

# Edgar Wallace

## MYSTERY MAGAZINE

**EDGAR WALLACE**  
*The Man Who Never Lost*

**JOHN BOLAND**  
*Suddenly, Each Summer*

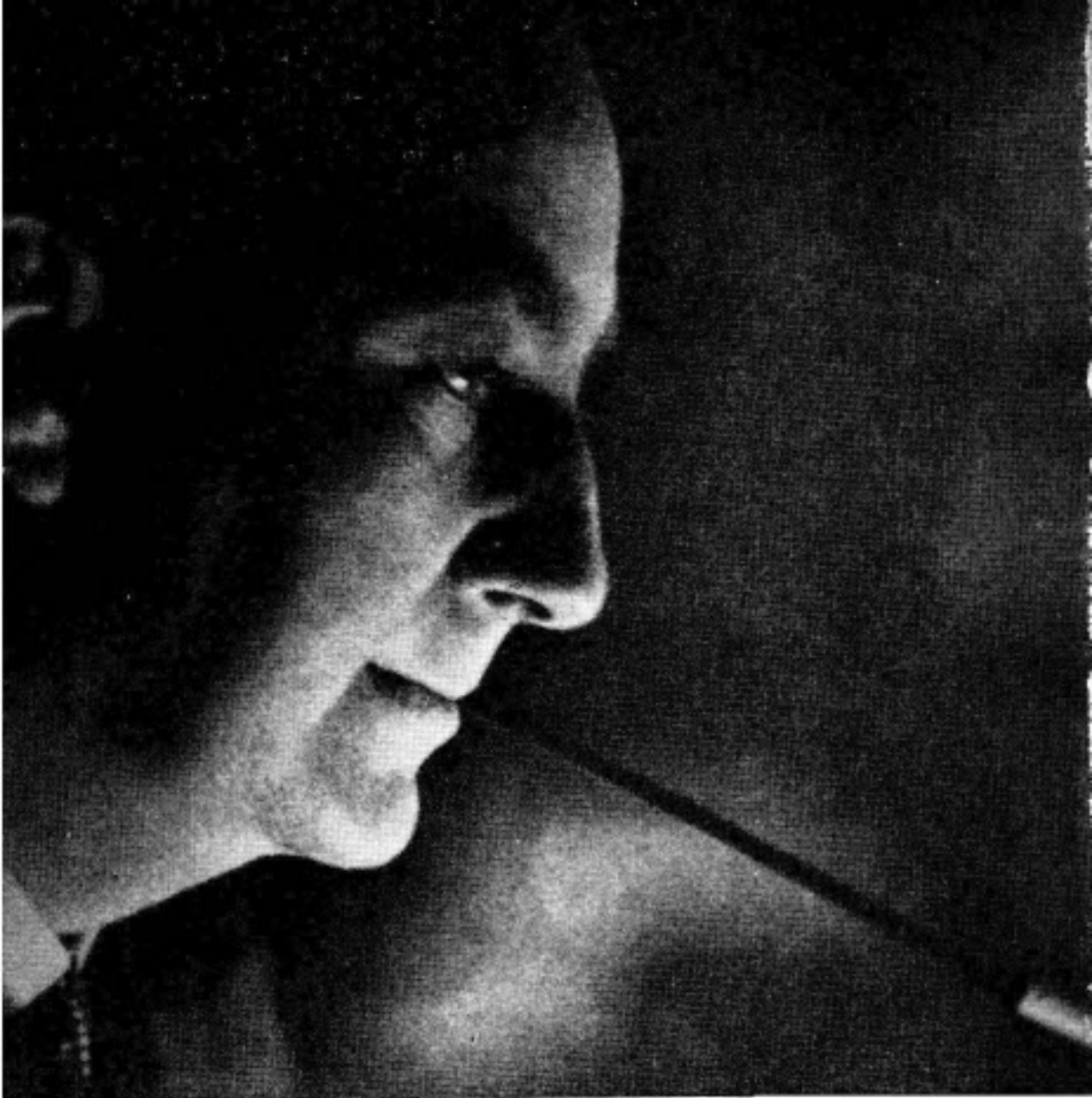
**ERNEST DUDLEY**  
*The Frightened Client*

**PAUL TABORI**  
*Before the Fact*

No. 11  
Vol. 2

Edgar Wallace

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# EDGAR WALLACE

## Mystery Magazine

Vol II No. 11

June, 1965

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**Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado**

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### CONTENTS

#### STORIES

The Man Who Never Lost	EDGAR WALLACE	3
Suddenly, Each Summer	JOHN BOLAND	13
A Matter of Record	JOHN SALT	23
The Angle	ED LACY	36
Requiem for a Witch	NATALIE MACMURDY	41
Before the Fact	PAUL TABORI	51
The Pursuit ( <i>period piece</i> )	CONSTANT GUEROULT	59
It Could Be . . .	MAX MUNDY	89
The Frightened Client	ERNEST DUDLEY	100
Honesty is the Best . . .	RICHARD ESSEX	112

#### FEATURES

<i>Editorial</i> : Briefly		2
<i>Relaxation</i> : Crossword		50
<i>Decisions</i> : Competitions		70
<i>Crime</i> : The Remarkable Mr. Bartlett	ROGER GARNETT	72
<i>Autobiography</i> : Moment of Truth	ERIC PARR	81
<i>Cartoon</i> : No. 2	H. M. BATEMAN	88
New Books	JOHN DE SOLA	121
Readers Say		126

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It is not a very surprising thing that in crime writing, where death is the greatest selling point of its productions, death is also the greatest enemy of the crime novelist.

The high adventures of detection, the inevitable and essential body — what is the theft of all the jewels of Asia compared to one murdered man? — and the gradual narrowing of pursuit towards the suspect give the crime novel its chief fascination.

## Briefly

And in the heyday of a popular author's work readers may not line up outside shops for the latest instalment, as they did for Sherlock Holmes, but the same devotion is there. The aficionado is a very loyal person indeed, and often singularly so.

The loyalties are strong. The detectives one favours are known to the smallest personal idiosyncrasy. The authors may not possess the physical and spiritual largeness of their creations, but they are also honoured souls — the reader will ask for the 'new Creasey' as readily as he will ask for the 'new Gideon'. In doing all this he gives to the creator of the fictional detective an often notable fame, a fine income, and a feeling of permanence.

But let death strike in real life and, too often, the great edifice of fame generally tumbles with dismaying speed.

Think of that roll of names which once thundered, names like Cheyney, Crofts, Freeman, Hume, Oppenheim, Leroux, Reeve, Van Dine, and many, many more, a record stretching back almost a hundred years. Gone with the wind indeed!

Oddly enough Death, that crushing fellow, cannot douse certain favourites. Some names can sell book for book with living contemporaries, some names are alive. Two come easily to mind — Conan Doyle *diminuendo*, but Sherlock Holmes the massive, towering, fictional creature. The other? Edgar Wallace.

He lives mightily on not through a detective but as himself, the story-teller. His personality is undiminished, his book sales are annually in millions and in theatre and motion picture he is, and this in a very material age that judges a detective writer by his sales.

There it is. Death takes crime writers, every one, first dimming then extinguishing them, but does not touch the immortals . . .

*The Editor*



Egar Wallace

## THE MAN WHO NEVER LOST

*It was all a question of the  
player and a certain something*

THE MAN in the grey suit who stood outside the Hotel de Paris was dimly conscious that from one of the balconies he was being particularised. He guessed also that he was in process of being described, but he was hardened to notoriety. He could almost hear the man tell the girl, "that is the celebrated Twyford—the fellow with the system, who breaks the bank every week."

Too lazy and somnolent to raise his head even to identify the newcomers to Monte Carlo, as he guessed they were, he stretched his long legs to the sun and settled sideways for greater comfort.

He was forty and greyish. A lean, clean-shaven face; large, regular white teeth that showed readily, for he was easily amused; eyes of steady, unwinking blue, and a gun-metal nerve: these were some of the features and qualities of Aubrey Twyford, the man who never lost.

"That's Aubrey Twyford," said the envious young man on the balcony. "I wish to heaven I had half his luck, or a tenth."

"Poor Bobby!" said the girl.

Her eyes were sympathetic and kindly, and at the pressure of her hand on his arm he turned.

"Whose luck?"

The middle-aged lady who came through the french windows and joined them on the balcony had no sympathetic quality in her tone, nor was there kindness in her nod.

"Hello, Bobby," she said, and gave him her cheek; "I heard you had arrived. Who were you talking about?"

He nodded to the square and, shading her eyes, Mrs. Brane studied the lounging figure.

"That's Aubrey Twyford—they call him the Man Who Can't

Lose. He comes to Monte Carlo every season from February to May, and never leaves the table except as a winner."

"Wonderful man!" said Mrs. Brane dryly. "Are you thinking of following his example, Bobby?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Aunt," said Bobby Gardner with a laugh, "I had hopes."

She sniffed.

"I hate gamblers," she said shortly. "He must be a very horrid person." She looked again at the object of their conversation.

Twyford had risen and was walking slowly to meet a short, stout man who had come down the steps of the Hotel de Paris.

"That's Souchet, the big Paris banker. He's a millionaire, and I wouldn't change places with him for all his money. His daughter ran away with the chauffeur this week; the poor old boy is quite knocked out. He's losing money at the tables, but the beggar can well afford it," said Bobby gloomily.

The girl had gone into the room, and his aunt moved closer to him.

"Why did you come to Monte Carlo, Bobby?"

"Why?" His pretence of surprise was very transparent. "Why, I come here every year."

"But why have you come now?" she asked.

He did not immediately reply nor meet her eye.

"I am getting very tired of this business, Bobby," she said quietly. "You're making a fool of Marjorie. The girl is simply worried to death. Why don't you propose to her, if you're going to?"

He laughed somewhat bitterly, for Bobby had occasional moments when he was sorry for himself.

"With eight hundred a year?"

"Nonsense," she said contemptuously, "as if money made any difference!"

He swung round.

"It makes a lot of difference. Madge is a very rich girl and I am a very poor man. When I can meet her on something like equal terms, I will ask her."

"That is just vanity," said the elder woman; "man's vanity! It would not worry you if she were poor and you were rich. You would not regard it as being an undignified thing for her to accept your wealth."

"That's different," he said.

"Only from a man's point of view," said she, and walked back into the sitting-room.



A quarter of an hour later all three passed into the rooms, through the big and terribly serious public room into the ornate *Cercle Privée*. They passed along the roulette tables and came to

the crowd about the *trente-et-quarante* players.

"That's the only game he ever plays," said Bobby in an undertone. "Look at him packing it up!"

In front of this man in grey, with his expressionless face and his lean, white hands, was a thick pile of thousand-franc notes, and as they looked he had added 24,000 to his stock. On the opposite side of the table Bobby saw the sour, bearded face of Souchet, the banker. He was not gambling, unless betting in louis can be so described, but five out of every six stakes he played were raked to the croupier.

"Who is Aubrey Twyford?"

"It's a strange story," said Bobby, leading the girl to one of the seats by the wall. "He used to be a professor of psychology, a man who never gambled and took his modest holiday every year in Monte Carlo. People who knew him here twenty years ago say that he never risked as much as a five-franc piece on the table until he discovered his system."

"Has he a system?" she asked.

Bobby nodded.

"The Casino authorities have tried to find what it is. They have had detectives and officials watching him for years. All his coups have been recorded and examined by the best system experts in Europe, but apparently there is no system at all. I have reason to believe they have searched his luggage time and time again to discover some clue which will put them on to his scheme of play, but they found nothing."

"That's very strange, Bobby."

"This is his last season, by the way. He told me yesterday he was chucking it up."

At that moment there was a stir at the table. Souchet and Twyford rose together and walked away, Souchet explaining something with a little smile and the man who never lost nodding his reply as he pocketed his winnings.

Bobby noticed that he needed two pockets.

"Go on about him," said the girl. "I'm fearfully interested."

"About twelve years ago he started playing, and since then he has never looked back. The Casino officials say that he has taken nearly seven hundred thousand pounds from the tables in the past ten years."

She frowned.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked quickly.

"I had an idea," she said. "That is all."

He did not press her.



Aubrey Twyford entertained on a lavish scale. His table, in a corner of the Café de Paris, was always crowded for dinner, and

when Bobby and the girl came in that night they found the usual throng about him.

"I forgot something about Twyford, and I ought to tell you this in justice to him," he said. "He is extremely good to people who have bad luck. I have known him to go down to see off a man who has gone broke, and to hand him an envelope containing every penny he had lost. You see," said Bobby, with a smile, "one is frightfully communicative at Monte Carlo, and one knows just how the other fellows are doing at the tables. Last season a widow came down with three thousand pounds and lost it in four days. She had come because she wanted to raise enough money to buy her son a business. It was a mad sort of idea. Twyford told her so when he got into conversation with her the first day she played, and do you know what he did? He gave her six thousand on the day she left Monte Carlo, in exchange for a promise that she would never gamble again."

"It's incredible," said the girl. "Who is that man next to him?"

"That's young Stanton. His father is a rich Manchester merchant. He won two hundred thousand francs this afternoon."

She laughed.

"Is the financial position of anybody in Monte Carlo secret?"

"Not a bit," answered Bobby. "I bet you the croupiers could tell you your income to within a pound."

★

Mr. Stanton had taken a little too much wine. He was loud and talkative.

"I'm going to set 'em alight tonight," he said, with a laugh. "Stand by, everybody, and see me break the bank."

Twyford raised his glass of Vichy water and sipped.

"It is very unlucky to talk about breaking the bank," he said.

"Luck?" said the other. "My dear chap, there isn't any luck in it. One has only to keep one's head -"

"Don't despise luck," said Aubrey. He had a rich mellow voice and spoke slowly and deliberately. "There are three lucky moments in every twenty-four hours, no more. I have studied the subject carefully. If you get in on the flood-tide of your luck, you can't lose. If you strike any of the other minutes, you cannot win."

"Do you suggest that you only win for three minutes in every twenty-four hours?" scoffed Stanton.

"I am not talking about myself," said the other quietly. "I work on a system, and by my system I cannot lose."

"But if you've got a system," persisted Stanton, gulping down a glass of champagne, "why is it you are not playing all the time? Why, you go for days without making a bet."

"I shall bet tonight," said Twyford quietly, "and I shall win and win heavily. I am going to play maximums of twelve thousand

francs."

"What we ought to do" – it was Souchet the banker who spoke – "is to follow our friend, but how? He does not play his stake until they start dealing the cards, and then it is too late to follow him."

Twyford smiled.

"That is also part of my system," he said dryly.

The girl leant across the table.

"Bobby," she said, "take me back to the Casino when Mr. Twyford goes. I want to watch his play."

"I'll get you a seat near him," said Bobby. "There are generally one or two sleepers who will give up their seats for a louis."

"Sleepers?" she said, puzzled.

"That isn't the name, I don't think," he said, and explained that there was a class of *habitué* at the room who did nothing but sit on the off-chance that somebody would put down a stake and either walk away or forget to take his winnings. In this case the wily watcher reaches out his hand and rakes in the 'sleeper' unless the croupier is extra vigilant and has noticed who staked the money.

Presently the big party broke up, and they strolled across the deserted square. With very little difficulty Bobby secured a seat, two removed from Twyford, for the girl. Immediately opposite her sat the optimistic Stanton, flushed and voluble.

True to his word, Twyford produced a bigger pad of notes than he had taken away in the afternoon. His first stake was for twelve thousand francs, and this he lost. He lost his second stake on black. He staked again on black and won. The girl watched him fascinated. He dodged from black, to red, from red to *couleur*, from *couleur* to *invers*, and five out of every six coups he won. It was enthralling to the girl, possibly because the scene and the setting were so novel and bizarre. She watched the dealer as with amazing dexterity he led out the two lines of cards . . .

*"Rouge perd et couleur."*

A clicking of counters against rakes, a flutter of mille notes, and invariably it seemed it was towards Aubrey Twyford that the notes fluttered. She kept note of the colours in a little book which Bobby had provided. There was no method in the run of the cards; they dodged from black to red and from red to black. They ran three times on black before they started zig-zagging from black to red again, and it seemed that everybody at the table was losing – except the man who could not lose.

Stanton was no longer voluble. His big pile had steadily decreased until it was the merest slice. He was losing his nerve. He would put a big stake upon a colour, then change his mind and withdraw the greater part of it before the cards were dealt. Once he put down a maximum, hesitated, and took it off, substituting five hundred francs on the red. The red won, and he cursed audibly. Aubrey



Twyford, who had had his maximum on the red, smiled.

At eleven o'clock Stanton pushed back his chair and walked round to Twyford.

"They've cleaned me out," he said. "I've lost three hundred thousand francs. You don't seem to have done so badly."

Twyford smiled.

"Do you want any money?" he asked.

"No, I've finished for the night," said Stanton. "I'll try again in the morning," and walked past him to the bar.

Twyford caught Bobby's eye and nodded.

"Come and drink orange-juice," he said. "I am bloated with wealth."

"May I introduce Mr. Twyford?"

The girl looked into the half-smiling eyes of the man who could not lose, and saw a whole wealth of humanity and humour in their depths.

"You must drink orange-juice, Miss Radley," he said; "everybody does."

"It sounds very innocuous," she laughed.

"That's just what we want," said he.

"I have been watching your wonderful system, Mr. Twyford," she said.

He chuckled.

"I hope you are not going to tell people how I do it," he said dryly. "Everybody watches my wonderful system and I fear they are as wise as ever, though why they should not understand it from the first, heaven only knows!"

They sat down in the big, comfortable arm-chairs with which the buffet was well furnished, and the waiter brought them great tumblers of orange-juice packed with cracked ice.

"When I have finished at Monte Carlo, I must write a book about my system," said Twyford.

"And I will be one of your first readers," said the girl. "I am sure I shall come straight to Monte Carlo and win a fortune."

He shook his head, and the smile vanished from his face.

"It requires a heart of iron to work my system," he said. "It's just because I am getting human that I am giving it up."

Bobby went to the bar to get some sandwiches, and the girl turned to the man.

"Mr. Twyford," she said, speaking rapidly in a low voice, "there is something I want to say to you. You are really leaving Monte Carlo for good?"

He nodded.

"And you are not going to work the system again?"

"I am not," he said; "that you may be sure."

"Suppose, Mr. Twyford," she dropped her eyes and fingered the

arm of the chair nervously, "suppose somebody offered you a big sum for your system, would you sell it?"

She looked up sharply and saw he was smiling.

"Not for myself," she said, going red, "but there is somebody – somebody I want to be rich."

"I could not sell it," he said shortly. "I am very, very sorry, and I am really acting in the best interests of the – er – somebody you want to help, but it is impossible."

She bit her lip.

"May I ask you not to tell – ?"

He raised his hand to stop her and regarded the returning Bobby with more interest.

Her aunt came into the buffet at that moment and claimed her.

"You ought to be in bed, Marjorie," she said. "Bobby, why do you keep her up so late?"

Then she saw Twyford, and the girl introduced them.

"Have you been teaching them your system, Mr. Twyford?" she asked, with a little smile.

"I teach all Monte Carlo my system," he laughed, "and really the Casino should charge a fee to see me play."

★

When the women had gone, Twyford turned to Bobby and favoured him with a long scrutiny.

"Mr. Gardner," said the older man, "you aren't playing today."

Bobby shrugged as he sank back in his seat.

"What's the use?" he said. "I fool about with louis, and I neither make money nor lose money. I haven't the nerve to be a gambler, and yet I never have been so tempted to risk every cent I have as I am today."

Twyford sucked at his straw.

"Bad news?"

"No," said Bobby, "just a realisation of what a perfectly useless fool I am!"

"That sort of thing does upset you."

"Do you know what I am going to do?" asked Bobby suddenly, and his face brightened at the thought. "I'm going to have a real gamble tomorrow. I've got a couple of thousand pounds which I've been putting aside for – for – well, for something, and I'm going to play thousand-franc stakes."

"You will lose," said Twyford, without hesitation. "Every man who goes out to win big money because he must win big money loses."

"How do you know I must?" said the other sharply.

"I gather from your tone that it is necessary for you to have a lot of money," said Twyford, "and when a man goes out to win that money, he loses."

"Always?"

"In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred," said Twyford; "I think the percentage is a little higher. I kept very complete data during the first few years I was at Monte Carlo, and I think it works out at ninety-nine point four per cent."

Bobby stared at him.

"Then I am going to be the point six per cent that wins!" he said, and went off to see Marjorie before she went to her room.

Twyford looked after him with a smile, then with a shrug of his shoulders he beckoned the waiter.



Bobby Gardner came down to the vestibule of the hotel the next morning and found Twyford reading a newspaper.

"I was waiting for you," he said. "Do you think you could persuade your ladies to take a car ride to Grasse?"

"It is awfully kind of you," said Bobby gratefully.

Marjorie was at first reluctant. She had felt the last night's refusal as a rebuff, but Mrs. Brane wanted to go to Grasse to buy some perfumes, and Marjorie consented.

It was a much more pleasant ride than she had anticipated. The beauties of the Grand Corniche had been so often described to her that she was prepared to be bored, but the wonder of hill and valley, of narrow mountain roads and dizzy precipices, filled her with amazement and delight.

It was on the journey back, when they had stopped at the Gorge du Loup for tea, that Aubrey Twyford beckoned her more with a look than a gesture. She detached herself from Bobby and went to him.

"I have been thinking of what you said last night," he said. "Will you walk a little way up the Gorge with me?"

"About the system?" she said quickly.

He nodded.

"You will sell it?"

"No, I will not sell it," he said, "but I will give it to you. I have decided to leave Monte Carlo tomorrow. All the stories they tell about me are perfectly true. I am a rich man, and there is no further need for me to gamble. First," he said, turning and facing her, "you must promise me that you will not reveal my secret until after I have left Monte Carlo."

"I promise," she said, "but -"

"There must be no 'buts'," he said, "not even to Bobby Gardner."

He saw the colour mount to her cheek, and smiled inwardly. Then, taking her arm, he slowly paced the road, and the system of the man who could not lose was revealed.

At first she was incredulous. Then she felt a sense of revulsion. As his calm, even tones related the story of his years at Monte

Carlo, she recognised that he was speaking as a doctor might speak about his cases, cold-bloodedly and scientifically. At the end of the revelation she held out her hand.

"I am tremendously grateful to you, Mr. Twyford. No, I shan't tell Bobby, and I don't think I shall tell anybody else."

"You will see tonight," he repeated for the second time.

She inclined her head gravely.

They were nearing the party again when he said suddenly:

"Miss Radley, Bobby Gardner is a really good fellow, as nice a man as I have ever met. I have seen him here year after year, and I have particularly studied him."

She had gone very red, but it was with a smile that she asked:

"Why do you tell me this, Mr. Twyford?"

"It is quite unnecessary," he agreed. "I am sure you have noticed those qualities yourself."



The *trente-et-quarante* table was crowded when Twyford took his seat. Bobby, bright eyed and inordinately cheerful, laid his modest fortune before him, and nodded brightly to Twyford. Then the gambling began. Bobby started with a stake of a thousand francs and won. He increased his stake and won again.

With the exception of three he won twelve successive coups, and suddenly Twyford rose from the table with a little laugh, picked up the remainder of his money, and left the *trent-et-quarante* table for good. He stood watching Bobby, and Bobby was winning heavily until the girl whispered something in his ear when he, too, rose, both hands filled with notes and counters.

Twyford was sitting on a bench, smiling, and he jerked his head inviting them, but he was only looking at the girl.

"Come and sit down," he said. "I want to ask you a question."

He shook an admonitory forefinger at her, and she laughed. "I am not going to ask you whether you told Bobby Gardner my precious secret," he said.

"I thought you were," she replied in surprise.

"I am merely going to ask you this. Have you become engaged to Bobby since I saw you last?"

She nodded.

"That explains it," said the other.

He rose, shook hands with both of them, and the man who could not lose left the gaming rooms, never to reappear.

The following morning, Marjorie and Bobby sat on the terrace.

"You see," began the girl, "Mr. Twyford was a great psychologist."

"But do you mean to say," said the incredulous Bobby, "that he told you his system before he left?"

She nodded.

"By the way," he added, "do you know he lost nearly two hundred thousand francs last night?"

She nodded again.

"I guessed that," she said, "but I don't think that will worry him very much."

"What was the system?" said Bobby.

"I was telling you," said the girl severely, "when you interrupted. He studied the people of Monte Carlo, especially the gambling people, for eight years, and the thing he discovered was that there were conditions under which a gambler cannot win. If a man is worried about some outside matter, if he is losing steadily and cannot afford to lose, or if he comes to the tables and simply must win money, Mr. Twyford knew that whatever else happened, his money would go, and the majority of his stakes would vanish. And when he found this out he took the trouble to discover who at Monte Carlo was in trouble, who wanted money very badly, who was playing with their last stakes—and he played against them. If they backed red he backed black, if they backed *couleur* he backed *invers*."

"Good lord!" gasped Bobby; "was that playing the game?"

"That's what I asked him," said the girl, "and he had no difficulty in convincing me that it was. It was not he who was influencing the bad luck of the others, their bad luck was simply influencing him to fortune. Sometimes the man with the bad luck would only lose a few thousand francs, and Mr. Twyford would win hundreds of thousands by betting against him. If he knew a man or woman whom he played against was ruined, he always made good their losses before they left—he said he could afford to, because he was very often playing twelve thousand francs against their forty. He said it is the only system in the world, and I believe it is."

"But why did he lose last night?" asked Bobby, and the girl smiled.

"I suppose it was because he was playing against somebody who ought to have been very happy," she said. "Didn't you hear him ask me if I had accepted you?"

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## Like *EWMM* . . . ?

**hate it . . . pleased about something . . . angry with somebody . . . ?**

**You will find that the Readers Say page welcomes letters with something worth-while in them.**



# *Suddenly, Each Summer*

**JOHN BOLAND**

*The way of a man with a  
woman is of little importance  
when the woman decides*

LEM STYLES tied the boat up at the landing stage and went with Meona to the shabby Grant Hotel in the middle of the town. In the Ladies' Room, Meona changed into her best, and when she came out her hair and eyes were shining, her full lips thickly daubed with rouge. She went straight past him, ignoring his presence, her face lightly flushed as she walked sedately down the main street, stepping carefully to avoid tripping in the unaccustomed high heels.

Lem walked behind her, footsteps dragging in the dust, his grey head bent so as not to see the looks flashed at his wife by the men sitting and lolling wherever there was a patch of shade. Meona strutted along, her bold eyes examining each man, the audible comments and wolf-whistles as the loungers appreciated her bringing her lithe body even more proudly erect.

Patches of sweat began to stain the red dress, but still she kept on, rejecting every lounge she saw. Then, at the very edge of the town, she saw a man about fifty yards ahead. He was a huge figure, and even as she watched he turned aside from the dusty road and flopped in the shade of a tree. She halted, nodding in the direction of the man. "Ask him," she said. Lem hesitated. "I said you was to ask *him!*"

For a moment Lem stood, then with a shrug of hopeless acceptance, he went forward. The hobo was fair-haired; a big man, very big, about thirty. The sleeves of his khaki shirt were rolled up above the elbow, showing thick arms covered with a sheen of light-coloured hair. He had a vacant face, his blue eyes so lacking in colour as to be almost white, in startling contrast to the dirty, unshaven skin.

"You want somethin', Pop?"

Styles cleared his throat. "How—how would you like to work for me for a spell?"

"I wouldn't." The tramp closed his eyes. "I don't want no work, Pop, and I don't want no trouble."

"Just for a few days?"

"Look, bud, why pick on me? There's lots of other guys."

"I didn't pick on you."

"Then why you botherin' me, huh?"

"My wife told me to ask you."

"You allus do what a woman tells you to, bud?"

Lem's voice was very soft. "I love my wife. That's why I do what she asks."

"Then you must be crazy." The tramp turned his head and spat. "Women ain't of no account. You must be crazy."

"I don't think so." Lem's voice was still soft. "When you love a person I guess you'd do 'most anything for them."

The hobo laughed. "You've got it bad, Pop. Your woman must surely have been some dish. Tell me, bud, what was she like?" He paused. "Don't spare the details; I like to hear 'bout things."

Styles swallowed. "You—you can see for yourself what she's like."

Lazily the man turned his head to follow the line indicated by Lem's thumb. Suddenly the tramp was still. "You mean *that's* your frau? The young dame in red?"

"Yes."

The big man whistled appreciatively. "An' she wants to hire me?" He laughed. "Guess I might change my mind . . . providin' the work's to my likin'!" He rose and shambled over to Meona. "What sort of job you got in mind for me, sister?" He grinned, his pale eyes fixed on the low vee of her dress.

"You come to work for my husband," Meona said thinly, "you call me Missus Styles."

The big man bowed. "Why sure, Mum, Missus Styles," he said mockingly. "Personally, I ain't so formal. You can call me Jake. All my best friends call me Jake, and I'd sure like to number you among 'em."

She looked up at him. "Is it your real name?"

"I'll tell you somethin' else 'bout my friends. They don't ask no questions."

Meona held out a five dollar bill. "Here, go get yourself cleaned up at the barber shop. Ten o'clock tomorrow morning, be at the landing stage and we'll head out for home."

"Ain't you scared I'll take the money and not come?"

"You'll come all right," she said steadily. "Looks like you need to earn yourself a new pair of boots."

Jake's laughter boomed. He slapped Styles on the back, almost knocking the smaller man into the dust. "No need to look so worried, Pop. I'll be there all right. And that makes two of us

doin' as we're told!" Shouting with laughter, Jake began to walk towards the town, his cracked boots kicking up small clouds of dust as he went.

It took most of the day to travel the forty miles up-river, but when they arrived Jake followed Meona into the building and stood, staring round at the bare furnishings. "Ain't much in the way of home comforts. Lonesome, too, for a dame. Tell me, Missus, don't you ever find it too quiet?"

"It gets too crowded at times!" Lem's harsh voice came from the porch.

Jake grinned at the woman as he saw her left eyelid move downwards in a brief wink. He sat and watched her as she prepared a meal and later he wolfed everything she set before him. At last he sat back, bloated. "You surely can cook, Missus, although the boss don't seem to be tempted." Lem had eaten barely a mouthful.

She smiled. "Glad you like my cookin', Jake." She turned to Lem. "You finished? It's gettin' late."

Styles took a lantern and lit it, nodding towards the bed which stood in a corner, a huge padlocked trunk at its foot. "That's all the sleepin' space we've got in the cabin, so I've fixed you up a bunk in one of the outhouses."

He showed Jake to one of the small wooden sheds, standing about fifty yards from the cabin. Hanging the lantern from a nail above the bunk, Lem said: "You'll find this comfortable enough, I reckon." He moved to the door, then paused. "There's one thing, Jake, I brung you here to work for me, splitting winter firewood. Just you stick to that and there'll be no trouble."

"I ain't lookin' for trouble, boss," Jake said mildly.



During the next few days Meona went about her chores, singing, from time to time stopping work so as to gaze out over the clearing, listening to the sound of axe and saw. Lem Styles spent most of his day indoors, only leaving the cabin at infrequent intervals to see how Jake was getting on with the work. There was nothing about which he could complain: the big man worked well.

