


THE TOP SELLING BRITISH CRIME MAGAZINE

1/6  
**Edgar  
Wallace**

**MYSTERY MAGAZINE**



**MARGERY ALLINGHAM  
MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD  
FRANCIS GRIERSON  
HERBERT HARRIS  
ERIC PARR  
PAUL TABORI**

**NEW! EDGAR WALLACE**  
**Blackmail, with Roses**

No. 26  
Vol. 3

*Edgar Wallace*

**3/-**



*This drawing of Edgar Wallace, by Carlo Tora (Chamberlain Studios, London), was made in 1966, the original being in the Press Club*



# EDGAR WALLACE

## Mystery Magazine

Vol. III No. 26

September, 1966

---

*Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado*

---

### CONTENTS

#### STORIES

Blackmail, with Roses	EDGAR WALLACE	3
It Said 24 and 34 Came Up	PAUL TABORI	15
The Net	MIRIAM ALLEN DEFORD	20
<i>Modus Doesn't Always Operandi</i>	ERIC PARR	45
Let's Play Monster	THOMASINA WEBER	64
The Vase	HERBERT HARRIS	72
Witch Country	JOHN SALT	78
The Villa <i>Marie Celeste</i>	MARGERY ALLINGHAM	90
The Salvationists ( <i>period piece</i> )	V. DE L'ISLE ADAM	101
The Calculated Nightmare	JOHN BURKE	106

#### FEATURES

<i>Editorial: Briefly</i>		2
<i>Contest: True Crime</i>		43
<i>Relaxation: Crossword No. 20</i>		44
<i>Who's Who: Some EWMM Contributors</i>		51
<i>Caricature: Berkely Mather</i>	RALPH SALLON	52
<i>Crime: The Austrian Fantasy</i>	FRANCIS GRIERSON	53
<i>Reportage: Crime in View</i>	PETER MAGNUS	118
New Books	JOHN DE SOLA	120
Readers Say . . .		127

*Cartoons by Philip Meigh and Maciek*

---

Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine is published on the 1st of each month by Edgar Wallace Magazines Ltd. All characters in these stories are entirely fictitious and in no way refer to any person, living or dead. Printed by The Rugby Advertiser Ltd., Albert Street, Rugby. Distributed by Representation Services, 130, Hither Green Lane, London, S.E.13. Sole agents, Australia: Gordon and Gotch (A'sia) Ltd.; New Zealand: Gordon and Gotch (N.Z.) Ltd.; South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.; © 1966 Edgar Wallace Magazines, Ltd., 4, Bradmore Road, Oxford. NIGEL MORLAND, Editor.



**A**N AMERICAN READER has come treading where angels hesitate by commenting on a recent *Briefly*: 'The U.S. does respect the writings of Poe, but hardly places those three pioneering pieces above the Sacred Writings of Dr. Watson . . . in an old Gallup poll, Doyle was in second place and Poe in fourth . . . let's face it, only *The Purloined Letter* could be considered first-rate by modern standards . . .'

That there will be rumblings of wrath and fast reaction at such fighting words is certain, for our informant goes on to explain that

## Briefly

there are those who doubt the psychological basis for *The Purloined Letter*. Perhaps. It is a controversy which must rage and wane from time to time. When *Briefly* mentions Poe or Doyle, some readers write in (sometimes with a very odd air of pride!) to say they find both these authors completely unreadable, and they always write such views with that half-defiant air of the man in company who announces that he does not drink and hopes someone will gasp in surprise.

Obviously every writer must have his admirers and his detractors, but maybe there is occasionally a sort of irritation, even an ennui, among aficionados when the rival claims of Poe and Doyle are, mooted. Poe's champions at times are apt to insist that there are other writers, that there have *been* other writers, but they pale into insignificance against him. The partisans of the Sage, of course, have no doubts at all; they debate his adventures, the words about him, his every aspect with that thrilled enjoyment which must have attended the incontrovertible proofs handed down at Sinai.

Both these writers were masters in their particular spheres; that is indisputable. But if Poe was the great Originator then Doyle was the great Emancipator, since he brought the detective story from the doldrums in which it had more or less rested for nearly 50 years into the full flower of literature.

Still, the debate has about it that air of things long ago and far away. No matter who is what and what is who, Poe and Doyle are read and re-read, the toughest of all tests for detective literature.

What is worth remembering is that a type of fiction 'invented' (as it were) in 1841 is still steaming along at high pressure 125 years later, chalking up gross takings which are larger today than the total incomes of whole nations in Poe's time—that is the real wonder of it all.

*The Editor.*



Erskine Wallace.

# BLACKMAIL, WITH ROSES

*The adventures of Michael Hex are in the Robin Hood tradition and have never before been published. This story—featuring Hex and his henchman, massive, red-headed Belshazzar Smith—appears exclusively in EWMM*

“GATHER YE ROSEBUDS while ye may,” said Belshazzar Smith poetically, “old Time is still a-flying and this same flower that smiles today, tomorrow will be dying”—Errick wrote that.”

“He might have been doing something better,” said Michael Hex. “Anyway, flowers don’t smile—not Boddin’s flowers.”

He and Belshazzar Smith were sitting on their favourite seat in the Temple Gardens, green and lively at this period of the year and densely populated with lunch-hour loungers.

“Errick says—” began Mr. Smith.

“Let’s leave Errick alone,” smiled Hex. “That poor man must turn in his grave twenty times a day. The thing we have to consider is not Errick’s flowers or even Mr. Boddin’s roses, but Mr. Boddin’s surplus profits and how much he is going to devote to the Hex Home for Handicapped Children.”

“E’s a very close man,” said Belshazzar Smith, puffing thoughtfully at his briar pipe, “a very close man indeed. Is butler says he weighs the bread he gives them and measures the milk three times a day—and he’s worth millions.”



"Officially he's not worth millions," said Hex, "when I went to him for a subscription he told me that times were hard." He looked at his watch. "Wait for me here," he said, rising, "Boddin has invited me to coffee. He nearly invited me to lunch but he thought better of it and asked me to come in to the Savoy and meet him in the lounge."

He left Belshazzar basking in the spring sunlight, the picture of a contented man, and made his way to the Savoy.

Boddin, a stout, red-faced man, rose stertorously and offered a large, soft, limp hand.

"Ah, Mr. Hex," he wheezed, "what an unlucky fellow you are! I've just finished my coffee. Now shall I order you some? Say the word and you shall have the best cup of coffee that the house can produce. Would you like a nice cigar? I see that you're a cigarette smoker. That's better, it doesn't cost so much. I don't smoke cigars myself, except now and again when a friend offers me one and I take it just to oblige him. Sit down, sit down, make yourself comfortable."

"From which I gather," said Hex, "that the chairs cost you nothing."

Boddin chuckled.

"You will have your joke—but there are a lot of people like you in the City who think I'm a mean man. And there are a lot of people in the City who think I'm a rich man. But I'm not, Mr. Hex. I give you permission to go to the Inspector of Taxes and ask him what my income is. He's a clever man, Mr. Hex, as shrewd a man as there is in the City of London and he's had accountants, real chartered accountants, the very best in the city of London, to examine my books and transactions, and he's never been able to trace a penny of excess profit."

He chuckled again, and it was the chuckle of a man who was enjoying a great joke all to himself.

"They say that you've done a big trade with Holland and made millions," said Hex.

Boddin nodded delightedly.

"I know, I know," he said, "but where's their proof? They've examined my banking account—I gave 'em all the assistance I could, but they found no record. The truth is, Mr. Hex, I did a little agency business, took a paltry commission, just a few pounds and was satisfied. I don't hold with being greedy and I say don't try to crush the working classes, do all you can for 'em, help 'em over the stile and you'll be respected. If the working classes knew



what I've done for 'em, they'd put up a monument to me, they would indeed."

"Something in the shape of a guillotine," suggested Hex. "Now, I haven't come here to discuss your private affairs. I know you've made a lot of money."

Boddin's hand went up in protest.

"Everybody knows it. The income-tax commissioners know it. You've simply dodged the authorities by making all your transactions in cash. You haven't taken cheques or given them—you've paid in bank-notes and you've received payment from other merchants in the same way."

"If I never get up from this seat—" began Boddin.

"But you will get up from that seat," said Michael Hex. "You are going to behave like a fine old gentleman, you're going to walk across to that writing-table, produce your cheque-book and draw ten thousand pounds from your bloated account to help children get a new start in life."

Boddin shook his head slowly and his face wore an expression of great pain.

"Oh, if I only could!" he said, with a melancholy intonation, "But I can't Mr. Hex, I'm a poor man and beyond a few pounds at the bank, the goodwill of my little business and my little country cottage, I've nothing. You must come down and see my little place at Pilsham one of these days, Mr. Hex. I've got some of the finest roses you ever saw—not expensive roses," he added hastily, "I don't hold with giving fancy prices for flowers."

"Quite right," said Hex, "as 'Errick says—"

"Who's 'Errick?" asked Mr. Boddin suspiciously.

"He's an income-tax collector," replied Hex.

"Then you can tell him from me he's a liar," said the stout man with some heat. "I've got no money to waste on da—on poor little children."

Hex got up with a sigh.

"I see we shall have to employ other methods."

"Try 'em!" said Boddin, no longer affable and obliging, but very truculent indeed. "Some of the cleverest fellers in the City of London have been after me, me lad, and they've all had to give me best. A young chump like you ain't going to get over a man like me."

"What vulgarity!" murmured Hex.

"And as for your children, let the country pay. What do we pay rates and taxes for, I'd like to know? Ain't there institootions



for kids like that, and don't I pay poor rates, eh? You're not going to get a penny-piece out of me, you and your ten thousand pounds!"

"It's now fifteen thousand," said Michael Hex, "and you'll be lucky if it doesn't cost you more."

"Ha, ha!" said Mr. Boddin with delicate sarcasm. "Try it! You won't be the first person who has sneaked into my office and bribed my clerks, you won't be the first nosey parker that's buzzed round my safe deposit vault. You won't be the first person who's searched my house."

"You're quite right," said Hex, "but I shall be the last, and when I've finished my investigations into your disgusting but furtive prosperity you will be sitting in a nice little six-by-twelve cell at Wormwood Scrubs, wishing you had paid up."

Boddin spluttered and flickered his hands in gestures appropriate to incoherent wrath, and Hex went and rejoined his companion in crime.

"I've got a feeling, Belshazzar," he said, "that you're going to play a very big part in loosening this old so-and-so from his ill-gotten loot."

"I'm sure I'm very willing," said Belshazzar Smith gravely, "in the words of 'Errick—"

"Never mention that man to me," said Hex.

He spent the rest of the day making telephone enquiries.

"I am going out of town tomorrow, Belshazzar," he said, "I have it in my mind that I'm on the verge of a great discovery."

He went to Pilsham by the early train, inspected Mr. Boddin's 'little cottage,' and, by climbing a wall, commanded an extensive view of his property.

It was early for roses, but his imagination helped him to visualise a picture of radiant beauty when June would come and these straight stems would be heavy with fragrant flowers. The cottage itself was a moderately large but unpretentious building, planned and executed in execrable taste. It was glaringly and patently new. Its face was smothered with stucco, it had porticos in the Corinthian style and chimneys which were strictly Elizabethan.

Hex returned to London in a very thoughtful mood and on the following morning, interviewed a bank manager who was also a friend.

He told his tale and Mr. Martin listened with interest.

"You're up against a pretty tough proposition, Hex," he said. "We all know that Boddin is a very rich man but every effort to



discover the extent of his wealth has been fruitless. Why, Somerset House has spent a small fortune in detectives and accountants to trace his profits—which I'm certain have been enormous. The fact is, the artful old fox has confined himself to cash transactions. We know this because a merchant in Amsterdam was shadowed from that city with three thousand pounds and the money was traced to Boddin. The old man must have got wind of the fact that he was being watched and religiously recorded the transaction in his books, so that when the Inland Revenue people paid a surprise visit there was the money, accounted for. He has a store somewhere and if you can find it you will be doing the government a good turn."

"Heaven forbid that I should assist the Inland Revenue in its nefarious work," said Hex, piously, "all I am anxious to get is a subscription of fifteen thousand to the Hex home. It's a wonderful place, my dear chap," he said enthusiastically, "and with that money I'm going to build a new extension—I've had the offer of some land—" and he went on to describe his scheme.

"Anyway," said the banker at last, "you won't get any money out of Boddin. Why he's hoarding it, Heaven knows! I have naturally a constitutional dislike for all people who refuse to bank their money, but my dislike of Boddin goes beyond this. He's done a lot to raise the price of commodities in this country and he's raking in the money—for what? He has neither chick nor child, wife or relative. It is sheer greed, sheer lust of possession which animates the old devil."



Boddin was in the habit of spending his week-ends at Pilsham. During the remainder of the week the house was in charge of an old housekeeper who slept out. He had a small staff of gardeners, who, however were forbidden to touch the roses and spent most of their time in the kitchen garden, where Boddin was able to raise vegetables with profit to himself.

He travelled down second class and invariably walked the mile-and-a-half between the station and his house. He regarded Saturday and Sunday as sacred to flora and was not without reason annoyed on the Saturday morning when his slow-footed housekeeper came to him with a card, inscribed: *Mr. Michael Hex*.

"Tell him to go away. Tell him I don't want him here!" said Boddin furiously, "if he won't go send for a policeman. I won't



see him! I tell you I won't see him! Tell him to go to the devil—ah, good morning, Mr. Hex."

For Hex, who was nothing if not pushful, had followed the messenger.

"I thought I'd come down and see those roses you were boasting about. I can stay to lunch and catch the first train back after."

"There's a good train before lunch," growled Mr. Boddin.

"I don't particularly want a good train," said Hex, "in fact, the morals of a train don't worry me in the least."

"Well, what do you want?"

Boddin faced him squarely. He was dressed in his oldest suit. On his hands were leather gardening gloves and in one of them a murderous looking pair of shears.

"We were talking the other day," said Hex, "about fifteen thousand pounds, you were anxious to donate to my philanthropic scheme—"

"Fifteen thousand hell-cats!" spluttered Mr. Boddin, "I'll see you—"

"Yes, yes, yes, I know where you will see me. But I really am in need of this money and I think you would save yourself a great deal of trouble if you paid up. You see, I happen to know something about your little nest-egg."

The stout man's eyes narrowed.

"Oh you do, do you?" he said slowly, "now man to man and with no witnesses present, I'll call your bluff. You tell me where my little nest-egg is to be found and I'll give you your fifteen thousand."

"Why put me to the trouble?" pleaded Hex. "Come, Squire, if you'll forgive the agricultural term, be a sportsman and give me your cheque."

Mr. Boddin said that he would not give any cheque. He completed his earlier sentence and said where he would see Hex before he gave one brass farthing. He referred in plain terms, though somewhat coarse, to Hex, likening him to a bank robber, a blackmailer, and a cut-throat. He expressed his fervent faith and confidence in the justice of the English law and its availability for dealing with men who tried to get money out of him, and when he had finished, Hex said:

"What time do you lunch?"

"I don't lunch and I won't lunch!" exploded Mr. Boddin, "there's a village policeman here, my friend, and I'll have you off the premises in two ticks."



"Do anything you like, but don't call me your friend. People who don't know me might be deceived into believing you."

He left by the good train that went before lunch.

That night he outlined his plan to Belshazzar Smith.

"The money's as good as in my pocket," he said, "though it worries me."

"Worry," said Belshazzar Smith, "is the unconscious—"

"Yes, yes, I know—'Errick," said Hex. "This is rather serious. Ought I to ask him for twenty or twenty-five thousand?"

"Find out what he's got and take half," said Belshazzar Smith.

"That is a bright idea," agreed his partner.



The real difficulty as Hex knew and had known all along, was to find the architect who had designed Boddin's house. Pilsham only knew him as 'a foreigner,' a dour, reticent man, presumably a Dutchman, since most of the workmen were Dutch and had been imported to construct Mr. Boddin's country house. It was this fact which had put Hex on the trail. Boddin was not the kind of man to go to the trouble of importing large bodies of labourers from Holland if it cost money, as undoubtedly it would cost. Why, then, had he taken this unusual step unless it was to prevent the details of the house and its construction becoming public property?

To his surprise Hex had discovered, by making judicious enquiries that the general lay-out of the house was fairly well-known to the villagers. Various men and women had been up to 'Le Nid' as Mr. Boddin's romantic fancy had christened it, and as cleaners or repairers of windows, bells, and such, had penetrated to every corner—even to Boddin's study.

"The thing to do, of course, is to find the architect, and that's going to be rather a job," said Hex, after he had explained his plan. "The only thing we know about him is that he stayed at the Adlon Hotel in London and occasionally visited the works while they were in progress."

He consulted a paper which he took from his pocket.

"I find that the first job done was the building of the wall. Obviously this was because the architect didn't wish to be overlooked while the house was in course of construction."

"Send 'im a letter," said Belshazzar Smith, "send 'im a registered letter and pay for an acknowledgement. That's what we used



to do in a debt-collecting agency I worked with. The letter's forwarded to the gent, and the receipt comes back to you with 'is name and address on it."

Hex looked at him admiringly.

"There's a great dun lost in you, but will you kindly tell me where I should send the letter."

"To the last place you heard from 'im."

Hex nodded.

"I'll go to the hotel. It will save time," he said.

He was gone all afternoon, but returned in triumph.

"Hans van Rhyn is in London, my lad," he said, cheerfully. "He's come over on an official mission on behalf of the Dutch Government—it has something to do with the shipping of building material. I have an appointment with him at seven o'clock."

"The money is yours," said the confident Belshazzar, "as 'Er—"

"Quiet," said Hex.

Hans van Rhyn was a grizzled little man who spoke good English when he spoke at all, but on the whole was a most excellent listener.

This Hex discovered in the first five minutes of their conversation and, very wisely, adapted his tactics to van Rhyn's temperament.

"I am afraid," said van Rhyn, "that I cannot oblige you because I am not here on business, and really I have no desire to do any more business in this country. My experience has not been a very pleasant one and I vowed I would never again undertake a contract in England."

"I'm profoundly sorry to hear this," said Hex regretfully, "because you are the only man who can carry out the work which I want doing."

The Dutchman looked interested.

"You make me curious," he said, "and although I cannot promise that I will oblige you yet I should like to know what the work is."

"I want a house built," said Mr. Hex slowly, "and I want it built exactly on the same lines as the one you built for Mr. Boddin."

A frown gathered on the other's face.

"That is an undertaking which I do not care to have anything to do with," he said shortly, "your friend, Boddin—"

"He's not my friend," said Hex hastily, "he's merely an acquaintance."

Still the Dutchman shook his head.



"It is not work I care to do," he said "even if you are not a friend of Mr. Boddin."

"I assure you I am not that," said Hex, now sure of his ground, "I regard Boddin as the meanest, most miserable creature on the face of the earth."

The Dutchman nodded and his taciturn face lit up with a smile.

"I am almost inclined to do it for you, but really it is impossible. Why do you want a house of that character?" he asked suddenly "Are you a wine connoisseur too?"

"Yes," said Hex quietly.

"In that case," said van Rhyn, "you can get any architect to design a house unless you are eccentric and believe that people are trying to rob you of your wine. I don't know much about wine," he went on, "but I know that it keeps just as well in an ordinary cellar as in a vault."

"Away from the house?" murmured Hex.

"Exactly," said the Dutchman, "I have always thought Mr. Boddin's idea fantastic . . ."

They talked together for an hour and parted the best of friends. Mr. van Rhyn steadfastly refusing to indicate approximately the plan of Boddin's house and out-dwellings.

"Take my advice and get a British architect to design you a sensible dwelling-house," he said, "and leave those stupid ideas of Boddin's alone."



Belshazzar Smith accompanied Hex to Pilsham the next morning and they found rooms in the village. That night, armed with a sword-stick, Hex climbed the forbidding wall of 'Le Nid'—the gate was securely locked—and began his investigations.

A sword-stick is an admirable probe and, throughout the night, the two men systematically tested Boddin's beautiful rose garden. It was just before dawn when Hex, thrusting his sword into the earth, felt the point grate against something hard. Feverishly they cleared away the mould with a garden trowel, which Smith had brought, and in a few minutes had scraped clear a square foot of concrete facing.

Michael Hex replaced the earth and was very thoughtful on his way back to the village.

"That's the place all right," he said, "a little concrete house built underground, and probably entered through a trap in the



roof. Now, Belshazzar, we're up against it. What are we going to do?"

"Do?" said the astonished Belshazzar Smith, "why, of course we'll go and take it."

"Would you commit a robbery?" asked Hex in shocked tones.

"Why not?" said the unemotional Belshazzar.

"For many reasons," replied Hex seriously. "If we expose this man we don't get any money. If we take our share and leave the rest we condone his crime. If we tell him we know the money is there and ask for our little lot we're guilty of blackmail, besides giving him an opportunity of getting the stuff away. There is only one thing for it, Belshazzar."

"What's that?"

"You've got to die."

"Oh?" said Belshazzar blankly.

"You've got to be murdered," said Hex.

Smith looked at him uneasily.

"'To every man upon this earth—'"

"'Death cometh soon or late,'" Hex finished the quotation.

"And this is where you make a bit of a sacrifice."

Of these conversations Boddin was, of course, ignorant, but he had not been in his house very long on his return to the country that Saturday, before he knew that there were unpleasant visitors in the village. He was, therefore, not surprised except in one respect to see Michael Hex walking across the garden to where he was standing, pruner in hand.

"How did you get in?" he demanded, "I gave strict instructions that you weren't to be admitted."

"That's all right," said Hex, listlessly, "I got over the wall."

Boddin looked at the intruder curiously. Hex was not his jovial self. His tone was sad, his demeanour was dejected, and he wore a black tie and a deep band of black on his left arm.

"I had to see you," said Hex, "after all it concerns you more than anybody else."

"What's the game?" asked the suspicious Mr. Boddin.

"I admit I was suspicious of you," said Hex, "and I've been here three days, searching for your hidden treasure-house."

"You've got a nerve," said Boddin, moving uneasily.

"I had an idea it was in this garden," Hex went on, gloomily, "I had a dream that you had a little concrete vault built somewhere about here."

He waved his hand towards the rose-trees, and Boddin swallow-



ed hard.

"Night after night," Hex went on, "my unfortunate companion and I have been probing this garden."

"Well I'm damned!"

"I hope not," said the sad Hex. "As I was saying, night after night, Belshazzar and I searched in vain for your golden treasury. Belshazzar thought it was on one side of the garden, I thought it was on another. Two nights ago we quarrelled," he paused impressively.

"Well?"

"I killed him," said Michael Hex simply. "I cut his throat. It was quite easy. I used a new knife, that I'd bought in London. For eight-and-sixpence," he added.

Boddin was staring with incredulous eyes.

"You *murdered* him!" he whispered hoarsely.

"Cut his throat," said Hex, "like that."

He made a gesture and Boddin leapt back.

"I have come to confess my crime."

"But, but," stammered Boddin, "you're an infernal scoundrel, sir! To cut a man's throat in my garden! I'll have the police after you in a minute."

"Wait a minute," said Hex, "I not only killed him here but I buried him here."

"Where?" Boddin's voice was hardly audible.

"There!"

Hex pointed to ground which had evidently been recently disturbed.

"But you couldn't bury—" Boddin stopped short and bit his lip.

"I buried him there!" said Hex, "send for the village constable; he has only to dig to prove my words."

The stout man's face went from red to white, from white to purple.

"Send for the village constable," moaned Hex, "let me again face the victim of my crime!"

"How much do you want?" asked Mr. Boddin with an effort.

"What is money? What is twenty thousand pounds?"

"You said ten thousand," roared Boddin savagely.

"What is a paltry twenty thousand? Will that ever wipe away the memory of this sad occurrence?"

"Now, look here," said Mr. Boddin, "speaking as business man to business man, you've bitten me and I'll pay. Come to my



office on Monday morning."

"Send for the police," said Hex, "I can't wait till Monday."

"Suppose I give you a cheque for fifteen thousand?"

"Send for the police," said Hex in great distress.

"I'll give you the full amount," groaned Boddin and the words nearly choked him. "You've got me and I know when I've been had."

"Twenty-five thousand to me and the remainder to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or it's a prison cell for one of us."

Boddin did not speak for a long time. And then he only sighed.

"Come into the house," he said at last. He signed his cheque and handed it to Hex.

"Now look here Mr. What's-yer-name," he said, striving to keep the unhappiness out of his voice, "we're both good business men and I can take a joke as well as anybody. I shall laugh over this, you see if I don't."

"I shan't see," said Hex, "but I'll take your word for it."

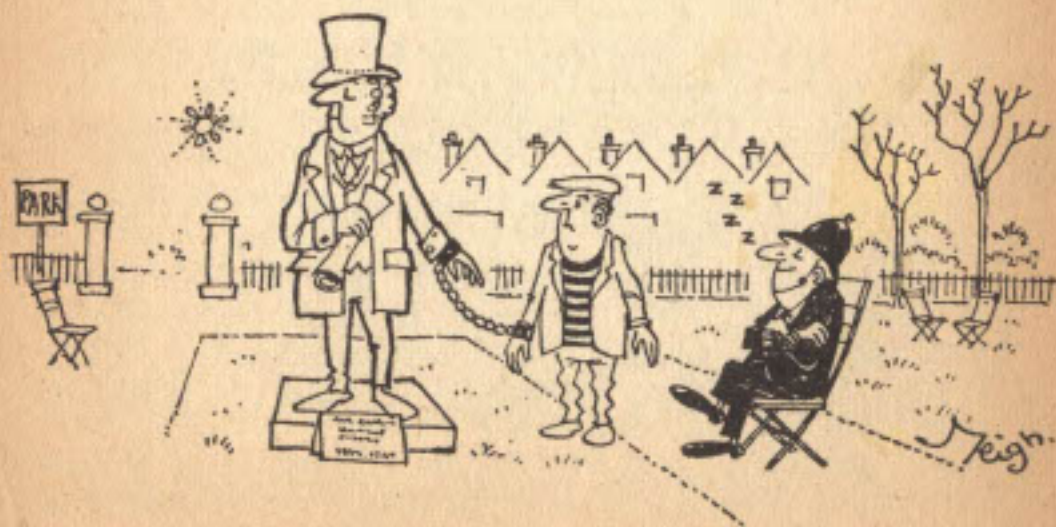
"The biggest joke of all," said Boddin, "is that bit about me sending the money to the Treasury."

"You won't laugh over that if you don't do it," said Hex, "and besides, you can afford it. This isn't the only place you've got your stuff in. Take my tip and don't make trouble. Send it in as conscience money."

"I haven't got a conscience," snarled the other.

"I have," said Hex.

© Penelope Wallace, 1966.





## BRIEFS

# IT SAID 24 AND 34 CAME UP

PAUL TABORI

*In this series of Grand Guignol  
briefs, this minute murder  
calls for pity rather  
than envy*

I HAVE NEVER been much addicted to murder, and I killed only one man in my life. It happened in Monte Carlo many years ago. I was driven to the Riviera by a love affair which ended badly—it was an American girl and she preferred a millionaire. I can't really blame her. I had met her in Africa, accompanied her on a trip to India, and then went with her to the United States, where we parted. I couldn't stand any of the three continents which had been the background to this unhappy chain of events—so I came back to Europe. I went to Monte Carlo though I wasn't interested in gambling. Most of the day I spent locked in my hotel room, writing a biography of Bertrand de Born, the 12th century poet and warrior. Every night I had a drink or two in one of the Monaco bars and then went early to bed. It was in one of these bars that I met a gently passionate man, whose name was Ugo. We became friends. Ugo was an Italian, but had spent most of his life in South America. He earned his living by selling antiques to rich tourists. The antiques were considerably younger than Ugo.

It was Ugo who dragged me off to the Casino, where every night he lost practically all the money he made during the day. I never gambled, for I had convinced myself by bitter experience of my peerless bad luck. I settled down in an armchair and waited until Ugo had finished.

Fortunately this never took longer than half an hour. Long before midnight he would come up to me, tap my shoulder and say, "No luck today!" He never varied these words and we walked



home under the starry sky, reasonably content with our routine.

One night Ugo told me again, "No luck today!" and we started towards the door. But before we got there, Ugo reached in his pocket for a cigarette.

"Oh!" he cried, surprised. He had found a one-franc *jeton*. "I never knew I still had this. I might as well lose it too. I'll be back in a minute."

He moved towards the roulette table, but turned back again.

"What number shall I pick?"

"Don't be an idiot. Get it over with."

"No, no," he repeated stubbornly. "Tell me what number to play."

"Forty-five."

"But there are only thirty-six numbers on the table!" he cried angrily.

"Then put it on thirty-six."

He rushed to the table. A minute later I heard the croupier's voice:

"*Trente-six, rouge, pair et passe!*"

I bent forward. I saw Ugo's shaking shoulders and his hands as he reached for the five franc counters the croupier had pushed towards him. Now suddenly he twisted round and asked in a faltering voice:

"Now what? Tell me quickly."

