THE TOP SELLING BRITISH CRIME MAGAZINE

Edgar Wallace

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

EDGAR WALLACE
The Guy from Memphis

a new short story
SAX ROHMER
Escape to Peril

'WAS HANRATTY GUILTY?'
(EWMM True Crime Classic)

and other outstanding stories and features

No. 14
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3/-

Edgar Wallace

EDGAR WALLACE

Mystery Magazine

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Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado

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NIGEL MORLAND, *Editor.*

Briefly

WITH SHERLOCK HOLMES dancing his way through the musical thrills of *Baker Street* and packing 'em in the aisles on Broadway, the Sage is loudly praised as the vanguard of all fictional private eyes. His deerstalker is worn by the *ton*, and even beatniks suck valiantly at meerschaums. Holmes has his inviolate niche and his devotees from which no man can part him.

But perhaps the lover of crime fiction will try and give honour where it belongs. In this case it may be to acknowledge, despite national boundaries, the trail-blazer of the Holmes' cult, for Americans—quite understandably —speak of Edgar Allen Poe as the great original. It is their belief that no man more truly epitomises and initiates all private eye-ism than C. Auguste Dupin.

Everything being read in crime fiction today appears to have been at least blue-printed by Poe, with the aid of Dupin. And, more, whatever Conan Doyle had learned from him in creating Holmes ('. . . I owe much, as you say, to Poe . . .' he wrote in a private letter to a friend), perhaps he was thinking round him on that autumn day in 1885 at his desk in Plymouth when he roughed out Sherlock Holmes (though on that creative morning he began as 'Ormond Sacker').

In a story, *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains*, published in 1844, Poe not only has a character of vigorous and creative imagination, but one who was singularly tall and thin, broad of forehead and bloodless of complexion. If this progenitor can in any way more resemble his successor, he was even an habitual user of morphine.

However, Dupin was later re-considered with a hard eye when Holmes was to say: 'In my opinion Dupin was a very inferior fellow . . . he had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was by no means such a phenomenon as Poe appeared to imagine'.

You pays your money and takes your choice. All fictional private eyes have only one two-headed god, and his name is Holmes on Mondays, Dupin on Tuesdays . . .

The Editor

Edgar Wallace

THE GUY FROM MEMPHIS

The Orator again in a case that shows what happens when Greek meets . . .

THERE WAS a society of men and women who devoted their time and their little money to the reformation of the habitual criminal; and every Thursday night all the habitual criminals in London who were not wanted by the police at that particular moment, or who were not engaged in the exercise of their habitual criminality, would assemble in Duvern Hall and be addressed by eminent persons, some of whom were quite great novelists. At the committee meetings of this reformation society the organisers would congratulate one another upon the extraordinary progress they were making, and would detail such cases as :

H- X-. A man with 17 convictions, now doing honest work with Messrs. B. & C., and quite satisfied with drawing £6 a week. . . .

When it came out in evidence, as it were, that X- was supplementing his £6 a week with a little private larceny at the expense of the firm which employed him, his name was ruled out of the book of grace and he was most conveniently forgotten. For this society, like many others, had not realised that, of every pound spent in the reformation of the habitual criminal, 19s. 10d. was wasted—if the other 2d. were devoted to the stamp on a letter telling the gentleman to go to hell his own way.

Sometimes retired inspectors of police came down and addressed their late lawful prey with honeyed words and brotherly love; and the silent and watchful audience would afterwards discuss with one another the appearance of their old foe.

". . . See that gold wristwatch of his? I wonder who he pinched that from—the thievin' so-and-so!"

Only one or two members of the active force had been induced to take an interest in the movement, and Inspector Oliver Rater, with great reluctance, consented to 'say a few words'. The night he came to make his address the hall was crowded. He had so many personal acquaintances, so many people who resented his interference in their business that it could not be otherwise.

His address was brief.

"Some of you fellows make me sick," he began unpromisingly. "When you say you're trying to get an honest living, you mean that between jobs you go round ear-biting the mugs. Two of you tried to catch me last week, when you found I was coming to speak in this hall—thank you for the compliment! The majority of you are only really comfortable when you're in stir—you feel at home with the screws. One of you fellows —I'm not naming names—came out of prison last week and the first thing he did was to go round and scrounge a couple of kites! I've since found that you have a can in tow. I'm warning you; I'm not praying over you. Not a tear have I shed. I've only helped one man to get a job, and what did he do? He pinched a new suit of clothes from his boss and bust a house in Finsbury. He is happier on the Moor. There isn't one of you who doesn't say he's being hounded down by the police, and none of you that doesn't look upon a policeman as a house agent. This is the longest speech I've ever made in my life. I shall certainly see most of you again at the Assizes, and if I don't, it will be because I shan't be there."

It was not a successful address. The committee was horrified. Most of them didn't know that 'stir' was prison, that 'ear-biting' was borrowing, that a 'screw' was a warder, or a 'kite' a cheque, a 'can' a fool, and they invariably said 'burglary' where the Orator and his friends preferred 'bust'.

They were so horrified that they wrote to the Commissioner; and the Commissioner replied that he had their letter and that the matter was receiving his attention.

"I should like to have been there when the Orator spoke," he said, as he dropped the letter of complaint in the waste-paper basket. "He has probably used up all his speech for the next two years and we shan't get a word out of him."

★

But there was one appreciative hearer. The society had a straw-haired typist whose name was Lydia Grayne. She was very pretty and competent, and had declined seven separate invitations to have a little dinner with members of the committee. There were seven men on the committee.

She came shyly to the Orator as he was leaving the building.

"Would you be awfully offended if I asked for your autograph, Mr. Rater?"

The Orator looked at her with a twinkle in his grey eyes, took the book without a word and scribbled his name.

She was from Canada, she told him; had only been in the country three months. Later he heard that she had left her dismal job, but he did not know what the new one was until some time had elapsed.

Scotland Yard at this time had a sort of guest—Captain J. Snell, of Philadelphia. Ordinarily, Chief Inspector Rater did not like talkative men, but for some reason which was inexplicable he tolerated the garrulity of the American—and not only tolerated it but encouraged the man. This was during the period when the Orator was suffering from insomnia. Captain Snell was in Europe studying the operation of criminal laws; he had allocated a month of time to Scotland Yard and had been shown everything from the Black Museum to the Lost Property Office. At night he used to stroll west with Mr. Rater, or spend a less energetic evening in the Orator's sitting-room, telling tales of strange adventure.

"There was a guy down in Memphis named Lew Oberack. This bird was the slickest con man that ever talked money . . ."

Here the Orator's head would drop. That was why he liked Captain Snell: his voice was soporific. Yet, if he had listened to the clever American, certain strange happenings in the office of one Dimitri Horopolos would have been quite understandable.

Mr. Horopolos was a Greek and immensely wealthy. He controlled not only an extensive trading concern, but his firm

were bankers and financial agents, and he had a finger in most of the big international flotations.

A singularly good-looking creature, with his girl's complexion, big dark eyes and black moustache, he was as singularly vain. He was vain in his prowess as an athlete, his riding, his beautiful house in Elman Square, and the fascination he exercised over susceptible womanhood.

★

There was once an oblique complaint addressed to Scotland Yard, and Rater himself had interviewed the smiling millionaire.

"My dear fellow," drawled Dimitri, "how absurd! The girl threw herself at my head. I did my best to bring her to her senses, and when I found I could do nothing with her, I discharged her. A man in my position is subject to such charges."

"There is no charge," said the Orator briefly.

Later he interviewed the girl, but without success. The thought of publicity terrified her. Her successor left the service of Mr. Dimitri quite as hurriedly, and was as reticent about the reason. Mr. Horopolos met the Orator by accident in Bond Street.

"Well, I've lost another of my secretaries," he smiled. "I really don't know what to do to please them."

The Orator was chewing at the end of a cigar. He eyed the gent'eman unfavourably.

"Ever tried not doing things that displease them, Mr. Horopolos?" he asked.

Dimitri laughed; he had a sense of humour. Moreover, he was rather pleased with himself that morning, for at last he had found a pearl amongst secretaries, a straw-haired girl with great blue eyes, who had accepted the job he offered with alacrity. She was a stranger in London, had no relations, no friends at all. She didn't like the idea of living in, but that was a difficulty which might be overcome. After all, as Dimitri said to a compatriot, you can't expect everything.

The Orator was well aware that the new secretary had arrived. He had an ocular demonstration, for Dimitri, with an audacity worthy of one of his classical forbears, sent the girl with a note to Scotland Yard.

My dear Mr. Rater, I have had so much trouble with my previous secretaries that I would like you to approve this

one, and pass on the warning which I understand it is your practice to give to any pretty girl who comes into my employ.

The Orator looked up from the letter to the demure girl sitting on the other side of the desk.

"Well, Miss Grayne, they tell me you didn't like reforming criminals?"

She was delighted that he remembered her name.

"I've got such a nice place now, Mr. Rater," she said. "Mr. Horopolos is so very kind, and so handsome—I've never seen a better-looking man, have you?"

"Not since I last visited a cinema," said the Orator in his most offensive manner.

He hesitated, in face of this letter, to offer any advice whatever. In all probability Dimitri had told the girl that he was not popular at Scotland Yard, that he had lost certain secretaries. It was even probable . . . the charitable Mr. Rater shook his head and dismissed the idea.

"You'll find this Greek a very good fellow for pay," he said, "but a bit friendly. You can't help that—nobody can. If I were you, I'd have office hours and keep 'em."

She was very grateful.

"I don't know how the hours run in this country," she said. "What time ought one to leave work at night?"

"Just as soon as it's dark," said Mr. Rater.

That night he sat before his fire listening to Mr. Snell.

"Well, this guy Oberack—the bird I told you about—lived in Memphis . . ."

At this point the Orator's head dropped forward and he slept.

★

Dimitri found his new secretary a great improvement on any that he had ever possessed. She had a ready sense of humour, was prepared to laugh at stories which with the average secretary would not have raised a smile and would certainly have caused acute misgivings in the minds of more commonplace young women. She was remarkably able, and rattled through his correspondence at an extraordinary speed.

"My dear, you're both efficient and charming," he said and patted her on the shoulder.

He always started by patting them on the shoulder.

She looked up at him with her big blue eyes and smiled.

"I think I shall be very happy here," she said. "My last place . . ."

She told him of her unfortunate experience in the office of a middle-aged tea man, and of the no less unpleasantness associated with her earlier work.

"Prisoners' reform, eh?" He was amused, was Mr. Dimitri, who had never been to prison and therefore could never be reformed in a proper and official manner. "What a bore it must have been for you, little girl."

He usually had a big correspondence by the early morning post and he stayed long enough to deal with this before he went to the City. Generally he returned about four o'clock in the afternoon and dealt with such letters as had arrived in the course of the day. He had a big house, which he had built for himself, and maintained a fairly large staff.

"One of these days I'll show you some of my nice diamonds," said Dimitri, who was prouder of these treasures than of any others he possessed.

She was delighted.

"Do you keep them in the house?" she asked.

Dimitri smiled.

"I keep them under the house," he said, amused by her eagerness. "I'll tell you something which will interest you. Six attempts have been made to burgle me. Twice the burglars, who were one of the cleverest gangs from Paris, succeeded in getting into the house, but if there had been two hundred gangs instead of two they couldn't have got into my strong-room—it's the one burglar-proof vault in London."

Here he did no more than justice to his marvellous strong-room. It was constructed in the basement, a small room of steel and concrete, with a door two feet thick. He had in it a system of ventilation. It had served its purpose for his father during the war, for it was near to being a perfect bomb-proof shelter. It was under construction when the war started and its ventilation, which was an afterthought, had been designed to make the place habitable during the hours when German aeroplanes were over London.

"In fact, it is rather like a little room where one could sleep in comfort," he said. "You must see it one day."

He had no intention that she should see it one day, or even one evening, when he spoke; for this vault of his was most jealously guarded. A commissionaire was on duty day and

night at the end of the passage leading to the underground room.

★

He was the most attentive of employers. She had not been working for him a week before he insisted upon accompanying her to the door when she left.

On this particular night he stood in the doorway, watched her come down the stairs and turn left. As he did so, he saw a man come out of the shadow of a lamp-post and talk to the girl. For a moment she stood, hesitant. He saw the man talking earnestly; then suddenly Lydia turned back and came quickly towards him.

"What's wrong?" asked Dimitri.

"I don't know. I think he's a police officer or something," she said, her voice tremulous. "He told me I ought to be very careful about staying late in your house."

Dimitri, in his fury, brushed her aside and went down to the man. He had a clear view of his face—thin, long, with bristling black tyebrows.

"What the devil do you mean by speaking to that lady?" he demanded. "You're a police officer, are you? You can go back to Mr. Rater and tell him from me that if I am subjected to any more of this treatment I shall make a complaint to Scotland Yard."

He saw the man smile.

"Who told you I was a police officer?" he asked coolly. "And if I am, what objection is there to my warning a young girl about the perils of the street?"

It was on the tip of the Greek's tongue to be very rude indeed. Instead, he mastered his emotion.

"Come in and have a drink," he said, as genially as he could.

The man hesitated for a moment, and seemed a little reluctant. But his manner and tone immediately changed.

"I'm very sorry to give you any annoyance or any trouble, sir, and I'm not anxious to get in any myself. I have my duty to do . . ."

"Come inside," said Dimitri.

Obediently the man followed him. On the top of the steps they passed the girl, whom Dimitri dismissed with a brief goodnight. He led the way into a well-furnished study. The man sat

awkwardly on the edge of a chair, balancing his hat on his knee.

"I'm not asking you to betray any of your office secrets," said Dimitri with a flashing smile, as he poured whisky into a tumbler and sent soda fizzing after; "but if your job is to watch me, I can save you a lot of trouble—I've no desire to be on bad terms with the police. On the other hand, I should prefer to be on good terms with them."

The man coughed apologetically, reached out for the whisky and soda, and gulped it down.

"Duty—" he began.

"Never mind about duty," said Dimitri affably. "What you've got to do is to do your duty by yourself. Will you be here every day?"

The watcher nodded.

"Except Sundays," he said.

Dimitri laughed.

"On Sundays I promise to behave myself. Tell me, what is your name?"

"Olcott, sir."

Dimitri took a note-case from his pocket, extracted an oblong piece of paper and laid it on the table. The watchful man saw it was for ten pounds.

"I couldn't take that, sir. I couldn't really. I mean, I should get into very serious trouble."

"Trouble?" scoffed the Greek. "What nonsense! You think of nothing but trouble. I suppose that naturally runs in a police officer's mind."

He pressed the note upon Mr. Olcott and after a considerable show of reluctance, the note was pocketed.

He saw Olcott again the next night. The man touched his hat to him respectfully. On the third night Dimitri again invited him into the house.

"I'd like to know exactly what your orders are," he said, when he had his visitor sitting with a large drink.

Olcott coughed.

"Well, to tell you the truth, sir, I should get into serious—"

"Trouble," I suppose!" snarled Dimitri, who was no longer amused. "Well, you're likely to get into trouble anyway, aren't you? What are your instructions?"

After a while it came out. Olcott's duty was to watch the house until the girl left and to remain for an hour after to

report if she returned.

"Suppose she does a little extra work, what happens then?"

"I report to Mr.—well, I don't want to mention names—if she doesn't come out by half past ten."

The Greek's lips curled.

"That's about the stupidest thing I've heard," he said. "All right, Olcott—I'll tell you the night you can leave early."

His friendship with the girl was progressing satisfactorily. She had tentatively accepted an invitation to supper at a fashionable restaurant. Only Dimitri knew that the rendezvous would be changed at the last minute.

She certainly displayed some evidence of apprehension when he suggested, on the morning of the proposed meal, that she should come back to the house at ten.

"A little *tête-à-tête* supper would be rather fun," he said. "We can have it in my suite."

She shook her head. This blonde girl had suddenly developed a weakness for the proprieties, it appeared, for she suggested that she should bring a friend with her.

"That's a perfectly stupid idea," he smiled. "Think it over."

She thought it over all day; and during that period the plans were adjusted to meet her objections. It was to be a dinner at seven; then a supper at nine; then dinner at half-past eight with an assurance that he would see her home. He agreed to every modification, for the beauty of the girl was like none that he had ever known.

★

Inspector Rater was at the Yard, and his American friend had installed himself in the chair on the opposite side of the desk, had clouded the atmosphere with cigar smoke, and had set the Orator's head nodding.

". . . well, this guy in Memphis . . . smartest con man ever . . ."

When the Orator woke up he was alone, with no other proof of his visitor's presence than the odour of his cigar. It was a messenger who had awakened him; and the Orator looked at the unfinished report which the arrival of Snell had interrupted and groaned inwardly, for this document had to be before the Chief Constable at eleven o'clock in the morning.

He was half asleep and only dimly heard the messenger's voice.

"What boy?" he asked.

"He came about four or five minutes ago, sir. He said this had to go to you personally."

The Orator took a crumpled piece of paper from the messenger's hand, unfolded it, and smoothed it out. It was a thin sheet, evidently torn from a diary, and the message, in a shaky hand, was written in pencil.

For God's sake help me. The Greek has locked me in underground room. I came to dinner . . . (here a few words were indecipherable) . . . *Please help me.*

Lydia Grayne.

The Orator was wide awake now. He glanced at the clock: the hands pointed to ten. Lydia Grayne and the Greek? No further explanation was needed; as to how the message was sent to him, by what agency, he did not even trouble to guess. He touched a bell and then, finding the messenger still in the room, sent him in haste to gather a squad. Five minutes later a police tender was flying westward. It pulled up with a jerk before the house of Mr. Dimitri Horopolos and the Orator was the first to jump to the pavement.

He rang the bell twice before an answer came, and to his surprise it was Dimitri who eventually opened the door to him. He was wearing a dressing-gown; on his face was a scowl, which might have been caused by the sudden appearance of Inspector Rater.

"What do you want?" he demanded wrathfully.

"I want Lydia Grayne," said the Orator.

"Well, she's not here," stormed the man. "Your damned spy could have told you that."

"You can admit me voluntarily, or I'll get a search warrant in half an hour," said the Orator briefly.

The man threw open the door and stalked before them up the stairs. He paused at the head and snarled back :

"Shut the door, one of you."

There were no servants to be seen, a circumstance which struck the Orator as curious. He learned afterwards that the servants of this strange establishment lived in a separate quarter of the house, which could be entirely shut off at its owner's pleasure.

It was not to his study but to a little room on the first floor that Dimitri conducted them. The Orator saw a table laid for two, and on the sideboard a variety of cold food.

"Now perhaps you'll tell me what you mean by this, Inspector?" said Dimitri loudly.

The Orator handed the little sheet of paper to his unwilling host. Dimitri read and frowned.

"It's a damned lie! She's not here. She was coming, but she didn't turn up."

"Have you an underground room?"

The Greek hesitated.

"Yes, I have. I keep most of my valuables there. You don't suppose I'd shut her away in a safe, do you? The whole thing is ridiculous. I tell you she was coming, but—"

"I should like to see that underground room," insisted the Orator.

"But I tell you, she hasn't even come tonight. I was expecting her; can't you tell from the table nobody's been here?"

"The table is not evidence," said the Orator. "I want to see your underground room."

The man turned purple, and seemed as if he would explode in his fury. Instead, he went into another room, and after a time returned with two small keys on a key chain.

"As you're so darned curious, I'll show you the place," he said.

He went down a narrow flight of stairs, the detective at his heels, along a narrow corridor and, stopping before a steel door, inserted first one key and then the other. The great door swung backward. He put in his hand and turned a switch, and the Orator found himself in a small, dungeon-like chamber, illuminated by a bulkhead light in the roof. On small glass shelves were deposited hundreds of leather cases.

But that did not interest him. He saw a chair, a table and a camp-bed. The girl was not there.

"Is there any other room?"

"Of course there isn't any other room," snapped Dimitri. "I tell you she didn't come."

The Orator looked round and for a moment felt foolish. Had he been hoaxed? There was no place for a mouse to hide in that room. When he got upstairs to the ground floor level, Dimitri's reserve melted. For five minutes he stormed in three languages at this disturber of his peace. His voice grew shrill with fury: the diamond rings on his hands made scintillating sweeps of light as he gesticulated.

"That's very fine," said the Orator, "but I only want to tell

you I'm entitled to make this search, and I'm not sure even now that she isn't on the premises."

"Search the house!" roared Dimitri.

It was an invitation which the Orator did not hesitate to accept.

But nothing was found. He went back to his car a puzzled man, and the door slammed on his heels.

Dimitri went back to his sitting-room, livid with rage; paced up and down; was on the point of telephoning through to the servants' section to order his hidden menials to clear away the supper, when he heard a rat-tat at the door. Perhaps it was Lydia. His heart jumped at the thought. He raced along the passage and threw open the door. A man was standing there: he recognised him.

"What the hell do you want?" he demanded.

"Let me in, quick," said Olcott in a low voice. "I've just left Rater and he's furious with me. Did he search your strong-room?"

"Of course he searched my strong-room!"

He closed the door and the two men went back to the small room where the table was laid. Olcott closed the door of this room behind him.

"Well, what do you want? You've been a lot of use to me! Have you seen the girl and headed her off?"

Olcott shook his head impatiently.

"What I want to know is, Mr. Horopolos, did he take the keys of your strong-room away with him?"

"Of course he didn't," said Dimitri.

"Are you sure?" The man was very earnest.

The Greek put his hand in the pocket of his dressing-gown and took out the ring with the two little keys.

"Here they are."

"Hand them to me—and don't move, or I'll blow the top of your head off!" said Olcott, and the Browning in his hand was very steady, in striking contrast to Dimitri, who nearly fainted with horror.

He was placid enough; allowed himself to be tied up and gagged, before the leisurely Mr. Olcott with the keys went down to examine the strong-room.

When the Orator returned to the Yard he found the talkative Mr. Snell in an armchair. The Orator was not in a mood for reminiscences. Snell was a wily man in the ways of criminals,

and to him he told the story.

"Gee!" said Snell, drawing a deep breath. "That sounds like that guy at Memphis . . . the finest con man that ever lived. He used to work with his wife—the prettiest thing you ever saw—straw-headed, blue-eyed. She'd find a guy to fall for her, and she always picked a bad man. Then this guy from Memphis used to turn up, pretend he was a detective and clear out all that was worth clearing. I'd like to bet that that guy . . ."

Before he had finished, the Orator was racing back to the police car. It was just about to drive away when he jumped in and the two detectives who were in sight joined him.

By the time he got to Dimitri, broke in the door and untied him, 'that guy from Memphis' was driving with his straw-haired wife somewhere east of Marble Arch.

Some EWMM 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.* Latest book is *The Good Citizens.*

Joel Casavantes. 33-year-old Californian. Writes on Jacobean drama, also fiction reviewer for Los Angeles' radio stations, and a psychiatric research assistant. *EWMM* publishes his first short story.

Christopher Curtis. Journalist of considerable experience, and a wide traveller. Knows a lot about what goes on 'behind the news headlines'.

Michael Gilbert. Became famous with the classic *Smallbone, Deceased.* Born Lincolnshire, 1912, lives in Kent, and is an enthusiastic pillar of the Crime Writers' Association. Likes writing best while travelling in trains.

Jean Justice. Lives in West London. Knows the Hanratty family and many other people concerned in the case. A traveller, and a writer of strong convictions.

Sax Rohmer. Irish born, real name Arthur Sarsfield Ward. Died in 1959. Prolific writer who successfully turned out everything from musical comedies to horror and suspense books. Dr. Fu Manchu is even more famous than his creator.

MARGIN of ETERNITY

JOEL CASAVANTES

Using both experimental surgery, and human desires, this strange crime story is unforgettable

"CARCINOMA, I'M afraid — inoperable. I would give you . . . six months at the outside."

"I thought as much, Frank, but I wanted to get the best opinion possible." I smiled encouragingly at the distressed face of the man sitting opposite me in the pleasantly furnished consulting room.

The words did not shock me, for I had known I was incurably ill. But by training and temperament I am a thorough man, one who exhausts all possibilities before coming to a decision or conclusion. My reputation as a psychiatrist rests in part upon these traits. More than the medical ethos, more than the heavy responsibility for the destiny of my patients' lives, it is, finally, my own opinion of myself, my self-respect, which enables me to face my patients with the clear conscience of one who has studied their problems exhaustively and can advise intelligently. If one is to play God, one should do one's homework thoroughly.

So, when the pain signals from the nerve-centres grew too persistent to ignore, I went to Frank, a first-rate specialist in internal medicine, in order to confirm my own diagnosis and prognosis.

I am, of course, no stranger to this situation, this pronouncement of doom. In a medical capacity I have sat in on many of these. I have observed the range of responses the knowledge of imminent death produces in people. It is strange but true that those whose lives are deeply rooted in purposive activity, whose commitment to life is strong and continuing, take the news best. While those whose lives have been wasted on pettiness and trivia, whose lives have flickered so feebly, are the ones most afraid of the night. I

could say with objectivity that I was taking it well, better indeed than poor Frank.

Frank had been at college with me, had been a room-mate at medical school; we belonged to the same clubs. We had spent many good times together. He would take it hard.

"Will you tell Karen?" he asked.

"Not now, perhaps later."

"There's the pain, you know."

"I'll spare her that part of it. I'll spend the last weeks with my brother."

"Oh, yes, how is he?" An edge of bitterness crept into Frank's voice. Frank had never liked Neville, whose intellectual brilliance was surpassed only by his intellectual arrogance. Neville had been two years ahead of us in Medical School, and was already a legend when we entered. His learning in every field was enormous, particularly in the basic sciences: his mastery of each subject as he encountered it, complete. His reading speed was phenomenal, his recall, total. He coupled a scorn for those less gifted with an inhuman disregard for the emotions of others. This meant he was hated and feared by nearly everyone, students and professors alike. He cared nothing for what they thought, and his great wealth, his physical size and strength and brilliance of mind made him invulnerable.

His surgical technique alone would have made him pre-eminent, but he was indifferent to pursuing such a mechanical art, and was fond of saying that a skilled surgeon and a skilled butcher differed only in the material upon which they worked. His passion was for research, and his presence in medicine was due to his considering the human organism the most complex and advanced of all machines and therefore most worthy of his efforts. The brain and its functions fascinated him and he had set himself the task of solving the problem of brain transplantation, in the same manner that others were attacking and solving the problem of vital organ transplants.

"For consider the prime tragedy of man," he had once told me, "Not that he dies, but that he dies before his work is done, at the time when his brain is most charged with ideas and knowledge, when it has stored the collected wisdom and experience of the race, and has begun to venture into un-

known areas: at this point the body betrays him, and extinguishes the mind's light in its own dissolution. If those brains that merited it could be transplanted into fresh healthy organisms when their own began to fail, think of the contributions those minds could make."

Neville had finished school, had obtained his M.D., but had never practised. Ignoring the offers that reached him, he had withdrawn to the family estate, added a completely equipped laboratory, and with the aid of an assistant had continued his research.