Styles's movements were getting tense and jerky. He began to walk with a peculiar high-stepping gait, as though lifting his feet over trip-wires, and his whole manner was that of a person expecting an explosion at any moment.

But there was no sign of strain on Jake's face. In the evening he would sit on the porch, looking through the open doorway at Meona as she crouched in front of the opened trunk at the foot of the bed. She would sit for hours, stroking the trunk's

contents. One evening she locked the trunk earlier than usual and went out on to the porch, where the two men were sitting. Jake leered up at her.

"Ain't much fun hereabouts," he began slowly. "How come you satisfied to live in a dump like this, Missus?"

"Oh, there's things to do."

"Such as lookin' in that trunk?"

Her voice was suddenly thin. "Can you shoot?"

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Styles' rocker come to an abrupt halt. "Ain't much to shoot hereabouts."

"There's plenty of room for targets."

"Hell! That ain't no fun."

There was a strange smile on her face. "So. You ain't no man with a gun?"

Lem's voice cut harshly across the small silence that followed her words. "That's enough, Meona. Jake doesn't want to talk about guns. That's enough, I say."

"Oh, but you're wrong, boss." Jake's tone was innocent. "Hardly anythin' I'd rather do than talk guns with Missus Styles."

"You shoot well, Jake?" she asked.

"I guess. But it's been a right long time since I handled a gun." He stretched out his enormous hands, looking down at them with pride. "Reckon I don't need one. I can get by with these." He clenched his hands into huge fists.

"How 'bout you and me having a shooting match?"

He darted a quick look at Styles. "Sure."

"It'll have to be just the two of us. Mr. Styles don't care for shooting."

"Just the two of us, Missus? That'll suit me fine."

"O.K." She was very excited. "I'll fix up a target and we'll have a contest."

"Ain't no good shootin' in a contest 'less there's a prize fer the winner." Jack said deliberately.

"O.K." There was vivid colour in her cheeks. "We'll make it a dollar. A dollar to the winner."

Jake laughed softly, staring sideways at Styles. The old man seemed ill. "I can think of other things as would be more to my liking. You got any suggestions?"

"I'll think about it, Jake," she said, her voice almost inaudible. "I'll think about it."



In the morning Styles looked old and defeated; his eyes were bloodshot and his hands moved ceaselessly in a fine tremor. He followed Meona everywhere, never more than a yard from her

side. At last she turned on him, screaming.

"Can't you get out from under my feet, you doddering old fool!"

Styles recoiled, standing in the middle of the room, looking like a whipped dog. He held out a trembling hand to her but she brushed it aside. "If you want me to cook your food, then get out of my way," she said.

White-faced, he blundered to the wall and took a fishing-rod down from where it hung among the rifles and revolvers. He lurched to the door and turned. "See you cut plenty of wood today," he mumbled to the amused Jake. "If you want to keep out of trouble, keep splitting firewood. Don't waste your time."

There was a glint in Jake's dull eyes. "Don't worry, boss, I won't waste no time." He chuckled, watching Styles go away. "Boss don't seem easy, Missus Styles. What's gotten into him?"

She stared at him, arms akimbo, her bare feet spread widely apart. "You'd best get on with your work. If you ain't done a fair measure by the time Mr. Styles comes back, he's liable to raise hell."

Jake gave a grunt of scorn. "That ancient runt raise hell? I could break him apart with my bare hands."

"You think so?" She stepped back, a magnificent animal, beautiful and wild. "Then you're a dumb ox. Afore you'd got more'n a finger on him, he'd have carved your belly to pieces. You figger muscles are enough, eh? Then I reckon you'd better not risk tangling with my husband. Mr. Styles is quite some man with a knife."

Despite the heat there were goose-pimples on Jake's arms. He looked out through the doorway, across the clearing. "You sure he'll stay away?" he muttered uneasily. "I don't want no trouble."

"I know what'll keep him away." She walked to the wall where the rifles and revolvers hung from pegs and took down a Winchester. "Mr. Styles don't like shooting. If he hears us he'll stay away 'till night."

"You sure?"

"You think I don't know my own man?" Meona knelt at the trunk and unlocked it, taking two small boxes from it. "Come on. I've got some shells."

They went into the dazzling sunshine. The sky was already brassy with heat. From a tree branch, about eighty yards from the cabin, hung five bottles, a piece of twine tied round the neck of each bottle and over the branch. Meona slipped five rounds into the rifle as Jake held it.

"Five shells, five bottles. Let's see how good you are."

Brow furrowed, he peered at her, then dropped flat on the baked earth, pumping a round into the breech and bringing the



rifle up to his shoulder. She stood close to him, her feet almost touching his body as he took aim. Then a hammer-blow of sound echoed round the clearing.

Meona shrieked with laughter. "Missed! Some shooting!"

He scowled. It was difficult to aim; the heat made the target shimmer. He squinted again, squeezing the trigger. This time the right-hand bottle shattered, and two of the remaining shots found a target.

She took the rifle from him. "Go put more targets up, so's I can show you how to shoot." Go on, you big fool," she added, as he hesitated. "You don't expect me to go down there, do you? Go on, there's more bottles by that tree."

He stared down at her bare feet for a moment, then strode off towards the tree. When he was within a few feet of it a bullet cracked above his head, smacking into the branch less than a foot away. His heart pounding, he threw himself down, cutting his cheek on a piece of broken glass.



For a space he lay trembling, the hot sting of the cut painful. Carefully he raised his head and looked back at Meona. She was lying down, the rifle held pointing towards him as he stumbled to his feet and shouted at her.

"You bitch! You tryin' to kill me?"

She was laughing and made no attempt to move as he ran towards her. When he was within a few feet she fled to the cabin, the sounds of her screeching laughter coming back to him. He stood there trembling, feeling the grip of anger tightening on him.

Paying no attention to the big man standing uncertainly out in the full glare of the sun, Meona came out on the porch, carrying a pile of breakfast dishes. She began to wash them at the table on the porch, behaving as though she had forgotten his existence.

Rage made it difficult for him to breathe. Carefully, his footsteps muffled in the dust, he began to stalk over to the cabin; as he got near his eyes focussed on the straggly wisps of hair that had escaped from the two thick plaits coiled over her head. Her neck was only inches from his outstretched hands when she whirled to face him, gun in hand.

He backed away hurriedly, his gaze fixed on the revolver.

"What—what you playin' at? What's the game, huh?"

She smiled. "I'm a respectable woman, Jake. Ain't no man puts his hands on me, less'n he's my husband . . . Course, I like you, Jake, but we ain't married."

"You're crazy! You don't make sense."

For a moment he thought she was going to kill him; then the tension in her face slackened, and she giggled. "I could get to like you, Jake. You're different from Lem." Her mouth was vicious. "I wouldn't care if he never came back."

Jake licked his lips. "He won't be back for a time."

"But he'll *be* back . . . Unless he had an accident." She giggled. "You know, Jake, if Mr. Styles was to meet up with an accident, I don't reckon as anyone'd ever know what happened." The man was watching her with animal intensity. "I reckon if, say, he busted a leg, he'd lie out there in that swamp an' never be found, no matter how many folks was to look for him . . . or if he was to step in one of them mudholes . . . ain't nothin' ever comes up from one of them, Jake."

He dragged a forearm across his face. "What you gettin' at?" he demanded hoarsely. "What you gettin' at?"

Meona smiled

"You know, Jake, you ain't a bad-looking man. I reckon if I was ever to get to be a widow-woman, you're the kind of man I'd hitch up with next time . . . Yes, I'd get me a man like you and I'd go live in the city and have some good times."

His face was blank. "Good times cost dough."

"I could afford 'em, Mr. Styles, supposin' he was to meet up with a fatal accident—well, he'd leave me well fixed."

Jake's brow furrowed. You could pick up a dame at any street corner. But one with money . . . that was something else again. "You kiddin'? This place ain't worth a hundred bucks."

"Mr. Styles has got a-plenty hid away."

He spat. "How much? Fifty bucks?"

"Twenty-seven thousand dollars!"

Laughter belched from him. "Anyone as'd live in a rat dump like this ain't got twenty-seven thousand cents!" He laughed again. "How'd he come by it? Rob a bank?"

"I told you you was a dumb ox," she said levelly. "Mr. Styles is smart. He sells herbs, drugs, animal specimens. He finds 'em all in the swamps; it don't cost him nothing to grow 'em, but he gets right good payment from drug companies and some of the universities."

He scratched his head. "Is it hid in there?" He nodded at the trunk at the foot of the bed.

"No. That's mine. All mine."

"Then where is it?"

"I don't know. All I know is—he's got it. And it's here, somewhere. Mr. Styles don't trust banks."

Through narrowed eyes Jake studied the wooden sheds on the edge of the clearing. They *could* be used for storing drugs, plants and stuff. *Twenty-seven thousand dollars!* It made his throat

ache to think of all the rye he could buy with that much dough.

Slowly he went to the table and began to finger the dried blood from the cut on his cheek. He stood for a long time, trying to think what to do, and when he turned round, Meona was sitting in the rocker, watching him.

"Mr. Styles might get shot by some careless hunter, she said.

He thought about it for a minute. "Ain't no hunters hereabouts at this time of year." He wiped the sweat from his neck with the rough towel. He'd always steered clear of real trouble . . . well, almost always . . . but twenty-seven thousand dollars! His body felt empty, a hollow framework of flesh and skin with nothing to support it. His bones had melted. For the first time he was aware of the silence. A few insects buzzed; from somewhere over at the edges of the clearing a bird called. But apart from these sounds there was only a dull, roaring noise of the blood seething inside his head. He looked at the woman, but in her presence he couldn't think. He had to have a chance to think.

Jake stumbled from the porch and, once hidden from sight of the house, he got to work with the axe, savagely swinging it and cursing with every blow, chopping at a tree as though it was a mortal enemy, felling it and moving on to another one. But even his strength couldn't stand up in that heat and at last, gasping, he dropped the axe and started back towards the cabin.



It was late afternoon when he walked into the clearing. Meona was sitting in the rocking-chair and she smiled a welcome at him. Lying on the boards beside the rocker was the Winchester, and as he paused at the steps she kicked the rifle towards him. Her face was smooth, expressionless.

"Don't you reckon it's possible as Mr. Styles might meet up with an accident?"

He gulped. "It—it's possible."

"You know, Jake," she said, as though gossiping, "Mr. Styles is a tidy man. He always tidies my mess away. First thing, 'fore he comes up to the house, he'll clear up all that broken glass from the bottles and chuck it into a mudhole, where it don't do no harm."

Jake was back in nightmare. He'd known some queer women in his time, but she was the worst—and the best—of the lot. She went on: "Now if someone was goin' to start a bit of target shootin', just at the very moment as Mr. Styles starts to clear up the broken glass . . ."

"Yes?" he whispered.

"Reckon the person behind the gun might not notice as Mr.

Styles was there . . . and there might be an accident . . . a fatal accident." Her voice was still innocent. "And there's them mud-holes—right handy for garbage."

"What you want me to do?" he asked desperately. "You—you reckon I might do some target shootin'?"

Instantly she was smiling. "Sure, Jake, sure. I understand. Sticks in your gullet, don't it, missing them bottles. Practice a bit, and you'd win your prize, huh?" She got up. "I'll go get some shells."

When she came back she was carrying a bowl of potatoes. She looked round. "Reckon you'd aim better if you was lying in that patch of shade, beside the porch." She handed him five rounds. "Don't make no mistake now."

She settled herself in the rocker and began to scrape one of the potatoes. Jake, his mind numb, lowered himself into the shade, flinching at the insects that crawled over him and at the flies clustering round his head. It seemed to him that there was a smell of death in the air. Although the earth was powder-dry, except where he watered it with his own sweat, it smelt musty.

Occasionally he looked up at the woman, trying to draw strength from her presence, but she seemed unaware of him. She was still scraping at one of the potatoes, a reminiscent smile playing round the edge of her mouth, her lips wet.

Waiting was becoming intolerable. He stretched, trying to bring ease to his body, when a whisper from the woman tightened his nerves to the point of pain.

"Mr. Styles is a-comin'!" Her voice was exultant.

With fumbling fingers he loaded the rifle, swearing at the flies that landed on his face. Once he had the sights trained on the track he had to suffer the flies' torment. He did not dare to brush them away; if the sights moved off the point where he had them trained he'd never have the guts to bring them back.

There was a movement at the edge of the clearing. Styles emerged from the trees and began to walk towards the cabin. Then he changed direction, heading for the tree where the necks of the shattered bottles were still hanging.

Jake shook his head, trying desperately to rid himself of the flies and to clear the sweat that was blurring his vision. Styles had his back towards Jake now; the old fool was reaching up to the low branch where the strings were tied, his arms stretched up and outwards, one either side of his head, as though offering himself for crucifixion. Jake could see the middle of the man's back lined up in the centre of the sights and his fingers took up the first pressure. *Why didn't Styles move!* He waited there almost as though inviting death.

Blood poured down over Jake's chin from where he had bitten through his lower lip. His finger tightened convulsively on the

trigger and there was a click. He stared stupidly at the rifle, sweat drenching him. He ejected the faulty shell and pumped another round into the breach and fired again. There was another click. Sobbing, he twisted his head to look up at the woman, and what he saw made his heart freeze.

She was standing up, gloating over him, her face almost unrecognisable. From the bowl of vegetables she took a revolver, slowly bringing the gun up to aim at his paralysed body. Her body shaking, Meona began to laugh, the noise of it rising in pitch and volume, shrieking out from her froth-ringed mouth and continuing long after the echoes of the six shots she fired had died away.

At a shambling run Styles hurried across the clearing, his face ashen. When he reached the shade of the porch Meona was on her knees, pulling the worn boots from the feet of the dead man. Stooping, Styles gripped Jake's legs just above the ankles and, grunting with the exertion, he began to drag the body feet first towards the edge of the clearing, in the direction of the nearest mudhole.



When Styles got back to the cabin Meona was standing in front of the open trunk at the end of the bed, Jake's boots in her hand. As she heard Lem enter she added Jake's boots to the four assorted pairs already in the bottom of the trunk, then threw herself into Lem's arms, moaning.

"Don't let them take me away, Lem. Don't let them take me away."

He stroked her plaited hair with gentle fingers, the lines of strain on his face smoothing away as he gazed down in compassion at her stained and ravaged face. Tenderly he held her to his heart. "There, there, my love. You are safe with Lem, my darling." He was at peace. Nothing bad would happen to disturb them again. Not for a long time.

Not until next summer.

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**A** POLICE officer is not a man apart. He is a fellow human being doing a job which, if so minded, any ordinary citizen could do himself in many instances.

— *Thomas Moore*, Chief Constable of Nottingham.



# A Matter Of Record

JOHN SALT

*A box of the stone jug gave  
Rosewarne and Manbre  
a straight answer*

SUPERINTENDENT EDWARD ROSEWARNE hurried from the casualty entrance of Charing Cross Hospital in a mood of cold fury. A pretty coloured nurse clattered past him exclaiming "Que frio!" at the climate of the night. Rosewarne stared after her bleakly, his mind still busy with the scene in the surgical ward where a youth with a knife wound that had penetrated a lung still struggled for life. The operating surgeon had offered no optimistic prognosis.

The savage mood persisted during Rosewarne's short drive back to Holborn Central Police headquarters in Otway Street, off Drury Lane. He had left a uniformed officer at the bedside in case the boy should recover consciousness and be able to describe the youth who had attacked him during an affray at the Polygon Youth Club in Smithfield. There was nothing else to be done but question a cloud of frightened witnesses. Rosewarne's sergeant, Jack Manbre, was already doing that at the Polygon.

Holborn Central had been busy that night. Even now, at two in the morning, there was brisk activity at the charge desk combined with the sound of singing. Rosewarne's harshness softened only a little at the sight of his latest prisoner. All that Holborn Central needed on a night like this was Bosie Hawkins, and Bosie they had got, for the third time that month.

He turned to confront the superintendent, a large and ancient man with a flowing white beard, yellow-tinged at the edges, that cascaded in a convoluted tangle over his chest like so much kapok exploding from an over-stuffed cushion. Hair sprouted from his ears and overhung his eyes, but his head was a tall, pink dome with a faint tonsure of grime above his ears where his cap usually sat. His face was the colour of vellum, the skin something of the same texture, but his nose dominated all, questing, beaklike, veined and with a dewdrop at the tip. His arms flew wide at sight of Rosewarne and his three overcoats with them, affording a glimpse of a long, many-pocketed waistcoat of the stuff that used to be called kerseymere, cinched at the

waist by a length of rope that also secured his yellow corduroy workman's trousers.

Bosie lurched forward, exhaling malted liquours. Rosewarne caught the desk sergeant's eye.

"Found in Fleur de Lis court, sir. Drunk."

Bosie swung round again, almost overbalancing. "But not disorderly," he thundered. "I want that written down. Bosie Hawkins is never disorderly. Never on your nelly." Rosewarne caught him as he staggered again. The old man gave him a beatific smile and added in tones of dreadful refinement, "Never, Superintendent, if I may be allowed the expression. Never on your Sam."

Rosewarne propped him against the charge desk. "Put him down, Sergeant, if you've a cell spare."

"Up before the court in the morning, sir?"

Rosewarne shrugged. "Hardly seems worth it. I should turn him loose when he's slept it off. Any news from the Polygon?"

"Sergeant Manbre's upstairs in your room, sir." He turned to a constable. "Dench, just make Mr. Hawkins comfortable for the night, will you."

Bosie said reproachfully: "It's too early for bed. I won't go till I've had a word with the superintendent, here. He's a gentleman is the super. You could all learn a lot from him."

Rosewarne said wearily: "Come along, Bosie, you've had your fun."

"You've had a bad night. I can see that and I won't add to your troubles. Just tell me how long you've known this blooming borough."

"Getting on twenty years," Rosewarne humoured him.

The old man crowed triumphantly: "Well see now, young feller, you're just a beginner. There's things you don't know and never will know about this manor and the people in it. But Bosie knows, and why? 'Cos it's all written down in my books, that's why. Come on then, Dench, see that, never forget a name. Come on, Dench, Wench, Tench, take me to bed." He staggered off leaning heavily on the shoulder of the red-faced young constable and singing amiably:

"Hey dog lobbity, robbing Bobbity jolly country boys we be."

"He's a jolly country boy, I must say," the sergeant muttered.

"It's a true bill though, Sergeant. Bosie does know a hell of a lot about this manor, writes it all down, too. He keeps a pen and a bottle of ink in his waistcoat pockets and his clothes are stuffed with papers."

"Keep him warm, I shouldn't wonder," the sergeant observed morosely. "Will you listen to that now." Further strains of song echoed from the cell block. Bosie was tearing a cat with a ballad

dredged up from heaven knew what uncertain memory of the Newgate Calendar:

"In a box of the Stone Jug I was born,  
of a hempen widow the kid forlorn."



Rosewarne's face clouded and he hurried up the stairs to his own office where Detective-sergeant Manbre sat talking into a telephone. The sergeant hung up, shaking his head. "Not a squeak, sir. Nobody recognised anybody or if they did, nobody is talking. The raiders were complete strangers. They burst in, picked a fight, smashed a few windows and pushed off again in a couple of cars leaving young Lennie Hillman flaked out on the dance floor. No motive that I can see. Simply for the kicks, I suppose."

Rosewarne's irritation was near danger point. "Don't talk to me about kicks," he exploded. "In ten minutes time this could be a murder case. Any news from the hospital?"

"I just talked to them. Hillman's still unconscious."

"What luck with the cars; anybody get a number?"

"Too much of a panic, sir. They were probably stolen."

"They were probably stolen," Rosewarne repeated bitterly. "Really I think I could have worked that one out for myself, Sergeant. All right then, let's see some reports of stolen cars."

Manbre said promptly. "Five, sir. Three in Shoe Lane and New Bridge Street, a couple from St. Martin's Lane."

Rosewarne snapped his fingers impatiently: "I want the recovery rate."

"Two still missing, sir. A grey Riley and a dark blue Hillman Minx." The telephone jangled, Manbre picked it up and listened briefly. "That's the Riley, sir, West End Central report it found abandoned in the Edgware Road, seats slashed, tyres deflated, a bashed-up wing. Could be one the kids used."

"Could be any kids though, Jack, another game altogether." Rosewarne paused, then added thoughtfully: "I wonder why I set my heart on a dark blue Hillman Minx. Put out a general call."

Manbre glanced at his watch, sighed, then picked up the telephone. Rosewarne went to the steamed-up window and gloomed at the night. "This could take a long time."

"The thought had occurred to me, sir," the sergeant agreed glumly.

In fact, it took only ten minutes. A terse call from the Hertfordshire Constabulary informed them that a blue Hillman had been stopped just outside Barnet after jumping the lights and glancing off a long-distance lorry in the High Street. The driver, a youth called Reggie Sadler, had been arrested, a second boy had darted off into the night. Sadler, superficially injured but

badly scared, had blurted out a hysterical and unsolicited confession as to the incidents at the Polygon and had identified his escaping companion as Peter Hugo, the boy who had fought with Hillman.

"Know anything about this kid, Hugo?" Rosenwarne shot at Banbre.

"As it happens, sir, yes."

"I'll have the address first. Tell me the rest on the way."

"Bedfordbury, sir. Back of the Coliseum Theatre."

Rosewarne sat hunched forward in the rear seat of the police car as if urging it to greater speed. "All right, let's have it."

"Nothing much to it; queer sort of story really. I found a gang of kids tormenting old Bosie Hawkins one day. This Peter Hugo was the ringleader so I took him by the ear and waltzed him round to his mum and dad. They said they couldn't understand it. The kid and Bosie had always been good friends. Then all of a sudden the boy turns nasty and starts chucking stones whenever he sees him. I gave the boy a ticking off and his mother made him promise never to do it again. I think the Hugos even took the old rogue in for a bit to dry and straighten him out." He chuckled reminiscently. "A lot of people have tried to do that, without much success."

Rosewarne moved impatiently. "The boy has no police record, then."

"Not officially. He drove a car for Dougal Rankin a while back though, and that's no recommendation."

"That louse. Are we there, Jack?"

Manbre glanced out of the window. "This is it, sir. Third floor; there's no lift."

Rosewarne shivered as he climbed from the car. The flat block reared like a cliff above them, the upper storeys shrouded in the mist and darkness of early morning, the concrete paths aglitter with rime.



The tall man who opened the flat door was fully dressed. His eyes swiftly appraised the two policemen, then he called over his shoulder: "It's the police, Jenny." He jerked his head at Rosewarne. "You'd better come in; it's about Peter, I suppose."

"You seem to know all about it," Rosewarne said stiffly.

"I'm not bloody daft. He hasn't been home all night, something's got to be wrong. What has he been up to?"

Rosewarne told him briefly. Hugo listened with a bleak face. "Seems to me you haven't much proof. Come in and talk to the wife."

He led the day through a small stuffily furnished sitting-room into a back kitchen, where Jenny Hugo sat at a table, supporting

her chin on her hands. Rosewarne saw at once that she was the stronger vessel, a thick-set, compactly-built woman with strong hands and a smooth intractable face. Rosewarne introduced himself. "This is Sergeant Manbre. I hope you won't object to him taking a look over the flat."

"You won't find Peter," she said harshly. "We haven't seen him since early evening. He uses this place like an hotel."

"There's not much to keep a kid indoors these days," the man said dully.

She flared at once. "There's bad blood in him. I've always said and we both know it."

Hugo said on a warning note: "That's enough said, Jenny." Husband and wife stood glaring at each other, then the tension went out of the woman and she sat down again at the table. Manbre came back from the bedrooms shaking his head.

Rosewarne said quietly: "You understand that we have to find your son and the sooner the better. He may return here or attempt to get in touch with you. If he does it is your duty to inform the police at once."

Mrs. Hugo said sharply: "He's not my son."

Her husband pressed her shoulder. "You only say that because you're upset, Jenny."

"Don't be daft, Will," she said tiredly. "They'll have to know anyway so what difference does it make. We took him from a home, Superintendent. Peter is an adopted child."

Brief light dawned on Rosewarne's inward mind. "Was that the cause of the trouble with Bosie Hawkins?"

She gave him a suspicious glare. "How did you know about that. Oh, I suppose he told you," jerking her chin at Manbre. "We told Peter when he was fourteen; he'd been asking a lot of questions. Looking back I can see it was a mistake. We should have done it sooner. He turned against everybody, including us, but especially Bosie."

Rosewarne nodded. "I want you to hang on here, Jack, until I can send a relief. I'm sorry about this, Mrs. Hugo, but I want you to leave Peter's things just as they are. Lock his bedroom door and give the sergeant the key. A search will be made in the morning."

"In the morning," she echoed and quite suddenly began to weep great silent tears that splashed down over her dress and contorted her face with the effort to control them. Rosewarne averted his gaze and went out without looking back.

Dawn at 5.30 found Rosewarne still in his office. He had spent the intervening hours interviewing the chastened Reggie Sadler and superintending the round-up of seven other members of the gang that had raided the Polygon Club. Of Peter Hugo there



was still no news, and in Charing Cross Hospital Lennie Hillman still fought his unequal battle. Manbre came in at seven and found his chief drinking coffee. Rosewarne pushed the pot towards him. "Did they talk much after I'd gone?"

"Hardly at all. The woman had something on her mind, though."

"You mean about the bad blood. I picked that up, too. We should have some news from the committee that handled the adoption during the day."

"What news of Hillman?"

"Nothing good; not the worst though."

Manbre shook his head. "Why the hell do they do it?"



It was another hour before they had the answer to that one by which time Rosewarne and Manbre found themselves inspecting the strong-room door of a merchant banking house that adjoined the Polygon. Rosewarne prowled around inside the vault, inspecting the rifled drawers, then came out again and leaned against the twisted steel door. "Quite an explosion, Jack."

The sergeant answered glumly: "Which nobody heard because they were all too busy with the rumble next door. So it was all a put-up job."

Rosewarne said: "I'll take my dying oath none of the kids we rounded up this morning knew what they were getting into. To them it was just the kicks you talked about, Jack."

"Somebody had to know," Manbre protested.

"That's right. Peter Hugo, for instance. He had more brains than the rest of them put together, but he didn't plan this robbery. Let's work it out on the hypothesis that Hugo was paid to lay on a diversion while the safe deposit was raided. The strong-room contained thirty thousand, but some money would have to be laid out to get it. This job called for a wiring expert to fix the alarms, a jelly expert who knew just how much he needed to blow off the door without blowing his head off, too, a cosh boy who could lay out a watchman without killing him, a cool brain to work out time schedules and safety margins, and a fast driver to get them all safely away. Does that catalogue suggest anybody to you?"

"Dougal Rankin," Manbre said without hesitation. "And young Hugo has worked for him in the past."

Rosewarne shook his head. "That's guessing, Jack. We'd just like it to be Rankin because this job bears his hallmarks and it's an easy tie-up with the boy. We don't even know whether Rankin is still operating."

"He came out of Barlinnie eighteen months ago; he'd be about ready to pull a new job. And he'd make for the Border right

afterwards. Glasgow's his home territory, sir."

"All the more reason for staying away from it, I should think. Anyway, he'd have to use a lot of local London talent and they'd want their cut first. Rankin would hole up somewhere on the way if only for the share-out."

"The Hillman was heading North," Manbre said suddenly. "Did Sadler say why?"

"Hugo told him to."

"Well, surely . . ."

"We're snatching at straws, Jack. Hugo was only a small part of the operation; he'd have had his orders to stay away from the big boss afterwards."

"I realise that, sir. But Hugo knows he may be on a murder charge. Surely he'd go to Rankin for protection."

"He'd not get it," Rosewarne said firmly. "The reverse in fact. By God, that's a thought." He considered it then shook his head again. "It's all pretty tenuous, Jack. We'll go by the book—prints, witnesses if any, time checks, all the routine stuff. Meantime there's no harm in asking Mr. Dougal Rankin a few questions when we find him."



But Dougal Rankin was not to be found and the investigation laboured on in measured frustration. During the next twelve hours Reggie Sadler and his companions were remanded in custody following an appearance at Clerkenwell Magistrates' Court, the police opposing bail. A second operation was performed on the still unconscious Lennie Hillman, and Superintendent Rosewarne received a typed extract of a confidential Home Office report on the adoption of Peter Hugo. He was reading it again at eleven that night, checking the notes of the second interview with Mrs. Hugo that had resulted from it when the day's final piece of news reached him. Bosie Hawkins had been admitted to the emergency ward of a Hampstead hospital, suffering from exposure and alcoholism.

In the ordinary way it was not information that would greatly have interested Rosewarne though he preserved a secret liking for the ancient rogue. Certainly he would not have interrupted an important investigation to go paying sickbed visits but for the fact that Bosie was asking to see him with an urgency backed by the examining physician's tacit admission that the old man had not long to go. Rosewarne found him propped against pillows, very clean and pale, his beard combed and spread over a chest that made only a small mound beneath the sheets.

Bosie's eyes were still bright, even mischievous as he ventured a familiarity not normally allowable with Edward Rosewarne. "I'm for my long home, Ted."

"Not you, Bosie; you'll still be causing trouble when I've got my pension."

"That's as may be." A thin white hand crept from beneath the sheet and a finger moved, beckoning Rosewarne closer. "Can you hear me, I've got the croaks."

Rosewarne leaned to the reedy whisper. "What's it all about, old chap?"

"I saw the papers before I took ill. You're looking for Peter Hugo. Is it for murder?"

"It could be," Rosewarne said grimly.

"That means the other kid is still alive."

"Only just."

"There's hope, then. Have you found Peter yet?"

"I shouldn't be telling you, but, no, we haven't found him."

"There's something you may not know about Peter."

"About his mother, the real one?"

Bosie's eyes flickered. "A thing like that could have a big effect on a boy."

"It might. If he knew."

"He did know; Mrs. Hugo told him. Ah, she's a daft one." Bosie gave a great sigh.

Rosewarne said in a controlled voice: "If a boy finds out that his mother was a convicted murderess it would upset him. Anybody would be sympathetic. But it does not give him an automatic right to make history repeat itself. Hugo stabbed a boy the other night."

Bosie moved his head in a negative gesture. "Somebody says he stabbed a boy; that's not quite the same thing."

Rosewarne put a hand on the old man's shoulder. "I can't talk to you any more about it, Bosie. I must go. Is there anything I can get you?"

Bosie's hand reached up and grasped him with surprising strength. "Find that boy, Ted; it's important. I reckon he's in danger."

Rosewarne sat down again; suddenly he was all policeman. "Let's have it, Bosie, what do you know?"

The black eyes were wary. "I don't feel so good."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I might."

"What kind of answer is that? Either you do or you don't."

"I've been in trouble all my life. I've no cause to love your kind."

"What you're trying to say is that you won't grass."

The tired eyes looked suddenly desperate. "It's not even that. I do know, but I don't remember, that's the size of it. Nothing stays in my mind anymore. I have to write things down. You

remember."

"Your books, yes; you've often told me."

