

10¢

FALL
ISSUE

G-MEN DETECTIVE



A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

MEN OF *Treason*
A Complete
Dan Fowler Novel
By C. K. M. SCANLON

Death WEARS A
COLORED SHIRT
A Mystery Novelet
By DIXON WELLS

SECONDS LATER THE BIG ONE CAME!

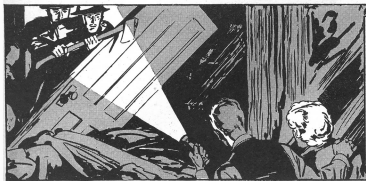
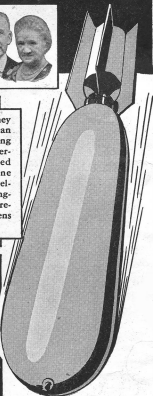
A true experience of Mr. and Mrs. James Sproston, of Cheshire, during the big air blitz over England.



1 Night after night they heard the great German Heinkel bombers roaring directly overhead, Liverpool-bound and loaded with bombs. Then one night Jerry was late. Feeling safe, the elderly English couple prepared to retire. Suddenly the sirens began to shriek...



2 Came the rumble of jettisoned bombs. Sproston grabbed up his flashlight. He and his wife hurried downstairs to black out the windows. The next moment an explosion shook the house. Seconds later the big one came...



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G-MEN DETECTIVE

Vol. XXV, No. 3

EVERY STORY BRAND NEW

Fall, 1943



A Complete Dan Fowler Novel

MEN OF TREASON

By C. K. M. SCANLON

Dan Fowler, Ace of the F. B. I., Battles to Blow the Lid Off a Racket that Threatens Our Nation's War Effort—and Teaches Traitors Who Gamble on American Lives that Justice Holds the Trump Hand! 15

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DEATH WEARS A COLORED SHIRT Dixon Wells 64
Lincoln Foster, G-Man, Tackles the Strange and Mysterious Case of the Murdered Anti-Fascist!

Thrilling Short Stories

THE BEST LAID PLANS G. Haines Trimingham 53
A Short Short Story Complete on Two Pages
THIS LITTLE RAT WENT TO MARKET C. S. Montanye 55
Mel Allen Was Nearly Lured into a Trap, but—
DEATH IS WAITING John L. Benton 84
Bob North Ferrets Out a Slick Sabotage Racket

Special Features

FEDERAL FLASHES A Department 8
THE BLACK CHAMBER (Cryptography) M. K. Dirigo 60
A WAR BOND MESSAGE James M. Cain 63
BEWARE (The Soldier's Fare Racket) A Feature 79
THEY LICKED THE FIFTH COLUMN Sam Merwin, Jr. 80

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

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FEDERAL FLASHES

A DEPARTMENT WHERE READERS AND THE EDITOR MEET

ILD JOHN YANEK stared for a few seconds at the canary in a cage near him. The tiny yellow bird was drooping on its perch. Even as John Yanek watched, the canary tumbled to the bottom of the cage. John, a Slav miner of long experience, wasted no time.

"Fire damp!" he shouted, his yell echoing through the dark reaches of the shaft. "The bird, it is dead! Quick, everybody!"

Sixty-odd men, their black faces shining with sweat under their cap lamps, dropped picks, drills and shovels. The most dreaded death of the deep, dangerous mines was upon them!

Odorless—but Fatal

Fire-damp gas was odorless. It had no noticeable effect on human lungs. But let a spark, a scratched match, or the firing of a fuse reach it, and sixty-odd miners could be buried alive in the twinkling of an eye.

But as John Yanek saw the canary die and yelled his warning, his experienced eye told him that something was wrong with his judgment. One of the younger men nearby had broken one of the most rigid rules. The youthful miner had the open flame of a match cupped in his hand to light a forbidden cigarette.

"Fire damp kills the bird," mused John Yanek, "but an open light does not explode it."

But John did not have time to wonder long about this strange fact. A few seconds later, he and the rest of the miners in Shaft Four were running for the exit. In John's hand was the cage containing the dead canary.

"Not fire damp," John muttered to himself. "Could the little bird have been sick?"

Even as he spoke, John felt himself growing weak. There was a sudden sharp irritation in his nose and eyes. He glanced at the men he had warned and saw that they were all on their feet. But three or four had paused in their flight and were rubbing their faces, looking back at John Yanek.

"Hurry. Not fire damp. Something else I don't know about!"

The Threat of Death

John Yanek sent this second warning after the men. The burning in his nose and throat

continued. He breathed with difficulty, but managed to move after the others, carrying the canary, dead in its cage.

The men all kept their feet, but their fear was increasing. Old John Yanek was not a man to be frightened easily. But he had a black premonition.

"It is death," he said. "All of us will die, awfully. You may be lucky, little bird, that it is over so quickly."

And old John Yanek was right. Not one of those sixty men in Pit Four was alive that night. All died horribly—and no one knew what had happened.

Enter—Dan Fowler!

The company doctor did all he could. But he knew that was not enough. By long-distance telephone, he contacted the F.B.I. A short time later, Dan Fowler and Larry Kendall arrived at Unionport, by plane.

After listening to the doctor's report, it was clear to both young G-men that old John Yanek had been right. Fire damp had not been responsible for the deaths of the miners.

Rather, and Dan Fowler's blood ran cold as he realized the implications, the gas that had somehow got into Pit Four was "arsenite."

A Deadly Gas!

Arsenite, arsenic trichloride, a deadly gas carried over from World War I, without having been used. A poison gas that was one hundred percent fatal, that would remain for days, weeks, along the ground in sheltered places, and would penetrate any gas mask and all clothing to burn the lungs or the flesh of the victim.

"It's clear," said Dan Fowler, "that those miners were killed by Nazi snakes, just as surely as if they had been bombed by Stukas!"

Dan was right. And it was up to him and Larry to find out how it had been done, to prevent its being done again in other pits and other mines—and to find the devils in human form who were responsible.

That job turns out to be one of the toughest assignments in Dan Fowler's brilliant career. How does he solve the grim problem? Who is responsible for the horrible death underground?

(Continued on page 12)



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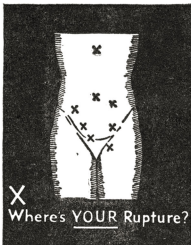
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FEDERAL FLASHES

(Continued from page 8)

Laurence Donovan gives you the answers in **DEATH STOPS THE COAL**, one of the most gripping full-length novels that we've ever had the privilege of publishing, in the next issue of **G-MEN DETECTIVE**. It's packed with thrills, action and suspense!

For our featured novelet in the same issue, we have **AGENT OF DESTRUCTION**, by Norman A. Daniels. This author will need no introduction to regular readers of **G-MEN DETECTIVE**, but they and all other readers will find this yarn to be one of the best he has ever turned out.

It concerns an apparently innocent Norwegian fishing boat with a base on the New England coast.

Actually, the boat is something quite different and it is G-man Jerry Grey's job to find out what it is all about—and stop a diabolical scheme of Nazi sabotage!

Letters from Readers

As usual, we have a big batch of mail waiting for our attention this time. You readin' folks have been doing a swell job since last we met, and we only wish we could print each and every one of your good letters. However, since we can't do that, we'll pick out a few representative ones, knowing you'll understand.

First, there's this one from Boston:

I think the novels about Dan Fowler are the best detective stories anyone can read today. They are all packed full of thrills and keep me right on the edge of my chair, wondering what's going to happen next.

It is a good idea to give us a picture of the tough and dangerous work our G-men are doing in uncovering Nazi rat nests and preventing their planned acts of sabotage. The F.B.I. boys are doing just as important a job as those who are flying and fighting. It's good to see them get due credit.

Best of luck to you.—James Gulvin, Boston, Mass.

Thanks a lot, Jim. We hope you drop us another line soon. Always glad to hear from you.

G-MEN CLUB,
10 East 40th St.
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I wish to join the **G-MEN CLUB**. I promise to uphold the laws of the Nation—to do all in my power to aid in their enforcement, and to back the efforts of Federal agents in their fight on crime.

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TO OBTAIN THE G-MEN EMBLEM, our official insignia, enclose the name-strip **G-MEN** from the cover of this magazine, plus ten cents in stamps or coins.

NOTE: If you do not enclose the name-strip, send 15c, in stamps or coin. This nominal charge is made merely to cover our expense in mailing this valuable bronze badge.

9-43

☐ If already a member, check here

Here's another missive:

I am an ex-soldier with four enlistments in the U.S. Army. I am sixty eight years young. I have been reading G-MEN DETECTIVE for a long time, and I'll say that all the stories were very good, and I do like the short stories.—William Benner, Cleveland, Ohio.

Thank you, Soldier. It makes us feel good to get letters like yours. Write us again and tell us if we're still pleasing you.

There's time for one more which rather takes us to task. After you read this letter, write and tell us your viewpoint on Mr. Hesson's ideas. Anyway, here goes:

Have just finished reading PANAMA PERIL in your June issue. It's pretty good in spots, but a lot of it is just hokey. Hasn't Jean Francis Webb found out yet that the Army controls Panama? If there was any monkey business like he describes going on down there, the Air Forces and the Infantry would move right in—and no fooling around with Dan Fowler.

Why don't you cut down on the length of the lead stories and print more short stories? Most people who buy magazines don't want to spend the time to wade through a long novel.—Sam Hesson, Albany, N. Y.

Well, there you have it, folks. What do you think? We know we can't please everybody, but we want to please as many of you as we can. So write and tell us your opinion.

Join Our Club

Join our G-MEN CLUB, folks. Everybody is eligible. All you need is an interest in law enforcement and a belief in a free America. See the coupon elsewhere in this department for more details.

Of course, you all realize that the Club offers no special privileges with regard to local or federal law-enforcement agencies. It's just

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a get-together for folks who read this magazine.

That's all just now. Please write and tell us what you think of G-MEN DETECTIVE. Address your letters and postcards to The Editor, G-MEN DETECTIVE, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

As Phil Baker would say, "Bye-bye. Buy Bonds!" Thanks for listening—see you next issue.
—THE EDITOR.

WHY GOD PERMITS WAR!

Why does God permit war? Why does He permit cruelty, injustice, pain, starvation, sickness and death?

Thirty years ago, in Forbidden Tibet, behind the highest mountains in the world, a young Englishman named Edwin J. Dingle found the answers to these questions. A great mystic opened his eyes. A great change came over him. He realized the strange Power that Knowledge gives.

That Power, he says, can transform the life of anyone. Questions, whatever they are, can be answered. The problems of health, death, poverty and wrong, can be solved.

In his own case, he was brought back to splendid health. He acquired wealth, too, as well as world-wide professional recognition. Thirty years ago, he was sick as a man could be and live. Once his coffin was bought. Years of almost continuous tropical fevers, broken bones, near blindness, privation and danger had made a human wreck of him, physically and mentally.

He was about to be sent back to England to die, when a strange message came — "They are waiting for you in Tibet." He wants to tell the whole world what he learned there, under the

guidance of the greatest mystic he ever encountered during his twenty-one years in the Far East. He wants everyone to experience the greater health and the Power, which there came to him.

Within ten years, he was able to retire to this country with a fortune. He had been honored by fellowships in the World's leading Geographical Societies, for his work as a geographer. And today, 30 years later, he is still so athletic, capable of so much work, so young in appearance, it is hard to believe he has lived so long.

As a first step in their progress toward the Power that Knowledge gives, Mr. Dingle wants to send the readers of this notice a 9,000-word treatise. It is free. For your free copy, send your name and address to the Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. F-336, Los Angeles, Calif. Write promptly.

[Advertisement]



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The Secret of MENTAL CREATING

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All things begin with thought—it is what follows that may take your life out of the class of those who hope and dream. Thought energy, like anything else, can be dissipated—or it can be made to produce actual effects. *If you know how to place your thoughts* you can stimulate the creative processes within your mind—through them you can assemble things and conditions of your world into a happy life of accomplishment. *Mental creating* does not depend upon a magical process. It consists of *knowing how* to marshal your thoughts into a power that draws, compels and organizes your experiences into a worth-while design of living.

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There was a rush of feet, two men hurled themselves on Fowler, and his gun was kicked out of his hand (Chapter III)

MEN OF TREASON

By C. K. M. SCANLON

Dan Fowler, Ace of the F.B.I., Battles to Blow the Lid Off a Racket That Threatens Our Nation's War Effort!

CHAPTER I

Captain on a Rampage

A CITY was rising in this semi-wilderness. A city into which more than fifty thousand men would soon pour. A city of barracks and mess halls and officers' neat bungalows. It was to become one of the great training centers for United States troops.

But while it was being erected a village nearby had also grown tremendously. Where two or three thousand people ordinarily lived quietly and peaceably, had come hundreds upon hundreds of workers to clear the ground

for the camp and erect the many buildings.

With them had come the usual array of gamblers, women camp followers, confidence men, loafers and soap box orators. Some were prosperous, some down on their luck, but all had one ambition—to play the workers for suckers.

The former little village hotel was now a roaring barroom and gambling hall. General merchandise stores had been turned into bars with gaming rooms somewhere in back. The townspeople were outraged, but when an army camp had to be built workers were necessary and the leeches who followed the workers clung to the town with a tenacity that defied the usual law and order.

A BAFFLING COMPLETE MYSTERY NOVEL

When Traitors Gamble on American Lives,

State Police moved in from time to time. Irate townspeople demanded the State Militia, but little was done. The gambling and drinking went on.

There was no out-and-out violence. The gamblers saw to that. Murders would draw police in droves, so when working men squawked when they thought they were being cheated, they were allowed to win a little. Everything worked smoothly, as if some guiding hand held all the threads of crime and manipulated them with fantastic skill.

The man who had so providently leased the town hotel two months before anyone realized an army camp was going to be built nearby, ruled over the hotel like a czar. He played when stakes ran high and certainly did not resemble a gambler.

"LUCKY" SAUNDERS, as he was known, was short, fat and mild-eyed. He incessantly chewed gum and neither drank nor smoked. So far as anyone knew, he carried no weapons beyond a surprising punch packed away in his short, apparently flabby arms.

Saunders was getting ready to lock up for the night when he saw the uniformed figure of Captain Corbett come reeling down the street. Others saw Captain Corbett, too, and were shocked and surprised.

He was young—not more than twenty-eight—and an officer of the engineering corps. And right now, Captain Corbett was very, very tight. He sang boisterously, waved his arms, and shouted at everyone he passed. When he turned abruptly into the hotel he almost lost his balance and fell.

A couple of passersby heard Lucky Saunders berating the man mildly.

"Brace up, Captain. Come inside. I'll put you up in my room."

"I want a drink," Captain Corbett announced in a loud voice to the world at large, and swung into the almost empty barroom. He marched up to the bar, slapped his fist on it, and demanded whisky. Much whisky, straight whisky, strong whisky.

The bartender shook his head. "Nix, Cap. you better do like Lucky says. Go some place and sleep it off. Boy, if the Colonel ever saw you now."

Captain Corbett roared with laughter. "When I first grew up, bartenders used to say, 'If your mother could only see you now.' Now the colonel is my gray-haired old mother. Pour me a drink, you—or I'll bust every tooth in your head."

The bartender sighed and gave him a drink. Corbett yanked the bottle away, drank from it, then with practised aim hurled it at the big mirror behind the bar. It smashed into a thousand pieces.

Corbett yelled in wild elation and headed toward the gambling rooms at the back. Only the employees were there. The suckers had gone home long ago. Lucky Saunders was strict about an early closing time. Workers needed rest so they could make more money which would come into Lucky's hands.

Corbett wanted to play poker. Nothing else would do. Half the town heard him insisting upon it. But the gamblers were not of the same soft caliber as the bartender. They took it for a short time, then Captain Corbett went sailing out the back door.

He arose, muttering, staggered away, and was gone about ten minutes. When he returned, a .45 army automatic was in his hand. He sent two bullets smashing through the door.

The gamblers, sweepers, hangers-on, took nose dives beneath tables. Corbett didn't seem to be quite as high now, and there was deadly precision in his movements as he walked across the floor, muttering savagely.

One man dared to oppose him. He was a young kitchen employe and he held a short club in his hand, balanced for either throwing or swinging.

Corbett suddenly lifted his gun. The young man hurled the club and did his best to get out of the way. Corbett fired once. The young man went down on his knees. Corbett aimed the automatic carefully. It crashed twice. The young man's head turned into a bloody mass.

The captain seemed to realize what he had done. He backed up, gun ready, reached the door and darted outside. Already, the village constable and his assistant were on their way.