I became annoyed. In order to put an end to the matter I told him:

"Put it all on thirty-six."

"You really mean it," he stammered.

I repeated firmly and ruthlessly, "Put it all on thirty-six."

He obeyed me like a well-trained dog; he gave me a humble look and then turned to watch the wheel. It began to slow down and stopped. The croupier called out again:

"*Trente-six, rouge, pair et passe!*"

There were a few scattered cries of surprise. The croupier pushed impassively the winnings towards Ugo.

"And now?" he asked in a thin little voice.

"And now we go home!" I commanded in a tone of absolute authority.

In his gratitude and admiration he didn't dare to contradict me. He changed the counters at the cashiers, crammed 1296 francs into his pockets and then trotted after me obediently. On the way back to the hotel he didn't say a word.



Next day I had forgotten about the whole thing—I was too busy with my 12th century troubadour. In the evening Ugo came to my room and suggested another visit to the Casino.

When we got to the *Salle* and I was about to sit down in my accustomed armchair, he murmured nonchalantly:

"Come up to the table for a minute or so and give me a few numbers."

I hesitated for a minute, but then I agreed.

"Number five."

And it came up.

"And now?"

"Eighteen."

He won.

"And now?"

He wasn't at all surprised. But the other gamblers who began to watch us were certainly interested. I felt uncomfortable, and said impatiently:

"How should I know. Whatever you like."

I turned my back to him and retired to my comfortable armchair. He followed me closely and said quietly:

"If you don't know it means I ought to stop now."

He looked at me as a sick man looks at the doctor examining a thermometer or a client looking at the moneylender from whom he wants a loan; I was a superior being and he expected a revelation. I smoked a couple of cigarettes and tried to avoid his eyes. For a while I fixed my glance upon a potted palm, then turned to the left, but still avoided looking at him. After finishing the second cigarette I tackled him.

"Well, what do you want from me? Don't beat about the bush."

"Nothing, nothing at all."

He looked utterly miserable. I had to laugh. In the middle of my laughter, without my conscious will, a number exploded from my lips like a bubble:

"Seventeen."

Ugo rushed off. I began to feel pangs of conscience. Yet I couldn't help listening. There was a brief silence, a hum of voices and then the croupier:

"*Dix-sept, noir impair et manque.*"

Next night we both played separately and lost. I tried it alone and—lost. Then Ugo played alone, with me providing the numbers—and he won again. I became soon exhausted and gave



the order:

"Home!"

Again he obeyed.

Maybe you expect me to provide some psychological details and theories—for most people have a morbid interest in clairvoyance. But I am telling this story not for entertainment but to teach a lesson. That night, as we left the Casino, Ugo, a man of honour if there ever was one, made me an offer.

"Let's make a deal—we'll come to the Casino every night. I'll stake my own money. You won't gamble; you will only give me the numbers. And we'll share the winnings, fifty-fifty."

Thus we spent two months. Every night I felt that some demon, some evil spirit whispered the winning numbers into my ear. I frowned with concentration as if listening closely, and the inner voice put the numbers on my lips with unfailing certainty. After seven or eight, I became exhausted, the voice fell silent, and we went home. In this way we won about 15,000 francs every night.



But money is the root of evil. While the gold I gained every night with this magic aid piled up in my drawers, my days became ever greyer, ever more anxious. I made slow progress with my biography of Bertrand de Born, though I had concentrated all my hopes and ambitions in this important work. Now my achievement and my fame were jeopardised and for days I did no work at all. Every page was torture. My nerves, stimulated and excited every night, could not relax. The money I got so easily bore a bitter fruit. Between Bertrand de Born and the Casino, my grief faded and I almost forgot the American girl. I could find no reason to linger in Monte Carlo.

But I had one reason: Ugo. Could I forsake him? I hadn't the courage. He had long ago given up selling antiques; he was living entirely upon my gifts and was busily building up a fortune. He didn't feel it at all burdensome. He was a simple man; he would never have dared to tackle a biography of a 12th century poet.

And what if one fine day my clairvoyant gift disappears? He would be left on his own. How could I explain it to him? I had grown quite fond of the man.

Days and weeks passed and I became more and more impatient and the demon, never at a loss for a suggestion, gave me a hint how I could get rid of Ugo without provoking his resentment and



hate. My plan matured slowly. Then, one day, when I was unable to write a single line of my biography and Bertrand de Born had faded just as the lovely and faithless American, I carried out my plan, calmly and ruthlessly. We were at the gambling table. Ugo was sitting and I was standing as usual behind him. As always he waited till the others had placed their bets so that no one could be able to follow him. Then he turned to me. I closed my eyes, I pricked my ears, while inside me the mysterious voice whispered: "Twenty-four."

"Thirty-four!" I said without hesitation.

The few seconds before the ball stopped seemed centuries. I felt deeply worried for having led Ugo astray. I repented and promised myself that in future I would help him to win again. I grew hot and felt my eyes watering. The ball stopped. It was number thirty-four.

My pangs of conscience disappeared. I gave Ugo a look of hate which he didn't notice. I listened to the voice. It said, 'five.' But to Ugo I gave eight. Eight won. The demon whispered 'twenty-one.' To Ugo I said thirty. Thirty came up. I no longer listened to the demon, I picked numbers at random and every one of them won. I had failed. There was an uproar. We had broken the bank. The roulette table was covered with a black cloth. Ugo was radiant. I was seized by a spasm of rage; would I never get rid of him?

"Come on!" I shouted at him and pushed him out of the *Salle*. We walked along the seashore and left the lights of Monte Carlo behind. Once or twice Ugo turned back as if to ask a question but I just gave him another push and he walked on obediently. Then as we reached the top of a steep hill, high above the sea, I tripped him up, smashed my fist into his face. He fell without a sound. I lifted up his body and hurled him over the edge of the cliff. I heard it strike the rocks and bounce into the sea a long way down.

I took the next plane to Tangier. It was only then that I remembered—I had left my manuscript and all the source material that I had collected for my biography of Bertrand de Born in my bedroom.

One of these days I really ought to go back to Monte Carlo and collect my property.



# THE NET

Miriam Allen deFord

*Combining police procedural methods  
with individual investigation  
this deft whodunit possesses  
a lifelike air of reality*

DETECTIVE-SERGEANT Cochrane looked at the mortuary slab and averted his eyes. He had seen many victims of violent death in his long years on the force, but fire was the worst of all, and he could never get used to what it could do to the human body.

Nevertheless, to start things going, he had had to bring the manager of the apartment house to see if he could identify the corpse—Joseph Nunes was pale and his left eye kept twitching in his nervousness. It was almost noon, and he had been up since two o'clock in the morning, when the passing truck driver had seen smoke boiling out of one of the front windows on the third floor.

"Is that the tenant?" Cochrane asked.

Nunes shook his head dumbly. His Adam's apple went up and down before he could speak.

"It can't be him," he said. "Hoskins was—is—a lot taller than that. Unless"—his voice wavered—"the fire could have—kinda cut him down?"

"The body has a head and feet," Cochrane answered dryly. "Well, I guess that's that, till the autopsy. Let me see if I've got all the details, and then you can go home and get some rest."

"Fat chance with all the cleaning up to do, and the insurance people, and the tenants missing stuff or claiming smoke damage. Well, that's what I'm paid for."

"Tough luck. Now tell me if I've missed anything. The tenant in three twenty-one is named Jerry Hoskins. He's about twenty-five, you think, and he's a dental mechanic. He's been there six months, and always paid his rent on time. After the fire, this body was found on what was left of the bed, and you say this isn't him. So he's the only one not back in the building or otherwise account-



ed for. Correct?"

"I guess so."

"Anything else?"

"Not that I can think of right now. Oh, yeah, here's the list you wanted of all the tenants."

"Thanks. I'll be there to see you, tomorrow at the latest. Tonight, maybe, if the doc gets through early; he'll be along any minute now. You be home?"

"Where else?" said Joseph Nunes bitterly. "I've got to be there for them to kick, don't I?"

The autopsy revealed that the victim was a young woman.

It also revealed that there was no carbon monoxide in her blood—which meant that when the fire had started the girl was already a corpse.

And, finally, it revealed that the cause of death had been a bullet through the heart.

There was no sign of a gun or a spent bullet in the burned-out apartment.

The cause of the fire was still a mystery. But there was no evidence of arson.



It was easy enough to locate Jerry Hoskins. Cochrane found him by the middle of the afternoon, at work in the dental laboratory. He appeared to be completely bewildered when they took him down for questioning. He insisted that he hadn't seen a paper that morning, and hadn't the least idea why he was wanted for anything. He did, Cochrane noted, seem embarrassed and nervous, but perhaps that was natural for anybody without a record. Of course he'd be glad to answer any questions they wanted to ask. But Cochrane and his partner, McAlpin, noted the tell-tale flush that came and went on the pale, thin young face.

Where was he last night? Again the flush. From ten or so on, he had spent the night with his older brother, Ed, with whom he had lived until he had rented an apartment of his own. The kids had been asleep when he arrived and Ed was out, but Margaret, his sister-in-law, was there.

And, say, for the evening up to nine, after he had left work? The pathologist couldn't even guess when a cadaver in that condition had died.



"Come on, Hoskins," the detective said. "You might as well come clean. Who was the girl?"

"W-What girl?"

"Who was she, some floosie you picked up and took home with you?"

"Certainly not," Hoskins blurted indignantly. "I knew her way back in high school." He laughed uncomfortably. "Well, since you know she was there, I might as well tell you—it just makes me look such an utter sap." Then he did a double take. "My God!" he exclaimed. "Did something happen to her? Did Harry—"

"We'll come to that. Tell."

"I met her again six months ago—the very day I moved into my apartment. I was kind of celebrating striking off on my own at last. About time, at twenty-three. I got my personal stuff arranged in the place and then went out to find somewhere to eat. I stopped at a bar at the corner to start the celebration off right, and she was there, on the stool next to me. I couldn't place her, but she looked vaguely familiar. I wasn't going to speak to her, but she called me by name. Then it came back to me who she was."

"What's her name?"

"I don't know her married name, but at Central High she was Bella Donna Smith."

"Huh?" McAlpin interrupted.

"I know—can you imagine parents giving their kid a name like that? She'd dropped the Bella, of course, but somebody found out and they made her life a hell on earth about it. I can still hear them—'How come they named you Beautiful Lady when you're not?' 'Say, Bella Donna, is it true you're pure poison?' I was sorry for her, but I never went with her or had anything much to do with her. She was always scared and shy and kind of melancholy. We were two of a kind, I guess." Hoskins flushed once more and smiled deprecatingly. "Both loners."

"Then what? Did you take up with her when you met again?"

"Oh, no. I'm—I guess I'm kind of awkward about girls. That's one reason I cut loose from Ed and went on my own, hoping I'd become more—well, sociable, but it hasn't worked so far. We did talk some more, and I told her what I was doing and where I'd just come to live, and she said we were neighbours; she lived in a rooming house about two blocks away. I noticed she wore a wedding ring, and I asked her if she was married now, and



she said yes, but she wasn't getting on with her husband and was thinking of breaking it up. She never did tell me his name, just called him Harry she said he was third engineer on some luxury liner, and he was home off and on, short stops when the ship was in port and two long spells every year between voyages. He'd just finished one of them. She was working as a file-clerk for some insurance company, but she didn't tell me which one. That was about all, except that she did say Harry was crazy jealous though he had no reason to be, and she was scared of his temper. She isn't very pretty, to tell the truth, and it sounds impolite, but my guess is she never had much choice and married the first guy that asked her."

"Go on."

"There's nothing to go on with, till last night. That time we just said goodbye and some of that stuff about 'we must get together again soon,' with neither of us meaning it, and that was that. I wasn't starting my new life by getting messed up with any married woman."

"What happened last night?"

"Look—Sergeant, what is it? Won't you tell me what's wrong? Did Harry get into my place and do her any harm? I'd feel responsible, if he did."

"We'll go into that after you tell me about last night."

"Well, I went straight home from work, and I'm not much of a cook, but I was too tired to go out for dinner so I fried some eggs and stuff, and then I settled down to a TV programme I like to watch. That's how I know what time it was—just eight-thirty—because I was sore when my bell buzzed downstairs and I wasn't expecting anybody."

"It was Donna Smith. She looked awful—she was white and her eyes were staring and she was shaking all over. When I opened the door she just barged in and fell on the nearest chair without saying a word. I could hear her teeth chattering.

"I didn't know what to do, so I went back to the kitchen and fetched a bottle I had there and poured her a drink. She was shaking so she spilled some of it, but she managed to gulp some down and take hold of herself a little.

"Finally she started to cry, and after a while she got some tissue out of her bag and wiped her eyes and blew her nose and began to pull herself together. First she began apologising all over the lot—why she was bothering me. It was just that she didn't know another soul near by she could turn to and after all we were old



friends, and she was so frightened. I got her off that line by snapping 'Why?' " He paused briefly before he continued.

"It was Harry, of course—her husband. It seems the last long vacation he had, he had made her miserable with his jealousy—no reason for it, she insisted, and I can believe that all right. It made her mad, and they had one godawful row, and it ended with him beating her up. So she said that did it; she'd had enough and she was going to get a divorce. He said if she did he'd kill her—and she said he meant it, that he had a gun and he'd threatened her with it before.

"His leave was about up, so she decided she'd pretend to make up and wait till he'd left, and then move somewhere he couldn't find her and file suit. She ought to have moved as soon as he went back to sea, of course, but she didn't—he wasn't due back here again, till four months from now."

"You mean she told you all this at your place last night?" Cochrane asked.

"Sure—I hadn't seen her till then since that time we met at the bar. I've been back there a few times myself, but she was never there when I was."

"So then what was next?"

"Well, that was the whole point. She said she was coming back to her room after dinner, and as she turned the corner—whoops! there was Harry, waiting for her at her front door. She turned before he saw her and ran. She was sure he was waiting to shoot her on sight."

"Likely story."

"That's what I thought. But there she was, hysterical. She said she ran back the way she'd come till people stared at her on the street. She didn't know what to do, couldn't think straight. All she wanted was to hide somewhere and be safe. She thought he must have quit his job—as I said, he was supposed to be away for four months more. I know it sounds phony. If she'd started suit, he might have been served the papers somewhere and left the ship at the next port and come back to get her the way he'd threatened—but she hadn't even seen a lawyer yet. She's a kind of disorganized person, I guess."

"Seems so," Cochrane grunted.

"So then suddenly she thought of me. I'd given her my address and she could reach me without doubling on her tracks. She picked me to be her rescuer."

"She could have phoned you first."



"Sergeant, I told you she was in hysterics. I don't suppose that even entered her mind. She just arrived, and dumped the whole mess on my lap. And I hardly know the girl. If you want to know, I was appalled. The next thing, he'd burst up there, and of course he'd decide immediately I was involved with her, and—blooie! But hell, I couldn't just order her out, the state she was in.

"Maybe, I'm just a coward, and I know darned well I was a fool. I told her she could stay, but I was going to get out and go to my brother's. She began crying again, but I sure wasn't going to be a target for a jealous man with a gun. I phoned Ed's and got my sister-in-law and told her a pipe had broken in my building and the water was turned off, and could they put me up for the rest of the night, and of course she said sure, come right over. I told you, didn't I, I lived there till six months ago. So I took my toothbrush and razor and beat it. By that time Donna had got control of herself again, and I told her she could stay till I got home from work today, that I'd phone her first to see how things were, and that she should put the night latch on the door and not answer any downstairs buzzes or rings at the apartment door—not even answer the phone till I called before I left work. To make sure it was me she was to let the phone ring seven times before she answered.

"Oh, gosh, Sergeant, that's what's worrying me. I don't see how Harry or anybody else could have got in unless she disobeyed my orders and let him in. The manager or one of my neighbours would have heard if he'd tried to break in. But if she did, and he's done her any harm, I'll feel it's all my fault. I'm no hero, but I oughtn't to have left her there alone. To tell you the truth, I didn't half believe her. I wasn't at all certain she hadn't imagined the whole thing, or perhaps just made it up for some reason."

"So that's your story, Hoskins?"

"Yes, sir."

"Uh-huh. Now suppose you tell me the truth."

"W-what?"

"You're the one with the big imagination, for my money. Look this is what really happened, isn't it? She came to your place all right, because you invited her. She stayed for the obvious reasons. After a while you had a fight over something. Then you beat it, but you did the job first."

"What job? For heaven's sake, tell me what's happened to her!"



"That's right, you didn't read the paper this morning." It was McAlpin speaking.

"I told you I spent the night at my brother's. He gets the paper in his office and brings it home at night. I overslept and just had time to dress and shave and grab some breakfast and get to the lab on time. Margaret—my sister-in-law—will tell you that."

"O.K." Cochrane's eyes bored into the white face opposite. "At two this morning a truck-driver passing by saw smoke coming out of what proved to be the front window of your apartment. He pushed all the bells and got the manager and then phoned an alarm. Your place was blazing from top to bottom."

Hoskins jumped up from his chair. Cochrane pushed him down again.

"But—but my things!" the young man stammered. "My books—my records—my camera—everything I own!"

"And something you didn't own. The girl."

"You mean—she was burnt?"

"Her body was burnt. She was dead before that, with a bullet through her heart. And no gun."

Hoskins simply sat and stared, as if out of his wits. The detective went on inexorably.

"It was a good story, wasn't it? I'll give you credit for imagination. And I have no doubt you did spend the rest of the night at your brother's, after you set fire to the bed and dumped the gun on your way over there."

"But they'll tell you—I phoned them about nine-thirty. Ed wasn't home, and the kids were asleep, but Margaret will tell you when I got there."

"We've talked to her. She's your sister-in-law. She doesn't want their name disgraced." It was McAlpin again: Hoskin's head turned from one detective to the other. "Besides, the time doesn't matter—that fire could have taken hours to burst into flame."

"But—"

"But nothing. A man whose name we don't know—and, of course we'll try, but I'll bet you anything you like when we've gone to every steamship company that makes this port and asked if they have a third engineer named Harry; if they do it'll turn out he was somewhere else last night and never heard of a woman named Bella Donna Smith. Maybe there isn't even any Bella Donna Smith. Maybe you made the whole thing up after you'd shot this girl you'd picked up and then went to your brother's



for an alibi. That sounds a lot more likely to me than the cock-and-bull story you've been feeding us. And don't tell me somebody must have heard a shot later than you got to your brothers. Nobody heard anything—or, if they did, they thought it was a backfire.

"Come straight now, Hoskins, have I got it right?"

Jerry Hoskins shook his head, utterly beyond words. Finally, he struggled to achieve a few.

"I never owned a gun in my life. I don't know how to use one."

"If you'd been smart," said Cochrane, ignoring this, "you'd have left it there and let us think it was suicide."

"But I didn't—I don't—oh, why won't you believe me? I'm telling you the whole truth—I've told you everything I know. Sure, I was a fool and a soft sap and maybe a coward, but I didn't kill Donna Smith, or anyone else, let alone set fire to my own place, with everything, I own inside it. I've lost my job, I guess, too, being hauled off by the police. Isn't that enough punishment for being an easy mark for a girl I scarcely knew?"

"Oh, I'll grant the arson charge might not stand. For all I know, you might have been smoking when the quarrel started, and got excited and dropped your cigarette on the bed and not even known it. But I don't buy your fairy tale, not one bit. Unless some guy named Harry comes forward and says she was his wife, and he trailed her to your apartment and got through a double locked door—if it *was* double-locked—and killed her, you're the logical suspect and we'll get the evidence to prove it."

"If you're holding me I have the right to demand a lawyer and I want one."

"I'm not holding you. We haven't enough evidence for the Grand Jury—yet. But we'll get it, don't worry. And don't try any fancy tricks like leaving town. We'll find you if you do, and the next time we meet you'll be held for suspicion of murder. I've come clean with you, which is a lot more than you've done with me. Beat it."

Jerry Hoskins stood up and stared into the detective's cold grey eyes.

"I'm not going anywhere," he said. "I'll be staying with Ed—my brother. And I'll be hunting for Harry, too."

"Stay out of it—that's our business. I'll even give you the off-chance that you're telling the truth, or some of it, crazy as it sounds, so I'm warning you to let the police department do the detecting around here. If there *is* a Harry, and you find him,



you're likely to get hurt."

"I'll be careful. Look, I was in the same class at Central High with Donna Smith. I could find out from their records where she lived then and who her people were, and maybe get a line from them on who she married."

"Do you think that hadn't occurred to us? You stay out of it, and pray that we do find something to back up this dream-story of yours."

"Am I free now?"

"For the present."

"O.K., I'll remember your warning. There are other things I can do. And if I get anything I'll come here and give it to you. I'll make you acknowledge yet that I've told you the truth."

"You do that."

Cochrane watched him go. The usual method hadn't worked. He picked up the phone and ordered a tail kept on Jerry Hoskins.



Jerry was right; he had lost his job. He talked things over with Ed and Margaret, and they proposed that he move back with them, after all, everything he possessed now was the clothes he had on and his razor and toothbrush, and postpone looking for another position until this dreadful business was cleared up. They, at least, believed him implicitly and fully, and that was a great help. The one thing that puzzled him was why, if the fire had been reported in the morning paper, Ed hadn't phoned him at the lab. "They leave an early edition," Ed explained. "It wasn't in yet."

He had a hunch Cochrane was having him followed. Nevertheless, he determined to go ahead. But where and how?

Neither question had been answered when they came for him again. Cochrane, the uniformed man said, wanted to see him at once at the precinct station.

The detective was smiling—the smile of a hungry cat sighting a nice fat mouse.

"Well, Hoskins, I have some news for you," he purred. "We combed all the rooming houses in your neighbourhood till we found the one where the girl had lived. You told that much of the truth anyway; she did exist. We had a good long talk with her landlady. And what do you think?"

"What?"

"Remember your story of how Donna and her Harry quarrelled



the last time he was home on leave?"

"That's what she told me."

"Well, guess what? Donna'd lived there for almost a year. And she was *Miss Smith*. There never was a sign of a husband, or even a boy friend. They didn't have a quarrel because he wasn't there. In fact, apparently there never was a Harry, except in your own pretty mind. She wasn't married at all. No man ever stayed there with her."

"So she sold me a bill of goods. I only told you exactly what she told me."

Cochrane grunted.

"I know you don't believe me," Hoskins said. "But *I* know I've told you the truth, all through. And I know another thing. All right, evidently, she was a kook and had brainstorm. But something or somebody frightened her. There was *some* reason why she turned up at my place that night, afraid to go back to her own room. She couldn't have faked it—she was scared to death."

Did he imagine it, or was there a swiftly suppressed flicker of puzzlement in the detective's eyes?

"If you didn't make the whole thing up," Cochrane retorted.

"I didn't."

"All right, I'm still levelling with you. We still haven't got enough evidence to have you indicted. But I think we'll get it. We'll let you go again, but we're keeping an eye on you. And take my advice—don't try to do any amateur snooping to bolster up your story, and get in our way, or I'll find a reason to pull you in and hold you till we do have the goods on you. Scram—for now."

Jerry Hoskins went away more upset than ever. The girl's rooming-house was out, the Central High School records, through them Donna's family, if any, even the bar where they had had their first reunion—the police would have fine-combed all these professionally and he couldn't hope to get anywhere with private sleuthing. What was left?

Only one place—the place where it happened.

He went back to his apartment house and looked up Joseph Nunes. He had to anyway; he should have gone long before. There might be some unused rent due him, and though there wasn't much hope, there was always the possibility that in the final clean-up after the fire some small possessions of his might have been found unburnt. Of course, he'd had no insurance.

Nunes wasn't pleased to see him. Hoskins hadn't expected him



to be. But he let him in, grumpily and after refusing categorically, on the owner's instructions, to allow him any rent refund, fished around in a cupboard for a cardboard box which, he said, contained everything of a personal nature salvaged from the fire.

Hoskins went through the dirty, charred pile of fragments. There was what was left of his only legacy from the father he could scarcely remember—his mother had died at his birth, his father when he was four and Ed was eight, and they had been reared by a grandmother also long since dead—a pair of military hairbrushes, as they had been called then, the bristles burnt off, the monogram on their silver backs almost illegible. There were the useless bits and pieces of what had once been his camera. Half a ceramic ashtray. Some charred plastic that seemed to be part of his transistor radio. There was, ridiculously, a slightly smoked bottle of aspirin.

And under everything else in the box was a metal object he had never seen before.

Hoskins picked it up slowly and stared at it incredulously.

It was the remains of a revolver.

"Where—where did you get this?" he asked. "It isn't mine." His voice was hoarse.

Nunes shrugged impatiently.

"All I know, after the firemen left and the police got through later in the day, I hired a man to sweep out and clean up before they came in to paint and refurnish the apartment. And a lot of trouble you caused us, Mister, bringing your girl in here, even if the insurance paid for the loss. All that extra work, and who wants a place where something like that happened? We lost two other tenants who moved out because of it, and it's only last week I managed to rent that apartment again."

"But this pistol," Hoskins interrupted the complaint. "Where did your man find it? And how did the cops miss it? They looked everywhere for one."

"Well—" Nunes had the grace to blush. "I told this guy, anything he found, even if it was broken or just a piece of something, if it looked like it belonged to the tenant, to put it in that box and give it to me, because you'd be sure to come back to see if there was anything. Naturally, when he did, I looked over it myself to see if any of the stuff was ours. I had a right to anything I could use," the manager added belligerently, "all the trouble and extra work. So I took this out and put it away before the cops went through the box, but then I found it was too messed up



even to be repaired, so I threw it into the box again."

"O.K., I don't blame you. But that isn't what I mean. How did your man find it, when the police didn't?"

"He didn't tell me, but I can guess. That bed, it was burnt right through." Nunes shuddered. "The mattress and bed-clothing were just a mass of burnt flakes, and the wires in the box spring melted down and fused together so you'd never be able to tell what they'd been. And that was a good bed, too—you ought to know. There ain't many furnished studio apartments better outfitted than they are in this house. So my guess is that when the cops poked around all they saw was a bunch of twisted metal, but I told this fellow that if anything was left too burnt to fix and too big to move easily—like that big armchair, you know, or the chest of drawers—he should break it up into pieces small enough to haul out. I suppose when he used his hammer or axe or whatever he had on the bed-spring, he fished the gun out of the twisted mass. You say it isn't yours?"

"No, it isn't; I never had one. I'm turning it in to the police."

"Why? What do they want with it?"

"Don't be so dumb, Nunes. Because they couldn't find a weapon they called it murder. This is evidence that poor girl killed herself, God knows why. And, what's more, I'll bet anything she started the fire, smoking to get her courage up, and then letting the lighted cigarette fall when she forced herself to squeezing the trigger."

"Who was she, anyhow, and what was she doing in your place?"

"Ask the cops," said Hoskins crisply. He lifted the box and turned on his heel.



Halfway to the precinct station with his find, he stopped dead in his tracks. Yes, he had the gun. But how could he convince the cops that this wasn't more play-acting—that the revolver didn't belong to him? Just bringing it in wouldn't be enough for the detectives; they would reason he'd figure that now Nunes knew the score he'd tell the police about their conversation, so Cochrane would immediately jump to the conclusion that this was more of the elaborate concoction he kept insisting on. They'd be sore anyway at having missed the gun.

Another thing: as he'd told the detectives, something or some-



body had scared that girl—scared her even worse than he'd thought for alone in his apartment she still hadn't felt safe from whatever it was—from something she feared so terribly that at last it had driven her to self-inflicted death.

In other words, maybe there was no Harry, maybe Donna Smith wasn't married or engaged in an illicit affair; but *something* had happened to her before she appeared, white and shaking with terror, at his door at half past eight that night.

Instead of going to the station, Jerry Hoskins took the bus back to Ed's house and put the box in the closet they had allotted to him. "What's that?" Margaret asked.

"Stuff of mine they found in the apartment," he told her. "I'll have to go over it and see if any of it can ever be used again."

"Oh," she said, sympathetic and embarrassed. Margaret always reflected Ed, and Ed was treating him as he had done in their childhood—as a naughty little boy who had gone against their wishes and come a cropper in consequence. They had opposed vehemently his striking out on his own; Ed had had ingrained into him from the age of eight the conviction that Jerry must be protected, defended and bossed.

Was there any place left, neglected by the police, where he could get a lead on what had happened that night to Donna Smith?

The bar where he had met her six months before. The cops had been there, of course, interviewed the bartender and the regulars, after Cochrane had first taken him in. But their objective and approach wouldn't be his. Perhaps whatever had frightened her had happened there. Since Cochrane didn't believe his story he would have asked few questions about Donna herself—all the detective would want to know was whether Jerry had picked her up there. Not that he was going to ask questions, either; he'd have to work out a plan.