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We always got along well. He respected the quality of my mind which was in many ways similar to his; though I lacked his ceaseless drive for knowledge, I had the same total-recall memory, a faculty which had proven invaluable in my practice. Though we had seen each other infrequently during the last ten years, we had kept in touch, and I knew he was still working on brain transplantation. Only the lack of suitable subjects and circumstances had prevented his attempting the operation, and it seemed doubtful if the opportunity would ever arise. For unlike other organ transplants where, say, a healthy kidney was removed from a dying man and placed in another dying man, the brain transplant required a perfectly healthy recipient whose own brain and consciousness would be excised. The legal, not to mention the moral, problems seemed insurmountable.

Well, here perhaps, was the answer to Neville's problem. He could at last put his theories to the test. I had nothing to lose, and, possibly, a new life to gain. Apart from the pleasures of life I was reluctant to leave, paramount among which was my young and beautiful wife, there was the book which I had planned for my later years, my contribution to the field of psychiatry. A book setting forth a new method of demolishing neurotic personality structures and replacing them with healthy ones. In short, a new psycho-analytic theory, utilizing a combination of the hallucinating drugs and hypnosis.

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Two weeks later I drove up to the family estate and dined with Neville in the high-ceiled baronial dining hall. He lis-

tened attentively as I explained the situation and proposed that he perform the operation.

"Of course, I'll do it, Stuart, but we need a recipient and I don't think we can count on any volunteers." I had to smile. How typical of Neville. No useless sympathy nor lamentations; just acceptance of the situation and consideration of the obstacles confronting us.

"I think I have the man. My chauffeur, Tristam." Neville regarded me steadily, waiting for me to go on. Between us, unspoken, lay the conventional objections to what we proposed to do. "Besides his being medically suitable for this experiment, I have personal reasons for wanting to, shall we say, 'reincarnate' as Tristam. You know Karen. Without in the least trying she exudes sexual magnetism like a bitch in heat.

"Every one of my friends, has at one time or other made a pass at her. And I don't blame them. Even after five years of marriage she excites me more than any other woman I know. Fortunately, she has never been the least bit interested in any other man. The more feverish attempts of my friends on her virtue have always been a source of amusement to us, and of pride to me. She's never cared for anyone but me, I'm sure of that. Or I was sure until last summer.

"We went down to our seaside house for a few weeks. It adjoins a beach which always has several gladiator types on it. There's a large flat rock directly in front of our house and about fifty feet out in the water at low tide. It's just right for diving from, and people cross our beach to get to it. When the Adonis types see Karen, you can see them swell and start to strut in an attempt to attract her attention. She usually doesn't notice them and when she does she's amused.

"One morning, after we had been there a couple of weeks, we went outside to get our usual morning sun-baths. Karen was wearing a white bikini which sets off that light golden tan she has during the summer. She looked like a calendar girl come to life with that incredibly provocative yet elegant body of hers. Her appearance set off the usual activity on the beach: hand-stands, vigorous swimming, aimless running back and forth with all the muscles tensed, and painfully obvious posing of the heavily muscled bodies.

"It was all wasted on Karen, who stretched out on her

stomach and became immediately absorbed in her book. Then someone got up and began to walk over towards us. This was not uncommon. On one pretext or other they would come over to get a better look at Karen and allow her to appreciate them at close range. Karen would look up, smile pleasantly, and go back to her reading, leaving me to carry on the somewhat limited conversation. In response to their questions I would gravely consult my watch and tell them the time, would assure them it was alright to cross our beach to get to the rock, and agree that it was truly fine weather. I would, all the while, studiously avoid looking at their bodies, keeping my eyes on their faces. This disconcerted them in two ways: forcing them to cast hurried surreptitious glances at Karen; and making them uncertain whether I was aware of what magnificent specimens they were.

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"But this one was different. He was alone and his walk had nothing of false confidence or swagger in it. About six feet tall and weighing close to fourteen stone, his body was well-muscled in a functional way, without the synthetic over-development of the body-builder. As he drew closer I could see the strong chisled features and intelligent expression. With his close-cropped blond hair, and blue eyes, he looked like a modern Viking. I looked at Karen. She was staring intently at him, then, with a visible effort, here eyes went back to her book. But, I noticed, her eyes did not move over the page, remaining fixed on one spot. Then, she put her book aside and laid her head on her arms with her eyes closed. He greeted me pleasantly and looked openly at Karen, who had apparently fallen asleep. He was completely at ease, made small talk in a relaxed way, and after a few minutes asked me for a job. He was an expert chauffeur-handyman, and wanted a permanent situation. His proposal surprised me, partly because he was obviously well above this sort of work, and partly because I did need this type of service. It's virtually impossible to get an intelligent, responsible type for this kind of position. I studied him closely for a few moments. What a specimen! Rousseau's natural man with a high polish. Obviously highly intelligent, with classical cold features and superbly modeled head. Even sprawled out easily on the sand

you could see the enormous power latent in that splendid body. I could see what Jack London had in mind when he drew Wolf Larsen.

"Well, I engaged him, and it worked splendidly. You know that famous remark that the best things to have in life are money and animal magnetism; the second best, intelligence and good looks. I have all except the animal magnetism, and he has all except the money. It's now up to you to combine all of these cardinal virtues in one creature.

"You may smile, Neville, but wait until you see him. Both as a medical man and as a man of the world I am forced to give him his due."

"What about Karen and this paragon?" murmured Neville.

"I was getting to that. It's another reason why he is the logical choice. There is no doubt that Karen has been shaken by him, is aware of him. In some subtle way she reacts to him. I suppose it's natural. He's the male counterpart of her intense magnetism. Oh, there's nothing overt, yet. He's correctly polite to her and she's correctly pleasant to him. But, Karen and I have been so close that I'm sensitive to the slightest tremors in her emotional field. She *is* aware of him, and in one so supremely indifferent to anyone besides me as Karen has been this is a sign of a strong reaction. I think she's giving him money. She's been drawing more for household expenses since he arrived. Has she been unfaithful? I'm not sure. If anything she's even more devoted and affectionate towards me, almost as if she were trying to protect me from — what? That's the question. Sometimes I feel like that poor devil Stroeve in Maugham's novel. I'm as sure of Karen's love as I am of anything in this world, but after all I am fifty, twice her age, and twenty-five years in psychiatry have taught me that nothing in human relations is immutable."

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I stopped, aware that Neville was no longer listening. He was lost in thought.

"Are you not sure that the art of medicine is ready for such a step, or are you afraid to commit murder?" I asked mockingly.

Neville frowned: "Don't talk rot about medicine being an art! Medicine is a science. The trouble is, too few doctors are

scientists. They simply don't know enough to tinker with the most complex mechanism in existence. They learn a little anatomy, chemistry, bacteriology, and *think* they're equipped. A complete mastery of mathematics and physics, especially that part dealing with electro-magnetics, is far more important when it comes to coping with the uncommon but really interesting cases.

"When I began to read the literature on the brain I assumed that the so-called experts had given full weight to the electrical phenomena so characteristic of that organ. Yet, aside from Lücke in eighteen eighty-eight, Benét in nineteen twelve, and Stevens in 'forty-three there was nothing but the most superficial treatment of this area, and even those three men failed to grasp the full significance of the electric impulses governing the brain. I've solved the problem. Reduced to its simplest terms, each brain gives off a unique pattern of electric impulses which must be held constant during transplant and for a short period after, while the body and brain adjust to each other. The real problem was an engineering one: building a miniaturized unit which could allow for the differential in the electric field pattern owing to the different chemical balance of the recipient organism. Sort of a metabolic transformer. There is absolutely no question as to the success of the operation. It's as simple as solving an equation; the real work was in setting up the terms of the equation. The actual operation is simply a matter of mechanics. Both I and Dr. Laich, my assistant, are excellent mechanics, and the laboratory is designed for just such an undertaking."

He had been speaking vehemently, rapidly. He paused, laughed, then resumed: "As to whether I would let the question of murder influence my decision, let me first point out that what we intend to do to Tristam is not, in the strict sense, murder. The law defines murder as the 'unlawful killing of a human being by another with malice aforethought, either express or implied.' The operative word there is 'kill', and my dictionary on law defines it as 'to deprive of life; to destroy the life of an animal or person.' Here, of course, the operative word is 'life', and my English dictionary defines it as 'that state of animals . . . in which the natural functions and motions are performed, or in which the organs are capable of performing their functions'."

His head thrown back, his eyes half-closed, Neville was amusing himself by quoting, verbatim, words read long ago. "You can be sure that Tristam's natural functions and motions will not be impaired. After all, to quote again, you'll find death has been defined 'by physicians as total stoppage of the circulation of the blood, and a cessation of the animal and vital functions consequent thereon, such as respiration, pulsation, etc.,' none of which will apply to Tristam. It's all rather academic though, since you are the one that is going to die. After the operation, I'll arrange for a car accident, on the estate, in which you'll be burned beyond recognition. I'll sign the death certificate, and that will be that. The inquest will be no more than a matter of form.

"Your main problem will be Karen. This is going to be a terrible shock to her, and there won't be any way to soften the blow. Can you arrange to have some of her family to be visiting her when this happens?"

"Karen doesn't have any family. Her parents died when she and the other children were quite young. The children were divided up among various aunts and uncles, and haven't stayed in touch. Karen has done everything on her own. Worked while going to college, put herself through nursing school."

Neville shrugged, then raised his glass with an elaborate flourish. "We'll operate to-morrow."

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The return to consciousness was like a rebirth. First a dim glimmering of light and faint sensations of sound and pressure. Then a developing awareness of myself as an entity. I could see, at first indistinctly, then gradually coming into focus, a face bending over me. It was Neville. He was studying me intently. Then, as he saw the gleam of recognition in my eyes, he grinned broadly. "The operation was a success, you were buried yesterday," he said softly.

The next week I spent recovering my strength and getting acquainted with my new body. Neville was my constant companion, observing me closely, asking questions endlessly, and taking notes. This was for him the culmination of 25 years of research and preparation. It was a great personal triumph and complete vindication of years of bold, original and lonely research.

But it was more than that. Neville was too supremely egotistical to covet the plaudits of a world he had largely ignored. For a man who saw the life of the mind as the only redeeming feature of a creature largely compounded of gross appetites, confused emotions, and puerile superstitions, this meant the preservation of those specimens of humanity who could inaugurate a new age of man. But though I could appreciate the immensity of his accomplishment, my thoughts were only of Karen. Neville was reluctant to let me go, but I promised him I would return immediately with Karen and continue to assist him in putting together his book.

I drove up the long approach to the front of the house. The house-keeper met me at the door with ill-concealed hostility.

"Put the car in the garage and come in the back way."

I laughed and walked past her. Karen was in the library talking to Harkness, our family lawyer. She paled when she saw me, but retained her poise. Harkness excused himself and we stood facing each other, she with lowered eyes. I would soon know the answer to the question which had tortured me with jealousy. How deep was Karen's emotional commitment to the man whose body I now occupied? Had she been unfaithful? Though it would make my way that much easier it was like salting a fresh wound to consider it. That she had loved me I did not doubt. Before Tristam had entered our lives she has been charming but so indifferent to all the attractive men who had desired her. Even after Tristam nad come to work for us her love for me had seemed undiminished, even more intense. But that very intensity gave her away. To my trained mind it indicated that I was the recipient of the excessive emotion Tristam stirred in her.

"Well, Karen, have you nothing to say to me?"

She raised here eyes to mine. I was staggered by what I saw there. Contempt and hate shone from her eyes. She spoke, coldly and deliberately.

"Get out of here and never let me see or hear of you again, or I'll tell the police where they can pick up an army deserter. Your blackmail is over. While Stuart was alive I would have done anything to keep him from knowing that you were my brother, but it doesn't matter now."

MICHAEL GILBERT

Bonny for Value

Patrick Petrella again in the light-hearted adventure of the cut-price watch and the jovial shop-keeper (an EWMM *special reprint)*

MR. CORNSTALK, an employee of British Railways working in the main line signal-box at Waterloo, was on early shift; which meant that he had to be on duty by five o'clock each morning, leaving his house in Watchet Street, S.E. shortly before half past four.

As he ran down his front steps he noticed that the side door of Mr. Prince's shop opposite was standing ajar. Now Mr. Prince, like all pawnbrokers and jewellers, was a most meticulous locker-up. His windows were covered, each night, with heavy shutters which were bolted on the inside and padlocked on the outside. His front and side door were locked and double locked.

A glance convinced Mr. Cornstalk that something was amiss. There was a newly-sawn hole in one of the panels of the door about halfway up, and through it he could see the remains of the heavy lock dangling from a couple of screws. He wondered what to do about it. The last thing he wanted was to make himself late for work. On the other hand, Mr. Prince was an old friend. A compromise occurred to him. He knew Mr. Prince's home telephone number, and there was a kiosk on the corner.

All of which accounts for the fact that Detective-Inspector Patrick Petrella and Detective-Sergeant Croft, both showing signs of men who have been urgently dragged from their beds, were in Watchet Street with the outraged Mr. Prince before half past five had struck.

"It's not the stuff that's gone I mind about so much," said Mr. Prince. "Of course, it's not properly covered, but

I should get something for it—" From which Petrella, who was not inexperienced in these matters, gathered that Mr. Prince was heavily over-insured. "It's all this mess and damage. Looks like he done it on purpose. Why did he have to wreck the counter, for instance? There wasn't any call to do that."

He pointed to the old mahogany surface, polished by fifty years of care and use, now criss-crossed by a dozen burns. In some of them were embedded the ashes of the cigarette that had been laid down there.

"I'm afraid it's one of the things burglars do," said Petrella. "Wanton damage. It sort of relieves their feelings."

"Tchah," said Mr. Prince.

"It sometimes help us catch 'em too. We might be able to bounce this one if we're quick. Get on to Scotland Yard, Croft, and see if CRO can turn up something for us."

"Those boys at Central," said Sergeant Croft, "they're Civil Servants. They come on duty at harpass nine and they go home at harpass five."

"I think," said Petrella patiently, "that they've got some arrangement for emergencies. If you get hold of the Night Duty Officer he'll tell you all about it."

He spoke patiently because he had not found himself getting on as well as he should have done with Sergeant Croft, who was over fifty and, though, sound on essentials, sour from lack of promotion.

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The Criminal Records Office, in Petrella's experience, answered your enquiries in one of two ways. Either it was feeling cautious, in which case it gave you a list of a hundred and fifty 'possibles' without expressing any particular preference for any of them, or else it made bold and inspired guesses. That morning it was in Delphic form. His enquiry produced a single, prompt, and red-hot tip.

'Carson (William) alias Cranston, alias Causton, alias Crawford. Previous convictions —' there were a lot of those, mostly for shop-breaking — 'method of entry, side or back-door, panel drilled, hole cut with keyhole or taper saw, lock or catch-plate levered off . . . chain smoker when at work

. . . uses a bicycle for transport. Last known address, 17 Marsh Close, S.E.11.'

The latest date stamp on the report was three months old. Carson might have moved half-a-dozen times since then. Professional burglars were birds of passage. On the other hand, he might not.

He said to Sergeant Croft, "Get the car, we're going visiting."

It was then twenty past seven. At half-past seven the door of No. 17 Marsh Close was being opened to them by a stout lady in a kimono. She said, "Good morning, Sergeant." There was no need to ask their business. Like lice and debt-collectors, police were endemic in Marsh Close.

"He's second floor back," she said. "Don't you boys make more noise than you must. The lady in the next room's expecting her first and she needs her sleep."

Petrella said, "Did you happen to notice when Carson got in?"

"He's got his key," said the old lady indifferently. "I don't keep tabs on him. Matter of fact, I did think I heard him go up about half an hour ago. Probably working nights. He'll be in bed by now."

Carson was not only in bed, he was asleep, a happy smile on his face, and enveloped in a light but not unpleasant aura of Scotch whisky.

"Sleeping like a babby," said Sergeant Croft. "No night starvation there."

"Might have a look at his shoes and clothes before we disturb him," said Petrella.

Carson, brought back to the land of reality, was unsurprised by their visit and unresentful.

"Do the bed first," he said, "then I can get back in it."

They found nothing. Not even a saw blade, a screwdriver, or a chisel. By the time they had finished, Carson was asleep again. The ambulance came for the woman next door as they were leaving, and they followed her down the stairs, flushed and important with impending maternity.

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After breakfast, Sergeant Croft brought in the night reports from the uniformed branch.

"No wonder ol' Carson was sleepy," he said. "He must've had quite a night."

Petrella read, in the careful, boyish handwriting of Constable Warren —

> *At 6.50 a.m. I stopped a bicyclist at the corner of Craigavon Street and Water Street. I recognised him as a man named Carson with previous convictions for house- and shop-breaking. There was a canvas bag fastened to the carrier of the bicycle. In view of his record I asked Carson if he had any objection to me examining the bag. He said, Go ahead. I found the bag to be empty . . .*

"There's something wrong with those times," said Petrella. "Carson was away from Watchet Street by half-past four—"

"He wouldn't leave it quite as late as that," said Croft. "If he'd cased the job properly he must've known that — what was that railwayman's name? Beanstalk — left his house at half-past four."

"All right. Say four o'clock. The constable on the beat reported all correct at two o'clock. That gives him two hours for the job. Break the door. Open two steel cabinets."

"I couldn't do it," agreed Croft, "but Carson's an expert. Two hours is about right."

"Well," said Petrella, "he leaves at four on his bicycle. Ten to seven he turns up in Craigavon Street. How far can you go on a bicycle in nearly three hours?"

"Thirty miles."

"That's what I mean. It doesn't make sense. Carson's got a fence lined up. Probably somewhere handy. His one idea's to get rid of the stuff — and his kit, too — as quickly as he damned well can, and get back to bed. If possible, before it's light. What's he doing hanging round at ten to seven drawing attention to himself?"

"Perhaps he couldn't contact the fence."

"I don't believe it. It stands out a mile that he'd got all the details fixed up beforehand. Get someone on to finding out if anyone actually saw Carson between, say, half-past four and half-past six."

It was an unexplained fact. A single, awkward piece that would not fit into an otherwise smooth pattern.

The matter might easily have been shelved and forgotten,

had not Petrella's mid-morning cup of coffee brought with it Detective-Superintendent Benjamin.

The superintendent operated from the main divisional station at Causeway, and was in charge of all criminal investigations in X Division, that roaring jungle of factories, cinemas, shops, pubs, and railway yards which fills the main loop of the River Thames and spills itself southwards towards New Cross and the Kentish hills. He was a tall, thin Lincolnshireman, and Petrella liked what he had so far seen of him. Particularly he appreciated the fact that he had been left almost alone in his first three months at Gabriel Street substation.

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They talked shop for a few minutes, but it was clear that the superintendent had come to say something, and at last he said it.

"Do you own a private bank account?"

"Yes," said Petrella. "I've had one for about three years."

"How often do you see a bank statement?"

"I don't know. I should think about once a year. They don't bother you much unless you're overdrawn."

"I'd advise you to ask for it once a month."

Petrella stared at him.

"Did it never occur to you to wonder why your predecessor, a young and enterprising chap like Jimmy Carver, should have been moved from a divisional post here and given a clerical job at Scotland Yard?"

"I never thought about it at all," said Petrella. "To tell you the truth, I was too pleased at getting promotion and a station of my own."

"Can't blame you," said Benjamin. He paused so long that Petrella thought he might have changed his mind about what he was going to say. Then he said, "We'd been having a lot of trouble with shop-breaking. Jewellers and such like, chiefly. Not tiaras or priceless matching pearls, but signet rings, watches, cigarette lighters. A good profit in it if you handle it in bulk, and someone was doing just that. We knew the operators pretty well, but we could never catch them with anything on 'em. We thought we knew the organiser, too. A man called Bonny."

The name stirred a memory.

"Bonny for Value," said Petrella. "Doesn't he run a shop in Harp Street? Calls itself, 'Government Surplus.' Sells almost everything."

"That's him. And a shop like that might be fine cover for a receiver, don't you think? That was our first idea, too. But it didn't turn out like that. There are depths in Mr. Bonny. Depths beyond depths."

"You'd be able to check on the stuff he was offering."

"We had stooges go in and buy things, which we traced back to the retailer and the maker. That was routine."

"And it was all good stuff."

"I wouldn't say it was good stuff," said the superintendent. "But it certainly wasn't stolen — at least, not by our records. Some of it came from abroad, and was difficult to trace. Some was salvage, sold in job lots by the insurance company that had had to pay out on a fire claim. Some was bankrupt stock. That sort of thing."

"But legitimate."

"Oh yes. One parcel, for instance, we traced back to its actual sale, by order of the Sheriff's Court in Inverness. Another lot came from Cardiff. He has nation-wide connections, has our Mr. Bonny."

"Might he be running a legitimate business in his shop, and a receiving end at his house? But, of course, you'd have thought of that."

"Yes. We thought of that. And we kept his house under general observation. It's a big, rambling old place, in half an acre of garden, up in Gosselin Park."

"Five minutes from Craigavon Street."

"That's right. Why?"

"It fits in with something that happened this morning," said Petrella. "Please go on, sir."

"Most of our suspects were seen in the neighbourhood from time to time. In the end I thought we had a strong enough case, and I got a warrant and organised a search, which I entrusted to your predecessor."

"And he found nothing?"

"There was nothing to find. Not when he made his search. I'm quite satisfied about that. Three months later, a rather disturbing fact came to light. A cheque for fifty pounds had been paid into Inspector Carver's bank account three days

before the search. It was signed by Mr. Bonny. He said he had paid for some spare-time decorating and building work that Carver had done for him. Carver said he knew nothing about it. The trouble was, he'd drawn against it."

"He could do that without knowing it was there," said Petrella.

"Certainly he could. That's why I suggested you look at your own account monthly."

"I'll look at Mr. Bonny, too," said Petrella.

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That afternoon he made his way down to Harp Street. Modesty was not one of Mr. Bonny's failings. From a clear fifty yards he could read the six-inch-high red letters, BONNY FOR VALUE; and in equally prominent style, the legend SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE. The triple windows of the shop were crammed with duffel coats, primus stoves, knee-length rubber boots, barometers, sets of spanners, a gross of signet rings, cards of fountain pens, balaclava helmets, crockery, camp-chairs, sunglasses, socks. It was a dreamlike quartermaster's store.

As Petrella stood examining its riches, his eye was caught by a prominently-placed tray.

ADMIRALTY SURPLUS STOP-WATCHES, said the notice. *Buy now. This sacrifice cannot be repeated.*

Petrella felt in his pocket and fetched out a copy of the list he had compiled, in his own hand, in the early hours of that morning. His memory had not deceived him. One of the things Mr. Prince had lost had been a dozen precision-made stop-watches. He had valued them at £15 each.

Petrella pushed open the door and went in.

He had little doubt that the personage who came forward to serve him was Mr. Bonney himself. He was so red, so inflated, so genial, so pleased with himself that it could have been none other.

"A stop-watch?" he said. "You have a keen eye for a bargain, young man. I put a dozen in the window this morning, and — you can see for yourself — only five left. Four pounds-ten apiece. Anyone in their senses would charge you five guineas. A wonderful chance."

Petrella agreed with him. It seemed almost too good to be

true. It was fortunate that he happened to have four pounds and some silver with him.

"Shall I wrap it, or is it for personal use, perhaps?"

"Oh, it's for me."

"Then you'll need a chain. Here we are. Heavy plated links. Five bob to anyone else. Four-and-sixpence to you."

Petrella settled for four-and-sixpense.

"A wonderful timekeeper," said Mr. Bonny. "With that watch, Inspector, you'll never be late on duty. Give my love to all the boys up at the station. Be seeing more of you, I hope. Good-bye for now."

"Good-bye," said Petrella. He had exactly fourpence left, in coppers, and he used it to telephone Gabriel Street for a car. Ten minutes later he was showing his watch, but not now very hopefully, to Mr. Prince.

"Not bad," said Mr. Prince. "No. It's not one of mine. It's not really what you'd call a jeweller's job. How much did you give for it? Four pounds ten? If you'd told me you wanted one I'd have picked you one up for about three-fifteen wholesale."

Petrella drove back to Gabriel Street in silence. When he got there he went into his office, and reflected for ten whole minutes before lifting up the receiver and demanding an outside line. He dialled the private exchange of New Scotland Yard and, when the operator answered, he asked to be put through to Detective-Inspector Carver.

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"No. I don't mind talking about it," said Carver, stirring his tea. "I'm gradually getting over the feeling of having been kicked in the stomach. If you land him, best of luck to you. He was too fast for me."

They had met, at Petrella's suggestion, in a first-storey tea shop which looks out on Big Ben and observes odd hours to accommodate police officers off duty.

"There was just enough in his story to make it look fishy. I do a bit of decorating in my spare time — round my own house and for friends. And Bonny had had a couple of rooms done up, but not by me."

"It seems to me," said Petrella, "that, now you don't have

to endorse cheques, anyone can go round paying money into anyone's account."

"That's right," said Carver. "Then they said I'd drawn against it. What the hell! I never know what I've got in till I get a dirty letter from my bank manager, then I back pedal a bit."

"Same as everyone. Tell me about the raid."

"If I'd been a betting man," said Carver, "and you'd asked me to lay some odds, I'd have said it was a hundred-to-one on we were going to strike oil that morning. We'd tightened up the observation on Bonny's house. It isn't an easy place to watch. Stands in a big garden, runs down to the railway at the back, and there's plenty of trees and bushes. You'd need twenty men to be sure no one came in or out. But we'd got a good spot nearly opposite the gate and we'd seen Dicky Bird go in at four o'clock the previous afternoon — and if *he* didn't do the Corner Store job, I don't know who did.

"And not only that. We pulled back at night, so's not to disturb him, but one of the men swears he saw Parsons sniffing round at six o'clock the next morning. And that means another packet of stuff was on its way in. Right?"

"Sounds quite firm to me," said Petrella.

"When I rang the bell at nine o'clock next morning I thought it was going to be a walkover. The stuff we were looking for — you couldn't push it down the crack between two floorboards, you follow me? It would have filled a couple of shoe-boxes. But when I saw old Bonny's face — I began to wonder. You know how bloody pleased with himself he looks?"

"Yes," said Petrella. He felt the weight of the watch in his pocket. "Yes, I know."

"He was grinning like a Cheshire cat. 'Come in, Inspector. Come in. What can I do for you this lovely morning?' Blah, blah, blah. I told him what we wanted, and he said, 'Go ahead.' I can promise you we didn't leave a couple of square inches unlooked. We'd a team from Central. Those boys can see through a foot of concrete. The house was clean, I'm telling you."

"The garden?"

"We'd a bit of luck there. It was a sharp, frosty morning. Inches of white hoar frost on the ground. You could see the

prints on the path of the people who'd been up it — milkman and paperboy and so on. And no one had put a foot into the garden at all. If they had, they'd have left a trail — well, you couldn't have missed it."

"And what was your idea about it?"

Big Ben spoke out the quarter, and Carver waited till it had finished. Then he said, "My idea was the same as the superintendent's. With one important difference. It stuck out a mile that Bonny had had a tip-off. He'd shifted the stuff Bird brought in the day before. And if we *were* right about Parsons — well, he'd just told him to come back later. Either way it adds up to the same answer. He knew he was going to be raided."