CORBETT raced for the first car he saw, a swank sedan belonging to one of the gamblers. He piled in, started

Justice Holds the Trump Hand—and Doesn't Bluff!

it, and pulled away with a nerve-shattering clash of gears.

The constable sent his assistant for another car and advanced toward the hotel. Lucky Saunders bolted out, his face as white as paper. Lucky told what had happened. The constable took a quick look at what was left of the young man, then raced to meet his car.

Corbett had a good start, but the constable's car was fast and his assistant a good driver who knew every turn and twist in the difficult highway that led to the nearest city. There were no turn-

threatened the bartender, busted the mirror, got into a fight with those rotten gamblers, then came back with a gun. Who'd he kill, Constable?"

"Fellow named McEvoy. New man in town. Joe, our village has gone to pot since those swindlers arrived. I've done everything I can to drive 'em out, but an officer of the law needs evidence and whenever I show up, nothing is going on. Same thing when the state troopers arrive. I . . . There's Corbett's headlight again. Push your foot through the floorboards, Joe."



DAN FOWLER

offs so only speed and skillful handling of the wheel was necessary to overtake Corbett.

They spotted the tail-light six miles further on. Corbett must have seen the flash of official car's headlights for he suddenly stepped on it, too.

"I can't gain on that buggy," the constable's assistant groaned.

"When he reaches Bellhaven," Constable Turner muttered, "he'll have to slow down or get himself killed. Personally, I don't care which. Must have gone crazy. Corbett was a nice lad. I can't understand this."

"He was tight," the assistant said. "He

The distance between the cars was slowly lessening because the road became more and more difficult to negotiate. It wound through a mountain range and one side of the road was guarded only by a flimsy highway fence.

Suddenly, they saw the headlights of Corbett's car start swerving madly. One moment they shone on the rocky wall beside the road, the next they shot off into space as Corbett spun the wheel and headed toward the fence.

"He'll kill himself," Constable Turner said through set teeth. "Maybe it's best he does, at that. I'd hate to shoot an officer of our army, Joe, but so help me,

I will if he opens up first."

The course of Corbett's car grew more and more erratic. Then he seemed to lose all control of it. The right fender hit the rocky wall with a clashing sound. Like a greased meteor, the car hurtled through the fence and off the cliff.

Constable Turner's car reached the spot not one minute later. He and Joe piled out. The car was about four hundred feet down the cliff, burning fiercely.

Flames illuminated the wilderness as Turner made his way down the cliff. He and Joe scrambled toward the car.

So far, the flames were mostly confined to the rear, indicating that the fuel tank had been punctured and that gasoline made most of the blaze. Yet before they could reach the car the whole thing turned into a pyre.

Turner curled one arm around his face and darted closer. He grabbed the door handle, but it was so hot that his flesh was seared. Using his flashlight, and as if daring the car to explode, he pressed against the door handle again.

IT OPENED and a limp arm dangled out. Turner yelled to Joe and both challenged the flames. They grabbed that arm and tugged. The body was wedged behind the shattered wheel. By sheer strength, they hauled the uniformed figure away from the flames. They picked up Captain Corbett and hastily stumbled downhill, escaping the explosion of the car by only a couple of minutes.

Constable Turner made a brief examination of the man they had rescued.

"He's dead, Joe. Burned too—pretty badly around the face. We'll take him back to town. I want Doc Warner to have a look at him."

"But ain't it against the law to move a body like this?" Joe said. "Ain't you supposed to wait for the medical examiner?"

"Doc Warner is the medical examiner," Turner said. "We'll just bring the evidence to him. Get a hold, Joe. . . ."

An hour later, venerable old Doc Warner drew a sheet over the figure on his office table.

He walked over and sat down. Constable Turner watched him, with a silent question in his eyes.

"Primary cause of death was a blow on the back of the neck," Dr. Warner said. "Might have got it when the car went over the cliff. Mind you, I said 'might,' because I don't think so."

"Neither do I, Doc," Turner declared. "Captain Corbett was here only two days, but I got to know him pretty well. There's something awful rotten about this case. Awful rotten, Doc. What else did you find out?"

Dr. Warner made some notes on a prescription blank.

"Well, Constable, as medical examiner it was within my rights to do an autopsy. From what you told me, the dead man was in the middle of a flaming car. Well, I examined his lungs. Captain Corbett didn't breathe in any flames."

"Meaning just what, Doc?"

"He was dead when that car went over the cliff. Even if he got that blow on the back of his neck as the car crashed down the hill, it wouldn't have made any difference. He'd have been bound to breathe in some flame to sear his lungs, which he didn't do."

"Murder," Constable Turner breathed. "Yep, I had an idea it would shape into this, Doc. Well, a thirty-five-year record has been busted. First murder we had here since Old Man Marinelli clubbed his wife to death. I was just a young squirt then."

"What are you going to do about it?" Dr. Warner asked.

CONSTABLE Turner reached for the telephone on the doctor's desk.

"This ain't nothing for me to handle, Doc. My specialty is catching chicken thieves or stopping fights and maybe pinching some crazy driver now and then. Murder just ain't in my line. What's more, I don't even think the State Police should handle it."

"Why not?" Doctor Warner queried.

"Not that they couldn't solve it—but Captain Corbett was an officer of the United States Army. This is a Federal case, Doc. Yep, a Federal case."

Turner picked up the phone.

"Elsie," he said. "This is Ed Turner. Get me the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Boston. And, Elsie, when you listen in, remember this ain't to be talked about, understand? It would break your mother's heart if I had to throw you into my calaboose. Now get me the F.B.I."



Steam shot out with the force of a shell leaving a cannon, as men screamed in pain
(Chapter X)

CHAPTER II

Stranger in Town

T EIGHT-FIFTY the next morning, a special train pulled in and three hundred more men were brought to hurry the work on the camp. One of those men was a rugged looking fellow, tall, with square, capable looking shoulders. He was on the swarthy

side, but his eyes were clear blue.

He wore a leather jacket, work pants and shoes that had seen better days. A dilapidated suit-case dangled from one hand. As he stepped onto the platform, a slender, officious acting man stepped up to him.

"What's your name, mister?"

"Logan," the new arrival said. "Peter Logan. Why?"

The slender man took his arm and piloted him out of earshot of the others. He spoke in a low, confidential voice.

"It's tough on some of the new guys, pal. Lots of 'em are shipped back—at their own expense, or they can rot in this jerk town. Me—I'm in. For ten bucks I'll fix it so you'll go through the employment office like a greased pig. Maybe later, I can even work you up—for a consideration."

"No kidding?" Pete Logan seemed amazed. "I figured the Boston office had all the say. Sure, I've got ten bucks to insure my job."

"Slip it to me easy. If we're seen passing dough, both of us will lose our jobs. Thanks, pal. Nice to meet a swell guy like you. I'll bet you got nerve too. Maybe one of them dynamiters, huh?"

"Nope," Ed Logan replied. "I'm strictly a pick and shovel artist. That doesn't take much nerve."

"But you got it. You're a born gambler. Sure—you ain't afraid of nothing or nobody. Listen, pal, every night at the hotel, Lucky Saunders puts on a little game. All the boys go there. I know Lucky. We're like this."

He crossed two fingers and grinned.

"Now if you'd like to sit in some night, I know a way to clean up. Never tried to pull it because I never found a guy

I felt I could trust, but you're him, pal. You're a natural."

"Okay," Ed Logan said. "Don't mind if I do. If you think we can clean up without getting our heads shot off."

"Sure, sure. Even if Lucky or any of the other right guys find out they been gypped, they'll never squawk. Don't dare. They don't mind the local cops so much. The police force is one guy—an old-timer. The State cops don't get here often, but what Lucky is afraid of is maybe the G-men rolling in. Now you wouldn't be a G-man, would you, pal?"

The slender man laughed heartily, made a definite date, and told Logan to ask for Steve Hackell.

Logan joined the line of men who were shuffling toward the construction company's office. Shortly after, he was interviewed, given a numbered tag and told to report to a digging gang foreman. He had certainly gone through the mill promptly and he grinned at thoughts of his departed ten dollars. Any man who paid a plugged nickel to have the ways greased was a fool. This construction company needed workers so badly they'd take anyone.

Yet Pete Logan was not a fool. He put in the rest of the day working hard. Late afternoon saw him trudging through town toward Constable Turner's neat, white house. When he was admitted to Turner's office, he opened a wallet. Constable Turner squinted, then looked up with considerable surprise.

DAN FOWLER, of the F.B.I.," he said. "Say, the murder of Captain Corbett must have been mighty important."

"You did some good work on that case, Constable," Dan Fowler, ace operative of the F.B.I., complimented. "We're grateful. It isn't merely the fact that an army officer was murdered that interests us. It's the idea of such an officer carrying on as Captain Corbett was alleged to have done. I can't believe it. Corbett wasn't the type."

"Just what I figured," Turner agreed. "It don't make sense. Doc Warner will convince you it was murder, but it was also Captain Corbett who went hog-wild before he died. Shot a young fellow who works over at the hotel. Near blew his head off."

"Doesn't jibe with Captain Corbett's

reputation," Dan Fowler said slowly. "Now I want the low-down on everybody in town—the recent arrivals, I mean. Looks to me as if a pretty nasty bunch had moved in to provide the workers with amusement."

Turner shrugged. "They moved in before we even knew the camp was going to be built, Mr. Fowler. First off, they bought up all the stores and the hotel, just like they meant to do an honest business here, but them that bought 'em just disappeared and the gamblers and all the rest moved in."

"No arrests?" Fowler asked.

"Can't make arrests without evidence and all I get is a lot of kidding. If I show up, they know I'm coming when I start from home. Same thing with the State Police. That's why I'm glad you came here in disguise." He grinned. "Pete Logan, laborer, eh?"

Dan Fowler laughed. "I ran up against a classy representative of the influences at work here before I'd taken my second breath of your excellent country air. A man, for ten dollars of my money, greased the works so I'd get a job promptly. Lots of other men fell for it, too. The man who took their money—and mine—has no more influence with this construction company than Hitler has. But that's all beside the point. I want to find out what happened to Captain Corbett. This doctor—can he be trusted? And will you get him over here?"

"He can," Turner said curtly, and with emphasis. "And I will."

Turner made a phone call, sat back and sighed.

"We're glad to have you here, Mr. Fowler, to act against these terrible people who have broken the quiet of our little village. Not the workers. They're all right—but they're away from home. The are easily influenced. I'll bet half their earnings are taken by those gamblers."

Dan Fowler nodded. "What is happening here is going on all over the country wherever a camp is opened. The thing really is gigantic. Wherever a lot of men are brought to work, these crooks appear as if by magic. They rob those workers. Often the morale of the men goes way down. They earn good money, but lose half of it. I'll even give you odds that another new business started

up here recently. Money lending."

"Why, yes," Constable Turner said.

"I knew it. The workers go broke, borrow, and pay all kinds of wild interest and bonuses. That's against the law, but a man who needs money badly doesn't consider the legal end of it. The gamblers own the money-lending business. They loan the workers cash to lose on their crooked wheels, their crooked dice and phony poker games."

"Tough, huh?" Turner muttered.

"The men behind this are doing more than robbing the workers, Constable," Fowler said grimly. "They're undermining the war efforts. A man who loses half of his pay at gambling is not a good worker. You might call what those gamblers do, treason. Call the gamblers themselves, plain traitors."

THE doorbell rang. Turner escorted Dr. Warner into the room. Warner shook hands and sat down.

"Mr. Fowler," he said, "when Ed phoned me about you and what you suspected, I went right down to the undertaking parlors and got samples of the contents of Captain Corbett's stomach. I can tell you this—Captain Corbett had not been drinking prior to his death. Not one drop."

Dan Fowler whistled. "That does it, gentlemen. If Captain Corbett's stomach contained no alcohol, then he couldn't possibly have been the man who reeled into the hotel bar and shot that young fellow. It was someone else—in Captain Corbett's uniform. Someone who either wanted Corbett blamed for that murder or wanted Corbett's reputation ruined. I'd better get to work."

"If I can help—" Dr. Warner offered.

"Thanks." Fowler nodded. "I may need a lot of help. First of all, the field office in Boston informed me that a private detective had been sent here, retained by the construction company. His name is Harry McEvoy. Do any of you know him or where he boards?"

Dr. Warner sighed. "I knew him. Maybe Ed Turner doesn't as yet—but he's not boarding anywhere. He's the young fellow Captain Corbett was supposed to have shot. I found a little piece of paper rolled up in the lining of his pocket. Had his name on it."

Dan Fowler said, "Oh!" so softly it was no more than a breath.

CHAPTER III

Dynamite

SHORTLY after, Dan Fowler drove away in the constable's car. He no longer looked like Pete Logan, but was neatly dressed and out of disguise. McEvoy, the murdered private detective, had lived alone in a shack at the far end of town. Fowler headed for it, but parked his car some distance away.

He approached the shack with one hand on the butt of his shoulder-holstered gun. It was a rundown place with a lot of tin cans piled outside the back door. Fowler crouched beside the miniature dump and listened. Rising, he accidentally struck a large can and it clattered off the top of the pile. Fowler swore softly at the racket and listened again.

Fairly certain that no one lurked in the darkness, he approached the shack. The door hung from one hinge and creaked dismally when he opened it wide enough to slip through.

Inside, the place was what had been expected from its outward appearance. Obviously, it had been ransacked. Whoever killed McEvoy wanted to make certain he had left nothing to point to his killer. Fowler began looking for the same thing. McEvoy should have left a record of some kind, and it would be expertly hidden.

For half an hour, he searched the place without result. He sat down on a rickety chair, snapped off his flashlight and tried to concentrate in the pitch darkness. He recalled seeing many cigarette butts around the place but no pipes. Yet there was a newly emptied tobacco tin in that dump behind the place.

Dan Fowler went to the rear of the house again, listening intently. He had a vague feeling that he was being watched. He threw the beam of his light around experimentally, then shrugged. It was his imagination.

He reached the dump and quickly found the tin can. The cover was tight and it took him a few moments to wrench

it off, but there was something inside—a small fingerprint kit enclosed in a canvas case. As Fowler opened it up a playing card fell out. On it were three black daubs from McEvoy's fingerprint dusting powder.

Two of the prints were quite clear. The third was just a smear. Using a magnifying glass Dan Fowler studied this middle print and discovered it was the mark made by the stump of a finger. This playing card had been handled by a man whose third finger had been amputated at the first joint.

Fowler stuffed everything into his pocket and started walking to his car. The crackle of a dry branch somewhere behind him gave the first warning of danger. He turned quickly, whipping out his gun. The crackling came again. Someone was slowly approaching. He ducked and waited.

Then there was a rush of feet and two men hurled themselves upon him. His gun was kicked out of his hand before he could fire. That same foot collided with the back of his head and a numbness came over his limbs.

As hands gripped him, Fowler knew what had happened. One man had attracted his attention, while the others had stolen closer until they could leap and take him before he could offer any resistance. A flashlight was turned on. Someone with a voice like gravel laughed and spoke.

"Never saw him before. Nothing on the guy either, but he smells copper to me. Load him into the car, boys. If he comes to, slug him again or put a chunk of lead through his skull. It won't make much difference."

FOWLER decided to play dead. He slumped in the grasp of his captors and was dragged over to the narrow dirt road. They threw him into the back of a car and one man slapped him on the back of the head with a gun butt. Dan Fowler did pass out then. . . .

His first conscious impressions were of being on a ship during a violent storm, being tossed from side to side. Then he realized that two men held him like a hammock and were slowly making their way down a steep, rocky incline.

He was dropped bodily beside what seemed to be the charred wreck of a car and then Fowler knew where he was.

This car had contained the body of Captain Corbett.

"Okay," someone said. "Put him inside and when she blows, he'll turn into hamburger. Give that lunkhead sheriff something to think about. Lucky thing I posted you boys at McEvoy's place on a hunch somebody would come looking for evidence we wouldn't find. Boy! Those prints would have burned a certain guy we know."

Someone forced open what was left of the front door. They picked Fowler up and wedged him behind the wheel. Flashlights were turned on while the men worked.

The wheel was of non-inflammable plastic apparently, for it was only smudged from the smoke of the fire. Fowler could see several sets of prints on the wheel. Some were fairly good. The settling smoke had outlined them clearly, but others were just smudged, as if the man who had made them had worn gloves. But that same man had a third finger missing on his right hand. The same person whose fingerprints McEvoy had developed on the playing card.