He had not been back there often enough to be remembered. He was certain no one would recall his meeting with Donna so long ago; and so far there had been no word in the papers of the identification of the fire victim, so he knew the police were keeping it quiet. Now he began to drop in almost every evening, before the late crowd. He wasn't much of a drinker, but he could nurse a glass of beer for a long time; he was quiet and friendly, and after a while the bartender began to recognize him—"Don't you live somewhere around here?" "I used to." He was careful to stand a drink now and then, not too often but often enough.



The bartender's name was Mike, but he wasn't Irish. Hoskins thought he might be of Polish descent—he had the deep-set dark eyes, the fieriness and the melancholy of the Pole.

Jerry took advantage of a moment when he was the only customer.

"You don't mind my hanging around like this, do you?" he asked amiably. "I'm early for an appointment."

"O.K. by me." Mike looked at him speculatively. "Just so you're not like one I had here alone, a few weeks ago."

"Why, what'd he do?"

"It was a she. In fact, that girl—" He paused, then went on. "Nice, quiet dame, regular customer though I never knew her name. Never had too much, never tried any pick-ups or funny business."

Hoskins's heart gave a startled leap. He'd had a hunch about this place, hadn't he?

"Then what—"

"She was sitting right where you are, taking her time over a drink, just like you. I had to go on back for a minute, and I left her here. Hell, most of our customers are neighbours: more like friends. Anyway, when I got back, she'd gone—left what she owed on the bar. What's more, she's never been in here since."

"But—"

"Well, that night when I was closing up, I happened to think of my gun. I've had two hold-ups here, and I got a permit to keep one. Kept it under the bar, on the shelf. When I looked, it was gone.

"I couldn't prove she'd swiped it, I hadn't thought of it for a day or two, but I'm morally sure she did. And as I said, she's never come back since. It made me mighty uncomfortable, I can tell you; for a while I kept watching for news of some dame living around here who'd bumped somebody off—or herself. I had to go to the cops and tell them somebody—didn't know who, I said—had stolen it; they had its description, of course. Bought another and got a permit for that, and I've got it hidden in a better place. But I don't leave nobody in here by himself any more."

"Don't blame you." Hoskins managed to say. He'd better not ask Mike what make a calibre it was; he was sure he knew. Not to arouse suspicion, in five minutes more he got up and said it was time for his appointment. "I may not be seeing you for a while," he added. "The job I was doing around here is about



over." He wouldn't be returning, unless with Cochrane.

So now he had everything—everything except what or who had scared Donna Smith into coming to him, and kept on scaring her after he'd left, so that she saw no way out but death. And until he found that out—unless Cochrane got tired first and pulled him in—he wasn't turning in the revolver or telling his story to anyone.

But time was running out, and any day now Cochrane might get tired of his waiting game. He should have gone in with the gun at once; all it would mean to the detective now, if he couldn't come up with proof of the suicide and its cause, would be that the pistol was his own and that he had killed Donna. So he must get that proof. He was pretty desperate, but he was still determined.

His break came with something that he had received every year, and had always hitherto ignored—the invitation to the annual reunion of his class at Central High. This time he was eager to go. Somewhere among his class-mates there might be someone who possessed the essential clue.

He had no close friends from high school days. He had never been a mixer, and had always been diffident and awkward, both with other boys and with girls. But of course he knew them all—it was only five years, after all, and some of them were just out of college and others were in graduate school or were still taking professional or technical training of some kind. He was in the minority that merely had jobs—or hadn't jobs.

The girls were the best bet for what he was after; they were more likely to know what had happened to other girls. There was a buffet dinner, and he wandered around, greeting people and being greeted, waiting to find the right person.

Rose McLeod had been president of their class, star of the girls' swimming team, first violin in the school orchestra—a plump, black-eyed, friendly girl whom everybody had liked and who liked everybody. She was, of course, surrounded now, the centre of a hilarious throng. But Jerry Hoskins watched her, waiting for his opportunity.

It came after everyone had eaten, after all the speeches had been made, but when the evening was still young and nobody was ready to go home yet. Jerry, coffee cup in hand, saw Rose McLeod for a moment deserted, sitting by herself on a couch against the wall of the hotel banquet-room the class had rented. He sauntered over to her and asked, "Can I get you some more coffee, Rose?"

"Heavens, no, Jerry—I'll be awake all night as it is. Sit down



and talk; I haven't had a word with you all evening."

Nor for four years of high school, either, he reflected; but then everyone was in a mellow, nostalgic mood at reunions. She patted the couch cushion beside her, and he sat down.

"Isn't it nice to see all the old crowd again?" she asked brightly. Jerry Hoskins had never belonged to the old crowd, but it was an auspicious beginning.

"It sure is," he answered enthusiastically. "Pretty good turnout, isn't it? Nearly all of us, as far as I can remember."

"Well," Rose's black eyes warmed. "Poor Jack Grant—he passed away, did you know that?"

He scarcely recalled Jack Grant, but he shook his head sympathetically.

"And, of course, several of the boys are in the army. And Mary delOcchio married an artist and they're living in Paris—imagine! An awful lot of us seem to be married—I never met so many husbands and wives. Not me, though." She laughed merrily.

"Nor me. I was wondering"—his voice was carefully casual—"whatever became of Donna Smith?"

"Poison Smith?" She smiled as everybody used to smile, then looked guilty. "Gosh!" she exclaimed, "I ought to be ashamed after what happened to her."

"What?"

"She was in Huntoon for a while."

Hoskins gaped at her in pure amazement. Huntoon was the State Mental Hospital.

"Yes, didn't you know? I guess not, or you wouldn't have asked me. I heard about it from my brother-in-law—his brother's an orderly there. She was really nutty, he said, had delusions and went completely haywire. I asked Jim—that's my brother-in-law—last time I saw him, about a year ago, how she was getting along, and he said they'd discharged her as cured. But those things often come back, don't they? I don't know what became of her after that . . . oh, good Lord, Jerry, I never thought! Were you fond of her? You're white as a sheet. I didn't know you ever went together."

"We didn't. I hardly knew her. I'm sorry to hear about her, of course." He managed a smile. "I just had a stab from the headaches I get—that's why I've turned pale, if I have. I'm afraid I've got to get out of here and go home and to bed before it gets worse. Sorry to have to leave early. But it's been grand to see you all."



"You must come back oftener," said Rose. "And take care of those headaches—you ought to see a doctor about them."

"Oh, I have." Hastily he made his farewells, waved at people he passed and drifted out.

Now he had it pretty well figured out. She'd stolen Mike's gun—that showed in itself that her mind had become unbalanced again. Something had scared her that night, but now it didn't matter whether it was something real or imaginary. It must have been suicide, and the fire must have been an accident because she'd been smoking and forgot about it when the crucial moment came. All he could do now was go to Cochrane, give him the gun, and tell him the bartender's story. All the police would have asked Mike before would have been whether he'd known Donna Smith, without saying why, and he'd told Jerry he didn't know her name. They had no photograph to show him.

Cochrane would be sore about his not turning the gun in as soon as he got it, but that was unimportant. The important thing was that now he had witnesses—Nunes, the bartender, maybe Rose's brother-in-law's brother, certainly other people from the hospital. He could prove it wasn't his gun, could clear himself completely.



Looking back, Jerry Hoskins recognized that this was the moment when he ceased to be a dependent boy, and became a mature adult.

Cochrane took the revolver with a grunt. "Nunes was here," he said. "He got worried and came down and told me. What did you think he'd do?"

"Then why—"

"It was beyond use, so we let you keep it till we needed it. We've kept an eye on you, and we would have pulled you in any time. I just decided to give you some rope—I was pretty sure you wouldn't keep your nose out of this, the way I told you to, and sometimes an amateur runs on to something we miss. Like this Huntoon business—we couldn't canvass your whole high school class for gossip about the girl.

"Shut up now and sit still; I'm going to phone Huntoon and then I want to talk to you again . . .

"All confirmed," he said a quarter of an hour later. "That let's you out, I guess." Jerry sighed in relief.



"Then she did kill herself, the way I figured?"

It was a rhetorical question. He got an unrhetorical answer.

"They don't think so. For one thing, she wasn't suicidal. Her delusion was this same business she fed you—the husband she didn't have. She was scared to death he'd kill her—she'd never have committed suicide. She even didn't want to leave the hospital because she was so afraid of him. Then she seemed to realize it was all a dream and they said she was cured and discharged her. They're always overcrowded there. But it must have come back."

"But, if he never existed—"

"Yeah, I know; it's screwy, but so was she. The head doc at Huntoon is going to call me back and give me some more details from the file when she entered. Wait around a while and I'll tell you what he says."

"Meantime, tell me again about Mike Kovinsky and the second permit he got after his gun was stolen. I want to check on that too."

Jerry repeated the bartender's account. Cochrane took up the phone again. When he got his reply he whistled. But to Jerry's look of enquiry he gave only a headshake.

"Stay put," he said. "When I've got that call from Huntoon I want you to go somewhere with me."

The call came a few minutes later. Jerry couldn't make anything out from Cochrane's brief monosyllables, nor could he read the notes the detective was making. When he hung up, Cochrane for the first time looked excited. Now that Jerry was no longer a suspect, the sergeant's whole attitude toward him had changed.

"What do you know?" he exclaimed. "It seems there once was a Harry—Harry Sonderheim his name was—and he really was a marine engineer—still is, for all I know. They checked back and got the kernel of truth out of that poor daffy girl's daydreams. We'll look him up, but we'll probably find he was somewhere the other end of the world that night. He couldn't have done it, anyway—he had no reason."

"They weren't ever married, but I guess they did have an affair. Just the girl in every port to him, I suppose, but it was her great romance. She took it hard."

"She would—she couldn't have had much experience. Poor Donna."

"Yeah. Well, they went together for a few weeks, three or four years ago. Then he vamoosed. Just like that. She couldn't take



it—it was too much humiliation. She brooded till her mind gave way, and she cooked up this whole screwy story. Couldn't face the fact that she'd been deserted, so to save her self-respect she dreamed up the exact opposite.

"Then she began seeing men in buses, or on the street, or anywhere, that looked something like him, and soon she began deluding herself into thinking they *were* him. At first she just ran and hid when she'd 'see Harry.' One day it appears she came face to face with a guy that must have resembled him—in a restaurant, it was—and suddenly stood up and screamed that he was going to kill her, and knocked over her table with all the dishes, trying to escape. Of course they grabbed her, and she couldn't make sense and kept screeching that Harry was after her. The guy proved who he was, and that he'd never seen her in his life before. So that's how she got committed to Huntoon."

"Then I suppose," said Jerry Hoskins slowly, "that the night she came to me it had happened again. She wasn't really cured, and it must have been the same thing all over again."

"I imagine so."

"But then if she didn't kill herself—and we know she had that gun—somebody killed her. You know it wasn't me. Who was it?"

"That's what we're going to find out. Come on, Hoskins, I want you to go somewhere with me."



They were lucky. They hit the afternoon lull again. Mike was alone.

He remembered Cochrane, and he remembered Jerry Hoskins. At the sight of them together a flicker of fear crossed his face.

"Kovinsky," the detective said, "let's see your new gun—the one you told Hoskins here you got a permit for after a customer stole yours."

The bartender began to sweat.

"Because you never did get another permit," Cochrane went on relentlessly.

"I haven't got a new gun," Mike muttered at last. "And nobody stole my old one. That's just a story I told him"—he jerked his head toward Jerry.

"Why?"

"Why was he hanging around here all the time? What was he



after? If he was from the cops I wanted to put it over that my gun was gone and I didn't know where; if he was casing me for a hold-up, I wanted him to think I had another."

"Is this it?"

The detective laid the battered object on the bar.

"How can I tell? It don't look like nothing."

"It's yours all right. There was enough left to identify it. It's the one you had a permit for."

"It was lost."

"O.K. Where?"

There was a long silence.

"She phoned me," Kovinsky said then.

"When?"

"That night. The night she—the night she died."

"What did she want?"

"She—she wanted me to come—come right away. She gave me the address. It was about quarter to twelve. She was crying and carrying on, and she said I was the only one left could save her. I thought she was nuts, and I hung up on her. Then she called again, and I was afraid people could hear her, the way she was yelling. So I told the relief man I have here nights to finish up, and I went to see what the hell was going on."

"I thought you said you didn't even know her name."

"I didn't—I don't yet. I hadn't known her address till she told me."

"It wasn't her address. But go on."

It came in a flood now.

"I knew who she was, all right—she'd been here often enough. She used to talk to me sometimes—mostly stuff about some husband who was jealous of her and she was scared of and how she was going to get a divorce. I never listened much—just made sympathetic noises, the way you do. I hear enough of people's private troubles—that's part of being a bar-keep. So this night she started off by saying, 'This is Harry's wife—you know,' and I knew."

"I see. What happened next?"

"Well, I went where she said, and I buzzed and she let me in. When I got up to the apartment she had the door unlocked."

"She was a mess. Look, officer, I never—I never had anything to do with that girl: you understand? She was no bargain—no looker, and kinda half-nuts, I always thought. But I was sorry for her; that's why I went, besides not wanting to have the custo-



mers wondering what was happening. She was crying, and she'd been in bed and out of it again, and there she was, with her hair every which way, with something on that looked like a man's pyjamas—

"She told me this husband of hers was back in town, she'd seen him, and she ran away, but she was certain sure he'd followed her, and any minute he might break in and kill her. She had to have protection. Great—so if he comes, there I am, planted as the fall guy. I couldn't make heads or tails out of it. Something about some guy she'd thought would help her, but he ran out on her and I was the only one she could think of that might help—"

Jerry Hoskins swallowed a lump in his throat.

"So I tried to calm her down, and I told her I'd look outside, all around, and make sure nobody was there—there wasn't a soul in sight when I went there. I asked her why didn't she call the cops, and she said no, they wouldn't believe her, they'd—something about committing—I thought maybe she meant she'd committed something and they were after her, though I couldn't imagine what for."

"No, she was afraid they'd commit *her* again," Jerry said half to himself. Kovinsky didn't even glance at him.

"So then I said, 'Well, look, you go back to bed and go to sleep and I'll sit right here till daylight, and if anybody comes I can handle him.' I had a sister once used to get highsterics, and that's the way we used to talk to her. It seemed to work, at first, and she got in bed and pulled the bedclothes over her. I put out the light, and I thought we were all fixed. Then all at once she sat up again and whispered, 'No, you can't! Harry's bigger than you are, and he's got a gun.'"

The bar-tender pressed both hands hard on the bar to stop them from shaking. There was sweat on his forehead and his upper lip.

"That's where I made my big mistake," he groaned. "You see, when she phoned all that stuff I didn't know what I was going to get into. There might have been some guy there I'd have to fight, for all I knew. So like a fool, before I left I slipped my gun into my back pocket. And when she pulled this line, I thought it would give her confidence, and I said, 'Don't worry, sister, I'm armed too!'"

"That was the worst mistake I ever made in my life. Because she said, 'Show me,' and I went over to the bed and pulled the gun out—there was light enough from the window for her to see—



and I said, 'See? It'll all be O.K.'

"And then, before I knew what she was doing, she grabbed my hand and tried to pull the gun away from me. She—she laughed. It was like a cold breeze down my spine. I realized then she really must be crazy. She was, wasn't she?"

"Yes," said Cochrane.

"And she said, 'Give it to me, and then you can go. I won't be afraid once I have a way to defend myself. That's all I've wanted, but I didn't know how to get it.' I said, 'Oh, no, you don't miss!' and tried to get my hand loose, while she held on with both of hers. I was all mixed up, thinking here she was, a real lunatic, and they always say never to get them upset. So I said, kind of coaxing, 'You let go, and I'll guard you. That's better all around, because I know how to use this and you don't.' And then oh, God, you won't believe this, but it's true—"

Kovinsky pulled one hand free from the bar and wiped his face with a handkerchief.

"She dug her nails into my hand, and she said, 'No, if Harry breaks in here and sees you, he'll shoot you down before you can move. But if I'm alone I can shoot him as soon as he gets in. Besides,' she says in a funny little voice like an old maid school-teacher, 'come to think of it, it isn't nice for a man to stay all night with a lady in a bedroom, you or my other friend, either. I ought to've thought of that before, but I was so desperate!'"

"Well, I was just flabbergasted. For a second I forgot to hold tight. And suddenly she got the gun away from me. I dived for it, but somehow between us the safety catch must have moved, and before I could think the gun went off. There wasn't much noise, because of the bedclothes.

"I—I guess I just panicked. I was paralysed. Then I pulled myself together, and turned on the light. And there she was. Dead. No pulse, no breathing, not even blood; it must have got her right through the heart. I saw enough corpses when I was in the army; I knew.

"And all I could think of was, they'd think I'd did it. They'd find her, and the relief man would say I got a phone call and left early, and I've got a wife and kids.

"So I just turned tail and ran."

"Without the gun?" Cochrane asked incredulously.

Mike Kovinsky nodded.

"I was halfway down the block before I remembered it. I didn't dare go back—I was afraid somebody might have heard the



shot. I got home about the time I usually do, after the place closes.

"And then the next day I read in the paper about that fire. All I could hope was they'd never connect her with me."

"Were you smoking?" Jerry Hoskins asked abruptly.

"I guess so—I can't even remember. But I know I lighted a cigarette when I made her go back to bed and sat down to wait there till morning. I don't remember putting it out."

He turned to Cochrane again.

"Officer, I swear to God it was an accident, the whole thing. I no more meant to shoot that girl than go to the moon. When they said they didn't know who the victim was, even if it was a man or a woman, I began to wonder, if I'd been saved.

"The only danger was the gun, because it was registered to me. I hoped that somehow it had been lost and carried away with the burnt stuff from the fire. And then when the paper said the tenant of that apartment was some man I never heard of—"

"That was me," said Jerry. "That wasn't her home; it was mine. And the gun almost *was* lost. Even the police couldn't find it."

Cochrane glared at him.

"The man who searched that room and missed it is sorry already," he growled. "He's demoted back to patrolman."

"So that's why," Mike continued, "when I was afraid this guy here was snooping, I told him some girl had stolen my gun."

"Well, Kovinsky, let's go," Cochrane said.

"Where?"

"Where do you think? To the station, to be booked."

"But it was an accident!" the bartender wailed.

"That's for your lawyer to prove and the jury to decide. It might be manslaughter, or even murder second degree."

Kovinsky looked wildly around him.

"But I'm all alone here!" he cried. "Any minute I'll have customers in—it's a miracle nobody's come since you got here."

"Lock up and come along."

"But I'm not the owner—I'm only an employee."

"Too bad. You can phone from the station."

Jerry Hoskins looked at the bartender with fellow-feeling. They were comrades in misfortune, both caught in the crazy-quilt melodrama of a deranged mind. Impulsively he said, "Look, I don't know much about it, but I can fill simple orders till someone gets here. I'll pinch-hit for you till you can notify your boss."



Mike Kovinsky paused where resignedly he was taking off his white coat and preparing to go with the detective. He gazed at Jerry with horror.

"You can't," he said flatly. "Thanks, but you can't."

"Why not?"

"If you served just one customer behind this bar," the bartender said firmly, "the union would be down on us like a ton of bricks."

© Miriam Allen deFord, 1966.

---

## TRUE CRIME COMPETITION

Crime in real life is not always so glamorous or exciting as the fictional sort, but many *EWMM* readers must have come into contact with crime in one way or another—been the victims of burglaries or robberies; had something stolen, been swindled, defrauded, or had pockets picked . . . the list must be endless.

*EWMM* is interested in what happened, if it happened to you. We offer a **ten** guinea prize for the most interesting experience of this kind, together with six subscriptions for one year to *EWMM* as consolation prizes to the runners-up.

Just write and tell us about *your* brush with crime. The rules are simple:

Write in your own way just as you please—it is not the quality of the writing that counts, nor the way it is presented, but the details of the experience.

Make it short or long, and told the way you think best.

The closing date for entries is 24 September, 1966.

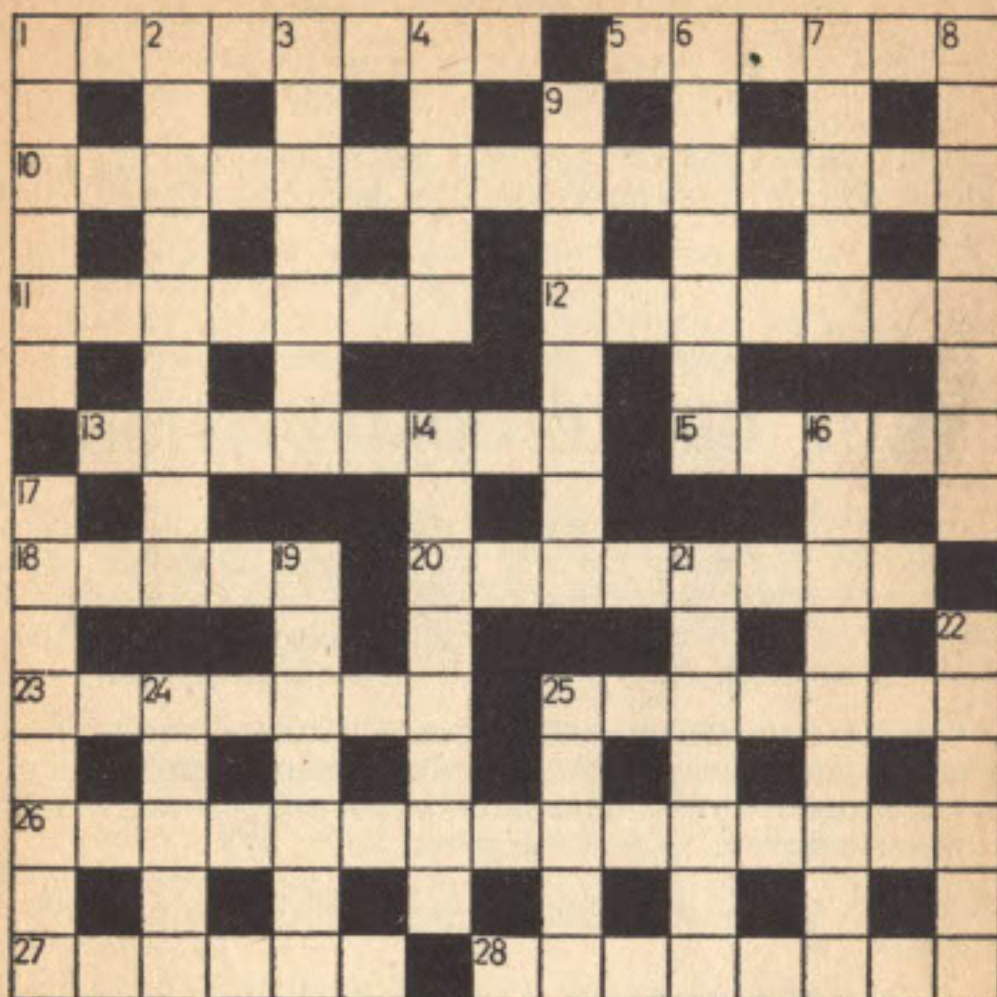
The Editor's decision will be final.

The winning entries and the runners-up, will be listed in *EWMM* published on 1 December, 1966, and extracts from the winning entries will be published.

Address entries: TCC, *Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine*, 4, Bradmore Road, Oxford.



# EWMM Crossword No. 20



## ACROSS

- 1 No beer, all skittles (8)
- 2 Take exception to—in court? (6)
- 10 The skeleton of that EW character? (5, 2, 3, 5)
- 11 Serious complaint (7)
- 12 Work put out again (7)
- 13 '26' may be tried on him (8)
- 15 Spirit that's undrinkable (5)
- 18 Sphere of activity (5)
- 20 Bracelets not for women? (8)
- 23 Horse that put others in the shade! (7)
- 25 Force into wrinkles (7)
- 26 By which the trustful are deceived (10, 5)
- 27 Scions of the family tree? (6)
- 28 Artist who was a successful lookout man? (8)

(Solution will appear  
in our October issue.)

## DOWN

- 1 Get at a race-horse (6)
- 2 Cost of being right? (9)
- 3 Old gold coin is more than enough for a firearm (7)
- 4 Just like Smart Alec or Clever Dick (5)
- 6 Arson, for example (7)
- 7 Some of the little folk (5)
- 8 Subjects of mental cruelty? (8)
- 9 Not a long stretch—for an athlete! (5, 3)
- 14 Heated and hardened! (8)
- 16 Try to profiteer! (4-5)
- 17 The crimes of receivers! (8)
- 19 Picking pockets at the seaside? (7)
- 21 Wooded at the Old Bailey, perhaps? (7)
- 22 One sex is said to be (6)
- 24 A Queen, maybe (5)
- 25 A drink in prison? (5)



# Modus Doesn't Always Operandi

ERIC PARR

*In the Fraternity you learn it  
the hard way, unless you  
go first to ask Wilmer*

"**M**ODUS OPERANDI," says Wilmer one day, "is the reason why the majority of you geezers get nicked." After coughing up this pearl of wisdom he carries on with the job in hand, which is the washing of a couple of dozen tea-towels that Freight Train has just nicked from the household department in Harridges, and has flogged to Wilmer for half-a-nicker.

"No one can wipe up on new tea-towels," says Wilmer, completely ignoring his first remark which, if you examine it very carefully, is the finest way to get your audience on their toes.

"What's this *modus* lark," asks Fanlight Stevens, "and what's it got to do with us getting nicked?"

This is the cue line Wilmer's been waiting for. He carefully drapes the tea towels over a line at the back of the coffee-bar, wipes his hands, and pulls out his battered tobacco tin. He carefully places a layer of black shag into a cigarette paper, runs his tongue along the edge of the gummed paper, flicks the wheel of his lighter and with the devout air of an acolyte at a pontifical mass, touches the flame to the end of his cigarette.

I wait for his answer which I know will not pass his lips until a lungful of smoke has ascended to the ceiling.

Henry Irving had nothing on Wilmer.

"The *modus operandi* or the *M.O.*, as the bogies call it, means simply this—whenever a particular piece of villainy is carried out, the law can usually pin it down to a handful of villains. Take you, Fanlight. You never get into a gaff unless there's a fanlight. Right?"



Fanlight nods his head.

"So," replies Wilmer, "that goes on your record as your *modus operandi* or mode of operation. So when someone steams into a place via your favourite route then it's fifties on that yours is one of the names on the local D.D.I.'s desk.

"Then there's Freight Train, who's a dot on the card if ever I saw one. Does himself up in a white warehouse coat and dodges about all over the place, nicking anything that the owner takes his eyes off for five minutes. The mere mention of a white coat near the scene of the theft is enough to send the bogies galloping along to his drum.

"You've all got your pet *modus* and not one of you will make an effort to change it."

"You can't teach old dogs new tricks, Wilmer," remarks a character who gets the name Truthful Tom on account of that he is such a flipping liar and who earns his living by writing heart-rending letters to old trouts in the country. The contents of the letters is a fanny about how his old mother is dying in hospital a couple of hundred miles away and although he's been a bad son all his life, he would like to hear his mother's words of forgiveness before she departs to a better and brighter world. Unfortunately he hasn't the price of the next meal, let alone the railway fare to this distant spot.

Personally, I am of the opinion that any old trout who stands for Truthful Tom's tale of woe deserves to lose her cash. If my memory serves me right, some two years ago we all had a whip-round for a wreath for Truthful Tom's old lady, who had turned her toes up at Holloway in the middle of a three year sentence she had copped at the London Sessions for sixty-nine cases of false pretences.

"I did know one old dog who taught himself new tricks," replies Wilmer, "and you probably know him, Tom."

Tom raises his eyebrows enquiringly.

"Georgie Fisher," says Wilmer, and Tom laughs.

"The Head Porter, eh."

Wilmer nods.

"The very same. Now, as you know, during his long life he collected more bird than Charley Peace, and it began to show on him. The only subject he could discuss was the nick and every time he came to a closed door he automatically stood back waiting for an invisible screw to open it. He even used to have porridge for breakfast during the short spells he was at liberty. His explanation



was that he couldn't get out of the habit and that his system had got used to a pint of burgoo every morning.

"Well, *you* know how he got his name and for the benefit of others present, I'll explain."

Here Wilmer glares at a little group, carrying on a private conversation amongst themselves. They caught his eye and began to button up, very lively and their faces take on expressions of rapt attention.

"He used to get a job as head porter in some hotel or the other. His references were always tip-top as they ought to be, considering he used to buy them for a tenner apiece and for the first three or four months he would go out of his way to make himself the best head porter in the business.

"All the time he was looking out for a good prospect. When that prospect arrived, usually in the shape of some unattached old trout with plenty of tom-foolery, he would watch her every movement and when the first available opportunity arose, and he knew that she would be out of her room for at least one hour, he would borrow a pass-key, let himself in and go through the room like a dose of salts.

