley and Flood have made a positive identification in a downpour? Angelina, listen—" The most adamant of juries could be moved. Angelina had to be. "Everybody knows the syndicate has been operating in this area, and that means protection somewhere along the line. Sooner or later, the boom had to fall on someone. Benedict's story could be true."

"If you had a wife," Angelina said, "She wouldn't let you get mixed up in a case like this."

"He could have received an anonymous telephone invitation to dine at the Coach and Fours that night," Simon insisted. "He could have discussed it with his wife behind the counter of the motel café, just as he claims, and they could have decided some of his friends on the police force were giving them a wedding dinner. They could have gone to the restaurant in complete innocence until the florist's box was delivered to their table—"

Angelina shook her head. "You've got no witness," she said.

"One," Simon said.

Angelina looked bewildered. To emphasize his statement, Simon held up one index finger. "One witness," he said, and then, because there would never be a more opportune moment, he left the table and went to the kitchen door. He

opened it, beckoning with one hand. A car door slammed.

Seconds later, a slightly built man enveloped in a checkered topcoat with the collar turned up stepped into the kitchen. He carried a small leather case lettered "Ace Vending, Inc."

"Mr. Warsaw," Simon said quickly, "this is the wonderful landlady I told you about."

Mr. Warsaw smiled vaguely. Thin, pale-blond hair stretched like a tight cap over his narrow skull; his face was a deep tan with a slight flaking of skin on the end of his nose.

"Simon—" Angelina began.

"Mr. Warsaw," Simon said, "is my witness. When none of the guests that had been registered at Benedict's motel checked out as the café customers, I ran an ad in the newspapers. Today Mr. Warsaw came to my office. He heard everything, Angelina. He was waiting on the stool at the end of the counter near the wall telephone. He'd come to talk about installing a vending machine. He not only heard the conversation between Benedict and his wife, he heard the voice that delivered the message. He repeated the telephone conversation for me word for word though it hasn't been made public. But Mr. Warsaw and I have a problem."

Angelina studied Mr. Warsaw. He looked very harmless and said nothing; but she had sharp ears.

"Simon," she said, "what problem?"

"None," Simon answered, "when I think of that empty room upstairs next to mine."

"No," protested Angelina, "not in there."

"Benedict is being framed, Angelina, and the people who have gone to so much trouble to frame him won't like the idea of an unscheduled witness spoiling the job."

"And anyone could have seen you bring him here!" Angelina protested. "I don't want my house shot up!"

"Then you admit that Benedict may be innocent?"

Simon couldn't have done better in a courtroom. While Angelina groped for a reply, he took out his wallet. He counted out $100 and placed it on the table. Reluctantly, Angelina took the money.

Timothy Benedict was 34, good-looking, but awkward in a cell as if he still belonged outside in the uniform of the guard at the end of the hall. He took the object Simon handed him and studied it carefully. It was a driver's license with a photograph.

"John Warsaw," he read.

"The face," Simon urged. "Do you recognize the face?"

Benedict studied the photo.

"I've seen this man," he said slowly, "but I don't remember where or when."

"He had a salesman's kit. He'd

come to see you about installing a gum machine."

Benedict's head came up.

"Warsaw," he said brightly. "A little guy with thin blond hair."

"At the counter near the telephone?"

"I don't remember that. It was earlier—oh, about the second or third day after we took over the place. This man came to see me about a vending machine, but I was too busy to talk."

"And so he came back."

"He said he was coming back. Maybe he did and I didn't see him. As I told you before, Lita and I discussed the call behind the counter for a few minutes, and then I had to rush back to the kitchen because some grease had caught fire on the stove." Benedict smiled wryly. "I don't mind admitting the place is a lot more work than Lita and I had bargained for; but we planned to hire help as soon as the weather changed and business picked up. Now, I don't know what's going to happen. If I don't get out of this, we'll lose everything. Lita can't run it alone."

"No sinking fund?" Simon asked.

"Not much. Lita had a small inheritance and I had my savings. It was enough to get a loan from the bank. Can't you bring that out at the trial? Won't it make people see that I haven't been a part of any payoff?"

"It might make them think you were just smart enough to cover your tracks," Simon said. "What about the payoff, Benedict? Are you sure you never heard any rumors?"

Timothy Benedict's face darkened, and it wasn't good-looking that way. Simon was glad he wasn't the guard in uniform at the end of the hall. Soberly, Benedict handed back the license.

"If you don't have faith in me, you can chuck the case," he said.

"But the whole town's been muttering under its breath."

"All right! The rackets are operating, but not with my help. I was a clean cop, Ingersoll. Don't forget that! I'll defend myself if you're afraid—"

Simon's smile curbed the outburst. "Just verifying a hunch," he said. "Now, there's one thing more. When you were arrested, you made a statement describing the details of that anonymous telephone call. What, exactly, did you say?"

"As nearly as I can recall," he said, "the voice—a man's voice—asked if I was Timothy Benedict. I said that I was, and then the voice said, 'This is a friend. You and Mrs. Benedict are requested to appear at the Coach and Fours Restaurant tonight at eight thirty. The headwaiter will show you to your table. No excuses and no rain-checks.'"

"And that's what you told the police?"

"As far as I can remember, yes."

"Who was present at the time?"

"Captain Chance. District Attorney Nelson. Paley and Flood. The police stenographer—a man named Anders."

"Anyone else?"

"My wife."

Simon was silent for a speculative moment. When he stopped asking questions, Benedict began.

"What about Warsaw?" he demanded. "Does he say that he was at the counter when the call came through?"

"He does," Simon answered.

"Then he must have heard. I repeated the whole conversation to Lita. We chewed it over between us, and we didn't whisper. Warsaw's a break, isn't he? A real break!"

A client's morale was important; but Simon was a cautious man.

"It's a break," he admitted. "I'll tell you later what kind."

When the cell door closed behind him, Simon went directly upstairs.

Captain Chance wasn't alone in his office. A huge, ruddy figure with gray-dusted hair, he seemed almost atavistic alongside the bright young man who might have stepped out of a current college yearbook. District Attorney Nelson wasn't that young; but it would take a trip to the Hall of Records to prove it.

"Ingersoll," he said brightly, as Simon stepped into the office, "I hear you've got Benedict."

If he had said that Simon had an incurable disease, the undertone of pity would have been less pronounced.

"I've got Benedict," Simon answered, "and that's why I'm here.' He turned to Captain Chance. "What's this about Paley and Flood recognizing the driver of the payoff courier's car? I'm curious to know how the identification was made, Simon said. "It's my understanding that Paley and Flood were posted in the parking lot outside the Coach and Fours in response to an anonymous telephone tip concerning Benedict."