Then, from bits of conversation Fowler heard, he knew they were planting dynamite underneath the car. Their object was to completely destroy any possibility of clues. A belated gesture brought about, probably, by the discovery that McEvoy had taken a murderer's prints.

There were four men here, apparently underlings following orders.

"Okay," the one with the gravel voice said. "We're all set. Ricci, you know how to set this stuff off. Give us a chance to get back on the road, then let 'er go."

"Yeah," somebody called Ricci answered. "I get the dirty work. This fuse ain't so long and it's all I got. Go ahead—I'll have to dive for cover. Is that guy in the car still stiff?"

"When I slug 'em, they stay cold," another man said. "Wish we had time to figure out who he is."

"Aw, he's just a private dick, like McEvoy was. Come on, boys. Let's beat it so Ricci can do his stuff."

Fowler heard three of them scrambling back up the incline. Ricci snapped on a cigarette lighter, touched flame to a cigarette and kept grumbling about getting all the dirty work.



As the operator bent, the killer hoisted himself, a knife glistening in his hand (Chapter VIII)

Someone hailed him from the road. Ricci got up—and Dan Fowler slid out of the car and leaped on him. Ricci let out a wild yell. But he was slender, wiry and strong, and he knew how to fight.

The palm of his hand cracked against Fowler's jaw and the G-man saw stars for a moment. Then he smashed a blow to Ricci's mid-section. The crook doubled up and hit the ground. Breathing hard, Fowler looked for the dynamite fuse. When he saw it, the fuse was illuminated by the flame of Ricci's cigarette lighter which he had retained.

SPARKS flew. Ricci gave himself a terrific shove and wriggled beneath the car. He also dragged the fuse with him, but left it directly under the car. That explosive would go off in less than a minute!

From the road, someone threw the beam of a spotlight down at the scene. Ricci was on his feet, running like mad. But Dan Fowler knew what would happen when the dynamite went off, that there would be an avalanche of loosened rock. So, instead of following Ricci down the incline, he went up it and crouched low to avoid the spotlight.

From the road he heard a yell. Someone thought that Ricci was their recent prisoner. Guns cracked, Ricci threw up both hands, and was in that position when the blast went off.

Fowler hugged the ground, clasped both hands over the back of his neck and grunted in pain as stones and debris crashed down on him. Only the sheltering protection of the huge rock behind which he had crouched had saved him from death or severe injury.

When the racket died away and the stones ceased rolling, he heard the three men scrambling down to see what had happened to Ricci. As they rushed by twenty yards to Fowler's left he started climbing the hill.

They didn't realize what had happened until Fowler was in the car and shifting to second gear. He rolled rapidly back to town, left the car half a mile away and ran back to where he boarded. Nobody saw him enter.

He removed all traces of his fight and close call with death, put on the clothing and the disguise of Pete Logan and was in the humming center of town by

the time those three killers returned. He strolled into the hotel bar where he had a date with Steve Hackell, who could so easily get a man a job for ten bucks.

Steve Hackell, mysteriously enough, didn't even seem to recognize the man he knew as Pete Logan. Hackell was talking to a group of new men. About half of them ambled toward the gambling rooms. The others left, some angrily. Not all workers fell for Hackell's smooth line.

Dan Fowler, as Pete Logan, went up to the bar and greeted Hackell warmly. The gambling steerer immediately became friendly.

"Remember me?" Fowler said. "I gave you ten bucks to grease the works and, brother, I sure got my job okay. You must stand in."

"I do." Hackell winked. "Come on, I'll buy you a drink. I . . . Hey, got change of a twenty?"

Dan Fowler had. He showed a roll of about one hundred dollars in much-folded bills, and carefully counted out the change. Hackell handed him the twenty. Fowler rapidly fingered the bill. It was good. Hackell didn't dabble in counterfeiting anyway. Perhaps he hadn't thought of that.

Over a drink, Hackell became confidential. "Pal, I got a lot of guys work around here and it hurts me to see them gypped and trimmed in the gambling places. It hurts me something awful. You know what I mean."

"Sure." Fowler shrugged. "Me—I don't go for that stuff. When I invest dough, it's got to be on a sure thing. So the gamblers are crooked, eh?"

"They could bring up a nine on one dice," Hackell grunted. "Took me for plenty and I been waiting to get back at 'em. The only way is by being just as crooked as they are. All I need is a little capital."

"What's your proposition?" Fowler asked cautiously.

"I got it all figured out, pal," Hackell said, out of the corner of his mouth. "You have some dough. Not much, but enough. We'll get into a game, see. They'll take me in ten minutes and I'll drop out. Then you stay in the game. I'll kibitz and keep signaling you when to lay it on thick. Yeah—it's dishonest, but you can't beat those guys any other way. How about it?"

CHAPTER IV

The Con Men

DAN FOWLER played hard to get, but finally consented when Hackell put the pressure on. According to his judgment, a pick-and-shovel mucker who carried a hundred dollars in his pocket had a few hundred more tucked away some place.

They went to a corner table for half an hour while Hackell taught him the signals he would use. Finally, they ambled to where several games were going on.

One of the gamblers greeted Hackell with a raucous salute. Hackell swore softly and steered Fowler toward that gambler's table. Hackell sat next to Fowler but did no signaling while he was in the game. That was not long.

Hackell was dealt three kings and he bet his roll on them, only to have the professional gambler turn up three aces. It was patently crooked and on the surface, Hackell was the sucker. Dan Fowler knew better. Much better.

Hackell checked out of the game, lit a cigarette and began walking around aimlessly. Fowler played like a miser, dropping out often, betting only insignificant sums. Then the action began. He was handed four queens.

Hackell saw them and cautiously gave the prearranged signals. According to Hackell, the biggest thing against Fowler was the professional gambler's chance to fill a small straight. Fowler would win even if he did.

The play was made. Fowler bet. The gambler raised quickly. Fowler came back at him and the pot grew. The hands were shown and Fowler scooped in a hundred and twenty dollars. Hackell grinned knowingly.

Now the touch would come. For a moment Fowler was tempted to quit or use some of his own skill in this game. This professional gambler was a clumsy lout compared to some that the F.B.I. man had played against.

He decided to play, however, and on the next deal he got four nines. Fowler

felt it coming, but he played the game to the hilt. Hackell signaled everything fine and Dan Fowler threw in all the money he had. The other players quickly dropped out. The gambler raised. Fowler called, and the cards were shown. The gambler had accumulated four jacks on a three-card draw. The game was over and Hackell—he was nowhere to be seen.

Fowler walked dejectedly away. Just outside the door, a pimply-faced man sidled up to tell him he could get money at the loan office. It was open as long as the gambling places were going.

Fowler shook his head and kept moving. He had been neatly trimmed and a man who actually made his living with a pick and shovel, would hardly have suspected collusion on the part of Hackell with the professional gambler. After all, Hackell also had been cleaned out.

No one paid much attention to Fowler as he quietly went upstairs to where most of the gamblers roomed. He knew where the man who had cheated him lived. He got the door open in quick time and made himself comfortable.

When the gambler sauntered in and turned on the lights he gave a nervous start when he saw Fowler quietly seated in a chair. The gambler reached toward his hip pocket, then shrugged. This crummy-looking mucker was only here for a touch. That often happened.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"A hundred and eight dollars and sixty cents," Fowler said calmly. "And don't go for that roscoe because I'll beat your ears off if you do. You guys are saps. Working the tips game in this day and age. I'll bet you even try the tat game. You know—the one where you use phony dice."

"Wise guy, huh?" the gambler growled. "Scram, bum, before you learn something else."

FOWLER was sure this gambler would not use a gun. One more gun job and the whole town would be closed up. He walked toward the man.

The gambler did yank out his gun. Fowler kept advancing, eyes riveted on the gambler's trigger finger. Suddenly Fowler's left hand came down against the gun muzzle while his right drove home a short, powerful uppercut.

The gambler flew across the room, swayed, then did his best to reach the

door. Fowler swung him around and plastered him on the jaw again. This time the gambler folded up.

Dan Fowler threw the man on the bed and proceeded to search him. In a pocket, sewn to the inner side of the fellow's shirt were six thousand dollars in crisp, new bills, just like the twenty Hackell had wanted changed. Fowler studied the currency intently. He was positive it was good.

Then he idly checked on the numbers. They were in rotation. These bills were fresh from the bank. He took his own money from the gambler's pocket, including that crisp new twenty. Its numbers were close to those on the bills the gambler had on his person.

Dan Fowler rapidly noted the numbers. He put the currency back and sauntered downstairs to the bar. Hackell was there, softening up another victim. He saw Fowler and suddenly found he had an urgent appointment elsewhere.

He had reached the hotel veranda when Fowler grabbed his arm.

"How about you and me taking a little walk, you shyster?" the F.B.I. man said in a low voice. "I've already seen your pal. You know the guy who rooked you so badly. I got back at him. I got my own dough and now I want a little chat with you."

"I—I better go back and—" Hackell protested.

"Pal," Fowler said, "you better come with me because if you don't, it will take a couple of men to pry you loose from the cracks on this veranda floor. Walk!"

Hackell walked, and every time he hesitated, the grip on his arm became increasingly painful. At the rear of the hotel, Fowler shoved him against a wall.

"Okay, tinhorn," he said tightly. "You go back to school. I heard there were easy pickings around these camps, but I think you guys are easier to pick than the suckers. The best of you couldn't put the bite on a mark for any more than small change. You guys are heel grifters, plingers."

"P-plingers?" Hackell choked. "I—I don't get it, pal."

"You don't even con the lingo," Dan Fowler ground out. "A plinger is a street beggar. A heel grifter is a cheap punk. The stakes here, are good enough for the pay-off. That's me. I'm pay-off.

Big time stuff. Now I got something to settle with you."

Hackell started to yell for help. He emitted one dismal squeak before Fowler's fist walloped him expertly on the jaw. Fowler searched him, too. He discovered another wad of currency, all new, all crisp and all bills in the same numerical rotation. They corresponded closely to the bills that professional gambler had carried.

Dan put the money back after making notes of the numbers. He left Hackell there and returned to the hotel bar-room. He saw the pimply-faced little guy who acted as steerer for the loan sharks and approached him.

WITHIN a short time Dan Fowler walked into the loan shark's office. He was met by a swarthy man to whom in record time he signed over his wages to a figure three times that of his loan, agreed to repay the money with a bonus and interest sum that amounted to slightly more than fifty per cent and was briefly treated to a glimpse of two thugs seated in the next room.

"I just wanted you to meet our collectors," the loan shark purred. "So when they accost you outside the paymaster's window, you'll hand over part of your pay. Any time you want more dough—just ask for it. But don't try to run out. It's not healthy."

"I won't run out," Fowler said. "It so happens I can lay my hands on some money tomorrow. Suppose I pay it all back then? How much will it cost me?"

The man named a prohibitive figure and hesitated.

"Tell you what, tomorrow we're closed up. The next day you can pay us back and we won't charge you any added interest for the day that elapses. Okay?"

"Okay," Fowler agreed, and was handed over more of that fresh, new currency. He also had a glimpse of plenty more in the loan shark's wallet. The loan shark put a friendly arm around his shoulder and led him to the door.

"Lucky Saunders is having a little game tonight," he informed blandly. "Maybe you can get next to it and make enough to pay us without dipping into your reserve, friend. Not that we loan money to gamble with. Not that, but Lucky Saunders got his nickname

because he's unlucky and—for your own information—stupidly honest.”

Dan Fowler strolled back to the hotel, passing up steerers to other gambling places. He had an idea they were all connected and supervised by one person, but the real games were held at the hotel. He didn't play, although it was clear that the news of his acquiring cash had already reached the ears of the steerers. He did consent to look in on the game run by Lucky, but refused to sit down.

“My luck's all wrong tonight,” he explained. “Save a chair for me tomorrow night, eh, Lucky?”

“Sure.” Lucky looked up with a grin that suddenly faded. “Hey, wait! I'm not operating tomorrow. Just the bar. It's healthy to take a day off now and then.”

Fowler nodded and grinned broadly as he left the room. He wondered how in the world these tin horns had discovered that Dan Fowler's sidekick, Larry Kendall of the F.B.I., was openly coming to town in the morning. Ostensibly, he was to investigate the death of Captain Corbett. In reality, he hoped to find some means of consulting Dan Fowler secretly, to work with him.

CHAPTER V

One of the Mob



THROUGH Constable Turner, Larry Kendall borrowed a car the next night and drove out of town. At a prearranged spot, he stopped, lit a cigarette and leaned back to wait.

Larry Kendall, a little younger than Dan Fowler, was just as

trim and slender, just as alert. The two had worked as a team for years and behind them was a trail of broken criminals and rackets, Axis espionage agents, grafters, kidnapers and murderers.

Dan Fowler and Larry Kendall were not assigned to any special F.B.I. field office, but roved the whole country and sometimes left the borders of their own land. They usually turned up with results that added to the already high

prestige of the F.B.I.

Ten minutes after Kendall parked, Fowler slipped through the brush beside the road and hopped into the car. Kendall drove away and kept the car in motion all the while Dan Fowler was his passenger.

“How goes it?” Kendall asked.

Fowler wrinkled his nose. “The set-up smells to high heaven. It's cheap, tinhorn stuff, but profitable. Boy, do they take these poor guys for a ride! It's a combination of rackets, Larry—cheating gamblers, steerers, con men and plain thugs, to say nothing of loan sharks. I've an idea the whole doggone thing is organized.”

“So have I,” Kendall grunted. “I spent yesterday digging up dope from all over the country. Dan, whenever a new project opens up that calls for a lot of men, the grifters assemble there as if a magnet draws them. They come equipped with gambling devices, plenty of cash and a willingness to take a guy for any sum from ten cents up. Looks like a lot of small-time stuff on the surface.”

Fowler frowned. “But add it all up and you get something colossal. Larry, some of these men are equipped with large sums of cash, all new currency and the serial numbers on the bills prove they came from the same place. I'll give you the numbers I took. Check with the Treasury, see what bank got that money, then we'll try to find out who got the cash from the bank.”

“Nice work,” Kendall commented.

“About Captain Corbett now. That was a smooth bump-off with complications. Dan, the way Corbett was killed and what he was supposed to have done before his death indicates a desire to blacken United States Army officers. Also, the only people who swear the man was Corbett are members of this gang. What do you think of an Axis angle?”

“Plenty,” Fowler answered grimly. “The guy Corbett was alleged to have killed happened to be a private detective hired by the contractor for this job. That investigator discovered something so they had to get rid of him, but do it in such a manner that not the slightest suspicion would be cast upon themselves. The murderer has the third finger of his right hand missing. I'll find him.”

Larry Kendall lit another cigarette and applied flame to Fowler's.

"Do you think this stuff is big enough to warrant the attention of an Axis spy ring?"

"I don't know," Fowler confessed. "There's enough money to attract the attention of big-time con men or even the heavy boys who go in for all kinds of crime. Either way it must be stamped out. What happens to these poor guys who are taken as suckers interferes with our wartime efforts."

"I figured it might," Kendall said.

"Yes, but you haven't mixed with these men. They beef all the time, want more money because they've lost so much to those tin horns. They stay up too late, drink too much and their work suffers. If this is an Axis scheme, it's smooth. If it isn't, the rats who are responsible should be decorated by Hitler. You'd be surprised how many man-hours are being lost."

KENDALL sighed.

"After being in this business so long, nothing could ever surprise me. But this town seems awfully dead for a wide-open place."

"Your fault," Fowler grinned. "They knew you were coming last night and they all pulled out. Shows they're afraid of us, Larry, but there'll be a big man at the top of this racket and he won't scare. He's just careful. Our job is to find him."

"Through the currency he dished out?" Larry inquired.

"Partly. But that alone couldn't convict him. We need iron-clad evidence because this man is clever and he's an organizer. He'd slip right through our fingers without plenty of facts. Getting them means an inside job, and I've already started work on it."

Kendall nodded. "I'll play the outside, this time. We'll keep in contact. How do you intend reaching this big shot?"

"I've let a couple of the tin horns realize I'm not exactly a ditch digger," Fowler said. "They'll believe I'm a con man trying to horn in. Maybe they'll try to retire me with a knife or a bullet. Maybe they'll decide to hire me. I'm banking on the latter and guarding against the former. Now drive back to town. Leave town publicly, and

I'll meet you at Angelo's in New York on Thursday between one and two in the afternoon."

At the town limits, Fowler got out. He vanished, but turned up at the hotel bar long before Kendall put in an appearance at the railroad station where a late train was ready to pull out.