"He always left the room very tidy so that sometimes it would be a day or two before the old trout tumbled that she had been turned over.

"Well, it was only a matter of time before the law used to sort him out. They knew his graft only too well and when he finally went down for five years, which was the biggest sentence he had ever copped for this lark, he came to the conclusion that he would have to try a new caper, and with the experience he had gathered during the time he had worked amongst the cream of society he knew just the scheme. The only snag was that this lark required a great deal of working capital.

"The day he came out he steamed straight around to Monty Cohen, who was his regular buyer and stuck his proposition up to him."



"Old Monty listened and after a great deal of deliberation decided to finance this scheme, which was the obtaining of gear by means of the kite-up. In plain English, the Head Porter was going to kit himself out in clothes similar to those worn by the county gents who used to bung him a bit of silver to get a cab for



them, adorn himself with the bits and pieces that Monty had just got out of his safe. The said bits and pieces consisted of a gold cigarette case, a gold Dunhill lighter, a pair of platinum cuff links and a Louis Patine wrist-watch.

"This discreet show of wealth and taste should overcome any qualms a jeweller might experience when asked to accept a cheque from a perfect stranger.

" 'Remember my boy,' says Monty, 'this gear is only lent. I shall expect to see it intact at the end of every week when you have completed your operations, and you come to me with the fruits of your labours. Now, here's a brand new cheque book, a driving licence and a few visiting cards. Away with you now, and be lucky . . . '

Wilmer looks round to see we are attending, then goes on:

"I suppose a commercial traveller is a bit nervous when he makes his first call on a buyer but when he finds that he is a natural salesman, those fears vanish. He goes on to bigger and better sales.

"That's how it was with Georgie when he steams into his first victim which was a jeweller's shop just off Bond Street.

"The assistant took one look at Georgie's Savile Row tweeds, his Sulka tie and Harris shoes, and scurried into the back office to fetch the manager.

"Georgie allowed the manager to get a good gander at the gold cigarette case he was just putting back into his pocket and absent-mindedly toyed with his lighter before he lit his cigarette. This showed to advantage the platinum cuff links.

"After a few minutes' conversation, Georgie realised the manager was an eighteen carat snob. He went to work on those lines. He dropped names all over the place and due to his pre-knowledge of the famous, he was able to recite their various little idiosyncrasies with an air of conviction. Within ten minutes he had the manager eating out of his hand.

"When the time came to writing out a kite for the brooch of his choice, which was a little trifle of sapphires and diamonds priced at the modest figure of five hundred and fifty guineas, the manager didn't blink an eyelid.

" 'Send it to the Dorchester, my dear chap,' said Georgie, and went on to relate a very funny tale about the Duchess of Tinchester's craving for pigs' trotters. After the manager had wiped the tears from his eyes, Georgie said, 'On second thoughts I'll take the brooch with me. You understand,' and here he gave a discreet



wink which was met by a cute little chuckle and a wagging of a finger from the manager.

"Monty was delighted with the outcome of this first venture. After he had completed a stock check, he handed over a hundred and fifty for the brooch and away steamed Georgie for pastures new.

"What Georgie wanted all this money for I don't know. He lived in Rowton House and had his meals in the cheapest cafés. I really think he used to miss the nick.

"He spread his graft about by going to places as far apart as Edinburgh and the West Country. He worked with discretion and retained the ability of being able to melt into a crowd which is half the secret of the duff-kite business.

"The only time he ever caused raised eyebrows was one time in a café where he absent mindedly emptied an ash tray and stuck the dog ends in his pockets."



"Now Monty had previously warned him that this lark couldn't last for ever, and Georgie realised the truth of it. He decided to pull off the biggest tickle he had ever attempted and that was to be his last.

"With this thought in mind he sailed into one of the most exclusive jewellers in the West End.

"The commissionaire saluted as he passed through the glass doors and once inside Georgie went into his bored aristocrat routine, and soon had the entire staff jumping through hoops. He particularly impressed one young salesman who obviously had a yen for the better things of this world and he stood in the back ground admiring Georgie's attire and *savoir-faire*.

"Georgie allowed himself to be convinced that the two thousand pound diamond bracelet was the finest of its kind, and with an air of nonchalance he pulled out his cheque book.

"To whom do I make it out?" he asked.

"The manager murmured in his ear and stood there, beaming, while Georgie went through the motions. He took the cheque and briefly examined it.

"Thank you, sir," he said and then taking the bracelet from an assistant, announced his intention of wrapping it personally.

"He retired to the back of the shop and Georgie languidly lowered himself into a chair.



"His mind was busily working out just how much Monty would give him for this bauble and how this would make his bank balance climb by leaps and bounds.

"He groped for his cigarette case, opened it and all the time the young assistant was regarding him with envy.

Georgie flicked the wheel of his expensive lighter, raised it to the hand-made cigarette in his mouth and then closed his case and at that moment the young assistant's brows puckered in bewilderment.

"He paused for a moment, looked at Georgie, who was miles away and then slipped away to the back office.

"After a while the manager came back into the shop and apologised for the delay, murmuring something about the right kind of box.

"Georgie waved his hand in the air. He had all the time in the world. Eventually the manager stuck the tiny parcel in Georgie's hand and stood back as Georgie sauntered to the door.

"'Morning,' said Georgie as he opened the door, and steamed straight into the arms of two bogies, who weren't at all impressed by his Savile Row suit.

"They swagged him into a waiting car and before he knew what day it was he was standing in front of the Station Officer listening to a charge of obtaining goods by means of a forged instrument.

"He was still puzzled when the D.I came into his cell to see him.

"'I don't get it,' said Georgie, 'why should this one come a tumble?'

"The bogie grinned and by way of an answer he opened the gold cigarette case he was carrying in his hand.

"'Take a look,' he said and there, framed in eighteen carat gold, were three fat cigarettes, and *four dog-ends!*

"'It was the young salesman who tumbled you. He thought you were at least a prince of the blood-royal until he saw the contents of your case. By the way there will be a further charge of receiving stolen property. The jewellery found in your possession was the proceeds of a screwing job at Ascot. Bad luck, Georgie boy. You should have stuck to the hotel lark.'"

There was a silence as Wilmer finished, and then Truthful Tom says, "Well, his idea of changing the old *modus* didn't work out too well, did it?"

"You're right there, Tom," replies Wilmer. "After he had done his time he went back to the old head porter lark. His



greatest complaint was that he realised that whenever a job was done by someone using the same routine it was to be expected that the law would steam around and ask him some very personal questions.

"What he objected to was that every time a jeweller was tucked up with a duff kite, the law used to pull him out of bed and stick him on an identity parade.

"It got on his nerves so much that he registered for honest work at the Labour Exchange.

"The last I heard of him was that he was punching a long distance lorry up to Edinburgh twice a week.

"He decided that if his night's rest was going to be continuously disturbed, he might as well get paid for it."

© Eric Parr, 1966.



## Some EWMM Contributors . . .

**John Burke.** Born Rye, Sussex, 1922, but brought up in Liverpool, where his father was a police chief inspector. Served throughout World War Two; won Atlantic Award in Literature from Rockefeller Foundation. Has written many books.

**Miriam Allen deFord.** Born Philadelphia; lives San Francisco. Her book, *The Overbury Affair*, won M.W.A.'s 'Edgar.' Popular Mystery and fact writer; publishes translations she makes from Latin originals.

**Francis Grierson.** Many years *Daily Mail* editorial department. Has written over 50 books and technical works, including an official volume on the organisation of the French police.

**Herbert Harris.** Londoner; born 1915. Expert practising public relations officer. Author of nearly 3,000 internationally (and often broadcast) published short stories.

**Eric Parr.** Author of the famous *Grafters All*. Is an expert on the ways of the Fraternity (of Criminals). Writes for TV, and frequently makes personal appearances.

**John Salt.** 43, married; two children. Served Royal Navy in World War Two. Began as a dairy-farmer; now a journalist and magazine editor. Lives in Hertfordshire.

**Paul Tabori.** Born Budapest, 1905; educated Switzerland and Germany. Prolific author of many books, plays, films, TV presentations. Hon. Sec. International Writers' Guild.

**Thomasina Weber.** Scottish born, but has made her home in Florida. Specialises in mysteries for grown-ups, but particularly enjoys writing songs and stories for juveniles. Author of a book of songs widely used on USA educational TV.



# THE CARTOONIST AND THE CRIME WRITERS



© EWMM

BERKELY MATHER





# The Austrian Fantasy

**FRANCIS GRIERSON**

*Against the opéra bouffe reality  
of Franz-Josef's empire was  
played a tragedy that  
reads like fiction  
run wild*

**T**O GAIN PROMOTION is the laudable aim of every keen young soldier, but to use murder as a means to that end is as hazardous as it is unlawful. Perhaps that is what Confucius implied when he wrote: *Even in killing men, observe the rules of propriety.* Be that as it may, there is the extraordinary case of a Continental murderer who devised his own rules and methods, and whose crime caused a sensation that spread far beyond the confines of his native land.

Austria, shorn of her ancient pomp and power, is today a small republic covering 32,000 square miles and having a population of seven millions. Her integrity as a sovereign, independent and democratic State is guaranteed by a treaty signed in Vienna in May, 1955, by the four Powers then in occupation—the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France and the Soviet Union. The former Austrian Empire—the Dual Monarchy formed by union with Hungary—extending over 261,000 square miles, with a population of more than fifty millions, had passed through two world wars.

Half a century ago the Austria of the Emperor Franz-Josef, who was to occupy the throne for no fewer than 68 years, was vaguely associated by the foreign public, especially those people who had never been there or had made only brief visits to the country, with Vienna's imposing buildings, glittering ceremonial,



gay cafés, the seductive music of Johann Strauss, and a national reputation for enlightened humanity, the social graces, and gallantry on battle-field and in bedroom.

The military caste stood high on the Austrian social ladder. The Emperor was proud of his army numbering some 400,000 at peace-time strength and demanded from it loyalty, discipline and—in public, at least—a high standard of behaviour. Military service was compulsory: two years with the colours and ten more in the reserve. Ruddy, bushy-whiskered Franz-Josef was the strong and in some ways able head of a country that had already experienced many vicissitudes, but he regarded the new liberalistic notions then cautiously rearing their ugly heads as a sinister threat to the monarchical principles, which were his religion.

It is not difficult to imagine the horror caused by rumours that an attempt had been made to murder a number of officers of the General Staff, and that one officer had died.

The War Office authorities did not improve the situation by their hush-hush policy. Their refusal to give any explanation or information, or to allow any official statement to be published—a virtual military censorship—only increased the general apprehension and whetted public curiosity. It is easy to decree secrecy, but to enforce it is often impossible. Gossip, even in high official circles was rife and indiscreet; the Austrian newspapers were quickly on the scent of what they correctly foresaw would prove to be a worldwide sensation, and the Vienna correspondents of foreign journals were eager to provide their readers with the latest details. The Emperor furious at the slur on the honour of his army, ordered an immediate investigation. Public excitement mounted as rumour followed rumour, many of them plausible but without foundation, but it is unnecessary to record them here; the real facts, as they eventually became known, were remarkable.



Late in the winter of 1909 a number of Austrian officers, most of them on the General Staff received by post small cardboard boxes holding capsules, each of which contained a pill. A circular letter sent with each box declared that the pills were a nerve-strengthening remedy, guaranteed by 'the highest medical authorities,' quite harmless, but producing 'startling' results. These samples were offered for trial by one 'Charles Francis,' who gave as address a box number at a district post office in



Vienna.

Most of the recipients, regarding this as an advertising scheme to sell some new quack medicine, threw box and circular away and forgot the incident.

Unfortunately Captain Richard Mader, an officer popular and of good prospects at the War Office, decided to try the supposed tonic. Opening his box he swallowed two of the pills. A minute or so later, he was lying dead on the floor of his room. The army doctors who were called decided—rather casually, it seems—that death was due to heart failure, but Mader's relatives were not satisfied. They had been told by a brother-officer that Mader had mentioned some pills which he had received from an unknown source, and they asked for a post-mortem examination. This was made and it was found that the pills had contained cyanide of potassium—the basis of hydrocyanic acid, or commonly called prussic acid—in a quantity much larger than that required for a fatal dose.

When this became generally known—and Mader's relatives had every reason to spread the news—public resentment of official attempts to hide the facts became too clamorous to be ignored.

The emperor, who had ordered daily reports to be made to him, demanded immediate action to discover and arrest the author of the crime, and appointed a special committee of police, military and other experts with full powers of investigation. A monetary reward was offered for information leading to the arrest of the murderer.

In many criminal enquiries an obvious motive provides at least a possible clue to the identity of the culprit, but in this case the investigators had no such trail to follow; the murderer might have been a ghost, for all the trace he had left. The officers to whom the pills had been sent had in each case a good army record; an investigation of their private lives revealed no more than the minor indiscretions common to their class. Many other men, military and civilian, were questioned for one reason or another. One officer was so deranged by his interrogation, and the feeling that he must be under suspicion, that he shot himself dead. This caused a rumour that the police had been certain he was guilty, whereas in fact, they were satisfied that he was innocent.

One of the first lines of enquiry, of course, was the identity of the 'Charles Francis,' whose name appeared on the circulars sent with the poison pills. Nothing was known of him at the postal address he had given, and in fact, the only Charles Francis



to be found in Vienna was the honourable Ambassador of the United States of America.



The excessively large dose of cyanide of potassium in the pills suggested that the sender of them was not a medical expert, but that he certainly had access to an ample supply—it should be remembered that control of the sale of dangerous drugs was not then as strict as it now is in most countries. A check among chemists revealed only one fairly regular and large purchaser of cyanide and he turned out to be a reputable photographer, who used it in developing his plates—a common practice at that time.

It is noteworthy that one of the most remarkable features of this case is the fact that the source of the murderer's supply of the drug was never discovered, even when he had been tried, found guilty and sentenced. He disclosed many things, but that secret for a reason known only to himself, he firmly refused to divulge.

Then came a dramatic change in the situation. An investigator was struck by the fact that the officers to whom the pills had been sent had all graduated from the War College within a certain period; it also occurred to him that a civilian would not have been likely to know their names or the duties to which they were posted. Further, the circulars sent with the poison boxes had been first hand-written and then duplicated on a copying machine, and the handwriting was similar to that generally used in making military maps. So maps drawn by candidates who sat at the last examination for General Staff appointments, but had not been selected for posts, were sent for and compared with the circulars. There was a similarity between the writing on the circular and that on the map drawn by an officer named Hofrichter. The investigating committee immediately followed up this new and promising line of enquiry.

Lieutenant Adolph Hofrichter, aged 28, was then attached to the 14th Infantry Regiment, quartered at Linz, an old castle and cathedral town 95 miles west of Vienna. He was a tall, well set-up man with an oval face, dark hair, and moustache, keen eyes and pointed chin. In his gold-braided tunic, shako with the double-eagle badge, tight breeches, high boots and tasselled sash and sword-knot, he looked the typical gay, carefree young officer of his day, and that was how his adoring young—and pregnant—wife appeared to regard him.



The investigating committee found that Hofrichter who had passed successfully through the Cadet School and the War College, had earlier held a temporary post on the General Staff, but that appointment was not confirmed when permanent appointments were made; Hofrichter was returned to regimental duty.

A visit to Linz rewarded the committee with still more significant information. Hofrichter had purchased at a local shop a quantity of boxes and envelopes similar to those received by Captain Mader and other officers. In his quarters were found, *inter alia*, several capsules and a duplicating machine.

The committee now felt justified in concluding that Hofrichter had despatched the poison pills in the belief that they would create at least one vacancy on the General Staff and that he would be chosen to fill it.

It was a reasonable theory, and perhaps they hoped that Hofrichter would simplify matters by breaking down and making a full confession; but if so, they were disappointed.

The lieutenant declared that the charge was absurd and unfounded; he had never possessed poison or sent it to anyone else. The cardboard boxes had been bought to hold his wife's ornaments and other odds and ends; and the copying machine he used for his private correspondence. As to the capsules, they were filled with a worm medicine for his dog—later a veterinary surgeon administered some of these capsules to the dog, without harmful result.

What was to be done? The emperor was impatiently calling for action; the newspapers were printing awkward questions and scathing allegations of official secrecy and inefficiency.

So Lieutenant Hofrichter was arrested and taken to a military prison.

This step caused a public outcry and bitter dissension, for many people refused to believe that Hofrichter was guilty. It was even suggested that the police had trumped up the whole affair to cover up another case of alleged poisoning in which they had recently made a bad blunder; but this charge was discredited.

Among the prisoner's military champions—and they included many former comrades—was General Weigl, who commanded the Linz district, and had asked the War Office to appoint Hofrichter to the garrison there. In a Press interview the General said: 'I am fully convinced of this young officer's innocence . . . He would never have been capable of committing such a crime.'



Hofrichter's wife, who repeatedly declared her faith in his innocence, claimed that he had no motive for murdering Captain Mader or any other officer, because, so he had told her, he had been informed that in consequence of new regulations he was not at that time eligible for a Staff post. If that were true, it seems odd that no official confirmation was forthcoming.

An announcement that Hofrichter would be tried by court-martial, though not unexpected, was not warmly received. The emperor was a stubborn traditionalist, especially in military affairs, so the stern rules of army legal procedure, however clumsy and outdated, had to be obeyed. For instance, neither members of the public, nor even accredited representatives of the Press, would be allowed to attend the trial. Complete secrecy would be preserved about the proceedings. So strong was the feeling that a body of members of Parliament drew up a resolution declaring that it was time the procedure was reformed and demanding that Hofrichter's trial should be held in public. The Government, however, refused to submit this plea to the emperor, possibly feeling that it would only stiffen his disapproval of innovation.

Army regulations provided that any court-martial must be preceded by a court of enquiry; this preliminary tribunal was therefore constituted and sat behind closed doors from 7 December, 1909, until well into February, 1910.

The proceedings were conducted by a civilian lawyer, Dr. Kunz.

At a British court-martial there is a deputy judge-advocate who advises the members of the court on points of law and procedure; an officer is appointed as prosecutor; and the accused can make his own defence or be represented as he chooses. It is true that a court of enquiry is not subject to quite the same rules, but in this case Dr. Kunz assumed the duties of director of the court, prosecutor, and, as Hofrichter was not allowed to retain his own defender, counsel for the accused as well.

Kunz recounted the facts already detailed and offered a good deal of personal opinion and some conflicting evidence. The fact that some junior officers, not on the Staff, had received, but not taken, poison pills was explained by the prosecution as Hofrichter's cunning device to avert suspicion from himself, although so far it had not been proved that the accused had sent any pills to anyone. Kunz did his best—or worst—with the largely circumstantial evidence at his disposal, but the awkward facts remained that (a) no cyanide was found in Hofrichter's quarters, or on his person when he was searched; and (b) no chemist could be found who



remembered having sold him even small quantities of the drug, although as an amateur photographer he might well have made such purchases. Again, Hofrichter had been seen in Vienna, wearing civilian clothes, on the date when the pills were posted; but no one could be found who saw him post them, and it had to be admitted that Hofrichter had been on leave and had visited relatives in an outlying suburb.



Meanwhile, the police, whether because they felt that their case needed a shot in the arm, or on the general principle of exploring all avenues, in the hope that something useful would turn up, had continued their searches into Hofrichter's career, both as a soldier and in private life.

Much of the public and Press support for the accused lieutenant was based on his apparently untarnished record as officer, husband and man of honour. The first rent in this robe of saintliness was torn when the police, who had their own channels of private as well as official publication, caused it to be known that a few years earlier Hofrichter, then serving at a military post in north-western Austria, had become sexually involved with a peasant girl. Such affairs were no more unusual in the Austrian army than in those of other countries, and the amorous adventures of the dashing soldiery were generally regarded as excusable indiscretions; but in Hofrichter's case the sequel was tragic. Whatever vows may have been exchanged between the couple, when Hofrichter left for Vienna to attend a course of instruction at the War College, the girl believed herself abandoned and she committed suicide. She took cyanide of potassium. It was suggested at the time that Hofrichter had supplied the poison, but no evidence was found to support the charge, and it seemed unlikely that the young officer would risk his future career by such a foolish act.

The resurrection of this story caused many people to revise their opinion of Hofrichter and then a lucky identification enabled the police to reveal the lieutenant as a Hyde who could not even plead a Jekyll as the involuntary author of his crimes.

For a considerable time the police had been trying to establish the identity of a man who called himself 'Dr. Haller' and about whom they had received many complaints from young women and girls, who alleged that he had seduced them, or tried to do so, with the aid of a drug.



Some months before Hofrichter's arrest an advertisement was inserted in a Vienna newspaper saying that a doctor and his wife required a nursery governess. A certain Fraulein X. answered the advertisement and was asked to go to Linz for an interview. She did so and was met by the supposed Dr. Haller. He explained that his wife and family were away at the moment and he asked Fraulein X. to go to a hotel with him and discuss arrangements for the nursery post. She agreed, and there, she alleged he gave her a drink into which he had put some drug, and then tried to rape her. She screamed for help and the landlord came to her aid. Haller bolted to the street and disappeared, and Fraulein X. and the landlord reported the affair to the police.

It was this Fraulein X. who now definitely identified Dr. Haller as Lieutenant Adolph Hofrichter.

The effect of this and other revelations of the double life that Hofrichter had been leading was to deprive him of the sympathy of nearly all his former public and private supporters; but his wife, Anna, and his mother-in-law insisted that all the charges made against him were based on deliberate lies—though why or by whom the lies had been invented they were unable to say.

However greatly the members of the court-martial, which was now convened, might deplore the blot on the army's escutcheon caused by the revelation of Lieutenant Hofrichter's debauchery, they were not concerned with morals, but with murder.

It was their duty to determine whether the accused man had in fact and intentionally administered a fatal dose of poison to Captain Richard Mader, and had attempted to kill certain other officers by similar means. If they found Hofrichter guilty they would have also to recommend the sentence he should receive, a judgment which would eventually be submitted to the emperor for final decision.

Those who have had experience of army judicial procedure during the past half century will know that a British court-martial is one of the fairest tribunals in the world. For example, the prosecution not only presents the case against the prisoner, but is also *required* to disclose any evidence, or bring to notice any circumstance, it may possess *in favour* of the accused, if not already known to the defence. The prisoner is present at the hearing and can make, personally or through his representatives, objection to anything he considers improper in the conduct of the trial.

Such methods would have horrified the Emperor Franz-Josef and the rigid disciplinarians who served him.



The Vienna court appointed to try Lieutenant Hofrichter comprised one major—president—two captains and four lieutenants. This was a reasonable selection in view of the accused man's rank and age; *but* Hofrichter was not allowed to attend, and the court heard no speeches, either for prosecution or defence.

The members of the court listened to the reading of evidence and arguments recorded by the court of enquiry, and frequently adjourned to obtain rulings by higher authority on doubtful points. One wonders whether some, at least, of the members were uneasy about the flimsiness of the case against Hofrichter, but did not care to risk the wrath of their superiors by saying so. At any rate, the secret sessions continued for several months.

Meanwhile, Hofrichter was having a tough time in prison. His earlier confinement had been close enough, but became much more severe when it was found that he had tried to bribe a warder to smuggle out a letter, and was planning to escape. The intercepted letter, addressed to his wife, asked her to send him poison, concealed in a manner he indicated, as he could no longer bear the suspense and wished to commit suicide. The authorities, who may have suspected that he wanted the poison as part of an escape plan rather than to take his own life, promptly stopped his few remaining comforts; he was deprived of reading matter and writing materials, and his only permitted visitors were the governor and the medical officer of the prison.

Such severity may have been justified from the official point of view, but the next action of the authorities was sheer cruelty to a detainee who was, after all, still an innocent man in the eyes of the law. Hofrichter had been told that his wife had given birth to a son, but when he begged the governor to allow Anna to bring the child for him to see, his request was promptly refused.

Hofrichter now began to show signs indicating an approaching mental breakdown, though the sceptical prison doctor asserted that he was malingering in the hope of being transferred to a hospital.

Then came an event as sensational as it was surprising.

Hofrichter demanded an immediate interview with the president of the court-martial, declaring that he had an important statement to make.

When the president arrived Hofrichter said he wished to withdraw his previous plea of Not Guilty. He admitted that all the charges against him were true, and he offered to make a written confession.



In this document Hofrichter said that he had sent the poison pills for two reasons: one, because he hoped to make room for himself on the General Staff; two, because he wanted to secure for his wife the easy life of the wife of a Staff officer, with its extra pay and privileges. He gave details of how he had prepared and despatched the pills; he agreed that he had included officers not on the Staff so as to avert suspicion; in fact, he was apparently prepared to agree to any suggestion or request—except one: no amount of persuasion could induce him to disclose the source from which he had obtained the cyanide for the pills. He may have wished to protect some other person; if so, he succeeded, for the mysterious purveyor was never found.

While Hofrichter's confession was under consideration the police arrested his wife, Anna, on charges of having given false evidence and of trying to smuggle letters to him with the complicity of a warder who had already been punished for his part in the plot. It was then decided that Anna had acted under her husband's domination and the authorities wisely dropped the charges. Frau Anna promptly recanted her previous protestations of faith in her husband. He had, she said, often lied to her; and she was bitter about the sexual escapades in which he indulged when he was supposed to be on hunting parties with other officers. It is to be wondered how much she really knew before the police made their revelations and her husband made his confession.

Although the court-martial accepted Hofrichter's confession and plea of Guilty the members spent several weeks in debating what sentence should be passed on him. At last it was decided by a unanimous vote, that he should be condemned to execution by the public hangman; but as certain doctors called in to examine him declared, somewhat obscurely, that he was 'morally abnormal,' the court sent with their formal verdict a recommendation that the death sentence should be commuted to one of imprisonment for a long period.

The documents were sent to the commander of the Vienna garrison and he forwarded them to the Emperor. While they were under consideration, Hofrichter, suddenly changed his mind and withdrew his confession. It was suggested that he did so as the result of a secret hint from high authority, and that suggestion may have been correct. Military law then stipulated that the death penalty could be inflicted only after the accused had admitted his guilt. Hofrichter's new plea of Not Guilty could therefore at least reduce the proportions of a scandal already



sufficiently painful to the army and its admirers.

Whatever the reason may have been, Hofrichter had to wait until June to know his fate. The regulations required that, although the trial must be secret, the verdict must be proclaimed 'publicly' with doors and windows open.

So Hofrichter, in uniform but without his sword, was marched to the prison governor's office, where he found the members of the court-martial, dignitaries from the War Office and others who included some former brother-officers, waiting for him. Outside the prison walls jostled the usual crowd of sightseers always ready to assemble whether there is anything to be seen or not.

Trumpets sounded, drums rolled, and a senior officer uttered the words that meant the end of an ambitious soldier's military and social career:

"Adolph Hofrichter, you have been adjudged unworthy to serve the emperor and the flag you have disgraced. You have deserved death, but mercy has been granted to you. The emperor orders that you be deprived of your rank and forthwith expelled from the army. You will then undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of twenty years."

There was still one more act of this sordid drama to be played: the degradation which accompanied the sentence.

Hofrichter endured the cold gaze of his former comrades while his sword was snapped in halves and the buttons and badges of rank were torn from his tunic. Then handcuffed, he was taken back to what must have been the welcome privacy of his cell.

I have never witnessed the degradation ceremony, but I have seen a picture of its infliction on Captain Alfred Dreyfus—whose conviction on false charges of treason remains perhaps the greatest blot on French military history—before his deportation to Devil's Island. Many years later, in the World War One, I was hovering as a modest junior on the fringe of a gathering of Allied officers assembling for a conference in France. Suddenly I recognised a face—it was that of Major Dreyfus now proved innocent, restored to the army, promoted and awarded the Legion of Honour. It was the noble face of a man who had borne contempt as well as physical and mental torments and I knew that the marks suffering had drawn on it could never be smoothed out. Perhaps Adolph Hofrichter, monster though he was, found that short visit to the governor's office, a worse ordeal than the slow agony of the years he was to spend in a convict prison.



# *Let's Play Monster*

THOMASINA WEBER

*A chill, off-beat tale of a  
child's innocent little games*

WITH A WIDE yawn that expanded his chest like a hairy barrel, Steve Flynn shuffled across the room. Picking up his shirt, he felt his stomach lurch when he saw the blood on it. That stupid old man! You wouldn't think anyone would be dumb enough to get his head bashed in over a few radios. Some people had no sense.

And that included Steve Flynn, he thought bitterly. He never broke into a shop unless it was empty. But who would think an old man with a going business would be living in that rat-hole behind the store? And who would think a pip-squeak like him would try to take on somebody as big as Flynn? And with a penknife, yet!