"Suspicious actions," Chance said. "When a man scurried out of the restaurant and ran across the parking lot to a sedan with the motor running, they had to notice. He was built like Benedict. They thought it was their man. Later, after Benedict's arrest, he described the man who had delivered the box of money to his table, and the description tallied.

"Built like Benedict," Simon mused. "But what about the driver?"

"Both Paley and Flood got a good look at him when the car swung out of the lot. They've identified the mug shots of one Malone, or Maloney. He has a string of arrests in half a dozen states."

"Captain," the District Attorney cut in, "I know that you have a generous nature, but why not let Mr. Ingersoll work out his own case?"

"Mr. Ingersoll is working out his

own case," Simon said. "Mr. Ingersoll is wondering why the payoff man was built like Benedict."

"Mother Nature has her reasons," Nelson remarked.

"On the other hand," Simon argued, "he could have been picked for the purpose of drawing the stakeout's attention to that car. If you want to frame a man with unsavory companions, it's a good idea to have a recognizable face in the picture."

Nelson's smile was too thin to survive. "Nobody is framing your client," he said. "My office has had several suspects under surveillance for some time, and Benedict was one of them. When a police sergeant buys expensive property, it arouses suspicion."

"Did you know that Benedict planned to marry?" Simon asked.

"We did. A beautiful woman can be a powerful incentive for this sort of thing."

"But the woman who became Mrs. Benedict had money of her own."

"All the more reason for Benedict to need more. No woman wants to be loved for her money."

Nelson had to be very sure of himself to have tipped his hand so soon. That made two people in the office who were very sure of themselves.

Simon asked to see a copy of Benedict's statement at the time of his arrest. There were no objections. Chance pushed a button and issued a directive. Moments later, a third man entered the room with a paper folder in his hands.

"I'll take that, Anders," Chance said. He glanced at the contents and then passed the folder to Simon.

There had been no introductions, but on the basis of Benedict's statement, Simon knew the third man was Anders, the police stenographer.

When he was finished, Simon returned the transcript to Anders.

"Is there anything else I can do for you, Mr. Ingersoll?" Anders asked.

Ten finger holes in the telephone dial; ten white eyes staring out from the black box on the wall. Simon counted them clockwise and counterclockwise while Lita Benedict drew coffee out of the urn.

"I'm slow," she admitted, returning to the counter. "Since they took Tim away, I'm all thumbs."

She wasn't all thumbs. She was a complete set of everything, beautifully assembled.

"Mrs. Benedict," Simon said, "Why did you marry Timothy?"

Coffee spilled over in the saucer as she put the cup in front of him.

"I was—I am—in love with Tim."

"And you had an inheritance."

"A small one. An old house and a vacant lot at the edge of town. I sold them both for $15,000. Tim had his savings."

"I don't suppose it ever occurred to you that he might not have saved

the money he put down on this place."

Instant anger was the most honest of the emotions. Lita Benedict's could have been notarized.

"Might not!" she gasped. "Mr. Ingersoll, do *you* believe this charge against Tim?"

"Fifty thousand dollars in a gift box is hard to come by," Simon said.

"But Tim didn't know what was in that box! We went to the Coach and Fours because the man on the telephone told us to go. 'You and your wife,' he said. What were we to think except that it was a surprise party. Then a man brought the box. It looked as if a corsage were in it. Tim opened it and said, 'Let's get out of here.'"

Simon watched Lita talk out her anger; then, as he had done earlier in Benedict's cell, he produced the driver's license bearing a likeness of John Warsaw.

"Have you ever seen this man?" he asked.

"No," she said. "I don't think so."

"Your husband has identified him as a salesman who tried to get him to install a vending machine."

Lita Benedict had glanced at the photo; now she studied it carefully.

"There was such a man," she admitted, "but I didn't talk to him."

"This man?"

"It might have been. All I actually remember was a checkered topcoat."

"This," Simon said, "is the man. Now, try to remember. Did you see that topcoat the morning your husband received the call to go to the Coach and Fours?"

Lita Benedict tried. "I don't remember," she said slowly.

There were three newspapers in the city. After leaving Lita Benedict, Simon went to each in turn. He looked up the issues following Benedict's arrest and studied the complete texts. That done, he consulted the Yellow Book and paid a visit to Ace Vending, Inc.

It was a small walk-up office with one man in charge. The operation was largely self-controlled. Warsaw had made his initial investment nearly two months ago. His routes and collection days were of his own choosing, and his reports back to the office were made on a monthly basis. The last one had been a week before Benedict's arrest.

That done, Simon went to a pay telephone and called Angelina.

"How is the new roomer?"

"Trouble," Angelina said. "Four times today I've had to empty the ashtrays in his room. He's got the upstairs hall looking like a politician's back room. Besides, he wants me to call him a book."

"A what?"

"A book. To place a bet. Mad Maud is a filly he knows like a baby sister, he says. The odds are twenty-to-one, and she can't lose."

"Take care of him, Angelina,"

Simon told her. "What about outside the house? Have you seen anyone watching?"

"The bakery truck has been past three times."

"The bakery truck?"

"Usually it comes once a day."

Simon was worried. He stepped outside the telephone booth and turned up his coat collar. The driver's license he had borrowed from Warsaw bore an address. It was a new apartment building in an old section. The manager's office was on the first floor.

"Johnny Warsaw isn't here. He's gone out of town," the man said.

"When did he leave?" Simon asked, surprised.

"A long time ago. Warsaw don't live here any more. I wish you fellows would stop coming around."

"Fellows?" Simon echoed.

"I tell them all. Johnny Warsaw don't live here! How long is it going to be before you believe me?"

There was one more stop to be made before Simon could return to the rooming house. At a newsstand, he picked up a racing form and searched through it until he found what he was looking for. Mad Maud had gone in the first at Hialeah, a claiming race for fillies. He pocketed the form and drove back across town. At the rooming house he went directly upstairs.

Simon gave Warsaw a rundown on his activities, culminating with the apartment manager's strange conduct. Warsaw laughed.

"The old boy's cooperating," he said. "I briefed him on what to say if anyone came asking for me."

"Are you really that frightened?" Simon asked.

"The people who are building a cell around Benedict aren't amateurs," Warsaw answered.

"Yet you volunteered to testify."

Warsaw hesitated, rolling a cigarette between his fingers.

"I'm not the hero type," he admitted, "but in my line of work I see things that I don't like, and I think, 'Johnny, this could happen to you.' Once I've made it to the witness stand and told my story, who will finger me? I'll be too much in the public eye for anyone to take the risk."