Steve Hackell spotted Fowler and quickly faded away. A patch of adhesive clinging to his chin was mute testimony that a mosquito hadn't bitten him. Lucky Saunders was behind the bar, wearing a bartender's apron. He gave Fowler a peculiar look, but that was all.

The sound of a train pulling out made Saunders watch the hotel entrance. One of the steerers entered and gave a covert signal. Lucky hastily peeled off the apron and sang out that there would be interesting developments in the back room for sports.

The suckers filed in to be clipped. Dan Fowler shook his head. These men were earning good money which should have been invested in War Bonds or sent home to wives and families. Instead, men like Lucky Saunders were gently lifting the greater part of their earnings and none of it was used to fight the Axis powers.

Fowler didn't blame the men too much. They probably intended for their investments in the game to be small, but in that lay their real danger. It also explained that ordinary gamblers were not behind this racket. It was operated by old-time confidence men who knew how to make the suckers pony up with every nickel they owned.

"What's the matter, Logan?" a voice asked softly. "You look like you're sorry for those guys."

Fowler turned slowly. Lucky Saunders stood beside him, smiling. Dan Fowler returned the grin.

"I'm feeling sorry for myself, Lucky," he explained. "I can't help wondering why somebody else never thought of this racket before. A construction gang is composed of the easiest marks in the world."

Saunders nodded. "You're no pick-and-shovel mucker, Logan. What's your angle? Horning in?"

"Might be," Fowler admitted. "I let myself be clipped here and there just to feel you guys out. Take last night.

Your man cold-decked me twice and he was clumsy about it. If I wasn't looking for everything that goes with this racket, I'd have cold-decked him right back and cleaned the guy. No—I'm not a mucker. Whatever I am happens to be my business though."

SAUNDERS' smile faded and became a scowl.

"Whatever you say, pal. Only last night you got tough with a couple of my boys. You also borrowed some dough from a loan office. That dough is going to be paid back, understand? Every nickel of it with the interest you agreed to. I just thought you'd like to know."

"Yeah," Fowler said derisively, "it's a pleasure. How about me joining your game?"

"Try it," Saunders grunted, "and find out how it feels to get your head busted wide open. You scam on the first train in the morning. After you settle up. Now get out of here."

Dan Fowler took Lucky Saunders' nose between two fingers and squeezed hard. Then he belted him in the middle and strolled out. Lucky was small-time stuff. Somewhere around this town was the local racket boss through whom connections might be made with the still higher ups. These rackets, spotted all over the nation, were the results of one man's thinking.

Down the street was what had once been a hardware store. Now it seemed to be closed, although lights shone in the back room half the night. Fowler had an idea this was the big stuff. Here, the real holders of money were fleeced.

Fowler banged on the door and when nobody came, he kicked at it. A man

who looked more like a gorilla than a human warned him to get away. Fowler reached into his pocket and pulled out a generous roll. The man wet his lips and the door was opened wide.

"Lucky sent me," Fowler explained suavely.

"Whyn't you say so?" the gorilla muttered. "C'mon in. Just between you and me the house is playing in bad luck tonight. Some of the boys are cleaning up."

Inside, a five-handed poker game was going on. Fowler sat in, stacking about four hundred dollars on front of him. Part of it was money he had borrowed from the loan shark.

The dealer was an ashen-faced man of about forty. His eyes were icy cold and he dealt as if he had been born with a pack of cards in his hands. He gave Fowler a curt nod and the game switched to stud by unspoken agreement.

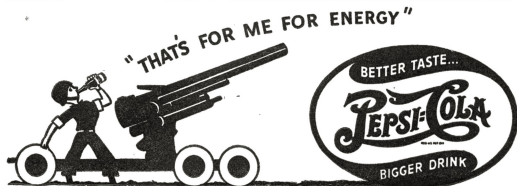
It was the old build-up stuff. The players were being allowed to win plenty. Then, at the opportune moment, the pay-off would come.

Then Fowler barely restrained a start of excitement. The dealer had a finger missing from his right hand! The third finger. Here was the murderer of Captain Corbett and McEvoy, the private detective!

Dan Fowler could make an arrest right now, but if he did, the crooked business at this camp would fold up and he would have to start all over again. He sensed that even this cold-eyed, deadly killer was not the real higher-up, although he was probably a close lieutenant. Fowler decided to bide his time.

An hour later, five phenomenal hands were showing. The betting became stif-

[Turn page]



fer and stiffer. The dealer alone remained impassive. He slowly studied his cards then shoved cash into the center of the table even though his hand was by far the poorest of the lot.

Fowler began whistling "The Sidewalks of New York." The dealer showed a spark of life for the first time.

"Pipe down, friend. This is a big game. We've got enough raw nerves without listening to that."

Fowler shrugged. "I was just thinking about the sidewalks of New York, pal. You know—where the subways run?"

"Meaning just what?"

Fowler leaned across the table. "One thing. This is a big game. Whoever loses this pot, fades out of the game. That means five of us. The sixth will be loaded down with sugar, so scrooge up to the table and keep your arms in sight. No cold decking. No subway deals. If you pull a fast one, so help me, there won't be enough left of you to stuff a flea with!"

THE gorilla who had let Fowler in started to make a rapid exit. Obviously, he was going for help. Fowler's right hand moved fast and when it steadied itself a gun was gleaming in his palm.

"You're not leaving when the game gets good," he said carelessly. "It's not exactly healthy to leave now. Why not stick around?"

"S-sure," the gorilla gulped. "S-sure, why n-not?"

Five men watched every move of the dealer's fingers. The most cold-blooded professional couldn't have got away with a thing under those conditions. The man on Fowler's left won the pot. With a yell of triumph he scooped up the money and darted out.

The others moved slower. Fowler and the dealer didn't move at all. Neither did the gorilla. Finally, the dealer waved a hand and the gorilla started toward the door, first looking at Fowler for permission.

"Beat it!" Fowler barked. "Only stay away from the winner. That dough belongs to him."

The gorilla vanished with amazing speed. Fowler stuffed his gun away and talked for three minutes. None of his words were complimentary, but the dealer took them without a quiver.

Finally, he leaned back and spoke. "So you think this is small-time stuff, that we're a bunch of tin horns. Maybe that's just what we want everyone to think. Let's see you do that subway deal."

He flipped the pack of cards across the table without spilling one. Dan Fowler shuffled and dealt. His fingers flew. The gambler got four aces and Fowler mysteriously dealt himself a royal flush.

"Not bad," the gambler nodded. "My name is Smith. That's good enough for now. Want to know something? I guessed who you were the moment you walked in here. You're Logan."

"I'll change Lucky's name," Fowler said softly.

"Aw, he's just a front. You're pretty good. You haven't, by any chance, got smallpox?"

"There are no warrants out for me," Fowler answered quickly.

"The cops don't know I exist except maybe a few with tin mittens."

In the parlance of con men that meant Fowler was not wanted for any crime although some fixers or police who liked to hear a coin clink into their hands, knew of him. The lingo of con men identify themselves to one another. They are the highest group in the world of crime. The brainiest, priding themselves on the fact that they never resort to violence. What happened in this village indicated that the real head of this racket was now a con man and did not hesitate to turn even to murder.

The dealer grinned knowingly.

"Right, Logan. Interested in steady work with a big cut?"

CHAPTER VI

Assignment to Crime



UST at one-ten the next afternoon Dan Fowler, in New York, strolled into Angelo's, a modest restaurant where he was well-known by the proprietor, although Angelo never so much as gave him a tumble unless Fowler greeted him first.

Larry Kendall occupied a booth at the far end of the place, and Sally Vane, the girl in Dan Fowler's

life, was waiting with him for the entrance of the G-man ace. Fowler slid behind the table beside Sally, and their hands touched in quick greeting, but the unspoken messages in their eyes said far more.

Always these two understood each other—as they also understood that some day they would belong to each other even more completely than they did now. But that day—marriage—must for the present be postponed, because of the very danger attached to the Federal man's work.

Still, there was never a time that even the sound of Sally Vane's voice did not thrill Fowler, and that a look into her blue eyes, and seeing the sheen on her lovely gold head did not inspire him to fresh effort. It had been that way ever since Sally Vane had come to do secretarial work in the Washington F.B.I. headquarters. So efficient and clever had she proved herself to be that now she often was taken from her regular work to act as a special assistant for Fowler and Kendall when need for a woman aide arose—the high spots in Sally Vane's own existence.

And now the two great G-men had no official secrets from the golden-haired girl of Dan Fowler's heart. They spoke freely before her, as Fowler did now, coming to the point at once as he questioned Larry Kendall.

"Yes, plenty doing, Dan," Kendall said softly. "That money you found on the gamblers passed through the Security Trust Company. I had a talk this morning with Cliff Banning, the president. He produced records that showed that part of this money was issued to a man named William Verdo. Nobody knows anything about him. He lives in a swanky hotel suite and is checking out this afternoon for Chickering. That's out West where a huge mining enterprise is ready to start."

"Chickering," Fowler breathed. "Hmm—nice work. What else?"

"The rest of the dough went to a man named Johan Falk. He is developing this particular mine in Chickering. Looks like he and Verdo are in cahoots."

"It's beginning to shape up . . . Well, I'm being accepted into the gang, provided I pass inspection here in New York. If I do, my work will be that much easier. Now what did you learn about

McEvoy, the private detective who was murdered?"

"I asked Sally to handle that," Kendall said.

"I checked on him," Sally said. "His last report to his office, by telephone, was vague. But he said he was on the trail and to expect something big soon."

Fowler nodded. "He found out too much. So did Captain Corbett, and both died for it. The affair was neatly arranged to throw no suspicion upon anyone else. I'm going to investigate this Verdo and Johan Falke, too. Not much time, though. I'm supposed to meet a big shot and get my working orders."

"Dan," Sally said, "isn't there some way I can help?"

"Yes," he told her. "Follow me and see that I'm not trailed. Pull the booth curtains, Larry, while I bring Pete Logan to life."

Half an hour later, Dan Fowler made his way to the hotel suite of William Verdo, the unknown who had come into possession of some of the currency that had found its way into the hands of the gambling ring. He rapped on the door, but received no answer. He was not surprised because Kendall had phoned the man vainly. Fowler entered with a skelton key.

IT WAS a four-room suite, elaborately furnished. Two clothes closets were filled with expensive wearing apparel. The G-man checked through various drawers without finding anything significant. In fact, the lack of significant things indicated just how careful this William Verdo must be.

Fowler was searching the five big suitcases when he felt a gun muzzle rested against the back of his neck. He didn't move. Whoever held that gun had entered with the stealth of a panther on the prowl.

"Can I get up?" Fowler asked quietly.

"Yes. But be careful what you do with your hands. I suppose you have an explanation of this, Logan?"

Dan Fowler barely held in check a gasp of astonishment when he turned and faced the gaunt, fishy-eyed gambler he had met at the camp the night before. The man who had sent the supposed Pete Logan to New York for possible employment by the gang.

Fowler grinned a trifle weakly. "I

guess I didn't realize how smart you are, Mr. Smith. That was the name you gave me."

"It's Verdo—William Verdo." The gambler held a small automatic with studied carelessness. "Lift your hands, Logan. After I frisk you, we'll talk and you had better have a good reason for this."

Verdo took a .32 from the disguised G-man's hip pocket, his wallet, and a few papers which had been carefully prepared to carry out his false identity.

Verdo sat down, checked through the papers, and tossed them and the wallet back to Fowler.

"I'm listening," he said coldly.

Fowler grimaced. "All right—I'm a fish. Naturally, I had to know something about you. So I wound up here and you caught me red-handed."

"You didn't trail me," Verdo said. "I know that. How did you find me?"

"I've got friends," Fowler grinned. "Good friends, Verdo. Remember, I'm no small-time stuff. You made me a proposition. Maybe it's good, maybe not. I have a right to know."

Verdo dropped his gun into the side pocket of his coat.

"You wouldn't be under the impression that we can be driven out to make room for you? This is no horn-in on your part?"

"Not so long as I'm treated right," Fowler said. "Put yourself in my place. You're sent to New York to be contacted later on and meet somebody you never even heard of. That's to be sized up. If you pass, there's a job out West. Wouldn't you try to find out a few things?"

"Possibly." Verdo smiled a little, and seemed more at ease. "Seeing that what you have done here amounts to nothing, I'll tell you where to go for your interview. Take the West Side Subway to Northland Avenue. Get off there and walk to one of the benches exactly in the middle of the station. Stay there until the station lights are put out. Trains discontinue stops at that station after one-thirty in the morning. It's dark as pitch, and nobody ever comes there. The entrance is blocked off with a chain. That's all you have to do. Then come back here for orders."

"I'm not sure I want to work for a man who is afraid to meet me face to

face," Fowler said doubtfully.

"He can't take chances with anybody," Verdo ground out. "He's way up, and operating on the level. Later on you may be allowed to meet him. Logan—you'd better go through with this. That's just a little friendly advice."

"Spoken like an unfriendly threat." Fowler grimaced. "Okay—I'm in. I'll talk to your Mr. Mystery and you can tell him for me that I can out-cheat the best man he's got."

DAN FOWLER accepted his gun and stalked out of the suite. He didn't attempt to visit Johan Falke. Verdo was suspicious and if he had Fowler trailed, the shadow would be an expert. Outside the Federal ace met Sally Vane.

"Follow me to a subway station that is closed for the night," he told her. "A man will come out. Trail him and phone Larry where he goes."

At the appointed time Fowler reached the station and concealed himself until the station agent departed. Then Fowler sat down in the designated bench and waited. Trains flashed by, lighting up the station momentarily, and somehow Fowler got the idea he was being studied by someone hidden in the darkness.

Then he saw the glow of a cigar and sniffed its aroma. An expensive cigar, smoked by the dim form which advanced. The man stopped about twenty feet from Dan Fowler.

"I understand you're quite a fellow, Logan," he said. "I would—would like to know more about you."

The G-man did not miss the hastily corrected accent. He remained seated just as Verdo had ordered.

"I've been playing the game for years," he informed calmly. "Everything from the shake to the big store. I have no police record. A good con man never has. It's up to him to see that no marks blow off to the cops. I can rattle dice, subway deal, put in a fix and I know my way around."

The man laughed, a low, gruff sound. "No one but a con man could speak their language so beautifully. I am satisfied with you, Logan. On the bench at the other end of the station you will find five hundred dollars. Buy a ticket for Chickering. Full directions accompany the cash. Obey them to the letter.

Your wages will be two hundred a week and a cut on big killings. Good luck."

"The way I play 'em," Fowler grunted, "luck doesn't count. I—"

Suddenly he realized he was alone. The unknown had departed. Now everything depended upon Sally. . . .

Sally Vane saw the man emerge from the station, but she was unable to get a look at his features. His hat brim was pulled down and he kept his head bent. He hailed a taxi.

Sally got another, and had her driver follow the first cab. It pulled up at a corner, the man got out, paid the driver and walked rapidly away. Sally, following, saw him enter a hotel. There the trail was lost until she talked to the elevator starter.

"Who just went up?" he repeated Sally's question, willing to talk to such a pretty girl. It was dull on the elevators after midnight. "A guy with a black hat, kind of big?"

"He wore a black hat," Sally said. "Within the past two minutes he probably took one of the elevators."

"Oh—him." The starter nodded. "He told the operator to take him to Eleven-sixty-seven. That would be Mr. Falke, some guy from the West. Owns a mine."

Sally hesitated. If this man Falke was an Axis agent or even a big shot confidence man, he would be careful. She decided to phone Larry from somewhere besides the hotel lobby.

Down the street two blocks, Sally saw a small all-night drug-store, dimly lighted in accordance with the dim-out regulations. She went in and walked straight to the single phone booth at the rear. There were no customers in the store. The druggist, white-haired and pleasant-looking, and wearing a long, white coat, nodded to her.

SALLY had dropped a coin into the slot and started to dial when she stopped abruptly. Two men were walking toward the booth. Hard-faced men. One of them stepped close to the glass door and flashed a small gun concealed in the palm of his hand. He shook his head in a gesture that she was not to phone.

Sally had not expected to be trailed here, but it was apparent this unknown whom Dan Fowler wanted to identify had taken steps to see that he was well

covered. She hung up, stepped out of the booth and that gun was instantly pressed against her side.

"We're going to have a talk, sister," the crook said.

"Supposing I don't like your company?" Sally said indignantly. "Suppose I start to scream?"

"It would be the last yell you'd ever let out," the gunman snapped.