Flynn looked at the long cut on the back of his arm. It was dry now and caked with darkened blood. In all the excitement, he hadn't known he was cut until he got home. The old man was a scrapper and had no one to blame but himself for the conk on the head. Flynn didn't like hurting people, but when he lost his temper, he wasn't responsible for what he did. And now, remembering how he had dragged the unconscious man out of sight behind the counter, Flynn felt fear and anger at himself and an urgent desire to get out of town. But he couldn't leave until Morgan came. He balled up the shirt and stuffed it in the bottom of the clothes-hamper. Lester's voice drew him cautiously to the bedroom window. The skinny nine-year old boy was sitting under his side-porch talking to that stupid little robot toy he was so proud of. 'I made him myself,' he had told Flynn the day Flynn rented the house next door. 'He can walk and sit down and stand up.' The kid was always making kookie things like that, and just because they always worked, it gave him the idea he was



some kind of genius.

"Mr. Flynn's not up yet," Lester was telling the robot as it walked back and forth on the ground before him. "I saw him come home late last night. If Mother hadn't been home, it would have been a good time to search his house. He killed his wife and chopped her up in little pieces, you know. And then he hid her in the basement. He goes out nights and takes away a piece at a time and leaves it on somebody's doorstep. We'll have to search his cellar again. I hope we can find some of her before she's all gone."

Flynn snorted in exasperation and headed for the bathroom. No matter how many times he told him he didn't have a wife, the kid still kept asking where she was. He had a one-track mind. He lived in a world of his own where monster-comics and horror-movies and science-fiction magazines were reality. He saw murderers instead of milkmen and fiends instead of neighbours. He was a real kook.

Taking a brush from the cabinet, Flynn eased it through his shaggy hair. The thing he hated worst in life was getting a haircut, but he couldn't put it off much longer. The fear of having his hair pulled seemed to tighten his scalp and snarl the hair, and the barber just yanked and chopped and talked, leaving Flynn's scalp tender for days after.

He was pouring coffee when Lester appeared at his screen door.

"Good morning, Mr. Flynn."

"Morning, Lester."

"Let's play Monster."

"Sorry, kid. I'm not awake yet."

"Well, when you're ready, I'll help you get the blood off your car seat."

Flynn dropped his coffee cup. "What's that?" he said, staring at the unruffled face of the boy on the other side of the screen. His prominent forehead overshadowed his pale eyes and a strand of hair hung between them. That flopping hair would have driven anybody else crazy, but it didn't seem to bother the kid at all.

"Where did you put the body?" Lester asked, matter-of-factly.

Flynn forced himself to laugh. "There ain't no body, kid. I had a flat tyre and the jack slipped. I got scratched up some. See?" He showed him the cut on his arm.

The boy ignored it. "You should have used my ray-gun," he said, indicating the home-made contraption stuck in a holster. "It doesn't make a mess at all."



"I told you, kid—"

"Lester, it's too early for you to be bothering Mr. Flynn." Marsha Metcalfe had come up behind her son and was smiling over his head at Flynn. "Hello, there."

She was wearing a pair of yellow terry shorts about eight inches long and a couple of handkerchiefs cleverly knotted in front. They really weren't big enough, Flynn thought, pulling his eyes away. Her long black hair touched shoulders shiny with suntan oil. One hand held a transistor radio and the other a glass in which ice-cubes floated.

Flynn wiped the perspiration off his forehead with the back of his hand. "Would you like some coffee, Mrs. Metcalfe?"

"Run along, Lester," she said, pushing the boy aside. "No coffee, but I'll keep you company."



The coffee scalded Flynn's throat, but he was glad of the distraction. Marsha put her radio on the table beside them. "I've told Lester to stop pestering you," she said apologetically.

"He's bored, I guess," said Flynn. "It's been a long summer."

"If I didn't have to work at the diner, I could spend more time with him. I'd give anything to be able to stay home. He's such a lonely little boy."

She frowned at the radio as the news came on. "The police are searching the city for the thief who broke into Addison's Appliance Shop last night and stole twenty radios, and several hundred dollars in cash," said the commentator. "Mr. Addison who was severely beaten by the burglar, says he can make no positive identification, although he claims to have inflicted a cut on his assailant. Police found one clue at the scene, however. On the floor of the shop—"

Marsha clicked off the radio. Flynn bit back a protest. What clue had he left? Why did she have to shut off the damned radio? Now he would have to wait for the next newscast.

"You're such an attractive man," she said, gazing at him over the rim of her glass. "So strong and capable. Have you ever thought of getting married again?"

He scowled as he dragged his thoughts back to the kitchen. "Again? I've never been married at all."

"You haven't? But Lester said—"

"I wouldn't want to call Lester a liar," said Flynn slowly, "but



he does come up with a few."

Marsha smiled. "I hope he'll outgrow that habit. He only started it after his father died. A boy shouldn't have to go through life without a father, don't you agree?"

All Flynn needed right now was a woman on the prowl, he thought vehemently as he pushed himself to his feet. "Guess I better go clean up," he said, carrying his cup to the sink.

"Let me do that for you," said Marsha, coming up behind him.

"No, that's okay. You go get your suntan." He turned around to find her face a few inches away from his.

"I'd really like to," she murmured. "I don't often get the chance to play housewife." As she smiled up at him, he noticed the nicotine stains on her teeth and he could see the traces of pancake make-up along the hairline where her wash-cloth had missed it last night. Her pale eyes looked exactly like Lester's.

"Let's play Monster," said Lester, from the doorway. "Come on, Mother, you said you'd play with me."

Her eyes hardened, but she turned to her son with a bright smile. "Not Monster, dear," she said, going to the door. "We'll play catch."

"I don't like to play catch," Lester whined.

"Then we won't play anything!" The door slammed and they were gone.



Flynn was scrubbing at the bloodstains on the car seat and cursing his carelessness when he heard footsteps in the driveway. Looking up, he saw a policeman coming towards the garage. Another stood talking to Marsha where she was sunning herself on a chaise. Dropping the rag, Flynn hurried out to meet him.

"Are you Mr. Flynn?"

"Yes, I am," said Flynn, breathing deeply to slow the beating of his heart.

"We're trying to find out if anyone heard anything unusual last night." There was no smile on the craggy face of the police officer as he looked down at Flynn from a great height. Flynn wondered suddenly if he could see the car beyond with its open door. And he wondered where Lester was. He hoped the kid wouldn't hear them and start squawking about the blood on the seat. They knew the thief had been cut. Flynn turned slightly so his arm would be concealed.



"Sorry," said Flynn casually. "I'm a pretty heavy sleeper."

The policeman's gaze went over his head and seemed to stay for a long time on the dark interior of the garage. Flynn tried to will the perspiration to stay on his forehead and not roll blindingly into his eyes.

"Good morning," said Lester from behind him.

Flynn felt his knees go weak. He could almost see the bulging forehead, the flat pale eyes, that hair tickling one eyelid and then the other.

"Good morning, son," said the officer.

"Are you looking for the murderer?"

"No, no murderers today. Today we're looking for a thief."

"Well, when you're looking for a murderer, just ask me. I know where all the murderers are."

"Be glad to," said the officer, a faint smile at the corners of his mouth. "Thanks for your help," he said to Flynn as he left. Without a glance at Lester, Flynn turned and walked into the house.

After burning his fingers twice, he finally managed to get a cigarette lit. The matchbook dropped to the floor and he left it there. He looked at the clock. Eleven-ten. Morgan wouldn't get here till one.

He turned on the radio, but the news was over. All he heard was the temperature. "—ninety-eight degrees, humidity ninety-two percent." Angrily, Flynn shut it off. As if he needed to be reminded how hot it was! He had had a rough few minutes when he saw that cop coming towards him. Whatever clue they had found, he had been sure it had led them straight to him. If only Morgan would come so he could get out of this town!

That was the trouble with this kind of work, he thought as he stretched out on his unmade bed. He had to rent a whole house so he would have room to stash the stuff until Morgan could take it off his hands. He had thought this house was perfect, and then on his first night here Marsha Metcalfe had come over to introduce herself. She had complimented him on his car, laughing and saying she was ashamed to park her little bug next to such luxury. She acted as if she thought he was loaded. He wished Morgan would come early. He had had it with this town. A man couldn't even earn a decent living any more without people bugging him.

A noise in the basement brought him to his feet. He hurried to the basement door and part way down the steps. Careful to keep out of sight, he saw Lester pushing a broken jar under the



workbench. "Murderers always hide bodies in the basement," Lester said to his robot. He opened the furnace door, looked inside, then closed it.

"Yoo-hoo, Mr. Flynn!" Marsha was scratching on the screen. With a sigh, Flynn climbed the stairs to the kitchen. Some days just weren't meant to be lived through.

"I brought you some nice cool lemonade," she said, placing the frosty pitcher on the table. "With a zinger in it," she added. She had changed to a skin-tight sunback of some kind of green stuff he could see through, and it was a few seconds before he could focus his eyes on the drink.

"A man should have someone to make him comfortable in weather like this," she said.

Flynn took a long drink of the lemonade. It burned all the way down. It was the rawest lemonade he had ever tasted.

"Don't you ever get lonely, Mr. Flynn?"

"I like it that way."

"Oh, that's too bad," said Marsha sadly. "I think we make a wonderful couple, and Lester is so fond of you."

"Well, ain't that nice."

"You wouldn't be sorry, Mr. Flynn."

He stared at her. "What are you, kidding?"

"Not at all, Mr. Flynn. I just think you'd rather be married than in jail."

"And what's that supposed to mean?"

"The police found a book of matches at the scene of the robbery last night, exactly the kind of matches you use."

She was tossing the matchbook he had dropped earlier.

Flynn laughed loudly. So that was their big clue! The sudden relief made him dizzy. "I guess I'm the only one in town who has matches like those."

"No, but you're the only one in town who has a cut on his arm from the store-keeper's penknife."

"Prove it. My car jack slipped."

"You prove it." Marsha was turning her glass round and round in her fingers as if she had never seen such an interesting pattern before. "And you're also the only one in town who has a room full of radios and appliances. Now, what do you suppose one man would want with all that stuff?"

"What right you got to go snooping in other people's houses?" demanded Flynn.

"If my son comes home and tells me something that makes me



suspicious, I got a right to look into it."

"If you were suspicious, why didn't you call the cops?"

"I had my reasons," she said quietly.

"Now just a minute, Babe. If you think you're going to blackmail me into marrying you so you can live it up and your lying Lester can have a daddy, you're nuts. Are you sure your husband didn't commit suicide when he saw what his son turned out to be?"

A change came over Marsha's face and she was on him in an instant, all clawing fingernails and gnashing teeth and kicking toes. "You take that back!"

Her fingers dug into Flynn's long hair and suddenly he felt as if his whole scalp was being torn loose from his head as she twisted and pulled. With a yell of rage and pain, he knocked her from him and she crashed against the old-fashioned sink. He watched in horror as she slid to the floor. Her face slowly faded to a pasty grey and Flynn felt himself gagging.

"You killed her," said Lester from the top of the basement stairs. His face was impassive, except for a slight narrowing of the eyes.

"Get lost, kid," Flynn muttered. His head was throbbing and his heart pounding so violently it felt as if each beat was raising him up on his toes. "Go play, Monster."

"I saw you this time," he said. "Is that how you killed your wife?"

Flynn drew a deep breath. The heat of the kitchen seemed to be pressing down on his head, pushing him inch by inch into the wooden floor. Soon it would be up to his ankles, his knees, his hips . . .

"Come over here and I'll tell you all about it, kid." A car crunched on the driveway. Morgan?

Lester didn't move. "On second thoughts," said Flynn, his breath hot and thick in the humid air, "let's go down in the basement. That's where I did it, you know."

"You go first."

"No, you first, kid. I'll be right there."

As Lester went down the steps, Flynn opened the table drawer and took out a carving knife. It was short enough to slide into his belt without discomfort.

The redness behind Flynn's eyes gave the dim cellar a blurred, underwater look. "You there, kid?" he said as he neared the bottom of the steps.



"I'm waiting." Lester was standing with his back to the laundry tub, his hands at his sides.

"First I took the knife, like this," Flynn said, drawing the knife from his belt, and holding it up where Lester could see it. "Isn't that a beauty?"

"Yes, it is. I guess it was pretty messy, though."

"That's for sure," agreed Flynn. He touched his broad thumb to the blade of the knife. He could lie Lester right up a tree when he put his mind to it.

Upstairs there was a pounding on the door. Morgan would have to wait. After the day he had put in, Flynn deserved this little bit of fun. And nobody could tell him getting rid of Lester wasn't going to be fun. The boy's skinny throat moved as he swallowed. The knife was inches away from the white skin. But Flynn wouldn't commit a bloody murder. He was going to scare hell out of him with the knife and then strangle him.

A blow of excruciating pain drove Flynn backwards across the cellar. His hands flew to his stomach as he looked at Lester with his stupid little gun in his hand. "My ray-gun isn't messy at all," the boy was saying. Flynn shook his head dazedly. What was the kid talking about? "Father broke Mother's arm once. I saw him do it."

Flynn gaped at the face with the pale eyes and the bulging forehead and that crazy lock of hair hanging down like an oily piece of string.

"You're fatter than Father was. I guess you'll take two shots."

The kid was nuts! He couldn't have killed his own father! Not with that stup—

© Thomasina Weber, 1966.

---

THE criminal problems of the United States tend to occur to this country within the space of a few years of their incidence in America, so it is of utmost importance that we should familiarise ourselves with the position across the Atlantic in order to be prepared.

—*The Police Journal*.

IN my opinion Sherlock Holmes is . . . the classic caricature of the Amateur Detective, in whose person the whole art of detection is made ridiculous . . . it is what makes Holmes lovable and immortal . . . —Christopher Isherwood, *Exhumations*.



# THE VASE

HERBERT HARRIS

THE ENGLISH detective-sergeant from the Hong Kong police was an old-stager with sour cynicism written all over his face. He was sick of Hong Kong and even more sick of British chaps like me who couldn't resist a pretty Chinese face.

"Mrs. Chee Min's a friend of yours?" he asked unnecessarily, dead keen to make me squirm.

"Customer," I answered calmly, feeling irritated as he walked along a row of pottery vases, peering inside them.

"But a friend too, eh?—a *very* good friend?"

"Who says?"

"She has neighbours," said the detective. "They say you often visit her place when Mr. Chee Min's not at home."

I swallowed and said: "Nice people."

"Look," he went on, still wearing that sour smile, "this is only a routine check on people who *might* have picked up Mrs. Chee Min's diamond bracelet. I daresay it was one of her servants, but . . ."

"But?"

He smirked. "You might have brought it back to your shop and popped it into one of these vases."

"Be your age, chummy."

"And you be yours," he countered, his face hardening. "Stop playing with China dolls. You might drop one and get a nasty cut, picking up the pieces."

I felt myself flushing. I said: "You know very well I don't pinch bracelets. You just came here to show me how smart you are . . . how you've got all us home-siders taped."

"That's right." His eyes glinted. "We like to keep you all out of trouble if we can."

"Go to hell," I told him. My inside felt all churned up as I watched him go out. I suffer badly from a nagging conscience and I don't like it when people set it in motion.

I looked at the Chee Min vase, standing on a shelf. I called it that because I had had it specially painted for the pretty Mrs. Chee Min. It looked beautiful, really beautiful.

Then I went and stood behind the girl who had hand-painted



it, watching her busy with her latest effort.

She looked like a painting herself as she sat at the bamboo table quietly working. As quaintly pretty as a Chinese doll.

The slanting almond eyes would betray forever her half-Oriental parentage, so she made no attempt to go completely western.

The way she had styled her blue-black hair would pass muster in London or Paris or New York. And she was just as deft as any of the European girls with a powder-compact and lipstick.

But, beyond that, the lovely Eurasian girl was happy to be thought Chinese. There was such grace and delicacy in that cheongsam, whose collar hugged the slender swan-neck, and through the slit skirt of which peeped one long graceful leg . . .

Well, I said I was a pushover for an Oriental girl, didn't I?

I leaned over her shoulder and looked at the vase on which she was working. The long thin brush moved quickly in deft fingers. In a few moments she had painted a whole column of beautiful Chinese 'grass' characters.

"You made a lovely job of the Chee Min vase," I said.

She turned the doll-like face to give me a warm grateful smile. More than just gratitude for my praise, though. A smile from the heart of a child in love for the first time.

Was Rosy Pearl *really* in love with me? Recently there had been all the signs of it.

Not that I minded. Sometimes I found myself thinking: 'Maybe, one day, when she is older, a little more mature, I could marry her and make her a partner . . .'

Rosy Pearl was a real asset to my business, the art-and-curio shop in the Kwan Chow Arcade. It was one of the bazaars in which visitors to the island liked to browse.

Women went into rhapsodies over Rosy Pearl's hand-painting on pottery. The men simply leered at Rosy Pearl and enjoyed their secret dreams.

A tiny frown was playing around the slanting eyes. She said, with a hint of reproof: "Mrs. Chee Min telephoned."

"While I was out?"

"Yes. I thought it wise not to mention it during your talk with the police-sergeant."

"Good girl. What did she want?"

"She said to meet her at the usual place at one o'clock."

The 'usual place' was the Nan-Shan Restaurant, tucked away



in a quiet backwater, and I was already there, waiting for her, when Mrs. Chee Min came in.

Her name was Hui-Fei,—I called her Fay for short. She was not very young; maybe old enough to be Rosy Pearl's mother. She was sweet and gentle and a little sad, and I found her soothing.

I don't think I was in love with her. Maybe I was sorry for her. Quite plainly she was married to a man who didn't really want her, but who was determined that nobody else should have her.

I said: "This is a surprise, Fay. I was going to see you tonight. I was going to bring the vase, the one I promised."

"No!" she exclaimed. "No, you mustn't . . . not tonight!"

Then I noticed the bruise on one side of her face, the side she had tried to hide from me.

I fought back the feeling of anger. "Your husband's back?"

She nodded, her eyes filling with tears.

"He hit you?"

Fay lowered her head. "He knows about *you*. I'm afraid . . . so very afraid."

"You should stand up to him."

She shook her head. "No, I can't. When he's had drink, he is like a madman. I think he is going to kill me."

"And seek his revenge on me, too?" I said with a rueful smile.

Her eyes were troubled. "Perhaps, in some way or another."

I took her hand comfortingly. It felt strangely cold considering the hot monsoon wind scorching in off the South China Sea.

"He's smaller than I am, and, what's more, I don't scare easily—tell him that," I said.

Mrs. Chee Min smiled, blinking away the tears. "You're such a good friend to me. I don't know what I'll do when we stop seeing each other."

"Who said we've got to stop seeing each other?"

The question was sheer bravado. The whole thing would have to stop, and soon. I knew that. The cop had hinted as much. Rosy Pearl disapproved. My conscience gave me hell every time it got the upper hand.



We met twice more at the Nan-Shan Restaurant, but I kept away from her house. The Chee Min vase, which had been painted so beautifully for her, remained on a shelf in my shop in the Kwan Chow Arcade.



I told myself, romantically, that I would never sell it, that I would keep it to remind me of Fay Chee Min.

It was nice for the customers to look at, anyway; the exploring ones who liked to pry and poke about in the back of the shop.

Such as this funny little bloke with the thick-pebbled spectacles which made his eyes look strange. A lot of Chinese look sinister. This one rather more than most.

Yes, he looked a bit of a nut case, but I let him browse away. After all, I recalled a chap who had struck me as the oddest fish I'd ever clapped eyes on, and *he* had turned out to be one of the wealthiest Hong Kong merchants.

Maybe this queer specimen would spend a lot of money, too. I stopped watching him, although I didn't move very far away.

And, then suddenly, Rosy Pearl was right there at my elbow. Her small heart-shaped face looked a little strained and she was asking in a kind of hoarse voice:

"Have I painted this pot like you wanted?"

I took the big vase, gazed at it critically, and handed it back.

"That's very good, Rosy Pearl—very good indeed."

"I'm pleased you like it."

She took the piece of pottery back to her bamboo table, and I could almost sense the stiffness of her shoulders as she stood there.

I moved casually to the door that led out into the Kwan Chow Arcade, and stood right beside it.

The Chinese with the thick pebbled lenses came towards the door.

I stepped in front of him, blocking his path. I said: "Do you see nothing you want to buy, Mr. Chee Min?"

He had stopped dead, stood very still. His eyes looked really queer behind those lenses, blinking at me, big black blobs like liquid tar, sinister and menacing.

Suddenly he spun round and made a dash towards the rear of the shop. But I knew what he was after and managed to get there before he did.

I tipped up the Chee Min vase and caught the stubby pistol as it dropped out.

At the same moment he made a lunge for the gun. I caught him on the side of the head with the vase. The thing bounced out of my grasp, curved in an arc, hit the wall, crashed to the floor in pieces.

Rosy Pearl let out a little cry. I wasn't sure what had upset her—seeing me in danger or seeing some of her best hand-painting



in ruins.

The Chinese wasn't badly hurt, just dazed. He stood there crouching, breathing noisily with his mouth open, staring at the gun in my hand.

"I shall walk out of the shop," he said, panting. "You will not shoot me, because you dare not. How will you explain the shooting of a man whose wife you make love to behind his back?"

He was backing away from me now, and grinning at me like a lunatic.

Suddenly he swivelled round and began to run. I knew I dare not let him get away. I flung myself after him.

A man passed the door of the shop with a small barrow. The fleeing man crashed into it. I hurled myself at his legs, bringing him down.

I couldn't have hurt him very much, but he was screaming like a stuck pig and cursing volubly in gutter Cantonese.

"All right, chummy, just leave the rest to us," broke in a familiar voice, distinctly London-bred.

I glanced up. Sweat was streaming into my eyes, but I couldn't fail to recognise the detective-sergeant. He had brought friends. They stood, stolid and implacable, beside a sleek police car.

"He—he was out to get me!" I gasped. "It's Chee Min, isn't it? I only met him once, and he didn't wear glasses."

The detective was looking at the gun in my hand.

"It's *his*!" I explained frantically. "He came into the shop like an ordinary customer. While I had my back turned, he put the gun in one of the vases."

The policeman just stared, waiting for me to go on.

"He was planting it. You see that, don't you? He's shot someone. He was planting it in my shop. You would have found it here when you came searching. I should have got blamed for—"

I broke off, my voice trailing away. The detective-sergeant's face was deadpan, a little gaunt, a little weary.

I said: "She's dead, is she? He's killed her?"

"About half-an-hour ago." He looked down at his shoes, then back at me. "You were expecting it to happen, were you?"

"I wasn't sure whether to believe her,"

The policeman looked over his shoulder. His colleagues had put Chee Min in the back of the police car.

"Better let *me* have that," the sergeant said, nodding at the pistol which had killed Fay Chee Min. And I said, "Yes," and



handed it to him.

"Suppose we had found this in your shop much later?" he said. "Suppose Chee Min had fixed himself a nice alibi?"

I just stared at him.

"You'd have been in it right up to your neck, wouldn't you? Keep off the slinky locals, chummy—especially married ones!"

He turned abruptly and strode towards the car.

I walked slowly into the shop. I could feel the beginnings of tears under my eyelids.

Rosy Pearl sidled up alongside me, taking my hand.

"I heard," she said, "and am very sorry."

I managed a smile for her. "That was dead clever, Rosy Pearl, the way you did that."

"You mean . . . this?"

She held up the vase which she had brought for my inspection while Chee Min was in the shop.

The vase on whose side she had painted swiftly with her brush:

HE HAS PUT A GUN IN THE CHEE MIN VASE. STOP HIM.

"I didn't see him do that," I told her. "How did you manage to see him with your back to him?"

"I was using my lipstick," she said. "I saw him in the mirror of my compact."

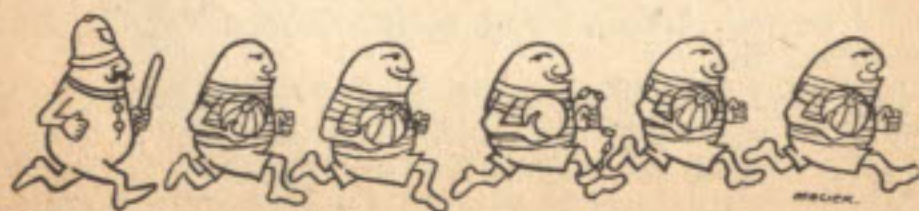
"You're a wonderful girl, Rosy Pearl," I said with a heartfelt sincerity. "A truly wonderful girl."

On an uncontrollable impulse, I took her face between my hands and kissed her. The slanting eyes were shining. "You love me?" she asked.

"Ask me when you grow up," I told her.

I turned away to look at the broken Chee Min vase on the floor. Then blinking away the wetness from my eyes, I looked at Rosy Pearl again. I realised suddenly that she *had* grown up and looked like a woman.

© Herbert Harris, 1966.





# *Witch Country*

JOHN SALT

*It was home ground to Jack Manbre  
but it had a dark side and  
an ugly way of life*

JACK MANBRE vaulted the stile at Torington Cross, and took the overgrown bridle path that would bring him out by the Flag Inn with its view of the Beden estuary in nice time for a mid-morning pint. The tall wet grasses dusted his trousers and dappled the toes of his brogues with bright yellow buttercup petals. A sea-laden breeze plucked desultorily at his tousled black hair and a strong morning sun warmed his shoulders. Manbre indulged in a mood of euphoria. It would be a good holiday. Ten days of his sister's cooking and this, the second of them, barely begun. Time enough to renew old acquaintance, even form fresh attachments, but no time at all to think about the desk work piling up in the C.I.D. room at Holborn Central, where his dour superior, Superintendent Edward Rosewarne, yet presided.

It was probably the recollection of yesterday's funeral when Lady Thelding from Troyz Hall had been laid in Bedenhoe churchyard earth that started Manbre thinking about death, though with no morbid intent. It just so happened that all the more notable obsequies of his childhood, spent in this very district, had taken place in the high days of July and August. Take old Fancy Armitage, now, a hundred if she were a day, laid to rest on the Bank Holiday Monday with plumed black horses to draw her and sheaves of hothouse arums piled high on the hearse. Or Daddy Lee, pushing the high eighties before the scythe fell and a mile-long cortege bore him to the churchyard streaming in its wake the myriad children whom neighbourhood rumour alleged him to have sired.

"Old Daddy Lee fell down the apple tree," Manbre checked himself in whimsicality then halted in actual stride as a night-black crow whirred up at him from the hedgerow. Without the bird Manbre might never have noticed the pitchfork handle for



all the uneasy jut of its angle against the high-banked dog roses, or the glistening substance that daubed it in two places high on the shaft. A horsefly circled then zoomed down purposefully. Manbre ran along the path and climbed a roadside gate. A billhook lay half in the gutter, dust from passing traffic had settled and clung to similar daubings along the blade and handle.

Ned Wade—known to Manbre for years—sat in the ditch he had been tending. His back was propped against the hedgerow, his worn boots rested comfortably on the bank. The prongs of the pitchfork pinned his neck to the earth but did not impale it. The damage of death was all in front, plain to view in the savage cross carved on his chest by the billhook. Blood had drenched his ribboned shirt and filled his lap to spill again in a thread-like stream that lost itself in the damp earth and leaf mould at the bottom of the trench.

Manbre laid the back of his hand against the dead man's neck; the flesh was warm and flaccid. He tested the pitchfork shaft gingerly with his shoulder; the prongs were driven deep, the handle stood firm as a house. Something crashed into the hedgerow from the meadow side. A heavy black snout came thrusting through, red-rimmed eyes glared at Manbre. He put a hand out and called encouragement. The black hound backed at once, gave a long-drawn howl and loped off towards the saltings. Manbre explored further along the ditch until he found the rest of Wade's tools wrapped in sacking. He unrolled them, brought the sack back and spread it as best he could over the dead man.



Inspector Lungley from nearby Fancaster was torn between pleasure that a qualified member of the Force should have discovered the body and annoyance that an urban arm should have intruded into his own rural territory. He was finally somewhat mollified to learn that Manbre was a local boy and that his father had once been district sergeant at Bedenhoe. "You're on crime yourself, I believe?"

Manbre briefly explained his position as aide to Rosewarne.

The inspector said fussily: "You mustn't expect us to have many frills down here but depend on it, we're thorough."

Manbre, who had just witnessed the dispatch with which the removal of Wade's body and the examination of the murder scene had been carried out, was happy to agree.



The inspector's bright blue eyes, set in a sharp ferret face, sparkled accusingly at Manbre. "Can't offer you a busman's holiday, Sergeant, but you can help by answering a few questions. Knew Wade, did you?"

"To pass the time of day, sir; he wasn't the chatty kind."

Lungley pursed thin lips. "Can't say he was much of a loss. Old villain in many ways."

Manbre remained silent while producing the expression of intelligent curiosity which so often goaded Rosewarne to a quiet frenzy. It had its effect, the inspector exploded with sudden violence: "Damn it, man, where's the sense in killing an ignorant, penniless labourer?"

"You said he was no loss, sir. He had enemies, then?"