When Simon left Warsaw, he went downstairs to the kitchen and had an earnest, persuasive conversation with Angelina—after which he went up to his own room, tossed a few things into a suitcase, and, without seeing Warsaw again, went out to his car.

He drove to the airline office and booked a round trip to Miami. He checked his suitcase and then went to a telephone booth. He called the office of Captain Chance. The captain had gone home, but an accommodating someone took the message. He requested that Timothy Benedict be informed that his lawyer, Simon Ingersoll, would not be in to see him for a few days because a matter pertinent to the case was taking him to Miami.

That done, Simon waited until the limousine left for the airport. When it left, he was on it. He stayed on it until the first hotel stop where he ducked off and hailed a cab. Fifteen minutes later, he dismissed the cab a block from the rooming house and continued on foot.

Dusk was at the edge of darkness. The street lamps were soft yellow balls on tall sticks. Simon stopped walking when a sedan parked in front of the rooming house.

A man stepped out. He appeared to be a businessman—well-dressed and carrying a brief case under his arm. He verified the address, mounted the steps, and rang the doorbell.

As soon as he was out of sight, Simon hurried on, cut through the driveway, and entered the back door. Angelina stood in the kitchen, her eyes wide with excitement.

"I did what you told me," she began. "I let him go upstairs."

Simon gestured her to silence and stepped quickly through the kitchen to the hall. The stairway was empty. He went upstairs and advanced to Warsaw's door. It was closed, but he could hear voices.

"What is Simon Ingersoll doing on the plane for Miami?" a man asked.

"What?"

"That was my question. What did you tell him, Warsaw?"

"Nothing—"

"You couldn't go through with it, could you? One lousy perjury sentence to cancel a $30,000 gambling debt. You thought it was a good deal when we set this up."

"I do think it's a good deal! I do!"

"I told you in the beginning we couldn't afford any risk of Benedict not being convicted. You were sent to answer Ingersoll's ad to make sure he would base his case on a witness who could be discredited in the courtroom. What do you think happens when he finds you were registered in a Miami hotel the day you were supposed to be in Benedict's café?"

Warsaw was scared. "I don't believe you. I talked to Ingersoll just a little while ago."

"We know you talked to Ingersoll," the man with the brief case said. "You've been watched, Warsaw. We don't trust bad losers. Ingersoll was out all day. He bought a ticket to Miami, and then called in to leave word with Benedict where he could be reached. To me, that means only one thing. You've talked."

Warsaw's terrified eyes flickered upward and brightened.

"Look behind you," he said.

"That's an old one," the man with the brief case answered.

"Yes," Simon remarked, "isn't it?"

When Anders, the police stenographer, whirled about, Simon was ready for him. It was a small trick to take away his gun.

A few evenings later, in Angeli-

na's kitchen, Simon explained everything.

"I was suspicious of Warsaw from the moment he walked into my office," he said.

The Benedicts were being introduced to Angelina's lasagne. Everybody forgives an ex-cop who isn't crooked after all.

Simon continued. "I checked with Ace Vending and learned that Warsaw could have been out of town for as much as a week before the day he was supposed to have overheard that conversation. That tallied with his unseasonal sunburn."

"Miami!" Lita Benedict exclaimed. "How did you guess?"

"I didn't guess," Simon said. "Angelina told me. Mad Maud at twenty-to-one. That gave me a clue to Warsaw's problem, and he had to have a problem to be volunteering for a perjury stretch. That gave me the set-up. With Warsaw in Miami the day he was supposed to be in your husband's café, all the D.A. would have to do was to follow through on another of those convenient telephone tips—such as the one that put Paley and Flood in the parking lot the night you were handed $50,000, Benedict—and get the evidence to blow my case right out of the courtroom. Warsaw wasn't a witness for the defense. He was a plant. As soon as I knew that, I had my job laid out for me."

"To flush out the person who had leaked my statement to Warsaw," Benedict added. "How did you know it was Anders?"

"He told me," Simon answered. "Six people were present when you made that statement: Captain Chance, District Attorney Nelson, the arresting officers, Paley and Flood, Anders, and your wife. When I called at Chance's office to check the exact statement, Anders made the mistake of calling me by name, in spite of the fact that we had never met and weren't introduced in the office. I decided that if he knew so much about me it must be because he knew more about my client. That was the hunch I played when I made the feint of going to Miami."

And nearly got my place shot up!" Angelina protested.

"You have to take a chance," Simon said. "Remember Mad Maud."

"That," she said, "is what I've been trying to tell you. Take a chance. See how happy the Benedicts are."

"Angelina—" Simon began.

"A wife would never let you get mixed up in such a dangerous case."

"Angelina, be consistent," Simon pleaded. "Benedict is free."

"Because Mr. Smart Lawyer saw that the witness' nose was peeling and guessed he was a phony!" she scoffed. "Where would your client be," she added, and there was no way ever to answer her, "if Mr. Warsaw had been using a sunlamp?"

Another in Mr. Pike's series about contemporary police investigation —with cops that have the smack of reality about them . . . Who said procedural stories lack warmth and human interest?

THE CASE BOOK OF THE 52nd PRECINCT

Clancy and the Shoeshine Boy

by ROBERT L. PIKE

11:30 A.M. Stan was sitting in Clancy's office that Monday morning, his hat thrust back on his head, chair tilted against the wall, face frowning.

"Damnedest thing you ever saw, Lieutenant," he said wonderingly. "Newspapers piled up in stacks all over the place, you couldn't hardly get through the hall. Junk? My God! Telephone directories from the year one, tin cans, barrels, magazines, rags, cigar boxes . . . One room was filled with empty orange crates—you know, them slat-things they use for oranges. It's the truth. You'd have to see it to believe it."

Clancy was taking notes, nodding. "Any idea how he was killed?"

Stanton shook his head. "He was lying there with his arms around his stomach, like he had a gutache, and his legs all pulled up. If he didn't have that bloody nose, we'd probably have figured he passed out natural, but his nose was broke. Doc Freeman said he'd call you when he comes up with something."

Clancy marked it down. "Anything to show how the killer got in?"

"Broke in, I guess. At least, the back door looked like it was pried open. Or it may have been like that all the time, for all we know. The windows are all boarded up with planks, nailed shut, and not a sliver of glass. They weren't touched. Some tramp probably figured the place was deserted and bust in. The old man must have been there and started a fuss, and the tramp popped him to shut him up. And killed him."

Clancy leaned back, twiddling his pencil. "Anything missing?"