"Hey, Joe," the other man said. "The druggist has seen your gat, I think. Now we got to take care of him, too. Listen, Joe—no killing. You know why."

"All I'll do is put a couple of slugs where they'll hurt plenty," the gunman snarled. "Stop squawking. Just because your brother died in a gas chamber—"

The other man turned pale. Sally saw the druggist approaching. She tried to warn him away, but it was too late. The second crook drew a gun, too. Sally and the druggist were herded into the prescription room behind the store.

"All right," the gunman called Joe said. "We can make this sweet and short. Sister, why were you trailing that guy? Who put you up to it, and who are you?"

Before Sally could answer, a customer entered the store.

"Go ahead and wait on the woman," one gunman told the druggist. "Just act like nothing is wrong."

The druggist came back shortly, carrying a prescription blank. He explained that he had to fill it and the customer insisted on waiting. Sally waited wordlessly, her heart in her throat. There was nothing for it now, she knew, except to take the situation in her own slender hands—and hope for a break.

CHAPTER VII

A Man Named Sissy



HILE the druggist began laying out graduates, a beaker and other articles he needed in compounding the prescription, Sally spoke softly to the pair of gunmen.

"Now you wouldn't shoot me if I refused to talk," she said earnestly. "Trouble is I can't tell you whatever it is you want

to know because there's a mistake somewhere. I was calling my husband, that's all."

"You trailed a guy from a certain subway station all the way down here," one of the gunmen grunted, "and asked questions about him at his—a certain hotel. Come clean, lady. Don't make it tough on yourself."

"I'm not afraid," Sally said. "Killing me will only get you a hangman's rope or the electric chair—or they'll strap you into a chair and drop a nice, white round bit of cyanide into some acid. They say dying that way isn't so good."

"Shut up!" the smaller of the pair rasped. "Stop talking about that."

"Just a beaker with some strong acid and a few white little eggs," Sally went on. "One whiff and you're a goner. Me—I'd rather be shot."

The smaller thug raised his gun as if to crack the muzzle across Sally face. The druggist measured out a copious quantity of white liquid and dumped it into a beaker. He pushed it carelessly aside and stepped in front of the small thug.

Apparently, the druggist was only interested in filling the prescription. He took down a large wide-mouthed bottle from a top shelf, removed the cork and left it near the edge of the bench. He then started rinsing the bottle into which he would eventually pour the medicine.

"The gas is white and heavy," Sally went on. "It spreads fast too, much faster than the poison gases they use in war. You don't have to drop the white pellets into the acid. It works just as well when acid is poured onto them."

"Look, sister," the bigger thug growled. "We all know about that stuff and if you don't start talking, maybe we'll have the doc here fix you up a dose of poison gas. This is your last chance."

Sally eyed him for a moment. Then she started moving back bit by bit, as if sudden fear assailed her. She reached the edge of the bench, thrust a hand behind her for support and the wide-mouthed jar tipped over. About fifty small round white pellets clattered to the floor. Sally seized the beaker and hurled its contents on top of the pellets.

Instantly, a heavy white smoke curled upward. With a wild yell the smaller thug sprinted into the store. The

woman waiting for the prescription saw his gun and began to scream at the top of her voice. The other thug watched that smoke curling upward for about twenty seconds longer than his pal. Then he howled and fled. The druggist picked up the telephone and called the police.

Sally sidestepped to avoid getting her shoes in the acid.

"Thank you," she told the druggist, "for taking my hint. I heard the little fellow say his brother had been executed in a gas chamber so I knew he'd be afraid of anything that looked like lethal gas and came from white pellets."

The druggist chuckled. "Just goes to prove that crooks haven't enough brains to live honestly. But what a mistake if those had been cyanide pellets instead of plain moth balls!"

SALLY made her phone call to Larry Kendall, then started back to the hotel where the mystery man had vanished. She saw Dan Fowler, disguised as Pete Logan, walk rapidly across the lobby. He signaled her to follow. Outside, they stopped in a doorway.

"The man who came out of the subway station went straight to this hotel," Sally said quickly. "The elevator starter said he went to Room Eleven-sixty-seven, the suite occupied by Johan Falke."

"I've just visited the suite," Fowler said. "It's Falke's place all right, but he wasn't there. Probably guessed he'd been trailed."

"Guessed?" Sally smiled. "He did more than that. Two lugs trapped me and for a little while things were not so pleasant. Anything suspicious in Falke's apartment?"

"He's a mine owner," Fowler said. "All kinds of literature there. He smokes cigars, too. So did the mystery man I met in the subway station. More important than that, I found a photograph of Falke and his wife. It was taken in Bremen at just about the time Hitler was first coming to power. It's reasonable to believe that Falke was fed on Hitler's principles and maybe thrived on them, too."

"Are you going to make an arrest?" Sally asked.

"Not yet. Too little evidence, and when the F.B.I. makes a pinch, it sticks.

I'm going out West and see what happens in a mining town. Thanks, Sally, for all your help. I wish you could come along, but a woman at this particular mining camp would be a dead giveaway."

Dan Fowler did not try to contact Larry Kendall. He might be watched. The next morning he was aboard a train for the West.

In Chicago, he phoned Kendall.

"Falke has gone back to Chickering," Kendall told him. "Verdo is still here—but hold onto your hat, Dan. Here comes the big news. Cliff Banning, the banker who told me where that new currency had gone, happens to be financially interested in that copper mine. He's flying West tonight. He'll probably beat you there."

Fowler canceled the rest of his train ticket, went to the airport and producing identification papers, was allowed to consult passenger lists. Cliff Banning was aboard Flight Number Three, due in four hours.

When that plane took off again, Dan Fowler was aboard. He quickly picked out Cliff Banning from Kendall's description. Banning was a white-haired man with clean-cut features, an aggressive chin and eyes that sparkled with good nature.

Fowler did not make the mistake of forcing himself upon the man, no matter how easily he could have done so. Instead, he bided his time until the plane landed at a city some thirty miles from Chickering. He and Banning were the only two passengers to alight and there seemed to be no one to meet either.

Banning began to walk up and down impatiently, eyeing every car that came toward the field. Fowler finally stopped him.

"Can you tell me how to reach Chickering?" he asked. "It seems to be off the beaten path."

"Chickering?" Banning growled. "That's where I'm going if my transportation ever arrives. Are you connected with the mine?"

Fowler smiled. "Well, I'm going into business there. The—ah—amusement business. All those men need relaxation and I intend to furnish it."

Banning scowled. "You can ride in with me when my car arrives. Do you know Johan Falke? He owns the mine."

"Never heard of him," Fowler replied. "Say—maybe that's your car coming now."

THE car he indicated rolled over and stopped. Fowler and Banning got in the back seat and a blond, ruddy-cheeked driver piloted the car toward a state highway.

"I'd be interested to meet Falke," Fowler said. "After all, I may have to get his permission to go into business. I suppose he owns the whole place. What's he like?"

Banning nudged Fowler and dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Careful—that driver works for Falke. Tell me—does he look German to you?"

Fowler nodded. "He's the type all right. Why?"

Banning frowned. "Falke is German, too. His copper mine hasn't been operated in years, but with the war, copper has become vitally important and the Government demanded that Falke reopen the mine. But what I'm wondering is why he refused to accept government funds to finance the mine and, instead, came to me for backing. I'm a banker."

"Could it be that Falke doesn't want to help our war effort?" Fowler said. "If he accepted Government funds, Federal inspectors would be around all the time. With private backing Falke would be more or less in full control, wouldn't he?"

"Yes, and I don't like it. That's why I came out. As the operator of the mine, Falke *could* create slow-downs, accidents, and even impair the quality of the ore. How'd you like to work for me as a sort of investigator?"

Fowler shook his head. "Nix. Me, I'm strictly a lone wolf. Anyway, I'm after big stakes with ideas of my own. I'll keep my eyes and ears open though."

"Good," Banning approved. "If I find any evidence to back up my suspicions, I'll take over the operation of the mine myself. Just what is your line, Mr. Logan? That's the name you told me, isn't it?"

"Right," Fowler said. "I'm going to keep the employees amused. Card games, dice—you know the stuff those hard working miners like. They're all sent into this wilderness from faraway places. They won't have their families along and I figure—"

"Wait a moment," Banning interrupted, half angrily. "You don't mean to say you intend running gambling enterprises in Chickering?"

"Why not?" Fowler shrugged. "So long as my games are honest."

Banning faced him squarely and his eyes were flashing.

"Logan, if this was my car, I'd throw you out. Those men work hard for their money. They should be putting it into war bonds, what they can spare. You propose to take it away from them smoothly. Perhaps you won't get the chance. If I can stop you, I shall."

Fowler scowled, and for the rest of the trip into Chickering neither man spoke again.

Chickering appeared to be a town where anyone might easily die of monotony. There was a row of one-story, ramshackle buildings, all weather-beaten and old. Ground was broken for huge barracks to accommodate the workers and there seemed to be thousands of them. The mine was located about a mile out of town and the hillside swarmed with men. Donkey engines puffed, conveyors creaked. Hundreds of tents had been set up for temporary accommodations.

Fowler got out of the car at the outskirts, did not try to thank Banning for the lift, and walked rapidly toward the center. A barely readable sign there indicated that the largest structure was the hotel.

IT WAS dismal-looking on the outside, but inside Verdo's men already had converted the dining room into a huge bar. At the rear were the gambling rooms. Other buildings were being used for the same purpose, but the place was dead now, for the men were all working.

Fowler spoke to the bartender, and in a few moments a barrel-chested, short-legged man came out of a back room and waddled toward Fowler. The man's eyebrows ran the full length of his forehead without a break. His eyes were small and reddish. He extended a hairy hand that gripped Fowler's like a vise.

"So you're the big shot," he greeted. "Glad to meet you, Logan. My name is Sissy."

"Sissy?" Fowler ejaculated.

"Yeah—they call me that because I can't stand to see anybody or anything

hurt. It makes me feel bad."

His handclasp grew tighter until Fowler winced in pain. Sissy laughed and let go. Fowler promptly decided that the man had been given that nickname because it contrasted so completely with his character. Sissy was strong, tough and ruthless. He was to work under Fowler's orders, but he took good care to signify he would handle his own end of things and that the man he called Logan had better not become too officious.

"Everything is set." Sissy grinned. "We're already operating. Falke gave us a little trouble at first, but we fixed his wagon. He sent down two square-heads to try to heave us out. The square-heads limped back."

Fowler nodded. "Good stuff. Teach 'em right from the start and you have less trouble. Anything else like that happens, let me know. Now I want to look around. Any competition?"

Sissy showed his teeth in a broad smile.

"Not yet, Logan. If any shows up, we'll bury it. Come on and meet the boys."

CHAPTER VIII

Murderer's Message



FOWLER met an assortment of criminals that amazed him. Unlike the gang in control of the construction camp in the Northeast, these men were anything but con men. They wore guns and bore the stamp of big city toughs. Fowler had not expected anything like this. The mystery man who controlled these enterprises must have hand-picked these gorillas for a certain purpose.

They were at the bar drinking when the shifts at the mine changed and workers began pouring into the barroom. Sissy stood beside Fowler, eyeing the men. He gave Fowler a nudge with his elbow that almost knocked the wind out of the G-man.

"Take a quick look at this bird coming through the door. The one with the split lip. He's a trouble maker."

"And look what's with him," Fowler grunted. "About twenty of his pals."

The miner, sweaty, dirty, walked straight up to Sissy, though he did use some caution in not coming too close.

"I want the money I was cheated out of," he flatly demanded. "Last night I accused one of the dealers of cheating. He did too. Got forty dollars off me, and I should have won. I want my money."

Sissy began massaging the knuckles of his right hand. "What you want is one thing, pal. What you'll get is a busted head. Beat it."

"Wait a minute," Fowler interrupted. "What's the beef, mister? I'm in charge here."

The miner turned. Behind him, his friends were slowly drawing closer. So were the gamblers with the guns.

As the miner went into a detailed account of how he'd lost his money, Sissy was gradually getting steamed up to the boiling point.

"Look," Fowler told the miner, "you're going to find plenty of trouble. None of my boys will cheat. I run honest games, but if you think you were gypped, that's almost as bad as if you were. I'm admitting nothing, mind you, but here's your dough and there's a drink on the house waiting at the bar for you and your friends."

Sissy grabbed Fowler's arm and spun him around. He stuck his big face close to the G-man's.

"The way to handle those dumbbells is by busting 'em wide open. They'll squawk every time they lose now. I'm going to bust 'em."

"Hold it!" Fowler said sharply. "Remember I'm in charge here. You can't think, Sissy, because your brain is all muscle like your arms. That guy will come back tonight and drop the forty bucks and more. He'll pass the word around. It's as good as a paid advertisement. Let him alone."

Sissy glared, and looked as though he would disobey orders. Fowler grabbed his wrist and gave it an expert twist. Even Sissy's massive strength was unable to compete with that grip. He writhed and muttered savage threats.

"Okay, Logan. You're supposed to be boss, but you don't know these men. You either handle 'em tough or they get even tougher. Let go of me."

Fowler released him and moved away.

He heard Sissy muttering threats, but when Fowler turned to face him, Sissy ambled away.

DAN FOWLER was worried. In the first place, the miners were a tough bunch and if things went sour, they probably would tear the town and every gambler in it apart. And to make matters worse, Sissy and his gang were equally as tough and depended more upon brute strength to cheat the miners than the finesse of confidence men. Things had to start developing right away.

Dan Fowler's quarters were upstairs in this dilapidated hotel. When he was shown the place he sat down on the edge of a hard bed and tried to figure things out. He was especially concerned with who was behind this scheme.

Verdo was the most likely suspect by far. He was wily enough to have sent Fowler—Pete Logan—to that deserted subway station, hurried there himself to pretend another man was leader. Verdo was a dyed-in-the-wool con man and professional gambler—but one who carried a gun and was willing to kill.

Johan Falke occupied much of Fowler's attention too. The German had been reluctant to open the mines, though the ore was so desperately needed. He had refused to let the Government finance him and had sought out private banking interests. If a Nazi ring was behind these gambling set-ups all over the country, the men could be after money to finance their spy and fifth column activities. More direct and sinister, they could be seeking to intimidate the workers. Rob them, create confusion and slow up the work or, at least cut into its quality.

Clifford Banning, banker, had a logical reason for coming out here. He had cooperated with Larry Kendall in New York, revealing that Verdo and Johan Falke had been given currency bearing numbers similar to those on bills found at the construction camp.

Someone rapped on the door. Fowler called a command to enter and four men came in. They were after orders. Fowler assigned certain men to certain games according to their proficiency. As the leader of the gang, he had to put up a good front.

"One more thing," he told the pro-

fessional gamblers, "if you don't know how to make a quick deal, play it straight for a few days. The odds are all in favor of the house anyway. Anybody caught cheating by the miners is through. That's all. Get set—this will be a big night."

Dan Fowler's little play of handing back the forty dollars to that miner bore results. Men flocked to the hotel and the other places. There were few laws against gambling so things could be conducted on a wide-open basis. Fowler hoped fervently that none of the men supposed to be working for him would start dealing from the bottom of the deck.

If such a thing happened, the lid would blow off and nothing short of the militia would be able to stop it. The miners were tough, willing to fight. The gamblers and men like Sissy were spoiling for a chance to use blackjacks, knuckle dusters, knives and guns.

Once, where there was some trouble in the corridor, Fowler opened the door of his room and saw a big, bald-headed man elbowing through some of the men trying to block his way. Fowler needed no introduction. This would be Johan Falke. Nobody else could look like that—with the trick mustache, the florid complexion and the bellowing voice.

The man entered Fowler's room, kicked the door shut, and put his back against it.

"I AM Falke," he said impressively, as if he expected the G-man to click his heels and salute.

"Oh yes," Fowler said. "The man who owns these mines. I hope you get rich on them, sir. You should—with copper in such demand."

"I am not interested in making a dime from these mines!" Falke bellowed. "The copper mined here is turned into bullets and tanks and grenades and planes. I would be more satisfied to blow up the whole thing. Blow up all men who plan wars with it."

"A tall order," Fowler commented dryly. "What do you want with me?"

Falke walked up to him, waving a fat finger.

"You are in charge of the riffraff sent here. The gamblers, the cheats! I am forced to run the mine because the Government so orders me, but I want my

workers to get a chance to keep their earnings. Men like you rob them. I will not have it!"

"Throw us out?" Fowler offered sarcastically.

He thought Falke was about to attack with his bare fists. Then the German lowered his arms, heaved a great sigh and turned toward the door.