"Books? They're not books. Just bits of paper with scrawls on them. You know me. Everybody does. If I'm in a room nobody lowers their voice because of me. It's as if I were a wall or a ceiling or the rail you rest your foot on. So I hear things, in pubs, in clubs, walking around the street markets—and I write them down . . ." The voice broke off. Bosie's eyes closed and his body stiffened in a sudden spasm. A nurse came round the screen and peered down at him. She looked at Rosewarne. "I think you'd better go, sir."

Bosie opened his eyes at once and glared at the girl. "Don't go, Ted; I've got to tell you. Listen, I heard the Polygon job planned; Peter was with a bloke. I didn't recognise him but I got the name though I've forgotten it since. Anyway, it's all—all written down, the name, the place they were meeting after the . . ." the words tumbled over each other and trailed into incoherency. Bosie's eyes closed, this time with an appearance of permanency. The nurse said crisply, "You must go now, sir."

Rosewarne nodded and walked softly down the ward to the Sister's office. "Hawkins's clothes. They've not been destroyed?"

"Of course not, sir, but we had to fumigate them. You'll find his personal effects and papers in the Almoner's office."



In all four hundred separate sheets of paper and cardboard had been rescued from Bosie's clothing. His books were written on anything that came to hand—old cigarette cartons, scraps of newsprint, paper bags, the backs of envelopes, all creased and crumpled and stained from their resting places in the deep pockets and torn linings of Bosie's many coats.

It took Rosewarne and Manbre the better part of two hours to go through them all. The entries were in diary form with the date and even the hour of writing noted in a strangely precise hand. Sometimes Bosie philosophised, often he composed a form of blank verse, but for the most part the entries were straightforward records of people and things, verbatim renditions of conversations heard. There was caustic comment, too, and even a verbal caricature of Rosewarne himself. But of the entry concerning Hugo there was no sign, though Manbre found a long description of the scene in which Mrs. Hugo in a moment of anger told Peter of the circumstances of his adoption, Bosie being a guest in the house at the time.

Manbre pushed the papers aside. "That's about it, sir. The old fellow must have been wandering."

Rosewarne shook his head. "We haven't finished reading yet. Bosie slept in dosshouses most of the time, I'm having them all checked. Every scrap of his handwriting will be brought here."

"They'd have destroyed it surely, sir. Some of the stuff we read was ages old."

"And some of it was written only three days ago. I expect a good deal of his scribbling has been burned by now, but he'd have saved the bit about Peter. It was important to him and he would have put it somewhere safe. Damn it, Jack, why didn't I think of it before. It could be at the Hugos. Come on, no time to lose."

It was four when they reached the flat. To Manbre, his eyes gritty with sleep denied, it seemed that nothing had changed since their last visit. The Hugos were both fully dressed, obviously waiting and hoping that Peter would return, the woman sat at the kitchen table in the same position that they had seen her last.

Only her manner had altered; there was a softness now that Rosewarne had not remembered, an air of resignation and even a desire to help. She went at once to a music stool in the sitting room and lifted the hinged lid. "There's a pile of Bosie's old junk in there. I always meant to throw it out but sometimes he'd come asking. You're welcome if it will help, though I don't see how it can."

Rosewarne lifted out the plywood container and emptied the contents on the kitchen table. Wearily he and Manbre applied themselves to the task and with the same result. An hour later Rosewarne scooped up the bits and pieces and put them back in the box. "No luck, I'm afraid. We shall have to take these away with us, Mrs. Hugo."

She nodded dispiritedly and followed them to the door. Manbre paused, staring at a raglan overcoat, green with age, that hung on a hook behind the kitchen door. "Would that be Bosie's?" he asked doubtfully.

Rosewarne snatched the coat down and plunged a hand through the pockets. The envelope was inside the tattered lining at the tail of the coat. He plucked it out and took it over to the light. Manbre watched the stern face and felt a familiar tingle of anticipation run up his spine. Rosewarne looked up, the tiredness and frustrations of the day sponged away. "This is it. Times, dates and places. Dougal Rankin is our boy."

"Where, sir?"

A shadow crossed Rosewarne's face. "Can't hope for too much at this stage, but the plan was to foregather at a deserted roadhouse near South Mimms. Chances are they've flown the coop by now, though."

"Unless young Hugo caught up with them last night."



"I'm banking on that. Maybe they sat tight till things got quieter. Let's get down to the car."

The derelict roadhouse lay some three miles off the Great North Road at the end of a private carriageway, long unrepaired. Rosewarne had rallied his forces on the swift drive through the northern suburbs. Two cars from the Central Division accompanied him and a third filled with Hertfordshire men was already drawn across the overgrown drive that led to the house. The woods around were faintly stirring to the false dawn but the house was silent and showing no light. Rosewarne pushed forward on foot with Manbre and three uniformed men.

Behind the house a starter motor ground, a heavy engine fired and began to rumble steadily. Headlights flared and lit the tinsel drapery of the frosted trees.

Rosewarne switched on the powerful torch he carried and broke into a run. The police party rounded the back of the house and came into the full flood of the headlamps of a heavy van moving slowly towards them. As it picked up speed Rosewarne shortened his grip on the flashlamp and hurled it through the windscreen. The truck lurched to one side, hit the corner of the house and stalled. Manbre wrenched open the cab door and hauled out the driver. Rosewarne, beside him, gave a satisfied grunt. "Making an early start, aren't you, Rankin?"

The man began to bluster, but Rosewarne cut him short. "You'll find it's a fair cop; I should save any explanations for the beak. Check the back, Sergeant; you'll likely find a few more friends in there."

Manbre was back in a few moments. "Three more of them, sir, and the money. No sign of the boy, though."

Rosewarne turned on Rankin. "What have you done with Peter Hugo?"

"Get knotted, copper! I don't know what you're talking about."

Rosewarne's fists clenched. He said to Manbre: "Get these beauties wheeled away before I do them an injury. I'm going to take a look inside the house."

Manbre rejoined the superintendent five minutes later as he emerged from the tumble-down building. "Nobody in there, Jack; there's something about this that I don't much like."

"Maybe he never got this far."

"If he made it to Barnet he made it here. Let's tour the grounds."

"What are we looking for, sir?"

"I don't know; a grave maybe," Rosewarne said harshly.

But it was no grave they found, only an ante-room to death, a rotting wooden shed surrounded by nettle beds in which Peter Hugo lay on a pile of mouldering sacks. The boy was dressed only

in slacks and a shirt. His face had a bluish tinge and he was deeply unconscious. Rosewarne kneeled beside him to make an inspection. "Couple of broken ribs here, Jack. Likely enough he has pneumonia, too. Give me a hand to lift him; this is a hospital case."

Back at Holborn Central Rosewarne sorted out the pieces. "Hugo was injured in the smash at Barnet, nothing that a casualty ward couldn't have patched up, but the kid was too scared to chance that. Instead he made for Rankin's hideout, probably on foot; he'd have been in a poor way by then. Our Dougal wouldn't want anything to do with a kid on the run from a murder charge—he'd be too likely to break down and tell all. So Rankin parked him, where we found him, to die of exposure. The body might not have been discovered for weeks, by which time there'd have been nothing to link the boy with Rankin. I reckon the gang hung on there until the kid went into a coma then piled into the van for the getaway. We had more luck than we deserved."

"Will the boy be all right?"

"He'll be able to stand trial, if that's what you mean. But not on a murder charge. Hillman came to this morning and he's able to talk. It seems that he drew the knife himself and had it turned against him in the scuffle. This case is a little short on angels, Jack. Nobody turns out to be quite what he seemed."

"Especially Bosie Hawkins. How is he doing, sir?"

Rosewarne gave a short laugh. "Last night I thought he was a goner, but this morning he was sufficiently recovered to start causing more trouble. He tried to drink some surgical spirit the nurse was using. They stopped him in time though, so Bosie will probably survive to plague us yet. For all I know some Sunday newspaper will even publish his book. They'll have to censor the bit about me."

"About Bosie, sir. You said there were no angels in this case. Why did he go to all the trouble over Peter Hugo?"

Rosewarne was silent for a moment, his fingers played with the desk furniture, arranging a ruler at a precise right angle with a paper knife. Finally he said: "Did you ever hear Bosie sing an old Newgate ballad. The one about a box of the Stone Jug?"

Manbre nodded. "I don't see what that has to do with it, sir."

"You will. A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind, Sergeant Manbre. You see, Bosie Hawkins really was the kid forlorn of a hempen widow. Things were a little different seventy years ago when Bosie first saw the light. That happened in a women's prison on the day that his father was hanged at Pentonville—for murder. Does that answer your question?"

"Is that a true bill, sir?"

"It's a matter of record; you can look it up sometime. That's

the trouble with civilisation, Jack; everything gets written down. That's why things are so hard to forget." He yawned, picked up his hat and turned to go. "I'm off home to sleep for a week. If anybody asks for me tell them that I was found drowned at Wapping Old Stairs three years ago. It could be true."

Manbre crossed to the window and watched his chief go striding down Otway Street, shoulders back and chin thrust out. Manbre had thought it before and he thought it again. The old man had a ruddy queer sense of humour.

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## ***Sold out . . . !***

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# the angle

*is part one of a crime duo in what can be styled as American-Gothic, a tough story strictly of the big city . . .*

**T**HE RACKETS are no different than any other way of making a fat buck: you have to offer a new angle. And, man, it looked like we'd hit upon a real new bit. I'll admit it was Frankie's idea. I met Frankie in the pen and when we got out, we started hustling together. He's pretty sharp while I lean more to muscle—I'm built like a heavyweight champ, and can look meaner than Sonny Liston.

We weren't doing too well until one day we overheard a storekeeper beg a numbers guy we were doing a day's work for, to have the syndicate use his store for a numbers' drop. What that means is, the runners leave their slips with the numbers and the amount played, in the store, in case they get collared by some dumb cop not on the take.

Like inspiration a new form of the con hits Frankie's greasy brains. What we did was pick three small grocery stores in the poorer sections of the city. One run by a middle-aged and nervous guy named Silverstein, another owned by a Pedro Alverz and the third by an old guy called Woosburg, who still spoke with a Kraut accent after 30 years in the States. The thing was, all these stores were one-man affairs and not doing too good.

Frankie, he slipped them the pitch by himself. He told them he was in the numbers racket and would give them \$800 a week, each, to use their store for a drop. You see what a sales talk this was, these jerks were lucky to clear \$80 a week, putting in a 16-hour day in their store, so \$800 a week seemed like a call from heaven. Man, not one of the cats hesitated.

The next morning Frankie appeared at each store with a paper bag full of slips. About an hour later he 'phoned each grocer, asked him to look through the bag and see how many plays he had on 735. Around noon, Frankie showed up in each store with another bag and about two p.m. 'phoned each grocer again and

asked how many plays on 735 in the second bag. We'd fixed it so there was about \$10 going on 735.

Of course these storekeepers had no idea how numbers work or they would have known the guy running the drop hasn't a thing to do with any paying off. But we'd picked them because they were clowns. At four p.m. Frankie called each one and told them, "Seven thirty-five came out; pay off and I'll settle with you later." And then he hung up.

Now it was time for me to go into action. On a \$10 total the numbers will pay six grand, so I went from store to store, asking for my \$6,000. Naturally, these fuzzy shopkeepers are all up in the air, and one glance at gorilla-me doesn't help their jitters. They stammered that Frankie will pay-off only I told them loudly and firmly that I don't know any Frankie: I bet my dough, the number came out and I want my six grand or somebody is going to get one hell of a beating. I took what little dough they had, and said I'd give 'em until morning to raise the rest. With Alverz,

You see the beauty of all this—they couldn't run to the cops,

You see the beauty of all this, they couldn't run to the cops, they would never see Frankie again and there was me playing tough.



The following day Silverstein had \$1,500, pleaded with me to wait until the next day; he was trying to get a bank loan against his store. Alverz said he'd begged and borrowed \$2,200, couldn't raise another dime. Woosburg must have ripped his mattress apart. He gave me the whole \$6,000 and, waving a meat knife, warned me never to show my ugly puss in his shop again.

I slapped Alverz around and he finally came through with \$600 more, hysterically cried that was it. Silverstein told me the next day the bank was still considering his loan; he was trying to put up his wife's rings for collateral. I gave him a terrific gut wallop, and said he'd get more tomorrow. He came through with \$3,400 the next day and two days later I read in the papers he'd made like a bird off a roof.

Some score. Nearly \$14,000, and all in a few days!

Frankie and I kind of hid out. It wasn't that we were afraid of the cops but the goons in the numbers syndicate might take a dim view of what we'd done, *if* it ever got out. I don't mean we flew town or really took it on lam. We just moved to a cheap hotel and kept away from our usual bars and broads. In short, we were hard to find.

But after two months we returned to our old turf and didn't hear talk of anybody looking for us. We'd been living easy and had about \$12,000 left. Frankie thought we ought to shake down a few more stores, before the racket got known.



Not far from the flea-bag hotel we'd been hiding out in was this small store in a dead street of a few crummy private houses. You could see this guy wasn't doing much business, would be ripe for our play. The new sign said the store was the Big Deal Grocery and the guy behind the counter was young, so we had a live one. He accepted Frankie's offer at once and the next morning, when Frankie left the bag of slips, this shopkeeper told him, "I mentioned it to some of the salesmen about my being in the numbers and they . . ."

"Whatcha do that for, big mouth?" Frankie snapped.

The grocer shrugged. "Well, these guys, they've heard agout the numbers but never played 'em. You know. When I told them the odds were six hundred to one, well, they're all anxious, willing to play about twenty dollars a day, each."

"Twenty a day?" Frankie repeated. "How many suckers?"

"Well, four, for openers. But you know food salesmen, they all make out good and know each other. Once the word gets around, in about a week, we could have fifty guys playing, take in a grand a day. What shall I tell 'em?"

"Tell them to start playing! I'll be here tomorrow to pick up the action, before noon. Or any time convenient for them."

The grocer nodded. "There's one other thing—a twenty dollar hit means a twelve thousand dollar pay-off, and they know I don't have that kind of dough. I explained that you were part of a syndicate and could pay off ten, twenty, fifty grand, if anybody hits that big. But these salesmen, being new at playing, they want to be sure you can pay-off."

"What the hell do they expect, Dun & Bradstreet to give me a credit okay?" Frankie yelled.

"Oh, no, sir. These four salesmen, they said that if one of them can meet you and see that you have the money, say a roll like fifteen thousand, they'll start playing every day. Like I said, by the end of a week or two we'll have plenty of salesmen playing and—I don't want to sound greedy, but I should get a bigger cut . . ."

Frankie told me about it in our hotel room, added, "Jack, we got us something going which could be a steady score. We have a grand a day rolling in with six hundred to one odds in our favour. In a year, unless we get hit too often, we'll have nearly three hundred grand. This could start us in the numbers business, on the level."

"Yeah? How do you know this grocer can get fifty big players?"

Frankie said, "I ain't got a crystal head: I don't know anything for sure, Jack, use your thick brains, what have we got to lose? If the storekeeper don't produce, we can always shake him down. All I have to do is flash a fifteen grand roll. We got twelve

grand; we'll raise another three big bills. Jack, this is opportunity knocking our heads together!"

I thought for a second. "What about the numbers mob?"

"What are you so jittery about? This is virgin territory; the syndicate can't complain. After a few months we'll be in a position to maybe sell them a piece of the action, if they insist. Jack, Jack, this ain't peanuts—this can be a thousand-a-day take, every day!"



Frankie talked his ex-wife out of four hundred and fifty dollars and I borrowed three hundred from my uncle, when he wasn't looking. We hit up a loan-shark for two grand. We were short, but our roll flashed real fat. The next morning I went with Frankie to meet one of the salesmen in the store—I feel uneasy when Frankie carries *all* our loot. The grocer was behind the counter, alone. Frankie asked, "Where's the sales guy?"

"Waiting in the back room," this young grocer whispered. "Go right in."

The back room was empty of goods or a salesman: the only things in it were two empty crates. When we turned around the grocer had a .45 in his hand. He said, "The Marines gave me medals for using this, so don't try anything stupid. Put your money on that milk crate and move your hands slowly."

We took one look at his bright eyes and Frankie dropped the money, but at once. Man, with a .45 you don't argue; even a bum shot can tear an arm off. The grocer picked up the money with his free hand, had us turn around. I heard the swish of the gun before I tumbled off into black mud, knowing that was the ball game.

When I opened my eyes, naturally we were alone in the store. Frankie was still out, probably had a concussion, while my own noggin was bloody. We couldn't run to the police and there's this thing with the loan-shark hanging over us. Like if we don't pay the two grand we borrowed, with interest, we're in for a real licking, or worse. One thing came through my aching dome loud and clear: I had to find this lousy grocer fast!

Leaving Frankie in the back room, I wiped the blood off my head with my undershirt, went through the cash register up front. I expected it to be empty, but there wasn't even a name or address. I ran out of the store. The only other business around was a news-stand two blocks away. I asked the old guy behind the stand, "You know this young guy running the Big Deal store down here?"

"I know he's an idiot," the newsman said with a grin. "When he opened the store a few weeks ago, he'd stop to buy the papers: he read all day—no business. I told the fool, at the time, that

this wasn't the neighbourhood to support a grocery store. No store ever lasted there. But this cocky young fellow, said he knew what he was doing, didn't seem to care that he had almost no stock, hardly took in a buck all day or . . ."

"Okay, where does he live?" I cut in.

The old guy shrugged. "Who knows? I never saw him before a couple weeks ago."

"He never mentioned any address, at all?"

"I think he did once say he'd just come to the city, from Kansas, or maybe it was Chicago; some place a way off."

"What's his name?" I cut in again. "What did you call him?"

"I merely called him, son. He never did tell me his—No, wait; he did mention a name once. When I told him about this not being the spot for a grocery business, he said he knew the business because his father had been it it for years. Yeah, I recall now. He said his poppa's name was Silverstein. But I guess daddy wasn't much of a grocer either, the kid said his old man had jumped off a roof and . . . mister, you look real sick."

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# requiem for a witch

*. . . and this curiously haunting story,  
set in north-eastern Pennsylvania,  
pictures rural crime*

**T**HEY'LL NEVER burn Miz Wilson, no matter what she done. She's too old, for one thing. Sixty-five when she quit school teaching ten years ago and moved here. Everybody in Pine Center knows she's a bit teched in the head. Time and again, folks heard her wandering around in the woods near that old house of hers, and talking to the trees like they were people.

That's right, she talks to trees. I was hunting woodchuck oncet and seen her come along the path with that old hound dog of hers. Every few steps she'd stop and look up at pine with a smile and say, "Hello, dear. How are you today?" Or she'd pat a seedling maple like it was a child and cackle, "Aren't *you* the pretty thing. Someday you'll be tall and beautiful like your mamma."

Honest, that's what she done. Myrt and me figured out the old lady was so lonesome she liked to pretend the trees were friends.

We thought when Kitty Dolan came to work for her that summer, Miz Wilson would start acting normal-like. Kitty was only seventeen, cute as a kitten, and Miz Wilson treated her like a grand-daughter. Kitty said it was the nicest place she ever worked, and she got real mad when the village kids called the old lady a witch.

Everything was fine till one night when Kitty come down after work to visit with Myrt and me. She was kind of giggling, but her eyes were big. Seems when she was taking the old lady home after their evening walk, Miz Wilson stopped all at once in the middle of the moonlit road and says to Kitty:

"Hush. Hear them? The trees are talking very loud tonight.

Put your head against that big oak and listen. They're trying to tell us something."

Well, to please the old lady, Kitty put her head against the oak, and of course she didn't hear nothing but the breeze, but Miz Wilson just stood their listening and nodding her head till Kitty got scared.

Myrt told Kitty maybe she ought to quit the job because if Miz Wilson was *that* crazy there was no telling what she might do next, but Kitty said the poor old soul was harmless and it would be cruel to leave her alone, with nothing but the hound dog for company.



That was Kitty Dolan. She couldn't bear to hurt anybody and she wasn't the kind to think anybody would ever hurt her.

Until Jake Brader came back to Pine Center.

None of them Bradens are any good but Jake was the worst of the lot.

He was a mean little boy and he grew up to be a mean man. But he had black eyes, shiny as a fox's, and a way with the girls. We'd heard he'd moved out West but he walked into our kitchen one night after supper, when Myrt was showing Kitty how to bake a cake for old Miz Wilson's birthday.

Kitty was all pink from the stove and when she looked up and saw Jake staring at her, she got even pinker and right away I thought, *Here's trouble.*

"So you're back," Myrt says. "Wasn't the West wild enough for you, Jake Brader?"

"I like to travel," Jake says, bold as you please, never taking his eyes off Kitty. "Pretty girls out West. Pretty girls here, too. The Dolan kid sure has grown."

"I'm working for Miz Wilson this summer." Kitty pushed her hair back the way young girls do when they know a feller's watching them.

"Miz Wilson's crazy," Jake says, and sets down without being asked.

"She is not!" Kitty says, with a spark in her blue eyes. "Miz Wilson is real smart. She reads books, all kinds of books. An' she showed me how to make sassafras tea and elderberry wine."

"Kid stuff," Jake grins. "Girl Scout stuff. You're a big girl now, Kitty. I'm gonna take you to town and show you the sights."

"That you won't, Jake Brader!" Myrt takes the cake out of the oven, her face as red as a beet. "Kitty's fambly's away, visitin', so Dave and I are looking out for her."

"Maybe she doesn't *want* to be looked out for," Jake says, with that big white grin of his. "Maybe she'd like to see a little life,



for a change." He winked at Kitty. "You suppose Miz Wilson has some work for *me*?"

"There's wood to be chopped for kindling," Kitty says, quick. "I wanted to do it, but Miz Wilson says the work's too hard for a girl."

"Choppin' wood's the best thing I do." Jake rolls up his sleeves so we can see the big muscles in his arms. "I'll take you home, Kitty, and you can tell the old lady she's got herself a hired man."

"Kitty can't go yet." Myrt slams the oven door. "She's got to learn how to ice this cake for Miz Wilson's birthday surprise."

"I can wait." Jake stretches himself like a big lazy cat and a button popped off his shirt so you could see his hard brown chest. "I don't mind waiting for something like Kitty."



Myrt and me hoped Miz Wilson would have sense enough not to hire Jake. But the next thing we knew, he started chopping dead wood around her place. After that, Kitty didn't come down to our house so much in the evenings and when she did come, she was different. All at once, she seemed to get quiet and secret-like and she'd tighten up whenever we mentioned Jake's name.

We knew she wouldn't go to town with him after the first time and we could guess why, though Kitty said it was 'cause Miz Wilson wouldn't let her.

"I don't like his being around her," Myrt says. "She's only a kid. Innocent. Anyway, what kind of husband would Jake make her?"

"Same kind's an alley cat," I says. "You know he ain't plannin' on marriage. Not if he can get her without."

"Kitty's been brought up proper," Myrt says, "but she's in love. Maybe we ought to tell the old lady. I'm nervous as a cat with one kitten."

Tell the truth, I was kind of jumpy myself. Partly because the weather turned so hot, hotter than one of Myrt's griddle-cakes. No rain for weeks and the creek had dropped to a trickle and the swamp dried up.

Still, I was pretty sure Jake wasn't getting what he wanted. Oh, he strutted around some, full of turkey-cock brag same as usual, but it was about the girls in town he boasted, the floozies down on State Street.

Not because he was trying to save Kitty's good name. Any girl's reputation was a big joke to Jake. He just hadn't been able to break her down and it made him meaner than ever. He took to going to town by himself and he'd get good and drunk. Once, he nearly smashed up that old rattletrap car of his, but

not quite.

Which was a pity.



About that time we heard the news Jake was married. Some girl out West. Had a kid by her and then walked out on both of them. Everybody down to the village store was yak-yaking about it, including old Pop Brader hisself.

Pop was real tickled, like Jake had done something smart.

"That settles it," Myrt told me. "Now you *got* to tell Miz Wilson. And Kitty.

"It'll break Kitty's heart."

"I hope it's not too late, that's all I hope," Myrt says.

So I went up to Miz Wilson's by the back path through the swamp, so Jake wouldn't see me, and half way to the house I see old Miz Wilson and her hound dog standing by a clump of birch stumps.

Miz Wilson was talking to the birch and she didn't stop when I came up. She was holding a piece of bark in her hand and shaking her head.

"Poor darlings," she kind of croons to the stumps. "You were so lovely, once." Then she looked at me and sighed. "Isn't it a pity?"

"Yes, ma'am," I says. "Dead birch is no good for firewood, though most city folks don't know it."

"But look here," she says. "Here's a sapling growing right out of the dead stumps. See the pretty green leaves! Fresh and young as our Kitty."

I was afraid Miz Wilson might get off on one of her queer spells before I said what I'd come to say, so I broke in quick.

"That's what I come to see you about, Miz Wilson. Kitty—and Jake Brader."

She didn't speak. She looked at me with those faded green eyes of hers and her hand closed tight around the curl of birch bark. It was so still, I could hear a bird move in the brush. Even the hound dog didn't stir.

"Miz Wilson, they're saying down to the store that Jake's married, got a wife and a kid out West. Myrt and me are pretty sure it's true. We thought you and Kitty ought to know."

She didn't move, just stood there like she was part of the dead stumps, and I wondered if she had heard me. I could feel my ears getting hot, like a kid before a new school teacher.

I turned my cap round in my hand and kind of croaked, "None of them Bradens is any good, Miz Wilson, but Jake's the worst of the lot. I knowed him when he was a boy. I seen him maim rabbits to watch 'em run crooked. Oncet, I seen him cut up a live catfish in little bitty pieces. 'Course, it were only a

catfish, but— Jake *likes* to hurt things, and little Kitty won't be no exception. That's what I come to say, ma'am."

Miz Wilson closed her eyes for a minute. Then she opened them and looked at me very straight.

"Dave, if this is true, I have made a terrible mistake. I knew Kitty would fall in love with this young man, and I didn't try to stop it. I wanted her to be happy."

"Myrt and me want her to be happy, too, Miz Wilson. That's why we thought you ought to know about Jake Brader before— before anything had happens."

"I see. Thank you." Her voice quavered. Miz Wilson's kind of like a tree herself, tall and straight for her age, not skeered and fluttery, like most old ladies.

But I could tell she was mighty stirred up. "Jake must go," she says. "I shall tell him at once."

"He's got an awful mean temper, Miz Wilson. Maybe I should go with you, when you tell him."

"Thank you, Dave. It won't be necessary. I can take care of Jake."

She put the birch bark in the pocket of her man's patched sweater and started up the path to the house, stepping carefully over the roots and stones, while the old hound snuffled at her heels.

It didn't seem right to let her go alone, but I knew she wouldn't like for me to holler her.



"Jake's gonna be awful mad at me," I told Myrt.

"He wouldn't hit an old man like you."

I wasn't so sure about that, but there was no use scaring Myrt. There wasn't anything to do but wait. I didn't feel better, either, when I heard Jake had druv to town after Miz Wilson fired him, and gone on a three-day drunk.

I knew he'd be back.

It didn't help, either, when Kitty burst into our house the next day, her face all swelled up with crying. Myrt asked her to sit down but she just stood there, looking at us.

"Why did you do it?" she says, and her voice was shaky. "You didn't even give Jake a chance to explain. You told Miz Wilson a lot of lies and she fired him, right then. Told him to get off the place or she'd set her dog on him, like he was a tramp."

"He *is* a tramp," I says. "Always was. Anyways, that half blind old hound of hers couldn't hurt a rabbit, let alone a man. I'm surprised Jake didn't kick him to death before Miz Wilson's eyes."

"You're cruel!" cries Kitty. "You're mean, meddlesome old

people and I won't come to stay with you the way Miz Wilson wants. I'm gonna wait for Jake to come back and get me, the way he told her he would."

Myrt kept right on washing dishes. When she's upset, Myrt likes to keep her hands busy.

"Suppose Jake *is* married," Kitty says in a small voice. "He could have been trapped into it. He can get a divorce."

"And marry you," Myrt says. "Do you *have* to marry him, Kitty?"

Myrt's face got red when she said it and she dropped a plate. Kitty's face was red, too, but her head went up.

"So that's what you thought. Well, it ain't so. I'm not gonna have a baby. I—I told Jake he'd have to marry me first. And he will. You'll see. He's coming back. And I'll be waiting."

She slammed the door and we heard her running up the road.

It seemed awful quiet in the kitchen after she was gone. Myrt sat down and dried her hands on a dish towel.

"She hates us," Myrt says. She looked as if she was about to cry. I patted her shoulder.

"Don't worry," I say. "He hasn't harmed her—yet. Maybe he never will."

But I wasn't so sure. The Braders are bad enough sober, but drunk they're worse'n wolves. I sat around the kitchen till I couldn't stand it no more. So I told Myrt I was going for a walk. "You lock up here and don't open up to nobody. When I come back, I'll knock four times."

I went up the road toward Miz Wilson's. The night was dead still around me, like a hot dark room. In front of Miz Wilson's place you could have a real nice lawn, only Miz Wilson don't like lawns. 'Stead of grass, she got ferns, brake ferns, thick as bushes. The trees grow together too close over the road because Miz Wilson never would let a live tree be cut down. Leaves kept brushing against my face like cobwebs and the ferns were wet with dew. There were no stars. The woods had that waiting feeling you get before a storm.

First I heard the crying, it didn't sound human. More like a whimper from some little trapped animal. I moved my flash around till the light found something white. I had to plunge deep through the brush and the ferns before I was sure it was Kitty. She blinked at the light and kept on whimpering, and then she said one word:

"Jake."

I knelt and pulled down her torn skirt. The ferns all around were broken, smashed flat.

"Did he—rape you?" She flinched, scared of me, too, because

I was a man. "What were you doing here?"

She whimpered again, then said, "We—met here before. We had a signal, a bird call he used to make. Whenever I heard it—I'd—I'd slip out after Miz Wilson was asleep."

"And then—what did you do?"

She shivered. She lowered her head, and I could barely hear her voice, saying, "I—let him kiss me. But that was all. He said I was scared of Miz Wilson, that she could see in the dark, like a cat. I think he was scared himself. Anyway, he never tried—to force me. Till tonight. Tonight, he was drunk. I tried to fight him, and—he hit me."

She looked up from under her hanging hair and I saw her bleeding mouth.

I needed to kill Jake Brader. I didn't care if he was thirty years younger and strong as a bull. I just wanted to get my hands on him.

"Where did he go—after?"

"I don't know. After he hit me, it got dark, and when I woke up I was alone. I just had this . . ."

She opened her clenched hand, and I saw a man's shirt button, a shred of cloth still clinging to it.

"I'll take that," I said, and put it in my pocket. I didn't tell her I wanted it for evidence. "We'd better go up to Miz Wilson's," I said.

"No!" she cried. "I don't want her to know. I don't want her to see me like this."

"Then we'll go to my house. Myrt'll take care of you."

I helped her up. She was like a rag doll. I had to half-carry her to the road. I hoped no one would see us, and no one did. It was pretty late, and not a car passed.

Our house was locked and shuttered. I knocked four times and Myrt let us in. When she saw Kitty, she uttered a cluck like a mother hen and opened her arms.

"Take her upstairs," I said. "Do what you can. Jake's back. I'm going to telephone, see if we can head him off. With that old car of his, he can't get very far."

"Oh, no," Kitty whimpered. "Don't tell anybody. Please!"