Stanton shrugged, nearly unbalanced, and then settled his chair carefully back against the wall. "To tell you the truth, I don't see how you could even tell in that place. You ought to see it—it's hard to explain. A real junk heap. I talked to one of the neighbors and he told me the old man was real screwy. Picked up any piece of junk he saw. He didn't know the old man too well—I guess nobody did—but

he said one day the old man was feeling friendly and started to brag about a stamp and coin collection he had. So far we haven't found a sign of either one. Which doesn't mean too much—it could be hidden any one of a million places in that mess. Plus which, we haven't really looked yet."

"Nobody's looked?"

"Nobody yet," Stanton said. "Timmons found him. The front door was open, first time since Timmons has been on the beat. The boys from downtown are all through; I left Keller there until I get back. I figured on a bite of lunch and then going over and hitting up some more of the neighbors." He glanced at his wrist and eased his chair back to the vertical. "Anything special you want me to do, Lieutenant?"

Clancy laid down his pencil and swiveled toward the open window. The bright, warm June sunlight lit the small room that served as his office, dissipating some of its normal drabness.

"Better keep Keller there with you," Clancy said. "Go over everything in the place. The old man had to live somehow. And see if you can find any trace of that stamp or coin collection." He paused, considering, then shook his head. "Although I doubt if a philatelist or numismatist killed him."

Stanton, having no idea of what a philatelist or numismatist was, nodded his head solemnly. "Will do." He pushed his hat straight and started for the door. "I'm catching a sandwich over at the bar across the street. Can I bring anything back for you, Lieutenant?"

"All right. Roast beef sandwich and a cup of coffee. Black, lots of sugar."

Stanton nodded and disappeared, to be immediately replaced in the doorway by Kaproski, who stuck his head in a trifle apologetically. "Sorry to bother you, Lieutenant," he said, "but I got a customer here won't talk to anybody but the chief salesman."

"Bring him in."

Clancy pushed back the notes he had taken and leaned back as Kaproski came in trailed by an old man carrying a battered homemade shoeshine box. There was great dignity to the deep-lined, brown face; his clothes were old and worn, with leather knee-patches, but the attempt at neatness could be discerned in the clean shirt buttoned to the throat, and the highly polished wrinkled shoes.

The old man hesitated in the doorway as if he were suddenly sorry he had come, but the weight of his problem drew him farther into the room. He stared at Clancy gravely.

"You boss?"

"Yes," Clancy said, equally grave. "What's your trouble?"

The old man looked about the room carefully before returning his

eyes to Clancy's. "I been stole," he said simply.

Clancy nodded his head. "How much?"

The old man hesitated once more, as if fearful that the sum he was about to mention might not be believed. "Seesteen dollar," he finally said. The honesty of his jet-black eyes challenged objection.

Clancy merely nodded again. "Where did you keep it?"

This time the hesitation clearly showed a fear of revealing his hiding place to strangers, but memory that this hiding place could never again serve him broke down his reserve. He lifted the shoeshine box a trifle higher. "Here. Ol' empty can polish."

Clancy asked, "When did you miss it?"

"Now. I look. I don' know why. Money gone."

"Live alone?"

"Wit' gran'son." A shadow of alarm crept across the old man's face as he foresaw the possible direction the questioning might take. "But he's no take it. He's good boy."

"How old is he?"

"I tell you he's no take it. Someone else he's take it." He tore his eyes from Clancy's, as if by breaking their common glance he might also remove all danger of the other's suspicions. "He's go to school, study hard. He's no take it."

"Yeah." Clancy sighed, twirling his pencil. "Sure. Kaproski. Take his name and address, all the facts." He turned back to the old man. "We'll look into it. We'll try and find your sixteen dollars. Don't worry about it."

The old man shrugged fatalistically. He hadn't really expected any help—it was his panic at discovering the loss that had brought him to the precinct house. He followed Kaproski out of the room dejectedly.

Stanton came in moments later, carrying a damp bag. He set it on the desk and jerked his head toward the door. "What's old Martinez doing here?" he asked.

Clancy slit the stained bag up one side and took out a sodden sandwich and a cardboard cup with a loose cover. He looked at the unappetizing combination dubiously, picking up the sandwich. "Martinez?"

"The old man with the shoeshine box. What's his trouble?"

The sandwich tasted as bad as it looked. "You know him?"

"Sure. He shines shoes in front of Haley's Cigar Store over on Amsterdam. He's okay—a good joe."

The coffee was almost cold and had a faintly oily taste. It also tasted more than a little of cardboard. Clancy shuddered. "Know his grandson?"

"Also. Unfortunately. What's the beef?"

Clancy shoved the sandwich to one side. "Claims he's missing sixteen dollars he had hidden in his

shoeshine box. In an old empty can of polish." Stanton snorted. Clancy looked at him curiously. "What's the matter? Don't you believe it?"

"Sure I believe it," Stanton said. "I never knew the old man to lie. But this is a mystery? Hell! His punk grandson took it. Who else?"

"The old man doesn't think so."

Stanton looked at Clancy with deep pity. "The old man wouldn't think so if he had caught the kid with his paw in the box. The old man thinks the sun rises and sets on that little punk." He sighed in disgust, shaking his head. "Well, anyways, I'm on my way. Keller called in and he's waiting for me. We'll give the place a real shakedown. Anything else?"

Clancy dropped the half-eaten sandwich into the wastebasket. He didn't even look at the coffee. "Yeah. This afternoon, on your way back from the house, stop by the school and bring in young Martinez." He looked up at Stanton. "You know where he goes to school?"

"He goes to Wilson High," Stanton said in a stunned voice, "but my God! We got a hundred important things on the fire, Lieutenant."

"Now we've got a hundred and one," Clancy said evenly. "Bring him in. After school."

"But, Lieutenant! For sixteen lousy bucks . . ."

Kaproski had come back in and was listening. Clancy allowed his glance to flicker between the two men; then he swiveled his chair, staring out of the window across the dirty tenements that formed the skyline.

"Where do you draw the line?" he asked quietly, as if he were really asking himself, as if he would really have liked to know. "If the bank on the corner was robbed of sixteen thousand dollars, would it make a case?"

"Well, sure, of course, but . . ."

"If Haley's was knocked off for sixteen hundred—" there was an almost dreamy quality to Clancy's voice—"would we be right in sending a man around?"

"Sure, but look, Lieutenant . . ."

Clancy swung around suddenly, savagely. "So I ask you, where do you draw the line?"

Kaproski always felt nervous when people got too serious. "Look, Lieutenant," he said helpfully. "We could raise sixteen bucks for the old man, just around the precinct here." He added, explaining, "If the kid took it, it's probably gone into the pool tables by now, anyhow."

Clancy looked at him with irritation. "This is a police station," he said coldly. "If that kid swiped sixteen bucks, or sixteen cents, I want to see him." He turned back to Stanton. "I said *if*. Which means you pick him up quietly, with no fuss. None of his friends need to know."