Lungley sighed. "Maybe plenty wished him underground, but I can't think of anybody who'd tackle that kind of caper in broad daylight with cars passing the whole time. And the choice of weapon doesn't sound much like premeditation, now, does it?"

Manbre said carefully: "The killer must have lingered quite some time arranging the body and the pitchfork. It sounds almost like a—"

Lungley snorted his impatience. "Ritual murder—you're the first to say it, but you won't be the last. Well, are you so surprised? This is witch country, after all, and it's not above a hundred years since they burned one over to Dunbury." He left his desk and walked to the window, staring gloomily out at the ruins of Fancaster Castle. "Let's say it's all a pack of nonsense and then what have we got? An old hedger stabbed to death with his body deliberately arranged so that the blood will run down into fallow earth. That's a fertility cult if I remember my *Golden Bough*. We've got a black crow and we've got a black dog. You can imagine what the locals and the newspapers will make of that." He came back to the desk and faced Manbre squarely. "What we haven't got is motive, some powerful motive that would drive a man to brutal murder in the light of the sun."

"Could we look at that for a moment, sir—motive, I mean?"

Lungley smiled without joy. "We wouldn't want to keep you from your holiday, Sergeant."

Manbre stood up at once. "I'm sorry, sir. You did make the position clear."

The inspector waved him back to his seat. "All right, Manbre. Let's take the motive of hatred. Ned Wade had earned his fair share of that. Lord knows what the attraction was but in his day



he had the pick of the local maids, the wives and widows too. The boy friends and the husbands weren't too happy about it but nobody got around to tackling Ned in the open."

"Scared of him?"

"Not physically but there was something about the old villain that put the wind up people. They reckoned he had the evil eye and a good many of the cuckolds probably saved their dignity by the thought that if the Devil would have his way there was little enough they could do about it. I had the ins and outs of it from the Reverend Abbott over to Bedenhoe. He didn't much like the demoniac connection but when all was said even that was better than having Ned's brains blown over the countryside by some farmer's twelve-bore."

"So he got clean away with it."

"Not altogether. About twenty years ago he was set upon and left for dead. We never knew who did it. Wade wouldn't talk."

"No guesses, sir?"

Lungley spread his hands flat on the table and contemplated them for a long moment. "Guesses," he repeated, then looked sharply at Manbre. "Do you know the family at Troz Hall?"

"I went to the funeral yesterday, sir."

"Really! Well, *de mortuis* and all that but Gina Thelding was a pretty peculiar article. She broke her neck trying to thrash an untried horse over a hedge and ditch, and you'll find few enough in Bedenhoe to regret her."

Manbre's memory stirred. "There was some talk about Wade and Lady Thelding years ago."

"More than talk. Some of it came to the ears of her husband, Sir Nicholas. I think the rest followed."

"But he's the gentlest soul living," Manbre protested. "In any case Wade would surely have talked. And you say he never did."

"No, he never did," Lungley repeated softly. "There is a son, you know—young Keith Thelding. He's just about twenty now."

Manbre sat quietly while the implication dawned. "But there's no proof of anything like that."

"No proof at all, unless she told him something before she died. They say confession is good for the soul." Lungley watched the younger man with a wry grin. "I'm not kidding myself, Manbre, these are all old trails; they lead nowhere. Wade was killed in blinding fury. We need to seek a man in whom the sense of wrong burned like a flame."



The telephone rang, Lungley picked it up and listened, his face blank of all expression. He ended the conversation with a few quiet words then replaced the receiver and sat looking at Manbre. "We now have a dead black dog," he announced. "Sir Nicholas Thelding found it worrying his sheep in a meadow below the church and shot it with a sporting rifle."

"Whose dog was it?"

"That's interesting, too. It belonged to Keith. Savage brute by all accounts; the boy and his mother were the only ones who could handle it."

"Was he out with the dog today?"

"Sir Nicholas says no. Keith went up to London in his car. We can check that, of course. A hearse is the kind of thing people notice."

"A hearse?" Manbre was startled.

"That's right. He bought it from a scrap dealer and spent a year tarding it up. He has a sinister sense of humour, our Keith. Likes to take his friends riding in it. One other thing that might interest you—Keith fancies himself as a black magician. In a small way of business, of course. It doesn't amount to much more than a few half-baked witches' sabbaths at which the gin flows pretty freely. So how do you fancy a young man with a penchant for demonology and hearses as a potential ritual killer?"

"How do you, sir?"

"Not much, and that's a fact. But he comes of bad stock."

"Not Sir Nicholas, surely!"

"Maybe not, but his mother was a Pannet and there's wildness in that strain. The boy's uncle Humphrey was put away some years back; he's dead now, I hear. Quite a bigwig in the zoology line before his mind went. Had the same touch with animals as his sister and nephew."

He glanced at his watch. "If you're for Bedenhoe I can give you a lift."

"You're going up to Troyz Hall?"

"Can't be off it now. Pretty sticky with the lady of the house just dead, though." He hesitated a moment. "Do you know Abbott at Bedenhoe Church at all well?"

"Sang in his choir till he slung me out. I'm on closer terms with his daughter Jocasta now."

"Well, look, you're not on this case and I'm not putting you on it. But if you're talking to Abbott try and find out whether he was with Lady Thelding when she died."



Lungley dropped him at the gates of Troyz Hall and Manbre stood a moment, watching the police car surge smoothly down the gravelled drive towards the big house. Black Magic indeed. Still, Lungley was right in one particular. This was witch country and there were enough Devereux and Plantagent forbears—stern-faced and stiff in their marble cerecloths in the cathedral-like churches of the district, who had done their share of demon chasing in the dark years.

But Pannet, what did he know about the Pannets? Faint memory nagged all through a wet afternoon's sailing with his sister's boys in the family catamaran off Horsey Island. At seven he called the Rectory. Mrs. Abbott told him that Jocasta was out to a party somewhere with Keith Thelding. He asked to speak to Mr. Abbott; suddenly her voice was cool. No, Henry was much too busy—really, he could not be disturbed.



Manbre put the phone down thoughtfully and sat there worrying for another ten minutes. Finally he did the thing he had promised himself never to do on holiday. He rang Holborn Central and asked for Records. The information he sought was not readily available; they would ring him back though not necessarily that night. From upstairs came the noisy sound of boys being put to bed. He went up and told his sister that he was driving into Fancaster to take in a picture. "If anybody rings you can leave a message with the Abbotts. I might drop in there late for a drink with Jocasta."

"You'll be lucky," she said.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

"Nothing, just—you'll be lucky."

He flung out of the house and drove belligerently down the High Street. Lungley's driver flashed him as he swung left on the Newton-Fancaster road. Manbre pulled up and Lungley came round to the driving window. "Thought you'd like to know. Wade used to get a regular three-pound weekly pension through the post. Payments stopped about three years ago. Why should the hush money cease?"

"Danger past?"

Lungley frowned. "That would rule out Sir Nicholas."

Manbre said suddenly, "You've been up to the Rectory."

The inspector grinned. "Got a cool reception, did you? Yes,



I talked to the Reverend Timothy; he was surprisingly open on the whole. There's no question that Keith is Sir Nicholas's son."

"Then that rules Keith out, too."

"It might, if he hadn't lied about this morning. His father said he went up to London but in fact he didn't get as far as Fancaster. Said he was looking for his dog."

"Looking for his dog?"

"That's what he said. Well, have a good evening, Manbre, wherever you're bound."

Manbre drove gloomily on into Fancaster, his temper unimproved by the sight of Thelding's hearse parked on the forecourt of the Flag with an attendant cluster of sports cars. By ten he was on the road home past Bedenhoe Church when his headlamps picked up the figure of a girl hobbling along the road ahead, with one high heel missing from her shoes. Manbre wound down the window as he drew level. Jocasta gave him a stricken look. "Thank goodness, it's you, Jack. I thought I had the Clan Keith on my heels."

She settled beside him and he felt her body trembling against his shoulder. He let in the clutch and drew away then said softly. "Did it turn nasty, Jocasta?"

Her voice sounded choked. "Sorry, Jack, I didn't mean to be silly but I was so glad to see you. I'll be all right in a minute."

"Take your time."

After a moment she went on. "I expect you've heard lots of people say 'Never again'."

"I expect I have."

"Well, believe me, I mean it now," she said fervently. "Do you know about Keith Thelding's parties?"

"Never been asked."

"Usually its all pretty childish and we go on to somebody's house and dance to records. But tonight—" she shuddered and was silent.

"Tonight it was different?"

She put a hand on his arm and said in a level voice, "Tonight it was beastly. Keith had dressed himself up in some black outfit with a horned helmet on his head. Any other time he would have looked ridiculous but tonight the effect was terrifying somehow, ghastly. There was another boy dressed like a labourer and they, they—"

"They re-enacted this morning's murder," Manbre said peaceably.



"Yes, and then Keith proclaimed himself Lord of the Coven or something, and they slaughtered a chicken and began to daub people's faces. When it came to my turn I just let out a screech and bolted." She buried her head against his coat. Manbre slipped an arm about her in defiance of the Highway Code and turned the car neatly into the yew-lined drive of the Rectory. He handed Jocasta over to her mother then answered Timothy Abbott's call from the study. "Telephone for you, Jack, from London—your sister asked them to call here."

Manbre picked up the receiver and knew before the voice reached him that it would be Rosewarne's. The words were calm and unemotional, the facts precisely stated. Manbre noted them on a scratch-pad then waited for the advice that would follow. "There is a doubt Jack, and a strong one, you can see that. You'll have to use your own wit but try not to upset Lungley. Let him know at once, then, if you're nearer the spot, get over there yourself and await developments. But for the Lord's sake don't precipitate them."

Manbre said stiffly, "Thank you, sir. I do understand the position." The ghost of a chuckle drifted in from Holborn and the line went dead.

Manbre met Abbott's eye. "You understood that call?"

The clergyman nodded.

"You used to keep all your old reference books. Do you still have *Who's Who* for nineteen forty?"

Abbott reached down the red volume without a word and went out of the room while Manbre rifled through the pages. The priest returned in a few moments. "Jocasta is in bed; she seems much calmer now. Thanks to you, I may say."

Manbre ignored the comment and stabbed his index finger at an entry in the book. "Demonology—that was his hobby?"

"His obsession, poor fellow. Will you have some brandy? It is very late."

"Nothing to drink. Will you talk to me?"

"I don't think I should."

"If you don't somebody else will, but it will take time and there is very little left."

"Where shall I begin?"

"At Troyz Hall with the Pannets."

The hiss of Abbott's indrawn breath sounded sharply in the quiet room but his voice was calm, almost resigned. "How much do you know?"



"A whisper, a word, a sense of danger. Tell me all you can."

"I will get my coat, we can talk as we go."

"First, I must phone Lungley."

"Very well, I'll wait by the car."

Manbre's enquiry drew a blank in Fancaster. The inspector had been called away, something to do with the Bedenhoe murder. Manbre passed a message and went out to join Abbott.



The Theldings, father and son, stood facing each other across the Adam fireplace at Troys Hall. They had the air of two men waiting for the end of the world in which neither had any longer great interest. Keith, tall, graceful, slender, dressed in a dark light-weight suit, came forward at once to greet Abbott. "Jocasta will have told you of my stupidities, sir. I can only say that I am desperately sorry. I should like to tell her that myself if she can bear the thought of seeing me again." He turned to the sergeant. "You will be Jack Manbre; Lungley told us about you. My father has just told me a strange and terrifying story which you will be hearing in a few moments. He will not spare himself, but I want you and the inspector to know that I regard myself as equally responsible with him." He paused then flashed his father a brief and brilliant smile. "I know, Dad—histrionics, I'll sit down."

His father was an older, fined-down version of the son, a tall, rangy creature with the same graceful carriage. He said to Abbott, "I am glad you have come, Timothy, the sergeant, too. Will you follow me, please; my son will bring torches."

He walked out into the grounds with Manbre close behind, the cold of pre-dawn chilling the sweat of night along the ridges of his spine. Sir Nicholas led the way to the Dutch barn behind the main house. He paused at the door and raised a warning hand. "You will all remain here and on no account move or speak." Manbre sensed rather than saw the door open. Then straw rustled and a petulant voice cried out.

Sir Nicholas answered soothingly. "It's all right, old chap. It's all right, only you must get up now. It's nearly morning and your friends are here."

The first voice came again, old and ineffably weary, overlaid by the fear that lives with all hunted creatures. "Nick, you're sure, they are friends who are coming?"



"Friends, Humphrey, friends. Nothing more to worry about, now."

Footsteps again approached the door, those that came with firmness and those that dragged with an agony of age and dread. Very close now, close enough to see the face and withered body, the sudden terror that started in sunken eyes. Sir Nicholas said with gentle authority, "Here is Timothy, who helped me find you; your nephew, Keith, and here is another friend and a good one, Jack Manbre. You will remember his father, Humphrey."

The shrunken, wild-eyed figure drew itself upright and said distinctly, "Your father was the sergeant here," then crumpled and pitched into Manbre's arms.

Thelding said crisply: "We'll lift him up to the house between us. Lungley should be there by now and I have an ambulance coming from Fancaster. After that, I will talk to you."

The rest of Manbre's holiday passed swiftly, hastened along by the day he spent at the adjourned inquest on Ned Wade and his later appearance at the first of the hearings against Sir Nicholas Thelding and the Reverend Timothy Abbott. He spent the last evening with Jocasta as dinner guests of Inspector Lungley, who had also invited down from London his old acquaintance of Police College days and Manbre's superior, Superintendent Edward Rosewarne. Lungley was disposed to magnanimity. "I was a jump behind you, Manbre," he admitted. "I suppose the dog put you on to it?"

Manbre nodded. "That was the start. Only two people could handle it, Keith and his mother, but she was dead. Then you mentioned the uncle and I began to wonder about him, was he really dead? So I phoned the department."

Rosewarne grinned. "Lungley called Scotland Yard an hour later. Soon after that he heard from Sir Nicholas himself. But by then of course, you both had the same story."

"What story?" Jocasta asked.

Manbre answered her. "Humphrey Pannet was certified as a homicidal lunatic in nineteen forty-one. He escaped from an institution three years ago with another inmate. They took refuge in a farmhouse which burned down. Two skeletons were found in the ruins and the medical superintendent identified them on the strength of the metal discs they carried. This was accepted at the time because the place was derelict. Later, there was a rumour that some tramp had been using the place as well. It couldn't



be checked but by then a doubt had been established that Pannett really was dead."

"At all events Sir Nicholas presumed death three years ago," Lungley went on. "That's when he stopped paying Wade to keep his mouth shut about the murderous attack Humphrey made on him. You see, Pannet had been staying at the Hall during his sister's somewhat sordid association with Wade. He was a man of honour in his own rather weird way and though he couldn't bring himself to tell his brother-in-law about it, he could, and did, decide to settle it in his own way. The result was nearly murder, Sir Nicholas reckons the mental crack-up dates from that night. Anyway it was wartime and Sir Nicholas found it fairly easy to cover things up. He paid Wade to keep quiet and took Humphrey off to a series of alienists in London."

Jocasta shuddered. "Then Humphrey must have been living an ordinary life as a private citizen over the last three years."

"It happens often enough," Rosewarne assured her. "As a matter of fact, he was looking after a Children's Zoo and was probably completely rational until he read of his sister's death. He turned up at Troz Hall the night after the funeral. What does Sir Nicholas say about that, Jack?"

"He was badly shaken. It was late at night and nobody else had seen Humphrey arrive. At first he seemed completely normal. The first hint of trouble came when he began quoting from the *Malleus Maleficarum* and identified Wade as Antichrist. Sir Nicholas said that it was perfectly evident the man was still twenty years back in the past and blaming his sister's paramour for encompassing her death by spells and witchcraft. Sir Nicholas sent for Abbott and they got him to bed somehow in a deserted wing of the house, with Keith's dog to keep guard. But they had reckoned without the Pannet gift for animals. In the morning Humphrey had skipped, taking the wolfhound with him. Keith took fright at that. He didn't know then about his uncle but he did know the dog was dangerous and he set out in pursuit before his father could stop him.

"By that time I had found Wade and the balloon went up. Abbott was all for telling the police but Thelding calmed him down and went out with a sporting rifle, ostensibly to shoot rabbits but in fact to find Humphrey before we did. He flushed him out within a few feet of where I had walked that morning. Humphrey bolted but Sir Nicholas potted the dog."

"What on earth for?" Jocasta asked.



"Because the dog would have led us to Humphrey. Thelding's sole aim was to spare his brother-in-law the hue-and-cry, just pick him up quietly on his own and get him back into hospital. Of course he knew where his duty lay. He had to report the presence of a dangerous maniac, even though he believed that there was only one killing that Humphrey meant to perform. Just the same he clung to the hope that Humphrey would return. He spotted him near the barn just about the time I picked Jocasta up after Keith's bit of foolishness. He took food to him then locked him in. By the time Abbott and I arrived, he had already phoned the police and the hospital and told his son." He paused at last and said to Lungley: "what will he and Abbott get, do you suppose, Inspector?"

"Hardly for me to say; they brought lives into jeopardy remember. Still, I'd like somebody to do as much for me as Thelding did for that poor devil."

Rosewarne broke the ensuing silence. "I'm driving back tomorrow, Jack. Give you a lift into town?"

Manbre smiled wryly. "Thoughtful of you, sir. I'll call round about nine."

"Let's say about eight; there's some work waiting on your desk."



Manbre and Jocasta said their goodnights and went. Lungley refilled Rosewarne's glass. "Pretty girl that," he remarked. "Anything doing in the marriage stakes?"

Rosewarne packed his sixth pipe of the evening and appeared to meditate. "Hard to say," he admitted finally. "Sergeant Manbre has a splendid memory and it may already have dawned on him that until he gets an inspectorship he won't be able to support Miss Abbott in the style to which she seems to have been accustomed. On the other hand, he may not remember anything of the kind. In any case I should say that at the moment he has other things on his mind."

In a car parked at a point overlooking Bedenhoe harbour, Detective-Sergeant Jack Manbre removed one arm to brush at a burning ear. "Somebody's talking about me," he grumbled.

"Who cares?" said Miss Jocasta Abbott. "Look, you can see the man in the moon." And then even he was eclipsed.



# **THE VILLA MARIE CELESTE**

**MARGERY ALLINGHAM**

*A further offering in our selection of outstanding (but less well known) crime stories by famous 20th century authors. This characteristic puzzle was one of Margery Allingham's (1904-66) personal favourites*

THE NEWSPAPERS were calling the McGill house in Chestnut Grove 'the villa *Marie Celeste*' before Chief Inspector Charles Luke noticed the similarity between the two mysteries, and that so shook him that he telephoned Albert Campion and asked him to come over.

They met in the Sun, a discreet pub in the suburban High Street, and stood talking in the small bar-parlour which was deserted at that time of day just after opening in the evening.

"The two stories *are* alike," Luke said, picking up his drink. He was at the height of his career then, a dark, muscular cockney, high cheek-boned and packed with energy and as usual he talked nineteen to the dozen, forcing home his points with characteristic gestures of his long hands. "I read the rehash of the *Marie Celeste* in the *Courier* this morning and it took me to the fair. Except that she was a ship and twenty-nine Chestnut Grove is a semi-detached suburban house, the two desertion stories are virtually the same, even to the half eaten breakfast left on the table in each case. It's uncanny, Campion."

The quiet, fair man in the horn rims stood listening affably as was his habit. As usual he looked vague and probably ineffectual: in the shadier corners of Europe it was said of him that no one



ever took him seriously until just about two hours too late. At the moment he appeared faintly amused. The thumping force of Luke's enthusiasm always tickled him.

"You think you know what has happened to the McGill couple, then?" he ventured.

"The hell I do!" The policeman opened his small black eyes to their widest extent. "I tell you it's the same tale as the classic mystery of the *Marie Celeste*. They've gone like a stain under a bleach. One minute they were having breakfast together, like every other married couple for miles and the next they were gone, sunk without trace."

Mr. Campion hesitated. He looked a trifle embarrassed. "As I recall the story of the *Marie Celeste* it had the simple charm of the utterly incredible," he said at last. "Let's see, she was a brig brought into Gib by a prize crew of innocent sailor-men, who had a wonderful tale to tell. According to them she was sighted in mid-ocean with all her sails set, her decks clean, her lockers tidy but not a soul on board. The details were fascinating. There were three cups of tea on the captain's table still warm to the touch. There was a trunk of female clothes, small enough to be a child's, in his cabin. There was a cat asleep in the galley and a chicken ready for stewing in a pot on the stove." He sighed gently. "Quite beautiful," he said, "but witnesses also swore that with no one at the wheel she was still dead on course and that seemed a little much to the court of enquiry, who after kicking it about as long as they could, finally made the absolute minimum award."

Luke glanced at him sharply.

"That wasn't the *Courier's* angle last night," he said. "They called it the 'world's favourite unsolved mystery'."

"So it is!" Mr. Campion was laughing. "Because nobody wants a prosaic explanation of fraud and greed. The mystery of the *Marie Celeste* is just the prime example of the story which really is a bit too good to spoil, don't you think?"

"I don't know. It's not an idea which occurred to me," Luke sounded slightly irritated. "I was merely quoting the main outlines of the two tales: eighteen seventy-two and the *Marie Celeste* is a bit before my time. On the other hand, twenty-nine Chestnut Grove is definitely my business and you can take it from me no witness is being allowed to use his imagination in this enquiry. Just give your mind to the details, Campion . . ." He set his tumbler down on the bar and began ticking off each item on his fingers.



"Consider the couple," he said. "They sound normal enough. Peter McGill was twenty-eight and his wife Maureen a year younger. They'd been married three years and got on well together. For the first two years they had to board with his mother while they were waiting for a house. That didn't work out too well so they rented a couple of rooms from Maureen's married sister. That lasted for six months and they got the offer of this house in Chestnut Grove."

"Any money troubles?" Mr. Campion enquired.

"No." The chief clearly thought the fact remarkable. "Peter seems to be the one lad in the family who had nothing to grumble about. His firm—they're locksmiths in Aldgate; he's in the office—are very pleased with him. His reputation is that he keeps within his income and he's recently had a raise. I saw the senior partner this morning and he's genuinely worried, poor old boy. He liked the young man and had nothing but praise for him."

"What about the girl?"

"She's another good type. Steady, reliable, kept on at her job as a typist until a few months ago when her husband decided she should retire to enjoy the new house and maybe raise a family. She certainly did her housework. The place is like a new pin now and they've been gone six weeks."

For the first time Mr. Campion's eyes darkened with interest. "Forgive me," he said, "but the police seem to have come into this disappearance very quickly. Surely six weeks is no time for a couple to be missing. What are you looking for, Charles? A body?"

Luke shrugged. "Not officially," he said, "but one doesn't have to have a nasty mind to wonder. We came in to the enquiry quickly because the alarm was given quickly. The circumstances were extraordinary and the family got the wind up. That's the explanation of that." He paused and stood for a moment hesitating. "Come along and have a look," he said, and his restless personality was a live thing in the confined space. "We'll come back and have the other half of this drink after you've seen the set-up—I've got something really *recherché* here. I want you in on it."



Mr. Campion, as obliging as ever, followed him out into the network of trim little streets lined with bandbox villas each set in a nest of flower garden. Luke was still talking.



"It's just down the end here and along to the right," he said, nodding towards the end of the avenue. "I'll give you the outline as we go. On the twelfth of June last Bertram Heskith, a somewhat overbright specimen who is the husband of Maureen's elder sister—the one they lodged with two doors down the road before number twenty-nine became available—dropped round to see them as he usually did just before eight in the morning. He came in at the back door which was standing open and found a half eaten breakfast for two on the table in the smart new kitchen. No one was about so he pulled up a chair and sat down to wait." Luke's long hands were busy as he talked and Mr. Campion could almost see the bright little room with the built-in furniture and the pot of flowers on the window ledge.

"Bertram is a toy salesman and one of a large family," Luke went on. "He's out of a job at the moment but is not desponding. He's a talkative man, a fraction too big for his clothes now and he likes his noggin but he's sharp enough. He'd have noticed at once if there had been anything at all unusual to see. As it was he poured himself a cup of tea out of the pot under the cosy and sat there waiting, reading the newspaper which he found lying open on the floor by Peter McGill's chair. Finally it occurred to him that the house was very quiet and he put his head round the door and shouted up the stairs. When he got no reply he went up and found the bed unmade, the bathroom still warm and wet with steam and Maureen's everyday hat and coat lying on a chair with her familiar brown handbag upon it. Bertram came down, examined the rest of the house and went on out into the garden. Maureen had been doing the laundry before breakfast. There was linen, almost dry, on the line and a basket lying on the green under it but that was all. The little rectangle of land was quite empty."

As his deep voice ceased he gave Campion a sidelong glance.

"And that my lad is that," he said. "Neither Peter nor Maureen have been seen since. When they didn't show up Bertram consulted the rest of the family and after waiting for two days they went to the police."

"Really?" Mr. Campion was fascinated despite himself. "Is that all you've got?"

"Not quite, but the rest is hardly helpful," Luke sounded almost gratified. "Where ever they are they're not in the house or garden. If they walked out they did it without being seen which is more of a feat than you'd expect because they



had interested relatives and friends all round them and the only things that anyone is sure they took with them are a couple of clean linen sheets. 'Fine winding sheets' one lady called them."

Mr. Campion's brows rose behind his big spectacles.

"That's delicate touch," he said. "I take it there *is* no suggestion of foul play? It's always possible, of course."

"Foul play is becoming positively common in London, I don't know what the old town is up to," Luke said gloomily, "but this set up sounds healthy and happy enough. The McGills seem to have been pleasant normal young people and yet there are one or two little items which make one wonder. As far as we can find out Peter was not on his usual train to the City that morning but we have one witness, a third cousin of his, who says she followed him up the street from his house to the corner just as she often did on week day mornings. At the top she went one way and she assumed that he went the other as usual but no one else seems to have seen him and she's probably mistaken. Well now, here we are. Stand here for a minute."

He had paused on the pavement of a narrow residential street, shady with plane trees and lined with pairs of pleasant little houses, stone dashed and bay-windowed, in a style which is now a little out of fashion.

"The next gate along here belongs to the Heskith's," he went on lowering his voice a tone or so. "We'll walk rather quickly past there because we don't want any more help from Bertram at the moment. He's a good enough chap but he sees himself as the watchdog of his sister-in-law's property and the way he follows me round makes me self-conscious. His house is number twenty-five—the odd numbers are on this side—twenty-nine is two doors along. Now number thirty-one which is actually adjoined to twenty-nine on the other side, is closed. The old lady who owns it is in hospital; but in thirty-three there live two sisters, who are aunts of Peter's. They moved there soon after the young couple. One is a widow." Luke sketched a portly juglike silhouette with his hands, "and the other is a spinster who looks like two yards of pump-water. Both are very interested in their nephew and his wife but whereas the widow is prepared to take a more or less benevolent view of her young relations the spinster, Miss Dove, is apt to be critical. She told me Maureen didn't know how to lay out the money and I think that from time to time she'd had a few words with the girl on the subject. I heard about the 'fine linen sheets' from her. Apparently she'd told Maureen off about



buying anything so expensive but the young bride had saved up for them and she'd got them." He sighed. "Women are like that," he said. "They get a yen for something and they want it and that's all there is to it. Miss Dove says she watched Maureen hanging them out on the line early in the morning of the day she vanished. There's one upstairs window in her house from which she can just see part of the garden at twenty-nine if she stands on a chair and clings to the sash." He grinned. "She happened to be doing just that at about half past six on the day the McGills disappeared and she insists she saw them hanging there. She recognised them by the crochet on the top edge. They're certainly not in the house now. Miss Dove hints delicately that I should search Bertram's home for them."

Mr. Campion's pale eyes had narrowed and his mouth was smiling.

"It's a peach of a story," he murmured. "A sort of circumstantial history of the utterly impossible. The whole thing just can't have happened. How very odd, Charles. Did anybody else see Maureen that morning? Could she have walked out of the front door and come up the street with the linen over her arm unnoticed? I am not asking would she but could she?"

"No." The chief made no bones about it. "Even had she wanted to, which is unlikely, it's virtually impossible. There are the cousins opposite, you see. They live in the house with the red geraniums over there directly in front of number twenty-nine. They are some sort of distant relatives of Peter's. A father, mother, five marriageable daughters—it was one of them who says she followed Peter up the road that morning. Also there's an old Irish granny who sits up in bed in the window of the front room all day. She's not very reliable—for instance she can't remember if Peter came out of the house at his usual time that day—but she would have noticed if Maureen had done so. No one saw Maureen that morning except Miss Dove, who, as I told you, watched her hanging linen on the line. The paper comes early; the milkman heard her washing machine from the scullery door when he left his bottles but he did not see her."

"What about the postman?"