"Give her something to quiet her down," I said to Myrt. "I'm leaving."

"Be careful," Myrt said.

I didn't know what to do. All I knew was I wasn't about to let Jake get away with it. I thought I'd telephone from Miz Wilson's, and warn her at the same time.

I was back on the road where I had found Kitty, when I saw Jake's car. I don't know how I missed it before, except there's an old quarry there, all overgrown with brush and weeds. The



car was empty except for a whisky bottle, and that was empty, too.

I took out my big hunting knife and slashed all four tyres. Then I turned off my flash and walked up the road in the dark to Miz Wilson's. I can walk pretty quiet and I know the way, blindfold. If Jake was hiding in the woods, I didn't want him to spot me before I spotted him.



But I didn't see Miz Wilson's old hound dog till I tripped over its body. The head was bashed in and there was blood on the big rock nearby. That was when I wished I had more than my big knife on me. But I went on. I knew I was on Jake's trail and I was scared what I'd find next.

Except for a light in the kitchen, Miz Wilson's house was dark. I tiptoed close and heard voices—leastways, I could hear Jake's voice, loud, and thick with drink.

I guessed Jake could take my knife away from me easy as not, and I had no mind to cut him. All I hoped to do was mix him up, maybe give Miz Wilson a chance to get away.

She was still all right. I could hear her cracked old woman's voice as I crept around the corner of the house and flattened myself against the chimney wall, where I could look into the kitchen.

There they were all right. Miz Wilson in her rocker, Jake leaning on the kitchen table, and a bottle of whisky between them. As I watched, he poured himself another glass and gulped it down. He swayed, eyes staring, sweat running down his face.

He pounded his glass on the table and shouted at Miz Wilson: "Listen, you old crow! Kitty'll tell you I forced her, and maybe I did. But next time it'll be easier, and you'll keep those cat eyes of yours shut! Hear me?"

"I hear you," said Miz Wilson. She was pale as wax, but she never once took her eyes off Jake.

"You better hear me," he scowled, cradling the bottle in his big arms. "If you just once try to fool me, know what I'll do? I'll take me some kerosene and set fire to your woods. I'll fire all the pine boughs I've been cutting around this place. They'll catch. Oh, my, but they'll catch pretty. All the trees around here'll burn. And I'll gag you so you can't scream, but I'll let you watch. By the time the fire truck gets here, there won't be anything left but black stumps. Then you'll have a lot of dead stumps to talk to. Won't that be nice?"

Miz Wilson put her hands over her face.

"I feel faint. A little of my whisky, please."

Jake laughed.

"Like hell! It's rotten whisky, anyhow. I bet you set here and

nip all by yourself when you're not outside talking to . . ." he shook himself, his eyes staring more than ever ". . . talking to those damn' trees."

He upended the bottle into his mouth.

Miz Wilson raised her head and smiled.

"Trees can be useful friends," she said.

She folded her hands and rocked gently.

"'Prunus Serotina', for instance. Black cherry. Or 'Cicuta Maculata', the water hemlock. The roots contain a certain oily fluid. Then there's the deadly nightshade . . ."

Jake did not seem to hear her. He had both hands pressed against his stomach. Suddenly he jerked his head back and gasped. Then he retched. He plunged out of the kitchen, vomited violently over the back steps. I had started toward him when he uttered a kind of animal howl and staggered down the road.

I saw him fall and figured he couldn't get very far, drunk as he was. I'd better tell Miz Wilson she was safe, and then telephone the police to come and get Jake.

When I hurried into the kitchen, Miz Wilson was at the sink, rinsing out the whisky bottle. When she saw me she stood perfectly still, and then began to shake.

"Don't worry, Miz Wilson," I says. "Kitty's at our house, and Jake won't get very far.

She gave me that queer smile of hers.

"That's right. He won't get very far."

Her green eyes were watching me as she dried the bottle and put it on the shelf behind a jug of her home-made elderberry wine.

I started to pick up the 'phone and put it down again.

We stood there looking at each other. Her voice was a whisper across the room.

"How long were you standing out there, David?"

All at once, her kitchen seemed cold to me, in spite of the hot summer night.

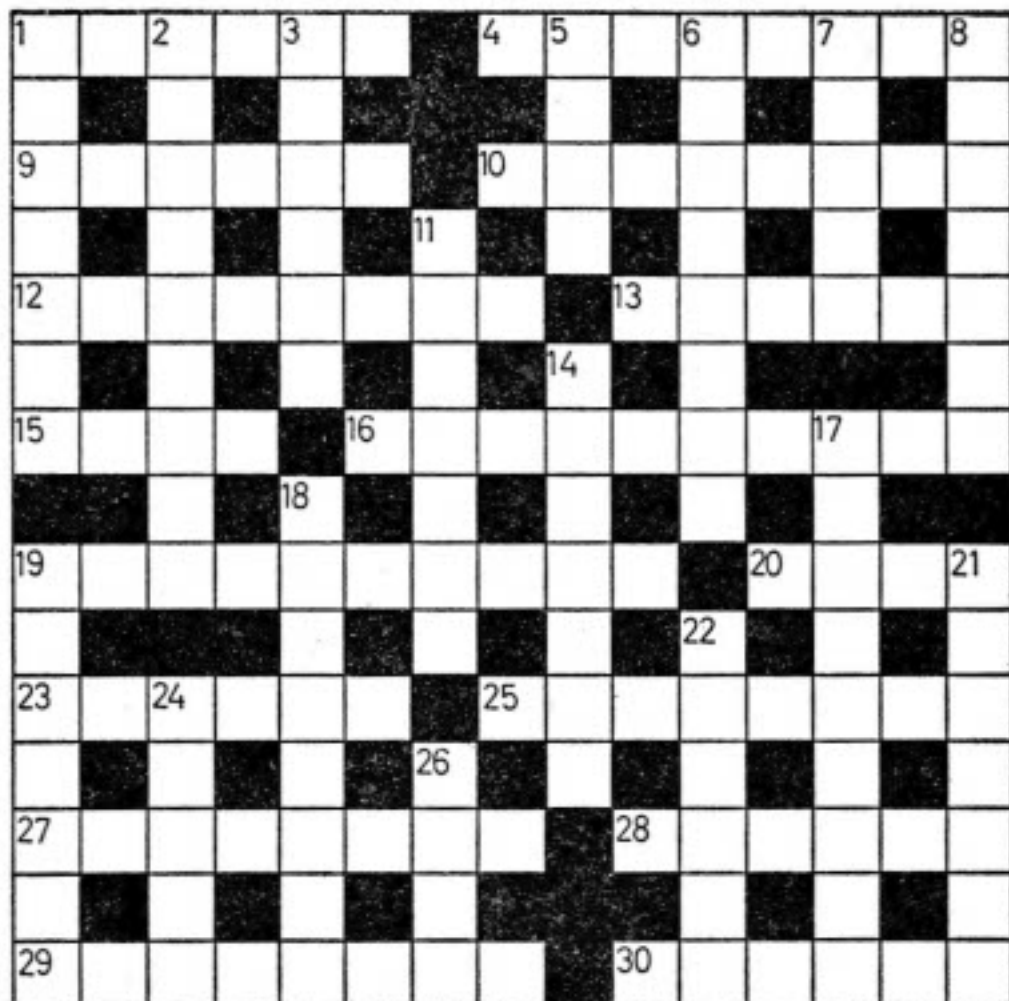
I walked to the door and looked back at her. "I haven't been here at all, Miz Wilson," I said, and walked out of the house.

I didn't find Jake where I had seen him fall. When I did find him, his body was wedged between two logs and he was clutching the rank swamp grass, with his dead face twisted up at me in a kind of awful grin.

They said at the hospital, he was poisoned with something like prussic acid.

But they'll never burn Miz Wilson.

## EWMM Crossword No. 5



### ACROSS

### DOWN

- 1 and 9 Impressions one might give at Scotland Yard (6-6)  
 4 and 25 Doc, seen in crime if, in a way, it helps judicial proceedings (8, 8)  
 9 See 1 Across  
 10 Farmer is found in possession of weapons (4-4)  
 12 Proof that you are someone (8)  
 13 Here a model may earn a bare living (6)  
 15 Colours — and cries? (4)  
 16 Cases for 10 (10)  
 19 Brawls I end in blows with a clenched hand (10)  
 20 Integrity requires some pluck (4)  
 23 Character like *The Northing Tramp*? (6)  
 25 See 4  
 27 Demanding previous performance? (8)  
 28 Order of lunatics? (6)  
 29 Cheap accommodation (8)  
 30 No bell or book? (6)

- 1 Dandy shipwreck all in vain (7)  
 2 Like sneakers not Squeakers! (9)  
 3 The fourth one is in Fleet Street (6)  
 5 Leave out this one (4)  
 6 Such a charge is shocking (8)  
 7 Quiet start to a scrap (5)  
 8 Habitual duties? (7)  
 11 Deserter must, perhaps, come round for a bed (7)  
 14 Achieves breath-taking results! (7)  
 17 Shin Edgar chopped up and tastefully decorated! (9)  
 18 How menacing was that Wallace man . . . (8)  
 19 . . . and more than one of his fraudulent characters (7)  
 21 Red tale to use as a lever (7)  
 22 Building that must be screened (6)  
 24 EW's yellow creeper (5)  
 26 Guns hung up in the bar (4)

(Solution will appear in our July issue)

# BEFORE THE FACT

PAUL TABORI

*The bait was there, the means, and the will, and now it was up to the police . . .*

WHEN I was a young police reporter in Budapest, my mentor and best friend was Captain Heltai. He had been a journalist himself and had worked under my father's editorship; he had never forgotten his early bungling days and was kind enough to help me to avoid the pitfalls and mistakes which few young newspapermen could foresee. I usually dropped in every night at his office and owed him a good many scoops. He even offered to make me a policeman, but this I had to refuse; I felt I had too much sympathy for the criminals in a poverty-ridden, semi-totalitarian country to be successful as a guardian of the law.

One night—it was pretty late—a young man came into Heltai's room and asked to be taken into 'protective custody'.

"Why?" enquired the captain. "Are you in danger?"

No, said the young man, he himself was dangerous. He was afraid that he would commit a serious crime and therefore asked to be arrested for twenty-four hours.

Heltai did not laugh, he did not kick him out; he had enough experience with cranks and madmen to realise that this young man was something out of the ordinary. He offered him a seat—I had discreetly withdrawn to the back of the room—gave him a cigarette and watched him light it with trembling fingers.

The young man had long hair and a smooth shaven, thin face; he wore dark, tortoiseshell spectacles. His suit was grey and rather shabby; his thin overcoat's collar was powdered with scurf. He rested his formless greenish hat in his lap; his tie was askew and carelessly knotted. It was obvious that he was trying desperately to keep his self-control. Heltai tried to reassure him, and then asked him to tell his story calmly and fully.

The young man thanked him politely and said:

"You'll think me mad, Captain . . . and I quite agree, it must be some kind of lunacy that has taken possession of me. Yet I must ask you to take me seriously. My whole future is at stake—and, what's more important, the lives of two men."

He was searching for words, pausing and starting again, fidgeting and twisting in the chair as if keeping still would be agony.

"I don't know how to make myself clear. I'm no criminal. I've never committed a crime in my life; I never had any trouble with the police. And up to this afternoon I was firmly convinced that . . . that I was constitutionally incapable of doing evil . . ."



He fell silent, unable to go on. Heltai said a few encouraging words, trying to draw him out. At last he continued:

"I was always greatly interested in crimes and criminals. That isn't unusual, is it? The papers publish the cases, one is thrilled by the stories, the criminal is hunted and found; then he is tried and the newspapers are again full with the details. Many people follow such trials; perhaps everybody does. I always felt surprised that men who committed a deliberate crime—say, murder—in order to obtain a large sum of money . . . how such men could act so stupidly and blindly, how they could jeopardise their lives by neglecting some important detail. Why didn't they work out their plans better; why didn't they consider every possibility; why didn't they arm themselves against discovery and capture; why did they commit some idiocy that robbed them of their reward . . . I spent a lot of time thinking about this. And then I began to plan. What would I do if I ever decided to commit a murder for gain?"

He stopped again. He was trembling.

"Well, what *would* you do?" asked the captain.

"Please, do not misunderstand me," the young man said. "I had no intention of committing murder. This is only a . . . a sort of game—a quirk of my imagination. But the game attracted me greatly and I spent much time over it. And I realised, in preparing such a crime, one must begin not with the criminal act but with the escape."

"That's excellent," smiled Heltai. He made a brief note on his pad; he moved a little closer to his visitor. "Won't you go on?"

"I had to consider: if I obtained suddenly a large sum, an unusually large amount, a whole fortune . . . what would be the next step? How could I take it with me?"

"How could I turn it into my acknowledged and unassailable possession? Just to hold a million or two wouldn't be much use. I couldn't suddenly appear as a rich man, for people knew very well that I wasn't rich. I couldn't go to a bank and deposit my 'capital.' The bank was bound to ask who I was and where this money had come from. Bankers were much too wary and experienced. Nor could I carry about such a huge sum in my pocket or in a suitcase! All this is logical, isn't it?" he turned



to us. I had moved closer. He was beginning to overcome his inhibitions and was warming to his story.

Heltai nodded.

"Well, Captain," the young man continued, "I had to settle first the bank transactions, carefully and with foresight. The place where I was to deposit the money had to know me and consider me absolutely trustworthy. The people at the bank had to know in advance that I was going to pay in such-and-such a sum on such-and-such a day and had to be prepared for my instructions to transfer the money abroad. The foreign bank also had to be informed in advance and had to be told that the money would be transferred, that it had to be paid out against such-and-such a signature and that its rightful owner would call for it on a definite date. Of course, I didn't intend to pay the whole sum into one bank nor split it up in equal sums. Therefore, a year or so before I was to commit the crime, I had to open accounts in several banks."

The captain raised his hand.

"Did you? Have you such accounts?"

"Yes, I did—and I have. One is with a private bank. I know its chief. The others are at the local branches of various big banks in different districts. At each bank I know the manager. I have saved about two thousand for capital. I manipulate this sum, withdrawing, paying in, giving small commissions to buy and sell. About once every four weeks I visit the different banks to discuss my financial affairs, listen to the managers' advice, chat about my plans and prospects. They all know me as a small but completely reliable depositor."

"Are your accounts carried under assumed names?"

"No. Why should they be? They're all in my own name. Don't you think this is right?"

"I can certainly make no objections . . ."

"Please, Captain, you must remember: there's no serious intention behind all this. It's just a game, an experiment—nothing more."

"I understand. Go on."

"How much money does one have to take abroad to live wisely, without care or work, on its interest? At least two million pengos. The big industrial firms need cash at the end of the week to cover the pay-rolls. These sums are being fetched from the banks by special messengers. If you pick a day upon which weekly and monthly wages have to be paid, a payroll of two or three millions is not unusual. They usually pick two messengers for such an important job; thank God, we have no armoured cars or police guards in our country.

"Now robbery offers little prospect of success in the bank,

on the street or in the factory offices. It is essential to lure the messengers to one's home. Therefore it is also essential to be on intimate terms with them. But you mustn't enter into such friendly relations that the police, seeking their acquaintances or friends, should be able to trace one. All this I discovered by a purely mental process. Do you agree, Captain?"

"I think your deductions were extremely shrewd. Did you try to put them into practice?"

"Yes, I sought such friendships. Why not? It is not illegal nor does it oblige me to any future course. It gave me pleasure to spin a net. But who can force me to go on? I decided to give it up."

"I believe you. But . . ."

"It became my habit to sit in the waiting rooms of the big banks. On certain days the messengers also sit there, waiting to be called. I joined them—pretending to wait as they did . . ."

"Have you nothing else to do?"

"Of course I have. I'm the representative of an important business firm. I am constantly travelling and no one can check on my movements. The question was: how to approach the bank messengers?"

"They were all hand-picked, middle-aged and dutiful; and, of course, they were also cautious and suspicious men. It was difficult to win their confidence. I thought that the best way would be to discover their hobbies and exploit their passions. They all must have some hobby, I reasoned, and I was right. One of them was a dedicated stamp-collector, another a great lover of music, the third had become deeply interested in Socialism and its literature. Yet all this was somehow not strong enough. There had to be something else—some other instinct, some deep urge.

"One morning I sat down in the waiting room with a rather saucy magazine in my hand. Several of the messengers stopped and glanced at the pages over my shoulder. Two of them sat down beside me, borrowed the magazine and studied it together. That was the beginning. The next time I showed them some pictures—the usual kind. Then I told them that I had plenty more at home, even better ones. I suggested they dropped in one day. And they did—unsuspectingly."



Heltai slapped down his hand on his desk-top.

"Amazing! And very clever. But still quite legal."

"At first they called on me when off-duty; they looked at my books, my drawings, my photographs; they could not get their fill of them. You must understand, I didn't collect all this for myself—only for them. It's easy enough to get these things if

you are willing to spend time and money on them. Now they often drop in even when they are on duty, just rushing up to my apartment for ten minutes to admire my latest 'acquisitions.' On such occasions they carry the money with them. They come without a second thought, following their instincts.

"They are all solid, married men—one or two a little hen-pecked, perhaps. They are under constant supervision; they daren't slip; they don't even long for any escapades. But there is a certain unfulfilled longing for adventure in all of them. So they satisfy it through their imaginations. Their consciences remain clear. Of course, it's a bit careless, bringing their satchels along with the money in. But they know me—and there're always two of them."

The young man lit a cigarette, then continued:

"Do I look like a criminal, Captain? Believe me, I'm not. Only this playing with fire attracts me; but I know it can never become serious. This week the pay-day for salaries and wages falls on the same day. Tomorrow my two particular friends are going to fetch the money from the bank—at least a million and a half. I only have to tell them that some 'new stuff' has arrived. That's our password—and they'll rush to my apartment as they have done before."

"Where do you live?" I asked, speaking for the first time.

"I have rented an apartment from someone else—a long way from the furnished room where I do live. The bank messengers think it's my only home. The landlord thinks I only use it to work and receive my customers in. I paid the rent in advance; they don't even know my name. Should the police come, no one could give them any information. I have given notice at the house where I have the furnished room. My landlady won't miss me. At the office I have asked for leave. I intend to write to my employer when I am already on the way that I found a better job. They won't try to find me. I have neglected my appearance a little. But this is only a mask; I have created this rather shabby figure gradually, in the last two years.

"But in my apartment I have a well-pressed suit, a spotless set of linen. After I have done what I have to do, I'll cut my hair, take off these glasses. At the various banks I am known without spectacles, anyhow. My suitcases are at the station, my passport is in order, I carry a valid railway ticket on me. I know the train—I know the carriage I want to enter. Before anyone has discovered that the bank messengers are missing, I'll be on my way. By the time the crime is discovered, I'll have crossed the frontier with plenty of time to spare. No shadow of suspicion can touch me. And once abroad, I can take a week to collect my capital; everything will be in order, according to my instruc-

tions, on the basis of my authorised signature. Within a year I'll be in undisputed possession of my loot."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Heltai. "For the time being that money is still in the hands of the bank messengers and not in yours?"

"Of course. When my guests have sat down at my table and have become absorbed in the enjoyment of my new pictures, I intend to place three liqueur glasses on the cloth. I produce a bottle of brandy, fill the three glasses and replace the bottle in the cupboard. Then I toast them, they empty their glasses while I only drink half of my share. A little later I bring out the bottle again and fill up—but only *their* glasses. Once again we drink—they have their second glass, I finish my first. This is how it happened every time and it will be same tomorrow. I've conditioned them perfectly to it."

"And then?"

"There is a second bottle in my cupboard. It contains brandy—with a little something added. Prussic acid. If I wish to, the second glassful is poured out of this second bottle for them. And as soon as they have drunk it, they're dead . . ."



"Well, I'll be . . ." Heltai rose.

"Of course I don't intend to do it," the young man repeated. "Why should I? I have merely designed the whole machinery for my own entertainment—just to prove to myself how well and safely I can plan. I can just as well pour out from the first brandy bottle the second time; they finish their drink, spend another ten minutes with me, go on their way and the game is over. I pledged myself that it shall be so."

"And you'll keep your pledge," smiled Heltai. "You are an honest and intelligent man. It would be even better if you went to the bank tomorrow and did not invite the messengers any more to your place. It would be best if you put an end to this game of planning and imagining, and never met them again."

"You're certainly right, Captain. Quite right. But there's something . . ." The young man glanced at the door as if weighing the chances of escape. "Something I haven't foreseen. Now that the machinery is all ready, it may start to function . . . automatically. I prepared a crime carefully, because I thought I would be unable to commit it. But now I'm no longer certain. It has become so easy. It almost looks . . . necessary and unavoidable. Suddenly I am—afraid of myself . . ."

"But if you don't want to do it . . . why should you?"

"I can't explain it. Please, Captain, take me into custody. Only

for a day. By tomorrow evening—no, tomorrow noon—I shall have lost the opportunity. The money will have been delivered, my ticket has expired. I'll have missed the dates of paying in the various monies and transferring them. I won't go through all these preparations a second time. Everything depends on a single hour, tomorrow morning. Please, save me . . . help me!"

He was trembling again. Heltai started to walk up and down.

"Look," he said, swinging round, "this is not so easy. I can't arrest you without a good reason. This would be a breach of the law, robbing you of your freedom, a wrongful arrest. You must first have committed a crime. But, according to your story, you haven't done anything illegal. Where did you get the prussic acid from?"

"I distilled it myself—from almonds."

"There you are. There's no law forbidding that. You've acted *too* cleverly. Why should I arrest you?"

"To protect me."

"From what? Are you drunk and disorderly? Are you mad? Are you being pursued by some hostile crowd? Only because you talk of plans and ideas . . . of taking steps anyone is perfectly entitled to take? I am a policeman and I must observe the law. I cannot arrest you—until you have committed the crime."

"By then it will be too late . . ."

There was a long, barren argument. Heltai turned to me. For some reason I couldn't explain myself I became suddenly very angry with the young man.

"I think this is just a silly comedy," I said. "I don't believe a word of your story. Maybe you're destitute and just want a few comfortable days in jail. But prisons are not free hotels."

He protested hotly. He had his home, he had his job.

"Have you?" I shouted. "Well, prove it. Show us your papers, your ticket . . ."

"I can't do that," he protested. Again he glanced at the door. "I wish you wouldn't insist, because if, after all, I should . . ."

Heltai intervened.

"Well, then, go home—and go to bed. If you don't want to commit a crime, there's no possible need for you to do so. But if you carry it through, we'll find you, don't worry."

The young man took his hat and coat reluctantly. The captain stepped over to him and put one hand on his shoulder.

"I don't share my young friend's opinion," he said, glancing at me. "I don't consider your story incredible. But I can't help you. I must follow the rules. Take hold of yourself. Don't yield to temptation. Think of the penalties awaiting you, think of the crime you would commit . . . of the two honest men you'd kill



... their families you would rob of all support. Think of your own parents. If you don't want to, you won't do it."

"No, no, of course not. If I don't want to, I . . ."

He dragged himself out of the room, closing the door quietly.

I looked at Heltai. Our eyes met. He shrugged and sat down at his desk. We were both silent for a long time.

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# THE PURSUIT

CONSTANT GUEROULT

*A French novelist of the sensational school, Guérault had occasional flashes of unusual brilliance. This remarkable impression of a murderer's reactions, when on the run, was written in the late 1840s*

**I**T WAS at the extremity of a village: a window was hurriedly thrown open, and a man appeared at it, his features livid, his eyes haggard, his lips agitated by a convulsive tremor; his right hand grasped a bloody knife.

He cast a look into the silent country, then leapt to the ground and set off running away through the fields.

At the end of a quarter of an hour he stopped exhausted, breathless, at the edge of a wood, twenty paces from the highway. He searched for the most closely grown and most impenetrable spot to be found and pressed his way into it, regardless of the thorns that were tearing him; then he began to dig up the earth with his knife. When he made a hole a foot deep, he placed the weapon in it, and covered it with the soil he had dug out, re-covered it with a grass sod, which he trampled down solidly, after which he sat down upon the wet grass.

He listened, and appeared uneasy at the silence which hung upon the country.

It was the hour when the darkness of night is replaced by that grey and uniform tint which is neither day nor night, and through which objects look like phantoms.

It seemed to him that he was alone in this funeral immensity, in the midst of this dumb and dim nature. Suddenly a sound made him start; it was the axle of a waggon creaking on the road, a league away perhaps; but in the silence this strange and discordant noise made itself heard with singular distinctness.

Then Nature awoke little by little. The lark took flight towards the blue sky, pouring out his notes, at once timid and charming, overflowing with life and happiness; a winged tribe began to sing

and flutter amid the leaves glittering with dew; on all sides—in the moss on which the golden insect was crawling, to the branch of the highest oak, where the bird voluptuously plumed herself in the ether—arose a morning concert, so harmonious in its confusion, so potent in its delirium, so full of greeting to the first rays coming from the east, that it might well be called a hymn to the sun.

Nature expanded herself, radiant and virginal; all was grace, freshness, sparkle in the forest, where a blue mist still floated; all was calm and hushed in the plain, the great lines of which undulated to infinity, the grey tones of which grew light under the reflection of the blue sky.



The murderer rose; his limbs trembled, and his teeth chattered one against the other.

He cast furtive glances around him, then cautiously parted the branches, stopping, starting, drawing back his head hastily at the least sound. At length, he quitted the densely grown thicket in which he had buried his knife.

He pressed forward deeper into the forest, choosing always the most shaded portions and avoiding the open parts and the beaten paths, making frequent stoppages to listen or to examine the ground before him ere he advanced. In this way he walked all day without being conscious of fatigue—so great was the agony which dominated him.

He paused at the entrance to a grove of beeches, whose imposing trunks stood white and smooth, like thousands of columns crowned with foliage. A calm day, a harmonious silence, added to the impression of grandeur and retirement made by this beautiful spot; something animate seemed to throb amid the luminous shade of the motionless boughs, as if a soul were there amid the shadows, murmuring mysterious syllables.

The fugitive felt ill at ease, and, creeping like a reptile, forced his way under a clump of thorn bushes, the density of which completely hid him.

When he was in safety, he first raised his hand to his head and then to his stomach, and muttered, "I am hungry!"

The sound of his voice made him shudder; it was the first time he had heard it since the murder, and it resounded in his ears like a knell and a menace. For some moments he remained motionless and held his breath, as if in fear of having been heard.

When he had become a little calmer, he felt in his pockets one after the other; they contained a few *sous*.

"That will be enough," he said in a low tone; "in six hours I shall have crossed the frontier; then I can show myself; I can work, and shall be saved."

At the end of an hour he felt the cold begin to stiffen his limbs, for with the coming of night the dew fell, and his only clothes were a linen blouse and trousers of the same material. He rose, and quitting his thorn bushes, continued his march. He halted at the first signs of dawn. He had reached the limits of the forest, and must now enter upon the open country, must show himself in the full light of day; and, struck with fear by this thought, he dared not advance a step farther.

While he was standing hidden in a thicket the sound of horses' hoofs was heard.

"Gendarmes!" he gasped, crouching down upon the ground.

It was a farm-labourer going to the fields, with two horses harnessed to a waggon; he was whistling a country air while re-tying the lash of his whip.

"Jacques!" a voice cried to him.

The peasant turned round.

"Hallo! is that you, Françoise? Where are you going so early?"

"Oh! I'm going to wash this bundle of linen at the spring."

"I'm going within two steps of it; put your bundle on one of my beasts."

"Thanks—that's not to be refused. How's the wife and the little ones, all of them?"

"I'm the weakest of the family," replied Jacques, laughing loudly; "all goes well—work, joy, and health."

He tied his lash, and the sharp crack was repeated by echo after echo.

The murderer followed him with his eyes as far as he could see him; then a deep sigh escaped from his lips, and his gaze turned to the open country spreading before him.

"I must get on," he murmured, "it is twenty-four hours since I . . . All is discovered, I am being sought. An hour's delay may ruin me.

He made up his mind resolutely, and quitted the forest.

At the end of ten minutes he came within sight of a church tower. Then he slackened his pace, a prey to a thousand conflicting feelings, drawn towards the village by hunger, restrained by the fear which counselled him to avoid habitations.

However, after a long struggle, during which he had advanced as much as possible under the screen of outhouses and bushes, he was about to enter the village, when he saw something glitter about a hundred paces from him.

It was the brass badge and the pommel of a rural policeman's sabre.

"He may have my description," he murmured with a shudder.

And, shrinking back quickly, he ran to a little wood which extended on his left and hid himself in it, pushing farther and

farther into its depths, forgetting his hunger, and thinking only of flying from the village and the rural policeman.

But he speedily reached the end of the wood, which was of very small extent: beyond, the plain began again.

On peering from between the branches he saw a man seated on the grass eating his breakfast. It was Jacques, the farm-labourer.



Nothing could be more pleasant than the corner he had chosen for his breakfast-room. It was a sort of little stony ravine, through which ran two deep wheel-ruts, but carpeted with grass and moss and bordered with creepers, green-leaved, yellow, or purple, according to the caprices of that powerful colourist called Autumn. The wheel-ruts were full of water, at the bottom of which glittered little white stones, smooth and transparent as onyx. Finally, this pretty nest was shaded by a cluster of birch-trees with reddish silvery trunks and foliage light and trebling.

Above this oasis spread ploughed fields on which hung, white and closely woven, the 'Virgin-threads,' floating and sparkling like an immense silver net.

Jacques' breakfast consisted of a hunk of bread and a piece of cheese, washed down with big draughts of cider claret, which he drank out of a stone pitcher, cooled in the water of the wheel-ruts.

The peasant's strong white teeth buried themselves in the bread with an appetite which might have made a rich man desire to share his frugal meal which he only interrupted now and then to give a friendly word to his two horses, which, a few paces off, were feeding.

"He's happy—he is!" murmured the murderer. Then, from the depths of his conscious he added: "Yes, peace and happiness are there."

He was tempted to accost Jacques and ask him for a piece of bread; but a glance at his tattered dress forbade him showing himself; and then it seemed to him that his features bore the stamp of his crime, and must denounce him to whoever looked upon him.

A sound made him turn his head and through the branches he saw an old man covered with rags. He walked bent double, a stick in his hand and a canvas bag slung to his neck by a cord. It was a beggar.

The murderer watched him with envious eyes, and again he murmured:

"What would I not give to be in his place. He begs, but he is free; he goes where he pleases in the wide air, in the broad sunlight with a calm heart, with a tranquil conscience, eating without



fear and agony the bread given to him in charity; able to look behind him without seeing a dead body, beside him without dreading to find a gendarme at his elbow, before him without seeing a vision of the scaffold. Yes, he is happy, and I may well envy him his lot."

Suddenly he started, a nervous trembling agitated all his limbs, and his features were drawn up like those of an epileptic.

"There they are!" he stammered, his eyes fixed upon a point on the road.

With haggard eye, bewildered, he looked on all sides, seeking to find a place of concealment; but so strangely was he overcome by fear that his eyes saw nothing, and his mind was incapable of thought.

During this time the gendarmes approached rapidly.