"What I'm getting at," Stanton said patiently, "the old man won't prosecute anyway, so why bother?"

"Look, Stanton," Clancy said in a tone of finality. "That old recluse that got killed this morning, that Willie-what's-his-name, he won't prosecute, either." He pushed the cold cup of coffee away from him in sudden anger. "I said I want to see the kid, and I want to see him!" He paused. "Anyway, I'd like to see the kind of kid an old man like Martinez breaks his back for!"

3:40 P.M. The telephone rang stridently. Clancy pushed aside the report he was working on, reaching across the wide, battered desk to scoop up the receiver.

"Clancy?"

"Yeah."

"Doc Freeman here. About that old man we found dead this morning."

"Yeah." Clancy reached for a pencil, inching his pad closer.

"It looks like he got a sharp poke in the stomach, high up, right under the rib cage. We opened him up and he had a chest cavity full of blood from a ruptured aorta. I'd judge it didn't take too much to break it. He wasn't in very good shape."

"How about the bloody nose?"

The doctor's voice became thoughtful. "In all probability, they were caused by the same thing. It looks like he was jabbed at with something—in the face, breaking the nose, and also in the stomach."

"Any idea of what that something could have been, Doc?"

"Something like an umbrella, maybe, or more probably something a bit thicker. The bruise area on the chest was very restricted and quite regular. Something about as big around as a broomstick, I'd say offhand. It's hard to be definite, Clancy."

Clancy thought a while, twiddling his pencil. "Could it have been a crowbar, Doc? The back door looked like it might have been pried open, by a tramp, maybe."

"It would depend on what kind of a crowbar, Clancy. If he was poked with the sharp end, you'd expect a more linear bruise, or possibly even a lesion. And, of course, if the same tool was used to poke him in the face, a crowbar should have done a lot more damage. Personally, I would be inclined to doubt it was a crowbar."

There was silence for several seconds. Clancy sighed. "Well, thanks, Doc. When will I get it in writing?"

"It's being typed up now. Your copy should be out there by tonight. In more technical language, of course. We have to maintain and protect the profession, you know."

Clancy smiled. "Sure." A sudden thought came to him. "Say, Doc, what about his clothes?"

"They must still be downstairs. He was baby-naked when I got

him. Hold the line. I'll switch."

Clancy waited while voices intermingled on the line; finally one dominated and the others disappeared. "Hello? Yes?"

"Jimmy? This is Lieutenant Clancy at the Fifty-second. That old man Doc Freeman just finished working on—what did you find in his clothes?"

"That's a funny thing, Lieutenant. Did you see him?"

"No."

The morgue attendant laughed. "You should of had. This character has on long underwear, them old-fashioned kind, bedroom slippers, each one different, a pair of patched work pants, one of them printed vests like them Mississippi gamblers used to wear, and on top of everything one of them turtleneck sweaters. In June, yet! What a farce!"

"Hilarious," Clancy said drily. "What did you find in his pockets?"

"Not very much. In his pants pocket he had a rag I guess maybe he used for a handkerchief, and a key, maybe to the front door. In his fancy vest he had a couple of coins. Nothing else."

Clancy leaned forward. "Coins? What kind of coins?"

"Foreign, I guess. Anyhow, not U.S. One of the boys down here says they don't have no special value, though. One of them was an English penny, I remember he said. Size of a lollipop."

Clancy made a note on his pad. "Jimmy, put the coins in an envelope and make out a receipt. I'll have them picked up."

"Want his other things?"

"Yeah. Send the sweater along, too. And the vest. Thanks, Jimmy."

"Any time, Lieutenant."

Clancy eased the receiver back on the bar, and the telephone rang immediately. He picked it up again, pulling his pad closer.

"Lieutenant? This is Stanton." There was deep satisfaction in the voice. "Guess what? Whoever clipped that old man this morning should have stuck around. We've been going through those old telephone directories. The first stack was clean, but after that we really hit paydirt. They're loaded. One and two-dollar bills stashed between the pages all over the place. Some of them old horse-blanket size, even—you remember them? So far we've got over four hundred bucks, and there's lots more phone books to go through, yet."

"How about the coins and stamps?"

"Oh, yeah. We found some stamps—three cigar boxes full." His voice became dubious. "I don't know anything about stamps, Lieutenant, but my guess is these ain't worth anything. Just regular stamps, torn off envelopes. If stamps are worth anything, they keep them in special books, don't they? These were just stuffed into cigar boxes."

"All of the stamps U.S.?"

"No. All sorts of countries. I'll bring them back with me—maybe one of the brains downtown can tell if they're worth anything. On the coins, not a sign."

"Okay. Leave Keller there and come on in. Let him keep looking." Clancy glanced at his wrist watch. "And don't forget to stop by and pick up young Martinez."

Stanton's voice dropped a notch. It was apparent he had been hoping Clancy would have forgotten. "Okay, Lieutenant. I'll also bring in the stamps and the dough we found so far." He could not keep a touch of malice from his voice. "I'll sit on it so the little punk don't swipe it!"

5:15 P.M. The boy was about seventeen, short but well-built, tightly packed into faded levis, with a loose-flowing black shirt open at the throat and buttoned at the wrist with white buttons. His hair glistened in a curving ducktail; his soft black eyes with sweeping lashes were expressionless in the mahogany face. He stood facing Clancy at ease, a slight smile on his full lips.

"You wanted to see me?" he asked.

"Sit down," Clancy said.

"If you don't mind, I'll stand," said the boy, smiling broadly.

Clancy's voice hardened. "Sit down!"

The boy's smile faded and he perched on the edge of a hard chair before the desk.

"Say, what is this, anyway? What's the big idea?"

Clancy just stared at him. The boy began to work up a frown of indignation. "I haven't done anything," he said finally, tight-lipped. "You can't hold me. What's the big idea?"

"Sixteen dollars is the big idea."

"What sixteen dollars?"

"You know what sixteen dollars," Clancy said.

"I don't know anything about any sixteen dollars," the boy said.

Clancy professed astonishment. "You don't know about the sixteen dollars your grandfather's missing?"

"He must have lost it," the kid said sullenly. "Keeping it in a stupid old tin can!"

"When did you find out about it?" Clancy asked softly.

The kid was silent, biting his lip, his brain working fast. "I heard some of the kids talking about it this morning at school."

"What kids? What were their names?" Clancy became efficient, reaching for his pad and pencil, eyeing the worried face sharply.

Stanton leaned over. "Exactly what time did you hear it? Think hard. What class were you in? Who were they? How many were there? Two? Three? Four? Come on, *think!*" The boy stared at his feet; fear had begun to creep into his eyes.