"Who else was in it besides you?"

"The superintendent organised it. He laid on the searchers for Scotland Yard. And I'd told Sergeant Croft."

"Yes," said Petrella. "I see."

★

It was after seven when he got back to Gabriel Street, but he pulled out all the files of the shop-breakings in the past six months and started to skim through them again. He soon found the one he wanted. A watch shop in the New Kent Road. There were reports on it from the investigating officer, who had soon concluded that it was the work of an Irish expert known as Patsy Parsons. The report was endorsed with the common form, 'insufficient evidence to justify arrest'. Petrella noted from the file that the breaking must have taken place after midnight, but before four o'clock when the patrolling constable had noticed that the night warning light had been extinguished and had gone in to investigate.

Four o'clock; six o'clock. Another unexplained gap. Even on foot it could hardly have taken more than half an hour for Patsy to get from the New Kent Road to Gosselin Park.

Petrella sat at his desk for a long time, the open files in front of him. He felt cold, and puzzled, and uncomfortable. And behind and beyond everything else he felt a growing anger. At Highside, where he had served first as a constable and then as a detective-sergeant, he had experienced the minor frustrations of a policeman's life, but he had never known this sort of shambles where the superintendent dis-

trusted the inspector, the inspector the sergeant, and the sergeant — who did Sergeant Croft suspect? If he were not guilty himself, he was probably going round nursing suspicions of someone else.

"Curse Mr. Bonny and all his works," said Petrella aloud to the silent room. "Curse a legal system that sets such store by presumptions of innocence, but allows no weight for presumptions of guilt. How the devil am I to get at him, triple-armed as he is in the armour of undetected crime?"

In the silence that succeeded this outburst the sudden shrilling of the telephone nearly frightened him out of his wits. He realised that a line must have been left through to his office when the exchange went off duty.

"Gabriel Street Station," he said. "Inspector Petrella."

"Oh, Inspector. How lucky I caught you. This is Mr. Bonny — you remember?"

"As a matter of fact I was just thinking about you."

"I wonder if you could come along? Something rather upsetting."

Petrella drove himself up to Gosselin Park. The front gate was open, and the porch light was on. Mr. Bonny had the door open before he was out of the car.

"Quick work," he said. "Come in, come in. Along here on the right. This is my little snuggery." It struck Petrella as exactly the sort of room a man might have made up out of pictures in early numbers of *The Strand Magazine*, full of mahogany and red plus and Benares brass. The electric light fittings looked fifty years out of date, and there was a genuine tantalus on the table.

"Imagine my feelings," said Mr. Bonny. "I always go round, when I get home in the evenings. Had I neglected to do so . . .!"

He pulled aside the long, plum-coloured curtains which covered french windows leading to the garden. They had been equipped, Petrella saw, with an up-to-date burglar-proof lock, but a lock which didn't look quite right. He examined it more closely.

"Yes," he said. "Luck you noticed it. Someone's taken it apart and put it back without the tongue. It isn't locking anything at all." He pushed on the window and it swung open. He stepped through and found himself on a small,

tiled loggia. Ahead of him, the garden sloped down into the darkness. The railway, he knew, lay somewhere at the foot of it.

When he came back Mr. Bonny was pouring out two generous whiskies.

"Have you got any ideas about this?"

"Ideas," said Mr. Bonny. "Certainly I've got ideas. Do you know that the contents of this house are valued, for insurance purposes, at ten thousand pounds? That's a Morland over the mantelpiece, Inspector."

Petrella looked at the two constipated horses with respect, and said, "What I really meant was, have you any idea who could have tampered with the lock? It looks to me like an inside job."

"Inside?" said Mr. Bonny. "Impossible. There's only old Mrs. Jacket, my housekeeper. She's been with me for years, and is nearly stone deaf."

"Then what would be your idea?"

"It would, I am afraid, be only too simple for someone to come through the garden during the day, when I am out, and Mrs. Jacket is engaged elsewhere—"

"I see," said Petrella. "Preparation by day. Execution by night." It was possible. He could think of no logical objection. It just failed to fit in with his previous experience of how burglars worked. "You can put on a temporary catch for tonight. A stout piece of wire across the handles should do it. And have it replaced tomorrow. You'd better give me a ring if anything further happens." Mr. Bonny promised that he would give him a ring. He also gave him a second whisky.

★

The next call came three nights later, at about seven o'clock when Petrella was going off duty. He again drove himself up to Gosselin Park. Mr. Bonny had seen a suspicious character hanging round the bottom of his garden. It was too dark to make any effective search that night, but Mr. Bonny was in such a state of alarm that Petrella spent twenty minutes in his snuggery, reassuring him and drinking his whisky. He promised that he would pass the word to the man on the local beat to keep his eyes open.

Mr. Bonny was overcome with gratitude and over their second drink he said, "All this running about after hours;

it must be very tiresome for you, Inspector. There ought to be an arrangement by which a householder like myself can pay you overtime."

"There ought to be, indeed," said Petrella heartily. "I've often thought so myself. I'll pass on the suggestion to the superintendent when I see him next."

He drove back to Gabriel Street, parked the car, had a meal at an eating-house in the High Street, and walked home to his temporary, and not very satisfactory lodgings in Portugal Crescent. His choice, in the evenings, was between sharing the downstairs sitting-room with three old ladies, and getting into his bed and reading. The decision did not take long to make and he was soon settled into bed, the gas-fire alight, his reading lamp on, and in his hand a collection of the Father Brown stories of G. K. Chesterton.

On the following morning he sent for Sergeant Croft, invited him to sit down, and said, "I think the time has come to deal with Mr. Bonny."

To say that Sergeant Croft looked startled would have been exaggerating the matter. His battered face was not one which registered emotion easily. Nevertheless, Petrella received the impression that he was leaving a good deal unsaid when he simply replied, "Yes, sir. What were you thinking of doing?"

"Nothing, right at this moment," said Petrella. "What I want you to do is to let me know as soon as we get another shop-break. If we can hear about it early enough we ought to be able to organise something. *Prompt* information is what's going to count here. Tell everyone that. If any of our men see anything suspicious, they're to let me — or you — know at once. Of course, you needn't explain what's behind it. In fact, this had better remain between the two of us for the moment. All right?"

Sergeant Croft again looked as if he was going to say something, then swallowed hard, turned on his heel, and stumped out. Petrella sat staring after him.

★

It was almost exactly a week later that Police-Constable Whittaker, passing the end of Carfax Passage, a cul-de-sac off Station Road, noticed something. A packing-case which had been lying on its side in the gutter when he had passed

that way an hour earlier had been moved, and was now standing on one end against the wall. Whittaker flashed his torch upwards and saw the broken glass of a window.

The telephone beside Petrella's bed dragged him out of a dream in which, in full evening dress and a frogman's helmet, he was exploring the Tobermory galleon. He surfaced with difficulty, knocking over the table lamp, managed to locate the receiver, and said, "Yes?"

"Sergeant Croft here, sir. Whittaker's just got through to me. There's been a break in Station Road. Someone got into Procter's by the back way, and opened his safe. Is that the sort of thing we want?"

Petrella collected his thoughts.

"What was in the safe?"

There was a pause while Sergeant Croft consulted.

"Rings and bracelets. And a packet of uncut stones. The old boy says it's all good stuff — and easily identifiable."

"Good," said Petrella. "What's the time now? Five o'clock. I'll meet you at the station at half-past six."

"Half-past six." Sergeant Croft's voice sounded suddenly sharp. "Are you sure that's right, sir? We don't want to give this little lot a chance of sliding away."

Petrella grinned to himself savagely in the darkness. "This isn't something we can rush," he said. "Half-past six, I said, and half-past six I meant. And pick us a heavyweight driver."

It was nearly seven o'clock when their car drifted to a halt outside Mr. Bonny's grey-stone front gate.

"Lock the car," said Petrella to the driver. "And come along with us. I'm not expecting a fight, but I want you to watch the back of the house. And we'll stick to the grass. We don't want a lot of noise."

Outside the front door Petrella and Sergeant Croft stood and listened.

"There's a light in the hall," said Croft. They were the first words he had spoken since they had set out.

"Listen," said Petrella.

"Someone's moving in one of the back rooms, too."

"All right. I'm going to ring the bell, and count ten, slowly. If nothing's happened, we'll break a window and go in. Here goes. One-two-three—"

He had reached eight, when the front door swung open. It was Mr. Bonny.

When he recognised his visitors, he took a quick, shuffling step backwards and, as they crowded through the front door after him, stepped back again, his mouth working, his florid face drained of colour, his eyes swivelling from Petrella to Croft and back again. Then his knees folded under him, and he went down on the hall floor.

"It's his heart," said Petrella. "I never trusted his colour." He was loosening Mr. Bonny's collar and tie. "Get an ambulance. That'll be quicker than trying to carry him down to the car." Sergeant Croft telephoned.

Petrella got a rug from one of the front rooms and put it over Mr. Bonny. His lips were a bit blue, but he was breathing.

Petrella was recalled to his mission by a knocking from the back of the house. He went along the passage, and into Mr. Bonny's study. Here the lights were on, and the curtains tightly drawn. He went over to the french windows, pulled back the curtains, and saw the anxious face of his driver peering through. He slipped the catch.

"You were all so quiet I reckoned he must have done you," said the driver.

"He's done himself," said Petrella.

On the study table were three cardboard boxes. Two were already packaged up in neat brown paper. The third was still unwrapped. Petrella lifted the lid. Inside was a blue case with, *Procter. Jeweller and Silversmith,* in small gold letters on the lid.

Behind him he heard Sergeant Croft breathing down his neck.

"Here it is," he said. "So fresh it's almost warm to the touch. Another thirty minutes, and it would have been away."

He pointed to the two packets which had been sealed. They had been addressed in bold, black capitals; one to *A. Smith, Poste Restante, Lossiemouth,* the other to *B. Smith, Poste Restante, Bangor.*

Outside they heard the ambulance bell coming up the drive.

★

"They'll pull him round all right," said Superintendent Benjamin. It was late that afternoon, and they were sitting

in the superintendent's office.

"He's a dying man, and I suppose I ought to be sorry for him," said Petrella, "but I'm not. He's done too much mischief."

"He won't be causing anyone much more trouble now," said Benjamin. "Just tell me how you worked it out."

"Most of the credit must go to a Mr. Cornstalk," said Petrella. "If he hadn't got up so early, we might never have seen it. The rest goes to G. K. Chesterton."

Benjamin said cautiously, "How do you mean?"

Superintendent Haxtell had warned him that Petrella was odd, that he read poetry, and had even been known to quote it.

"He pointed out that the postman on his rounds is truly invisible, because everyone expects him to be there. Mr. Bonny's system was based on that.

"He'd let it be known that if anyone stole anything, like jewellery or watches or lighters — anything small and valuable and fairly portable — he'd give tip-top prices for it. With one strict proviso. You had to bring it to his house between half past six and half past seven in the morning, or half past four and half past five in the afternoon. That's what kept Carson kicking his heels for nearly two hours."

"Yes, I see," said Benjamin. "And as soon as he got anything, he parcelled it up and posted it off to — who? Were A. Smith of Lossiemouth and B. Smith of Bangor and C. Smith of goodness-knows-where just Bonny himself?"

"There's a lot of work still to do on that angle, sir," said Petrella. "But my guess is they're real people. What I imagine happened was that if they could dispose of the stuff, they paid Bonny in kind — surplus goods, and bankrupt stock, and so on. At a cracking discount, of course. Which Bonny then sold at a handsome profit in his shop."

"And if they couldn't?"

"After a month, they'd collect and post the parcel back to him. Or to another Poste Restante, if Bonny hadn't found a buyer for it."

"Magnificent," said Benjamin. "And he did it all without setting foot outside the house. I suppose the postman picked up the parcels in the hall. They sometimes will if you treat them right. Morning *and* evening, by the way?"

"I think so. That's why he wouldn't have me in the house

before seven. When he sent for me about his burglary — he'd made all that up, of course — I jumped to the conclusion that he was trying the same tricks with me as he did with Carver."

The superintendent looked up, but said nothing.

"He did put out a feeler about bribery. But I thought it was more that he wanted people to notice me visiting him in his private house, and start jumping to conclusions."

The very faintest smile wrinkled the superintendent's forehead. "He underestimated you," he said.

★

When Petrella had departed he sat on for a few minutes, deep in thought. It was an excellent day's work. No doubt about it. There were loose ends to be tied up. But further investigation — a copy of Mr. Bonny's telephone account, for instance — might lead to startling results in far corners of the country, or even on the continent. He unlocked a drawer in his desk and pulled out a sheet of official paper, on which a report had been laboriously typed.

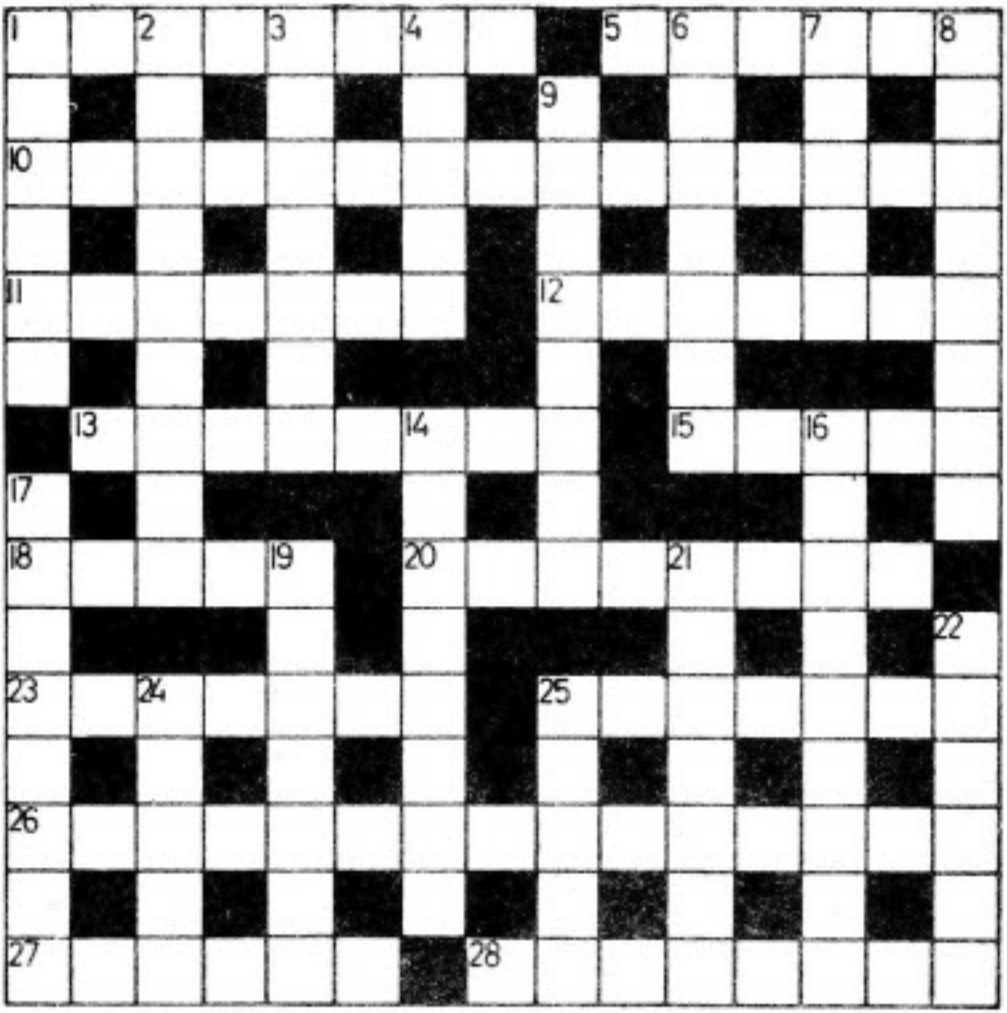
It started, *Sir, I feel it my painful duty to report to you* — and went on to say that Detective-Inspector Petrella had lately become friendly with Mr. Bonny — *suspected of being a receiver of stolen goods* — and had twice been observed to visit his house after dark, without thereafter making any official report on the subject of his visit.

It was signed, *A. Croft, Detective-Sergeant.*

The superintendent tore it slowly into small pieces and deposited the pieces in the waste-paper basket. Better days, he felt, might be at hand now for Gabriel Street Police Station.

I was once placed next to a rather nice elderly lady at a dinner-party and found, to my delight, that she was a great fan of mine. She never stopped praising my work, you see. She even informed me that her son had stacks and stacks of my books.. . . . 'When I tell my friends,' she finally concluded, 'that I have actually been sitting next to Edgar Wallace, I just don't know what they will say.' —*P. G. Wodehouse.*

EWMM Crossword No. 8



ACROSS

1 Divine comedy character to Dante (8)
5 Just like Tich? (6)
10 Accommodation suitable for those who spend all day on the beach? (3, 3, 9)
11 Are they assets when things are fluid? (7)
12 Mourning becomes her, on the stage (7)
13 Sad greed that brings disgrace (8)
15 Is such colour found in a pub? (5)
18 Phoney characters and their productions (5)
20 A witch-doctor is such a man! (8)
23 Nowhere in Butler's word (7)
25 A number of columns architecturally (7)
26 Casement exit — but not a window! (3, 8, 4)
27 Hate the look of a French trial (6)
28 Continues steadfastly to cross-examine? (8)

DOWN

1 and 2 Sound of food re-heated in a witches' cauldron? (6, 3, 6)
3 French stock-holder (7)
4 In some games they have spotty faces! (5)
6 You can take a dip in it but not a swim! (3-4)
7 Food and drink to a good man (5)
8 Remains found in ten lairs (8)
9 The murderer's victim? (8)
14 State that might land one in Broadmoor (8)
16 They have a consuming interest in their fellow-men (9)
17 Putting on an act (8)
19 Round figures! (7)
21 Bodies in a gang killing? (7)
22 These comics are real cards! (6)
24 Put into a seat (5)
25 Instrument that might locate a bullet (5)

(Solution will appear in our October issue)

ESCAPE to PERIL

First of three new, unusual stories by the creator of Dr. Fu Manchu

THE WAIL of the prison siren had stopped. Bert Bailey was glad. It had sounded like the howling of a frenzied spirit, pursuing him across the ghostly moor. A faint breeze sprang up, and the mist began to stir in swirls and eddies.

He was afraid to move. His foot hurt, and the moisture in the hollow warned him that he might be lying near one of those terrifying bogs which could suck a man down in minutes. He had no idea how far he had run, nor in what direction. He had fallen twice, and the second fall had twisted his ankle. He lay there, flat down, breathing heavily and wondering why he had been such a fool as to believe he could escape from Dartmoor.

The moor was alive with prison warders and police by now. He'd already had some narrow escapes. Twice he thought he heard shots which he couldn't account for. There wasn't the ghost of a chance of escaping far, he told himself. In his convict overalls he was a sitting bird.

He had no plan, no confederate standing by with a change of clothes—nothing. What had overcome him when he took off from Dartmoor Prison at Princetown? At one moment he had been weeding the governor's garden, a 'good conduct' job. He had worked close to the house and suddenly found himself looking through the window at the governor's kitchen, sniffing

the aroma of frying bacon. This had conjured up a picture of his lodgings in South London, and, after a moment's anguished indecision, he had taken off through the fog. Even one night at home had seemed worth the chance.

"Don't try anything," a quiet voice advised, and Bert felt something round and hard pressed into the middle of his back. "Get on to your knees, put your hands up and then turn around."

"Pinched!" Bert muttered.

He couldn't place the voice. Not a screw, surely. Probably a flattie, but the voice wasn't right for that either. Almost like an American's. A smart man, anyway, for he had crept up on him without a sound.

Bert obeyed, raised his hands, and stifled a groan.

"What's the trouble?" the voice inquired. "Hurt yourself?"

"Twisted my ankle."

"Stay as you are. I want to take a look at you."

Bert stared up and saw a complete stranger who held a gun in his hand. He had a new shock. This wasn't a copper. The man wore a soft brown felt hat and a tan raincoat. He had lean, dark features and hard dark eyes.

"Who the hell are you?"

The stranger slipped the weapon into his pocket. "Maybe I'm a man who has a soft spot for a fellow in trouble. What were you in for?"

"Housebreaking. But it was a wrong conviction."

"Most always is!" came a dry comment. "How long to go?"

"Twelve months more."

"You should have stuck it out. Listen. We've got to work fast. Once the fog lifts they'll spot you," and Bert's strange acquaintance peeled off his raincoat. "I'm leaving the gun in my pocket—see?" Off came coat and trousers, shirt and tie. A bulging wallet the man slipped into the pocket of a wide belt strapped around his body.

He motioned impatiently at Bert. "Off with your jail-suit now. Snap into it. I'm giving you these."

Bert pulled himself together, and the change of clothes was completed swiftly. The men were of similar build. The hat was large for Bert, but his ears helped.

"Goodbye, now." The man wearing Bert's convict uniform stood up cautiously, looking around, listening. "There's some cash in the coat pocket. Enough for a rail ticket. Good luck."

And before Bert could think of anything to say, his benefactor had vanished into the mist. He seemed to be limping slightly.

★

Bert had stood up to make the change of clothes, and began to try out the sprained ankle. It was painful, but he could walk. In any case, he must move fast. His friend would tell the warders who were bound to take him in that he'd been held up and stripped by a convict. Bert must be clear of the moor before then.

He climbed out of the hollow, still baffled by this incredible incident. Why should a man deliberately choose to get himself picked up as an escaped convict?

He stood still, listened, and presently he heard a motor-cycle not far away on his left. That must be a main road. He headed for it. He had just reached it— and the mist was clearing rapidly—when he heard the motor-cycle coming back. His first impulse was to plunge into a ditch. But he conquered it and walked boldly on.

A police constable pulled up with a squeak of brakes. "Convict out! Seen anything of him?"

"No. Am I right for Moretonhampstead?"

"Opposite direction." The policeman drove off immediately.

Bert's amazingly good luck was holding. He turned round and set out confidently. If he could get a lift, even now he might get to a railway station and have one night at his South London lodgings before they picked him up.

He walked on as jauntily as a stiff ankle would let him. Points to right and left of the road were becoming visible as the fog reluctantly dispersed. He could see nearby clumps of bushes, outcrops of rock. He was just passing one of these when what sounded like a giant wasp whizzed past his ear. The muffled report of a gun told him what it was, and he ducked, ran to the opposite side of the road and scrambled down a slope into a little gully.

Guarded voices near him betrayed the presence of a search party. Bert was completely mystified. He was also frightened. What did this mean? He wasn't wearing convict dress. Even if he were, no policeman or warder would try to shoot him. What's more, he reflected, neither flatties nor screws carry guns with silencers.

"Go easy, Red!" he heard dimly. "If he hears you first, you've had yours."

A coarse voice with an accent he couldn't place replied, "We've lost him again. He won't hang around and he moves like a fox. Damn this mist. Spread out."

Something like ten minutes passed before Bert ventured to move. He wondered how far these men had spread out. Their certainty that the man they were after hadn't hung round was unexpected luck in keeping with the whole unreal adventure.

By raising his head he could see surviving wisps of mist being wafted over a hill some distance away. Light was increasing rapidly. He must chance it. Progress on the moor would be hopeless. He made his way up to the road and set out. Motorists would be moving again, and he was staking everything on getting a lift.

Ten paces beyond from a side road came what seemed to be an answer to his hopes. A car came slowly out to the main road; Bert turned, arms stretched wide. The driver pulled up. They stared at one another—and Bert Bailey instinctively guessed his luck was still holding.

★

The car was a small convertible, and its driver was a girl with untidy wind-blown golden hair. The expression in her blue eyes was friendly.

"Hullo," she called. "Want a lift?"

Bert gulped. "Thanks," he said uneasily. "Car . . . crashed in the fog. Going Moretonhampstead way?"

"Part of the way. Jump in."

The breeze was freshening, the mist clearing. He got in beside her. She touched the hooter ring on the steering-wheel three times then, after an interval, twice again. They started.

"What's the idea of sounding the horn?" Bert wanted to know. "Not a soul round."

"Just a habit," she told him, but he thought she seemed nervous as she added, "Bit of fun, you could say."

"Bit of fun, eh?" Seen sideways, she had enchantingly long lashes, but the horn still bothered him. It had seemed like a signal. "You belong round these parts?"

"I belong in Devon—the cider country."

"I'm a Londoner myself, name of Bert . . . Graham. Friends call me Bert."

She hesitated and turned to look at him with a puzzled expression. But only for a moment. "I'm Beatrice Dean. Friends call me Trixie."

She accelerated to a speed which cheered Bert but also scared him. The road ahead was still misty, and they were doing over sixty. The moorland landscape went streaking past. An insistent hooting sounded from behind. Bert looked back.

"That's done it!" he muttered.

A motor-cycle policeman was overtaking them. He drew ahead and held out a gloved hand.

"Damn' cheek!" she said, but she slowed and pulled in to the roadside. "What's up? We're in a hurry."

"So I noticed!" The constable smiled at her, turning to Bert. "There's a convict out. Have you seen anybody suspicious looking?"

"We haven't," Trixie told him quickly.

"He might have pinched a coat or something—had a pal standing by." Bert felt icy water trickling down his spine. "Anyway, orders are to inspect all licences."

Trixie fumbled in the car pocket and produced several documents. "This car was hired last week by my husband in Plymouth. Read for yourself. We're touring Devan." Trixie's blue eyes held a sentimental warmth for Bert. "On our honeymoon, aren't we, darling?"

Bert swallowed. "That's right."

The constable returned the papers, and was rewarded with a shy smile. As Trixie drove off, he beamed at her in a friendly and encouraging fashion.

"Nerve!" was her comment. "All cops have a soft spot for honeymooners. It never fails."

Bert found himself being overcome by a terrifying sense of unreality about everything that had happened this morning. The mood passed, as swiftly as it had come. This was real, all right. Then he began to wonder. Why had Trixie pretended he was her husband? It had suited him, certainly, but if she really believed him to be what he claimed to be, why hadn't she said so?

They were doing sixty again. He had to speak loudly. "Why did you tell the flattie we're on our honeymoon?" He looked at her lips. "It gives a man ideas."

Trixie laughed. It was rather a strained laugh, and Bert decided that she might have been nervous herself when the

copper stopped them, although she hadn't shown it.

"Quickest way out. The romantic stuff wins hands down."

She slackened speed suddenly and swung the car into a narrow, bumpy lane.

"What's this?" Bert demanded in alarm.

"Where I live. I need more petrol if I'm to get you to Moretonhampstead."

Trixie turned the car off the bad road and on to a patch of grass. Away in a dip to the right Bert had a fleeting glimpse of what might be a deserted farm. No smoke came from the chimneys; there was no sign of life, human or animal. They pulled up before a stone building with a lichen-mottled roof. Trixie sprang out and ran up to the door, which she unlocked. She beckoned him to come in.

★

He found himself in a low-ceilinged room, stone floored. He suspected the place had been a cowshed. There was only one window, provided with rusty iron bars, and there was only one door—the door he had come in by. The furniture consisted of a single chair and a table on which some suitcases were opened. From what he could see of their contents, they belonged to a man.