The gallop of the horses and the clanking of arms suddenly brought back to him his presence of mind, and, seeing before him an elm, the foliage of which was dense enough to hide him from sight, he climbed up it with the agility of a squirrel.

He was in safety when the two gendarmes halted on the road a few paces from him.

He listened, motionless, a prey to emotion so violent that he could almost hear the beating of the heart within him.

"What if we search this wood!" said one of the gendarmes.

"It's too small," said the other; "it's not there that our man would take refuge—rather in a forest."

"Anyhow, it will be prudent to beat it up."

"No," replied his comrade, "it would be time lost, and the assassin has already a ten hours' start of us."

And they went on at a trot.

The murderer breathed again; he felt a renewed life. But, this agony passed, a suffering, for a moment forgotten, made itself felt anew, and he cried:

"My God, how hungry I am!"

He had not eaten for forty-eight hours.

His legs gave way under him; he was seized with giddiness and a humming in the ears. And yet, he no more thought of going to the village for bread. The gendarmes, the scaffold. Those two phantoms ceaselessly rose before him, and overmastered even the pangs of hunger.

While his restless ears were on the watch for all sounds in the country, the dreary tolling of a bell made him start: it was the bell of the village church sounding the funeral knell. The murderer listened, pale, downcast, shuddering at every stroke, as if the clapper of the bell had struck upon his heart. Then tears fell slowly from his eyes, and streamed down his cheeks.

It was because these funeral sounds evoked in his imagination

a picture at once terrible and heart-rending. At that same hour the bell of another village church was tolling like this for another death.

"Oh, wretch, wretch that I am!" sighed the murderer, covering his face with both hands.

He listened again to the strokes of the church bell, which sounded to him like the sobs of the poor victim; he murmured:

"Oh, idleness, it led me to the tavern—and the tavern, this is what has come of it. Three orphans, a poor wife in the ground, and I, hateful to all, hunted like a wild beast, pursued without rest or truce, until the hour when they shall have driven me to the scaffold."

He remained in the tree until night had come. When he saw the stars shine in the sky, when, in the vast solitude around him, he heard nothing but that vague breathing which seems like the respiration of the sleeping earth, only then did he venture to descend to rest himself.

He stretched himself at the foot of the tree, and closed his eyes; but fear which would not quit him, hunger which gnawed at his stomach, kept him constantly awake, and he rose at the first sign of dawn, overwhelmed, bowed down at once by alarm, fatigue, and the fasting of nearly three days.

At the end of a few hours his hunger, sharpened by the brisk air of the wood, ended by overcoming all his terror; and, feeling that his reason was beginning to reel in his brain, he decided to go into the village in search of bread.

He shook off the blades of grass which hung to his clothes, re-tied his neckerchief, passed his fingers through his tangled hair, then resolutely went out into the plain. Five minutes afterwards he entered the village, walking slowly, his head bent down, like a man overcome by fatigue, but casting a furtive and suspicious glance right and left, and ready to take flight at the first appearance of danger.

Not far from the church—that is to say, in the centre of the place—he perceived a tavern, the patriarchal aspect of which seemed to him to be reassuring. After convincing himself that neither cries nor disputes were coming from it—evidence that it was almost empty—he made up his mind to enter.

"What can I give you, my good man?" asked the landlord, a solidly built peasant, with broad shoulders, and a frank and open countenance.

"Bread and wine," replied the murderer, going and seating himself at a table near a window opening on to a garden.

He was speedily served.

"Here you are!" said the landlord, "bread, wine, and cheese."

"I only asked for bread and wine," said the murderer abruptly.

"Oh! the cheese is of no consequence to me, nor the bread either, for—no offence to you—you don't look too well off, and it seems to me that you need to get up your strength; so eat and drink without worrying yourself about the rest."

"Thanks, thanks!"

At that moment the church bells began to ring loudly.

"What is that?" asked the murderer. "Why are the bells ringing in that way?"

"Why? Because the mass is over."

"The mass! What is to-day, then?"

"Sunday. You are not a Christian then? Oh! you'll have companions presently."

The murderer felt himself becoming faint. He was tempted to rush out of the house; but a moment's reflection convinced him that such a course would ensure his certain destruction and that prudence itself called on him to remain where he was.

He had hardly come to this decision when customers flocked into the tavern, which presently became full. The murderer began to eat and drink, taking care to keep his face turned towards the window, so as to hide his features as much as possible.



A quarter of an hour passed, an age of torment and anxiety for the fugitive, whom the most insignificant word caused to shudder. At length he was going to rise and leave the tavern, when one of the drinkers cried:

"Hallo! here comes Daddy Fauchoux, our brigadier of gendarmerie!"

The murderer started, and his right hand flew to his head; all his blood had rushed to his heart, and from his heart to his brain, as if he had been stricken with apoplexy.

He came to himself little by little, but without recovering his powers; from the shock he had sustained there remained a weakness and nervous tremor which rendered him wholly incapable of effort.

On seeing the brigadier enter, he leaned his head upon the table, and pretended to fall asleep.

The welcome given to the gendarme attested the esteem in which he was held in the country; every one was eager to offer him a place at his table.

"Thanks, friends," replied Daddy Fauchoux, "a glass is not to be refused; but, as to sitting down and taking it easy with you—the service forbids."

"The service; that's a good one. To-day is Sunday, and thieves require a day of rest as well as other folks."

"Thieves, possibly; but it's different with assassins."

"Assassins! What do you mean by that, Daddy Fauchoux?"

"Haven't you heard about the affair at Saint Didier?"

"No; tell us about it."

"The more willingly, because I came in here to give you all a description of the scoundrel we are hunting."

The heart of the murderer throbbed heavily in his chest.

"He's a stonemason, named Pierre Picard," the brigadier continued.

"And who has he murdered?"

"His wife."

"The beggar! What had she done to him?"

"Cried without complaining when he beat her; only sometimes she went to the tavern to ask him to give her some money and buy food for her little ones. That was the whole of her crime, poor creature! It was for that he killed her on Thursday night last. She was only five-and-twenty. He ought to have kissed the ground she walked on, the wretch! She spent her life in working and caring for him and the children, and she had never received any other reward save blows and misery."

"The infernal villain!" cried a young man, striking his fist violently on the table before him; "I'd think it a pleasure to go and see his head chopped off."

"That's way you all ought to know his description, so as to be able to arrest him if you came upon him; for we know that he is skulking somewhere hereabouts."

There was a deep silence.

The murderer, he too listened, mastering by a superhuman effort the fever raging in his blood and bewildering his brain.

"This is the description of Pierre Picard," said the brigadier, unfolding a paper: "Middle height, short neck, broad shoulders, high cheek bones, large nose, black eyes, sandy beard, thin lips, a brown mole on the forehead."

Folding up the paper, he added:

"Now you'll be sure to recognise him if you meet him!"

"With such a description, it would be impossible to mistake him."

"Then, as the song says, 'good-night, my friends'; I leave you to go and hunt my game.

The murderer ceased to breathe. While listening to the brigadier's departure, he calculated that a few hours only separated him from the frontier, and already he saw himself in safety.

He was about raising his head, when the heavy boots of the gendarme, taking a new direction, resounded suddenly in his ears.

The gendarme stopped, two paces from the table at which he was seated; and the murderer *felt* his look turned upon him.

His blood seemed to freeze in his veins. A cold perspiration

burst from all his pores, and his heart appeared to him to cease beating.

"By the way," cried the brigadier, "here's a party who is sleeping pretty soundly."

And he struck him on the shoulder.

"Hallo, my friend, hold you head up a little; I want to see your face."

Pierre Picard raised his head sharply; the expression of his face was frightful. His livid features were horribly contracted, his blood-shot eyes darted flames, and a nervous trembling agitated his thin and close-pressed lips.

"It's he!" cried ten voices at once.

The brigadier put out his hand to seize him by the collar, but before he could touch him, the murderer struck him two heavy blows with his fist in the eyes and blinded him; then, leaping through the window into the garden, he disappeared.



Recovered from the surprise which had at first paralysed them, several young men dashed off in pursuit of him. Picard cleared the garden hedge, gained the fields, and in less than ten minutes was half a league away from the village.

After making sure that the unevenness of the ground prevented him from being seen, he paused to take breath, for he was quite exhausted and would have sunk down if this furious flight had continued twenty seconds longer.

But he had hardly seated himself, before confused cries struck upon his ears. He rose and listened.

It was his pursuers.

What was he to do? Exhausted, breathless, he could run no more—and they were there, on his heels. He cast a desperate glance around him. Everywhere he saw the level plain—without a rock, without a hollow, without a clump of trees, in which he could hide himself. Suddenly his eyes fell upon a shining pool of standing water, on the margin of which there was growth of tall reeds, and he gasped:

"Let's try it."

He dragged himself to the pool, in which he hid himself up to the neck, drawing over his head the reeds and water-plants, then remained as motionless as if he had taken root in the mud.

The water had become still and smooth as a mirror when the peasants arrived at the edge of the pool, preceded by the brigadier, who had recovered from the effects of the blows he had received.

"Now," cried Daddy Faucheux, from the back of his horse, and examining the country in all directions, "where in the name of wonder can that scoundrel have got to?"

"It's odd," said a peasant; "five minutes ago I saw him plainly



—and, now, not a glimpse of him, and yet the ground's flat and green for three leagues round, without so much as a hole in which he could hide his nose."

"He can't be far off," said the brigadier. "Let us divide and spread over the plain, searching ever bit of it, and coming back here last."

Pierre Picard heard the party disperse, uttering threats against him.

Still standing motionless in the pool, he dared not change his position for fear of betraying his presence by agitating the water about him, or by deranging the reeds and water-plants with which he had covered his head.



He passed an hour in this position, studying the sound of the steps crossing each other on the plain, of which his ears, eagerly strained, caught the least perceptible echoes.

At the end of that time the whole of the party were again collected about the pool.

"Thunder and lightning!" cried the brigadier, furiously; "the monster has escaped us, but how the plague could he have done it?"

"He must be a sorcerer!" said a peasant.

"Sorcerer or not, I'll not give him up," replied Daddy Faucheux. "I'll just give Sapajou time to swallow a mouthful of water at this pool, and we'll both slip off to the edge of the frontier, towards which the beggar is sure to make his way."

And turning his horse towards the pool, he reined him up just at the spot where the fugitive was hidden amid the tuft of reeds. The animal stretched forward his neck, sniffed the air strongly, then quickly drew back his head and refused to advance. Pierre Picard felt the beast's warm breath upon his cheek.

The brigadier gently flipped Sapajou's ears to force him to enter the pool, but the animal backed a couple of paces, and his master was unable, either by blows or pattings, to induce him to obey.

"Oh, we are in a tantrum!" cried the brigadier, furious at a resistance to which he was wholly unused; "we'll see which of us is going to give in to the other."

And he was preparing to flog poor Sapajou severely, when, as if understanding the impending danger, the animal wheeled suddenly to the left and entered the pool some paces farther off.

"That's all the better for you," said the brigadier. Then, while his horse was drinking, he said to the peasants:

"Now, my good fellows, you can go back to the village; I will see to the rest."

The peasants moved off, wishing him good luck. Then the

horse, having satisfied his thirst, left the water and set off across the fields.

The murderer was left alone.

But, though he was benumbed with cold, he allowed more than a quarter of an hour to pass before venturing to quit his retreat. At length he came from the pool, dripping with water, his head and shoulders covered with water-grass and plants which clung to his skin and clothes, his body shivering, his face cadaverous. He cast a long glance over the deserted plain, and tried to speak, but his teeth chattered together so violently that it was some moments before he could articulate a word.

"Saved!" he gasped at length.

Then he continued, with profound dejection:

"Yes, saved—for the moment. But the brigadier waits for me on the frontier; the gendarmerie are warned, the whole population are on foot; the hunt is going to begin again against the common enemy—against the mad dog. The struggle—for ever the struggle—without cessation, without pity! All men against me, and God as well! It is too much—it is beyond my strength!"

While speaking he mechanically freed himself from the slimy weeds with which he was covered.

He gazed upon the solitude by which he was surrounded, and it appeared to terrify him: he seemed to feel in his heart the same cold, sullen desolate solitude.

Then he took his head between his hands, and for five minutes remained plunged in his reflections.

"So be it," he said at length, in a resolute tone.

And he set off in the direction of the village from which he had fled.



An hour afterwards he entered the tavern where the brigadier had been so near capturing him.

All the peasants who had pursued him were there.

"The assassin!" they cried in bewilderment.

"Yes," replied the murderer, calmly, "it is Pierre Picard, the assassin, who has come to give himself up. Go and find the gendarmes."

He seated himself in the middle of the tavern, calm and unmoved.

Two gendarmes speedily arrived. Pierre Picard recognised them as those who, the evening before, had passed close by the elm in which he had taken refuge. He held out his hands to them silently. They placed handcuffs upon his wrists, and led him to a room at the *Mairie*, which was to serve provisionally as his dungeon, before he was transferred to the neighbouring city.

When he found himself alone, shut up securely in this prison, the door of which was guarded, the murderer sank upon his bed, and cried with a sort of fierce enjoyment:

"At last I can rest!"

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## COMPETITIONS

In our February issue was published a competition which posed the intriguing question as to Madeleine Smith's guilt or innocence in the matter of the murder of Emile L'Angelier, her lover, for which she stood trial in July, 1857, and was discharged with a verdict of 'Not Proven'.

There have been endless discussions as to Madeleine's part in the crime, and *EWMM* readers offered a variety of reasoned (but sometimes wild!) 'solutions' to the case. Some of the entries were outstanding, but, unfortunately, totally ignored the facts and were therefore inadmissible; others tended to adhere to the given verdict by merely underlining, often heavily, the main points of the prosecution's case.

It was difficult to choose a winner; in the end it was decided that the prize of ten guineas must go to *Miss Jean McDougall, 8, Midlock Street, Glasgow, S.W.1.*

Her solution, which is here published, is well reasoned and offers as a second conspirator a party many people are inclined to believe guilty; Miss McDougall's answer could, considering all the facts and the characters concerned in the case, well be the real solution:

*Emile L'Angelier contributed considerably to his early demise through drug-taking, but there is no doubt he was assisted greatly by two others, both of them women.*

*Madeleine Smith and Mary Arthur Perry had ample opportunities to administer the poison in gradual doses that would eventually accumulate to bring about the solution to their problems.*

*Madeleine, longing to be free of a no longer tintillating love affair and protected from future blackmail, would almost certainly discuss her devilish scheme with a proved and trusted confidante of old and enlist her help in retrieving the damaging letters.*

*Perry would probably express willingness to co-operate. If she was deeply infatuated with Emile, she might have thought him better off dead than alive, and suffering Madeleine's defection. She could also have been motivated by jealousy and hatred of the girl who had supplanted her so long in L'Angelier's affec-*

tions. Regardless of whatever arrangement they reached, she would not for one moment consider removing the evidence—Madeleine's letters, which would incriminate the younger woman and involve her in a murder charge.

Small wonder that she could not face Emile when he lay dying if within her was the burden of knowledge that she had successfully brought about a cruel and subtle revenge.

Our competition in the March issue, *Three Minute Thriller*, was a less ambitious requirement, and sought—in the facts presented—the name of the murderer out of six suspects, the clue being hidden in the narrative. We offered a two guinea prize.

Here, again, the entries were very varied—several of them consistently ignored the published facts to reach solutions not even possible within the story's framework. The first correct solution, which named Kismah, the flea-trainer, as the murderer, opened came from *Miss Moraig C. Auderson, 215, Bruntsfield Place, Edinburgh, 10*, a second prize-winner from north of the Border, and both ladies are to be congratulated.

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## Some EWM Contributors . . .

*John Boland*. Birmingham born, lives in deepest Sussex. Works actively for writers and journalists, writes text-books for them. Wrote the famous *The League of Gentlemen*. Forthcoming book is *The Good Citizens*.

*Ernest Dudley*, radio's popular Armchair Detective, and TV's 'Judge for Yourself' creator and compère. A Worcestershire man, who lives in London and writes prolifically.

*Richard Essex*, creator of the unforgotten 'Slade of the Yard' and 'Lessinger' the crook, was a newspaperman with the 'Nationals'. Author of dozens of whodunits.

*Ed. Lacy*. A prolific writer of crime novels, he won the MWA 'Edgar' for his *Room to Swing*. Reticent about himself, but is American, and a hard-working writer.

*Natalie MacMurdy* is also American, and a New Yorker. Writes love romances and juveniles as well as crime fiction. Likes travelling in Mexico, and rustivating in Pennsylvania.

*Max Mundy* worked ten years with the Foreign Office in Algiers, Italy and India. Travels — filming tribal life — and goes in for archaeology on the side.



**THE  
REMARKABLE  
Mr. BARTLETT  
ROGER GARNETT**

*A new look at the great  
'Pimlico Mystery' with  
some hitherto unknown  
facts*

**T**HE TRIAL of Adelaide Bartlett for the murder of her husband opened on April 12, 1886. It was presided over by the Honourable Mr. Justice Wills, one of those judges who have, from time to time, expressed themselves surprised and even shocked on learning that people are ordinary, fallible creatures.

For, indeed, the quirks and foibles of human nature dominated the Bartlett case; it is rich in those, and bereft of horror or real ugliness.

But to return to the beginning of the story. Adelaide Bartlett was born in the Rue Gourville, Orléans, on December 20, 1855. Her father was a professor of mathematics and of excellent family — Adolphe Collot de la Tremoille, Comte de Thouars d'Escury, her mother being Clara Chamberlain, who was of English birth. She was not, it might be noted, natural daughter of an Englishman and an unknown mother, as every authority has subsequently stated. These inaccuracies appear to have been perpetrated years later by Sir Edward Clarke, Q.C., her counsel at the trial.

In 1875 a Victorian 'go-getter', Thomas Edwin Bartlett, was, at 30, in a fair way to becoming a man of wealth. Hard-working and energetic, he opened various small grocers' shops in the south of London with his partner, Edward Baxter, and generally installed managers to look after them once they were going well.

Son of a carpenter and indifferently educated, Bartlett greatly admired learning in others. Peripatetic in his private life, he finally got around to visiting his brother, Charles, a furniture remover and carrier, whose home — and place of business — was in Brook Street, Kingston-on-Thames.

With Edwin in tow, Charles went to visit friends nearby, a



Mr. and Mrs. William Chamberlain. Staying with them was their niece, Adelaide de la Tremoille de Thouars d'Escury. Edwin was instantly attracted by the beauty of the 19-year-old French girl and, through William Chamberlain, pressed his suit.

Adelaide's mother in Orléans was apparently the approving (and moving) spirit in the match. After the usual enquiries had been made, it was decided that the short, stout, blond Edwin Bartlett was an eligible *parti*. The marriage contract incorporated a satisfactory *dot*, which Bartlett duly ploughed into the business and increased his chain to six shops.

The marriage took place at Croydon Parish Church on April 6, 1875.



The first of the curious Bartlett traits emerged when, contrary to honeymoon custom, he bore his wife off to the new marital bower — above the chief shop in Station Road (now Milkwood Road), close to Herne Hill Station.

Nor did he consummate the marriage but imposed the first of his odd notions on his bride, informing her she was going at once to be educated to an elaborate degree at a choice ladies' school run by Sarah and John Dodd in Church Street, Stoke Newington. She remained there for six months, spending her school holidays with her husband — the collector of coincidences will find interest in learning that less than a mile away in Upper Clapton was Mrs. Gorton's Academy for Young Ladies where, 22 years previously, Madeleine Hamilton Smith received *her* education.

Adelaide then went for a longer period to a convent in Belgium, to round off her period of learning, returning to live at Station Road just a month before her mother-in-law, Sarah Ellen Bartlett, died. This resulted in old Edwin Bartlett, the father, coming to share the *ménage*. He had only met Adelaide once (at the wedding), and disliked her on sight — with, it has been said, an Anglophobe's hatred of the French — and he behaved venomously towards her in her own house. She, with the fiery temper native to the *Orléannais*, answered back vigorously. Bartlett, living happily with his wife, appears to have noticed nothing.

She endured it for a year. Finally, upset by old Edwin's endless nagging, she ran away to her uncle's home. Bartlett fetched her back with great speed, brought about peace and then emerged from his absorption with commerce completely to lose his temper when his father made some very unpleasant insinuations against Adelaide and his youngest son, Frederick.

Bartlett regarded the accusations so seriously that he took his father before a commissioner of oaths and made him swear a statement withdrawing the insinuations as untrue (at the trial old Edwin was to say that he did this to keep the peace while, in

his mind, he withdrew not a single word).

Adelaide was living a lonely and self-contained life, without friends or entertainments. In 1881 things changed, for she now expected a baby. Great preparations were on foot then Bartlett, who was something of a hypochondriac, had a minor breakdown, brought on, the old father was to say at the trial, by (of all remarkable things!) 'laying a floor'.

Whatever the cause of it, Bartlett, who had been accepted after medical examination by an insurance company as a first class risk a few months before, decided on a sea voyage to Scotland to restore his health. And off he went, leaving his wife to the care, presumably, of his father and a midwife named Walker.



It should be noted that Walker came through the good offices of a Mrs. Nichols whose husband, an American doctor, had written a book called *Esoteric Anthropology* which both Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett had studied with diligence. The book dealt with birth control in elaborate detail, a 'shocking' book at that time. Its presence in the Bartlett household probably aroused more ultimate controversy and uproar than the murder itself (Mr. Justice Wills was to fulminate for several minutes about the book . . . 'such garbage' . . .).

However, Bartlett was back again, restored to health, before the baby's birth. But he would not have a doctor in the house, possibly a form of jealousy. Nurse Walker grew alarmed as Adelaide's time grew near, for the birth was going to be both difficult and painful — in the end she broke down Bartlett's resistance and a doctor was sent for, but the baby was born, and died, while he was on his way.

The young wife's recovery was slow. She had suffered a great deal, and though it did not sour her pleasant and happy nature, she grew depressed and was frequently distrait. Private letters written by Mrs. Alice Matthews, who lived in East Dulwich, have thrown minor light on the Bartlett marriage.

Mrs. Matthews was, with her husband, the only real friend the pair had. It appears that, in 1879, Bartlett had great trouble with his teeth. He went for an artificial set, and was attended by a Mr. Bellin, whose name is not in the Dentists' Register of the time; he was probably one of the innumerable empirics, maybe a dental mechanic, who adopted dentistry as a sideline. His treatment proves it.

He sawed (i.e., broke off) the teeth at gum level, an old-fashioned idea which assumed the shrinkage of the bony sockets and facial muscles would be obviated. Further, Bartlett had, at some time, indulged in mercury for health purposes which meant, later, his gums and mouth became in an appalling state.

In her letters Mrs. Matthews has mentioned Adelaide's discomfort and revulsion caused by the massive halitosis (for want of a better word) which she had to endure.

To try and save the marriage, since it was in danger of floundering, Mrs. Matthews talked Bartlett into moving to the rooms over his 'show' shop in Lordship Lane, East Dulwich. 'There was no room for me in that house,' old Edwin was to say at the trial, 'so I went elsewhere'.

Perhaps the absence of the old man, and the company of the kindly Mr. and Mrs. Matthews, restored the marriage to a normal course. Encouraged by their friends the Bartletts now took a cottage near the River Wandle in rural Merton Abbey. It was, in those days, comprised of 'cress-set rivulets in which the sand danced and minnows darted above the Springs of Wandel', as Ruskin was to write. In such charming surroundings Adelaide recovered her health, and found life enjoyable, until January, 1885.



In that month she went with her husband one Sunday to the Wesleyan chapel in Merton High Street for morning service — though Adelaide was Roman Catholic she was a recusant and had both married in a Protestant church and followed her husband's religion.

They took no particular notice of the minister, a tall, moustached young man who was in Supply the previous year, and was now stationed in Wandsworth.

His name was George Dyson, the son of a Wesleyan minister, who was born in Northampton, and educated at New Kingswood School. He entered the Wesleyan Ministry in 1882, when he was 24, in which year he went to Trinity College, Dublin; he was to sit for his B.A., there, in 1885.

Living at Parkfields, which was no more than a walk across Putney Heath from the Bartletts, he paid a duty call on them. In June he made a second call on the pair, who were now in regular attendance at his services. He mentioned he was going to Dublin that month to sit for his degree; to Edwin Bartlett this was education in an impressive form. The rather mild and harmless-looking young minister became a veritable giant of learning in the grocer's eyes.

The association ripened and Dyson was a regular visitor. When he returned, with his degree, it was proposed to him that he should continue Adelaide's education. His stipend was only a hundred a year, and Bartlett dealt with the financial side of it with great tact — Adelaide was to get regular lessons in geography, Latin, history and — her father's subject — mathematics.

She spent her afternoons, and sometimes her mornings, and, occasionally, evenings with George Dyson entirely unchaperoned.

Bartlett thoroughly approved and left them alone every day from morning until he returned from his shops at six. The association was, it is worth noting, entirely above-board. Adelaide was a virtuous woman and Dyson a good man — they kissed as cousins, both in and out of Edwin Bartlett's presence, but they were never lovers. Despite the extreme recklessness of the association in those times, it is obvious that association was wholly innocent, for, otherwise, the prosecution would certainly have made good use of such ammunition at the trial.

The Bartletts went to Dover in August when the tenancy of their cottage expired; Edwin went twice to Putney and collected Dyson, taking him to Dover as a house guest.

The following month, with two of his shop assistants as witnesses, Edwin made a new will. Adelaide was the sole legatee, George Dyson being one of the executors. It was an expression of his regard for the young minister.

Later that month the Bartletts went to London, where they took lodgings, a first floor back and front, at 85 Claverton Street, Victoria, in the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Doggett. This was to be an interim stay until they found a new house, and one more in keeping with Edwin's growing material prosperity. It was explained to the Doggetts that there would be one frequent visitor, 'only a clergyman', which was either an innocent qualification for the harmless Dyson or an adroit form of disarming in advance any possible suspicion of him as a man.

He was at the house at all hours, and for all hours. There must have been gossip, for those were the days when men and women did not associate alone for hours at a time, if they were not married or related. Dyson must have been a simple-minded soul, and Adelaide almost wholly ingenuous, not to suspect there were mutterings about them: Edwin never thought twice of the situation.

They dwelt happily and insularly in their little glasshouse, unaware of the watching world. George travelled to and from Putney each day, where he had been given a new church, with a season ticket paid for by Edwin.

The peaceful autumn was just that, until Edwin's illness.



It was nothing, at first. As a true hypochondriac Edwin took even very small illnesses most seriously, coddling himself and indulging in powerful medication.

At first there was sleeplessness, depression and odd fancies. It seems to be a form of physical reaction, a secret feeling (perhaps) that he suddenly realised he was not getting enough attention. He took to his bed. Adelaide fussed over him for day and night; she never undressed but slept by the bed, holding

Edwin's bare foot, which seemed to comfort him and send him to sleep.

Two days later Dr. Alfred Leach, whose practice was close by in Charlwood Street, was asked if he would take Bartlett as a patient and call on him.

The new patient was comfortably disposed on the drawing-room sofa. Leach found him suffering from some pain in the left side, minor diarrhoea and gastritis; the breath was very bad.

Leach thought it was a possible dose of mercury ('oo large a dose of blue pill'), and ordered a conventional stomach powder, and a mouth-wash; he was shocked at Bartlett's teeth. The following day he ordered bicarbonate of soda, bromide of ammonium, *nux vomica*, and two drops of pure chloroform in the whole. He also discovered a clue to the mercury. Edwin admitted, in a moment of abstraction, picking a pill casually out of a drawer of sample medicines and swallowing it. This habit appears to be his simple form of prophylaxis. After an examination the doctor was to record:

'This man years ago was badly used by some dentists, who put him in a plate of false teeth without drawing his stumps. The latter rotted, and he had to discard the plate. A fresh plate was made, and some teeth that should have been drawn were filed off. These rotted also and he gave up plate number two. He could not clean his teeth, and his mouth became foul, and sulphides were naturally among the products of decomposition. Having got a dose of mercury into the system, the sulphides seized upon all that circulated through the margin of the gums, and formed a deposit in their edges of black sulphide mercury.'

The result of this, after Leach's treatment had improved Edwin Bartlett's condition, was a visit to Thomas Roberts, L.D.S., of 49 Charlwood Street, a competent and expert dental surgeon. Over a period all the stumps except two were extracted, and Bartlett was much improved.

But Leach was both a cautious man and now familiar with his peculiar patient. He called in a Dr. John Dudley, from nearby; the treatment being given was confirmed as correct. Edwin was told he was to go on his own to Torquay for a stay after Christmas. On December 24 he was so improved that he was given a placebo, to keep him psychologically happy and content.

Adelaide nursed him devotedly, Dyson was in and out with cheering and comforting words — old Edwin Bartlett appeared now and again, making appalling accusations against his daughter-in-law and was driven away by a suddenly irate son, who told his father from the sick-bed what he thought of him.

Then Bartlett had an attack of what they would have called 'the horrors'. He was convinced that worms were crawling about inside him and up his throat. He received a prescription



of phosphate of strychnine, a vermifuge of great power and then a purgative of tincture of jalap. To add to this, without telling Leach, he quietly took two capsules of croton oil, a terrifying purge sometimes given in those days to awkward inmates of lunatic asylums to keep them submissive.

None of this had any particular effect on Bartlett. If anything he thrived, but by the 29th he was having crying spells interspersed with periods of gloom. He then went for another tooth extraction, came home and ate oysters, jugged hare, bread, cake, chutney, and more oysters for his dinner. He topped this off with a cup of strong tea and asked Mrs. Doggett, who had come in to see him, if she had ever taken chloroform.

Early on the morning of January 1 Adelaide woke in her bedside chair; she found her husband lying face downward dead.



Confusion became absolute. Dr. Leach was fetched, and Adelaide told him what she had found, that she had poured brandy ('nearly half a pint') down his throat to revive him. Leach discovered a glass within Bartlett's reach which contained liquid smelling of 'chloric ether'.

There was nothing in the room that was dangerous, except an almost empty bottle of chlorodyne which, Adelaide assured the doctor, Edwin rubbed on his gums — but the uneasy Leach knew that as little as one drachm could have fatal results. Adelaide sent telegrams to everyone, except George Dyson, and told Leach to conduct a post-mortem as quickly as possible to find out what was wrong, 'spare no expense . . .'

Into the midst of the frightened Doggetts and their servant came old Edwin Bartlett, bristling like a suspicious dog, openly smelling his son's lips for signs of 'prussic acid poisoning'. He then searched Adelaide's pockets, possibly for poisons or dangerous weapons, kissed her, and went off.

Dyson turned up the next day, while Leach and another doctor conducted a post-mortem in the Bartlett's rooms. Mr. and Mrs. Matthews arrived, and Dyson was sent into a state of great alarm when chloroform was mentioned — he had, on the 27th, bought an ounce of pure chloroform in Putney at Adelaide's request; she wanted it to soothe her husband to sleep. He had then bought more — five ounces in all — which he poured into a bottle of his own and brought to Adelaide.

He began to grow hysterical, quarrelling with her, and as days went by, he berated Adelaide, once saying, 'Supposing it were proved . . . that you . . .' to which she answered: 'Do not mince matters, say that I gave it to him.'