Kaproski leaned over, getting into the act. "What's the matter you can't remember? It's your own grandfather's dough, he supports you with it. Don't you want to help your grandfather? I thought you people stuck together in your family beefs? It's your own grandfather!"

The boy seemed to have shrunk on the edge of the chair. He wet his lips.

"All right," Clancy said quietly. "Why did you take it?"

The boy looked up, beaten. "I was only borrowing it," he said, suddenly looking about five years younger. "I was going to pay it back."

"When?" Stanton asked witheringly. "1975? When you got out of reform school?"

Clancy raised his hand. "Well, now," he said in a reasonable tone of voice. "If you were only borrowing it, that's a different matter. There's no law against borrowing money." The boy watched him suspiciously. "Of course, there's a law that says you have to pay it back. Just how do you plan on doing that?"

The boy looked at Clancy bitterly. "I'll pay it back. Don't worry."

Clancy shook his head. "I'm not worried. I know you'll pay it back. Sooner than you think." He rose to his feet, motioning Stanton and Kaproski to follow him into the corridor. "Stick around. Don't go away! I'll be right back."

Outside, Clancy took out his wallet and extracted a bill. "Kaproski, go out and get the complete fixings for shining shoes—polish, rags, brushes, the works. And don't forget to bring back a receipt." Kaproski grinned and taking the money, left. Clancy turned to Stanton. "How many men do we have altogether in the precinct?"

Stanton stared at him. "Full complement eighty-six. You know that, Lieutenant."

"Now that you mention it, I do indeed." A faint smile appeared on Clancy's face. "Well, you have the desk sergeant tell them as they come in that I'm not satisfied with the appearance of this precinct. From now on this is going to be the shiniest precinct in the city."

Stanton looked at him as if he were mad; then, shrugging, he went out toward the front desk.

Clancy went back into his office and sank into his chair, facing the sulky boy. "Tell me, son, what's your name?"

"Paulo."

"Paulo Martinez?"

The dark eyes flashed for a second. "Paulo Ignacio Maria de Martinez y Bertrand."

Clancy nodded his head. "That's quite a name." The sullen face across from his remained granite-like. "Well, Paulo, tell me: have you ever shined shoes?"

"Who, me?" The young voice was hesitant. "No."

"Well," Clancy said philosophically, "it's never too late to learn."

"What do you mean?" The suspicion in the boy's voice owed everything to fear of being made fun of.

"I mean what I say," Clancy said coldly. "I mean you're going to earn back the money you swiped from your grandfather—by shining shoes. All the shoes in the precinct."

There was a few minutes of silence; then Kaproski came in with a bundle and laid it on the desk. Clancy unwrapped it and pushed the contents across the desk toward the boy.

"You're in business." He turned to Kaproski. "Our friend here is going to earn back the dough he borrowed—by shining copper's shoes. You better be the cashier. I'm not so sure he has a good head for financial matters."

"How much does he charge?" Kaproski asked interestedly.

"Twenty cents," Clancy said.

The boy started to speak and then had to stop to clear his throat. "The old—my grandfather gets twenty-five. And tips."

Clancy looked at the boy coldly. "Your grandfather knows how to shine shoes." He thought a minute. "On the other hand, if you don't do them right the first time, you'll have to do them over. I'll go along with the quarter a shine. But no tips."

The kid picked up the bundle of polish and brushes wrapped in a clean flannel cloth. Without another word he turned toward the door.

"By the way," Clancy said. "Is there anywhere we can get in touch with your grandfather to let him know you'll be getting home late?"

"He never expects me before midnight anyway." The boy paused. "He usually leaves me something on the table to eat when I get back from school. Can I go home to eat?"

"I'll send out for a sandwich for you," Clancy said. "And milk. That'll be another fifty or sixty cents." He sighed deeply, shaking his head. "You keep borrowing at this rate, and you'll never get out of debt!"

11:45 A.M. Stanton was really impressed. "The telephone directories had nine hundred and seventy-five dollars," he said the next morning. "Keller is going through the newspapers and magazines now. All of the cigar boxes were empty except for those three that held the stamps. Of course we're miles from being finished looking, but nothing on any coins so far. The brains downtown say the stamps aren't worth anything."

Clancy turned to Kaproski, who began his report, referring to papers in his hand.

"Records say the house was in his name, free and clear. Taxes are paid every year by some law firm

downtown—Ryder and Wilson. His father set the deal up in his will way back in 1919." He looked at the other two innocently, anticipating their reaction to his next announcement. "Willie also had a slight bank account. Of a little better than three hundred thousand bucks." Stanton whistled. Kaproski nodded, pleased with the result. "Yeah. A nut—a real nut." He returned to his notes. "The law firm says Willie never made a will. They were trustees for his old man—Willie got a hundred dollars every month. I guess when his old man set that up, it looked like a lot of money. Anyway, the lawyers say Willie never asked for any more."

"The economical type," Clancy said. "What else?"

"That's it. Oh, yeah, he has—had—has, I guess, a sister, a Mrs. Henry Jorrens. I guess she'll get the works. She lives over on West End."

Clancy nodded. "I know. I've asked her to drop in this afternoon, after lunch. Anything else?"

"That's it, so far."

Clancy cleared his desk and reached into a drawer, bringing out the sweater and vest, and a small envelope which he placed to one side. "These are the things he had on, up on top, when he got it. There's blood on the sweater up around the neck from his bloody nose, but that's all. What interests me is this tear here—Doc doesn't think he could have been hit by anything sharp like a crowbar, but I figure his clothes might have softened the blow. And the sweater's torn."

Kaproski leaned forward. "That ain't torn. Not recently, anyways. You can see where he passed a crochet needle through to catch the ends and fix it. That was yarn-sewn. He sure didn't do that after he was hit."

"Crochet needle?" Clancy looked at Kaproski in astonishment.

"Yarn-sewn," Stanton said, smiling. "Mother Kaproski!"

"Sure I know about knitting," Kaproski said defensively. "Eight months in a Naval hospital—physical therapy, they called it."

Clancy took up the vest. It was an old-patterned type, with button-down pockets, patched under one arm, but intact and clean in front. With a sigh he swept the sweater and vest into a drawer.

"Well," he said, "that wasn't much help. I'd certainly like to know what he was killed with. I've a feeling it would help." He opened the envelope, upending it. Two coins rolled out, which he neatly trapped and slid before the others. "An English penny and what's this? One cruzeiro? That's Brazil." He lifted it. "Feels like tin." He spun it with his fingers, watched it come to a teetering halt, and pushed the coins together. "So? What do we know?"

"We know he was a nut," Stanton said. "We also know he's dead.