"He's no help. He's a new man on the round and can't even remember if he called at twenty-nine. It's a long street and, as he says, the houses are all alike. He gets to twenty-nine about seven twenty-five and seldom meets anybody at that hour. He wouldn't know the McGills if he saw them, anyhow. Come on in, Campion



take a look round and see what you think."

Mr. Campion followed his friend down the road and up a narrow garden path to where a uniformed man stood on guard before the front door. He was aware of a flutter behind the curtains in the house opposite as they appeared and a tall thin woman with a determinedly blank expression walked down the path of the next house but one and bowed to Luke meaningly as she paused at her gate for an instant before going back.

"Miss Dove," said Luke unnecessarily, as he opened the door.

Number 29 had few surprises for Mr. Campion. It was almost exactly as he had imagined it. The furniture in the hall and front room was new and sparse, leaving plenty of room for future acquisitions but the kitchen-dining-room was well lived in and conveyed a distinct personality. Someone without much money, who had yet liked nice things, had lived there. He or she, and he suspected it was a she, had been generous, too, despite her economies, if the 'charitable' calendars and the packets of gypsy pegs bought at the door were any guide. The breakfast table had been left as Bertram Heskith had found it and his cup was still there beside a third plate.

The thin man wandered through the house without comment, Luke at his heels. The scene was just as stated. There was no sign of hurried flight, no evidence of packing, no hint of violence. The dwelling was not so much untidy as in the process of being used. There was a pair of man's pyjamas on the stool in the bathroom and a towel hung over the edge of the basin to dry. The woman's handbag on the coat on a chair in the bedroom contained the usual miscellany, and two pounds three shillings, some coppers and a set of keys. Mr. Campion looked at everything, the clothes hanging neatly in the cupboards, the dead flowers still in the vases but the only item which appeared to hold his attention was the wedding group which he found in a silver frame on the dressing table. He stood before it for a long time, apparently fascinated, yet it was not a remarkable picture. As is occasionally the case in such photographs the two central figures were the least dominant characters in the entire group of vigorous, laughing guests. Maureen timid and gentle, with a slender figure and big dark eyes, looked positively scared of her own bridesmaid while Peter, although solid and with a determined chin, had a panic-stricken look about him which contrasted with the cheerfully assured grin of the best man.



"That's Heskith," said Luke. "You can see the sort of chap he is—not one of nature's great understanding success types but not the man to go imagining things. When he says he felt the two were there that morning, perfectly normal and happy as usual, I believe him."

"No Miss Dove here?" said Campion still looking at the group.

"No. That's her sister though deputising for the brides' mother. And that's the girl from opposite, the one who thinks she saw Peter go up the road." Luke put a forefinger over the face of the third bridesmaid. "There's another sister here and the rest are cousins. I understand the pic doesn't do the bride justice. Everybody says she was a good-natured pretty girl . . ." He corrected himself. "Is, I mean."

"The bridegroom looks a reasonable type to me," murmured Mr. Campion. "A little apprehensive, perhaps."

"I wonder." Luke spoke thoughtfully. "The Heskiths had another photo of him and perhaps it's more marked in that, but don't you think there's a sort of ruthlessness in that face, Campion? It's not quite recklessness, more like decision. I knew a sergeant in the war with a face like that. He was mild enough in the ordinary way but once something shook him he acted fast and pulled no punches whatever. Well, that's neither here nor there. Come and inspect the linen line, and then, Heaven help you, you'll know just about as much as I do."

He led the way out to the back and stood for a moment on the concrete path which ran under the kitchen window separating the house from the small rectangle of shorn grass which was all there was of a garden.

A high rose hedge, carefully trained on rustic fencing, separated it from the neighbours on the right; at the bottom there was a garden shed and a few fruit trees and, on the left, greenery in the neglected garden of the old lady who was in hospital had grown up high so that a green wall screened the lawn from all but the prying eyes of Miss Dove, who, even at that moment, Mr. Campion suspected, was standing on a chair and clinging to a sash to peer at them.

Luke indicated the empty line slung across the green. "I had the linen brought in," he said. "The Heskiths were worrying and there seemed no earthly point in leaving it out to rot."

"What's in the shed?"

"A spade and fork and a hand-mower," said the chief promptly. "Come and look. The floor is beaten earth and if it's been



disturbed in thirty years I'll eat my ticket. I suppose we'll have to fetch it up in the end but we'll be wasting our time."

Mr. Campion went over and glanced into the tarred wooden hut. It was tidy and dusty and the floor was dry and hard. Outside a dilapidated pair of steps leaned against the six foot brick wall which marked the boundary.

Mr. Campion tried them gingerly. They held if not as it were any real assurance, and he climbed up to look over the wall to the narrow path which separated it from the tarred fence of the rear garden on a house in the next street.

"That's an old right of way," Luke said. "It leads down between the two residential roads. These suburban places are not very matey, you know. Half the time one street doesn't know the next. Chestnut Grove is classier than Philpott Avenue which runs parallel with it."

Mr. Campion descended, dusting his hands. He was grinning and his eyes were dancing.

"I wonder if anybody there noticed her," he said. "She must have been carrying the sheets you know."

The chief turned round slowly and stared at him.

"You're not suggesting that she simply walked down here over the wall and out! In the clothes she'd been washing in? It's crazy. Why should she? Did her husband go with her?"

"No. I think he went down Chestnut Grove as usual, doubled back down this path as soon as he came to the other end of it near the station, picked up his wife and went off with her through Philpott Avenue to the bus stop. They'd only got to get to the Broadway to find a cab, you see."

Luke's dark face still wore an expression of complete incredulity.

"But for Pete's sake *why*?" he demanded. "Why clear out in the middle of breakfast on a wash-day morning? Why take the sheets? Young couples can do the most unlikely things but there are limits. They didn't take their savings bank books you know. There's not much in them but they're still there in the writing desk in the front room. What are you getting at, Campion?"

The thin man walked slowly back on to the patch of grass.

"I expect the sheets were dry and she'd folded them into the basket before breakfast," he began slowly. "As she ran out of the house they were lying there and she couldn't resist taking them with her. The husband must have been irritated with her when he saw her with them but people are like that. When they're running from a fire they save the oddest things."



"But she wasn't running from a fire."

"Wasn't she!" Mr. Campion laughed. "There were several devouring flames all round them just then I should have thought. Listen, Charles. If the postman called he reached the house at seven twenty-five. I think he did call and with an ordinary plain business envelope which was too commonplace for him to remember. It would be the plainest of plain envelopes. Well, then, who was due at seven-thirty?"

"Bert Heskith. I told you."

"Exactly. So there were five minutes in which to escape. Five minutes for a determined, resourceful man like Peter McGill to act promptly. His wife was generous and easy going, remember, and so, thanks to that decision which you yourself noticed in his face, he rose to the occasion. He had only five minutes, Charles, to escape all those powerful personalities with their jolly, avid faces, whom we saw in the wedding group. They were all living remarkably close to him, ringing him round as it were, so that it was a ticklish business to elude them. He went the front way so that the kindly watchful eye would see him as usual and not be alarmed. There wasn't time to take anything at all and it was only because Maureen flying through the garden to escape the back way saw the sheets in the basket and couldn't resist her treasures that they salvaged them. She wasn't quite so ruthless as Peter. She had to take something from the old life however glistening were the prospects for—" He broke off abruptly. Chief Inspector Luke, with dawning comprehension in his eyes, was already half way to the gate on the way to the nearest police telephone box.



Mr. Campion was in his own sitting room in Bottle Street, Piccadilly, later that evening when Luke called. He came in jauntily, his black eyes dancing with amusement.

"It wasn't the Irish Sweep but the Football Pools," he said. "I got the details out of the Promoters. They've been wondering what to do ever since the story broke. They're in touch with the McGills, of course, but Peter had taken every precaution to ensure secrecy and is insisting on his rights. He must have known his wife's tender heart and have made up his mind what he'd do if ever a really big win came off. The moment he got the letter telling him of his luck he put the plan into practice." He paused and shook his head admiringly. "I hand it to him," he said.



"Seventy-five thousand pounds is like a nice fat chicken, plenty and more for two but only a taste for the whole of a very big family."

"What will you do?"

"Us? The police? Oh, officially we're baffled. We shall retire gracefully. It's not our business." He sat down and raised the glass his host handed to him.

"Here's to the mystery of the *Villa Marie Celeste*," he said. "I had a blind spot for it. It foxed me completely. Good luck to them, though. You know, Campion, you had a point when you said that the really insoluble mystery is the one which no one can bring himself to spoil. What put you on to it?"

"I suspect the charm of relatives who call at seven-thirty in the morning," said Mr. Campion simply.

© P. & M. Youngman Carter, Ltd., 1958.

---

*E W M M*

---

October issue includes

---

Edgar Wallace and  
*Mr. Reeder*

---

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

---

Frank Swinnerton and  
*Girl in Flight*

---

*American Gothic*

---

and many other top-level stories and features

---



period piece

# THE SALVATIONISTS

VILLIERS DE L'ISLE ADAM

*The 20th story, in this unfailingly popular series, by Count Villiers del' Isle Adam (1838-89), recalls Poe at his best, a savage, remarkable tale - - - over 100 years old but as fresh as today*

MANY YEARS AGO, as evening was closing in, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, sixth prior of the Dominicans of Segovia, and third Grand Inquisitor of Spain, followed by a *fra redemptor*, and preceded by two familiars of the Holy Office, the latter carrying lanterns, made their way to a subterranean dungeon. The bolt of a massive door creaked, and they entered a mephitic *in pace*, where the dim light revealed between rings fastened to the wall a bloodstained rack, a brazier and a jug. On a pile of straw, loaded with fetters and his neck encircled by an iron carcan, sat a haggard man, of uncertain age, clothed in rags.

This prisoner was no other than Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, a Jew of Aragon, who—accused of usury and pitiless scorn for the poor—had been badly subjected to torture for more than a year. Yet 'his blindness was as dense as his hide,' and he had refused to abjure his faith.

Proud of a filiation dating back thousands of years, proud of his ancestors, he descended Talmudically from Othoniel and consequently from Ipsiboa, the wife of the last judge of Israel, a



circumstance which had sustained his courage amid incessant torture. With tears in his eyes at the thought of this resolute soul rejecting salvation, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, approaching the shuddering rabbi, addressed him as follows:

"My son, rejoice: your trials here below are about to end. If in the presence of such obstinacy I was forced to permit, with deep regret, the use of great severity, my task of fraternal correction has its limits. You are the fig tree which, having failed so many times to bear fruit, at last withered, but God alone can judge your soul. Perhaps Infinite Mercy will shine upon you at the last moment! We must hope so. There are examples. So sleep in peace tonight. Tomorrow you will be included in the *auto da fé*: that is, you will be exposed to the *quémadero*, the symbolical flames of the Everlasting Fire: it burns, as you know, only at a distance, my son; and Death is at least two hours (often three) in coming, on account of the wet, iced bandages with which we protect the heads and hearts of the condemned. There will be forty-three of you. Placed in the last row, you will have time to invoke God and offer to Him this baptism of fire, which is of the Holy Spirit. Hope in the Light, and rest."

With these words, having signed to his companions to unchain the prisoner, the prior tenderly embraced him. Then came the turn of the *fra redemptor*, who, in a low tone, entreated the Jew's forgiveness for what he had made him suffer for the purpose of redeeming him; then the two familiars silently kissed him. This ceremony over, the captive was left, solitary and bewildered in the darkness.



Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, with parched lips and face worn by suffering, at first, gazed at the closed door with vacant eyes. Closed? The word unconsciously roused a vague fancy in his mind, the fancy that he had seen for an instant the light of the lanterns through a chink between the door and the wall. A morbid idea of hope, due to the weakness of his brain, stirred his whole being. He dragged himself toward the strange *appearance*. Then very gently and cautiously slipping one finger into the crevice, he drew the door toward him. Marvellous! By an extraordinary accident the familiar who closed it had turned the huge key an instant before it struck the stone casing, so that the rusty bolt not having entered the hole, the door again rolled on its



hinges.

The rabbi ventured to glance outside. By the aid of a sort of luminous dusk he distinguished at first a semi-circle of walls indented by winding stairs; and opposite to him, at the top of five or six stone steps, a sort of black portal, opening into an immense corridor, whose first arches only were visible from below.

Stretching himself flat he crept to the threshold. Yes, it was really a corridor, but endless in length. A wan light illuminated it: lamps suspended from the vaulted ceiling lightened at intervals the dull hue of the atmosphere—the distance was veiled in shadow. Not a single door appeared in the whole extent! Only on one side, the left, heavily grated loopholes, sunk in the walls, admitted a light which must be that of evening, for crimson bars at intervals rested on the flags of the pavement. What a terrible silence! Yet, yonder, at the far end of that passage there might be a doorway of escape! The Jew's vacillating hope was tenacious, for it was the last.

Without hesitating, he ventured on the flags, keeping close under the loopholes trying to make himself part of the blackness of the long walls. He advanced slowly, dragging himself along on his breast, forcing back the cry of pain when some raw wound sent a keen pang through his whole body.

Suddenly the sound of a sandalled foot approaching reached his ears. He trembled violently, fear stifled him, his sight grew dim. Well, it was over, no doubt. He pressed himself into a niche and, half lifeless with terror, waited.

It was a familiar hurrying along. He passed swiftly by, holding in his clenched hand an instrument of torture and vanished. The suspense which the rabbi had endured seemed to have suspended the functions of life, and he lay nearly an hour unable to move. Fearing an increase of tortures if he were captured, he thought of returning to his dungeon. But the old hope whispered in his soul that divine *perhaps*. A miracle had happened. He could doubt no longer. He began to crawl towards the chance of escape. Exhausted by suffering and hunger, trembling with pain, he pressed onward. The sepulchral corridor seemed to lengthen mysteriously, while he, still advancing, gazed into the gloom where there *must* be some avenue of escape.

Oh! oh! He again heard footsteps, but this time they were slower, more heavy. The white and black forms of two inquisitors appeared, emerging from the obscurity beyond. They were conversing in low tones, and seemed to be discussing some



important subject, for they were gesticulating vehemently.

At this spectacle Rabbi Aser Abarbanel closed his eyes: his heart beat so violently that it almost suffocated him; his rags were damp with the cold sweat of agony; he lay motionless by the wall, his mouth wide open, under the rays of a lamp praying to the God of David.

Just opposite to him the two inquisitors paused under the light of the lamp—doubtless owing to some accident due to the course of their argument. One, while listening to his companion, gazed at the rabbi! And, beneath the look—whose absence of expression the hapless man did not at first notice—he fancied he again felt the burning pincers on his flesh. Fainting, breathless, with fluttering eyelids, he shivered at the touch of the monk's floating robe. But—strange yet natural fact—the inquisitors' gaze was evidently that of a man deeply absorbed in his intended reply, engrossed by what he was hearing; his eyes were fixed—and seemed to look at the Jew without seeing him.

In fact, after the lapse of a few minutes, the two gloomy figures slowly pursued their way, still conversing in low tones, towards the place whence the prisoner had come; *he had not been seen!* Amid the horrible confusion of the rabbi's thoughts, the idea darted through his brain: 'Can I be already dead that they did not see me?' A hideous impression roused him from his lethargy: in looking at the wall against which his face was pressed, he imagined he beheld two fierce eyes watching him. He flung his head back in a sudden frenzy of fright, his hair fairly bristling. Yet, no! No. His hand groped over the stones: it was the *reflection* of the inquisitor's eyes, still retained in his own, which had been refracted from two spots on the wall.

Forward! He must hasten towards that goal which he fancied (absurdly, no doubt), to be deliverance, towards the darkness from which he was now barely thirty paces distant. He pressed forward faster on his knees, his hands, at full length, dragging himself painfully along, and soon entered the dark portion of this terrible corridor.

Suddenly the poor wretch felt a gust of cold air on the hands resting upon the flags; it came from under the little door to which the two walls led.

Oh, Heaven, if that door should open outward. Every nerve in the fugitive's body thrilled with hope. He examined it from top to bottom, though scarcely able to distinguish its outlines in the surrounding darkness. He passed his hand over it: no bolt, no



lock. A latch! He started up, the latch yielded to the pressure of his thumb; the door silently swung open before him.

"Halleluia!" murmured the rabbi in a transport of gratitude as, standing on the threshold, he beheld the scene before him.

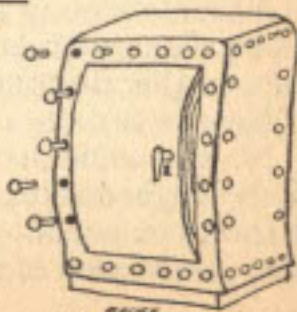
The door had opened into the gardens, above which arched a starlit sky, into spring, liberty, life! It revealed the neighbouring fields, stretching towards the sierras, whose sinuous blue lines were relieved against the horizon. Yonder lay freedom! Oh, to escape! He would journey all night through the lemon groves whose fragrance reached him. Once in the mountains and he was safe! He inhaled the delicious air; the breeze revived him, his lungs expanded. And to thank once more the God who had bestowed this mercy upon him, he extended his arms, raising his eyes towards Heaven.

Then he fancied he saw the shadow of his arms approach him—fancied that he felt these shadowy arms enclose, embrace him—and that he was pressed tenderly to someone's breast. A tall figure actually did stand directly before him. He lowered his eyes—and remained motionless, gasping for breath, dazed, with fixed eyes, fairly drivelling with terror.

Horror! He was in the clasp of the Grand Inquisitor himself, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, who gazed at him with tearful eyes, like a good shepherd who had found his stray lamb.

The dark-robed priest pressed the hapless Jew to his heart with so fervent an outburst of love, that the edges of the monachal hair-cloth rubbed the Dominican's breast. And while Aser Abarbanel with protruding eyes gasped in agony in the ascetic's embrace, vaguely comprehending that *all the phrases of this fatal evening were only a prearranged torture, that of Hope*, the Grand Inquisitor with an accent of touching reproach and a look of consternation, murmured in his ear, his breath parched and burning from long fasting:

"What, my son! On the eve, perchance, of salvation—you wished to leave us?"





# THE CALCULATED NIGHTMARE

John Burke

*A modern horror-fantasy which  
suggests that 1984 is much  
nearer than we think*

JOHNSON TOOK the final sheet of paper from Harker and put it back in the file. They both nodded gravely. Decisions had been taken and by tomorrow would be implemented.

"There'll be some hardship, of course," said Johnson.

Again they nodded. Men in their position had to be ruthlessly objective. They had made recommendations to the directors; the directors had approved, and the official circular was ready to go out to all staff in the morning. It was all for the good of the firm.

"We can't afford to be sentimental," said Harker.

He stood at the window and looked down at the street far below. The light was fading. Most ordinary office workers had gone home. At this hour of the evening the city belonged to men who were not so ordinary—devoted executives like Johnson and himself working without an eye on the clock, shouldering the necessity for making stern decisions, without fear or favour.

"Either you go in for complete automation," he said, "or you muddle along with an inefficient compromise. Too many companies in this country try that. And look where it gets them!"

"No one can say we haven't been fair."

"No one could accuse the computer of bias."

They laughed at the quaintness of the idea, then sat down. They felt tired but proud. The pressure was off, the job as good as done. Awareness of the huge building above, around and below



filled them with a warm satisfaction amounting almost to reverence. They were part of it—an indispensable part.

The Solon Synthetics building was twenty-five storeys high. It dominated a corner of the city which had once been a shabby huddle of Wren churches, decrepit shops, and a few ugly banks and office blocks from Victorian days. Once there had been crooked lanes here, leading to eccentric doorways of absurdly different sizes. Some entrances had porches, some had none; some had steps up to them, some were at the end of gloomy, unhygienic alleys. On the site of this confusion had arisen this tall concrete creature. For it *was* a creature—a complex, well-balanced organism which lived and breathed as a human being might do, but without human failings.

From a nerve centre in the basement a computer and its allied circuits controlled every function in the building. It was linked not merely with the financial and production operations of the company, but with the everyday running of the offices themselves.

The computer assessed the correct central heating and air-conditioning in each room and corridor. All windows were double glazed and sealed so that no wayward member of staff could throw out the calculations by admitting air from outside. Equally, no sound seeped in. If you worked for Solon Synthetics you were insulated during your day from the dirt, sound and turmoil of the less fortunate world around.

The computer adjusted the weighting of the lifts: in the morning it kept the majority near the ground floor to cope with incoming workers; in the evening it ran them in a nicely calculated sequence from top to bottom, and during the day it organised them to cope with the volume of calls from different floors. It kept an eye—an electronic eye—on the underground garages, sifting directors' cars from those of senior executives, and giving peremptory instructions by a system of coloured lights to the lesser functionaries, who just qualified for parking space. Studs in the road outside announced the entry and exit of cars. A huge steel portcullis was dropped during working hours so that no member of the general public should drive in or stray in by mistake. People wishing to use their cars urgently during the day had to register with the control-room so that an impulse could be transmitted to the portcullis to let them out.

Food in the canteen was prepared according to statistics provided each morning. Internal documents were transported under computer control through a complex intestinal system within the



walls and under the floors. In the unlikely event of fire breaking out, the computer would estimate the danger area, sound the appropriate alarms, seal off the fireproof doors at the end of each corridor when staff had been moved out, and bring into action the chemical sprinkler system.

Only the most trusted staff were allowed into the control room for maintenance. Most of the time the computer was left to itself. The data processing unit fed it steadily with information, just as the canteen staff fed the human beings in the building; but the computer was more reliable than the human staff, less prone to indigestion and headaches and rebellious moods or fits of carelessness.

Which was why it had recently been called on to eliminate one-third of the staff.

First, on existing data, it had showed how the company's marketing operations could be streamlined. Then it recommended how many staff should be declared redundant. Finally, on the basis of staff gradings and the results of a time-and-motion study analysis, it listed the actual employees who could be dismissed. It was dispassionate and unmalicious.



Harker stretched and yawned. "They won't like it," he summed up, getting to his feet and preparing to leave.

"There's nothing anybody can do about it now."

Johnson also got up. He slipped the file into his brief-case and took his hat from the stand just inside the door.

"One day," said Harker, "you won't even have to do that. As you come in through the main entrance an automatic arm will snatch your hat from you, and at night it'll put it back on as you go out."

Johnson smiled tolerantly. "By that time even you and I may be declared redundant!"

They both laughed at this fantasy.

They walked together to the nearest bank of lifts. Harker touched the little blob of light which conveyed an impulse to the mechanism. There were no clicking buttons, no mechanical parts to go wrong. They waited for the panel of lights to flicker and show which lift was on the way.

Nothing happened.

Johnson leaned forward and touched the light with his forefinger



as though to demonstrate to Harker exactly how it should be done. Still no lift came.

Johnson looked incredulously at Harker. "Something gone wrong?" It was unthinkable that there should be a flaw in the control system.

After a few more attempts, Harker suggested that they walk down the emergency staircase—hitherto unknown territory—and try to get a lift on the next floor. They walked towards the end of the corridor. Before they could reach it there was a faint sighing sound and a massive fireproof door swung slowly and remorselessly into place, blocking their path.

"It must be a fire drill," said Johnson.

"This is a fine time . . . !" Harker suppressed his irritation. It was out of place in a scientific temple such as this. "I suppose they carry out a test every evening when the staff have gone home. Excellent idea, really."

"Excellent," Johnson hastened to agree. "We'd better go back to my office and ring the doorman, to tell him we've got caught up in the exercise."

They retraced their steps. Johnson went to his desk set. It had dials for outside and internal calls, and for the connection to the dictation spools in the typing pool. Johnson dialled the number of the main entrance.

There was no reply.

"But there must be somebody on duty there, fire drill or no fire drill."

"Just the place where someone *ought* to be stationed."

Johnson peered at the little speaker grille in the desk set. It was not even producing the sound of the dialling pip.

Harker glanced apprehensively up at the ceiling. "You don't suppose they go through the whole routine—turn the sprinklers on, and everything?"

"Not for a test. They'd cause far too much damage."

Half an hour ago the silence in which they were cushioned had been cosy and luxurious. Now it began to seem oppressive.

"I wonder how long we'll have to wait before they open the doors again?" Harker ventured.

"This is ridiculous." Johnson was about to try dialling again when there was a faint crackle in the speaker. "Ah—that's more like !"

A slow voice with a metallic edge to it came from the desk set. It said: "Mr. Johnson . . . Mr. Harker? I want you both to



listen carefully. I want to have a little talk with you."

"Who is it speaking?"

"This is a recorded message, so you will miss important sections of it if you try to interrupt."

Harker and Johnson both opened their mouths ready to speak, then shut them as the disembodied voice continued.

"My name means nothing to you, so there's no point in my giving it. Of course, I have an official number in the company personnel records, and you'd be more likely to think of me as a number anyway. One of the numbers"—there was a crackle of irony now—"you have listed as being no longer needed by the firm, in spite of years of good service and loyalty."

"How the hell do you know—"

"Being in a position to examine the data processing material," the voice went implacably on, "and having also had an opportunity of studying the lists prepared by the audio-typist for duplication I know I'm chosen as one of your sacrifices. Unfortunately I do not choose to offer my throat to your axe. I consider the material fed to the computer was misleading. The way you presented the statistics was an invitation to the computer to choose women operatives, to dismiss expensive senior staff, and to effect shallow economies. Given the facts in a proper form it would have retained the key personnel who set up the whole system in the first place, and who understand its true potential. And, to be frank, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Harker, it might well have eliminated some surplus people on your particular level."

"Damned cheek. We can soon find out who—"

"Quiet!" snapped Harker. "We'll miss something."

"... don't intend, however, to indulge in time-wasting speculation. What I do intend is to safeguard my job and the jobs of certain colleagues. Not men *you* would know—just decent men who have always done a good job and can't afford to be thrown out in the cold simply because you've misinterpreted the functions of an automated business. Now, let me tell you my demands."

Johnson was fuming. He restrained himself with difficulty from slamming the desk set from his desk to the floor. One good kick would have silenced that voice. But the voice went on, calm and measured, and they had to listen to it. They had to hear it through to the end.

The nameless speaker wanted the redundancy list cancelled. Johnson must dictate a new memorandum to the directors saying that on further examination he and Mr. Harker had discovered



some odd discrepancies in the list and were now convinced that the computer's analysis of the situation was based on inadequately presented data. The dismissals should be recalled at once and the whole enquiry reprogrammed. While this was being prepared, further intake of young women should cease: the recent influx had been largely responsible for the misleading weighting of the statistics.

"This memorandum," said the voice, "is to be dictated now. When it is complete I will let you out."

There was a pause. Johnson tried to consult Harker mutely, afraid that anything he said aloud would perhaps be picked up in some way by their tormentor. Then it burst out of him:

"He can't force us to do any such thing. All we have to do is wait. We can sit it out tonight if we have to. Sooner or later someone will notice that this floor is cut off—by tomorrow morning at the latest. Probably the security officer will be here long before that."

"When I get my hands on him, whoever he is—"

"I have allowed you a few moments for consideration," the voice broke in. "I have a feeling that you employed them in the utterance of meaningless abuse. And I am sure you feel defiant. I will now explain why your defiance will do you no good."

"You wanted the place automated, and now you've got it. But I can make better use of the facilities than you can, because I've had access to the control room. I've programmed the computer—an interesting programme, I think you'll find. In the first place, this corridor is sealed off. No other floor is affected, and no alarm signals will show anywhere because I've arranged that they don't. The doorman will see nothing unusual on their check-panels, and the security officer on duty will have no reason to visit this floor until his routine visit at four o'clock in the morning."

"In the second place, I have timed it so that five minutes ago the air conditioning began to change. Do you notice it?"

They had been vaguely aware of the discomfort without realising what it was. Now Harker shivered. He felt as though a clammy hand had been placed on the back of his neck and that somehow its fingers were spreading.

The voice said: "The balance has been adjusted so that it will now get very cold and humid. Most debilitating. An hour or two of this will sap your morale, gentlemen. For your own sakes I hope you'll want to see reason long before that time."



Johnson began to shiver as well. The two men looked at each other seeking for some reassurance, trying to believe that it was only their imagination, that the cold and damp could do them no lasting harm, that if they stood firm they would not feel as wretched as their persecutor wished them to feel.

But their shivering intensified. Harker lurched helplessly towards the window. There was no way of opening it and no way of attracting attention from it. The night outside was clear and mild, and he longed to be out in it. He wished he had left with the usual jostling throng—all of them home now with their families, or out with boy friends, and girl friends, at the cinema or in a restaurant or a pub, or just walking in the good open air.

"You cannot telephone," the voice assured them. "There is no way of getting a message out. There is only one message the computer will accept from your office—and that is a connection to the typing-pool. You are linked with the dictating spools, and you can dictate the memorandum I've suggested. You can also leave a message for the head of the pool to the effect that the redundancy circulars should be withheld until the directors have had a chance of considering your new memorandum. That will save embarrassment all round."