"I have been a fool. An idiot. I sold or leased the buildings where you and your scum operate. I cannot throw you out because I helped install you here. It makes no difference that I thought you were going to run stores or maybe a quiet bar or two. This is all my fault."

He left the door wide open and walked away, shoulders bowed. He paid no attention to the men who eyed him with open animosity.

Dan Fowler watched him disappear down the stairs.

Falke was a strange character. A man with a violent temper and a tongue that became loose through rage. He had practically said he disliked furnishing copper for the war effort. The only reason for that could be his desire to aid Hitler and the Axis.

On the other hand, Falke also suffered from defeatism. He gave in too easily. Perhaps his protesting the effect of the gamblers upon his men was just window dressing and secretly he hoped their work would be badly interfered with.

Fowler made up his mind to take a look in Falke's big house about half a mile from the mine. Nazis are reluctant to give up or even hide the paraphernalia which Hitler made popular. Enemy aliens kept iron crosses, pictures of Hitler, short-wave radio sets and maps. F.B.I. raids had proved that many times.

First though, there was another stage to set. One which would bring out the leader of these gambling units installed at practically every camp in the country. For, with his exposure, all else would fit into the picture.

Fowler made the rounds of the gambling places, saw that the games were quiet and noticed his men were obeying orders. Some dealers had precious few chips while the miners won heavily.

There was just one new building completed in this town—the telegraph office which had been erected hastily and was hardly more than a one-room shack.

Dan Fowler strolled down there. The operator was about thirty, pleasant and courteous. At the counter Fowler picked up a pencil. All he wrote on the pad was, "Dan Fowler." Then, as if he had made a mistake, he ripped the sheet off, and hurled it into the waste basket behind the counter.

The operator picked it up, went to his desk and opened a drawer. He straightened out the sheet, checked the signature against another on a card. Then he proceeded to rip the sheet into shreds.

FOWLER, meanwhile, was writing his message, a rather long one. When he finished, he tore off several sheets so that the pencil would have left no indentations.

The message read:

Contact nearest Field Office. I need twenty men preferably new in these parts. Fly them in and all must be here tomorrow night. They are to act as professional gamblers belonging to Logan's mob which is me. Once local gyps realize I'm doublecrossing the outfit by taking over this area, they'll contact the boss and draw him here. Give men quick course of instructions in gamblers' and con men's lingo.

The operator read the message, and showed no particular concern.

"That will be a dollar sixty-two," he said pleasantly. "Your message will go right out."

Fowler wrote a second message. This one was to a mythical person in Chicago telling him to ship a score of capable gamblers and gunmen by plane. He signed it "Logan."

"Send this one too," he said and then, his lips barely moving, he added, "If anybody is trailing me, they'll want to see the message I sent. This is the one, understand?"

"Yes, sir." The operator nodded. "I'll get it right out."

"You're carrying out your guise of a telegraph operator to perfection," Fowler whispered. "Thanks."

The telegraph station was located beside a road which led to the mine and as Fowler walked back toward the center of town it was black dark. The road was bordered by sparse shrubs that took fantastic shapes by night.

Fowler whistled softly. Things were coming along well enough. If he could avert any fights or other trouble tonight,

he would have twenty armed and efficient G-men here in twenty-four hours.

But Dan Fowler's whistle would, perhaps, have been less cheery if he could have seen what happened in the telegraph office. Not two minutes after he disappeared, a man walked in and smiled affably at the operator. He had drawn the pad toward him and began to write when the pad slipped off the counter and fell behind it.

The operator bent down to pick it up. His client quietly hoisted himself partly onto the counter. There was a knife glistering in his hand.

As the operator straightened, the knife whipped down and entered the back of his neck.

With a half-strangled scream, he dropped.

The murderer glanced through the one window in the shack, made sure no one observed him, then hurried behind the counter. He found Dan Fowler's fake message signed with the name Logan, scanned it, and put the paper into his pocket.

He stepped to the window, drew a small pocket flash and winked it twice. A car drove up. The murderer grasped the dead G-man telegraph operator by the arms and dragged him out of the shack.

The car door was open and he stowed the corpse inside.

"Okay," he said to the driver. "Get in there and go to work. If anybody asks questions, the other operator was relieved and you're taking his place for a few days. You came in tonight. Don't bungle this."

"I won't." The murderer's assistant grinned. "I used to run one of these. It's a pipe."

The murderer slid behind the wheel of the car and drove on until he reached a fairly high cliff. At the bottom of it was a small pond. The killer dragged out the body of the telegraph operator and hurled it down the embankment. He followed it with the ray of a powerful searchlight until the corpse disappeared beneath the water.

The murderer smiled smugly, got into the car and again read Dan Fowler's message. His features grew black with hatred.

He turned the car around and drove back to town.

CHAPTER IX

Mounting Evidence

INSTEAD of returning to the town, now teeming with activity, Fowler veered off the road and headed toward Johan Falke's house. It was atop a knoll, overlooking the mine. A big house, although simple in its architecture. Lights burned in a couple of

downstairs rooms.

He prowled for a few moments, inspecting the garage and finding it empty. The car which Falke had sent for Cliff Banning had been driven away. With a small flat flashlight Fowler studied the tire marks on the cement floor. The car had rolled out not long before and the marks were vividly clear. The rear left was well worn and left little of its design imprinted on the dusty cement. The rear right was much newer and carried a design like a number of inverted Vs.

Fowler approached the house then. Peering into the windows of the illuminated rooms, he saw that no one was at home. That suited his plans perfectly. He knew that Banning was a guest here, but perhaps both he and Falke had gone to town.

He used a key on the front door and quickly got it open. Inside, he stopped and listened. There wasn't a sound. Closing the door, he started to inspect the premises.

The furnishings were simple, but massive. He carefully examined the contents of a desk in the living room, but it contained only papers pertaining to the operation of the mine. A check-book showed a substantial balance with a recent deposit that ran into six figures. That would be the loan Falke had obtained from Cliff Banning.

Fowler could not afford to spend too much time here. He still had the gambling place to worry about, especially the possibility that Sissy would go all out in cheating the miners and create disastrous trouble. Still, he must look further while he was here.

Upstairs, he found Banning's room.

He recognized the banker's traveling bag. It was closed and locked. Apparently, Banning was ready to leave in the morning.

Another bedroom was locked. Fowler soon had the door open, and he received something of a shock. This was Johan Falke's bedroom. On one wall hung an oil painting of a pleasant-faced woman dressed in the styles of about twenty-odd years ago—his wife, perhaps. Falke was a widower.

Another picture, though, was startling. It hung above a small secretary. It was a photograph of two young men in German Army dress uniforms with spiked helmets and swords. Draped above the picture was a German flag. Not the swastika, but the older flag carrying the German Eagle. And pinned to the flag was an Iron Cross.

There was also a bookcase, glass enclosed. It contained rows of German books, most all of them military subjects. By the signs, Johan Falke was a staunch German and if this plan for operating crooked gambling places, cheating war workers by other devious means was the scheme of some quietly operating spy ring, then Falke won top honors for being at the head of it.

There might be documents to give away the whole plan, but Fowler had neither the time nor the opportunity to look for them. The thought of trouble starting between the miners and the gamblers kept nagging him.

Fowler left the house, locking the door behind him. He hurried down the knoll toward the gleaming lights of the old mining town which now was roaring with life. The bars were jammed, the various gambling places were going full blast, yet all seemed peaceable enough.

THE G-man had passed through the bar and was mounting the stairway to the second floor where his room was located when he heard the sound of an open hand slapping someone across the face. It was followed by a cry of pain.

Speeding to the second floor landing and down the hall Fowler saw the brute Sissy shoving a much smaller man back. He alternated his pushing by a slap then a shove. The smaller man kept whimpering, but did not fight back.

"Sissy!" Dan Fowler called sharply.

The big man lowered his hand, turned

slowly and, greeted Fowler with a broad grin. It was a challenging grin without a trace of amusement in it.

"I thought I told you there was to be no rough stuff," Fowler said sternly.

"This little punk"—Sissy indicated the man who cowered behind him—"got into a game, and when he lost, the rat welched. I got only one kind of treatment for heels like him. I'm just showing him it won't be healthy to come back."

"Let him go," Fowler ordered. "Okay, you—beat it!"

The little guy ducked beneath Sissy and started to run. Sissy reached out with one hand, grabbed him by the neck and hurled him back. Fowler sighed. Sissy was looking for trouble and it couldn't be avoided this time.

"You're supposed to be the big shot here, Logan," Sissy said angrily. "Okay. But when the boss don't know how to run things, it's time for a guy who does to step in. I'm in, understand?"

"You are superseding me?" Fowler asked. "Is that what you mean?"

"Take it any way you like," Sissy declared. "Tonight, we're losing our shirts. The miners are plenty hot with the dice and the cards. If it keeps on, we'll be cleaned. I won't stand for it and you can't stop me!"

"Yes, I can," Fowler said gently. "I was picked to run this town and I intend to keep on doing it if I have to break that thick skull of yours and rattle the few brains you have. Now get downstairs where you belong."

Sissy ambled forward with his big arms dangling limply. But Dan Fowler knew what was coming and was prepared to meet it. An attempt to fight this brute by slugging it out with him would have fatal results. Sissy would not hesitate to administer a killing blow if he could. Therefore, the fight called upon teachings Fowler had learned in the F.B.I. schools.

Suddenly Sissy brought up his right fist in a blow that was intended to knock Fowler's head off his shoulders. It whistled through air and before Sissy could recover from his astonishment, that same arm was seized at the wrist and turned expertly.

Sissy emitted a howl of pain, twisted with the turning of his wrist, and the

heel of Dan Fowler's left hand shot up to encounter Sissy's blunt chin. His teeth snapped together with a loud click. Sissy wasn't even dazed by the blow. His left arm started to encircle Fowler's middle. Once it fastened into place, the result would be broken ribs.

Fowler suddenly let go of Sissy's right wrist and at the same instant gave the big man a hard shove backward. Sissy reeled, and before he could recover his balance, Fowler was upon him. He practically crawled up over the brute's chest, wound one arm around Sissy's neck and gave a mighty heave. At the same moment, he kicked Sissy's right ankle.

The huge man left the floor, sailed up and over Fowler to land with an earthquake crash. He didn't get up immediately. All the wind was knocked out of him.

MEN were coming up the stairs to find out what had rattled the whole building.

"It's nothing," Fowler told them. "Sissy got tangled up with his own feet and took a header. He's okay. Take him downstairs and give him a drink."

Sissy made no protest, but his eyes flashed a warning signal that next time Fowler would not have a chance to use his Judo methods. Next time, those eyes said silently, this Pete Logan was going to die.

Someone tugged at Fowler's sleeve and he looked down at the little fellow Sissy had been abusing.

"Thanks, mister," the little man said. "That big guy was going to knock my head off. You got here just in time."

"Look," Fowler said quietly. "It's dangerous to sit in on a game when you haven't the cash to back up your plays. Stay away from here and from Sissy. He's a killer."

"Maybe I don't know it." The little man rubbed his swollen cheek. "But you got me wrong. I didn't cheat. Sissy caught me hanging around the mine head. There were some other men there too. I couldn't see them, but they weren't miners. I work in the mine myself, and I know."

"What were they doing?" Fowler asked quickly.

"I dunno. First, they looked into the shaft and then one of 'em says he'd stick

around, because the others were to come back and meet him in the power-plant. You know—the shack where they make steam and electricity to operate the mine."

"How long ago was that?" Fowler queried.

The little guy shrugged. "Ten-fifteen minutes, I guess. What's up, mister?"

"Probably nothing," Fowler told him. "Better leave by the back door so Sissy won't spot you. Just forget all about this. You'll live longer."

Dan Fowler hurried downstairs and out the front door. He began running lightly as he left the lighted area. If that little mine worker was right, something seemed ready to pop at the mine. Perhaps the mystery man who led this gang was determined not to trust his methods of wearing down the miners, but meant to make use of more direct methods—like destroying the mine. The evidence turned more and more toward the fact that this was the work of a spy ring.

Fowler knew where the power-plant was located—about three hundred yards from the mine entrance. It contained huge boilers for the manufacture of steam and big dynamos that illuminated the mine and the village also.

At night no one stayed there. Steam was not needed and the generators took care of themselves. As a rendezvous for a spy ring no better place could have been selected.

There was a brilliant moon and Dan Fowler did not particularly like that. In the first place, the power-house was isolated, standing in a level, cleared space. Approaching it without being detected would not be easy.

Fowler glanced at the sky. In a few moments clouds would obscure the moon somewhat. He waited until that happened. Then he ran lightly across the cleared space and ducked hastily down against the shack wall beside the closed door.

He heard nothing, moved two feet to the left, grasped a protecting pipe for leverage as he arose. He let go of the pipe instantly. It was hot! Raising a bit, he managed to peer through a window. Someone was seated in a dark corner of the place, though the G-man could see only the shape of the man's shoulders and his hat.

DRAWING an automatic, he released the safety and crept toward the door. He grasped the latch, gave it quick pressure and kicked the door wide open. His gun leveled, but the man in the further corner did not move.

"Stay just as you are!" Fowler warned softly. "I have a gun trained on you."

Still there was no response and he stepped closer. Then he saw that what he had taken to be a man was just a coat draped over the back of a high chair. The hat was carefully balanced precisely in the center.

Fowler turned quickly and stepped to the door. The moon was bright again and he could see men slowly approaching the shack. There were at least a dozen whom he could see from the front. He hurried toward a rear window. More were coming. A ring of them surrounded the shack, and in the lead was Sissy. There could be no mistaking the man's bulk.

The circle stopped abruptly and the men lay flat, making harder targets of themselves if Fowler opened fire. He guessed that they would not dare shoot because the racket was bound to be heard by the celebrating miners and even by the others who were in the barracks about half a mile away.

No—they would not shoot. They simply would close in relentlessly until they were close enough to pounce. And the Federal ace knew just how much mercy existed in that warped little brain of Sissy's.

CHAPTER X

Voice in the Darkness



PEERING through the door, Dan Fowler caught a glimpse of the runt whom Sissy had been abusing. So the whole thing had been nothing but a trick, yet worked so simply that he had fallen for it. Sissy, it seemed, was intent on taking over and he would resort to

murder without the slightest hesitation.

Fowler knew he could hold them in check for a time. Not long, though, and he had to figure a way out of this.

He noticed the dull red glow from two huge boilers and heard water bubbling inside the great tanks. He remembered that hot bit of projecting pipe on which he had laid his hand.

A quick check showed this pipe, which was right beside the front door, to be a safety outlet for steam. Fowler moved toward the boilers and opened the drafts wide. He didn't shovel on any more fuel. There was enough and it burned beautifully.

With frequent glances out of the door and the rear window, he kept tabs on the ring of men who were slowly wriggling closer and closer. At any moment they might charge.

Fowler stepped beside the door and called out:

"Sissy, you two-timing rat, when I start shooting, you'll get the first bullet! Besides that, I'll notify certain parties that you're a traitor."

There was no reply, but the circle of men stopped wriggling closer. Fowler went back to the boilers and watched the pressure slowly rise. The coal bed was white-hot already. In this open area, a tremendous draft was pulling at the fires.

Sissy and his men were moving again then. Fowler sent one bullet zinging into the night. Someone screamed and all movement stopped immediately.

"That's one slug, Logan!" Sissy called out. "You got eight more and that's all. I'm going to bust you wide open and not because I'm afraid of what you might tell certain big shots. Those same big shots ordered me to do this. You guess why!"

Fowler felt perspiration break out over his forehead and not from the rapidly mounting heat either. It was a cold sweat brought by the realization that Sissy knew who he was. The entire plan had failed!

"You're crazy!" Fowler yelled. "Listen, men! I was put in charge here because I know how to handle things. Sissy is a stupid killer. I'm the boss and you know it!"

"Not any more!" Sissy cried. "When a guy takes over just to see how things are running and then he sends for his mob, he's the doublecrosser. And don't plan on your boys taking over, because they'll never get here. Your telegram wasn't sent, smart guy."

Fowler breathed a bit easier. They

had found that telegram then, but not the one he had sent to the F.B.I. They believed he was trying to take over the whole set-up.

"Come and get me then!" he called. "Come on, Sissy—if you want to find out what a bullet tastes like. That goes for the rest of you too!"

Swiftly glancing at the boilers, he saw that the pressure rapidly nearing the safety mark. That valve was almost ready to blow off. When it did, a jet of live steam would shoot out, but only for a short time. As soon as the pressure was reduced, the valve would shut off.