Bert looked round and sensed danger. Something queer *was* going on. In the first place, he'd noted that their petrol gauge indicated the tank was nearly full. In the second, if they had really been headed for Moretonhampstead they should have got there by now. And, finally, what was Trixie up to, bringing him to this stone-walled dump?

Her expert lies to the policeman took on a darker complexion. Her sounding of the horn when they started had been a signal to accomplices. Trixie was nothing but a decoy. This was a plot of some sort. Somebody must imagine he had money.

Trixie was starting toward the open door, and he saw her hand on the key, left in the lock. Then Bert moved quickly. Ignoring a painful twinge in his ankle, he jumped, grabbed her wrist and hauled her back inside.

"Now then, lady. What's all this?" His voice was angry as he spun her around. He was not quite prepared for the look in her eyes. They were wide with sheer terror.

"Don't kill me, Limpy!" The voice was frightened. "I'll do whatever you say. But *don't kill me!*" The words rose almost

to a scream as he drew the automatic from his pocket and kept it in his hand. He had no intention of harming her, but he had been in tight spots often enough to know the smell of danger.

"Sit down," he ordered, and pushed her to the single chair. "You've been playing a game with me, Trixie," he said, "and I want the straight of it now. That horn was a signal to someone. Right?"

Her eyes were fascinated by the automatic. "Yes, it was a signal—to Red," she said. "We found your car abandoned. Red and the others spread out on the moor looking for you. I was to cruise the road and pick you up if I found you. I was to bring you here and lock you up."

"How were you to know me?" he asked.

"By your clothes," she said. "They told me what you'd be wearing. And your limp. I knew you as soon as you came up on the road, Limpy." She looked toward the door. "You've got to get out of here. If they find you, they'll kill you."

He walked to the door and looked out across the moor. The mist had cleared now, and so far there was no sight of the men who were his pursuers. He came back and stood over Trixie. "Why do they want to kill me?" he asked her.

"Don't play dumb," Trixie cried. "For shooting Red's brother in New York after the big armoured-car robbery ten days ago. Red says you got away with half a million dollars."

In spite of himself, Bert Bailey smiled. He'd been a burglar and a robber most of his life, but he'd always been a lone hand. This was the first time he'd ever been accused of being a big-time gangster, American-style.

Trixie looked up at him. All her bravado was gone. "Let me get up, Limpy," she urged. "I'll take you anywhere you want to go in the car. But don't let Red catch you here. He's got two other members of the gang with him. You wouldn't have a chance."

Bert hesitated, but the sense of urgency in Trixie's voice impressed him. "All right, come on then," he said. He gripped her arm. She got up, and he walked with her to the car.

His mind was considering the hazards of his position. He wasn't Limpy, but three killers would not stop to look at his face. It was the clothes the real Limpy had given him that would identify him to them. If he tried to make a run for it, the chances were good that they'd hunt him down. He made

a quick decision. "How far is it to Princetown?" he asked as he settled beside her in the convertible.

"Princetown!" she said in alarm. "You've got to stay away from there, Limpy. I've heard Red talking with the others. The FBI has been in touch with Scotland Yard, and the CID is after all of you. That's one of the thoughts that's driving Red. He wants to find you and kill you before you're picked up by the police."

So that was part of it, Bert thought. "How far is it to Princetown?" he repeated.

"About five miles."

"Take me there as fast as you can make it."

It was the only thing to do, he told himself. If he went back in of his own accord and both he and Trixie told the prison governor what they knew, the authorities might be lenient with him for his escape. They'd got the real Limpy there now, he could be pretty sure. Since the gangster would have made no attempt to conceal himself on the moor, one of the parties of warders or other police would have had him. Oh, Limpy was smart enough. Changing clothes with a convict was the one providential way he could have saved his life.

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Trixie was driving too fast on the narrow road, but urgency overcame his fear. Sheep wandered just beyond the macadam, and he watched them anxiously, afraid one would stray into their path. Watching, he didn't see the three men as they rounded a long curve. But Trixie did. "It's Red!" she said quickly. "Red and the others."

"Drive!" Bert snapped. "Drive straight at them, Trixie. I'll cover you with the gun."

The men were on his side of the road, and he leaned from the car. He saw pistols in their hands and he opened fire, not aiming, trying only to disrupt their own fire.

"Keep going fast," Bert ordered, and glanced over to see her knuckles white on the wheel. Then the shots came, but as Bert guessed, the bigger a moving target the harder it was to hit. The three men jumped back as one and tumbled into the ditch at the side of the road. "Good girl!" Bert cried, as the little car shot past. "Now bend low over the wheel and zigzag till we get around that curve."

There were half-a-dozen reports from the threatening guns,

but they were safe round the corner now. Trixie's mouth was open, and terror was big in her eyes. She drove for a mile, then she brought the car to a halt.

"Take it," she sobbed. "Take the wheel. My hands are shaking too much to drive."

Bert leaned over to touch her shoulder. "Not many girls could have made a run like that," he said admiringly. "You're a proper heroine, Trixie." And because it seemed the right thing to do at the moment, he kissed her.

"One thing let's get straight," he said, as they changed places and he put the car in gear. "I'm not Limpy, I'm Bert Bailey, an escaped convict from Dartmoor—in for no more than a little quiet housebreaking."

He told her about his encounter with Limpy and the exchange of clothes. She told him how she had got herself mixed up with Red and his two friends. "When they heard Limpy had got a passage under a forged passport," she explained, "they hopped a 'plane and were killing time in Plymouth, waiting for the ship.

"I was a hostess in a dance-hall. Red was free with his money, and I saw no harm in playing along when he told me he wanted to take a little trip to the moor. When he found I knew Dartmoor and could drive a car, there was no holding him. But I swear I didn't know then who he was or what he planned to do," Trixie finished.

"They missed Limpy in Plymouth?" Bert asked.

She nodded. "But then they got wind of the fact he'd gone to try and lose himself in this district. Red got the keys to that old farm from an agent in Plymouth. We'd only got there early this morning, and they started searching for Limpy immediately."

They were entering Princetown now, and the grey hulk of the prison loomed forbiddingly on the left. Bert turned the car towards the great arched gate.

"I expect they'll be glad to see you," Trixie said, smiling at him.

"I'll be the most welcome guest they've taken in for months," Bert chuckled, and was surprised to find that he was feeling good about everything.

Three hours and several interrogations later, Bert Bailey was ushered into the presence of the governor.

"Well, Bailey," the governor began, looking up. "Sorry you

made a run for it this morning. On the other hand, certain benefits have developed that are directly traceable to your escape that seem to be utterly fortuitous but useful. Do you agree?"

Bert wasn't sure of the meaning of 'fortuitous', but he said, "Yes, sir".

"Yes," intoned the governor. "Because of what you've been through, I see no reason why you shouldn't know exactly what's happened. We have here, of course, the man with whom you changed clothes. And in the past three hours, because of the excellent descriptions furnished us by Miss Dean, the police have been able to pick up three Americans, apparently gangsters."

Bert's eyes brightened at that. "I'm glad, sir," he said. "They were up to no good, those three."

The governor appeared amused. "You've a sharp eye, Bailey," he said. "Now regarding this escape attempt of yours. Would you mind telling me why you tried it?"

"No, sir," Bert said. "It was the cosy look of your kitchen." The governor seemed puzzled as he continued. "I was weeding in your garden this morning, sir, and I happened to glance through your window. It must have driven me silly. I thought if I could get back to London I could have just one night in my own lodgings before I was brought back here. That was the whole thing, sir. P'raps I'm a bit stir-crazy; blessed if I know."

The governor stared at him, then nodded wisely and with assurance. "Well, Bailey," he said, "you know things generally go hard with men who attempt to escape from here. On the other hand, you returned voluntarily and you have brought us valuable information about an important group of American criminals. I shall ask for leniency from the visiting magistrates."

Bert Bailey leaned forward. "Thank you, sir," he said. "And what about the girl?"

"We have no charges to bring against her," the governor said. "She hasn't done anything. Would you like to see her before you're returned to your cell?"

Bert said, "Yes, sir," and added before he was led out by the warder who answered the governor's ring, "And thank you, sir. I won't try any escapes again."

The warder led Bert Bailey out to a visiting room used by lawyers where Trixie Dean was waiting. Bert talked to her

from behind wire enmeshed glass with the watchful warder sitting at the end of the division.

"I'm accepted back as a member in good standing," Bert smiled at her. "You going to Plymouth now?"

Her hand pressed against the glass, and his joined it on the other side. "Bert, you do know I've never done anything crooked, don't you? Plymouth isn't so far away. I can work there, and I could . . . wait?"

Bert nodded.

"Maybe I won't be here so long after all. Trixie, I think you're pretty well all right . . . oh, you know what I'm trying to get at."

She looked at him.

"Yes, Bert, I know." Her smile was sudden and bright. "You're pretty well all right yourself. I'll send you my address, and . . . everything."

"I'll be here." Bert winked at the warder, who studied him bleakly. "But keep your fingers crossed for me."

EWMM TRUE CRIME CLASSIC

MURDER ON DEADMAN'S HILL

JEAN JUSTICE

Was Hanratty guilty ?
Both challenging and alarming,
this story of the A6 crime raises
many grim questions

A YOUNG MAN was hanged on April 4, 1962. A jury had found him guilty of a particularly brutal murder, committed in the early hours of August 23, 1961, in a lay-by adjoining the A6 road at a spot called Deadman's Hill in Bedfordshire. The name of the man who was hanged was James Hanratty.

The story of the A6 murder began on the evening of August 22, 1961, when Michael Gregsten, a married man, and Valerie Storie—both of whom were employed at the Road Research Laboratory not far from Slough—called at the Old Station Inn, Taplow, for a drink of Coca Cola and gin. According to Mrs. Lanz, the wife of the proprietor, they stayed for just over an hour, leaving at approximately nine-fifteen. Mrs. Lanz knew them as regular customers.

The couple then drove along the A4 in the direction of Slough, down to Dorney and into a cornfield to discuss a motor car rally they were planning. They had visited the same spot several times before.

At about ten o'clock somebody tapped on the side window of the Morris Minor in which they were sitting. When Gregsten wound down the window, a hand holding a gun appeared and a voice said threateningly, 'This is a hold-up. I'm a desperate man. I've been on the run for four months. If you do as I tell you, you'll be all right.'

The intruder then climbed into the back of the car, forced Gregsten to drive further into the field, took their watches,

which he later returned, Gregsten's wallet containing three pounds and Valerie Storie's handbag.

In Valerie's handbag was a wallet holding seven pounds. In examination-in-chief, Miss Storie said, 'I opened the handbag and removed the money from the wallet and then gave him my handbag. He never looked inside it.'

For the prosecution, Mr. Graham Swanwick, Q.C., asked, 'What did you do with the money?'

'I put in in my bra,' she replied.

At about half-past ten, a light appeared in a nearby house. From inside the car it was possible to make out a vague shape pushing a bicycle. The gunman ordered Gregsten and Miss Storie to keep quiet if the man with the bicycle approached the car. 'If you say anything,' he said, 'I will shoot him and then I will shoot you.'

A little later he suggested that they should go and find something to eat. He first wanted to put Gregsten in the boot and drive the car himself. When Valerie Storie pointed out the danger of fumes from the exhaust pipe, the gunman agreed that Gregsten should drive.

Asked by the prosecuting counsel if she had seen the man's face at that stage, Valerie Storie stated, 'I could not see his face, because he had got a handkerchief or something tied triangular fashion over his nose and mouth.'

As they drove past the Post Office in Slough High Street, Valerie noticed that it was 11.45. They stopped first of all to get some milk from a machine, but none of them had a sixpence so they went on. They called for petrol at a garage near London Airport. There was one other stop, this time for cigarettes. After this they drove on as far as a lay-by on Deadman's Hill, where they pulled up with the car facing Luton.

Valerie Storie told the prosecuting counsel that the gunman had been a highly nervous passenger. She had asked him if he could drive. Although he had assured her that he could drive all sorts of cars, he had asked Gregsten where the gear positions were, and once when Gregsten changed into the third gear, the gunman had said, 'Why did you go down to first at that point?'

It is puzzling that the gunman's questions, suggesting as they do that he had only a limited knowledge of cars, would have been posed by James Hanratty. Before the A6 murder, he had been convicted three times for stealing cars. As an experienced car-thief, he obviously depended on his driving

ability and his acquaintance with the gear changes of various makes of cars.

The gunman then expressed a desire for sleep, but said that he would first tie up Gregsten and Valerie Storie. After tying Valerie's hands behind her back and lashing them to the rear door, he ordered Gregsten to pass him a duffel bag containing some laundry. In the words of Valerie Storie, 'Mike picked up the bag with both hands and turned left towards the interior of the car. He lifted the bag, and as it was just about to go over the back of the seat, the man fired two shots in very quick succession at Mike's head.'

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With Gregsten's dead body slumped across the steering wheel, Valerie was ordered to turn round and face the murderer. By that time she had freed her hands. A car passed and for the first time she was able to see what the man looked like. 'He had very large, pale blue, staring, icy eyes,' she said in evidence. 'He seemed to have a pale face. . . . He had got brown hair combed back, with no parting.'

At gun-point Valerie was then compelled to sit in the back of the car. The murderer attempted to kiss her, and while he was trying to touch her, she contrived to remove the seven pound notes from her brassière and hide them in the pocket of her raincoat. He next ordered her to remove part of her clothing, threatening to shoot her if she did not obey. Putting the gun on the back window shelf of the car, the killer pulled off one of the black gloves he was wearing and stuffed it into his pocket. He pushed Valerie back and brutally raped her. It was then almost daybreak.

Afterwards he forced Valerie to drag Gregsten's body out of the car. She then had to start the car and show the man where the different gears were situated. Her evidence then goes on in these words: 'I went back and sat on the ground beside Mike with my legs tucked up underneath me—almost with my back towards the car. The man got out of the car again, came up to where I was sitting and said, "I think I had better hit you on the head or something, to knock you out, or else you will go for help." I said, 'No I won't. I won't move. Just go.' I put my hand in my mac pocket and took out a pound note. I held it out to him and said, 'Here you are. You can have that, if you will go quickly.' He took the pound note and started to walk away.

'When he was about six to ten feet away from me,' Miss Storie continued, 'he suddenly turned round and started to shoot. I felt one bullet hit me. I felt the use of my legs go and I fell over. He then fired another two or three bullets at me while I was lying on the ground. There was a pause and I heard a clicking sound as if he was reloading. And then he fired another three shots and they seemed to go over my head. I lay perfectly still. I heard him walk towards me, and I tried to stop breathing and pretend I was dead. I felt him touch me, whether it was with his hand or whether he kicked me, I do not know. He stood looking at me for a few seconds. I heard him walk back to the car. I heard him get in. I heard him slam the door. I saw him put the headlights on and he started to drive off in the direction of Luton.'

The foregoing summary of what happened on the night of the murder is based on evidence supplied by Miss Storie. Still alive, she was found by John Kerr, an Oxford undergraduate.

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One of the first descriptions of the A6 murder appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on August 24, 1961 :

> All policemen in the Metropolitan area were searching last night for a hitch-hiking gunman who, having thumbed a lift in a car, killed its driver and wounded the woman passenger. The car was found at Ilford, Essex. The driver was Michael John Gregsten, 34. He and his companion, Miss Valerie Storie, were found at 6 a.m. yesterday on a lay-by at Deadman's Hill on the A6, near Clophill, six miles from Bedford. They had driven 43 miles from Slough where they gave a lift to a man at 9.30 p.m. on Tuesday. For five hours the gunman terrorised them and made them drive across the countryside before the car drove along the A6 through Luton towards Bedford. The gunman forced Mr. Gregsten to stop on Deadman's Hill, where he shot him twice in the head. Then, as Miss Storie tried to get out of the car and run, he shot her through the back and chest. Then, leaving their bodies on the roadside, at about 3 a.m., he drove off. Police said they wished to interview a man about five feet six inches tall, of medium build, with dark hair and pale face. He has deep-set eyes.

The next piece of information given to the public, this time

in *The Daily Telegraph* dated August 26, was that on the night of August 24 a loaded ·38 revolver had been found on the back seat of the upper deck of a 36A bus. There was no doubt it was the gun used by the murderer.

The public's growing interest in the development of the case was further stimulated by the publication of two Identi-Kit pictures based on witnesses' descriptions of the assailant. These mask-like portraits appeared in the newspapers on August 30.

Two and a half weeks later, *The Sunday Telegraph* reported that the left-hand picture, showing the hair was manifestly swept back, had been built up from Valerie Storie's description of her attacker. The other one had been put together from a description supplied by Edward Richard Blackhall.

Mr. Blackhall was travelling in a car being driven along the Eastern Avenue by a Mr. John Skillett during the morning after the murder. Irritated by the inconsiderate driving of a man in a Morris Minor, Mr. Skillett gave chase and eventually drew up alongside the offender at the traffic lights near Gants Hill. Mr. Blackhall, being nearer to the driver of the Morris, lowered the window so that Mr. Skillett could more effectively air his views on road manners. The other driver laughed and drove off. It was only on the following day that Mr. Skillett linked the incident with the A6 murder.

When he was subsequently invited to attend an identity parade, Mr. Skillett unhesitatingly picked out Hanratty. On the other hand, his passenger, who must have had a far better view of the driver of the Morris, failed to identify Hanratty. And that was the man on whose judgment and descriptive powers the police relied when they pieced together the face shown in the second Identi-Kit picture.

The police also attached a great deal of importance to two spent cartridge cases discovered in Room 24 at the Vienna Hotel, Maida Vale. Now, Room 24 had been occupied on the night of August 21 by a man called James Ryan. But the real name of the man in Room 24 was not James Ryan at all. It was James Hanratty.

It is common knowledge that after the police had interviewed and eliminated their first suspect, their second choice fell on a young man of twenty-five who had been convicted several times either for house-breaking or for stealing cars, and who had already served a number of prison sentences.

On October 10 *The Daily Telegraph* reported that a person who had ordered carnations in a florist's shop in Liverpool resembled a man Scotland Yard officers wanted to interview in connection with the A6 murder. Mention was made of his auburn hair, his cockney accent and a roll of notes — one- and five-pounds—he had produced.

Such was the first published intimation that the police were looking for James Hanratty. The fact that he had been seen flashing money about most likely meant that he had been enjoying a successful run with his house-breaking operations. It must also be remembered that when Hanratty's name appeared in the newspapers, two months had elapsed since Gregsten's killing, so it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the new suspect had been carrying on with his burglaries subsequent to the A6 murder.

Hanratty's thieving activities during this period are significant in that they provide an answer to the following question : If Hanratty was innocent, why did he not go to Scotland Yard, early in October, and get himself cleared? The truth of the matter is that the police had already called at the Hanratty home in September to question James about some robberies at Stanmore. He was not there at the time, but he heard of the police visit from a cousin. Well aware that because of his previous record a long prison sentence awaited him if he was

again convicted, he was naturally anxious to steer clear of the law. Even under those circumstances he telephoned Superintendent Robert Acott several times to assure him that he had nothing to do with the A6 murder. He was hoping to hear the superintendent say that the real killer had been apprehended.

Hanratty knew he had been over-optimistic when, on October 13, he was picked up in Blackpool by the police and charged on the following day with the murder.

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At the Magistrates' Court at Ampthill, John Kerr, who had been the first person to whom Valerie Storie had spoken after the lay-by shooting, gave evidence that he had been working as a traffic communicator on the A6 on August 23. He had come upon the body of a man and a wounded woman. The woman [Valerie Storie] had described what had happened. She had also said that the assailant was about her own height—five feet three inches—and that he had 'big staring eyes and light fairish hair'. Mr. Kerr said he had taken down the details in a shortened form on one of the sheets of paper he had on his pad and had given it to the police.

That piece of paper was not produced by the police. They insisted that it could not be found. As for the description, nothing was said about the *colour* of the assailant's eyes. With regard to his hair, although Valerie Storie's evidence at the Magistrate's Court was taken *in camera*, she maintained later at the Bedford trial that it was brown. At the beginning of the case, the police wanted to get in touch with 'a man about five feet six inches tall, of medium build, *with dark hair* and pale face. He has *deep-set, brown eyes*'. But Hanratty had large saucer-like blue eyes. The inconsistency makes one wonder what was written on the paper that so conveniently disappeared.

Another witness, the John Skillett already mentioned, described how a badly driven Morris Minor had cut in front of him on the morning of August 23. He identified the driver of the car as James Hanratty. His passenger, Mr. Blackhall, however, had attended two line-ups and on each occasion had picked out somebody other than James Hanratty. Moreover, on his own evidence Skillett was emotionally disturbed by the other driver's boorish behaviour. He addressed him angrily, but merely recorded the face of a man who was laughing and had no recollection of the man's hair. Under cross-examination he

admitted he had been shown photographs by the detectives who questioned him at Scotland Yard. Could one of them have been a photograph of Hanratty?

There was also the evidence of Charles Frederick France. He said he had known Jimmy 'Ryan' [Hanratty] for six or seven years. On August Bank Holiday they had attended a morning meeting at Hendon dog-track together. Afterwards they had boarded a bus and gone upstairs. 'I started to go towards the front of the bus,' said France. 'but he pulled me back to the rear seat. He made a remark something like: "This is the only seat on the bus that lifts up and it is a good hiding-place."'

Now, the murder weapon was found under the back seat of a bus. Hanratty's observation to France simply implied that the back seat made a good *cache* for stolen jewellery. As a petty thief, he must have known times when, with the police breathing down his neck, it paid to dispose of the loot. It may well be that the boastful James had also pointed out the same hiding-place to others, little realising that the disclosure would be used against him later.

Such was the doubtful value of the evidence put forward at Ampthill. It is significant that the prosecution did not produce a single witness who had seen Hanratty anywhere near the Slough area or the cornfield, either at the time of the murder or at any other time.

The Bedford trial opened on January 22, 1962.

Unquestionably the most important witness was Valerie Storie, for what really hanged Hanratty was her identification, visual and auditory. She had already picked out the wrong man on a parade at Guy's Hospital. After looking at the men on the second parade for twenty minutes, she made no identification. It was only after hearing each man say, 'Be quiet, will you, I'm thinking', that she picked out Hanratty. He was the only one who said he was 'finking'. This parade took place at Stoke Mandeville. The other twelve men came from that district and consequently any variations from standard English would have been attributable to the fact that their vowel sounds might have been those of the local dialect. It was not surprising that Hanratty, the only Londoner among them, was the one man there who mispronounced the diphthong 'th'.

Apart from the doubtful nature of the identification, it should also be noted that Valerie Storie started off by saying that her assailant had deep-set brown eyes. Then, during the

trial at Bedford, his eyes became 'large, saucer-like *blue eyes*'. Furthermore, she began by saying that the assailant was her own height, about five feet three inches, then he shot up three inches to five feet six inches, and finally she added another three inches, making him five feet nine inches. Then again, she had second thoughts about the colour of the assailant's hair—dark brown instead of light. At the time of the murder, Hanratty's hair, dyed because he was engaged in house-breaking operations, was jet black. Had Miss Storie clung to her original description, the police case would have been weakened.

James Hanratty was a specialist in car-stealing and house-breaking. He was not even a clever burglar, frequently leaving his finger-prints in the houses he broke into. He could neither read nor write. In fact, he had been medically classified as a mental defective. He had a police record and, if the A6 murder had never happened, he would probably have spent the rest of his life in and out of gaol. He mixed with small-time crooks, was something of a boaster, imagined himself important but was really a minor figure in the world of petty crime.

But the most noteworthy thing about Hanratty is that until he was involved in the A6 inquiries, he was never considered to have been a violent character. He had never attacked anyone before. He had never possessed an offensive weapon. The motive for the crime was sex, but evidence was given at the trial that Hanratty led a normal sex life. His own views on violence are expressed in the following extract from a letter he sent to his Auntie Annie from Brixton prison on November 14, 1961. The letter was dictated to a warder by Hanratty and the relevant words are these :

> Well, Auntie, I bet when you got to hear about this trouble it was a great shock to you, but you know that I wouldn't do a terrible thing like that. Though I am a bit of a crook, I wouldn't hurt a mouse. . . .

It is difficult to reconcile such a man with what took place on the night of the A6 murder. There was nothing in Hanratty's make-up to suggest that he was capable of surprising two strangers in a car, of threatening them with a revolver, of killing a young man in cold blood, of raping Valerie Storie and finally shooting her. Such brutal behaviour is not consistent with Hanratty's character. And, as Louis Blom-Cooper wrote in *The A6 Murder*, '. . . the longest murder trial in English legal history never came near to revealing the one inexplicable

feature of the case—what was Hanratty, an urban thief, immaculately dressed as always, doing wandering round a cornfield at Dorney Reach carrying a loaded revolver, a weapon he had never been known to use in his extensive criminal career?'

For further glimpses of the 'monster' whose conduct horrified the whole British nation, it is not possible to do better than to examine more of the letters sent by Hanratty to various members of his family during his long wait for the end. They were all dictated by him to various prison officers.

On October 17, 1961, a few days after he had been apprehended, he wrote a letter to his parents containing these words: 'When my solicitor gets the facts, it will be an open and shut case.' Such was his confidence that his name would be cleared.

Shortly before the trial, still believing he would not be found guilty, he wrote to his brother Peter : 'It won't be long before we are all together again, so until then all the best.'

Particularly moving are the pathetic letters he wrote after the Home Secretary turned down his appeal. Here is an extract from one he sent to his father : 'I can't say how sorry I am that this has turned out this way, but that was not my fault, it was the fault of others . . . and though I am about to take the punishment for someone else's crime, I will face it like a man.'

And on the same day, to his brother Michael, he wrote: 'I am going to ask you to do me a small favour, that is I would like you to try and clear my name of this crime. Someone somewhere is responsible for this crime and one day they will venture again and the truth will come out and then, Mick, that will be the chance for you to step in. I feel the police will try to hush it all up if they get the chance. So, Mick, I am counting on you to keep your eyes on the papers.'

There are only two sure ways of proving that Hanratty was innocent. He must either be provided with a watertight alibi, or it is necessary to look elsewhere for the A6 murderer.

As far as the first alternative is concerned, the unsatisfactory alibis Hanratty himself put forward will always be there to throw dubious shadows over any fresh attempt to show he was somewhere else when the murder was committed. Attention must be paid to some other man who not only had the means, the motive and the opportunity, but who fits the known facts.

It is highly significant that the murderer was very careful

not to leave any fingerprints in the car, although he was with his victims for nearly six hours, stopping once for petrol and again for cigarettes. The petrol-filling attendant identified the victims, but never picked out Hanratty. Scotland Yard's Chief of the Forensic Laboratory said that fibres and fingerprints belonging to Miss Storie and Gregsten were found in the car. He found nothing to fit Hanratty. Someone else other than the couple had left traces, but they had *not* been left by the accused.