'The Pimlico Mystery', as it was now being called, was the subject of an inquest which was put back to February 4 to

await the report of the Home Office analyst.

To packed benches the story was told; a copy of *The Companion to the British Pharmacopoeia* was produced, found among Adelaide's possessions and which fell open 'naturally' at chloroform . . . with all the facts and surmises, the end was in the arrest of both Adelaide Bartlett and George Dyson for 'wilful murder'.



The trial saw Sir Charles Russell, Q.C., the Attorney-General, Mr. (later Sir) Charles Matthews for Dyson, and Mr. (later Sir) Edward Clarke, Q.C., for Adelaide.

The Attorney-General opened by saying he would offer no evidence against Dyson, who was promptly discharged, but remained as a witness; after 1886 his name was dropped from the Wesleyan Ministry and was no more associated with it.

The trial lasted from Monday to Saturday. No defence witnesses at all were called. Prosecution proved irrevocably that Edwin Bartlett had died of chloroform poisoning, but the medical men showed how difficult it would have been to pour chloroform down the throat of a sleeping person, the apparent manner of death.

Adelaide had previously admitted possession of chloroform, but that she had it to sprinkle on a handkerchief to quieten him, particularly when at times his attitude towards her became too 'pressing'. The book on sex was talked about, with none too fortunate results, and the news that the Bartletts slept in twin beds (seldom heard of at the time) was another sensation.

Old Edwin Bartlett gave his harsh and prejudiced evidence, and with typical witness inaccuracy even stated that 'my son was 40 years of age on 8th October last', when, in fact, he was 41 on October 17. It was characteristic of his evidence.

It came out that Dyson called Adelaide 'Birdie' and wrote little verses to her; the parade of witnesses for the prosecution was damning not of intent but with facts which could be misinterpreted, the Dyson association among them.

That able writer Margaret Cole said a few years ago of Edwin Bartlett: 'In the first place, he was just over 40, an age when men are notoriously apt to suffer sex changes, if only temporarily. Mostly, men go off the rails; Edwin seems to have gone *on* the rails, though with less unfortunate results.' She goes on to mention that his teeth had probably been poisoning him, and that Adelaide was perhaps becoming too interested in George. She then develops the interesting theory that Adelaide persuaded her husband either to drink the chloroform that night or allow himself to be stupefied so that she could pour it down him, overcome, as it were, at the sudden prospect of having to endure him more or less for the rest of her life.

Whatever it was, her counsel made a tremendous speech for the defence, a landmark of forensic eloquence. It took six hours and so moved the public that it was concluded to a noisy, quite spontaneous burst of prolonged applause.

Sir Charles Russell's closing speech was not at all a sure one; the question of the chloroform ingestion seemed baffling in some ways and not in others. The judge's summing-up was to an extent hostile. The jury went out at three o'clock that Saturday afternoon, returning at five. The foreman stated: 'We have well considered the evidence, and although we think grave suspicion is attached to the prisoner, we do not think there is sufficient evidence to show how or by whom the chloroform was administered', which was qualified by the Clerk of the Court as a verdict of not guilty.



There was vast partisanship for Adelaide; Clarke was a national hero, and a great post-mortem occurred in the public prints as the case was sifted and re-sifted. The great Sir James Paget said of Adelaide Bartlett, with a sort of smart waspishness, that, with the trial over, she 'should have told us, in the interests of science, how she did it.'

She did not answer but fled back to Orléans and then into obscurity; her subsequent history is interesting but, out of courtesy to her family, the writer proposes to remain silent.

The student of the trial will draw his own conclusions and they will quite likely concur with the views of the kind and helpful Dr. Alfred Leach, who wrote, a month later in *The Lancet*, on the case at length, concluding that Edwin took the chloroform 'out of sheer mischief with the intention of alarming by his symptoms the wife who, an hour or two before, had talked about using it in an emergency'.

© Roger Garnett, 1965

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**I**NDUSTRY exacts a lesser toll and offers a five day week with relatively little night work. The police service cannot compete with the flesh-pots of industry.

— Robert Allan, Chief Constable of Renfrewshire.

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**R**EVEALING that indictable offences in England and Wales rose above the million mark in 1964, George Thomas, of the Home Office, said of larcenies: 'Each one of these must be investigated by one or more officers. It is, I think, reasonable to ask the public to take precautions to protect their own property and to assist the police in the war against crime.'

# Moment of Truth

**ERIC PARR**

*Unusual and impressive, this true  
autobiographical fragment  
has its own lesson*

**T**HIS, I said to myself, is a piece of cake in the shape of a large, detached house standing in an acre of ground and completely surrounded by an eight-foot hedge.

It was the gaff that 'drummers' dream about. No chance of prying eyes taking in every furtive movement and, what was more important, the house was as dead as a doornail. This I had checked by the obvious method of repeatedly ringing the front door bell, and then thumping on the back door.

It was clear that the people who owned this house were comfortably off. The large lawn and the surrounding garden were cared for by expert hands. One could see that the outside of the house was used to a yearly coat of paint, and a garage large enough for two cars was a further sign of prosperity.

I decided that I would go in through the french windows and would need a tool to open the catch.

Now I had served my apprenticeship with a man who was described, during the height of his career, as the 'cleverest and most persistent housebreaker in the country'. His inflexible rule was never to carry anything that could be described as a house-breaking implement, 'For,' he used to say, 'this entitles you to three months before you've done anything. So look for a tool. Every garage or outhouse has something you can use as a jemmy; the modern house is a pushover.'

With this in mind I went to the garage, the doors of which were wide open. I had my head in a tool box and failed to hear the sound of a car pulling up.

My first intimation that something wasn't quite right was when I heard footsteps on the gravel path. I dropped the tool-box and froze. The footsteps receded round the side of the house. After about five minutes I decided that it was time to be on my way. I couldn't have mistimed the move any worse than I did; as I

stuck my head through the garage door I looked straight into the eyes of a big, husky geezer who had bogey written all over his ugly face.

"Well, well, well," he said as he grabbed me by the arm. "What have we here?"

He was joined by another big, beefy basket. I came out with a ridiculous explanation that I was looking for a receptacle in which to place water for the radiator of my car.

When they suggested locating my car, I gave in. It was a silly explanation but it was the best I could do at such short notice.

"You'd better come along and see our gov'nor," said one of the bogies. "He'll worry himself to death over you."



During the journey to the nick in the police car I kept quiet. Not so the bogey who was sitting by my side in the back seat.

"We should have given you ten minutes or so. Let you have the run of the mill, so to speak. That way we'd have done you coming out of the house, and that would have wrapped it up nice and tidy. As it is now, we've got you on an enclosed premises charge which doesn't carry a long sentence, and that's a pity."

I couldn't let this go by.

"I thought that your job was to prevent crime, not to aid and abet it," I said.

He didn't like this.

"We've got a Flash Harry here," he told his pal. "I wonder how smart he'll be once we get him in the nick."

I didn't say any more after that. We pulled into the police station yard where we all got out and, with one man on each side of me, I was ushered into the charge room. Once inside I was told to empty my pockets. After that I was stood against the wall and subjected to a thorough search.

"You've got a lot of money," said one of the bogies. There was an envious note in his voice. "Fifteen quid in notes. Where did you get this?"

"I won it at the dogs," I replied.

He sighed. "One of these days one of you jokers will come up with an original answer. Now let's have some particulars. Name?"

I supplied that.

"Age?" I gave him that as well, but when it came to my address I didn't want to know. I had no intention of letting myself in for a turn over. They might find too much to my detriment in the small furnished room I rented in West Kensington.

"No fixed abode," I replied. He glared at me. "Don't give me that," he said. "Fifteen nicker, a gold wrist-watch, and a hand-made suit. What are you trying to tell me? That you spend your



nights in Rowton House?"

Before I could answer that one the door of the charge room opened and in walked a man in civilian clothes. He stared at me through a pair of piercing blue eyes set in a ruddy face. In his tweed suit he looked like a gentleman farmer. The bogey got to his feet.

"Enclosed premises for the purpose of, sir," he explained.

The newcomer nodded.

"Where?" he asked.

"One of the unoccupied houses on our list, sir."

The senior officer smiled wryly.

"Bad luck, son," he said. "You see, we don't take chances like too many people imagine. Whenever one of our householders go away they notify us, and we see to it that a regular patrol is made at regular intervals day and night. So if you had managed to get in you wouldn't have got far away after you had done the job. Right, Sergeant," he said as he turned on his heel. "Charge him."

"Any objection to having your dabs taken?" asked the bogey.

"It won't make a lot of difference if I do," I replied. "You'll only ask the magistrate for an order in the morning."

"That's about it." He reached in a drawer for the fingerprint outfit.

After I had been dabbed and tabulated I stood in front of a desk in the charge room and listened while the station sergeant read out that, "You, Eric Parr, are charged with being on enclosed premises, to wit, Two Trees, Welshire Close, for the purpose of committing a felony. You are not obliged . . ."

After the jailer had locked me in a cell I sat on the bed and had a quick mental check up. This little feat would entitled me to three months. That didn't worry me a lot. What *was* bothering me was what they might dig up. I had performed quite a lot in this country and if someone had clocked me at any time, then I would stand in more line-ups than a squaddy at Caterham.

The jailer brought in a night-cap in the shape of a large mug of tea and a sandwich. He was quite a cheery character. He stood chatting for a few minutes. He told me that in the morning I would be taken in front of a JP who would be brought in especially and that the inspector would ask for a week's remand.

"Brixton," I said. He shook his head.

"We have the right to keep you here for a week. It facilitates our enquiries if we've got you on the spot. Still, you'll be alright here. My old woman cooks all the food for prisoners on remand, and I don't look too bad on it after fifteen years, do I? You'll find the gov'nor here one of the best. Old Daddy Wilson, they call him. Mind you, there's one or two here who don't see eye

to eye with the way he runs things but he couldn't care less. He claims he's always given a man a fair crack of the whip, and he intends to keep things that way until he retires, which is in six months' time. Well, I should turn in if I were you."



The next morning I appeared in front of the magistrate, who remanded me in custody for a week. Shortly after I had returned to my cell I was visited by Daddy Wilson. He sat on the bed, gave me a cigarette and started talking.

"Now look, lad," he said. "I've got your record through from the Yard, and I see you have three previous cons. All for house-breaking, and that won't sound too good when you come in front of the bench. You know this kind of life is not for you. I see by your record that you went to a public school. You don't do it a lot of credit. Oh, I know that life to you is a giggle. Plenty of money, good clothes and every day Christmas Day. I've been in the Force for thirty years, and I've seen them come and go. Youngsters like you ending up old lags with years of bird in front of them. Now listen to me:

"In about half an hour you'll be getting visits from police officers from other districts. They're very interested in you and I'd strongly advise you not to dig your toes in if you think they've got something on you. You know your own business best and it's up to you to look after yourself. Perhaps I shouldn't talk to you like this, but I've only got a few months to go before I retire and it won't help me any to see you go down for a long time."

He got up, leaving the packet of cigarettes on the bed.

"Behave yourself while you're in my nick. You'll find the food pretty good and you can have the privileges of a prisoner on remand. You'll be able to buy cigarettes and papers, and you can have an hour's exercise a day in the garden."

He left the cell. He had me puzzled. Either he was the greatest con. man I had ever met and this was his way of getting me to cough, or he was a genuine humanitarian who didn't like to see a youngster sliding down the ladder.

I wasn't left alone for long. One by one they came into my cell and tried to get me to admit to outstanding offences. But I wasn't having any. Daddy Wilson stood silent in the background, holding a watching brief, as it were. He only opened his mouth once and that was when one bogey started the old intimidation lark.

"That'll be enough of that," said Inspector Wilson. "He's told you he knows nothing. Either make up your mind to charge him or leave well alone."

The bogey decided to leave well alone.

On the morning of the day I was due to appear in front of the magistrate, I got up early and cleaned my cell out. The jailer nodded approvingly when he came in to conduct me to the van, which he was driving to court. To my surprise my escort was none other than Inspector Wilson. He climbed in the back with me and all the way to court he was chatting about bowls, which was his favourite pastime.

We pulled up and when I stepped out of the van, I discovered we were in a cinema car park. I turned to the inspector.

"We taking in a morning matinée?" I asked.

He smiled and explained that a new court house was being built. Consequently all the magistrates' business was being conducted in the council offices about five minutes walk away. As the offices were in a narrow alleyway, this was the nearest we could get to it. We would have to walk the rest of the way.



Now whenever I have related about how the inspector and I got to the court, my listeners have always accused me of drawing the long bow. I must admit that they were entitled to be suspicious.

We walked along the busy pavement like a father and son taking a morning constitutional. He made no attempt at restraint and at one stage on our journey I crossed a busy road, stopped on the other side and realised that he was not with me.

He was not the slightest bit disturbed. He waited for a lull in the traffic, and then slowly came across to where I was standing.

"Traffic gets worse than ever," was his only comment.

We waited together in a long passage until my case was called and only then did he become Detective-Inspector Wilson. He touched my arm and we walked into the large, makeshift court. I stood behind a desk and faced the five magistrates. The charge was read out. I pleaded guilty. Wilson then went behind another desk, opened a folder and read out my previous convictions.

When he had finished there was a brief silence broken eventually by Wilson clearing his throat.

The chairman looked up. "Yes, Inspector?"

"May it please your worships," he said. Here it comes, I thought. The old coating stakes. What a villain I am, and how the number of depredations in the district are increasing week by week and here's a man who . . . To my astonishment he said:

"I have had this young man in my station for the past seven days, and have made it my business to study him carefully. According to his record he had a great advantage. He was educated at a public school. On the other hand this was offset by an extremely unhappy home life. I feel that he has come to the

cross-roads, and I feel convinced that if your worships took a certain course this young man would never appear before a court again."

"Thank you, Inspector," said the chairman. He conferred with his colleagues and then he announced their intention of retiring.

"I think you'll be alright," said Daddy Wilson.

After a short recess they returned. The chairman looked at me unblinkingly before he spoke. Then:

"Parr, you are a very fortunate young man. You have a friend at court in the person of Inspector Wilson. Because of his plea on your behalf we have decided to place you on probation for two years."

The clerk of the court read out the conditions of the order and when we got outside the court old Daddy Wilson shook my hand.

"Don't let me down, lad," he said in parting, and walked away.



It was years before I met him again.

One day I was wandering through a large department store. A hand tapped me on the shoulder and I spun around. A pair of keen blue eyes smiled into mine.

"On my manor again, son?" said a familiar voice.

We retired for coffee and he told me he was in charge of security at this particular store. We chatted of this and that and then I popped the big question.

He hesitated a minute, then he said: "I knew a young man like you. He had a good home life, and there was no excuse for him going off the rails. Ran away from home when he was sixteen, taking a hundred pounds from his father's cash box. The only news his parents had of him was when he was in trouble. He started with probation, Borstal, and . . . well, you know how it goes. In no time at all he was serving penal servitude. After he left prison he would conveniently forget those who helped him."

He sighed and I looked at him. I thought I was beginning to get the picture.

"The only thoughtful thing he did was to give a false name whenever he was arrested. As you know a man is convicted under the name he gives at the time of arrest. That way he kept his family name under cover."

"Has his family heard from him lately?" I asked. He hesitated again, then replied, "Oh, yes. They heard from him six months ago. He was really in trouble this time. He had gone out with a tearaway who carried a gun. During the robbery they were disturbed by a patrolling policeman and this little no-good pulled

his gun and shot the policeman right between the eyes. They hanged them both."

Now I had no intention of asking the direct question. Instead I said, "It must have made things very awkward for his father. I'm surprised it didn't ruin his old man's career."

He clapped me on the shoulder and then rose.

"They take a man on his merits in the Force, son," he said, "if he shows promise there's no reason why he shouldn't end up . . ."

Here I interrupted him.

"As an inspector, maybe?"

He smiled.

"So long, lad," he said. I sat at the table for a long time after his figure had disappeared in the crowd of shoppers.

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## *E W M M*

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July issue includes

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Edgar Wallace

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John Rowland and  
the Hulten Case

---

Michael Gilbert

---

Bernard Newman and  
'Vignette from Life'

---

and many other top-level stories and features



# THE CARTOONISTS AND THE CRIME WRITERS

No. 2



THE CRIME FAN WHO'D NEVER HEARD OF MRS PYM !

*(By H. M. Bateman, whose The Guardsman Who Dropped It is a classic. This cartoon immortalises Nigel Morland's 'Mrs. Pym', published in book form by Cassell's for 30 years this month.)*

# It Could Be...

MAX MUNDY

*It is possible that any sort of phenomenon is suspect, but a vision can always be helped along*

**I**T'S SITTING there, mocking me, this damn' crystal ball that started all the trouble. It's hidden under a black cloth but I know it's there, waiting for me to lift the cloth and peer into its heart. Thinks I won't be able to resist having a final peep to see what's waiting for me. Well, this is one time I'd rather not know. I've had enough of looking into the future to last me a lifetime—whatever's left of that.

It began just before last Christmas. The Dirok Club's pretty small and pretty remote, right up in the lush foothills in the very furthest corner of Assam, with Naga tribes in the hills to the East, and the Chinese much too close for comfort on the North, and tantalising glimpses of shimmering, snow-covered Himalayas half-way up to heaven, 'way above the cloudline.

Well, as I said, it was getting near Christmas and we—the Club Committee that is—decided to have a fancy dress dance, plus a sort of a funfair on New Year's Eve. We were to join forces with one or two of the other small tea-garden clubs round about so that we'd have a good crowd. Most of our members are tea planters and their wives, with a few Indian Government officials, Forestry, Game Reserve, Political Agents and such like, and, every now and then, an influx of the Army when one of the Sikh or Gurkha or other really tough regiments are stationed comfortably close to that imaginary 'Inner Line'.

I'm a bachelor myself—came out here a couple of years ago to learn the business with a timber company managed by a chap called Mackinley. Now, I hadn't been here three months before I got on the wrong side of Mackinley and instead of things improving they've just got worse all the time. His wife's not bad, though—much younger than he is and not a bad looker for a place like this. Jenny's not like most of the *mem-sahibs* here, spending her time either playing bridge or mahjong or talking scandal. From the very first she wanted to get around and see

the country—even began learning Assamese if you please. Not many of them bother to do that.

Well, after we'd decided on this fancy dress lark I began to wonder what I could go as. I wasn't too keen on all those Arab sheiks in bedsheets and Indian rajahs or Spanish flamenco dancers. I wanted something a bit more original, so I asked Jenny if she'd any ideas.

Mind you, junior assistants don't normally spend their time sipping tea with the manager's wife and exchanging polite chit-chat. And as for a flirtation—you have to be pretty crafty to get away with that in a small place like this, where everyone's servants make sure their masters and mistresses know just who is sleeping with who, most likely before they've even got around to thinking about it themselves.

But, as I've said, Jenny liked to know how the other half lived and one day she heard there was to be a bit of a *tamasha* among the tribals down in the market, and knowing I always go to these things she came round to the veneer factory where I was watching the new consignment of enormous Hollung logs being fed to the rotary peeler, stripped of the rough outer bark, then denuded of the pale red 'flesh' like gigantic rolls of paper being unwound. The thin sheets of wood were moved away on an endless belt into the factory proper, ready to be cut and dried and joined together and pressed and finally used to make plywood for tea chests since Hollung has no taint or smell.

I couldn't smell the Hollung but I could smell something else, a whiff of *Vent Vert* drifting on the slight breeze with the fine golden sawdust; I knew that Jenny was somewhere around.

"Over here, Mrs. Mackinley . . ." very formal I was, talking to her, no matter what I felt. "Did you want to see me?"

"Oh, Michael, yes, can I? Are you very busy just now?"

She was hovering by one of the trucks where three Assamese stripped to their loincloths were manhandling the great logs on to the hoist and tackle.

Sometimes a log slipped, and the men would scatter, light on their feet and ready for the fall, but Jenny was standing far too close to the timber for my liking. I called out to her urgently.

"Quite all right—would you like to come over here?" and I climbed off the platform and walked to meet her, just stopping myself from dragging her away.



What we talked about wasn't important except that she asked me about this religious ceremony, the *puja*, and I offered to take her with me if her old man didn't want to go, which of course, being Mackinley, he didn't.

And that meant we were down in the village alone together

that evening—except for several hundred villagers and a lot of our tea-pluckers and their families out to view the rather naïvely adorned images set up under temporary palm-leaf pavilions where worshippers took it in turn to dance themselves into a trance, holding earthen cups of red hot coals and smoking incense which they whirled round their heads with abandon.

I took some flash-photos. Jenny stood wide-eyed and entranced, with the flickering firelight glinting her blonde hair—that was one of her great charms for me, that and her naturalness and lack of snobbishness and side. There was never anything of the *Burra Mem* about Jenny.

“What’re you going to wear for this fancy dress do?” I asked her as we walked back to my jeep.

Jenny smiled hesitantly then. “Well, it’s a secret; I promised Mac I wouldn’t tell a soul. Let it be a surprise on the night. What about you? Secret too?”

“Far from it—I haven’t a clue what to wear, but I’d like it to be something different, maybe something nobody’d ever recognise as me. Got any ideas?”

“As a matter of fact, I have. It’d be just the thing for you, but you’d need to get yourself a prop and put on a bit of a show . . .”

I always did fancy myself in amateur dramatics, and as soon as she told me, I knew it was for me.

I don’t know if you’ve read any of those books by the chap who calls himself Lobsang Rampa—*The Third Eye* was one, and *Doctor from Lhasa* was another. Lots of people say he’s a phoney, that some European has already admitted to hoaxing everyone. But I don’t care what you say; that chap knows what he’s talking about, whether his name’s really Lobsang Rampa or Bill Smith.

Jenny’d been up to Sikkim for a holiday and she’d come back with a genuine Tibetan Lama’s outfit—robes, pointed cap, felt boots, and all. She proposed that I dress up in these, stain my skin a little—I’m already pretty sunburnt so I needed little to darken it to get that tinge of authentic old ivory.

“We were going to have a gypsy fortune teller,” she explained. “But a Tibetan Lama’d be much more appropriate out here. You’ll have to have something for a crystal ball—a gold fish bowl will do, turned upside down. And pretend to tell people’s fortunes. Will you do it, Mike?”

Of course I said I would, and what’s more, I wasn’t going to make shift with a goldfish bowl even if there’d been such a thing within miles. I sent down to Calcutta and asked a pal of mine there to look around the bazaars for me. Then, bless me, if I didn’t find one myself right on my own doorstep.

We're not far from a trading centre with a big weekly market where you get Bhutia and Naga and Wangpo and Dafla and a'il kinds of other tribal chaps coming down from the hills to bargain for fruit and vegetables and grain and livestock and cane baskets and mats, and heaven knows what else. I've seen holy men selling strange herbal medicines and charms, and slant-eyed, tough little Nagas with not a stitch on but a scrap of rag hanging from a cane belt with a wicked-looking dao knife slung from it, fingering cotton saris and gaping at silver trinkets. In the middle of all this open air bazaar, an enterprising Kashmiri everybody knows as Pockface—he even uses the name himself with a kind of pride—has set up a curio-cum-antique shop with rugs, carved walnut ware, ivories from Kashmir, embroideries from Kalimpong and a whole lot of oddments he buys off Tibetan refugees as they stream down from the mountains. I thought I might pick up something to add a bit more veracity to my disguise.

Then I found the crystal ball.



It was right at the back of a whole heap of prayer rugs and materials, covered with dust and cobwebs. I'd pulled at one strip of orange woollen material that turned out to be a hand-woven belt, the kind Bhutias wear round their robes to hold their tea-bowls and oddments, and I thought that'd do nicely to add to my Tibetan robe. Then the light from the doorway caught the crystal ball and right away I knew it was what I was looking for.

"What's that old glass ball?" I asked Pockface, knowing quite well but not wanting him to see I knew.

"That is one genuine crystal-gazing ball, *sahib*—one very holy man, very old Tibetan abbot, he died here in this village. His *chela* brought it to me to pay for the Holy One's funeral. It is a rare thing, *sahib*, very old, very genuine . . ."

I let him ramble on a bit while I pretended to lose interest, but I bought it in the end, paying about ten times as much as he gave the wretched little disciple, no doubt. I took it home wrapped in a piece of old black velvet because I remembered Lobsang Rampa said you should always keep your crystal ball covered and away from prying eyes.

It was of rock crystal, quite heavy, about five inches in diameter. I took it to the bathroom and washed it in running water and dried it carefully. Then I set it on the black velvet cloth, and sat down to look into the future.

There was nothing at all—simply nothing. I don't know why I should have felt so disappointed. After all I didn't believe in this thing; it was just old Pockface's story of it being a genuine crystal ball and belonging to a real Tibetan Lama that had convinced me, I suppose.



Anyhow, not to make a song and dance about it, I found Lobsang's book and looked up what he said about it. You had to sit with your back to a north light and the room had to be dim, no reflection in the ball. You had to be healthy—well, I was that all right, but the would-be seer mustn't indulge in worries or anger or any violent emotions, must eat very sparingly and no fried foods or sauces at all. That last bit was difficult, with Christmas upon us, though I did make a stab at it and people even commented on my unusual lack of appetite. I spent twenty minutes every evening looking into the ball and trying hard to relax, just pressing the sphere against my forehead then holding it in my cupped hands resting on my lap.



One night towards the end of Christmas week, the outlines of the sphere began to waver and I had the distinct impression it was growing immense, going to swallow me up. That shook me and I left it alone for a couple of days. Next time I looked in it was on the twenty-ninth of December. Sure enough, once again it was growing bigger and as I looked it seemed to glow with light and fill with a swirling white smoke. And then I saw something.

There was a small boy running wildly away from me and after him bounded an enormous, exuberant Great Dane. The boy looked over his shoulder in terror then tripped over a stone and fell down, the log leaping on top of him as he did so.

I nearly dropped the crystal in my astonishment. I recognised that small boy. It was me, aged about five, at my grandfather's house, and I'd been petrified by the dog that wanted nothing more than to be friends—but how was I to know or believe that. Yet I'd completely forgotten the episode, hadn't thought of it for years. And what I'd just seen might have been a piece of ciné film running through a projector, it was so incredibly vivid and accurate.

I'd almost made up my mind not to take the ball to the New Year's Eve party. I had a nagging feeling it was going to be dicey. After all, this thing really worked, even though it seemed to be the past and not the future I was seeing; and Lobsang Rampa distinctly stated you should treat crystal balls with respect. I felt that making a game of it, as we intended to do, would hardly meet with the Tibetan's approval.

But Jenny already knew I had the ball. I'd asked her to pass a message to my Calcutta pal when she flew down there for shopping, telling him not to bother looking any more. So when she popped in to see if I was properly rigged up, she 'oohed' and 'aahed' over my disguise and insisted on my taking the crystal.

I'd got it all wrapped up in a miniature wooden tea chest, the kind we use for sending seven pounds of tea to our chums at home, and I wouldn't let her see it.

"All right," she conceded, "but you've got to take it with you. It's an essential part of the act. And for heaven's sake, wipe that 'eye' off your forehead, Mike. It looks phoney—without it I'm sure, people'll think you're the genuine article."

I'd carefully drawn a third eye in the middle of my forehead, the clairvoyant, astral eye, but as Jenny said, it did look phoney, so I wiped it off. When I stood up with my Phrygian cap and yellow-rust robes and long embroidered felt boots and prayer-wheel in hand, I not only looked the part, I even felt it.

For all the big secrecy about Jenny and Mac's costumes, they turned out to be pretty ordinary—there were going as a couple of Burmese Karens, both in *lungyis*. She in a loose black blouse with the usual red and white trimmings and a white scarf round her head, and Mac with the man's scarlet and white version of the tunic blouse. Well, I suppose it looked all right—the costumes were authentic, I'll say that for them.

Anyhow, I did as Jenny told me, picked up the crystal ball wrapped in its velvet cloth inside the box, and half an hour later I was settled behind a couple of tribal blankets strung across a corner of the Club lounge.

There were quite a lot of out-station folk there and so far nobody'd guessed my identity. I kept my mouth shut, refused all offers of drinks—rather to my own surprise, but decided to stay sober till I'd done my turn with the fortune-telling.

I'd got a couple of prayer rugs on the floor and was sitting, a bit cramped, against a pile of cushions behind a low table covered with my black velvet cloth, the crystal ball in the middle. A whacking great copper trumpet stood upended behind me and I had a silver-lined tea bowl on the floor by my right hand, and a prayer-wheel by my left. No lamp, only the ballroom lights filtering through the curtains.

I'd begin my mumbling "*Om, Mani Padmi Hum*" (Oh, the jewel in the Lotus), turning the prayer wheel a few times, then motioning to my client to hold the crystal and look into it deeply. Then I'd take it back, press it to my forehead and hold it in my hands.

I'd tell them a bit about their past—that was easy with the people I knew, and those I didn't, Jenny'd prime me on before she ushered them in. Everyone knew it was a fake, of course, so nobody was surprised at that. And for the first half hour I wasn't getting any response from the crystal at all. I just invented the usual stuff—tall, dark men for the girls, and luscious blondes round the corner waiting for the men, with a promotion coming

up, of course.

Then something seemed to change and I found the crystal getting bigger, enormous, clouding over and I was falling, falling right inside it, right into the clouds. The clouds parted and I was looking down on a picture just as though I was in a chopper, hovering over the scene. I wasn't even aware of who I was talking to at the time; I felt as though I'd been taken completely out of myself.



I watched in fascination. I was looking into a jungle clearing; there was one of our *Makhnas*, a tuskless male elephant, the type the Company uses for dragging timber when the jungle's being cleared. Ours is one of the last companies to employ elephants and I'd been out often enough to watch them working, so that I recognised this one, old Guruji. He had a pad on his back and a *mahout* on his neck, with a couple of chaps clinging to the pad. One of them had a rifle. I got the impression of other elephants carrying passengers behind the *Makhna*, but only Guruji was clear. Suddenly, without any warning at all, came a wild trumpeting from the dense forest ahead and an enormous wild tusker charged like an express train, right into the *Makhna*. The chap with the rifle took a shot and scored a point-blank hit, but the tusker never even paused. He just kept right on coming. The *mahout* was banging wildly with his sharp goad behind the *Makhna's* ears and Guruji was trembling all over, trying to turn away and not having any space on the narrow path. Then I was vaguely aware of somebody calling my name and the clouds began closing in. I had a glimpse of two enormous grey bodies locked together and the man with the rifle falling, right under the tusker's big front feet. Then there was only a white mist and I felt myself being dragged back to wakefulness and the crystal ball was no more than a blank sphere.

The voice was still speaking, sharply now.

“. . . out of it, Mike. You don't have to put on the act for me. I only came in to keep up the illusion among the others. So far nobody out there's guessed who you are . . .”

I looked across the low table and it was Mackinley sitting there, looking impatient and slightly drunk.

It was Mackinley I'd seen in the crystal ball, the one with the rifle . . .

“I'm sorry,” I told him. “But this has turned out to be a bit more than I bargained for. I really was seeing something just then. You're not planning a trip into the jungle, are you?”

Mac shook his head impatiently. “Oh, come off it, Mike. You know damn' well we've got a party coming up from Calcutta

next week—laying on the usual excursion to see the elephants working.”