Searching out a big wrench, he went to work on the pipe. He turned a connection until half of the pipe projecting outside the shack, dropped to the ground. The automatic shut-off was contained in that part.

ABOUT three inches of pipe still projected through the wall however and now, when he chose to open other valves closer to the boiler, the steam would escape in a hissing, searing jet and keep on escaping until there was no more.

Fowler fired another warning shot and heard Sissy call out "Number Two!" He smiled wryly and began looking for something with which to cover himself during his planned escape. Steam could penetrate any kind of clothing, but even minor protection would help.

Then he spotted a large container of heavy grease. Hastily he dipped a hand into it and smeared thick layers all over his face, neck, arms and legs. He pulled his hat down tightly and moved toward the door.

The circle of men was on the move once more. They were no more than thirty feet from the shack and probably wondering whether or not to rush him. The besieged G-man fired two shots and heard Sissy's gibing voice number them. But one of the men dropped, attesting to G-man marksmanship.

Fowler realized that this was no attack according to Sissy's way of thinking. The burly killer would have used more direct means. A shot in the back or a knife suddenly thrust into a shoulder. Even in a situation like this, Sissy's method would have consisted of a rushing attack. The brains behind this were certainly not Sissy's.

An ordinary man, unused to danger, might have cracked under this strain. He would have fired his bullets rapidly, then charged out to be quickly encircled by the ring of men. But Dan Fowler was cool. He knew the futility of trying to break through without some assistance, even if it was only the result of a quickly concocted scheme to use live steam as an aiding measure.

Sissy would be expecting him to crack soon. The men were closer than ever, all silent and, in that silence, they indicated determination and certain death for the man they had trapped.

Fowler turned a valve slightly and heard steam rush through the pipe. Not enough to be seen or even heard by the attackers. Then he studied the topography outside the door. A straight run would carry him into the mine. Sissy would be expecting him to seek refuge somewhere else. Fowler grinned tightly. He would satisfy Sissy's expectations to a certain extent.

The bull-chested thug was calling out for Pete Logan to surrender. The man he believed to be Logan suddenly appeared in the doorway and sent three more shots winging into the night. They missed, and Sissy counted them for him.

"Two more, Logan!" he called. "You can't get out of this. Toss the gun out and then we'll come in and break your neck. It won't hurt much. Not the way I do it!"

"Come and get me," Fowler shouted and fired again. The man behind Sissy whirled and fell.

Sissy jeered and threatened, trying to force that last slug from Fowler's gun. Finally, one of the men stood up and began running toward the shack. The little doublecrosser who had helped lure the G-man to this spot.

Fowler took careful aim, fired, and the little guy tumbled in a heap, his leg shattered by the slug. This was it! They knew he had fired his last shot. Dan Fowler had realized from the start that he had little chance against this large number of men. They had him well surrounded. Even if he made hits with every bullet he had, there would still be enough men left to take him.

He had wounded some, and now the rest were closing in for the kill. None of the bullets had been wasted, though, for they had served to hold the attackers

in check until Fowler could make the necessary preparations to blast a path through them.

HE WAITED, both hands around the big steam valve. The boilers were beginning to pound under the pressure and with the safety valve removed and the steam controlled only by the valve which the Federal agent gripped, it was becoming dangerous to delay much longer.

The rear window crashed and a brick landed at Fowler's feet. He was hardly aware of this. Then he saw Sissy leading about eight men, bunched up, heading straight toward the door—and that steam vent.

Fowler gave the valve a series of rapid twists. Steam shot out with the force of a shell leaving a cannon. Its hissing jet caught the band of crooks squarely. Men's voices screamed in pain.

Fowler was already bolting out of the door. Someone fired at him. He leaped straight into the jet of steam, felt it bite through his clothing, melt the grease on his flesh.

But it also hid him. Once enclosed by the hissing white mist he was invisible. Not for any great distance, but far enough to get a good start and prevent the other men who were running from the rear of the shack, from making a target of him.

He felt cool, dry air as he came out of the steam and sprinted madly toward the mine. He skirted a shaft dug straight down into the earth. As he passed it, he let his small flat flashlight tumble into the inky darkness. He didn't even wait to see if it went out.

Sissy must have been scalded by the steam, but he was still able to retain command of his men and Fowler heard the brute's voice shrieking for his blood. He ducked behind a tool shed and gradually recovered his breath. Lungs ached from his exertions. His face was seared although the grease had saved him from more serious burns.

"He went down into the shaft!" somebody yelled. "I seen him usin' the flash!"

"Go down after him!" Sissy yelled. "But take him alive. He's mine! I'll show you guys how to kill a man slow and make him howl."

Dan Fowler smiled a bit, decided the

next time he and Sissy met, there would be a show-down. Then he started a dog-trot back to the now darkened and deserted village.

The gambling places and bars had shut down. Undoubtedly, the shots had been heard, but the miners figured it was none of their business and the gamblers knew what the shooting meant.

When Fowler reached the hotel, nobody was in the bar. He slipped through, hastily climbed the steps and hoped he would have time to reload his gun, get some extra ammunition, and get rid of the grease all over his body and clothes. He also would need to restore the swarthy make-up on his face, for the grease might have removed most of it.

They would hardly look for him here at the hotel. When Sissy learned he had been tricked, he would send his men searching through the sheds and equipment houses near the mine. To Sissy's mind, nobody but a plain fool would be crazy enough to walk straight back into the heart of danger.

Dan Fowler unlocked his door, stepped inside and closed the door behind him. It was pitch-dark in the room. He must have forgotten to raise the window shade. He found the light switch, snapped it, but nothing happened.

Then he heard a voice—one he would never forget. There was just that hint of a Teutonic accent and all the smugness and overbearing that had been in the voice he had heard in that deserted subway station hundreds of miles back in New York.

THERE is no use telling you not to become alarmed, because nothing seems to alarm you. Therefore, please understand that I can see you. My eyes are accustomed to the darkness, for I have been sitting here some time. I have a gun pointed at your chest."

"Mr. Mystery," Dan Fowler grunted. "So you decided to come out here and see what was going on. I figured you had more important things to do."

"Quite right. I have—many important things. My time is valuable, but I had to take care of you."

"How did you find out about my wire?" Fowler asked. "Sissy boasted about it because he figured I was as good as dead anyway. You don't seem to have the same faith in Sissy."

"I have faith in no one but myself. I could kill you right now, but I don't choose to. Yes, I knew about the wire, but there was a slight mistake in connection with it. You addressed it to a certain individual in Chicago, presumably one of your henchmen. Yet no such address or person exists."

"Maybe you're wrong," Fowler suggested.

"And possibly I am not. You see, it is vitally important that my plans shall not be revealed. I control gambling enterprises wherever camps such as this have sprouted up. I have organized the greatest gang of confidence men and expert gamblers in existence. I have been most careful of my choice in leaders. There was but one mistake made—in selecting you."

"Why blame a fellow for trying to get ahead?" Fowler said. "This is a big country. There are lots of camps, lots of lonesome men who go for a whirl at the dice or a play at the cards. Why hog everything?"

"Because I have my own methods for handling these men. The profits do not mean as much as . . . But I am talking too much. If you were merely this chap Logan, trying to horn in, I would take care of the matter right here. But I happen to know better than that. I know that Larry Kendall of the F.B.I. investigated certain funds which some of my men possessed. Only one person had a good opportunity to check the serial numbers on the bills. You—Logan. Or should I say—Dan Fowler? The partner of Larry Kendall."

CHAPTER XI

Blood Stains



NOW that Fowler's eyes also had grown accustomed to the gloom, he was able to make out a vague silhouette of the man, but he gave no indication of his complete surprise. Mostly though, he watched the shadow of the heavy gun in the mystery man's fist. It was steady, and trained squarely upon him. If he moved, a bullet would crash

through his chest.

"May I sit down?" he asked quietly.

"No. One move and I shall kill you even though I'd rather not. The F.B.I. has a history of tenacity in running down anyone who kills one of their men. I do not wish to become the subject of their attentions."

"I don't blame you," Fowler said, but he didn't add that this man had more than probably killed the telegraph operator and in so doing had murdered a G-man. There was no sense in asking for death.

"You are probably wondering just how I intend to take care of you," the unknown chuckled. "I don't mind telling you. Sissy has developed a most particular hatred of you. Neither he nor anyone connected with him knows you are of the F.B.I. If you told Sissy, I think he would strangle you anyway without stopping to think of the consequences."

"I agree," Dan Fowler said. "Go on."

"Well, it is quite impossible for you to escape from this village. Word has been passed to the miners that you have cheated them constantly, that you gave orders that they were to be taken over, but that the gamblers refused to obey. If you go to the miners for help, I hardly doubt but that you will die promptly."

"And if I try to evade Sissy and the rest of the mob, they'll land me too," Fowler grunted. "Quite an interesting set-up."

"Isn't it?" the unknown agreed pleasantly. "There are no phones, no methods of communication except for the telegraph office which has been thoroughly put out of commission. All around the camp is nothing but an immense plain. Sissy will post his men. They will shoot you on sight. Your fellow G-men will come in force, naturally. They'll concentrate on Sissy and his boys, find the one who killed you and the case will be closed right there."

"Unless," Fowler said ominously. "you make one little mistake. Think about that often, because I shall get away."

"I don't see how." The unknown laughed. "I've studied every angle, closed each loop-hole. There will be no mistakes. Sissy doesn't know I exist. My orders will come through a friend of yours. If he is taken by the F.B.I. for your murder, I shall consider it justice

for being tricked by you."

"William Verdo," Dan grunted. "So he's come to town. Good. When it's clean-up time, all of you will be right here where I can land you. Anything else?"

"Only one thing—rather insignificant. There was a certain document you missed in your travels around this section, Mr. Fowler. It would have proved to be most interesting. I shall leave it here as a souvenir of my little visit."

Fowler saw a white envelope flipped across the room to fall near where he stood. He bent down slowly, then suddenly let himself go limp. He sensed the trick this mystery man wanted to pull, so when the gun butt crashed against his head, Fowler was already giving way under the impact.

THE blow was a stunning one and he fell, but he was not unconscious. Only his muscles were paralyzed. He heard the man step back, mutter in satisfaction, and then a foot crashed against his temple.

"Swine!" the man rasped, and then things did go dark for Dan Fowler.

But the F.B.I. breeds men who are more like Commando troops than policemen. Fowler could take it. He came out of his fog not five minutes after the mystery man departed. Sitting up, he massaged a welt on his temple and a painful bump on his head.

The blow with the gun butt had been made with the intention of putting him away for some time, and the kick on the forehead had been meant to insure his remaining unconscious. If he had not been prepared for the blow with the gun butt and rolled with it, he would have lain here for at least an hour.

Dan Fowler got to his feet, staggered to the bed and fell across it. Five minutes of rest fixed him up. In the darkness of the room he found towels and quickly wiped off the grease. He rubbed more dye into his skin, changed into fresh clothing and reloaded his gun. He slid a couple of extra clips of bullets into his pocket, then ducked out of the room.

Down below, he could hear Sissy eloquently describing just what he would do when his enemy fell into his hands. A calmer voice commanded Sissy's silence. William Verdo, the gaunt-faced gambler, was speaking.

"There is only one way to get Logan," Verdo said. "He must be in town yet. Post armed men at all roads and on strategic places where they can overlook the plain. Tell your boss that the man who flattens Logan for good gets a thousand-dollar bonus. Now get going, will you? Logan is a slippery customer and we can't waste time."

"But if he hides—the games—" Sissy protested.

"Never mind the games. If Logan gets clear, he'll come back with a bunch of Chicago gunmen and clean up the whole place. He's dangerous, I tell you. Until he is wiped out, we can't operate. Beat it."

Fowler started back toward his room. Someone was coming up the stairs. Through the door, open just a slit, the F.B.I. man saw Verdo walk down the corridor. He was smoking a cigar furiously.

Fowler closed the door and headed toward the window. There were many things to be done before daylight when Sissy and his men would hold all the advantages. His foot encountered something soft on the floor. He bent and picked up the stub of a cigar. There were several burned matches on the floor also, indicating that the mysterious backer of this gambling ring had spent considerable time waiting here in the darkness.

Sliding the window up carefully, Fowler glanced out. Several of Sissy's men were hurrying off, and Fowler saw with amazement that each was equipped with a rifle. There must have been a regular arsenal here for the use of those crooks.

It was only a short distance to the ground behind the hotel. Fowler waited until no one was in sight, then he crawled over the window sill and hung by his hands for a moment.

He let go and dropped lightly. For two minutes he didn't move lest some one had heard and would be watching for a shadowy form running away from the hotel.

Nothing moved. Dan Fowler crouched and streaked for the shelter of a shed far behind the hotel. He rested there a moment and then noticed, with grim satisfaction, that the moon had decided to call it a night. This lonely country grew as dark as pitch.

HE WALKED rapidly away, heading for the telegraph office first. After that, he would see Falke, if necessary. Cliff Banning too. Should he get nowhere with them, he planned to slip back to the hotel and have it out with Verdo. That suave person knew a lot and probably guessed much more.

The telegraph shack was dimly illuminated and Fowler crept up to the window. A man sat behind the desk at silent instruments. He was reading a newspaper. But Fowler saw at once that this man was not the member of the F.B.I. who had cooperated with him. The mystery man had told the truth about him anyway.

Fowler pulled up his coat collar and yanked down the brim of his hat. With one hand deep in his coat pocket, clutching a gun, he opened the door of the shack and ambled in.

He shivered. "Getting colder," he told the operator who came over to the desk. "I'm one of the foremen at the mine. Got to wire for a machinery part."

"Can't be done," the operator said flatly. "Something happened to the apparatus. Can't get anything out and nothing comes in."

"Hmmm." Fowler moved closer. "That's bad. I'd better have a look."

He grabbed the operator's necktie, yanked him across the desk and let go with a powerful jab to the chin. The operator slid back and hit the floor. The G-man walked over to the instruments and made a quick check-up. Several important parts were missing. They had fixed that set for good.

He had no way of knowing whether or not his message to Larry Kendall had ever been transmitted. He had to see this thing through alone now, no matter what the consequences. He began stripping wires, working furiously against time.

Later, he picked up a flashlight from the desk and walked out. There were tracks in the dirt near the door, marks that looked as though they had been made when a man had been dragged along while his feet gouged into the dirt. These led up to a point where there were fairly clear tire tracks.

Fowler examined them and nodded grimly. One tire had left an almost smooth track, while the other had stamped little figures like inverted Vs

on the ground. He had seen tracks like those before—in Johan Falke's garage.

Constantly on the alert, he headed toward Falke's house once more. It was time for a show-down and he meant to begin proceedings. This time Falke was at home although no lights burned in the windows. He saw that Falke's bedroom window was open half way.

He let himself in with a skeleton key just as he had done before, stopped long enough to remove his shoes, tie the laces, and sling them around his neck. Then, as noiselessly as a cat, he climbed the stairs and went to the room which Cliff Banning occupied.

Fowler opened the door a crack, risked a quick wink of his flash and saw that the bed was empty although the suit-case still stood beside it. He entered. A small throw rug had been crumpled in a corner as if hurled there by scuffling feet. Fowler straightened out this rug and grimaced. There were a few spots of blood on it. Banning's blood?

The mysterious leader had not stopped at murder before. Only the menace of F.B.I. vengeance had prevented him from killing Dan Fowler, but in Banning's case no such danger threatened.

THE F.B.I. man began a systematic search of the room, looking for more clues of violence. Suddenly, the lights flashed on. Blinded by them momentarily, he couldn't see who'd entered, but he heard Falke's voice. Fowler's back was toward the door.

"Why, Mr. Banning," Falke said. "I have wondered when you would return. I . . . You're not Banning! Who are you?"

Dan Fowler faced the man and now walked slowly toward him.

"My name is Fowler of the F.B.I.," the G-man said. "I'm looking for Banning, too. Where is he?"

"Why—why, I don't know. I—I haven't seen him for some time. I was in town arranging for shipment of supplies here. What is an F.B.I. man doing here? Am I guilty of something?"

"Suppose," Dan Fowler said, "I think you are. That calls for alibis and explanations. Let's go downstairs, make ourselves comfortable, and talk it over."

"Yes—yes, of course." Falke was white, and badly shaken. "I will do anything."

"Oh, no!" Fowler brought out his gun. "Not anything, Falke. Not anything at all, in fact. Walk ahead of me."