In the back of the car, Miss Storie had a fleeting glance at the assailant's face after Gregsten's death. She later picked out the wrong man at Guy's Hospital. How could she be so sure of herself on the second identification parade? Mr. Skillett, as we have seen, picked out Hanrattay as the man who was driving Gregsten's car at Ilford at seven o'clock on the morning after the murder. His passenger, Edward Blackhall, who had a much better view, did *not* pick out Hanratty.

The murderer took pains to conceal his identity, but Hanratty seems to have invited the police to look for him. For instance, the murder gun was found under the seat of a London bus, Hanratty's self-confessed favourite spot for hiding his loot. Moreover, two empty cartridge cases suddenly turned up in the hotel room Hanratty had occupied three weeks earlier.

Hanratty's friend, Charles France, who knew about his favourite hiding-place, committed suicide before the hanging. He had two nervous breakdowns during the trial. He told his wife that 'They' would never let him rest. In the end a series of threatening telephone calls drove him to put his head in the gas-oven of a West London boarding house. His numerous suicide letters are still in the Home Office. They apparently do not incriminate Hanratty. As the Home Office puts it: 'It is not in the public interest to reveal their contents.' If the right man was hanged, how could publication of France's letters possibly harm the public?

But if Hanratty did not commit the A6 murder, then some other person killed Michael Gregsten and raped Valerie Storie in the lay-by at Deadman's Hill. Many who followed the Press accounts of the case were far from happy about the verdict. Certain prominent men—barristers, doctors, writers and journalists—felt then, and still feel, that justice was neither done nor seemed to have been done. A group of about a hundred MPs demanded an inquiry, but as the report in

Hansard indicates, their request was turned down by the Home Secretary. A glance at the relevant copy of Hansard will reveal that a great deal of new evidence and information came to light after Hanratty had paid the supreme penalty.

Not long ago *Murder Versus Murder*, written by the author of the present article, was published in Paris by the Olympia Press. The book is not yet available in this country. In it the prosecution's case against Hanratty has been carefully examined and the accumulation of fresh evidence has been tabulated. Among the various matters warranting further investigation are these :

1. A surrealist drawing executed by the real murderer and containing a concealed confession.
2. The real murderer's verbal confession to a barrister-at-law.
3. The real murderer's confession notes.
4. The real murderer's resemblance to the man Valerie Storie first identified.
5. The real murderer's physical appearance is *not* unlike one of the Identi-Kit portraits.
6. The real murderer has a speech defect ('f' for 'th') when excited.
7. The real murderer's personality fits that of the man described by Valerie Storie.
8. The real murderer's knowledge of the Slough area, the dog-track there, and the cornfield where Michael Gregsten and Valerie Storie were surprised.
9. Tape recordings of telephone conversations with the real murderer, during which the latter makes certain revelations that link him closely with the events of the A6 murder.

The State has hanged innocent people before. Justice has miscarried in the past, and because no judicial system is perfect, it will no doubt fall into error again. Most of the mistakes we make as we travel through the world are capable of rectification, but once a man has been hanged by the neck until he is dead, that is the end of him. If we find out later that the man man dangling from the rope was not a murderer at all, we can regret our blunder, but what can we do for the man whose life we have taken?

In the case of James Hanratty, the least we can do is to grant him the 'small favour' he asked of his brother. We can try to clear his name . . .

period piece

THE STREET OF THE WOLF

PEDRO A. DE ALARCON

Alarcón was a brilliant Andalusian writer who died over 70 years ago, his stories being notable in creative power and narrative as shown in this puzzling mystery

"WHAT DO we know, my friends? What do we know?" exclaimed Gabriel, the distinguished mining engineer, sitting down under a pine tree and near a fountain, on the slope of Guadarrama, about six miles from the Escurial Palace and just on the boundary line between the provinces of Madrid and Segovia. Well do I know the place, the fountain, and the pine tree. I can see them still, but I cannot remember the name.

"Let us all sit down and rest here," said Gabriel. "We have agreed to enjoy the lovely weather as best we can in this charming place, famous for the tonic qualities of this sparkling fountain and for the picnics which have taken place here, where great scientists have come to observe Nature and to find an appetite from time to time. Yes, sit down and I will tell you a true story to bear out my theory. You call me a materialist, but still I maintain that in this world in which we live strange things happen—things so strange that no reason can account for them, nor can science or philosophy give any explanation of such things."

Gabriel addressed this speech to five friends of various ages,

none of them very young and only one elderly. Three of them like him were mining engineers, the fourth was an artist, and the fifth something of a writer. All of them had come up with Gabriel, who was the youngest, on hired mules from the village of San Lorenzo, to spend the day in hunting for specimens in the lovely woods of Peguerinos, gathering forest plants under the pine trees, catching butterflies in gauze nets, finding rare beetles under the bark of the decayed trees, and in all these occupations giving a fair amount of attention to the well-filled hamper of cold provisions and the skin of wine to the cost of which all had contributed in equal shares.

This was in the middle of the hot summer of 1875. I am not sure if it was the festival of Santiago or that of San Luis, but it was a holiday of some sort—I think San Luis. In any case, the day was very hot, and the shade of the pine wood and murmur of the fountain were delicious after climbing the mountain-side. Up there, mind, heart, body, and especially appetite, were refreshed by the air and the stillness, after the busy life of the plains which we had left so far below us.

The friends sat under the shade of the pine trees, and Gabriel continued :

"You may call me a visionary if you like, but it has been my fortune or misfortune through life that I have ever been regarded as a materialist, a man of modern thought, not believing in things unseen, in fact, a positivist. Yes, I may be so, but my positivism includes an acknowledgment of the mysterious influences of Nature—all the strange and inexplicable facts which *are* facts because they happen; all the emotions of the mind which are inseparable from the life of every reasoning creature. I believe in all these things because they are material and natural. They cannot be explained, but still they happen. Now, as to other things, which are supernatural, or extra-natural, just listen to what I am going to tell you and then judge for yourselves. I was not the hero of the strange occurrence which I am going to relate to you, but listen, and then tell me what explanation you can give me—natural, physical, scientific, whatever you think will best explain the case, if explanation be at all possible.

"Now, all of you, give me your close attention. But first of all, give me some wine. ."

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"Perhaps you may have heard of an engineer of Public

Works named Telesforo de Ruiz, who died in eighteen-sixty?"

"No, I never heard of him."

"Oh, yes, I have heard of him. He was an Andalusian, very dark and handsome. He was engaged to be married to the daughter of the Marquis of Moreda, and died of gastric fever."

"Yes, that was he," replied Gabriel. "Well, about six months before he died, my friend Telesforo was a most brilliant young man, as everyone said. Tall, strong, handsome, talented and with a first-class diploma from the School of Mines, and excellent prospects, he was very much sought after in the way of his profession by both public and private enterprises, and he was just as much sought after in private life by the fair sex, marriageable or unhappily married, and even by some charming widows anxious to tempt Providence again. One of these was a well-known conquest of his, who would gladly have accompanied my friend to the altar. However, she does not enter into this story, and indeed Telesforo merely amused himself in her case by a very strong flirtation with her. If she did make herself a bit cheap to him. . . . Well, he was all the time deeply and seriously in love with the girl to whom he was engaged, poor Joaquina de Moreda, and so the poor widow merely filled a temporary gap. . . ."

"Now, now, Don Gabriel! No scandal allowed."

"I am not going to talk any scandal. Neither what am I going to tell you nor what I may ask you to say later on the subject is at all suitable for any but the most serious style of conversation. Well, my friends, listen with all your attention, for now I am going to begin my tale in earnest. Those of you who knew the young people will remember that poor Joaquina died suddenly when taking the waters at Santa Agueda at the end of the summer of eighteen fifty-nine. I was in Pau when the sad news came, and I was much affected on account of my friendship for Telesforo. I had only met the girl once, at the house of her aunt, General Lopez's widow, and her extreme pallor struck me as an indication of weak health, such as one sees in sufferers from aneurism. But she was very graceful, refined, and gentle-looking, and in addition to her personal charms she would inherit her father's title, as she was the only child, and she would also have a good deal of money. So when I heard of her death I knew that her sweetheart would be inconsolable, and when I got back to Madrid, about three weeks

later, I went to see him early one morning. He had a charming flat in the Calle del Lobo, near the Plaza San Jerónimo, and he lived there and had his office under the same roof.

"He looked sad, but was calm, and evidently master of his grief, as he sat working with his assistants at some plan of a railway. He was dressed in mourning, and when I entered, he embraced me in silence, then turned to give some instructions to one of his staff respecting the work in hand. I waited until, taking my arm, he led me to his private sitting-room at the other end of the house, saying as he went:

" 'I am so glad you have come. I cannot tell you how much I have missed you in my present state of mind. Something very strange and unaccountable has happened to me, and I want just to tell you about it, for only a friend who knows me as you do will be able to judge if I am mad or a fool. I certainly wish to have some sane and calm opinion such as I know that yours will be. Sit down here,' he went on when we had reached the sitting-room, 'and do not be afraid that I am going to weary you by describing the grief which afflicts me, and which can only end with my life. You have not had much personal experience of sorrow or human suffering, but yet you can imagine what I suffer and must always suffer. I do not seek or wish for consolation now or later on, or ever in all time. That subject is ended now. What I want to tell you is something so strange, so terrible, that I must speak of it to some one of calm judgment, someone who will listen and advise me. The whole adventure is like a seal set on my present misery, on the agony of my life, and it tortures me to the point of despair. It is all a frightful mystery, and I think it will alarm you too."

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" 'I do not know if it is a mental twist which I have always had, or if it is the effect of some of those silly tales which old nurses use to frighten children into quiet and obedience, but ever since I was very young nothing caused me so much fright and horror as the sight, or even the thought, of a woman alone out of doors at a late hour of the night.

" 'I assure you that I have never been a coward. Like every other man of the world, I have always been ready to fight a duel if it became necessary to do so, and not very long after I had left the School of Mines I was obliged to quell a revolt among my workmen on my first important piece of work, by

means of blows and even of shots, so that single-handed I reduced them to obedience. All my life, in Jaen, in Madrid, and elsewhere, I was accustomed to go about the streets at any hour of the night, alone and unarmed, and if by chance I did meet any late wanderers of suspicious appearance, I knew that they were merely thieves or human prowlers in search of prey, and I only avoided them or let them pass without notice. But if the solitary form was that of a woman, walking or standing, if I was alone, or there was no one else in sight, I was in the most abject state of terror possible to be imagined. You may laugh if you like, but my agony of mind was dreadful; I thought of ghosts or lost souls, apparitions from the other world, wraiths of persons still alive; in fact, of all the terrible superstitious ideas which have ever been invented to torture the credulous, and which at any other time or in any other circumstances would have only provoked my ridicule. Then I hastened my steps or turned back; I made all kinds of detours to avoid meeting the lonely figure, and overcome by repulsion and horror, I fled home, never stopping until I was safe within its doors.

" 'Once in the shelter of my own house, I could laugh at my silly fears, and console myself by reflecting that at any rate no one of my acquaintance knew of such folly on my part. I could feel sure then that, as I did not believe in fairies or witches or apparitions of any sort, there was no need to have been frightened by the sight of the poor solitary creature, whom want, or vice, or some other cruel spur had driven away from shelter on such a night and at such a time. I felt that I would have done better to have offered her assistance if she was in need of it, or alms, if I had waited for her to ask me for them. But all this solid reasoning did not prevent my acting in just the same way when the next solitary female was sighted. When I was twenty-five years of age, I met many such lonely nocturnal wanderers, and though I had always fled from them in the same way, I never had the slightest reason to think that they intended me any harm or were able to injure me in any way, nor had I ever any notable or disagreeable adventure with any one I met in the street late at night. But my fear was indomitable, only vanishing when I was safe at home, and could laugh at or scold myself for my lack of common sense. If I were not alone, or if there were other people in the street, the case was different, for I did not care then. The incident attracted no one's

notice, and was soon forgotten, as children forget their terrors of the dark when they have companions by their side.

" 'Now, this brings me to one night about three years ago. I have only too good reason to remember the exact date. It was the sixteenth of November, at three o'clock in the morning. At that time I was living in a little flat in the Calle de Jardines, near the Calle de la Montera. The night was cold and wet, and I was alone. You will ask me what I was doing out of doors at that hour on a November morning. Well, you will be surprised to hear that I had just left a sort of gambling saloon, unknown as such to the police, but where many people had already been ruined. I had been induced to go there the night before for the first and last time. Gambling was never a vice of mine, and the inducement held out to me by the friend who took me there, and who was a bit of a scamp, was that I would see something of the smart night life of the capital, and make the acquaintance of some interesting members of Bohemian society and ultra-fashionable actresses and other stars of the demi-monde, who dropped in to win or lose a few crowns at roulette.

" 'Well, about midnight the fun waxed furious. People of all classes dropped in, apparently after the theatre or the late receptions of society; play grew high, and I, like all novices, threw prudence to the winds, and staked my all, winning at first and then losting steadily, until at last, after being severely handled by Fortune, I came away without a single coin in my pockets, and with debts to my friend and others, the amounts of which I had jotted down, without having any very clear idea of what they amounted to, but feeling certain that it was utterly out of my power ever to discharge them.

" 'I was going home, half dead with weariness and disgust at my own folly, freezing with cold, and also very hungry. I did not know what to do, except to write to my father, who was very ill, asking him to send me money, and that would not only grieve him but surprise him, for he believed that I was doing well in my profession and already in comfortable circumstances. Overcome by these thoughts, I was just crossing the corner of the Calle de los Peligros to reach my own street, and was about to pass a newly-erected house at the corner, when on looking up, I became aware that in the doorway, erect and still as a pine tree, stood a very tall, stout woman, about sixty years of age, whose wicked bold lashless eyes were fixed

on me like two daggers, whilst her toothless mouth grinned at me with indescribable malignity.

" 'The terror, or rather, the mad panic, which seized on me then surpassed all I had ever experienced previously. I stood staring at this horrible figure, and each line of her, each smallest detail of her dress, were indelibly branded in my recollection. The lamp at the street corner shone on the scene, and the apparition, or whatever it might be, and I alone were the occupants of the entire street. I forgot my ruined position, I forgot my folly of that night, there was only room in my brain for one thought, if thought it could be called—a terror of the woman who seemed to fill the whole doorway beside me.

" 'Oh, do not be alarmed, my friend. I was not really mad; I am not mad now. But what shall I be if some consolation is not found for me; some solution of the distress of my soul? It is for that reason that I have asked you to listen to me and to bear with me.

" 'The first surprising thing about this woman, as I must call her, was her great height and the breadth of her bony shoulders; next the size and roundness of her enormous owl-like eyes, the size of her nose, and the hideous gap which served her as a mouth, made still more hideous by the malignant grin which would have disfigured the fairest mouth in existence, and finally, the strange coquetry of her dress; the bright-coloured handkerchief which was draped over her ugly forehead and fastened beneath the chin, and a small fan which she held open in her hand, and which she flirted in an affectation of modesty before her face and figure.

" 'Nothing could be more grotesque or ridiculous than the sight of that tiny fan in those enormous hands, like a sceptre of weakness to a giantess so old, so hideous. The same effect was produced by the gay cotton handkerchief in contrast to the huge deformed nose, and the coarse face which made me ask myself for a moment if this were not a man in woman's dress. But no. The expression was that of a wicked woman, of a witch, of a sorceress, of one of the Fates, of a Fury. I cannot express my exact thought, but in that instant I felt that this was the cause and the justification of all the unreasonable fears which had overcome me when I had seen a woman, however innocent-looking, alone in the street at night. It would seem that, from my very birth, I had foreseen the horror of this

encounter, and that I feared it by instinct, as all living creatures are given the instinct to recognise their natural enemies, even by their approach, before ever they have received any injury from them.

" 'When I saw now for the first time this sphinx of my whole life, I did not run away, less through shame or manly pride than because I dreaded unreasoningly that my very fear would reveal to the creature that it was I, her victim, who fled, and would give her wings to pursue me, to seize me, to . . . I could not tell what I feared. Panic is a thing of itself, and has no form of thought even to shape the thing it fears or to put into words its own madness.

✶

" 'The house where I lived was at the extreme end of the street, which, as you know, is very long and narrow. Not another soul was to be seen. I was alone with that awful statue-like figure, which might annihilate me with a word. How was I to get away, to get home? I looked along to where I saw the broad well-lighted Calle de la Montera, where policemen and watchmen are on beat at all times.

" 'Finally, I do not remember how, I resolved to do something to escape from the obsession which dominated me—not to take to flight, but to creep by degrees down the street, even at the cost of years of life and health, to get away, to get nearer to my home, if I did not fall dead on the ground before reaching it.

" 'I had moved thus slowly about twenty steps along the street towards my house, when all at once a new spasm of terror seized me. I did not dare to stop, I could not look round, but what if my enemy were following me. Dared I look round? I stopped and tried to reason calmly.

" '"One or other thing must happen," thought I with the speed of lightning. "Either I have good cause for this fear, or else it is sheer madness. In the first case, this terrible witch is following me, she will overtake me, and nothing in the whole world can save me. But if this is only a craze, a mania, an access of folly, a groundless panic, then let me face it out, convince myself of its unreality, and thus be cured once for all, and never have to suffer in this way again. I shall feel certain of my silly conduct if I find that this poor old woman is still standing in the doorway sheltering from cold or waiting for the

door to be opened. Then I shall go home, and never again will I permit such groundless fears to torment me."

" 'Having almost calmed myself by this forced reasoning, I stood still and turned my head.

" 'O, Gabriel, Gabriel, how shall I convey my feelings to you at what I saw? The tall woman had followed me with soundless footsteps, she was towering over me, almost touching me with her fan, her head was bent so as nearly to touch my shoulder.

" 'Why? Ah, why, indeed? Was she a pickpocket? Was it a man in disguise? Or was it only a spiteful old woman, who saw that I was frightened and wanted to terrify me more? Was it the spectral reflection of my own cowardice? Was it the sum total of all the deceptions and shortcomings of our human nature?

" 'To tell you all the ideas which ran through my mind at that moment would be impossible. I managed to utter a yell, which roused me from my stupor as from a nightmare. I ran like a terrified child and did not stop until I was in the Calle de la Montera.

" 'Once there, all my fear fell away from me. And yet the Calle de la Montera was deserted too. I looked all along the Calle de los Jardines, the whole of which I could see, and which was sufficiently well lighted by its three lamp-posts and by the reflection from the Calle de Peligros. It would not be possible for the tall woman to hide if she had gone in that direction, but I give you my word there was not a cat or the shadow of a mouse to be seen in the whole street, not to speak of a giantess like my tormentor.

" '"She has gone into some other doorway," I thought. "But she will not be able to get away without my seeing her if she moves while the lamps are lit."

" 'Just then I saw a night-watchman coming along the Calle del Caballero de Gracia, and I called him without moving from where I stood. To explain my call and put him on the alert, I told him that there was a man disguised as a woman in the Calle de Jardines, that he had gone into that street by the Calle de los Peligros, and must have gone off towards the Calle de la Aduana; that I would remain where I was if he would go to the other end of the street, and that in that way he would not be able to escape. It would be well for us both to capture him, I said, for he must be a robber or other bad character to go about disguised at that hour.

" 'The night-watchman did as I advised. He went down to the Calle de la Aduana, and when I saw his lantern gleam at the other end of the Calle de los Jardines I went along the other side and down the next street to meet him.

" 'Neither of us had seen anything in the shape of a human being, although both of us had looked into the doorway of every house.

" ' "He must have gone into some house," said the watchman.

" ' "I expect so," I replied, opening my own door, with the firm determination to change to another street next day.

" 'I ascended the stairs to my flat on the third floor, and opened the outer door with my latch-key. I never made my servant, José, sit up for me.

" 'However, this time he was waiting up for me. My troubles were not over yet.

" ' "Is there anything wrong?" I asked him in surprise.

" 'He seemed rather agitated.

" ' "Sir," he said, "Captain Falcón was here from eleven o'clock until half-past two. He said he would come back after daylight, and that if you came back, you were to wait up for him, as he must see you."

" 'Those words filled me with new terrors. I felt as if my own death were at hand. Certainly something very serious was on foot. My dear old father had been very ill for a long time, and as he had seemed to be much worse lately, I had written to my brothers in Jaen, where all my family lived, that if matters became very serious they were to telegraph to my friend, Captain Falcón, who would let me know at once what had happened. I had no doubt now that my father was dead.

" 'I sat in an arm-chair, awaiting the dawn and my friend, who was to be the bearer of sad news. How can I express what I suffered in those long hours of waiting. Three things, all of terribly painful association, kept repeating themselves in my mind, as being inextricably connected with one another, standing apart from the rest of the world in a monstrous and terrifying group : my ruin at play, the meeting with the tall woman, and the death of my honoured father.

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" 'When six o'clock struck, Captain Falcón entered my sitting-room and looked at me in silence. I flung myself forward and he said, to calm my grief :

" ' "Weep, my friend. You have indeed cause to weep, for such a loss as this can only come once in a lifetime." '

"My friend Telesforo," continued Gabriel, after he had drained another goblet of wine, "paused when he reached this point of his story, and after a silence of some minutes went on.

" 'If this were all I had to tell you, you might not find anything strange or supernatural in it, and you might tell me what others have told me; men of much common sense of my acquaintance to whom I have spoken of it; that every person of lively imagination has his pet subject of unreasoning terror; that mine was the idea of solitary female night-walkers, and that the old woman in the Calle de Jardines was only some poor old creature who tried to ask me for alms when she was without home or food, and whom I had alarmed by my own strange demeanour; that at the worst, she could only be some associate of thieves or other bad characters, waiting in a quiet street for her companions, and fearful of their being discovered by the night-watchman.

" 'I, too, wished to believe this, and after hearing it constantly repeated, I did almost come to believe it at the end of some months. Still I would have given years of my life for the certainty of never again seeing the tall woman! And now I would give everything I have just to be able to see her once more.'

" ' But why?'

" 'Just to be able to strangle her.'

" 'I don't understand.'

" 'You will understand when I tell you that I met her again three weeks ago, a few hours before I received the fatal news of the death of my poor Joaquina.'

" 'Well, tell me about it.'

" 'There is not much more to tell. It was about five o'clock in the morning, and I had been to an entertainment where I had not been much entertained. I had the unpleasant task of breaking the news of my approaching marriage to a lady with whom I had had a very pronounced flirtation, and who took the news very ill. I had to stand many reproaches and even tears from the young widow when I explained that the position was inevitable; my resolution was taken, and my wedding-day fixed. At that moment, though I did not know it, they were burying my promised wife in Santa Agueda.

" 'It was not yet daylight, but there was that faint light in

the sky which shows that night is weakening. The street lamps had been extinguished and the watchman had retired, when, as I was passing by the Plaza de las Cortes to get to my flat in the Calle del Lobo, at the corner of the Calle de Santa Ana, who should cross my path but the terrible woman whom I had seen in the Calle de Jardines.

" 'She did not look at me, and I thought she had not seen me. The same dress, even the same little fan as when I saw her three years ago. And all my previous terror was as nothing in comparison with what took possession of me now. I walked quickly down the Calle del Prado after she had passed, but I did not take my eyes off her to make sure that she did not turn her head; and when I reached the other part of the Calle del Lobo I breathed hard as if I had just breasted an impetuous stream, and my fear giving way to satsfaction, I pressed on, thinking that I had narrowly but completely escaped the notice of the hateful witch, and that now I was free from her proximity.

" 'But just as I was about to enter my house a new terror arose. Surely she was too cunning to allow me to escape like this, and she was only feigning not to notice me in order to be able to track me with more certainty down the dark and silent Street of the Wolf and thus find where I lived.

" 'I stopped and looked round. There she was just behind me, her dress almost touching me, her eyes fixed on me, her mouth distended in a spiteful grin of triumph, as she fanned herself with an air of languor, as though ridiculing my childish terror.

" 'That fear gave place at once to the most senseless fury, to the rage of desperation, and I flung myself on the creature, seized her by the arms and dashed her against the wall. I held her back by the throat, and rained blows on her until I was obliged to desist, in the conviction that I was really dealing with a human being and a woman.

" 'She had uttered a cry of mingled pain and rage, and pretended to weep, but I felt that it was but pretence: and then fixing her hyena eyes on me, she said:

" " "Why do you treat me like this?"

" 'My anger died away and my fear returned.

" " "Do you not remember," I said, "that you have seen me elsewhere?"

" " "Indeed I do," she replied sardonically. "The night of

San Eugenio, about three o'clock, in the Calle de Jardines."

" 'I shivered involuntarily, but I still kept hold of her.

" ' "Who are you?" I asked. 'Why do you run after me like this? What do you want with me?"

" ' "I am only a poor weak woman," she said with a diabolical grin. "You hate and fear me without cause or reason. If not, will you please tell me why you were so overcome with fear the first time you saw me?"

" ' "Because I have hated you ever since I was born," I said involuntarily. "Because you are the evil spirit of my life."

" ' "So that you have known me for a long time past? Well, my son, I have known you too."

" ' "You have known me? Since when?"

" ' "Before you were born. And when I saw you pass close to me three years ago, I said to myself: 'Here he is at last!' "

" ' "But what am I to you? What are you to me?"

" ' "I am the devil," she said, spitting in my face. And with that she slipped from my grasp, caught up her skirts, and ran from my sight without making the least noise as she disappeared.

" 'It would have been madness to try to overtake her. And it was now broad daylight and many people were passing in the streets, both in San Jeronimo Square and in the Calle del Prado. The tall woman continued to run, or as it seemed to fly, until she reached the Calle de las Huertas, now gleaming in the morning sun. She stopped there and looked back at me, waving her fan at me in a threatening manner, holding it closed like a dagger, and finally she disappeared round the corner of the last street.

" 'No, just wait a moment, Gabriel. Do not give me your opinion yet, for I have not quite finished my strange tale, in which my heart and my life are equally involved. Listen to me for a few minutes longer.

" 'When I reached home, whom do you think I found awaiting me but Colonel Falcón, as he is now, and he had come to bring me the terrible news that my love, my darling Joaquina, all my hope of happiness and good fortune on this earth, had died the day before in Santa Agueda. Her unhappy father had telegraphed to Falcón, knowing what an old friend of ours he was, asking him to break the news to me . . . to me, who had guessed that a great misfortune was in store for me as soon as ever I set eyes on the curse of my life. Now you know why I

want to kill the enemy of my happiness, my born foe, that sorceress, who is the embodiment of the cruelty of my destiny.

" 'But why do I talk like this? Is she really a woman? Is she a human being at all? Why did the presentiment of her existence weigh on me ever since I was born? Why did she *recognise* me when she saw me first? Why have I only seen her when some great misfortune has happened to me? Is she the apparition of Satan? Is it Death? Is it Life itself, for me, with misery? What or who is it?'

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"Well, my dear friends, I leave you to imagine what remarks I made and what arguments I used in the effort to calm Telesforo, for all that I said was just the same as you are all thinking now and preparing to tell me, so as to prove to me that there is nothing superhuman or supernatural in my story. You will tell me more than that . . . you will say that my poor friend was not in his right mind; that he must have been always a little mad, for he evidently suffered from the moral infirmity which specialists call groundless panic, or as the case may be, intermittent delirium; that even admitting that all that he said about the woman was quite true, still it was only a case of a singular series of chance coincidences of dates and events; and that perhaps the woman was mad too, and was excited by his mania. She might have been an old rat-catcher abroad at her nightly work, or a beggar, or even a self-styled witch, as the hero of my tale said to himself in an interval of lucidity and common sense."