“Don’t go, it’s dangerous, there’s a wild tusker, a loner around. He’s going to attack . . .”

“Oh nonsense, Mike! Give it up, can’t you? I’ve told you not to put on the act for me.”

Well, he wouldn’t listen of course, no matter what I said, and after that I closed down the show.

“Time I relaxed and had a drink,” I told Jenny. I went out and joined the fun and everyone said how I’d taken them in and what a perfect lama I made.

Mackinley, naturally, didn’t believe a word I’d said, although maybe just before he took off on the excursion three days later he had a niggling feeling I might have been serious when one of the trackers came in with the news that a big tusker, possibly a rogue elephant, had been causing trouble in the paddy fields about ten miles away.

There’d been no reports of him closer than that, so Mac decided to go ahead, after posting the area with lookouts to keep us informed of the tusker’s movements. He gave me an old-fashioned look just before we set out, and picked up his rifle, a thing I’d never seen him do before on a sightseeing excursion like this.

“Maybe you are a bit clairvoyant after all, Mike—might be as well to be safe than sorry.”

“Cancel the trip,” I urged. “Wait till the tusker’s gone, at least.”

I don’t need to spell it out for you. There were five elephants altogether, all tuskless males or females carrying the party. Not in those wooden howdahs you find in zoos or the game reserves; we don’t go in for anything as fancy as that. Just thick pads fastened by ropes on the *Makhna’s* back, with a *mahout* to each elephant and a couple of passengers hanging on to the ropes round the pads. Jenny was anxious to be up front with Mac, but I had a word with her *mahout*, junior assistant though I was. Whether he sensed I was in deadly earnest or not, I’ll never know, but he fell behind as I’d instructed him so that Mackinley led with the guest of honour, then I followed with the chap’s wife, and the others were behind us.



It was one of those really fine winter days with a warm sun overhead, but not too warm. In fact, it was quite chilly along the jungle paths where the immense trees, a hundred or more feet up, met overhead and shut out the sun’s rays. Huge tree ferns, fifty feet high; lush creepers completely covering trees, trunks, and towering branches like something evil out of a

science fiction book; giant banyans with hanging roots; wild flowers; rhododendrons; ground orchids, and literally hundreds of the tree variety not yet out; and there were butterflies in droves, a cloud of orange ones in one place and a whole bunch of yellow or white or deep purple ones with wing-spans of six inches and more in others. I don't know much about the jungle, but I've been out just long enough to feel its fascination, and not long enough to have learnt much jungle lore.

The vast grey bulk of the elephants blended uncannily into this lush green mass, a tangle that, off the path, could only be negotiated on elephant back. Even a few yards away, knowing the *Makhnas* were there, I had a job to pick them out in the trees and undergrowth.

All the time I was on edge, straining my ears to hear a wild trumpeting, even though I knew Mac had taken the precaution of beating the whole area, and there was no report of the tusker anywhere around.

The *Makhnas* picked their way daintily down a river bank and across the river, carefully testing each step before trusting their tremendous weight on it, squelching a yard deep in rich, red mud and breaking down creepers and branches, uprooting small trees that blocked the way, or hung down to the peril of their passengers.

This was a fairly well-worn track and we were heading for a temporary camp set up by a single-track narrow-gauge railway line laid by the Company for the flatbeds that carried the timber twelve or fifteen miles back to the main line. We could easily have done the trip on trolleys pumped along the line by a couple of coolies, but as a matter of fact the plan was to give the visitors the thrill of an elephant ride to the loading point, let them watch the *Makhnas* dragging the logs to the clearing with the camp and the railhead where *Sakhnas*, tusked elephants, would take over, using their tusks to manoeuvre the enormous logs on to the flatbeds. Then the party would picnic among the tall Hollungs overlooking the clearing and go back either on trolleys or if they preferred, on the primitive carriage the boys had knocked up three days earlier, putting low wooden sides and a roof on one of the flatbeds, with a couple of benches on either side, which the diesel engine would haul back, following the trolleys.

That was the plan.

With some twenty or thirty Assamese or Shans looking out for any signs of an intruder, and with trained elephants working daily in the area, it was quite unreasonable of me to worry about my so-called vision. In fact, I was trying to persuade myself I'd only imagined the whole thing, when my *mahout* suddenly turned



our elephant off the main path and began pushing through the jungle.

I warned the girl sitting in front of me to duck—although I must say our *Makhna* was very good, pulling down overhanging branches and creepers with its trunk so that we weren't in danger of being swept off its back. Then I leant forward, past the girl, to try and catch the *mahout's* attention.

"What's this for? What are you doing?" I was asking, when he turned sharply and hissed for quiet.

Next second, there he was, the tusker, the loner, the rogue.

Huge, swaying slightly on great barrel legs and peering through the undergrowth, not at us but obviously at the path we'd just left. We'd come upwind, and elephants are notoriously short-sighted; if I hadn't questioned the *mahout* it would probably never have noticed our approach.

At the sound of my voice, startlingly loud in that silent jungle—and believe me, the jungle *is* silent, surprisingly so—the tusker turned, its great grey trunk questing the air for our scent, its little eyes, pale yellow, sure sign of a bad-tempered, untrustworthy elephant, searching madly for the intruders. I could see he was *musth*, the oily discharge flowing down his cheeks. Maybe he wasn't really a rogue, just unhinged with this temporary madness that periodically affects all male elephants.

"*Goondha, pugla hai,*" bellowed our *mahout*, the need for silence now gone.

*Goondha* is the word they use for a bad elephant and I felt myself in the grip of the elephant shivers. *Pugla* means mad and what with my visions and this *hathi jokar*, the uncontrollable tremors that go through you when you're close to a wild elephant, I felt panic rising like a flood. I'd no rifle and even if I had, with those shivers, I'd never have been able to aim, let alone pull the trigger.

Suddenly I wondered whether I'd misread the crystal. It wasn't Mac's *Makhna* that was going to be attacked—it was mine, mine and this poor wretched woman sitting in front of me and shivering just as badly as I was. I tried to put my arms round her waist; she seemed in danger of falling off.

Then with an incredibly swift movement our *Makhna* turned and headed back through the jungle.

At the same moment the tusker was distracted by the noise of another elephant approaching along the path it had originally been watching; I turned my head and was staring in horrid fascination over my shoulder when I saw the *goondha* pause, then change direction to charge right through the undergrowth

and out into the path. I didn't actually see what happened then. By the time our *mahout* got the *Makhna* under control and turned it back to follow the path, it was all over.

The tusker had disappeared; we could hear it roaring and trumpeting with pain as it crashed through the jungle. Later on the Forestry Officer tracked it down and killed it.

It turned out that the unfortunate tusker had an enormous abscess at the root of its tail, which made its temper understandable. That, plus its *musth* condition, spelt trouble for anybody within range.

It had spent death for Mackinley.

It seemed that when the *goondha* came crashing out of the wall of trees and creeper it was to charge into the side of the leading *Makhna*, Guruji, carrying Mackinley and the Director. Mac had barely time to lift his rifle, but the safety was on and absolutely nothing happened when he squeezed the trigger. By the time he'd realised what had happened and released the safety, the tusker was lunging at the terrified *Makhna*. Mac had fired one barrel point blank into the tusker's skull, but the beast had never even noticed it. He'd stretched out his trunk, lifted Mac right off the pad and dashed him on to the path.

One great foot must have squashed him like a beetle as the *goondha* turned and made off, trumpeting angrily. There wasn't much left to scrape up when we arrived on the scene to find Guruji trembling violently and the Director on his back trembling even more violently.



Maybe we *were* a bit impatient. Three days later Jenny and I flew to Calcutta. That's where they arrested me, which is inexplicable, unless it's because they found out Mac had sacked me the day before the accident, after he discovered that Jenny had spent an hour or two in my bungalow every now and then.

They seem to have got the idea this was all a put-up job, that somehow I arranged for the tusker to charge Mac, that I'd deliberately directed it out of the jungle and on to the path where I knew Mac would be. The woman who was on the elephant with me is no help at all—she says she had her eyes shut the whole time, but that I did call out and that the *mahout* had shushed me angrily.

I still don't see how they can blame me for a legitimate accident—after all, I did give Mackinley fair warning, didn't I?

# The Frightened Client

ERNEST DUDLEY

*A straight-forward whodunit in the light-hearted style particular to the 'Armchair Detective'*

OUR TAXI swung over the bridge and presently turned between two great iron gates into a wide drive. A grey mist drifted up from the river and in the dusk the trees on either side loomed up dark and towering. As we rounded a bend I saw the house ahead of us, low and rambling. Its windows stared unlighted on either side of a heavy portico; and the whole appearance of the place was, I thought, distinctly uninviting.

I said to Mr. Brett: "Cosy little place."

He turned his long saturnine face limned by the glow of his cigarette towards me but made no comment. I glanced at my watch. We'd certainly got a move on since Mr. Brett received that somewhat odd phone call something under half-an-hour back. I happened to be in his office when it came through, jotting down some routine notes for attention next day, and took the call. It was a woman.

"I would like to speak to Mr. Brett. My name is Mrs. Guy Cavendish and the matter is urgent—"

It was a cultured voice, though a trifle taut with an undercurrent of fear. When you've been tagging along with a private detective you begin to learn how to place voices that come at you over the 'phone. Mrs. Cavendish was worried, I got that the first time. But, of course, she wasn't the first character to come on the line with a note of apprehension in the voice. I knew from experience she might have nothing more awful on her mind than a pet poodle that'd been pinched, or some pretty bauble lost between the latest night-club and a Mayfair flat. So, with my best business-like intonation, I'd said: "If you'll hold on, I'll see if Mr. Brett can speak to you." My hand over the receiver I had said to him: "A Mrs. Guy Cavendish."

He had shown a certain amount of interest. "Sounds expensive. Giving her husband's first name means she thinks she's important."

"She's up in the air about something."

"She wouldn't be ringing me if she wasn't. Maybe I'll mention my fee and bring her down to earth like a shot pigeon." And with a grin he'd taken his feet off the desk and grabbed the 'phone. "Martin Brett speaking."

I had gathered from the way he answered her she wanted to see him soon as he could make it at her house. He said the address over for me to write down. I could hear her voice blurred over the wire, because she wasn't speaking quietly and Mr. Brett had held the receiver away from his ear a little. Then suddenly there'd sounded a queer choky sort of gasp and her voice had stopped, sending a horrid prickly sensation under my scalp. There'd been a click of the 'phone at the other end being replaced, and silence. Mr. Brett had flashed his receiver but nothing happened. Mrs. Cavendish hadn't come on the line again.

Lighting a cigarette, Mr. Brett had said slowly. "We could do something about it, or we could leave it alone."

"Maybe she just changed her mind." It was late and I wanted to shut up the office and go home.

"Not so fast. She had to ring off in the middle of a sentence." I hadn't been able to find the answer to that one so I'd shrugged and waited to see what he would do about it, praying he would drop it and decide to go off for a drink or two instead. But he said: "Somehow I have the idea there should be something in this for me."



After that the action had been pretty snappy. I'd barely had time to lock the office and dive after Mr. Brett into a taxi. On the way, during the relatively calm moments when we hadn't been alternatively braking or accelerating with what I considered was sadistic violence on the driver's part, I'd managed to learn that Mrs. Cavendish hadn't got around to giving Mr. Brett any notion of what was on her mind before her sudden and somewhat sinister silence. "I merely gathered she was scared of something or someone; that was all."

"Maybe the danger was even more imminent than she'd realised?"

But he'd merely lit another cigarette and gone into a huddle with himself in the corner of the taxi. So now here we were drawing up outside Mrs. Cavendish's house, and I was wondering what might lie beyond that heavy, studded front door. Maybe Mr. Brett was wasting his time and I had been right when I'd suggested Mrs. Cavendish had just suddenly changed her mind?

Mr. Brett paid off the taxi which drove off and left us with the silence unbroken but for the steady drip-drip of the mist-laden trees around us.

"Not what you might call welcome on the mat," I said. I was wondering why no one had heard our arrival and opened the door to us.

"You forget," he smiled bleakly, "we are a trifle unexpected."

I pressed the large bell-push and heard the ring reverberate somewhere beyond. Mr. Brett observed:

"You could have saved it, Gorgeous; the door's open."

I started and forgot to make my usual chilling response to his sardonic familiarity as I saw the door move an inch wider. I hadn't noticed in the gloom that it wasn't properly closed. I looked at him questioningly. He promptly shoved the door fully open and I followed him in. As we stood in the hall the shadowed gloom was suddenly illuminated from a chandelier overhead. At the foot of the stairs a woman faced us, her hand on a light-switch. She was tall and heavy-featured, and stared at us suspiciously.

"How did you get in here?" Her voice was harsh with a slight trace of foreign accent.

Mr. Brett nodded over his shoulder at the open door. "I'll give you three guesses." He smiled.

Her face didn't relax. "Who are you? What do you want?"

"No." Mr. Brett said genially, "you tell me. Who are *you* and what do *you* want?"

She stared at him then muttered impatiently. "I am secretary-companion to Mrs. Cavendish. Again I must ask you what do you want?"

"Since you insist on being so helpful, perhaps you'd just go along to Mrs. Cavendish, tell her Mr. Brett's here."

"Is she expecting you?"

"I think she'll remember the name." was his reply.

The other turned to eye me. Mr. Brett interpreted her glance and said: "This delectable lady is *my* secretary. I prefer 'em," he added with gratuitous candour, "to be decorative."

The woman turned abruptly and walked quickly beyond the wide staircase. She paused at a door and went in, closing it behind her.

I said: "You know, I somehow think she doesn't care for us."

He nodded: "You know, I somehow think you're right."

"Think Mrs. Cavendish'll see us?"

"Depends what made her cut that 'phone-call."



I was watching the door, waiting for the tall woman to reappear. A silence lay over the house, a silence you could have cut with a pair of scissors. The door opened suddenly and the woman stood there.

"Mrs. Cavendish will see you," she announced with obvious



disapproval in her tone. We went into a long, low-ceilinged room. At one end were french windows, the curtains of which were drawn back with a glimpse beyond of the garden gloomy in the mist and gathering dusk. By the open brick fireplace was a slim attractive woman of about thirty-five. As the door closed behind us she came forward.

"Why have you come here?" she said, her voice low and tense.

Mr. Brett regarded her for a moment without answering. Then he said: "You're in trouble, Mrs. Cavendish. I'm here to get you out of it—for a fee."

She glanced at me, then at him. "I am no longer in need of your help," she said. And added unsteadily: "Now."

"You're sure of that?"

"Yes."

"What—if you'll pardon the curiosity—has happened to make you change your mind? You didn't 'phone my office just to find out if a private detective sounds human."

She drew a long, shuddering sigh.

"That danger no longer exists," she said.

"That's something off your mind, then." He paused. "Only you don't sound so pleased. In fact, I would say you sound as if you have slipped out of the frying-pan into the fire."

She stared at him intently. She said shakily: "I had heard you were a very good detective, Mr. Brett, but I didn't realise you were so intuitively perceptive."

He blew a ring of cigarette-smoke ceilingwards and watched it disintegrate. "All of which adds up to what I told you: you're in trouble," he murmured. "Why don't you tell me about it?"

She said: "I know you feel you're entitled to some sort of explanation. But I don't see how . . ." she broke off. Then went on: "When I telephoned you it was because I was frightened for myself. Now, it's—it's someone else. As well."

"You're talking," he said, "But you're not saying anything."

Mrs. Cavendish turned towards me appealingly. I gave her what I hoped was a smile of encouragement. "Why not tell Mr. Brett," I said. "Whatever it is that's worrying you, even if it does concern someone else, Mr. Brett'll help you out." It was the best I could think up. I was pretty sure he wasn't really concerned about her, though he was trying to give her that impression. Only thing bothering him was the fact he'd come all this way and he didn't like the idea of making the trip for nothing.

Suddenly he crossed to the door and jerked it open. He looked up and down the hall and apparently satisfied no one was there, came back into the room, closing the door again. Mrs. Cavendish was looking at him with raised eyebrows. She said:

"Did you think someone might be listening?"

He smiled at her. "That's what it looked like, didn't it? Who's this secretary-companion of yours?"

She said in some bewilderment: "What are you suggesting? Surely you don't think she would . . .?"

"I'm liable to think the worst of everybody, it's the way my mind works." He shot her a long look. "Does she know anything about—anything?"

Mrs. Cavendish shook her head emphatically. "No, definitely she knows nothing."

"How long has she been with you?"

"She joined us in South America. My husband was out there several years ago. Her name's Estella Cortez."

"What about any other servants?"

"There's only my husband's manservant, who is away at the moment. And a cook-housekeeper, who lives out."

Mr. Brett tapped the ash off his cigarette and contrived not to appear as irritable as I guessed he must be feeling. Mrs. Cavendish wasn't being at all helpful, and it looked as if it was going to take some hard spade-work to dig any information out of her. So far it seemed he wasn't going to succeed in persuading her to hand him the job of straightening out her secret. But he didn't give up that easily. He said:

"You mentioned your husband, Mrs. Cavendish. Where exactly does *he* figure in all this?"

There was an almost imperceptible pause before she answered. "My husband?"

I noticed a faint narrowing of his eyes at the new note of apprehension that crept into her voice. But when he spoke his voice was blandly casual. "Yes," he nodded. "For a start, where is he now?"

"Here, of course," she said. "He's—he's probably reading in his study. He always reads until dinner." She was talking quickly as if she wanted to get away from the topic.

"Would it disturb him unduly if I had a chat with him?"

The effect of his laconically put question was dramatic. Mrs. Cavendish looked sick and swayed so that I moved towards her. I thought she was going to pass out. But she pulled herself together.

"Will you please go?" she muttered. "You *must* go—I order you to leave at once . . ."

Mr. Brett stared at her bleakly, without moving. She picked up an expensive-looking leather handbag with a quick movement, so quick I imagined she was going to pull the old gun business on us. But what she drew out wasn't a gun, it was a wad of notes. I glanced at Mr. Brett and saw his expression brighten appreciably. She was saying:

"I realise I've caused you some trouble coming down here, Mr. Brett. Perhaps this will compensate you. I shouldn't have telephoned you—it was madness to do it. Please take this—and go. Go."

Mr. Brett took the money, naturally. But he still made no attempt to go. "If you'd care to add a further thirty to this," he murmured as he pushed the notes into his wallet, "I'd stay and clean up the whole business for you." And added: "Which would be cheaper than paying blackmail, anyway—there'll be no end to that."



I gaped at him. *Blackmail*, I thought. How on earth did he know anything about that? Or was it just a shot in the dark? Whatever the answer on that score there was no doubt about it having hit the bulls-eye—Mrs. Cavendish was looking at him as if he was something supernatural.

"How—how did you know?"

But he wasn't going to fool around answering her questions even if he knew the answer, which he probably didn't. He pressed home the advantage he'd achieved by his last remark, snapping at her: "Who is he? When are you seeing him again—tonight?"

She was wringing her hands agonisingly. "I—I—I'll never see him again . . ."

"What d'you mean? If you'll never see him again, well, what's worrying you about that? Come on," he urged her, "come on, tell me. I'll put you right. I've told you that."

"It's too late," she said in a heavy voice. "He's dead."

Mr. Brett was drawing impatiently at his cigarette. Now he paused, exhaled slowly and said through the cloud of smoke:

"Who killed him? You? Estella Whosit? Or could it be . . ." his eyes had narrowed suddenly, ". . . your husband interrupted his reading in his study to do the job?"

The tension in that room was so taut it almost twanged like a violin-string. I just stood there staring first at Mr. Brett then at the other. His long face jutted forward as if he was determined to drag the answers out of her. And then she caved in, just slumped into a chair and began talking in a quiet voice.

"I was being blackmailed. He was coming again tonight for more money. I knew, of course, that when he'd got it he wouldn't leave me in peace for long. He'd want more . . ."

"That's the usual routine," Mr. Brett said cheerfully.

"I had heard about you and on the spur of the moment I decided to try and obtain your help. I wasn't expecting him for about an hour, and I thought if I could get you down here you might do something . . ."

"You evidently believe I'm a fast worker."

"I didn't know what I believed," the woman went on, "I was crazy with worry and fear—the last few months have been a nightmare . . ."

"All right, Mrs. Cavendish; take it easy."

She pulled herself together, then continued more steadily. "And it was while I was on the 'phone that I heard him. He was out there," she glanced at the french-windows, it was now almost dark outside. "I rang off and went out to him. And then—then I saw he was in a state of collapse. There was blood . . ." She buried her face in her hands as if to shut out the remembered horror, ". . . he tried to say something, but I couldn't hear what it was. As I moved to steady him he fell. He was dead . . ."

Mr. Brett said: "Why do you think he had arrived earlier than you expected him?"

"I don't know."

He indicated her to continue. "Go on, what happened then?"

She said in a low voice: "I—I dragged him across the lawn and left him behind the shrubbery. He was dead, I was sure of that. Nothing could be done for him and I was terrified my husband or Estella would arrive and find him."

"It would have needed some explaining away," Mr. Brett agreed, not without a certain dryness. But she wasn't listening. Still in that monotone she went on:

"I came back here and tried to think what I should do. I asked myself who could have killed him. My husband? Had he . . .?" She shuddered, then proceeded: "You see, he's most terribly jealous and suspicious. It occurred to me he might have found out—about him, and . . ."

"If he'd killed him, he'd have come straight to you and told you, surely?" I asked.

She shook her head. "Not necessarily. He might be waiting for me to go to him, confess that I was being blackmailed. And why. It would be like Guy to act like that. It's not that he's cruel, just that he would expect me to tell him first."

"Why, instead of ringing me, didn't you go to the police?"

"I was afraid . . ."

"Scotland Yard would have taken care no one, not even your husband, would find out," Mr. Brett said.

"I didn't know if I could be sure of that," she murmured. "You see, I'd written some letters to this man, and . . ."

"What was his name?"

"Harry Trannion."

It occurred to me it was a difficult sort of name to remember. Automatically I found myself saying the name over in my mind so I wouldn't forget it.

"You say he died without saying anything?" Mr. Brett went on. "Gave you no idea who might have killed him?"

She shook her head mutely.

"Did you hear the sound of shot?"

"No, he looked as if he'd been stabbed—in the back."



Mr. Brett crushed his cigarette-stub into an ashtray thoughtfully. He turned to me: "You stay with Mrs. Cavendish, I'll go and take a look at the late Mr.—"

He broke off and glanced at the french-windows; there was a sudden curious scrabbling noise. I followed his look and heard the woman give a startled gasp:

"What was that . . .?"

Her question was answered almost at once, for the windows came open—she had obviously failed to close them properly—and a figure staggered drunkenly through them, and slowly made his way towards us.

"Harry . . .!"

Mrs. Cavendish's cry was a mixture of horror and amazement.

The man was in a ghastly state, his clothes soaked with mist and muddied, his hair lank across his face, and smeared with blood. He halted and tried to pull himself fully upright, the effort drawing painful breaths from him. His mouth worked convulsively as he tried to speak, and then, as Mr. Brett moved towards him, the nightmarish figure suddenly gave a moan and pitched forward flat on his face.

Mr. Brett bent over him. After a cursory examination he stood up.

"He's dead now, anyway." He turned to Mrs. Cavendish, who was staring in terror at the inert heap on the floor. "Afraid your diagnosis was a trifle premature," he said.

"But—but I thought . . ."

"He must've been only unconscious."

"You mean, he came round," I said, "and managed to stagger back here?" It seemed incredible.

He nodded. "Pretty tough specimen." He glanced down at the body. "He was stabbed all right. I wonder where the knife got to?" He gave a shrug and then nodded briskly at me: "I think this is where you call the police."

I hesitated a moment, glanced at Mrs. Cavendish, who was staring at the dead man. As I reached for the 'phone she jerked her head up as if coming out of a trance.

"What are you going to do?"

I told her.

"But my husband . . ." she burst out. "They'll take my husband. Don't you understand . . ." she turned passionately to Mr. Brett.



"That's why I wanted you to go. I knew you'd bring the police in. I could have kept it quiet. I could have protected Guy . . ."

Mr. Brett's voice was like a lash: "Get this, Mrs. Cavendish, and get it good: "You can't shield anyone from *murder*. Not even your own husband. If he did it, he'll have to . . ."

"Have to do what . . .?" A voice asked behind us

Facing us in the doorway was a heavily-built man behind a double-barrelled shot-gun. He came into the room and heeled the door shut.

"Guy . . ." Mrs. Cavendish said, and started towards him.

"Keep to one side," he told her, and she obeyed, watching him wide-eyed.

"Guy," she pleaded, "Mr. Brett came here to help me . . ."

"I understand perfectly," he interrupted her brusquely, "and am quite capable of taking care of the situation." He gave Mr. Brett and myself what I interpreted as a distinctly unfriendly look, then he said to his wife: "I think perhaps it would be better if you went."

"But, Guy . . ."

"Please do as I ask."

She looked helplessly at Mr. Brett and went out, closing the door behind her.

He came towards us purposefully.

Mr. Brett observed: "Useful-looking fowling-piece you have."

Guy Cavendish patted the breech grimly. "I'm sure you'll appreciate its bargaining power."

"What are you trying to sell?"

Cavendish nodded at the body on the floor. "My wife believes I killed this—blackmailer." He saw Mr. Brett's eyebrows raised. "Oh, yes, I overheard all that I needed to hear, though I have for some time suspected something was weighing on my wife's mind." He went on: "Whether you also believe me responsible for the creature's death I don't know. What I do know is you're not bringing any damned police here yet. You're getting out, both of you, and staying out." He swung the gun threateningly in a half-circle. "And the sooner the better—for you."

Mr. Brett eyed him. "If that's the way you feel about it," he said gently, "there's no object in our staying."

"I'm gratified to learn you are a reasonable person."

"It's a thing I hardly ever do—argue with a double-barrelled gun," Mr. Brett said with engaging candour. "Naturally," he went on in agreeable tones, "I go straight to the cops when I leave here."

"I shouldn't expect you to do otherwise."

Mr. Brett nodded. "So long as we understand each other."

I said, thinking maybe I might put in a word: "Since we're

all so friendly, couldn't you point that gun some other direction?"

"I'm still telling you to get out," he said unrelentingly. And kept a bead on us with that double-barrelled business. I shrugged and looked at Mr. Brett. As usual on these occasions, when I thought no good could come of staying, he was making no attempt to move. He was taking a lot of trouble tapping the ash off his cigarette into an ash-tray on the writing-desk and saying, sounding as if he was really interested in the answer:

"What about our friend?" with a nod towards the man on the floor.

Cavendish glanced at it. "I intend to dispose of that in my own way."

Did he, for his part, believe his wife had killed the man? It crossed my mind with a sudden light; if so, was his suspicion in fact entirely justified? Had Mrs. Cavendish been leading Mr. Brett up the garden when she'd suggested her husband had taken care of the blackmailer? Had she as a last desperate means of removing the menace to her peace of mind . . . ?

My growing conviction there might well be something in it, was interrupted by the sudden appearance of more trouble in the person of Estella Cortez. She came into the room staring at Mr. Cavendish, who wheeled round at her—still keeping his gun threatening us.

"What do you want?" he rasped at her, moving in front of the body in an attempt to screen it from her view.

"But didn't you ring?"

He eyed her, opened his mouth to say something, then swung on Mr. Brett, his gaze travelling to the desk, and—as I noticed for the first time—the bell-push that lay close to the ash-tray.

Mr. Brett smiled at him blandly. "Must have touched it when I knocked off my cigarette-ash," he said.



Livid, Cavendish stepped forward, to be brought up by a cry from the woman. She was staring, her hand at her throat in horror, at the dead man.

Cavendish said bitterly: "I meant to keep you out of this, but . . ." he broke off, drew a deep breath as he realised the hopelessness of the situation, his shoulders suddenly bent with weariness. He turned a defeated expression to Mr. Brett. "All right. Go ahead, call the police."

The Cortez woman was saying in a choked voice: "But who—who is he?"

Mr. Brett said softly: "Mrs. Cavendish may be able to identify him."

The woman looked at him, at Cavendish. Then she seemed to grasp the significance of Mr. Brett's remark. "You—you mean she . . .?" she breathed.

There was a heavy silence.

Mr. Brett said: "If you'll make up your mind to put that gun down, I'll 'phone."

Cavendish looked stupidly at the rifle he was holding. The woman crossed to him quickly and, with a gentle firmness, took it, placing it out of harm's way. She seemed to have taken a grip of herself, though I fancied she averted her face from the body. Mr. Brett must have noticed it, too, because he waved me to the 'phone while he moved towards the dead man. "Get it for me while I tidy up the place a trifle."

"Yes, Mr. Brett," I said. But before I could do anything about it, Estella Cortez had already reached the 'phone and was saying almost briskly: "I'll get them."

Mr. Brett let her carry on with it and taking up a light travelling-rug that was flung across a chair-back spread it over the body. It looked prettier, I gave him a hand, heard the woman as she dialled suggest to Cavendish:

"Perhaps you'd like to see how Mrs. Cavendish is?"

He nodded, and with a look at Mr. Brett, who didn't stop him, went out. Mr. Brett crossed to the door watching after him. The woman said: "I don't think he or his wife will try to run away." She seemed to have recovered her composure and was the almost dominating business-like secretary I imagined her to be. But I spotted she was fiddling nervously with a pencil as she got through to the police number. Mr. Brett didn't answer her, only smiled bleakly and as he heard her say something into the mouthpiece moved from the door. "I'll talk," he said and took the receiver.

He gazed at the large blotting-pad as he talked to the police. "Name of dead man is Trannion. It's murder, and I've got the killer all ready for you to collect."

There was a sudden cold feeling under my scalp as I realised he was *staring straight at Estella Cortez*. She was quick in the uptake, too, but before she could do a thing about it he had moved and the double-barrelled gun was in his hands, pointing at her. He said softly: "I think it's better in my hands than in yours."



In a local bar some time later Mr. Brett was explaining over a large Scotch: "I had a hunch all along both Mrs. Cavendish and her husband could be ruled out."

"Why?" I said. Personally, I'd had the idea once or twice she seemed guilty as could be.

"Obviously she'd never have thought of getting me down here if she'd any idea of killing Trannion," he said. "So her story that she thought I could help her over the blackmail business, and then had found Trannion stabbed, made sense. It tied up with the way she broke off that 'phone-call. Logical deduction from known facts."

"I'll give you that," I said.

"Thanks."

"But what about the husband?"

"A man who's got a gun isn't going to mess about with a *knife*," he said. "He's the type who'd have blown Trannion to hell with both barrels, not skulked around a foggy garden getting his feet wet."

I had to admit all this was sound enough reasoning, if not conclusive proof. I knew he'd trapped the Cortez woman, on the other hand, with proof that *had* been irrefutable. She'd broken down, made a statement all right when the police arrived admitting her guilt, how she'd been working with the blackmailer with whom she'd been infatuated, passing on the information about Mrs. Cavendish. Then, when Trannion threatened *her* with blackmail, she'd taken care of him. But what had given her away to Mr. Brett? I asked him.

"She wrote it for me to read," he said laconically.

I didn't get it. "Wrote what when?"