And that's just about all we do know."

"He may have been a nut," Kaproski said, as if in defense of the dead man, "but he was a rich nut."

"Yeah," Clancy said. "That may still be the answer." He glanced at his wrist watch. "Anyway, it's time for lunch."

"Want a sandwich from across the street, Lieutenant?"

"Artists and writers," Clancy said, sweeping the two foreign coins into his pocket. "Maybe they need to starve to do a good job, but I never heard it said of detectives. I'm getting a decent meal today." He pushed himself to his feet. "One o'clock back here. Ready or not."

2:00 P.M. The woman sitting opposite Clancy was dressed in dark, drab colors, and had a worried, motherly air. Clancy judged her to be well into her fifties, about five-four in height, about one-fifty in weight. The fur-piece about her neck had obviously seen better days. The whole family, Clancy thought sourly, likes to dress warm.

"Over thirty years," she was saying. "It was a terrible shock when we heard. Willie was—odd, you know. Papa felt Willie needed some sort of—well, protection, but Willie . . ." Her voice faded as she smiled at them doubtfully, twitching her fur to a new position where it once again assumed an obedient, shapeless slump.

"Yeah," Clancy said. He glanced down at his notes. "The estate was divided evenly between you and your brother?"

The woman leaned forward, opened her mouth to speak, and then paused. A slight edge crept into her motherliness. "I'm sure you are familiar with the terms of my father's will, Lieutenant," she said, a bit sharply. "Fortunately, Henry and I have never lacked for anything, so that never made any difference. When Papa left everything to Willie, we were quite pleased." She examined her words and revised them slightly. "At least, we weren't displeased. And nobody can *say* we were. After all, Willie was incapable of supporting himself, and that has never been Henry's problem."

Clancy's eyes avoided the bedraggled fur-piece, the worn and shiny blouse, the hair in need of a permanent. "Your brother never tried to contact you in all these years?"

"My brother . . ." She looked about and seemed to find sympathetic support in the frozen faces of Kaproski and Stanton. "Willie always felt that we didn't understand him—that is, that nobody understood him. When Henry and I were first married we offered Willie a place to live with us, but he preferred to live alone."

"Your husband always got along well with . . . ah, Willie?"

"My husband? Henry? Of course. Actually, they haven't seen each other in years and years, but when we were all young, they were quite good friends." She laughed nervously. "My husband is a bit of a recluse himself, you see, nowadays. He was wounded in the war and always felt that younger men should have . . ." Her voice faded dramatically as her smile encompassed them all, as if to say, These Men!

Clancy plowed on. "Tell me, Mrs. Jorrens, do you remember your brother being particularly interested in stamps? Or coins?"

"Oh, yes!" She sat up straighter, as if happy that she could finally be helpful. "He collected stamps and coins ever since I can remember. Papa started him off, you know. Papa used to travel quite a bit when he was younger, and he brought back these stamps and coins and always gave them to Willie. Tell me, Lieutenant, do you think Willie was killed for his stamp or coin collection?"

"It's happened," Clancy said noncommittally. "People have killed for less." He looked at the notes he had taken, then back to the taut face before him. "Thank you very much, Mrs. Jorrens. If there is anything else, we'll know where to get in touch with you."

The woman rose hesitantly. "Lieutenant," she said. "I'd like to offer a reward. For anyone who brings in information . . ."

"Of course," Clancy said, avoiding her eyes. "How much are you thinking of offering?"

She looked at the three silent faces in turn. "I don't know," she finally said vaguely. "I don't know about these things. Would five hundred dollars be all right?"

"As much as you want," Clancy said. "I'll tell them downtown. If you wish, they'll advise the press."

"That will be fine," she said, relieved, as if the hardest and most important part of her trip had been accomplished. "Thank you very much, Lieutenant."

Clancy rose as she swept out, her fur-piece sliding from her neck as if it had been caught unawares by her sudden move and was hurrying to catch up. There was a few minutes of silence after she had left. Stanton was the first to break it.

"I think maybe Papa had a funny idea of protecting Willie," he said softly.

"Maybe," Clancy said. "Maybe not. Anyway, it gives us some work to do." He sat down again, pulling his pad toward him, as Stanton and Kaproski hunched closer.

7:00 P.M. "I got some more dope on brother Willie," Kaproski said the next day, reaching for his notebook.

"Let's hold it," Clancy said. "Stanton called in a while ago—he'll be here in a few minutes.

Might as well look at it all together." A short dark figure passed in the hall. "Reminds me. How's that Martinez kid doing?"

"Not bad," Kaproski said in a pleased voice. "He catches on fast. Personally, I think he's beginning to even like it. The boys have been pretty good with him. He's not so hard-mouth like he was at first."

"How much is in the kitty?" Clancy asked.

"Over fifteen bucks as of late last night," Kaproski said. "Of course, there's still the outfit to pay for—that's three-forty, plus the fifty cents from Monday and sixty-five from yesterday. He brought his own sandwiches along today."

"Good," Clancy said. The young head poked itself in the doorway just then, and encouraged by the silence, came in carrying a new shoeshine box.

"Lieutenant," he said softly. "Can I get you now?"

"What? Oh, sure." Clancy slid one foot onto the top of the box. "Where'd you get the new outfit?"

The boy grinned. "Made it in wood-working class."

"Like shining shoes, huh?"

The grin faded. "I like making money," he said suddenly, almost harshly. He got out his rags and went to work as Stanton came in, pushing his hat back on his head.

"Let's go," Clancy said. He turned to Kaproski. "All right. What else did you find out about Willie?"

"He never got close to the war," Kaproski said. "The lawyers said that Henry blew his stack once about Willie being a slacker. Actually, the draft board turned Willie down for being too old, bum health, and also because he was slightly nuts."

"Henry should talk," Stanton said derisively. "He managed to get a desk job as a result of some pretty fancy wire-pulling, pals from the good-old-days. And that famous war wound of his—he got that in London. He was run down by a bread truck during a blackout. They did a bum job on his leg, and it left him crippled." He looked at Clancy steadily. "Our friend Henry uses a cane."

Clancy drummed the desk with his fingers.

"A cane could have done it," Kaproski said.

"Sure," Clancy said. He felt a prod at his foot and automatically switched feet on the shoeshine box. "Sure a cane could have done it. Also a crutch, or a pool cue. Or a drum-major's baton, or a hoe handle." He sat thinking, his fingers tapping the desk. "If it was Henry, why did he wait thirty years?"

Stanton shrugged. "Maybe he didn't need the dough until now."

"His old lady," Kaproski said, "she didn't look like they were in the chips."