"That is about the truth," said the companions of Gabriel in different ways. "We have all had that idea."

"Well, just listen to me for a moment, and you will see that I was wrong in thinking that, as you are wrong now. The only person who was not wrong was Telesforo. Ah, it is much easier to talk of madness than to find an explanation of many things which happen on this earth.

★

"A few days after this conversation with Telesforo I was obliged to go to the province of Albacete in my capacity of mining engineer; and not many weeks later I heard from a contractor of public works that my poor friend had been attacked by a very severe gastric fever and jaundice. He was unable to

move from his chair, and he could not work, nor would he see anyone. His grief and melancholy were pitiable; the doctors despaired of his recovery. Then I knew why he had not answered my letters, and I applied to my old friend, Colonel Falcón, for news. What he told me was ever more and more depressing.

"After five months of absence, I returned to Madrid on the very day when the news of the battle of Tetuan arrived. I remember it as if it were yesterday. That evening I bought the *Correspondencia de España* to see the news, and the first thing my eye lighted on was the obituary notice of my poor friend Telesforo, and the invitation to all his friends to attend his funeral on the following day.

"You will readily understand that I would not willingly fail to show him this last tribute. I had a place in one of the carriages nearest to the hearse, and when we alighted in the cemetery of San Luis I noticed a woman of the poorer class, old and very tall, who laughed in a most unseemly manner when the hearse arrived, and who then advanced with an air of triumph towards the pall-bearers, pointing out to them with a very small fan the way the were to take to reach the open grave, which was to be my friend's last resting-place.

"At the first glance I recognised that this woman corresponded to the description given by Telesforo of his implacable enemy. She was just what he had described, with her enormous nose, her eyes, her hideous mouth, the printed cotton handkerchief over her head, and the tiny fan, which in her hands seemed to be the sceptre of profanity and mockery.

"She perceived at once that I was looking at her, and she fixed her eyes on me in a peculiar way, as if recognising me whilst she ascertained that I recognised her. I felt that she knew that my dead friend had told me all about the scenes in the Calle de Jardines and the Calle del Lobo. She seemed to send me a challenge, to declare that I had inherited the hatred she had borne to my unfortunate friend.

"I confess that the fear which overcame me was greater than the surprise which I felt at this coincidence. It seemed to me to be certain that some mysterious connection had existed in some supernatural way between the appalling old woman and Telesforo previous to this life; but at that moment I saw that my own life, my own good fortune, my own soul even, were in

danger if I was to inherit this strange and terrible animosity from beyond the grave.

"The woman began to laugh, pointing at me mockingly with her fan, as if she had read my thoughts and wished everyone to notice my cowardice. She made a gesture of contempt or pity, turned on her heels, and walked into the churchyard, still looking at me with her head turned over her shoulder. She fanned herself and signed to me with the fan at one and the same time, walking with mincing steps among the tombs with a sort of infernal coquetry, until at last I saw her disappear for ever in the crowded heart of the great world of the dead.

"I say 'for ever', because fifteen years have passed since then, and I have never seen her since that moment. If she was really a human being, she must be dead by now; and if she were not, if she were a supernatural creature, I feel sure that she must have scorned me too much to persecute me.

"Now, my friends. I have told you all I know. Let me have your opinion as to such strange facts. Do you think that they are quite natural?"

★

The fact now remains that every reader will have to use his own judgment as to the conclusion to which he comes, and to his own ideas and beliefs in the matter.

So I will say no more. I leave it to your judgment to solve a mystery which has never been solved to my satisfaction or that of any other person who considered the strange case. And if it must ever remain a mystery, then I have only to address the most affectionate and faithful greeting to each of the five others who with me spent that unforgettable day on the shady slope of the pine-wooded hill of Guadarrama.

NIGEL MORLAND

A HIGH AND WINDY PLACE

A wry and disturbing story of crime without passion

IT WAS a successful marriage, for a time.

Barbara was a sweet person, very sweet indeed. When they had first met at that big coming-out party, it had been one of those things.

He admitted quite frankly to himself that people do not fall in love motion picture fashion: hats over the windmill, heavy sighs, that sort of stuff.

But the chemical attraction was instantaneous, the strong sexual awareness between two people which the ancients called love at first sight. Our own, possibly more disillusioned, age would dub it 'hormonic compatability'.

They had done the usual things together, indulged in the acceptable formal motions of two people falling visibly in love.

Barbara was more comfortably placed than he was; at least, her father was Hortey's Cattle Cake — dull enough, but real middle-class security stayed by all the solid monetary investments of its kind.

Not that his people were any the less, socially. They mixed in the same circles and did the same things, but his old man never quite pulled it off. There was always money of a sort, but only just. The Horteys changed their car every year; dear old Dad only managed it every other year, and then it was not new. You know the sort of car: 'carefully run by one owner. Showroom condition'. Always second-hand.

Young people, just the same, see little difference between reasonable security and extra jam on the bread. He and

Barbara got along splendidly. His job with Chadder-Hill was a good one — publicity director. People were always crying out for houses, and Chadder-Hill were always building new housing estates. His future was undoubtedly secure.

The last Sunday in May they went up to Fair Point, a lovely place. The road ran round the breast of a great hill; from the road, on the other side, was smooth soft turf making a pleasing carpet to the edge of the Point where a guardian white picket fence was ornamental rather than practical.

Below the fence the cliff face dropped sheer to tumbled granite of some distant natural convulsion, a fearful sight for those who suffered vertigo on towering heights.

The local boys and girls loved it. You could see across three counties on a fine day; you felt ten feet high when you were up on Fair Point with a pretty girl.

Barbara agreed to marry him, there. They decided it would work out well. Socially it was made to order, one of those marriages which happen every day — enchanting girl, eligible man, right parents. Being moderns, he and Barbara slept together before marriage. That, too, was just as they wanted it. So the marriage and all its elaborate protocol was definitely on.

★

It was very successful. Everything was perfect, so very perfect . . . for a year or so.

Sometimes he would brood for a while, sitting in his car parked on the edge of the road at Fair Point. His way from the office took him along that road, if he did not mind a small detour.

It was peaceful there, particularly on cool nights when the bustling winds inquisitively fingered his car. A good place to think, and check up.

He was working too hard, getting too much stomach from too much sitting at the desk; smoking too much as well, if this business of getting puffed when he ran upstairs meant anything. And tired? Well, no, just often pretty weary. But no one ever died from over-work, did they?

When exactly did the relationship change? You allowed for the little erosions in two people linked together. Edges, people said, became rounded and smoothed by the give-and-

take of marriage. Two human beings joined together, sleeping and waking, and contracted to remain so . . . and happily so.

Then what exactly happened? Who, or what, had slipped?

Barbara was sweet, Barbara was very sweet — or was she just too damned sweet and too damned sure?

There was a curious character change in little Barbara, the gentle, the loving, the beautiful little Barbara, a queer something, a measure of gall surrounded by the sweetest syrup.

This morning, for example:

"Your eggs are all right, John?"

"Eh? Yes, darling; excellent." Quick, remember that article about making them happy — observant husbands and all that; he got it out just in time: "You know, that new housecoat has everything. You look good enough to eat."

"Do I? Thank you, John, you were glancing through that magazine last night, for some reason." Her blue eyes were guileless. "Don't tell me you read the article about complimenting your wife at breakfast, and decided to try it on me!" She giggled in that way he once loved. "How very sweet of you; *thank* you, John."

God damn it! Well, so he had read it and had never thought of saying such a thing before, and when he did learn and try it out . . .

"Sorry, darling. I did mean it, though."

"Of course you did. But don't try and fool Barbara, darling. Barbara *always* knows."

And so she did. Barbara always knew, and Barbara always damned-well let you know she knew.

Why was it, without saying one rude or harsh thing, she unfailingly managed to ruffle his fur? If it was not in some remark that diminished him, then it was in a look; sometimes she said nothing at all. She looked it, by the Lord, she looked it as if she held up a printed caption which read: You might think you know; you're being very childish, John. Barbara *always* knows so stop being a silly boy . . . Barbara k-n-o-w-s.

★

Time did not help, much. Perhaps, because things at home troubled his nerves, he never felt quite fit. Slack in a way; chewed up; dull.

Hill, the junior half of the firm's partnership, had some words to say:

"John, you need a break."

"Me? Nonsense! Work never hurt anybody." He waved to his desk. "Look at it; going like fun. Out-baskets full, and everything on schedule."

"I didn't mean that." Hill smoothed an impeccable jacket — rich, acceptable Barry Hill with all his money, his string of women, his world in his pocket. "Work's as good as ever, boy. You're not always your bright self. It's something else. Barbara all right? I mean, everything in the garden's lovely?"

"Just what eactly does that mean, Barry?"

"Nothing at all, dear fellow." Hill's eyes were shrewd and aware. "Barbara's a sweetie; everyone knows that. You haven't been quarrelling with her . . . gilt worn off the wedding-cake, and things?"

He got out of it easily enough, but there it was. Of course Barbara was a sweetie, the whole world and its brother Sam knew what a sweetie Barbara was. Such a sweetie, with her way of saying one more word than was needed. What was that wisecrack — if there was nothing more to say then she'd say it?

Wildly funny. Still, Barbara did manage to add that little bit after everything was said. It might not be much, yet it went in with the exquisite precision of a sharp knife — swift, certain, sure.

You could feel your guts knot; you could feel your mind writhing impotently; you could feel a desire to throw something hard and edged into her loving, guileless face.

It was not hate, and he was by no means ready for the psychiatric couch. He was just human, and usually wrong or doing the right thing in the wrong way. He was also a man — oh, Barbara, he so often thought and never did say, I don't want to be right or to score off you. But why in Hell don't you handle me right, tell me I'm a god when I'm a heel, give into me when I'm wrong, and stop rubbing your ineffable superiority up my nose?

Even sex wasn't the same. She was warm and desirable, as she always had been. He just could not react. Maybe he was stupid, or maybe he was out of date. Somehow, just the same, there had to be love. He never had been a man for

pick-ups or hole-in-the-corner amours — sure, he was just a damn-silly romantic bastard who wanted to have his cake and eat it.

★

And then the embers blew into blazing flame. Jennie was tall, blonde, lovely — light centred on her as if from some inner incandescence. A very nice girl indeed.

His heart stood still when he saw her; adrenalin charged his blood as if he were facing twenty simultaneous emergencies. He was in love. She was everything he wanted; she made him feel like ten million in gold all the time she was with him. Dear Jennie!

She did nothing really unusual and said nothing really unusual — just a girl, straight, bright, enchanting. But he was ten feet high again. Nor did he feel like he did when he and Barbara were in love. This was a sort of enormous something: he had never gone home filled with inner excitement because he was going to see Barbara. It happened every time with Jennie, this tense, magical exaltation before meeting her. And when he met her there was no let-down at all.

Barbara? Now there it was. She did not change. If she suspected anything she said nothing. Yet, in her curious way, she showed that Barbara knew, or, anyway, had her psychic feelers out.

She acquired a new trick of harping on something in the most innocent, the most oblique fashion:

"If I died, John, would you marry again?"

"Eh? What a hell of an idea; what's on your mind?"

"Nothing; just a thought." The way she looked at him — of course it meant nothing! — made his toes curl. "I hope you would remain faithful to my memory."

"Darling, what a thought! You know nobody could ever take your place."

"I'm so glad. There'd never be another man like you. If you ever fell in love with another woman, I'd . . ." It tailed away. Her little grimace was so loving, and behind it?

He gave a genuine shiver. "Think I'll go to bed, Babs. I'm always so damned tired. We should take a vacation."

"Why not see the doctor? Couldn't he give you a tonic?"

"Doctors!" His contempt was scalding. "I'll take my book up to bed."

It crept into his mind with the insidious smoothness of a prepared, pre-digested fact. But he would never do that! It was something you read in the newspapers about other men; they killed their wives, but not nice men, decent men . . .

★

The idea refused to go away. Jennie would wait for him, for years if needs be. She never said anything, nor did she mention Barbara. And the idea would not go away.

When you thought it over coldly and logically, what was it? You removed a human being who, otherwise, could not be removed. Your right? Barbara would never let him go, not in ten thousand years. The Barbaras never did, not with their grip and their determination that nobody was going to say they were wrong or had failed in anything.

The Barbaras would just go on, steadily eroding — she would go on, eroding him until there was nothing left, only a worn man without spirit or soul, a yes-man, a good, obedient, dutiful zombie.

With Jennie it was right. It had been right with Barbara, that he admitted, but this was right in a different way. He would be happy with Jennie; they would have children which Barbara could not have; he would lose all his tiredness, his bay-window of a stomach. His youth and gaiety would return.

If he did — not that he would ever consider such a thing — but if he did do it that way . . .well, now. It was a sin against God and against man. He would be hanged when they caught him, and poor Barbara would be dead. His stomach turned as he imagined her lying there, dead and quiet, and somehow infinitely pathetic because she was still, Barbara who had never been still in her life.

What it was in the human mind that did it only the Deity and the psychiatrists knew, that trick of compensatory balance, that power of self-justification.

The longer you lived with it the easier it became. In some inevitable, diabolical fashion Barbara promoted it all.

Instead of being loving, enchanting, seducing his mind away from itself by her behaviour, she kept right on target with the things which hardened his resolve. She was so very right at constant intervals. Then she purged and whipped him — gently of course — when he needed those few hun-

dreds for a new car, an essential loan for an essential status symbol.

"No, John: *no*! Daddy gave me that ten thousand for our old age. Supposing something happened to you. I know it's a horrible thought, but we must be practical. I couldn't touch that money, I really mustn't. I *know* you'd pay me back fifty every month because you're very good like that, but I simply couldn't bear to visit the bank and let that nice Mr. Mitchell see me drawing from my precious deposit account." He felt a veritable Attila for even making Barbara think about what it would be like, going to see Mr. Mitchell.

It was Jennie who settled everything.

"I must go, John. My father is terribly ill and I must be with him."

"You'll come back, naturally?"

"I don't think so. If I can't have you, my dear, it's very painful living close to you in this town. Perhaps, some day . . . I love you very much. I'll wait; I'll wait for ever."

"You'll wait for *me*?"

"I'll wait. When it's real, when it's for keeps . . . John, perhaps Barbara might give you a divorce, if you keep on trying. I don't mind being your woman; I love it. But I want children and so do you. We don't need legality; they do, though. It's just common decency."

. How the devil did you kill your wife? How, how, how? His mind rejected the obvious things, and the clever things. It was the natural, spontaneous thing that worked, that kept suspicion from the husband, but how did a young and very healthy . . . it entered his mind with a bullet's impact: Fair Point.

They often sat there in the car, they often stared across three counties on a fine day, the bonnet pointed towards the picket fence at the cliff edge.

★

The evil simplicity of it was incredible. If there was a devil who arranged for sin to be an easy thing, then he did it with appalling dexterity.

That very next Sunday, when the air was fresh and the sun brilliant, they lunched with the in-laws. And right in front of them all Barbara explained — not that she had told him —

how they intended to take a drive in the afternoon with perhaps a pause at Fair Point 'where darling John proposed to me'. Those smiles! Those loving glances round the table as they signalled to one another that all was well in the marriage.

They went for the drive and sat at Fair Point on the way home; it was growing late and nobody else was there.

It was pleasant, with a small persistent wind shuffling up clouds from beyond the horizon. The view was clear. They had the car off the road, pointing towards the picket fence, and through the windscreen it was a most enjoyable sight. Then Barbara began talking:

"John, I've been meaning to have a chat with you." She turned to face him, beautiful, calm-eyed, terrifying. "I really can't believe it but when I went to Fennell's for lunch . . . you remember? Well, this man I saw looked *exactly* like you. He was on the culvert bridge, kissing a blonde woman. I know it wasn't you, of course, but I can't help feeling something because when I thought it over it seemed to me . . ."

It went on with the damnable persistence of inevitability. Barbara *knows*, and the horror of it was she really did know just by adding two and two and reaching a total.

He banged the brake handle with his knee, and the car began to move.

Barbara stared at him, quite unable to speak: her wide eyes showed that she knew . . . the car moved quicker down the slope with a sort of pre-destined majesty.

He opened the door, touching the footbrake so that the car paused on the very fringe of eternity. He screamed like a maniac: "Barbara, Barbara! For the love of God — jump, *jump*!"

He knew perfectly well her unprepared reactions could not possibly be that fast. He stepped back out of the car as if he were descending from a moving omnibus.

A passing car was stopped on the road, disgorging alarmed people. A stout man began racing towards John.

"We heard you shouting to her to jump; we saw you hop out . . ." The words trailed away in the empty crash from somewhere below. It was followed by the clanking, hateful, tin-can sort of climax that put an idiot footnote to tragedy.

The stout man wriggled uneasily as the good-looking young

fellow burst into tears, not that you could blame the poor devil. Sitting there, obviously, and the car began to move. His wife, or whoever she was, stunned with fright. He lost his head, of course.

Everybody was as nice as they could be. Even Barbara's father believed it, and understood when he learned they had been necking like they used to, and why not? And John's knee on that confounded brake, accidentally knocking the handle sideways so that the rachet became disengaged and the brake handle slid back.

The coroner was sympathy itself. Police experiments showed the accident was entirely possible with one of those walking-stick handle brakes. There was one rather keen young policeman who read up a lot of criminology, and he noticed the tyre tracks on the grass of Fair Point indicated a brief brake pressure being applied at the edge of the drop. He decided it might have been panic, or even unconscious reaction: it certainly was not a thing his superiors would regard as of any real interest.

John accepted the warmth with which he was surrounded. He resolutely refused to benefit by Barbara's death and insisted, despite her will, that her money should go back to her family. Murder, yes, and it was horrible enough, but he was not going to think of what Mr. Mitchell would have said, had he gone to touch her deposit account.

★

Murder was easy. After a fashion you could live with it. You could adjust yourself and file away, under a sort of scar tissue, all that had been Barbara.

And in time it was possible to leave the town and its memories, and how everyone understood his feelings, and move away. And, after more time, marriage with Jennie.

Jennie was all you ever asked for. She was the crown of it, the apex. She was going to have your child, too. You were thankful, and resolute that the future years of your life would be in obedience to every Biblical injunction. You would do everything in your power to atone. There might be a measure of forgiveness in atonement, perhaps an easement of the small sickness at the back of your mind, the tiny sinking horror that nudged you in the unguarded moments between sleeping and waking.

Happiness, the child coming, Jennie, and our future. There would be no Mr. Mitchell, but there would be insurance to take care of them all when he retired.

Expensive, of course, but well worth it. Looking round his new home, his lovely Jennie, and what he would have — the days would be good, and peace would bring him back to his former bounding health.

★

With his hand on the telephone Dr. Travers took a last glance through the papers — these insurance examinations were always a nuisance. He anticipated the evening with real discomfort.

The young man had seemed such a pleasing type, the one who had lost his wife so tragically a few years back and now was married to that pretty blonde with her first baby on the way.

Who would be a doctor? Hard work, night calls, never quite enough money. And things like having to ask this young fellow round and explain to him what myloid leukaemia was, and in some adroit way soothe the poor chap's soul by explaining he would be lucky if he lasted a year with the few medical tricks available.

What a life! Always the nicest people got it in the neck . . .

The average modern home is the greatest incentive to house-breaking ever conceived. Window-frames, unchanged in design for many decades, with catches that can only be described as toys . . . precisely at the right height for the average-sized thief to step into the ground-floor room.

—*James Cotton*, Chief Constable of Salford.

SOLUTION TO EWMM AUGUST CROSSWORD (No. 7)

ACROSS. 1, The Black Abbot. 9, Run to seed. 10, Tooth. 11, Oasis. 12, Soda. 13, Pair. 15, Torches. 17, Proviso. 18, Encores. 20, Bulwark. 21, Cops. 22, Hero. 23, Came-O. 26, Expel. 27, Mystic-ism. 28, Rude reminders.

DOWN. 1, Turn of the Screw. 2, (D)Ennis. 3, Lion's share. 4, Creases. 5, Added up. 6, Bath. 7, Thomas-in-a. 8, Sherlock Holmes. 14, Collection. 16, Rice-paper. 19, Steamer. 20, Blo-S.S.-om. 24, Maize. 25, Fled.

an Edgar Wallace Sampler

(1)

'Your way, my dear Thery [said Manfred] is a fool's way. You for benefit; we kill for justice, which lifts us out of the ruck of professional slayers. When we see an unjust man oppressing his fellows; when we see an evil thing done against the good God . . . and against man — and know by the laws of man this evil-doer may escape punishment — we punish.'

— THE FOUR JUST MEN.

'System, my jolly old bird,' Bones said solemnly, 'is the essence of success. Havin' a definite objective, stickin' your jolly old beak to the grindstone of routine, layin' down a path an' followin' it, orderin' your days an' nights so that not a second is wasted, for, as jolly old Thingummy says, "the movin' finger writes an' all that sort of thing" . . .'

— LIEUTENANT BONES.

In the deepest pits of 'Ell
Where the worst defaulters dwell
(Charcoal devils used as fuel as you require 'em),
There's some lovely coloured rays,
Pyrotechnical displays:
But you can't expect the burnin' to admire 'em!

— WRIT IN BARRACKS.

. . . [he] did not realise that Scotland Yard is the master of London and the servant of the provinces; that it cannot move outside of its own area without invitation. He knew nothing of the jealousies which existed, or, it would be fairer to say, the *esprit de corps* of local bodies which had such

faith in their own powers of detection that the calling-in of Scotland Yard seemed an unnecessary gesture, not particularly flattering to themselves.

— THE MAN AT THE CARLTON.

. . . what was once Deptford's glory is now Deptford's slum. The great houses ring with the shrill voices of innumerable children. Floor after floor is let out in tenements, and in some cases a dozen families occupy the restricted space which, in olden times, barely sufficed to accommodate the progeny of opulent ship-chandlers.

— THE FOURTH PLAGUE.

'When you have had as much racing as I have had, and won as much money as I have won, you'll take no notice of what owners think of their horses. You might as well ask a mother to give a candid opinion of her daughter's charms as to ask an owner for unbiased information about his own horse.'

— THE JUST MEN OF CORDOVA.

'The trouble about Reeder [said Inspector Gaylor] is that you feel he does know something he shouldn't know. I've never seen him in a case where he hasn't given me the impression that he was the guilty party — he knew so much about the crime.'

— RED ACES.

'Leave 'im — 'ow can I leave 'im? I ain't married to im!'

— THE RINGER.

'I saw an American crook play up in the West End the other night [said Sergeant Elk]. It was all about who-did-it . . . but that's not police work . . . we're not introduced to the characters in the story; we don't know one. All we've got in a murder case is the dead man. What he is, who his relations are, where he came from, what was his private business — we've got to work that out. We make enquiries here, there, and everywhere . . .'

WHITE FACE.

He took a chance on race-courses, backing horses that

opened at tens and closed at twenties. He backed horses that had never won before on the assumption that they must win some time. He had sufficient money left after this adventure to buy a book of form.

— MR. JUSTICE MAXELL.

Moppin' up is war — not tanks and aeroplanes; it's fillin' up the gaps that counts an' fronts are all gaps. I'm not sayin' anything against science, but I'll believe in it when the War Office takes away the soldier's bayonet and scraps the bombin' school.

— THIS ENGLAND.

'Oh, a journalist?'

'No, a reporter. I gave up being a journalist when I got a regular job.'

— THE SQUEAKER.

The criminal mind is not a brilliant one; its view is commonplace, its outlook narrow and restricted. The average criminal lives meanly, from hand to mouth, and is without reserves, either of assistance in committing a crime or in covering his retreat.

— THE DOOR WITH SEVEN LOCKS.

'Jockey Club? Gor-lummy, there ain't a jockey that's a member of it. They wouldn't joint it. They're going about under false pretences all the time.'

— THE SQUEAKER.

It made his heart sick to see the children. He saw a race being reared with no definite object. They were crammed with information about rivers they would never see, and headlands jutting into distant waters which would never send a beam to speed or a quick-flashing ray to welcome them across the dark seas. They were parrot-like, inane, vacuous, they knew things they would never know again after their school term was expired.

— THOSE FOLK OF BULBORO'

as they will REMEMBER ME

JOHN BOLAND

Suspense drama that will bring you to the edge of your chair

THE PARSON was well into his sermon now, pounding his hands together to emphasise the awfulness of the fate awaiting transgressors. In the third pew, at the forefront of the congregation, sat the Steele family — father, mother, three sons and two daughters; the man stern-faced, impassive. For a moment the parson paused and most members of the sparse congregation turned their heads to see who had entered the chapel at this late hour. They watched avidly as, after a whispered conversation, one of the sidesmen tip-toed to the Steele's pew and handed over a note.

Reading what was on the paper, Steele nodded and turned to his wife. "Apologise for me," he whispered. Then he was moving steadily between the rows of pews, a huge, upright figure of a man in a blue serge suit that did not fit very well. Looking at the expressionless face, one or two members of the congregation shivered: Detective-Superintendent Winford Steele was an implacable enemy of crime, criminals and evil. An unbending, God-fearing man, hard and rigid in his code.

Outside the chapel a police car was waiting, its driver ready to move the moment Steele was in the passenger seat.

★

The small crowd of uniformed figures stirred as the car came into sight on the cliff road, the windscreen glinting blindingly in the hot sunshine. "Ah, Mr. Steele. Sorry to get you away from the service, but we've got a real problem." The uniformed chief inspector nodded in the direction

of the cliff. "There's a maniac holed up with a gun. And he's got a woman hostage with him. Says he'll kill her if we try to reach him."

There was no change of expression on Steele's face as he heard the news. Indeed, if there had been, the men watching him would have been surprised. One of them, a little apart from the group, a constable nearing retiring age, whispered to his companion: "You'll see some fireworks now, young Tom. Hates gunmen, does old Iron Man."

The fresh-faced probationer gazed with awe at the legendary super. "What do you reckon he'll do?"

"Like as not go in bare-handed and tear chummy into pieces."

"He wouldn't!"

"Well, not without first praying for the chap's immortal soul," the older man conceded.

Steele assimilated the facts of the matter, glancing round at the scene even as he grasped the information given to him. The edge of the cliff was about ten yards from the road; the drop almost sheer for nearly two hundred feet.

It was a beautiful day, the sky cloudless but with sufficient breeze coming off the sea to temper the sun's heat. But the wind was dying and by afternoon the rocks exposed to the sun would be too hot to touch. The armed man was on a ledge about twenty feet from the top of the cliff, a spot Steele remembered from his childhood.

"Any idea who it might be?"

"No, sir."

This particular stretch of the coast was not too popular with tourists. Normally visitors didn't come along this part of the road — the main highway by-passed it three miles inland — but already several cars were parked, their occupants staring hungrily at the scene, hoping for excitement, bloodshed, or anything that would help pass the time away. Steele stared at them. "Get those people moving," he ordered.