Johnson felt a flicker of hope. It coincided with a bout of the shivers, as the room grew clammier. He did not dare to speak too directly to Harker still not sure that they were not somehow being overheard; but when Harker forced a grin Johnson guessed that he, too, had hit on the same idea.

The lunatic who was threatening them might well have programmed the computer so that it would not relax its control on the two prisoners until they had dictated a memorandum. But the computer wasn't a translating machine; it didn't understand English as such, and it had no way of evaluating every word and phrase that went on to the dictation spool. There was no reason why they shouldn't dictate gibberish, which could trigger off the relays and put an end to this absurd nightmare just as well as a coherent memorandum would do.

The voice said: "Oh, and incidentally . . . don't think you can cheat on the dictation. I've linked the dictation line with one outgoing telephone line . . . and that's connected to my own private phone. I'm miles away from you—but I can monitor your dictation, and if you don't say what I want you to say I won't replace my receiver. And until I replace my receiver you won't be released: I've fixed that. Also, if you try afterwards to press



the rewind button on your desk set and then start erasing the message from the spool, I'll make things unpleasant for you. Very unpleasant."

"How?" asked Johnson automatically.

"The only erasing that's being done," the voice went on, "is of this tape that's playing for you now. My little speech is being wiped out as it goes. There won't be any record left in the morning—nothing that anyone can trace. Now, have I convinced you that I know what I'm doing? I'm in control of the situation. Your easiest way out is to start dictating now. I'll give you five minutes to think about it. You'll notice that it's getting colder. And damper. Do you really want it to go on?"



There was silence. The atmosphere was certainly growing worse. Johnson felt that he was in a cold sweat: his face and hands and back were streaming with moisture, his shirt stuck to him, and when he ran a hand through his hair it was as though he had just emerged from a shower.

Harker said: "We can stick it out."

"We'll get pneumonia."

"Not if we do something about it the moment we're released."

"And when will that be?"

"All we've got to do," said Harker doggedly, "is stick it out. He's got us here, but he can't do anything more to us. He thinks we'll crack. But as long as we don't, what can he do about it?"

They looked round the room. Johnson had always been fond of his neat, aseptic office. It was so clean, with everything so perfectly to hand. A perfect cell in a perfect organism—that was what he had once called it at a management conference. Now it became a different kind of cell. The building which at ordinary times operated so flawlessly had become, with only the slightest change of emphasis, a flawless prison.

Shout, and nobody would hear them.

Hammer on the windows and nobody would see or hear, and the glass wouldn't break.

Lift a telephone and there'd be no answer.

Breathe in . . . and dampness seeped into your lungs.

Johnson heard himself let out a whimper,\* and quickly suppressed it. Harker frowned at him. But Harker himself was trembling uncontrollably and would soon be moaning.



Whatever sound might be forced from him, though, Harker was determined not to give in. Grimly he said: "There's nothing he can do."

"Your five minutes is up," said the voice from the speaker. "I observe that no message is yet going through to the dictation spools. I'm sorry about that. Now I'll have to apply a bit more pressure. You see, if you don't do what I say I'm going to get at least one little bit of pleasure out of this whole affair—I'm going to kill you."

"Mad," said Johnson, trying to stop the chattering of his teeth because he didn't want to sound afraid. "He's mad."

"Our chemical synthetics are known the world over. Public Relations Department are going to have to work overtime on plausible handouts explaining why two executives of the country were gassed to death by a leak of a highly toxic chemical into the sprinkler system. How can it possibly have got there? It'll baffle everybody. And you won't be in a position to explain to them what really happened, because you'll be dead. It will take about a minute to kill you."

The room seemed to grow smaller, to close in on them. It was getting colder and danker and yet at the same time more and more oppressive. Johnson tugged at his collar, which stuck damply to his throat.

Harker said: "He's bluffing."

"But suppose he's not?"

There was nothing they could break, no one they could get their hands on. The voice that issued the orders was not a voice they could argue with. The whole thing was remote and impersonal.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Harker.

But there might come a moment when they would have to believe—and then it would be too late.

Johnson said: "If he's capable of going as far as he's already gone, he's capable of—"

"Well?" asked the voice. "Have you decided?"

"Listen," yelled Harker. "I don't believe you're that far way. You can hear us. I'm damned sure you can hear us. Well, just listen to me—"

"Two minutes. I allow you two minutes to start dictating. Then the sprinkler will start to operate. I'm afraid that once it starts there will be no way of stopping it."

"It won't do you any good."



"I may stay on the list of redundancies"—the voice might almost have been answering this last aggressive shout—"but you . . . where will you be? Utterly redundant, I fear. Now, for all our sakes, wouldn't it be more sensible . . .?"

Johnson reached forward and pressed the switch to connect him with the dictation tape in the typing pool. As he leaned towards the speaker, the spool would be turning in the large room fifteen storeys below.

Harker said: "I won't let you—"

"Johnson of Personnel here," said Johnson. "A memorandum to Mr. Charlton, Mr. Astbury, Mr. Fletcher. Typist—please mark this urgent . . ."

Harker stood mouthing disapproval at him but made no move to interfere. The responsibility had been taken from him. The decision was Johnson's, and he wasn't going to show whether he was relieved or angry; but later he could deny that he would have wished it to end this way.

Later. There were so many things they could do later. Johnson caught Harker's eye as he was dictating, and tried to grin reassurance. Tomorrow morning they would cancel all this. They would go to the directors and call the police in. Perhaps they could do something about it the moment they were released from here, without having to wait until morning.

Johnson finished the memorandum. He then recorded a brief message for the supervisor. A red light would wink gently so that the supervisor would at once play the tape and then give instructions for withholding the redundancy circular.

Only, by then, Johnson intended to get yet another message in, cancelling those he had been forced to record now.

Harker went to the door and looked out. As Johnson's voice ceased, the fireproof doors at the ends of the corridor slid back.

Johnson said: "All right."

Harker could not trust himself to speak. He nodded. Johnson reached for the telephone, then hesitated. Their tormentor might still have some tricks up his sleeve. Any attempt to communicate with the desk or with the police might be disastrous. There might be a built-in delay or some other cunning trick. An alarm-call now might close the doors again and block their escape.

"Let's get out," said Harker his lips quivering. "Let's get right out."

They went to the bank of lifts. A lift came immediately. They went down to the basement and into the subterranean garage.



At this hour it was almost deserted. Johnson's car looked lonely, halfway along the vast, low-ceilinged space. Johnson and Harker came in from the same part of Surrey and took it in turns to drive, each bringing his car and giving the other a lift on alternate days. It was not merely a personal economy; it saved parking space in the garage.

Johnson slid in behind the wheel and sat quite still, waiting for his shivering to stop. The garage was unbearably dry and warm after the chill of his office and that sealed corridor.

Harker got in beside him. They sat without saying a word. They were still not ready to talk about what they had just gone through. When they were well away from here, safely on the road home, they could make plans to cancel out everything they had been forced to do.

At last Johnson felt fit to drive. He turned the car into the centre lane and drove towards the exit. The huge portcullis rose, triggered off by the pressure of the car on a line of studs.

Johnson accelerated. The freedom of the sane outside world was only a few yards away now.

The car was immediately under the portcullis when the steel teeth descended. There was a sheet of electrical flame along the top of the car for one blue, blazing second; then the roof buckled and the teeth drove down into the skulls of Johnson and Harker.



All the talk in the Directors' Restaurant, the Senior Executives' Mess, and the Staff Canteens, was on the same subject. How could the portcullis have failed? A thorough examination after the accident showed nothing wrong with the mechanism. It could not possibly have happened; yet it had happened.

Mr. Flint, Deputy Control Room Engineer, had quite a gathering at his table in the canteen. He had always been a sociable character, and as well as his own colleagues he lunched regularly with some of the brighter girls from the typing pool and from Personnel Section. Today they were particularly glad to see him, since he had been the one to inspect and make a report on the portcullis. Not that he could tell them much: there was simply no explanation for the horrible incident.

"It just goes to show," said Mr. Flint, "that machines aren't infallible."

It hurt him to say it, but it was better that people should adopt



this attitude rather than try to blame any individual on the staff for what had taken place.

One of the prettier and more garrulous audio-typists said: "Well, that'll teach people to work late! Much better for them if they'd gone home with all the rest. Then it mightn't have happened."

"Probably not," Mr. Flint agreed.

"Funny thing—they stayed late just to dictate an alteration to all that work they'd been doing for weeks. Just when we'd got the circulars duplicated and ready to go out too. And now we've got to hold them up until the directors go through the whole thing again. And as those two have been killed, they'll have to put someone else in charge and I don't suppose it'll come out at all the same in the end."

"I don't suppose it will," said Mr. Flint.

"Funny them going right back on everything they'd said. You can't help wondering if they'd got tired and rattled off a memo without really thinking what they were doing. I mean, given another couple of days they might have changed their minds again and gone back to where they started."

Mr. Flint nodded. That thought had occurred to him.

© John Burke, 1966.

---

## CLASSIFIED

---

NUMISMATIST wants gold coins. Sets in cases. Collections; top prices paid. G. Hickenbottom, 4 Dumbleberry Avenue, Sedgley, Worcs.

---

TRANSLATIONS—H. V. Clayton, Market Rasen, Lincs. Tel: 3387.

---

DUPLICATING, professional typing (tapes/mss). Verbatim shorthand translating. Mabel Eyles and Partners, 10, Beaconsfield Road, Friern Barnet, London, N.11. (ENT 3324).

---

UNBIASED advice; better cash terms on audio equipment. Tape/disc transfer; duplicating—Audio Supply Association, 18, Blenheim Road, London, W.4.

---

QUALITY TYPEWRITING, 2/- per 1,000 words; carbons 3d. Miss Lamb, 70 New Lane, Winton, Eccles, Manchester.

---



# CRIME IN VIEW

PETER MAGNUS

*TV reporter Peter Magnus will write  
from time to time on trends, and  
programmes planned - - - inside news  
for EWMM readers*

AUTUMN, 1966, should go down in the aficionado's diary as a vintage period for television crime programmes. The signs are that, after a period of near-stagnation, the field is in for an exciting time.

It is temptingly easy to trumpet that crime is making a comeback on TV. In fact, as far as the small screen is concerned, murder and mayhem have never been away.

After all, ITV's very first drama series had a forensic theme—*Boyd, Q.C.*, back in 1956. And, to be honest, some of the shows such as *No Hiding Place* have a tendency to display the weariness that goes with a long pedigree.

But crime remains, to a huge extent, the motive power which makes many of the electronic wheels go round. Most of Britain's dollar-earning colour-TV deals are for series like *The Saint* and *Danger Man*.

Hard-headed United States network executives bought one £350,000 series, *McGill*, on the strength of the title, London know-how . . . and the fact that it was a crime adventure project. At the time the deal was signed, that was *all* they knew—for actors, directors, and scripts were yet to be found.

No wonder, then, that ITV czar Mr. Lew Grade admits that he rivals the Great Train Robbers in making money out of the wrong side of the law!

In Britain, the situation is less simple. That cliché so beloved of headline writers, a wind of change, is whistling through television crime. The new climate is one in which only series of high quality or originality are likely to survive.

This autumn, for instance, BBC I offers just one new crime series. It is called *Vendetta*, has an Italian hero—with an eye, surely, on exports—and deals with a relatively fresh angle:



Mafia operations in England.

Black Hand epics are, of course, as old as Sherlock Holmes. But the BBC is sure the series has something new and unusual to say.

*Softly, Softly* . . . , successor to *Z Cars*, starts its second season in mid-October. Although it has failed to inspire the enormous popularity and prestige of *Z Cars*—which played across the world from Holland to Hong Kong—planners feel that its portrayal of Regional Crime Squad work is unhackneyed enough to deserve a longer proving period.

Both BBC and ITV are impatient for more crime fiction—but it must be crime with a difference.

On ITV, they came up with an idea worthy of Edgar Wallace in *The Informer*, about a legal expert who blows the gaff on his shadier clients. Also from ITV comes *The Corridor People*, using stock characters such as The Policeman and The Private Eye on condition that they appear larger than life and eccentric as well.

Another new ITV autumn entry is *Intrigue*, concentrating on industrial espionage and the like.

The point about all this is that the newcomers are striving, without exception, for an out-of-the-rut approach.

Not long ago, a television company blithely set out to produce 'a police thriller series with exotic backgrounds.' Today, that lazy, rather contemptuous attitude is discarded.

Of 'conventional' series, only *No Hiding Place* is likely to continue. And even that seven-year-old patriarch of Scotland Yard entertainment is moving, by command, towards deeper characterisation and fresher plots.

The head of one of Britain's biggest television companies told me recently: 'For too long we've been using crime shows as a crutch or a stop-gap. Then the BBC showed us up with *Z Cars*, *Maigret*, and the current season of Simenon plays.

'Without doubt, the crime scene is changing at a pace it has never approached in the past. It could lead to fewer crime programmes—but I doubt if the fans will be unhappy about that. Because what they do get will be better by far.'

During the next few weeks we will discover whether the fare lives up to the fanfare. For those of us who believe that television has done much to debase the coinage of dramatic crime and punishment, the suspense may well prove more punishing than anything served up on the screen . . .

© Peter Magnus, 1966.



# NEW BOOKS

**JOHN de SOLA**

*fiction*

**AMAZING DR. KHAN, The;** Herbert Metcalfe  
(*Church & Foster, 15s.*)

This is a determined effort to offer a vigorous knock-about thriller, a 'clean book,' the publishers insist. It certainly has everything—mysterious Indians; blackmail; gangsters; the Mafia; murder, terror, the lot. Not for the critical, but readable and zestful.

**AMBER NINE,** John Gardner (*Muller, 18s.*)

Boysie Oakes, the poor man's James Bond, is back again and, slang me who may, I infinitely prefer these noisy, vulgar and grandly real yarns. This time Boysie is scheduled to eliminate an M.P., who is playing ducks-and-drakes with the Official Secrets Act . . . but something goes wrong and the right sort of hell breaks loose. One of the joys of this vivid, nerve-jerking and jovial suspense plus thriller is an undersized killer from Java who makes other oriental killers look like sissies.

**BLACK MONEY,** Ross Macdonald (*Collins, 16s.*)

This is a veritable joy of a book, a slick, adult American thriller with a mule's-kick and top-level readability. Lew Archer is hired by a young man who is jilted by his girl for a presumably French political refugee. Archer begins his checking, and, before long, is deep in trouble and complications. There is no doubt that Archer is the new gift for all those who miss Marlowe, and want a replacement. Which Archer is, but a full, individual man in his own right.

**CANISBAY CONSPIRACY, The;** Angus MacVicar  
(*John Long, 15s.*)

A fresh and bright idea, about an African chief in this country for sanctuary, to find the powers-that-be decide against him,



and are for sending him back to the political mercies of his own country. He flees to Scotland where, in the tradition of Prince Charles Edward, he is helped and protected. A gay story of citizens fighting the police and the law, and . . . read and enjoy a rattling good tale.

**CASE OF THE SHAPELY SHADOW, The; Erle Stanley Gardner** (*Heinemann, 16s.*)

The mixture as before but as zestful as ever. This time Perry Mason copes with an extremely smart case of blackmail, which grows into murder. The nub of the plot is a beautiful secretary who deliberately makes herself plain, and that starts trouble moving. Perry Mason is in real courtroom danger but gets out of it with wonderful slickness. As always, a must.

**CONCEAL AND DISGUISE, Henry Kane** (*Boardman, 13s. 6d.*)

A crime story introducing McGregor, who was a cop, and is now involved in a curious case where nothing is quite what it seems, except the reality of his fiancée, Tilly Ulrich, and her elegant restaurant. A book solid enough for careful reading, and particularly enjoyable.

**CROAKING RAVEN, The; Gladys Mitchell** (*Michael Joseph, 21s.*)

Dame Beatrice Bradley, as irresistible as ever, yields to her godchild and rents a Norman castle for his summer holidays. Two years previously a murder took place there, and it appears there is also a singing ghost . . . give me this much and my enthusiasm flares. Rightly, for Dame Beatrice tracks down the killer, solving the case with all her old talents at work. This is the crime story grown-up—intelligent, and quite remarkably readable.

**CRYSTALISED CARBON PIG, The; John Wainwright** (*Collins, 16s.*)

'In other words,' as the publisher says, 'diamonds.' And they motivate a crackerjack story with a crime that makes the Great Train Robbery like chicken-feed. Punchy and vivid, a good book by an expert (its author is a real cop), even if the inevitable political angle creeps in at the end.



**DRACULA'S GUEST**, Bram Stoker (*Jarrolds*, 15s.)

Nine short stories republished after a forty-year-old rest, and the magic (and shudders by the dozen) are all there. The style and the situations are sometimes dated, but first-class story-telling is ageless. My favourite is still, as when I first read it, the horrifying *Dream of Red Hands*.

**FERAMONTOV**, Desmond Cory (*Muller*, 18s.)

The book amounts to this: Feramontov has gone into the ground in Spain, and Johnny Fedora is sent to winkle him out, with Moscow, as usual, in the sidelines and up to every possible mischief ingenuity suggests. Fast; colourful; bright. And in the Cory style, with first-class, authentic backgrounds.

**I START COUNTING**, Audrey Erskine Lindop (*Collins*, 21s.)

A curious, absorbing story, based on the principle of tragedy striking other people, but when a strangler is loose in a Midland town, the teenage heroine wonders if the strangler has a family, and then that the family might be her own. From that premise a wholly startling psychological tale springs, with atmosphere that reeks with fear and horror. A deeply impressive piece of expert characterisation.

**LITTLE HERCULES**, Frank Gruber (*Boardman*, 13s. 6d.)

The United States possesses five little nuclear grenades, which can be fired from a rifle. Somebody steals one of this vital collection and intelligence agent Harvey Fraser is led into a chase half across the world at racing speed. Plenty of thrills with a staggering, marksman's climax.

**LONG WAY TO SHILOH**, A; Lionel Davidson (*Gollancz*, 25s.)

Set wholly in Israel, where the hero is trying to discover the hiding place of a priceless Jewish treasure. Baldly, that is the plot, but its suspense is beguiling and the writing is superb. A book so good it ought to be 1966's crime novel of the year, for I cannot imagine anyone writing its superior.

**MIDNIGHT NEVER COMES**, Martin Fallon (*John Long*, 15s.)

Special agent Paul Chavasse goes after a hotch-potch of mystery and espionage, the kingpin of which is an international financier. Almost the mixture as before, to repeat myself, but



saved by fast-paced writing, a most delightful heroine and a really violent climax.

**PORTRAIT OF A DEAD HEIRESS**, Thomas B. Dewey  
(*Boardman*, 13s. 6d.)

'Mac' (which is all the name we ever get) is hired by a Chicago doctor to enquire into the death of his fiancée in her bath. It seems simple, until Mac starts digging into the private life of the dead girl, who is both rich and an active social worker. The solution is unexpected, and, in a sense, the murderer is to be pitied. Recommended.

**QUEENS FULL**, Ellery Queen (*Gollancz*, 18s.)

Three long stories and two shorts by an old expert at the puzzlement game. *The Death of Don Juan* is a most pleasing story, with a fine theatrical background, but my choice is *The Case Against Carroll*, a fine and wholly unexpected mystery. Definitely a must.

**TEN FACES OF CORNELL WOOLRICH**  
by Cornell Woolrich

Detection, irony, chills, suspense are the hallmarks of this brilliant collection.

'A virtuoso of nearly every type of the modern detective story' *Ellery Queen*.

October 16s.

**HARD BOILED DICKS**  
edited by Ron Goulart

From the golden age of 'pulp' detective story magazines, all the uninhibited gangsterism that characterised the thirties in prohibition America.

October 18s.

**T. V. BOARDMAN & COMPANY LTD.**



**SHEPHERD FILE, The;** Conrad Voss Bark (*Gollancz, 18s.*)

One of the best entries into the ranks of new espionage writers for a long time. In the Shepherd case nothing is what it seems—the backgrounds, the protagonists, the reasons for things all shift and change like coloured smoke. To top it all there is a sort of presiding, investigating genius named Holmes, but he has nothing at all in common with the Sage. Notable.

**TROUBLE WITH PRODUCT X,** Joan Aiken (*Gollancz, 21s.*)

When a campaign for a new scent gets going, mayhem breaks loose in the advertising world—kidnapping, possible murder, and a wholly suspect monastery (an ideal hideout, incidentally) all add to the excitement. Suspense, plus wild excitement.

## **A SCATTER OF PAPERBACKS**

**DEATH OF A CITIZEN,** Donald Hamilton (*Coronet, 3s. 6d.*)

Another tough man at the game, this time Matt Helm, who has the added virtue of being not only believable but deals with things in the real way. Violent and vivid.

**DOG IT WAS THAT DIED, The;** H. R. F. Keating  
(*Penguin, 3s. 6d.*)

A man in Dublin may be a traitor or a deserter, or an innocent victim. Whichever way it is, this tight, menace-filled thriller has almost everything.

**GOLDEN HADES, The,** Edgar Wallace (*Pan, 3s. 6d.*)

An actor has a fortune in stage money, and then finds it is real, every note stamped with the mysterious golden sign of Pluto, a sign which means death and disaster. Gripping.

**HANG THE LITTLE MAN,** John Creasey (*Hodder, 3s. 6d.*)

A wholly reasonable tale, presenting Inspector West. It deals with robbery and murder not of prominent people but of small shopkeepers. Well up to standard.

**HISSING TALES,** Romain Gary (*Four Square, 5s.*)

Some of these are minute and shockers rather than crime stories, as, for example, *Comrade Pigeon*. But the 15 tales in this collection are excellent.



**JUNKIE**, William Burroughs (*Four Square/Olympia*, 8s. 6d.)

A sort of conducted tour inside a dope-fiend. It is grim and shocking stuff that reads with authenticity, and seems factual enough. But, somehow . . .

**KILLER IN THE RAIN**, Raymond Chandler (*Penguin*, 6s.)

Eight Chandler stories, from his *Black Mask* days. Some of these were material from which books grew, but the stories will be new to *EWMM* readers. A definite must.

**MAIGRET'S SPECIAL MURDER**, Georges Simenon  
(*Penguin*, 3s. 6d.)

Published two years ago (1948 in France, as *Maigret et son mort*), this is a typical Simenon—bland, readable, real, with Maigret's particular brand of sympathy.

**NIGHT OF HORRORS**, A; Michael Innes (*Penguin*, 3s. 6d.)

Another one dating back to 1948, and with the magic Innes touch. A veritable night of murder and tension, with fire used as a killing weapon. Exciting and literate.

## **CRIME AND DETECTION**

Edited by  
**NIGEL MORLAND**

An entirely new venture in surveying crime every quarter. Comprehensively and clearly so that laymen can fully understand, the leading authorities write on many aspects of crime and criminology, a series of paperbacks which will grow into an encyclopaedia.

**A TALLIS ORIGINAL**  
**FIVE SHILLINGS FROM ALL BOOKSHOPS**

(or 5s. 6d. from The Publisher, 4, Bradmore Road, Oxford)



OUT BY THE RIVER, Ludovic Peters (*Hodder, 3s. 6d.*)

The European background to Communism, rascality, espionage and the like once again. Nicely done with a good eye for situations. Plenty of excitement.

SAINT IN THE SUN, The; Leslie Charteris (*Hodder, 3s. 6d.*)

That safe old knockabout hero is back again, in seven adventures, ranging from Cannes to Florida as backgrounds. Good, violent; guaranteed to thrill.

---

### 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 128 of the current EWMM).*

FOR SALE: Hard cover (cheap) editions, mint, of *The Coat of Arms; The Missing Millions; When the Gangs Came to London; The Green Ribbon; The Frightened Lady; The Ringer*. 10s. each post free.—Box A53, EWMM.

WANTED: Old paper-back editions of EW books buy or exchange. M. J. Cordwell, c/o Miss Blandford, 8 Cotman St., London, S.W.18.

MANY hard-cover EW's wanted. Please send full lists or can send my wants list on request. George C. Hoyt, Jr., 10110 Swinton, Granada Hills, California, U.S.A., 91343.

HAVE various EW's for sale or exchange. Send lists or write. P. D. Harris Nashleigh Farm, Chesham, Bucks.

MANY EW's for sale, some scarce. Send wants lists. Many EW's still wanted. All letters answered. H. A. Smith, 20, Ransome Avenue, Scole, Diss, Norfolk.

---

### SOLUTION TO EWMM CROSSWORD (No. 19)

ACROSS. 1, Crimson Circle. 9, Imprisons. 10, Match. 11, Ellis. 12, Indo. 13, Free. 15, Ere-long. 17, Ravioli. 18, Exhales. 20, Peruses. 21, Tick. 22, Blur. 23, (perf)Orate(d). 26, Oiled. 27, Stock-list. 28, Year after year.

DOWN. 1, Crime detection. 2, Impel. 3, Swiss rolls. 4, Noosing. 5, Insider. 6, Coma. 7, Exteriors. 8, Chief inspector. 14, Overlooker. 16, Ethically. 19, Silesia. 20, Pur-port. 24, Alive. 25, Idea.



# 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.*

## Hanratty

Lord Russell's article [July] would indeed appear to say what most of us think about this unhappy case. It is to be hoped that it will be an effective article in achieving the enquiry many people, *EWMM* readers in particular, so fervently desire.

BERNARD E. COX.

*Liverpool, 1.*

Despite Lord Russell's remarkable article, I am uneasy. As a layman, and a firm believer in British justice, I just cannot imagine that an innocent man was hanged; yet, so powerful were the arguments in *The Hanratty Case*, I am both bewildered and troubled.

E. M. E. TURNER.

*Chesham Bois, Bucks.*

Very well, then, Lord Russell and *EWMM* readers—James Hanratty seems to be innocent. I concur. May we *now* have some action from the Home Office, or is it indifferent, or dead to all demands for an enquiry?

DONALD PAINTER.

*Southsea, Hants.*

● *Now that this controversy has raged in these columns for a full year and the Home Office is considering a possible enquiry, EWMM must regretfully close this correspondence.*

## Praise and Blame

What a very graceful story you published in *Away from the River*, and I think you have that rarity, a crime-humourist in John Wyeth-Webb . . . yes, July *EWMM* was really nifty.

DEREK VINTNER.

*Bath, Som.*



Ralph Sallon was very clever in his drawing of Miss Agatha Christie [April] and Erle Stanley Gardner holding up the statue of Raymond Burr was brilliant [May] and thank you very much for what seems to be a new series, *Famous Edgar Wallace Films*. For teenagers (like me), this is a joy, and specially such beautifully printed pictures, too.

(Mrs.) GRACE F. REEVES.

*Sunbury-on-Thames.*

I swear I'll throw a brick at John de Sola if he says another word against Berkeley Gray [July] but, on the other hand, I find I agree with his reservations about *Frost*, by Andrew Hall. What clever little page fill-ups you have been publishing by 'Maciek.' More, please.

LEONARD RICHES.

*Wrexham.*

## Soldiers Abroad

People at home forget we have a lot of British soldiers serving overseas; they do appreciate books and magazines from home (it's the personal touch that counts!) I send all my old *EWMM*'s and know they are appreciated. Your local W.V.S. will help you with addresses, and other details.

(Mrs.) E. M. LITTLETON.

*Weymouth, Dorset.*

---

## FAMOUS EDGAR WALLACE FILMS

### THE MIND OF MR. REEDER

Gaumont-British (1939)

Director: Jack Raymond

(see outside back cover)

J. G. Reeder (Will Fyffe); Miss Gillette (Kay Walsh); Welford (George Curzon); Elsa Welford (Chili Bouchier); Ted Bracher (John Warwick); Mrs. Gaylor (Leslie Waring); Inspector Gaylor (Romilly Lunge); Barmaid (Betty Astell); Landon (Derek Gorst); Sam Hackett (Ronald Shiner); Lomer (Wally Patch); Brady (George Hayes).

*Photograph shows (left) Will Fyffe.*



EW Book Mart

Coupon 25





# It's a gift—

to yourself, a subscription to *Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine*. It means that we will post your copy direct to you every month. And if you would like somebody else to share your pleasure with you, why not take up a subscription for a relative or friend? Months of enjoyable reading will come out of this gift . . . pamper yourself for once!

---

**To the Publisher, Edgar Wallace Magazines, Ltd.,  
4, Bradmore Road, OXFORD, U.K.**

Please send EWMM for ☐ 12 months (40/—) ☐ 6 months (20/—)  
I enclose ☐ cash ☐ cheque ☐ money/postal order.

(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

(COMMENCE WITH ISSUE No. ....)

(The rate is the same for any country in the world. Appropriate foreign exchange can be sent, or, preferably, a draft through your local bank. U.S.A. rates: Single copy 55c; 6 months, \$3.10; 1 year, \$5.85; 2 years, \$11.50; 3 years, \$16.00.)