He grinned at my obvious mystification. "His name," he said, "while she was 'phoning the cops. Doodled it unconsciously on the blotting-pad." I still hadn't caught on and he said with an air of elaborate patience: "She scribbled his name down—and just before she'd been asking who he was. Remember?"

He saw by my face the penny had dropped and he muttered over his glass: "I was wondering when it would sink in."

I said: "Pretty smart of you, Mr. Brett."

He said, complacently: "That's what I'm paid for, Gorgeous . . ."

"Especially," I went on, and he eyed me warily, because I was laughing, "as it was *I* who scrawled the name when Mrs. Cavendish first told it to you—tricky name to remember, so—perfect secretary—I made a note on the blotter.

# HONESTY IS THE BEST . . .

RICHARD ESSEX

"THIS BURGLARY business," said Sam to his old friend, Horace the Sport, "don't seem to work out so good. I've been thirty years in the profession, and I've never known times so hard as they are today. Even for an experienced man like myself there's only a bare living in it; and the results, taken by and large, is disproportionate to the risks involved, as the bloke says. You know me, Horace; I'm a good man in my chosen profession."

"You're the top of the pile, Sam."

"You've said something, Horace. Yet such is the state of business, the high cost of living, ruinous taxation, borrowing millions from other European nations—which has got to be paid back by the likes of you and me—such is the state of the country owing to these things, that I've been thinking more than once lately of going to work."

Horace looked at his mate in disbelief.

"You, Sam?" he said. "You thinking of going to *work*?"

"It's with pain and sorrow I say it. But the profession of burglary today don't give a fair return for the labour of a man's hands, to say nothing of the mental strain. Thirty years I've been in the profession, and what have I got to show for it? I ask you. If it weren't for the occasional unemployment pay now and then—which has to be used cautiously—where should I be now? I've been doing some figgering."

"You always was a dab at figgering, Sam."

"I got a gift that way. Figgering comes just as natural and easy to me as drinking beer does to you; and I don't have to count up on no fingers either. I've been figgering that since I started in the burglary business in a humble way, I've done a matter of ninety-seven jobs, large and small. I've been jugged for five, which leaves ninety-two successful enterprises, as the bloke says. Which I submit is a passable record."

"You're a prodigy."

"A what?"



"It means a ruddy marvel."

"Well, I don't know I'm one of those, Horace, but I'm not so bad. I'm just one man, and against me there's all these thousands and thousands of police and detectives, and Z-cars and so on. What the bloke calls the forces of reaction. I read it in a book. Well, in my thirty years' fight with the forces of reaction I am ninety-two up. Don't ever forget that."

"You got 'em all biting their nails, Sam."

"I don't say that, though ninety-two to five is a pretty good average. But I've been figgering it out, and what does it all come to? Deducting four years what I spent in stir, where I was kept free and didn't have to pay no pernicious taxes, it works out, Horace, on ninety-two successful jobs, at about four pounds a week and a few pence. No more."

"It's a fact," returned Horace sorrowfully, "it don't hardly seem worth the effort we put into it. My average is less than yours, but of course I don't have your style."

"You've said it. It's a fine state of affairs when a man of my qualifications has to admit that the game's beat him and he's gotter go to work."

"What work you going to do? They say fences make all the money."

"Nothing like that, Horace. When I turn honest I turn honest. If I've gotter work, I'll do something that's open and above board. So that when the police come to me and say: 'What's this you're doing, Sam?' I can turn the thing inside out before their eyes and show 'em the works. I'm going in the junk business."

"Rags and bones? That don't seem much of a job for a man of your talents."

"Rags and bones nothing. I'm going to buy old motor cars for junk. I've been going into this with somebody what knows the trade, and there's money in it, Horace. Every week there's a few thousands of new cars come on the roads. That means that every week somewhere or other there's thousands of old cars ready for the junk heap. That's logic."

"How do you go about this business?" asked Horace with awakening interest.

"First off, you buy a car of your own - a lorry. I know where I can get a good, sound lorry for forty-five pun. Not much to look at, but a honest piece of work with thousands of miles in her yet. Well, you drives about the country, and near every garage you pass you'll see the wreck of some old car what's been standing out in the rain for a year or so, looking like nobody don't own it. All the instruments and every single thing that looks like it's worth tuppence has been stripped off. Mostly you can buy these old wrecks for three or four pun, or less. Sometimes you can have

them if you cart them away."

"What do you do with them? Who buys them?"

"Nobody don't buy them, Horace. Nobody won't have nothing to do with them. You take them to some quiet spot, and break them up. I've got some tools, and so have you. I reckon you and me, if we can break into a up-to-date, fireproof, burglar proof, honest-to-goodness chilled steel safe, we can break up an old motor car."

"You've got something there."

"All we want," Sam went on impressively, "is the aluminium and the brass. Nothing else. You can sell aluminium and brass for a good price. Old iron you can't give away."

"What do we do with the rest after we've taken the aluminium and the brass?"

"We let it lie. What do you say?"

"Sounds like easy money to me, and a nice, open air life, driving about in a lorry all day. I'd like to go into it with you."

"You shall, Horace, if you can put up half the price of the lorry I'm going to buy. I'm short about twenty pun."

"I can borrow twenty pun, Sam."

"You can't borrow it from me, if that's the way you are thinking."

"I know where I can get it."

"It'll come a little more than twenty pun. There's the licence. You see how directly you take a step in your own interest, you come up against this taxation. It's crushing the life out of enterprise, as the bloke says."



Several days later, having taken honesty to their hearts for the first time in their lives, they set out in a venerable but willing old truck, on the bright road of adventure.

They had with them the tools of their late profession, to which they had added a couple of sledge hammers, an axe, some heavy cold chisels and a long crowbar. They had also an expensive magnet, used by motor junkmen to differentiate between useless iron and steel and the metals for which there was a worthwhile market.

They drove into the country towards the south coast, but were not immediately successful. They saw many wrecks of cars, but mostly their owners wanted absurd prices. Finally they bought a majestic ruin for three pounds. It had a massive crankcase and a gear box of aluminium; there were brass exhaust pipes, hood fittings, radiator and such things.

They towed it away to a quiet spot and examined it. But that car was built in the days when the motor car designer worked more or less with the steam locomotive in his mind's eye. It was

heavy and it was strong.

Even Sam and Horace, admitted experts, agreed that the dismembering of this tough old warrior was going to be a heart-breaking job of work.

"This don't look as if it ain't going to be no tea-party, Sam," remarked Horace, uneasily.

But Sam was the brains of the combination and a man of infinite resource.

"Hitch her on again, Horace," he said. "I've got an idea. Harness the forces of nature to the service of man, as the bloke says."

"D'yer mean to say you're going to get the forces of nature to break up this car for us?"

"That's what I mean. And you shall watch me do it. You're all right for the navy work, but in every business enterprise as such, there should be at least one member who carries something under his hat besides hair. And that member is me. I'm going to break up this car with the force of gravity."

"But we ain't got any of that with us, have we?" enquired the puzzled Horace.

"Not here," chuckled Sam. "But I will take you to where there is some. And it's free. There's no tax on it - yet."

They attached the tow-rope again and hauled the car another five miles. Here they came to a lonely place where the road ran close to the sea. There was a cliff a good hundred feet high, with a vicious collection of rocks on the beach immediately below. They manoeuvred the old car as near as they could to the edge of the cliff, and pushed it over. There was a rending crash from below.

There was a gap near at hand by which they were able to descend to the beach.



But the old car was stouter than they had imagined. Stricken it was, but by no means demolished. Obviously there was some very hard toil ahead of them.

To Horace was given the task of separating crank-case and gear-box from the rest of the structure; while Sam, as the brain worker, attended to the lighter business of detaching the brass fittings.

For two hours, with the sun burning down on them, they worked as they had probably never worked before; or at least Horace did. While they were toiling and sweating, a police constable, who had dismounted from a bicycle on the road above, came down the gap and surveyed them for some time in interested silence. Under his watchful eye, both Sam and Horace experienced a mild discomfort, even though they knew they were engaged on a perfectly legitimate task. They took the precaution to conceal some of the tools more peculiar to their old trade than to the new.

"Pardon my asking," said the policeman at length, "but if it's not a rude question, what have you done with the body?"

"Ain't no body," replied Sam laconically.

"Are you staging a motor accident to claim the insurance?"

"Nope," replied Sam, with the calm, childlike gaze of one who knows there is no stain on his character, no guilt on his soul. "We're in the junk business, mate. Pretty big contractors we are. Buy old cars and smash 'em up."

"Huh? What do you do with them when you've smashed them?"

"We just take the aluminium and the brass. That's all we want."

"And who gets all the rest?"

"Anybody can have it," replied Sam generously. "We just leave it lie."

"Oh, do you? Well that's just what you don't do, as it happens. It's an offence to litter the foreshore."

"The tide'll wash it out," returned the aggrieved Sam.

"Iron doesn't float. And anyway the tide isn't going to wash it out, because you're going to wash it out. And I'm going to sit here and watch you do it. You'll carry all that rubbish up to the top again, load it into your truck, and take it away with you. We don't want it."

And sit there he did, through the next three hours, while Sam and Horace, with mighty labour, broke the old car into portable pieces, and carted every scrap up the steep path to the top of the cliffs, where they stowed it into their lorry.

It was terrible work. They groaned and sweated and swore, but the policeman was implacable. When they had carried up the aluminium and brass, he went to the top of the cliff and sat on the step of the lorry in case they should be tempted to try a quick getaway.

But for Sam there was recompense. Certain information had been imparted by his informant in the junk business. He had learned that an old car is hardly ever broken up without revealing, chiefly in the interstices of the upholstery, sundry coins, usually not above the denomination of a shilling, and small pieces of jewellery, not often of startling value. But sometimes a richer prize is found.

While Horace was on the cliff top, Sam made it a practice to be down below, ripping off the upholstery. This he did in a systematic manner, and he found several coppers, a tarnished half-crown – and a golden sovereign. The total amounted to one pound two and elevenpence, reckoning the sovereign at its nominal value.

He had finished, and was kicking the stuffing out of the way, when something glittered. Sam pounced – and picked up a ring, which he looked at once and put in his pocket as he saw Horace coming down the gap.

The glance had shown him that it was a good solitaire diamond,

in an old-fashioned claw setting.

"A bit of luck, Horace," he greeted his partner. "Not much, but a bit. I found two and elevenpence in the stuffing of this old horse. Of course we share fifty-fifty."

"We can do with it," panted Horace.

The policeman was an unpleasant character. A man of mean outlook, incapable apparently of a gesture of generosity. He kept them at it to the end, and even made them clear up the stuffing which Sam had kicked about the beach.

When every scrap had been loaded on to the lorry, he wished them a pleasant good day and pedalled off. When he was well out of sight, Sam and Horace shot the lot over the cliff again, except the aluminium and brass, and drove off.



It had been a dreadful day, and they ached with weariness. It was late when they reached London, but they were in time to weigh in with their stuff with the metal merchant who had contracted to take their output. At the agreed market rate their salvage for the day fetched exactly three pounds, thirteen and fourpence.

"You fellows paid too much for the old bus," explained the metal boss. "Now, if you'd had a bit more experience you'd have known that you oughtn't to have given more than about thirty bob. That would have left you a reasonable profit. You'll learn as you go on. And, to do well at this trade, you've got to smash up two or three cars a day. Some of my chaps can handle five or six."

Horace was silent. Sam did the arithmetic.

"Three pounds we paid for the old car. Fifteen shillings for petrol. There was some in the tank, which we got for nothing; that's carried forward. Two and elevenpence found, makes the receipts up to three pounds sixteen and sevenpence. Subtract three pounds fifteen shillings expended, leaves a remainder of one and threepence. Not so good."

He handed over sevenpence halfpenny to his partner.

"Sevenpence ha'penny, for working all them hours in the sun like a cart-horse! This is what honest-to-goodness work brings a man to."

Sam took things more philosophically. He had hidden reserves which his partner knew nothing about. Sam knew that in business a well-conducted company will frequently withhold secret profits, which are not shown in the balance sheet. He was one pound and sevenpence halfpenny in on the day, which in itself was rather better than his average over the last thirty years, to say nothing of the diamond ring.

This, he found on reaching his lodging, was better than he had expected. His expert knowledge of such things told him that it was worth possibly twenty pounds.



Not from a fence. But he would not have to sell this ring to a fence. He could sell it in the open market at the market price. It was honestly come by.

He knew from other junk men that in the case of a discovery of this kind, from an old car which had been through probably dozens of hands, there is seldom any ownership claim which can be substantiated.



The partners had agreed to make a late start the next day. Sam, with the ring on his little finger where he could see it, was considering an agreeable breakfast at half-past nine, when he heard his landlady at the front door, in discussion with a heavy voice which, in his unregenerate days he would not have liked the sound of.

But he kept steadily on with his kipper, smiling as a man smiles who is at peace with his conscience. Suppose by chance it *were* the police. What of it? The police had nothing on him, or nothing of recent date. An honest man was Sam, working at the honest trade of junkman. True there were those ninety-two undiscovered jobs outstanding. But they were all ruled off the books. The gains, such as they were, long since disposed of. It was impossible for them to put anything on him in connection with any of those out-of-date cases.

A big man pushed into the room, the irate landlady behind him. Sam knew him for Detective-Sergeant Shaw, a man he cordially disliked on principle.

"Good morning, Sam."

Sam nodded with a show of amiability, his mouth being full.

"Want you over at the station, Sam?"

"Whaffor?"

"Interrogation."

"Interrogation about what? I tell you I ain't done a thing. I've been going straight for months. I'm working."

"Huh? What you working at, Sam?"

"Junkman. I buy old motor cars and break them up for the metal. Good paying business when you get into it. I'm in partnership with Horace the Sport. We got a truck of our own."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it, Sam, and I hope you'll be able to prove an alibi. I've got no feelings against you personally. But there was a house-breaking job yesterday afternoon on your old beat more or less, and the chief thought he'd like to have a little talk about it. It seemed to him it was rather in your style. Of course, if you were out of town buying old cars—"

"I was. What time was it?"

"Between three and four yesterday afternoon. The folks were home at four."

"I was on the south coast with Horace," returned Sam calmly. "We were breaking up a car on the beach. We didn't leave there till gone five."

"Can you prove that, Sam?"

"Sure I can prove it. A young squirt of a bogey sat and watched us at work for three hours. He hadn't anything better to do. I got his number."

"Well I must say you're running in luck if you can prove that. Come and tell it to the chief, and we'll get on the wire with this officer. If everything's in order you'll be free in an hour or so. Nice diamond you got there, Sam. Like to let me have a look at it?"

He slid the ring off his little finger and handed it over. The sergeant took it to the window. He examined it long and carefully, with Sam glowering at him while he finished his breakfast.

"Like the look of it?" Sam demanded.

"I do indeed, Sam. It's a nice stone. How did you get it?"

"Honestly come by. I found it in the stuffing of the old car I was breaking up on the beach yesterday."

"Did the constable see you find it?"

"No, he didn't."

"Your mate did, I suppose?"

"Nor him," replied Sam sourly. "When I find a solitaire diamond ring on my lucky day, I don't go about broadcasting it."

"Well, I'll keep this ring for a few minutes, if you don't mind, Sam."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, that is so. I rather fancy the chief would like to cast his eye over it. He's rather a judge of diamonds."



The detective-inspector at the station seemed to have changed his ground after a short consultation with the sergeant.

"About this ring, Sam," he said pleasantly. "It's listed as stolen property. Easily identifiable. It's engraved with some initials on the inside. Did you notice that? It is part of the proceeds of a big scoop in the West End some three years ago."

"Nothing to do with me," replied Sam doggedly. "I found it in the stuffing of a car what I bought for junk. I can give you the name of the merchant I bought it from."

"But nobody saw you find it, Sam. Nor did you tell anybody that you had found it, until the officer challenged you with its possession."

"Why should I tell anybody? It's my affair, isn't it?"

"Well, it would have been better if you had, Sam."

"Isn't my word good enough?"

"I'm afraid not. You see, your record is against you. Of course you can see what the magistrate thinks of it."

"Magistrate? You mean to say you're going to arrest me?"

"Regretfully, Sam."

"But I'm an honest man. I'm in the junk business."

"But you weren't in the junk business three years ago when this robbery was committed."

"It's 'nouflage," Sam moaned, as they led him away to a cell. "It's these forces of reaction, that's what it is. An honest man don't get a chance. I don't know a thing about it. I never saw that ring until yesterday."

But the magistrate did not believe him. Nor did the judge at the Assizes. And the jury did not believe him.

"Well, there's one thing," said Sam, as he went off for a three years' stretch — "I won't have to pay none of these pernicious taxes."

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The book is obviously definitive, for there is little more that can be said about the case, since Mrs. Fordham reveals 'all', even if she aligns herself with those who believe subsequent prison sentences handed out seemed too high. The judge said: 'When a grave crime is committed it calls for grave punishment', and that, in this reviewer's opinion, is how it deservedly turned out.

One fault of Mrs. Fordham's is an occasional tendency to hint that if if-only-I-could-tell-you-all-I-know, which tends to be frustrating. She might have included, for example, the gloriously dogmatic underworld scuttlebut which, even now, firmly insists that Ronald Edwards is snugly holed up near Thornton Heath, that Bruce Reynolds is somewhere between Selsey and Portsmouth, while Wilson headed straight for Spain after his escape and is still there. The larger part of the money, it also appears, is stashed away in London safe-deposits awaiting the day when the heat is off—if the underworld knows what it is talking about, the field appears to be wide upon for the eager amateur detective!

**THE GREAT YARMOUTH MYSTERY**, Paul Capon (*Harrap, 21s.*)

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clarity. He is to be congratulated on adroit perception by bringing in the Dora May Gray murder in the same town in 1912, for it is, in fact, an actual part of the case.

One criminological writer, however, is not quoted who has gone on record as (in concurrence with Mr. Capon) being convinced of Bennett's innocence but who, with physical evidence available since the day of Mary Bennett's murder, has shown that the unfortunate John Herbert Bennett certainly did *not* kill his wife.

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BRASS KEY, The, Francis Swann (*Gollancz, 16s.*)

Almost pure American Gothic, this. The Peyton Place-type of Maine small town is the background, this time with proper realism; the reader goes step by step with Anne Dunham when she tries to solve the seemingly hopeless puzzle of her background and family. The Dunhams are probably not anybody's idea of a family, but they are well drawn. A good, suspenseful first tale; we await the next one.

DEATH OF A WEIRDY, Glyn Carr (*Bles, 15s.*)

A gentle, ambling story (with the sort of title this reviewer dislikes). Investigator Sir Abercrombie Lawker—an enchanting character—delves into the death of a gruesome type of writer in North Wales. Less a whodunit than a literate, scholarly novel, the epitome of those *EWMM* is ready to match any day with most current 'straight' novels.

MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN, The, Ian Fleming (*Cape, 18s.*)

Deeply as one regrets the death of so excellent a man and writer as Ian Fleming, it is a relief that presumably the whole preposterous James Bond era is over. This book (not up to the usual standard, if standard there be), is the mixture as before—the 'name' products easy living; complete unreality; paper-doll-like characters; and—technically—about as much resemblance to the real world of espionage as in the books of William Le Queux. For my money, the films leave the books out in the cold—they, at least, are delicious nonsense, made for moppets of eight to eleven.

MOST UNNATURAL MURDER, Fiona Sinclair (*Bles, 13s. 6d.*)

Regretful it is to report that this, its author's fifth novel, is also her last. She had style and a beguiling way of taking the reader into her confidence. The mystery begins in a progressive school in Cornwall, where a gallery of curious people and some odd suspects are concerned in one way or another with a girl's murder. A light book, for leisured reading on a sunny beach.

RANSOMED MADONNA, The, Lionel White (*Boardman, 13s. 6d.*)

Expert and exciting, this is an essay in pure thriller technique where tension is built up step by step to a first-class climax. The story is not particularly original—a unique painting stolen and held to ransom—but the human background is well done. Clifford Johns, the artist-detective, is worth knowing. This is the *Black Mask* school at its best.

RINGNECKER, The, S. H. Courtier (*Hammond, 15s.*)

The murders are committed gruesomely with hoops of strip-iron twisted round the victims' necks; the Ringnecker brings a Jack-the-Ripper wave of horror to Melbourne. The ultimate answer to it all, which at first seems utterly unreasonable, is a form of 'joke', but not when it is qualified. Mr. Courtier is an engaging writer—tough and, at the same time, rational. Warmly recommended.

STRANGER TO HERSELF, A, Brad Williams, (*Gollancz, 16s.*)

Another first mystery and another sound début—the *Peg's Paper* title is, however, deplorable for this readable tale. The plot concerns an identical twins' mystery presented with a new twist, and some of that fast-paced American writing which manages to give the impression of great speed during the reading. Solid backgrounds and much promise for Mr. Williams' later books.

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A harsh and desperate story of North Carolina with a terrifying killer, and a variety of characters obviously bringing *Tobacco Road* to mind. Gloomy, and very well done.

## SOLUTION TO EWMM MAY CROSSWORD (No. 4)

**ACROSS.** 1, Sanders. 5, Cranium. 9, Valse. 10, Royalists. 11, Regrant. 12, N-egress. 13, Egg. 15, Dry-ads. 17, Sorted. 19, Equal. 20, Ignore. 22, Yapper. 25, Sty. 27, Strange. 29, Off-beat. 30, Feathered. 31, Carl-a. 32, Resorts. 33, Rosette.

**DOWN.** 1, Severed. 2, Nell Gwynn. 3, Emerald. 4, Surete. 5, Crying. 6, Allegro. 7, Issue. 8, Misused. 14, Gaunt. 16, See. 17, Sly. 18, Top secret. 20, Insofar. 21, Rancher. 23, Affects. 24, Rat Race. 25, S-evre-S. 26, Yonder. 28, Roads.

# Readers Say . . .

*Extracts from current letters. Opinions expressed are those of the writers. Publication in this open forum does not necessarily mean that EWMM agrees with any views offered.*

## The Faithfull Case

As a most interested reader of your *True Crime Classics* there is one 'footnote to crime' which might be new to you. It concerns Starr Faithfull.

As is well known she was found on a beach near New York City in June, 1930, regarded as a suicide by some and as a case of murder by others, a sensational case from the beginning. It was never solved and many remarkable theories were offered; as you said in *EWMM*, the dead girl's story became a large part of *Butterfield 8* and *Lolita*.

Some years ago an elderly seaman told me what might well be the truth. Apparently he worked on the *Mauretania* at the time, but said he had his reasons for keeping silent.

Starr Faithfull was on the *Mauretania* on June 5th; she made a habit of attending ship's farewells. The authorities at the time said she then went ashore.

But, I was informed, she returned to the *Mauretania* just before it sailed to join a rich acquaintance. Apparently he had bought a low number in the ship's daily run sweepstake. As a matter of personal principle (and because of big side bets), he was determined to win. The only way legitimately to delay the ship was contrived in getting Starr Faithfull to jump overboard and be 'rescued' which would cause the ship to lose considerable mileage.

She did this and her friend waited to give the alarm. But, I was told, the high jump must have stunned her, for she never came up again. The place where she jumped would fit in with the finding of her body at Long Beach on June 8th, with the clothes she wore and the condition of the body, particularly the bruises on the upper body the high dive would have made.

London, S.W.18.

JOHN E. F. FIELDER

- *A fascinating and almost feasible 'solution' but it does not wholly fit the known facts; it is something new and one containing, perhaps, several grains of truth.*

## Bouquets, Again

Thank you for publishing my letter [March] but I noticed you did not include my rude remark about your covers on the January and February issues—I apologise, now that I have seen the March issue which is altogether splendid in every way. Bravo, Edgar, for *The Clue of Monday's Settling*.  
London, W.8

J. F. PALING

I was attracted to your magazine by its bright cover [April] after I had already sent you an article of mine which was rejected because its subject was wrong for you. *EWMM* is very good indeed. You have brought the short story back to England at last with insight and intelligence. What a change it is to find in this country a magazine that regards crime aficionados (a *much* nicer word than 'fans'!) as literate and subtle-minded people with good taste.  
Blackburn, Lancs.

RICHARD EMNEY

Your April issue is very fine indeed. The period piece series deserves a medal, so does Edgar Wallace for writing untouched by passing time. *Waiting for Goody* was brilliant, and warmest of welcomes from me to those two grand old reliables—Mrs. Pym and Saturnin Dax. You mentioned Peter Manuel in the book pages; could we have his story sometime, again?  
Esh, Durham

E. V. TEMMETT

*The True Crime Classics* are my favourites in your very good magazine, and I loved *Waiting for Goody* in the April number. Such a change to find such a bright and adult crime magazine, blending something for everybody.  
London, E.C.4

(Miss) D. E. CHRISTIANSEN

● Thank you for the praise, and for itemising favourite contributions to *EWMM*. Request for Peter Manuel noted, and will be followed up.

## King Kong

Recently in Paris I saw a revival of *King Kong*, made back in 1932.

With our modern taste for horrors, I wonder how many people today realise that, with *Frankenstein*, *King Kong* was the inceptor of that tremendous flow of cinematic thrillers in which technique 'effects' become extraordinarily clever?

When it was shown *King Kong* was reviled and praised, but chiefly praised for an imaginative conception that put Jules Verne in the shade. And who else conceived and wrote it but Edgar Wallace, during that last, tragic visit to Hollywood.  
New Brighton, Cheshire

T. V. BRADDOCK



● *To underline this, playwright Guy Bolton said at that time (in Hollywood) that EW was 'the biggest success among the writers that [have] come out here.'*

### Dr. Crippen

When I read and enjoyed the Notable British Trials' volume on Dr. Crippen, I wondered if the s.s. *Montrose*, on which he and Ethel Le Neve fled to Canada, is still sailing the high seas, and, if so, if those who sail her know the story?

Incidentally, in the very considerable literature on the case there is one source students may not have noticed. This is in one of the last 'Berry' books (the 'autobiographical' novel), by Dornford Yates. Under his real name the author was one of the counsel at Crippen's trial, and the fascinating sidelines on the whole case—which are put into Berry's mouth—are not only little known but both true and remarkable.

Glasgow, C.1

TOM RICHARDSON

● *The Montrose was broken up years ago. On her last voyage she came adrift from her tow ship in a storm, the two caretakers on board were hurriedly disembarked. By remarkable coincidence the second caretaker's name was Crippen.*

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### CRIME WRITING MARATHON

Durham students challenged Edgar Wallace's record as the world's fastest crime writer. As a 1965 'Rag Week' stunt it was decided to try and beat the record. Installed in a vacant shop as their study in North Road, Durham, the students got down to *Tomorrow is Now*, a book plotted by a Bede College man. Starting on a Tuesday, at midnight, 200 writers in relays turned out about 200 words each. Miss Penelope Wallace, managing director of *EWMM*, sent a £25 bet that the toilers would never reach 60,000 words of their novel. Forty hours later a telegram reached her: 'Sixty thousand finished still going strong'. The book, adroitly done, totalled 66,000 words in 44 hours.

(*photograph facing page*)



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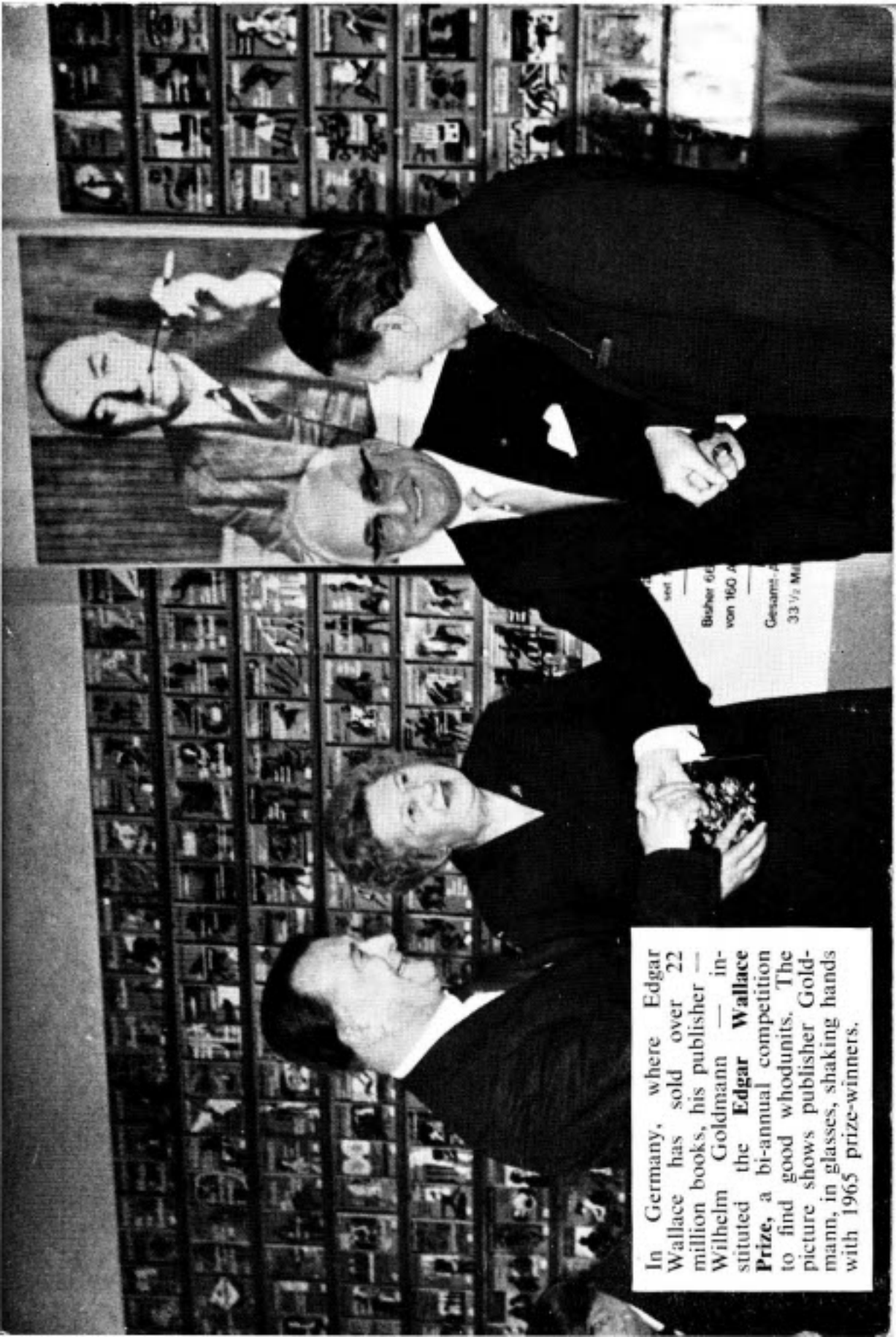
for  
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Best tobacco

name for  
cigarettes

SIZE FLAVOUR THAT

Best tobacco  
KINGS SIZE



In Germany, where Edgar Wallace has sold over 22 million books, his publisher — Wilhelm Goldmann — instituted the **Edgar Wallace Prize**, a bi-annual competition to find good whodunits. The picture shows publisher Goldmann, in glasses, shaking hands with 1965 prize-winners.

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