On hands and knees he crawled the last few inches to peer over the cliff edge. His memory had not played him false; the ledge where the gunman was hiding was shielded from view by an overhang. The rock-studded beach, one hundred and eighty feet below, shone dazzlingly; it was from the beach an approach to the ledge would have to be made.

along and up the dangerous path that had been worn in the rock by the feet of adventurous youths over the centuries.

Steele edged back. Already there were several constables on the spot. He was the man in charge; he could order any or all of them to attack once the guns drawn from headquarters had arrived. Yes, he could do that.

But he wouldn't.

He felt his stomach churn at the knowledge that one man, and one man only — himself — would have to go to face the hazard of death. As well as it being his duty, it would be expected of him. Steele knew well enough what his reputation was among his fellow policemen: he even knew the nickname they gave him. But it wasn't only in the Force that he was respected. Practically every civilian in the county knew him, many lowered their eyes deferentially when he passed by. The bishop himself had invited the Steeles to tea on one occasion.

Above the muted roar of the waves a shout rang out, followed by a shot and a scream from somewhere on the face of the grey granite cliff.

It took ten minutes to get down to the beach and find out what had happened. A white-faced constable was supporting a companion whose tunic was blood-stained. The wound was fortunately not serious; the injured man was able to tell his story.

"I — I was guarding the bottom of the track, sir," he gasped. "Suddenly he came into view. He'd got the woman with him."

Apparently, after shouting a brief threat, the gunman had fired, the bullet ploughing through the officer's right side just below the ribs and going straight out again.

"S — sir," the wounded man said. "I think I recognised him. I think it's Barney Malloy."

"*Malloy!*"

The name was gasped. Barney was on the run after a break from Dartmoor, seventy miles to the west, where he'd been serving fifteen years for armed robbery. Malloy was vicious, and knew how to handle a gun only too well. He wouldn't be taken too easily; if at all.

"He swore he'd not be taken alive again," the inspector reminded his superior.

"I don't like transgressors, and I particularly dislike transgressors with guns," Steele stated flatly.

★

The issue of firearms had arrived and the inspector waited for instructions. The spot where Malloy was holed up, assuming he was back on the ledge, was roughly in the middle of a curve in the rock face. To left and right, arms of land reached seawards, making a small cove. With riflemen stationed on either side, the gunman would not be able to escape unless he tried to swim for it; an impossible task, there were too many rocks against which the rollers pounded even in calm weather.

Steele compressed his lips. "I'm going to get him," he said conversationally. "Keep the men out of the line of fire. We don't want anyone else hurt." He tried to subdue the fierce pride that flooded him with well-being when he saw the respect and admiration in the other man's eyes. Pride was a sin; he would have to pray for forgiveness. But it was merely another evil to add to the list of his faults; he was a wicked sinner, and may the Lord have mercy on him.

But he wasn't fool-hardy as well.

"Get half-a-dozen men on the cliff top," he said calmly. "Fifteen minutes minutes from now, get them to kick up a din." It would be breaking the Sabbath peace, but it couldn't be helped. The noise he'd make scrambling over the last few yards would somehow have to be masked. He looked down regretfully at his best suit. It would never be the same again, he realised, but it would be undignified to undress in front of the men. Still, he could take off the jacket . . . but, no.

Almost as though he was marching on parade, Steele moved across the stretch of sand towards the foot of the path leading up the face of the granite cliff. The first part of the climb would be safe enough unless Malloy was still on the path. If the gunman was on the ledge he wouldn't be able to see anyone negotiating the first part of the track.

Steele was fifty feet above the jagged rocks of the beach when the bullet slammed against the cliff inches in front of his head. Fragments of stone tore round him and he dropped flat on the track, heart thumping with fear. Malloy must have the path covered.

"Lord, help me, Thy servant," he prayed, his hands wet with sweat as he peered upwards, waiting for the tearing impact of the next bullet as it struck.

"*Leave me alone, you bastards*!" The screaming voice was not far above him; Malloy was probably round the bend that lay twenty feet ahead and slightly higher.

"Throw your gun away and come down."

"Are you all right, sir?"

The super swivelled to look down at the scared inspector, crouching a few yards away on the path. "I ordered you to keep away. Can't you understand plain English?" The inspector turned and scurried off. Little as he enjoyed the prospect of coming under revolver fire, he'd prefer that to suffering Steele's displeasure. There was something about the superintendent that put one in mind of heavenly wrath; the man was more than human; if he was wounded he'd probably bleed ice-cold holy water.

The .45 revolver in Steele's right hand was like a ton weight. Every ounce of reason in his brain screamed at him to turn back: leave Malloy to be forced out by thirst or hunger, or give the desperate man time to destroy himself. Steele groaned. There was a woman to be considered.

"Are you coming down, Malloy?"

There was no answer. Either the man had retreated to the ledge, out of hearing, or he was waiting for the superintendent to show himself. "Help me," Steele prayed. "Help me make the right decision, Lord. Show me your infinite mercy and I will praise your name all my days."

★

The wind had dropped now; the sun's rays were fiery daggers, pinning him down. Not two feet away from his face blue-bottles buzzed in a cloud around a decaying banana skin, discarded by some child days before. Steele flinched from their presence; they were unclean, creatures of the devil.

Despite that, the temptation to stay where he was almost prevailed. To move meant that he might be exposing himself as a target. His stomach was knotted as he forced himself upright and began to move. On the far side of the cove, two constables with rifles saw the big figure come into view and march forward.

"There you are, mate. The responsibility of rank! That's what it is."

"You wouldn't get me to do that." The constable shook his head in admiration. "He hasn't got a nerve in his body. Can't have." It occurred to him that walking upright so bravely into possible violent death might also be put down to stupidity, but no one had ever suggested the Iron Man was stupid. At least, not in that way.

But there was no such certainty in Steele's own mind. Murderous pride was forcing him on. He knew he was in view from below and nothing, not even the imagined agony of a bullet smashing into his body, could stop him from putting first one foot forward, then the other, and holding his heavily-muscled body as erect as always.

Two more strides and he would be at the spot which would reveal him to Malloy if the gunman were lurking there. Every visible inch of rock, sand and sea stood out with remarkable clarity, as though being examined under a magnifying glass, and he was aware of a medley of sounds and smells more acute, more complex and poignant than he had ever known.

"In the midst of life . . ." he whispered to himself. And strode forward.

When he saw the empty cliff face before him the relief was so enormous he could have yelled aloud in the joy of still being alive. For the moment he was out of sight of the watchers below and he wiped the sweat from his face before going on. The next two hundred feet were steep and awkward; they isolated him completely from those on the beach.

Although he had been expecting it, the booming sound from the loud-hailer being used on the cliff-top made him start. Gulls, screeching protest, flew out wildly from their resting places in the niches on the sheer surface, their lost cries echoing above the deep boom of the distorted voice.

"*Malloy*! We're going to let down a ladder. Climb up it and we'll take care of you."

Screamed defiance, the words indistinguishable, was the only result, but as the loud-hailer was used to repeat the plea, Steele stuck the .45 in his jacket pocket and began to scramble upwards with all the speed he could muster, careless of making a noise. He was nearing the ledge now;

Malloy was not more than fifty feet ahead and ten feet higher. But the last and most dangerous hazard of all lay before him. To reach the ledge it would be necessary to round a projecting rock that narrowed the path to less than two feet in width.

Anyone rounding that projection would be exposed before being able to bring his own gun to bear. And at this point the cliff fell sheer to the rocks below the path: even a slight push and he would be over the edge. Wiping his forehead again, trying to blink his eyes clear of sweat, Steele waited. Malloy couldn't get out, but he, Steele, couldn't get in.

★

The loud-hailer was repeating the plea endlessly, the words mingling into a long, booming din, and Steele cursed himself for his stupidity in ordering it to be used without pause. It didn't seem to be distracting Malloy but at the same time it made it impossible for the detective to listen for movements made by the trapped man, to gauge where he was exactly.

Steele looked at his watch. Already he'd been keeping in shelter for over ten minutes. His wife and family would be on their way home from chapel by this time. Even though he was not with them he could picture the slow, dignified progress they would make through the streets, eyed by a hundred or more speculating watchers. But one thing was certain: the dignity of the Steele family would be upheld by his wife. She placed a true value on decent respectability, although it had taken him several years to train her into such ways.

He licked his parched lips, desperate for a drink of water. If he dallied much longer that confounded inspector would be coming up to find out what was wrong. He lowered himself prostrate, inching his head forward, right ear scraping on the path, until he could just see round the projection.

Relief flooded him with weakness as he saw Malloy's back. The fair-haired gunman, in fouled jeans and torn blue shirt, was standing staring up at the cliff-top overhang, where the loud-hailer was situated. The automatic in the man's right hand looked as big as a cannon.

Keeping his gaze on the escaped convict, Steele got to his knees. As he stood up he saw the woman beyond . . . His heart raced in shock: she was staring at him, wild with hope.

Malloy saw and whirled to face the threatened danger.

"*God damn you*!" He was berserk, his face twisted with passionate rage, and the moment he brought his gun to bear, he fired. The heavy slug hit the rock three inches from Steele's head, ricocheting off seawards.

Steele's bullet hit square in the chest, lifting Malloy back two yards before dropping him. It was a fluke. Steele was not all that good a shot, but he preferred to believe that his aim had been guided. The loud-hailer cut off and in the silence the woman's sobs were heart-rending.

It was Steele's stinging slap across her face that calmed her hysteria. "Oh, God, oh God!" She was wild and beautiful, with gypsy colouring and a classic, generous body, inadequately concealed. Steele knew her as Diana Stokes, wife of a burglar he had sent down for robbery with violence.

"How did you get mixed up with him?" he demanded fiercely. He had to shake her roughly before some sanity returned to her face.

"He — he's my husband."

"I thought you were married to Stokes?"

"I was living with him." She gave a little hiccup of fear. "He — Barney — he found out about me. He was going to kill me." She pushed the long dark hair back from her tear-stained face. The underlying greyness was fading from her cheeks now; she was recovering from the ordeal with the rapidity of an animal that had escaped danger. In another minute or so she would be normal.

Ignoring the agonised whispers from overhead, as the sergeant up there tried to find out what was happening beneath the overhang, Steele stooped beside the woman. "Because of Stokes?" he insisted.

"No. He thought there was someone else."

Suddenly she had her arms round his legs. "Darling," she pleaded wildly. "I didn't tell him. I didn't, I swear. I've never told a soul."

Steele straightened, brushing away her clinging arms. At any second now someone would come pounding into sight, bent on finding out what was going on.

"Don't you believe me?" she cried.

The big man brushed off his blue serge; it was merely dusty, not damaged in any way. Watched by her enormous

brown eyes he went across to the corpse and took the automatic from the relaxed hand. With the gun in his hand he walked back to the woman and thrust the muzzle against her body, below and between her breasts, then squeezed the trigger.

Even as she fell he fired his own revolver out over the sea.

"*Got him*!" he shouted. "It's all over."

As he waited for the others to join him, Steele stared down, frozen-faced, at the dead woman. She said she hadn't told Malloy.

Well, now she would never tell anyone.

Vignette from Life (5)

Vietnam Episode

CHRISTOPHER CURTIS

A bold and honest picture of unusual events behind the battle-ground

SAIGON WAS a gay town when the French had it. People had time to stop and stare, to smile, to be happy.

That was when the country was Indochina. Nowadays it is Vietnam; politically earnest; packed with theories; solid with windy philosophies.

My stay there was for eight months just over a year ago. I lived in a dreary walk-up flat a few yards along the road from the smart six-floor glass-house belonging to the U.S. Information Service.

It was my chief contact with U.S. policy, via a pleasant man from Denver named Castello. He was one of the cleverest news-tasters I've ever met, and very intelligent on affairs and trends. He was killed last year in one of those bombing tragedies which are a Saigon commonplace.

Life on the Delta wasn't too boring. The Vietcong usually did something nasty every day. There were town scandals (quite inevitable with such an influx of Americans and Europeans). If there was no spot news, some ship generally managed to ground itself going down or coming up the river — it made for cheerful, harmless fun.

As a freelance journalist on a loose assignment from an American newspaper, I got paid on lineage. Now and then a bonus came along for something good, but generally I lived a puritan life: men are usually puritans not from conviction or highfalutin reasons, but because they are either broke or they have too much money.

I had enough, just the same, to take an occasional girl out

to dinner on that romantic houseboat where the food was not unlike the *Grand Comptoir* in Paris. Once I managed a long weekend in Cambodia where life was still feudal, like the old Far East my father knew when the peasantry touched forelocks to the white folk instead of knifing them.

Then I landed in bad trouble. I sent a dispatch to my paper after a jaunt on the town with an English friend. Choler, I suppose. My sinning paragraph read:

> The Americans mean well. They just have neither the dedication nor the experience to conclude the Vietnam war successfully. The British have the know-how and could sort out this country in a year, but they won't touch it. It's another Korea. The Vietcong will bring the U.S. to a standstill, and Vietnam will duly be divided, treaty-wise, by a permanent line of demarcation running east and west across the land about the level of Nha-trang.

I hold no brief for the Commies, but that was my frank opinion and I offered it. My dismissal arrived within twenty-four hours of filing my dispatch to New York.

★

It served me right. Pontificating big-mouths like me deserved the stick. But Saigon was no place in which to be job-less, particularly when you've been riding the Americans. They are nice people, yet touchy about policy. It was all round town, via some cable clerk, that I had spoken out of turn, which tactful Limeys did not do.

That night I had a caller, a stout, jovial Vietnamese I called Bill Nghia, easier than his full name. He worked as a reception clerk in a big main street hotel.

I was just climbing under my mosquito net when the door buzzer went, and there was Bill.

"All right if I come in?"

"Welcome. I was just going to bed."

"Won't keep you long." He showed his splendid teeth at me; he spoke English better than I did, and four other languages. "Bit of trouble?"

"Me? Blowing my top. I do, sometimes. The Americans are—"

Bill raised one brown palm.

"*Vive les Américans; vive les* everybody else. No politics;

business is always business. How's money, Chris?"

"Sticky. I can live here for three months, or get a ticket for home tomorrow. I thought of going to Hong Kong. The *Mail* is looking for a sub. I could try it."

In the end it seemed that Bill Nghia could put something in my way, a spot of legal hi-jacking. He was acting either out of expediency or charity. I don't know. He surprised me, though. I always thought him a sissy little man, bland as Tiger Balm.

It turned out he, and a friend of his named Huu, had bought a load of goods as a side-line from a hard-shelled Karen trader who wouldn't deliver. Bill had a receipt which looked kosher. He offered me a hundred dollars American to grab his goods from the Karen, who was intending to sell them for higher money to somebody else, monkey-business but business after all.

Bill wanted fast action. That meant dressing and going out into the hot garlic-and-dust scented town — Saigon at night is a cross between the Barbary Coast in 1905 and Times Square on July 4th.

Bill had to get back to his desk. I went off. Even with an advance of dollars in my pocket, and the thrice-armed primness of the righteous man to sustain me, I felt uneasy at every brown-clad policeman in the streets. And there were a lot of them that night, totin' guns like an ancient Dodge City movie which made me feel personally guilty of nameless misdeeds, or a parking offence.

The address I had was down by the docks. That was rough. Several ships had come in that day. The dockland section had an overflow of seafaring men enjoying themselves. Harmless, yes, but it was easy to step innocently on some fighting drunk's toes.

The Karen lived over a ship's-chandler (the window was full of the right mercantile junk: the shop-sign proclaimed with guileless innocence: *Chok-Nyi, Ships Done Change monnäie*).

The stairs had been a local convenience for years. At the top the air was stiff with ugly smells. I tried one door. Locked. I tried another, which opened.

There was a little old man in a tattered blue cotton gown huddled in a corner, quite dead, a knife still in his chest.

The foul room was otherwise empty. There was a small roped packing case in one corner.

Bill had described the case, which his friend Huu had already seen. The markings I was told about tallied. The numbers quoted on Bill's receipt were stencilled on the wood.

★

In Saigon a wise man keeps his nose very clean. The government, understandably, is touchy about a lot of things. This percolates down to the police, who are trigger-happy to a man.

Being in a room with a dead native, and freshly dead by the look of the blood, wasn't clever on my part if I was seen: the local law would be after me, or, if the Karen was friends with the Fatherland Front the Vietcong would sort me out. But I wanted my fee and the extra hundred Bill had promised to lend me to set me on my feet in another town.

I grabbed up the case and nearly slipped a disc. It was only eighteen inches by eighteen, but heavy as lead. I tried again, hoisted it up. And got out quick.

There were plenty of people in the street: native-wise they were all staring at me man-handling a packing-case in a town where most white men don't lift anything heavier than a pay packet.

The case was killing me. My back felt broken and my hands almost raw. I decided the thing held gold, a common enough smuggling commodity in Vietnam. If it was, Bill Nghia was going to pay me double. But first I had to reach him. He expected me by six that morning in the flat he shared with Huu.

There was a policeman with his cap at an acute slant sauntering after me by now. He was young, good-looking, and out for kudos, which might mean me.

As nonchalantly as I knew how, hauling that ton weight, I eased round a corner. There was an empty pedi-cab standing in the gutter, in charge of a thin-looking man in a high-neck tunic, probably Annamite. He had a kind face. When I addressed him he answered in excellent French.

I said I was in a hurry, perhaps in trouble, and gave him ten dollars American, which was riches. He seemed reluctant then observed my dismay when the cop appeared, his chin

cocked agressively, at the end of the street. Never a man, woman or child came out of Annam who wouldn't, at the drop of a penny, delight in scoring off the police.

My pedi-cab coolie thrust me in, nearly killed me when the case jounced in my lap. He went off with a jerk I never imagined his skinny arms could manage.

The cop went sour on the whole situation. He screamed for us to stop in French, English and Vietnamese. I howled, '*Vite*! *Vite*!' at the coolie, and '*Speshite*!' and '*Juldi*!' to placate any political ears within hearing.

We took the corner on one wheel, slid between a sports-car driven by an evil-faced Chinese youth, and a trundling vegetable barrow. The street emptied in possibly one second flat when the policeman's gun banged out. Whatever he hit is wasn't me but somebody howled. I hoped it was a long-shoreman; they loved to hamstring cops with their little cargo-hooks.

We got away and reached the back of the Parliament building where Bill lived in one of those smart new jerry-built blocks that had all the personality of a beehive. I was so relieved I handed over twenty dollars. I was warmly thanked and, with a sense of humour rare in Asia, my thin friend told me he thought he'd join the Vietcong if this was what happened on a quiet night in Saigon.

★

Bill was alone, and highly alarmed when he heard my story. He thought the description of the dead man sounded like the Karen. But he had no clue as to why he should be murdered.

"For this blasted gold," I told him in a sour voice. "I might've been arrested, or shot."

When a Vietnamese laughs hysterically it's like a teenager after a go at the marijuana. I thought Bill Nghia would split something. He stopped at last, intimidated by my expression.

Without a word he found a screwdriver and got the top boards off the case. Inside, under paper, was a solid mass of what looked like cards. He hauled some out and handed them across.

I riffled through. I could feel my ears turning bright-red.

"These are pornographic postcards, dammit!"

"Feelthy pictures, Chris; you like, huh?" Bill was off again, rolling on the day-bed. I had to kick him to get sense from him.

"My friend Huu, and I, we bought this consignment," he explained. "We'll make a stunning profit up-country. The Commies pay big money for them, and for dirty books. There's a fortune in it, if you don't get caught — it's a good spare-time racket, and the boys round Hanoi are mad about any sort of pornography, a relief, I imagine, from the Party's pap."

It was only Bill's gift of another hundred dollars that cheered me up. As he said, I'd got his case and he'd make a few thousand dollars out of it. But he thought it might not be long before the young policeman would be touring every place where white people went, looking for me.

I was on a *Messageries Maritimes* ship two days later with all my possessions, Hong Kong-bound and using my head. If the South Vietnamese authorities radioed for me to be held, the French, whose colonial teeth were still on edge, would have politely told them to drop dead . . . and thrown me off the ship to preserve protocol at the first port of call, which was Hong Kong.

Lady Patterly's Lover

C. M. MacLeod

A pert tale that ironically pictures what happens when the Establishment turns to murder . . .

"WE'D BE doing him a kindness, really," said Gerald. "You do see that, don't you, Eleanor?"

Lady Patterly ran one exquisite hand idly through the thick, fair hair of her husband's steward. "I'd be doing myself one. That's all that matters."

Beautiful, completely spoiled as a child, at twenty-one married to the best catch in London, at twenty-three the wife of a helpless paralytic, at twenty-four bored to desperation; that, briefly, was Eleanor, Lady Patterly. When old Ponsonby had died and her husband's close friend Gerald had come to manage the Patterly estates, she had lost no time in starting an affair with him. Discreetly, of course. She cared nothing at all for the world; but she was vain enough to care greatly for the world's opinion of her.

Gerald had been only too willing. As handsome as Eleanor was lovely, he had the same complete lack of scruple, the same cold intelligence, the same passionate devotion to his own interests. He took the greatest care of his old friend's property; because he soon realised that, with Eleanor's help, he could easily make it his own. It was he who suggested the murder.

"The killing part is the easiest. A pillow over his face, a change of medicines, nothing to it. The important thing is not to get caught. We must see that nobody ever suspects it of being anything but a natural death. We'll take our time, prepare

the groundwork, wait for exactly the right moment. And then, my love, it's all ours."

Lady Patterly looked around the drawing-room with its priceless furnishings, through the satin-draped windows to the impeccably-tended lawn. "I shall be so glad to get out of this prison. We'll travel, Gerald. Paris, the Lido, Hong Kong. I've always had a fancy to see Hong Kong."

They would do nothing of the kind, thought Gerald. He was too good a steward not to stay and guard what would be his. But he only smiled and replied, "Whatever you want, my sweet."

"It will be just too marvellous," sighed the invalid's wife. "How shall we go about it?"

"Not we, darling. You."

★

After all, it would be Eleanor, not he, who would inherit. Unless he married her afterwards, he hadn't the ghost of a claim. And suppose she changed her mind? But she wouldn't. With the hold of murder over her, she could be handled nicely. But if he were fool enough to do the job himself . . . Gerald was no fool.

"I shall continue to be the faithful steward. And you, my dear, will be the dutiful wife. A great deal more dutiful than you've been up to now."

Lady Patterly inspected her perfect fingernails, frowning. "What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to start showing some attention to your husband. Don't overdo it. Built it up gradually. You might begin by strolling into his room and asking how he's feeling."

"But I do, every morning and evening."

"Then do it again, right now. And stay for more than two minutes this time."

"Oh, very well. But it's so depressing."

"It's not all jam for old Roger, either, you know."

"How sententious of you, darling. Right, then. Shall I hold his hand, or what?"

"Why don't you read to him?"

"He loathes being read to."

"Read to him anyway. It will look well in front of the nurse. That's your objective, Eleanor, to create the impression of devotion among the attendants. You must be able to act the

bereft widow convincingly when we — lose him."

His mistress shrugged and turned toward the stairs.

"Oh, and Eleanor," Gerald lowered his voice yet another pitch. "We'd better postpone our meetings until it's over. We mustn't take any risk whatever. And don't be surprised if I start a flirtation with one of the village belles."

She arched one delicately pencilled eyebrow. "Have you picked out anybody special?"

"One will do as well as another. Protective camouflage, you know. It's only for a few weeks, darling." He turned the full force of his dazzling smile on her, and went out.

Eleanor stood for a moment looking out the window. It was hard on Roger, of course. Still, she had her own future to think of. Her husband had offered her a divorce as soon as the doctors had told him the sports-car smash-up had left him paralysed for life. Naturally, she had refused. It wouldn't have looked well; and besides, the settlement he had offered was not her idea of adequate support. No, she would have it all. She and Gerald. It was really clever of Gerald to have found the way. She arranged her features in exactly the right expression of calm compassion, and went to inquire after her husband.

★

Day by day she increased the length of time she spent in the sick-room. It was not so tedious as she had anticipated. For one thing, Roger was so glad to have her there. She took to bringing him little surprises: some flowers, a few sun-warmed strawberries from the garden. She had the gramophone brought into his room, and played the records they had danced to when they were first married. Nurse Wilkes beamed. Marble, the valet, scowled distrustfully. She found herself looking forward to her visits, planning the next day's surprise, thinking of new ways to entertain the invalid. The weeks went by, and Gerald began to fidget.

"I say, don't you think we ought to be getting on with it?"

"I thought you said we mustn't rush things." And she went past him into Roger's room, carrying a charming arrangement of garden flowers she had got up early to pick with the dew on them.

As usual, she took up the book she had been reading aloud, and opened it to her bookmark. Her eye, now attuned to Roger's every expression, caught a tightening of the muscles

around his mouth. She put the book down.

"You hate being read to, don't you, Roger?"

"It's just that it makes me feel so utterly helpless."

"But you're not. There's nothing at all the matter with your eyes. From now on, you'll read to yourself."

"How can I? I can't hold the book. I can't turn the pages."

"Of course you can. We'll just sit you up, like this —" Eleanor slid one arm under her husband and pulled him up. "Nurse, let's have that back-rest thing. There, how's that?" She plumped a pillow more comfortably. "Now we'll prop the book up on the bed table, like this — and lift your arm, like this — and slip the page between your fingers, so that you can hold it yourself." A pinching of the right thumb and forefinger was the only movement Lord Patterly could make. "And when you've finished with a page, we just turn it over, like this. See, it works beautifully."

"So it does." He looked down at his hand as though it were a miracle. "That's the first thing I've done for myself since it happened."

For the next half-hour, Roger read to himself. Eleanor sat at his side, patiently moving his hand when he signalled that he was ready, helping to slide the next page into his grasp. She found the monotonous task strangely agreeable. For the first time in her life, she was being of use to someone else.

When Marble brought the patient's lunch and Nurse Wilkes came forward to feed it to him, she waved the woman away.

"He'll feed himself today, thank you, Nurse."

And he did, with Eleanor setting the fork between his thumb and forefinger and guiding his hand to his mouth. When he dropped a morsel, they laughed together and tried again.

★

At last Lady Patterly left Nurse Wilkes clucking happily over a perfectly clean plate and went to get her own lunch. Gerald was waiting for her.

"I've got it all figured out, darling," he whispered, as soon as they were alone. "I've been reading up on digitalis. The doctor's been leaving it, I know, on account of that heart of his. All we have to do is slip him an extra dose, and out he goes. Heart failure. Only to be expected in a paralytic."

To her own surprise, Eleanor protested. "He is not helpless. He's handicapped."

"Rather a nice distinction in Roger's case, don't you think, sweet? Anyway, there we are. You've only to notice which is the digitalis bottle, watch your chance, and slip a tablespoonful into his hot milk, or whatever they give the poor bloke."

"And what happens when Nurse Wilkes notices the level of the medicine's down in the bottle? Not clever, Gerald."

"Dash it, you can put in some water, can't you ?"

"I suppose so." Eleanor pushed back her plate. "I'll have to think about it."

"Think fast, my love. I miss you."

Gerald gave her his best smile; but for some reason her heart failed to turn over as usual. She got up. "I'm going for a walk."