Clancy frowned. "If we could only place him there," he said absently. "You sure none of the

neighbors saw anybody? Nobody?"

"We can check them again," Stanton said. "Maybe that reward will wake some of them up, but we went over them pretty carefully." He grinned. "Laugh like hell if the old lady put husband Henry on the spot with that reward gimmick."

"We'll have to go over the neighbors again," Clancy said. "And Kaproski, you go back to that law firm and find out what you can about Henry's bank account. Maybe he developed a taste for blondes, or the horses, late in life." He felt a professional tap on his shoe, lifted his foot free, and admired the gleam. "Good job," he said, reaching into his pocket, and then giving the boy a coin.

The young face fell. "Aw, shucks, Lieutenant," the boy said. "Not twice! I'll never get off the hook that way!"

Clancy looked down in surprise to see what the complaint was. He saw that he had inadvertently handed the boy the Brazilian cruzeiro. With a smile he started to take back the coin, when his hand suddenly stiffened.

"Not twice?" he said slowly. "What do you mean, not twice?" He looked down at the pouting face below him steadily. "Who slipped you the other one?"

The boy froze. Suddenly both Stanton and Kaproski saw the light.

"Who gave you the other one, kid?" Kaproski asked softly.

The boy sat there, biting his lip. Stanton exploded.

"Damn it! Who gave it to you, you little punk?" he cried.

The boy wet his lips. "I can take it," he mumbled.

Stanton took him by the shoulder, shaking him. "What kind of an answer is that?" he roared. "'I can take it!' What kind of a stupid answer is that?"

Kaproski brushed Stanton's hand from the boy's hunched shoulder. "Let me do it, Stan," he said. He leaned over quietly. "Look, son, nobody's trying to pin anything on you. We just want to know one thing—who gave you a coin like that one? It's important, son."

The boy looked up, hesitating. "One of the cops," he finally said. His eyes dropped to the floor. "I figured he was just trying to give me the needle, so I kept my mouth shut. I can take it," he added defiantly.

"Which one of the cops?" Kaproski asked, still in the same quiet voice.

"I don't know his name," the boy said sullenly. "A big one. With red hair."

"Timmons!" Clancy said, striking one fist into the other palm. "It wasn't a cane—it was a patrolman's night stick!" He looked at Stanton. "Where is he now?"

"Should be on his beat," Stanton said.

"Kaproski, go through his lock-

er. And then you and Stanton check his home." Clancy turned to the boy. "You stay here, son. Right in this room. You may be a valuable witness."

10:45 P.M. "He had the coins in an old suitcase on a shelf in his bedroom," Stanton said, as if Timmons were not in the room at all, sitting quiet and narrow-eyed, watching them all. "And over a thousand bucks, some of them that old-fashioned big-bill kind." He looked over at the silent uniformed figure contemptuously, as if it were a desk, or a cabinet—anything but a human body. "He must have thought he had the works before he rang in. Or maybe he was pressed for time. And I guess he didn't clean out his pockets too good if he left that coin in with the change."

"We found a stamp collection, too," Kaproski added. "A regular one, in them big books. I guess he took one look at them stamps in the cigar boxes and knew they weren't worth anything." His eyes also flickered over the quiet figure as if it weren't there. "I guess maybe he don't know too much about coins."

Clancy looked at the silent figure sitting beside his desk. "Well, Timmons?"

"The old man was nuts," Timmons said, speaking slowly, thinking. "He come at me like a maniac and I had to cool him. It was self-defense," he added darkly.

"Sure," Clancy said. "And, of course, once he was dead you took the dough so the rich old man wouldn't have any trouble getting into heaven. Very commendable."

"So I took the dough," Timmons said. "So what's that? So I get kicked off the force and maybe six months. So what?"

"How did he come at you?" Clancy asked interestedly. "Did he have a weapon?"

Timmons hesitated, trying to remember what the others had found. "No. But he had his hands, and you should have seen him. I put up my club and he run right into it, smashing his nose. And when he seen the blood, he really went nuts. He plowed at me like a crazy guy, so I poked him in the stomach." He shrugged. "He folded over and when I looked at him, he was dead."

Clancy glared at him. "God, I hate a crooked cop!" he muttered. "The day you burn will be a personal pleasure for me!"

"Burn?" Timmons' voice was almost scornful.

"Burn," Clancy said in a tight voice. "Yeah, I said burn!" He leaned over his desk, enumerating on his fingers. "One: there's no jury in the world is going to believe that a cop weighing over two hundred pounds needs to use a night stick to cool a sick, old man. Two: you poked him in the stomach first, knocking him out; and then, when he was on the floor, helpless, you laid your club across his face."

"Who, me?" Timmons said.

"You," Clancy said. "If you had poked him in the face first, like you said, there would have been blood on your night stick, and some of it would have come off when you jabbed him in the stomach. It would have marked his sweater—*but his sweater wasn't marked.* No, you poked him in the stomach first, and when he was down, out cold, you laid your club across his face." He looked at the silent cop with disgust. "Take him away," he said, swinging his chair toward the open window and the soft screams of children running in the June night below. "Take him out of my sight!"

Stanton dragged the shocked man to his feet. "You're stupid," he said conversationally. "Real stupid. If you'd said you found him dead, it might have held us up a while—not long, but a while." He pulled the unresisting arm to the door.

The boy had sat there wide-eyed. Now he cleared his throat. "Lieutenant," he asked.

"Yeah? What?" Clancy looked over at him, as if seeing him for the first time.

"Is he—did he kill that old man?"

"Yes, he killed him," Clancy said savagely.

The kid said softly, "I'm sorry I stole that dough from my grandfather."

Clancy suddenly realized the connection. "You earned it back, kid, plus a reward. You're in for a reward, son." He straightened up in his chair, erasing the last interview from his mind. "Five hundred bucks. What do you think you'll do with it?"

The boy thought carefully, this new intelligence wiping the thought of Timmons and his crime from his mind.

"I don't know," he said slowly. "Will five hundred dollars pay for a regular shoeshine stand, Lieutenant? Big enough for me and my grandfather?"

"I honestly don't know," Clancy said wearily. "I don't know what pays for anything any more."

The kid sat silent after this inexplicable statement. Kaproski cleared his throat. "Better go along, kid," he said gently, and eased the boy from the room. He turned to Clancy. "Lieutenant," he began.

"God, but I hate a crooked cop!" Clancy said bitterly.

Kaproski nodded. "Sure. But at least you did something for that kid. If you hadn't helped him, he could have ended up like Timmons, or maybe even worse."

Clancy sighed. His eyes fell to his gleaming shoes, and he looked up at Kaproski somberly. "Yeah. Well, you can't lose them all, I suppose."

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