She started off aimlessly, then found herself heading toward the village. It was pleasant, swinging along beside the grassy-bordered lane feeling her legs respond to the spring of the turf under her feet. Roger had loved to walk. For the first time since the accident, Eleanor felt a surge of genuine pity for her husband.

She turned in at the bookshop. It was mostly paper-backs and greeting cards these days; but she might find something Roger would enjoy, now that she'd found a way for him to manage reading.

"That was rather bright of me," she though with satisfaction. She liked recalling the look on Roger's face, the beaming approval of Nurse Wilkes, the suspicious pleasure in old Marble's eyes as he had watched his master feeding himself.

"There must be any number of things I could help him do," she mused. "I wonder how one goes about it."

She went up to the elderly spinster in charge. "Have you any books on—what do you call it, working with handicapped people? Exercies, that sort of thing."

"Physical therapy," Miss Jenkins nodded wisely. "I do believe there was something in that last lot of paper-backs. Ah, yes. Here we are."

Eleanor riffled through the pages. "This seems to be the general idea. But don't you have something that goes into greater detail?"

"I can always order it for you, Lady Patterly."

"I wish you would, as soon as possible."

"Of course. But—excuse me, Lady Patterly—we all understood his lordship was quite helpless."

"He is not!" Again, Eleanor was astonished at her own

reaction. "He was sitting up in bed reading by himself this morning, and he ate his own lunch. You can't call that helpless, can you?"

"Why—why, no, indeed. Good gracious, I can't believe it! Nurse Wilkes said—"

"Nurse Wilkes says entirely too much," snapped Eleanor. She would have a word with Nurse Wilkes.

She walked back slowly, studying the book page by page. It seemed simple enough. Manipulating the patient's limbs, massage, no problem there. If only they had a heated swimming pool. But of course, Roger wouldn't be ready for that for ages yet. And by then, she and Gerald—Gerald was getting a bit puffy about the jawline. She'd noticed it at lunch. Those big, beefy men were apt to go to flesh early. He ought to start exercising. No earthly good suggesting it to him. Gerald made rather a point of being the dominant male. Roger was much more reasonable.

★

Roger was positively boyish about the exercises. When the doctor dropped around for his daily visit, he found them hard at it. Roger pinching Eleanor's fingers while she swung his arm high over his head.

"See, Doctor, he's holding on beautifully."

"She's going to have me up out of this in a matter of weeks."

The doctor looked from one to the other. There was colour in Lord Patterly's face for the first time since the accident. He had never seen her ladyship so radiant. Why should he tell them it was hopeless? Life had been hard enough on them. Anyway, who knew? There was always the off chance the long bed rest had allowed some of the damaged nerve-ends to grow back together.

"By all means go on," he said. "Just take it a bit slowly at first. Remember that little heart condition.

Eleanor suddenly thought of Gerald and the digitalis. Her face became a mask. "I'll remember," she said tonelessly.

"Oh, nonsense," laughed her husband. "Evervone's got these idiotice hear murmurs. My father had, and he lived to seventy-two. Gerald has, and look at him. Shoots, swims, rides, all that."

"Gerald had better watch himself," said the doctor. He picked up his bag. "Well, the patient seems to be in good hands. You're doing splendidly, Lady Patterly, splendidly.

Don't be dismayed if progress is a bit slow. These things take time, you know."

"Time," smiled Lord Patterly, "is something of which we have plenty. Haven't we, darling?"

His wife smoothed his pillow. "Yes, Roger. All the time in the world."

"I'll leave you to it, then." The doctor moved toward the door. "Watch his pulse, Nurse. Give the usual injection of digitalis if it seems advisable after the exercises. You have the hypodermic ready, of course?"

"All in order, Doctor. Ready to hand on the bed-table if need arises.

Gerald was right, Eleanor thought as she gently kneaded the wasted muscles of her husband's arms. It would be easy. Too easy. She drew the covers up over him. "There, that's enough. I don't want to wear you out the first day. Shall I put on some music?"

"Please."

She had taken to playing classical records for him. It whiled away the time in the sick-room, sitting beside the bed, letting the long waves of melody sweep over her, day-dreaming of all the things she would do when she was free. Today, however, she found her mind dwelling on more homely pictures. People's faces. Miss Jenkin's, when she had dropped her little bombshell at the bookshop. The doctor's, when he had found her giving Roger therapy. Her husband's, now, as he lay with his eyes closed, the long afternoon shadows etching his features in sharp relief. He was as good-looking as ever, in spite of everything. That jaw would never be blurred by fat. What would it be like, living in this house without Roger? She tried to imagine it, and could not.

★

After dinner the following evening, Gerald suggested a walk. "You're looking peaked, Eleanor. Needn't stay cooped up with your patient forever, you know."

His double meaning was plain. She rose and followed him out the French windows to the terrace.

"Rather an inspiration of yours, that physical therapy thing."

"What do you mean?"

"Easy enough to overdo a bit. Make the heart attack more plausible, eh?"

She did not answer.

He went on, confident of his power over her. "You were right about the digitalis, I decided. I've thought of something even better. Potassium chloride. I was a hospital laboratory technician once, you know. One of the jobs I batted around in after they turned me down for the army. Rum, when you come to think of it. I mean, if it hadn't been for my wheezing heart, I shouldn't have drifted into this post; and if it weren't for Roger's, I shouldn't be—getting promoted, shall we say? Anyway, getting back to the potassium chloride, it's reliable stuff. Absolutely undetectable. Do an autopsy, and all you find is a damaged heart and an increased potassium rate. Exactly what you'd expect after a fatal coronary attack."

"Gerald, must you?"

"This is no time to turn squeamish. Especially since it's you who'll be giving it to him."

"Don't be a fool. How could I?"

"Oh, I don't mean directly. We'll let Nurse Wilkes do that. She keeps a hypodermic of digitalis on the bedside table, ready to give him a quick jab if he needs it."

"How did you know that?"

"Don't forget, I'm the dear old pal. I've been a lot more faithful about visiting Roger than you ever were, until your recent access of wifely devotion. Nurse Wilkes and I are great chums."

"I can imagine." Men like Gerald were always irresistible to servant girls and barmaids and plain, middle-aged nurses. And rich women with nothing to do.

"I took careful note of the type of hypodermic syringe she uses," Gerald went on. "Yesterday, when I was in London, I bought one just like it at one of the big medical supply houses, along with some potassium chloride and one or two other things, so it wouldn't look too obvious. Dropped in beforehand to visit some of my old pals at the hospital, and pinched a lab coat with some convincing acid holes in it. Wore it to the shop, and they never dreamed of questioning me. I went into a public lavatory, filled the syringe, and got rid of the rest of the stuff in various places on the way back to the station."

"You think of everything, don't you, Gerald." Eleanor's throat was dry.

"Have to, my love. So there we are. I give you the doings, all ready for use. You watch your chance tomorrow morning

and switch syringes. Then you put old Roger through his paces till he works up a bit of a pulse, back off, and get ready to play the shattered widow. The stuff works in a couple of minutes. And then it's all ours."

"It's all ours now," said Eleanor suddenly. "Mine and Roger's."

"I—say! You're not backing out on me, are you?"

"Yes, I am. I won't do it, Gerald."

No woman had ever refused Gerald anything before. His face wrinkled like an angry baby's. "But why?"

"Because I'm not quite the idiot I thought I was. You're not worth Roger's little finger."

It was astonishing how ugly Gerald could look. "And suppose I go to Roger and explain that your loving wife act was just a build-up for murder? Suppose you're caught with the evidence? You will be, Eleanor. I'll see to that."

"Don't be ridiculous. What would you get out of it?"

"You forget, my love. I'm the old boyhood chum and devoted steward. I'll be the chap who saved his life. With no wife to inherit, Roger just might be persuaded to put me down for something handsome."

"And how long would he survive the signing of the will?"

"That won't be your concern, my sweet. You'll be where you can't do a thing about it."

Eleanor stared at him, frozen-faced. He began to wheedle.

"Oh, come on, old girl. Think of the times we'll have on dear old Roger's money. You don't plan to spend the rest of your life in that bedroom, do you?"

"No," said Eleanor, "I don't." Her mind began racing wildly with pictures of Roger being carried down to the terrace on a cot to get the morning sun, Roger being pushed around the grounds in a wheel-chair, Roger taking his first steps on crutches. And some day, Roger and she walking together where she and Gerald were walking now. It would happen. She knew it would; because it was what she wanted most in all the world, and she always got what she wanted. It was only necessary to go about it intelligently.

"Very well, Gerald," she replied. "Give me the syringe."

"Come down to the shrubbery first, where we can't be seen from the house."

She hesitated. "It's full of wasps down there."

He laughed and steered her towards the dense screen of

bushes. Once hidden, he took the instrument out of his pocket. "Here you are. Be sure to handle it with your handkerchief, as I'm doing, so you won't get fingerprints on it. Now, have you got it all straight?" He rehearsed her again in every detail.

"Yes, Gerald," she said at last. "I know exactly what to do."

"Good. Then you'd better go back to the house and tuck Roger in. I'll stroll about the grounds for a while longer. We oughtn't to be seen going back together." He blew a kiss and turned to leave her.

"Wait, Gerald. Don't move," said Eleanor sharply. "There's a wasp on the back of your neck."

"Swat it, can't you?"

Lady Patterly's hand flashed up. "Oh, too late. Sorry, that was clumsy of me. Did it sting badly?"

★

She left him rubbing his neck, and walked easily across the terrace. The barrel of the hypodermic syringe felt pleasantly smooth in her hand. She lingered a moment by the garden well, idly dropping pebbles and listening to them plop into the water far below. If one plop was slightly louder than the rest, there was nobody but herself to hear it. She went in to her husband.

"How are you feeling tonight, Roger?"

"Like a man again. Eleanor, you don't know what you've done for me."

She slipped one hand over his. "No more than a wife should, my dear. Would you like to read for a while?"

"No, just stay with me. I like to look at you."

They were sitting together in the gathering twilight when the gamekeeper and his son brought Gerald's body back to the house.

"How strange," Eleanor observed to the doctor half an hour later. "He mentioned his heart again this evening. It kept him out of the army, he told me. But I'm afraid I didn't take him seriously. He always looked so healthy."

"That's always the way," said the doctor. "It's this big, hearty chaps that go in a flash. Now, his lordship will probably live to ninety."

Lady Patterly smoothed back her husband's hair with a tender hand. "Yes," she said, "I don't see why he shouldn't."

NEW BOOKS

JOHN de SOLA

CASE OF THE SWINGING SKIRT, The, Erle Stanley Gardner (*Heinemann*, 15*s*.)

This time Perry Mason skims so close to disbarment that it is a veritable miracle of adroitness on Mr. Gardner's part when Perry does not slip, particularly as he is in Della Street's bad books as well. This one is about a singing cigarette-girl who is up for the alleged shooting of a jealous wife. Told with the zest, the speed, and the expertise that makes ESG so magnificently readable.

DARK TRADE, The, Anthony Lejeune (*Macdonald*, 16*s*.)

Adam Gifford, who combines journalism on *The Morning News* with some Secret Service jobs as a sideline, is that interesting fictional being, a real reporter who works on a real newspaper. The story is a good one, stemming from industrial espionage. The plot is exciting and the answer reasonable. A readable book indeed, even if this reviewer was slightly alarmed for Gifford's hero-image at the way he lobbed that bomb.

END OF A PARTY, Hillary Waugh (*Gollancz*, 16*s*.)

'The Gilmore Slaying' is violently headlined by the newspapers after the party in question, and the mystery which stems from it is very well written, if with mild irony. Set in Connecticut with backgrounds well drawn, this is an immensely engaging book. Two opinions must be offered, however — the events on the opening page will badly date a subsequent cheap edition, and the résumé in chapter 28 is a form of recapitulation every crime writer worth his salt long ago dropped along with guilty butlers and 'had I but known'.

GOOD CITIZENS, The, John Boland (*Harrap*, 16*s*.)

John Boland, whom *EWMM* readers seem to love like a brother, has done it again with that impeccable sense of pity for his characters which marks his writing. This time a Fleet Street man who loves drink too well delves into a mystery set in the deepest countryside where a peculiar, evil family

is a sort of collective 'Ma Barker' to hoodlum-youths of the locality. The background is beautifully drawn, the eerie unease of it being spine-chilling.

JOKER TAKE QUEEN, Bruce Munslow (*John Long*, 15*s*.)

After a somewhat turgid opening page this story gets to work with speed and dispatch. Someone hangs Bonny Smith to a tree with a history in the deep country, dressing her up in no uncertain manner. Enter, as they say, Chris Knight, creator of that famous private eye, Johnny Golightly (nice name). Author Knight acquits himself well, emulating his own private eye, and the book is very enjoyable. But, surely, would even so obviously a yellow newspaper as *The Daily Glare* write quite as shakingly as its report on page 182?

MAY YOU DIE IN IRELAND, Michael Kenyon (*Collins*, 16*s*.)

Anything set in Ireland is generally unreal and the people often arouse in the insular English breast of this reviewer a feeling combining affection, patronage and the belief that any-

thing will happen and — Alice in Wonderland-wise — does. This gay story concerns a professor from Chicago who inherits a country house in Ireland, and enters into possession of it with a notion that all the devils in hell, and the Little People, are after him, while mayhem and violence beset him. A first novel packed with promise; the inevitable flaws will iron out with experience when Mr. Kenyon should become a top-flight crime writer.

MODESTY BLAISE, Peter O'Donnell (*Souvenir Press*, 18*s*.)

Were this reviewer given to such phrases, the only way for him to sum up this book is in the graphic word, 'Crumbs!' Modesty, of the cartoons, is not unknown but this violent, vehement and even vigorous tale is pure Spillane in its uproar. Most definitely not for that nice maiden aunt who dotes on Christie.

MURDER ON THE NIGHT FERRY, Bryan Edgar Wallace (*Hodder*, 16*s*.)

The author's fifth book concerns a French student who scents a possible plot in some demonstrations in Paris against the United States. He heads for London to inform the British Secret Service, and is murdered on the *wagon lits*. There is plenty of action and speed in the resulting plot, and some tautly vigorous writing. But one ventures to wonder if the violent mob in Trafalgar Square would have been silenced by the heroine's last minute strategem — possibly, but in these sophisticated, completely disillusioned days? Yes, perhaps, the very ingenious charm of the gesture . . .

NICE PLACE TO DIE, A, Maurice Culpan (*Collins*, 15*s*.)

Another first crime novel, of the school that tends to make the reader suspicious by opening with a weather report. This is eased by the stabbed corpse appearing on the second page, and the story hurtles into Penruthan's 'first murder for 24 years'. It is well told and the pen-pictures of the locals suitably etched in mild acid. Promising.

ONLY THE RUTHLESS CAN PLAY, Jonathan Burke (*John Long*, 15*s*.)

A murder story about a Company man, a big-business product more common in the United States than in this still

innocent island, but the breed is increasing, and Mr. Burke knows it well. And draws the pitiless, quite revolting Company with great skill. The body is in no hurry to appear, but the Company and its executive course are so enthralling one forgets this is a mystery. Full marks for an off-beat, vividly done tale.

SLADD'S EVIL, Philip McCutchan (*Harrap*, 18*s*. 6*d*.)

When Mr. McCutchan's character, author Graham Sawbridge, cannot live or keep his daughter on his royalties, he joins an organisation, Woodville Developments, whose activities are scarcely legal, and . . . Out of this Mr. McCutchan has fashioned a beautifully written tale, elegantly contrived and with thrills as well as horror, such as in the petrifying curtain chapter. It is to be hoped that the members of the Crime Writers' Association, who find it hard to live on *their* royalties, will not profit by Sawbridge's case, though the money was good . . .

STILL AS THE GRAVE, Mary Linn Roby (*Collins*, 15*s*.)

And another first novel about which this reviewer wishes he could say only nice things. Unfortunately it is not possible. This story of ageing stage-star Kate Wakefield concerns her intention of murdering her husband when he falls for a young girl in his theatre company (a positively dreary young woman). It is possible a woman of Kate Wakefield's character and temperament *might* write her story as this is written, but it is novelettish and, despite the adroit ending, unreal. Perhaps all this is no more than first-book pains, and Miss Roby's next will be much better?

TO FEAR A PAINTED DEVIL, Ruth Rendell (*John Long*, 15*s*.)

Mrs. Rendell has the same knack for creating horror as Ursula Curtiss, but does it with an individuality of her own. Her dialogue is immensely readable. The plot, which has as a fulcrum, a most unpleasant painting, is perhaps subordinate to that doctor turned detective — Greenleaf, with his trivial medical degree — who is not only very well drawn but part of a living world of people very deftly depicted. A round and solidly entertaining crime novel.

EDGAR WALLACE EXHIBITION

This Exhibition, news of which was first announced in EWMM, is now in active preparation. It is to be hald in the National Book Leagues's Stallybrass Gallery, 7 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, from 25 November to 4 December, 1965. The Gallery will contain a unique collection of Wallace-iana not only of great interest to all devotees of Edgar Wallace, but to every crime fan (open to to the public, no charge for admission).

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.*

And More English

T. E. Gahagan [April] wrote most interestingly on English usage. Looking through my daily newspaper I have noticed how justified his criticisms are. I have a criticism, too, an error that I have noticed made by even the most educated and informed of our writers and newspapers. 'Hung' is what is done to game, and 'hanging' is when a man hangs himself or is hanged — you *cannot* under any circumstances substitute one for the other.

London, N.4. L. H. FISH

The letter in your July issue from Mr. D. E. Todd on English words often misused leads to a point I have felt very strongly about. Many excellent American books are published in this country (both crime and otherwise), but *why* cannot their publishers (generally) English the spelling? 'Labor', 'honor', 'furor' and so on. English books published in the United States (and I have read many over there) always have the American way of spelling substituted.

Chichester. E. WARD BROUGH

• *After six months the English controversy still brings in readers' views. Keep up the good work, please.*

Bouquets, and a Brick

Suddenly, Each Summer, by John Boland [June], was first-class, and I much enjoyed *Honesty is the Best Policy*, by Richard Essex, in the same number. He was a great favourite of mine when I was a young man. Glad to see he's still writing, and as good as ever.

London, W.8. J. F. PALING

EWMM gets better and better! Paul Tabori's *The Flying Carpet* [July] was very good. Bouquets from me to Christopher Curtis, Michael Gilbert and Bill Knox, and the *Vignettes from Life* are quite outstanding. But a good solid brick to John de Sola for impugning my James Bond!
Ventnor, I.O.W. WILLIAM STUMP

• *Again thanks for your praise. Poor John de Sola is in trouble lately, for another reader objects to him 'chewing up' Leslie Charteris. It was once said that a critic who arouses ire 'is either a good critic or an opinionated ass'!*

The Top Twenty Again

In *EWMM* you published a list of the 'Top 20' for crime short story collectors [February]. I wonder if it would be possible to do this with the 'Top 20' full-length crime novels? It would be difficult, I know, but I would like to see it.
Fort McMurray, Alberta. DOUGAL MACDONALD

• *So difficult that* EWMM *hesitates, Mr. MacDonald. The enclosure of your own list supplies an idea. Let* EWMM *readers send in their lists to the Editor by October 25. The votes will be compiled and the resulting 'Top 20' published on December 1. A guinea to the reader whose list is nearest to popular choice.*

The Face of EWMM

A relative of mine is a sub-editor on a newspaper who is engaged solely in 'make-up'. He tells me that *EWMM's* bright and varied 'make-up' is a pleasure to see, and that it is such a change from most magazines which look the same on every page. What is the name of your 'typographical' expert?
Glasgow, C.1. I. E. NAIRN

• *Thank your relative and explain that the editorial cheek is pink with gratification.* EWMM's *rule is to choose the best make-up for each story, and endeavour to keep its pages fresh and bright.*

Obscure Book

You answered a book query about *The Adventures of Heine* that I sent you [February]. Can you help me in what has been a hopeless search? I am seeking a volume entitled *The Book About Criminals*. It is by, I am told, E. Nesbit, whose tales I always enjoyed in my youth. It was published about 1890, but no bookseller or library can help me.

Stonor, Oxon. FREDERICK WELLS

● *You provided a veritable riddle, but have you got your facts right? An official bibliography of crime books does contain* A Book About Criminals, *published in* 1881. *But the author is Mrs. S. Meredith, and the London publisher is . . . Nisbet!*

Other Worlds?

Looking in, recently, at television's *Sky at Night* on the 100th edition of the series, I was impressed by the details of possible communication by radio signals between planets and earth.

It made me think again of Edgar Wallace's many-sided genius as an original writer, for not only did he invent everything from remarkable detectives to the first of the modern screen monsters in *King Kong*, but dealt with communication between planets when he wrote in 1929 the remarkable *Planetoid 127* (which was re-published in *EWMM*). This not only foresaw the feasibility of radio communication through space but visualised the not wholly impossible existence of twin-worlds, an inhabited duplicate of this world on the far side of the sun, the first time such a notion had been postulated in fiction.

And, in this age of the incredible coming true, why not? Why not a world like our own entirely cut off but not astrally or by tele-communication . . .

Petersfield, Hants D. E. CROWLY.

● *A big chunk of supposition, too big for editorial opinion, but in the matter of Edgar Wallace's many-sided genius* EWMM *is wholly with you.*

EW BOOK MART

A service for EWMM readers without charge for buying, selling, or exchanging any books by EDGAR WALLACE

(Each advertisement, other than from subscribers, should be accompanied by coupon from page 127 of the current EWMM)

OFFER two hard-cover fiction books for one Edgar Wallace paper-back (crime only), and three hard-cover for one Edgar Wallace ditto. R. Deacon, 19 Ruthin Road, Blackheath, London, S.E.3.

EDGAR WALLACE books wanted, buy or exchange. H. A. Smith, 20 Ransome Avenue, Scole, Diss, Norfolk.

CANADIAN collector wants Edgar Wallace novels. Has all recent reprints. D. MacDonald, 14322 Ravine Drive, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

ORIGINAL *Readers Library* volumes (cloth) *The Thief in the Night; Four-Square Jane; Planetoid 127*, and *The Sweizer Pump*. Mint. Offers to: L. S. Elliott, 17 Langdon Crescent, London, E.6.

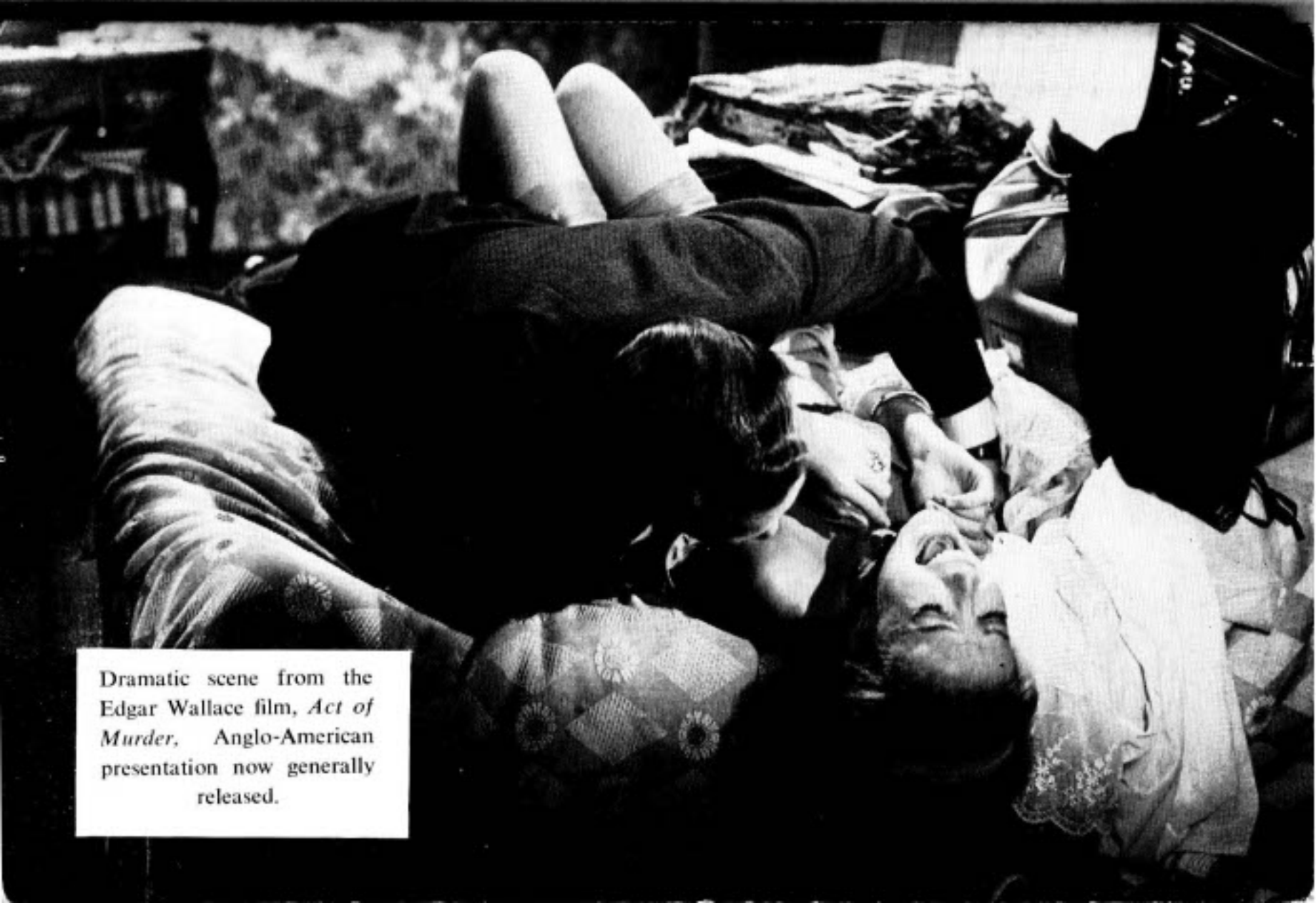
ABOUT 30 EW's for sale, some scarce. Send your wants to A. J. Willcocks, 51 Headland Park, Plymouth.

WANTED: EW books, including *We Shall See; The Last Adventure; Smithy; Sanctuary Island; Elegant Edward*, etc. Lists, please, to: W. H. Bufkin, 2512 Spring Hill Avenue, Mobile 7, Alabama, U.S.A.

WANTED: *The Blue Hand; The Book of All Power; The Fellowship of the Frog; The Man Who Changed his Name* and *Terror Keep*. John F. Chant, Lee Haven, 1 Northfalls Road, Canvey Island, Essex.

WANTED: *Devil Man; Bones of the River; The Steward* and *The Thief in the Night*. A. R. Kaleel-ur-Rahman, 66 Vivekananda Hill, Colombo, 3, Ceylon.

WANTED: *Barbara on her Own; Daughters of the Night; Unofficial Dispatches; Tomb of T'sin*. R. J. McCarthy, Wetlands, Augathella, Queensland, Australia.



Dramatic scene from the Edgar Wallace film, *Act of Murder*, Anglo-American presentation now generally released.