CHAPTER XII

Spotlight of Justice



RAY dawn and the fog of early morning formed a protective shield for Dan Fowler as he moved down the knoll from Johan Falke's home. He proceeded cautiously, knowing that Verdo's men were still planted and guarding every road or trail from the mine. There was a look of grim determination on the G-man's face.

Reaching the rear of the hotel, he saw that an armed guard was posted at the back door. Time was precious now. He stole closer until he was no more than twenty feet from the unsuspecting guard, then suddenly charged out.

The guard tried to bring his rifle to bear, but Fowler moved too fast for that. He hit the guard, sent him reeling, then clapped a hand over his mouth. When Dan Fowler arose, rubbing his knuckles, the guard was stretched out—cold.

Fowler entered the rear door of the hotel. It was broad daylight now, the fog rapidly being dissipated by the warm sun. The miners were emerging from their barracks. They would all pass the hotel on the way to work.

Dan Fowler watched the vanguard of them and saw Sissy step into the middle of the road and stop them. Sissy was telling the men something that brought dark looks and muttered threats, and Fowler had a good idea what it was.

He made his way upstairs to the room into which he had seen Verdo disappear. He tried the knob gently, gave the door a shove and stepped in with his gun leveled. Verdo, peering out of the window, whirled and started to make a grab for his own gun on a dresser. His hand stopped half-way and froze there.

"We're going downstairs," Dan Fowler said. "Straight out onto the porch where the men can see us. Travel, Verdo."

"You're crazy," Verdo said. "The

miners will be after your blood. You're not so smart, Logan. Last night the boys took those suckers over. There were a lot of hotheads among them, too, but we cooled 'em off. Now Sissy is telling them he just found out you ordered the men to deal from the bottom of the deck. The miners suspected something was phony. They'll blame you and, heaven help you, Logan, when they lay their hands—"

"The name," the G-man said, "is Fowler. Dan Fowler of the F.B.I. Your cagy mystery leader has known my identity for some time, but he never told you, did he? Do you know why? Because he was afraid to kill me—wanted you or the boys to do it. He knew no murder of a G-man has ever gone unavenged. Get started, Verdo. We're still going out on the porch."

Verdo's aplomb was badly shattered. He shifted his eyes rapidly from side to side, then uttered a scathing tirade against the mysterious man who led this outfit.

"Listen, Fowler!" he said. "I don't know who this guy is. I swear it! You've got nothing on me except maybe some crooked gambling, and that's no Federal matter."

"The murder of an army captain is," Fowler said quietly. "You killed Captain Corbett back at that construction camp. This spectral boss of yours gave you orders to do this because Corbett was getting ready to go on the warpath against the gamblers. Also McEvoy, whom you shot while you were wearing Captain Corbett's uniform, was a private detective who had learned a lot. Both of them had to die, so what could be easier than make it seem that one killed the other? You can't cheat your way out of this one, Verdo."

VERDO swallowed with some difficulty and when Fowler pressed the muzzle of his gun against the man's back, he moved. They walked out onto the porch. Sissy was in the road, shouting to the miners assembled there.

Someone spotted the man they thought was Pete Logan and the crowd surged forward. Fowler took a firm grip on Verdo's wrist with one hand, held his gun loosely with the other.

"Hold it, men!" he shouted. "You are making a mistake. If you were

cheated last night, it was the work of Verdo, the man I'm holding here, and of Sissy who is doing his best to inspire murder."

"Kill him—kill the crook!" Sissy yelled, and whipped out a gun.

As he leveled it, the miners hastily scrambled out of the way. Fowler's automatic barked just once. Sissy's gun arm went limp. He stood looking at the blood which dripped from his fingers. The gun dropped to the ground. Sissy gulped, turned paper-white, and slowly folded up. For once in his life he acted the part of his nickname. Sissy had fainted.

The miners surged forward, respectful of the gun in Dan Fowler's fist and the evidence of his marksmanship. He threw the gun against the porch wall.

"I had nothing to do with cheating you men last night," he told them firmly. "My name is not Logan. I am not a gambler. I took the identity of a gambler only to protect you men. My name is Fowler. I'm a G-man."

That stopped them momentarily, but Verdo, now desperate, began to shriek that it was all a lie. Fowler reached into his pocket, drew out a leather wallet with his identification inside and tossed it at the crowd. Verdo kept yelling that everything about the G-man was a fake.

Fowler spoke gruffly to the gambler. "Verdo, just one more remark and I'll tell these men you murdered an army captain. Imagine how they'll feel."

"You can't prove it!" Verdo snarled. "Sure I can. In the first place, you were the only crook at that camp tall enough and thin enough to wear Corbett's uniform properly. The only people who identified Corbett as the drunken, half-crazy killer were crooks. Don't you think those men will talk when they find out the F.B.I. is involved? Don't you think this mysterious boss of yours will also talk? He'll say you killed Corbett on your own hook. And—I saw the marks of your fingers on the wheel of the burned car!"

Verdo shut up. Dan Fowler faced the crowd. Their hostility was rapidly dying. The gamblers who had mingled with them to back up Sissy's accusations were trying to wriggle out of the throng. None of them got far. The miners were determined to see this

through now and to hold everyone involved right on the spot.

"Men," Dan Fowler said, "all of you have a job to do here. Your work is as important as the fighting our forces are encountering all over the world. We need copper for guns, tanks, planes and ships. Your duty is to get it out of the ground. But you're not doing the job.

"You aren't entirely to blame. A man can't work properly when half his pay is taken from him by professional gamblers and cheats. And this has been happening all over the country wherever there are a large number of men working on a project. Preferably, men separated from their families, because they become excellent suckers. Know what I'm driving at, men?"

NOBODY answered. There was just respectful attention.

Fowler saw Johan Falke skirting the crowd to make his way around the back of the hotel. And in the distance several cars were heading this way fast and kicking up a cloud of dust.

"What has occurred here and at other camps is plain sabotage," Fowler went on. "You men were skillfully cheated by crooks who are past masters in the art of gypping the public. You never had a chance. You men work hard and deserve your wages. The crooked gamblers don't work at all and take whatever you make away from you. If you want to use money to make money, try War Bonds. You won't be gypped there."

Falke was standing beside Fowler then. Someone shouted an accusation.

"If we were being cheated so we'd get sore and spend too much time beefing, it sure could be sabotage. Hey, guys, Falke is a Kraut. Why didn't he open up this mine long ago? It took the government to make him do it. He brought those gamblers in here! He pays us, then takes it away. He's a no-good Nazi!"

Dan Fowler shouted down the tumult that arose.

"Another mistake. Jumping at conclusions makes plenty of trouble. Listen to me! Falke is no Nazi. He lost his two sons and his wife in the First World War. He came to this country to forget everything that has to do with militarism. He bought this mine, worked it,

and retired because there was a surplus of copper. When the new war broke out, Falke refused to have anything to do with it. He knew what war meant and he only wanted to live here in peace.

"But when his own countrymen began to raze the nations they conquered, Falke knew he could no longer hope to avoid taking part in the conflict. So he reopened the mine to provide the copper that makes weapons which will be used against his own people. He knows they are wrong, that only force can stop them. He is doing his part and he is not a cheat. His wife was an American, and Falke himself was made a citizen years ago."

Three cars with horns blaring, created a path through the crowd. Larry Kendall jumped out of the first one, followed by a number of F.B.I. agents. Kendall waved to Fowler, then began a round-up of the professional gamblers.

Dan Fowler jerked Verdo around.

"Are you wondering how I did get a message through after the telegraph operator was killed and the instruments wrecked? Very simple, Verdo. There were still wires and power. All F.B.I. men know the mechanics of telegraphy and radio. I patched up a sending set and tapped out a message."

"So what?" Verdo growled. "I'm just a con man. You can't pin a murder on me. Suppose you did see marks on the wheel of that car. Where are they?"

"Blown to pieces," Fowler answered. "I'll admit the evidence is gone. Even that which McEvoy gathered was destroyed, too. A playing card with your prints on it, Verdo. McEvoy was trying to place you."

Verdo shrugged. "If you have no evidence, stop accusing me of murder."

"No, I won't, Verdo, because the man who ordered you to commit those crimes also intends for you to take the blame. He'll testify that you did it in order to save his neck—and he isn't so far away from you now."

Verdo gave his first shiver of apprehension.

"You're crazy," he challenged.

"Am I? Listen, Verdo, I also sent a message to State Police and they closed off every avenue of escape for the bigger man behind this scheme. He was trying to run for it, found himself trapped and the only place he can be is right

here in town. We'll get him, and—"

Verdo turned deathly pale. "I'll make a deal!" he yelled. "I'll bargain!"

THERE was a single shot. Verdo was whopped half around by the force of the bullet, and then he slowly collapsed in Dan Fowler's grasp. The wound was an ugly one, but not necessarily fatal.

The G-man eased him to the floor, pumped two quick shots at the second story of a house across the street and saw a man duck for shelter beneath a window.

Larry Kendall shouted orders. His force of G-men raced to surround the place. Tear-gas guns were fired. Kendall crashed through the front door. There was some wild shooting and then sudden silence. A few moments later Larry Kendall emerged, dragging Cliff Banning beside him.

Dan Fowler knelt and spoke to Verdo.

"See what happened? When Banning discovered he was trapped he had to kill you to avoid being blamed as a coconspirator in the murders of Captain Corbett and McEvoy. He was waiting for you to come out of the hotel, but we got here too soon. Then he became desperate and fired anyway. You won't die, Verdo. Not from this bullet wound, but you have proof of what a rat Banning is."

"I'll talk," Verdo groaned. "If he travels the route with me, I don't care what happens. Get me a drink. Please get me a drink."

Fowler sent for a glass of whisky. Then he told Verdo more facts to bolster up the gambler's hatred for Banning.

"Banning did his level best to pin suspicion on you. He arranged for you to be in certain places at certain times when he had an alibi for himself and you wouldn't have one. He even smoked cigars and left the butts around to indicate that either you or Falke was the mystery leader. Banning was the only suspect who did not smoke cigars and if the butts were planted, then he must have done it. That is minor, however. The main thing is that the man behind this scheme of systematically robbing the workers needed a huge amount of capital. Banning had it. He required a method of finding out where and when

new camps were being started up. Banning's banking connections furnished that too.

"It could not have been you, Verdo, although I did wonder for a time. You neither possessed sufficient money nor influence. Falke was a good suspect. In fact, Banning did his level best to pin the whole thing on him. He even mimicked Falke's German accent. The set-up did have the appearance of fifth column work. Banning realized this and when he discovered the F.B.I. was on his trail, he decided to quit. He even went so far as to leave a few blood stains around his room at Falke's house. By vanishing, he hoped Falke would be blamed for killing him and hiding his corpse. That's Banning's specialty, making someone else take the blame for his crimes."

There were handcuffs on Banning's wrists. Larry Kendall shoved him forward.

"Nice going, Dan. The boys and I were getting impatient. No message came through so we tried to raise the mine by telegraph and got no answer. We were ready to come anyway when you got word through."

The crowd began mumbling then. Banning gave them a frightened look.

"You've got to protect me!" he squealed. "Whatever you told those men are lies. All lies."

DAN FOWLER whirled Banning around until he faced the crowd.

"Take a look, men!" he shouted. "Look at a rat with slimy paws. A greedy rat who couldn't make money out of this war because restrictions prevent anyone from getting rich on it. But Banning had a new idea. He was going to get rich anyway."

"You men helped him by turning into foolish suckers for his bait. If you grumbled and griped because you lost so much money, he didn't care. If it interfered with your work, that meant nothing to him either. If the flow of copper which means so much to our fighting men, was slowed down—so what? Banning was making money. Like all cowards, he did his best to blame others, and like all crooks, he made little slips that revealed him. Like furnishing his gamblers with crisp new currency that could be traced. Oh, Ban-

ning said Falke got this new money and must lead the gambling ring. He even blamed his stooge Verdo, but Verdo is going to have the last say this time. He murdered an army captain at the orders of Banning."

"I did not issue any such orders!" Banning yelled. "Verdo did that on his own."

FOWLER looked down at Verdo.

"See what I meant, Verdo? And you thought he'd back you up."

Verdo began a screaming denunciation of Banning. He revealed the entire set-up, told how the gamblers were organized and instructed how to cheat working men. How the organization spread its tentacles all over the nation, how Banning had murdered the G-man telegraph operator.

"Better take the two of them away," Fowler told Larry Kendall. "Then order a general round-up of every unit. Verdo will tell you where they are. I'm afraid these men are getting unruly. Falke, you've got to help me calm them."

Falke addressed the men, pleading with them to return to the mines. Fowler stepped forward.

"We've wasted enough time," he said. "I put on this little show expressly for your benefit. I wanted you to see how some men care nothing about democracy, how they think only of making money. Remember that. You can't lick Hitler and his gang without paying for it, and throwing your money away won't help. Now go back to the mine and whenever you see a grinning gambler massaging the cards or rattling the dice, remember he's as much a fifth columnist as the rats who go around bleating that we can't win."

"We can and we will, because men like you will furnish the material necessary for victory. There are millions of troops depending on you. Will you let them down? Will you permit the enemy to kill them because they lack one bullet perhaps, or a tank, or a big gun or a plane? There is copper in that mine. Get it out! Deliver it to the enemy with gunpowder behind it!"

Next Issue's Novel: **DEATH STOPS THE COAL**, by Laurence Donovan

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THE BEST LAID PLANS

By G. HAINES TRIMINGHAM

Snurl Plotted His Crime with Skill and Care, Because He Wanted to Make Sure He Wasn't Going to Be Tripped Up!



IT WAS a great plan, thought Snurl. He had worked on it for months and it was impossible for anything to go wrong because every detail had been studied and assigned to its proper niche.

He had stolen the dynamite stick by stick. It had been easy

enough for him to get it, for as assistant chief engineer in charge of a construction job, he had a key to the company's magazine. Lest suspicion be cast on Tony, Joe or himself, he had smashed the locks each of the four times and stolen a stick. No one could ever guess that these locks had been opened with keys. He had laid in the last piece over two months ago.

Because he intended to return immediately to Philadelphia to receive word of the accident there, Snurl hadn't checked out of the Hotel Crandall. His baggage was still unpacked in his room. Even such a seemingly unimportant detail as that hadn't been overlooked. Although he didn't expect to need an alibi, he would have one established in case the detectives became suspicious.

The worry he had tried to dismiss on the train disappeared as soon as he opened the door of his attractive home. The house was cold. This proved that Mary hadn't changed her mind about visiting her mother. She must have been gone since morning. He wondered whether she would return that night. No matter. Warmer weather was ahead, and it was unlikely that the oil furnace would go on until she returned and pushed up the thermostat. She expected him home tomorrow night, and would be sure to have a hot dinner waiting for him. What were a few hours more when he had waited so long?

Snurl opened his desk, removing Mary's two \$10,000 insurance policies—

her life insurance and the fire insurance policy on the house. As he stood toying with the papers in his hand, he pictured the nice little sum he and Stella would have when he collected on these two policies.

HE WALKED to the end of the hall to look at the thermostat. It was set for fifty-five and the thermometer stood at sixty-four. Rather than risk the chance of having it go on, Snurl pushed the thermostat down an additional few degrees.

It was unlikely that Mary would remember exactly where she had set it. He would have liked some heat while he worked in the cellar, but one could not work in a hot boiler.

On his way to the cellar he snapped off the main switch for the oil furnace, smiling at the thought that someone else might have forgotten to do that. In the cellar he turned on the light over the oil tank and examined the gauge. It was three-quarters full. That meant there were almost two hundred gallons in the tank. Quite enough for a nice fire when the explosion ruptured the tank and the oil ran over the cellar floor.

He unlocked his tool cabinet and carefully removed the four sticks of dynamite and the two percussion caps. Only one cap was necessary, of course, but Snurl wasn't leaving anything to chance. One of them might be defective. Although he was handicapped by his heavy overcoat, which he had not removed, it was the work of only a few minutes to put on the caps and wire them in parallel. He removed the front panel of the oil furnace, and uncovered the igniters. He wiped them with a rag and then burished them with a piece of emery paper so that there would be a good electrical contact.

Placing the four sticks of dynamite gently on his work bench he bound them together with twine, to make it easier to put them in the boiler. He

picked up the potent package gingerly, and stretching his right arm full length into the fire box pushed the dynamite far back, well beyond the burner nozzle.

Despite all his experience in handling explosives, Snurl felt the trickle of perspiration run down his side as he finished this task. He knew he had a right to be nervous. Mary might walk in at any minute. Suppose she came home and pushed up the thermostat without his hearing her and he went out and turned on the main switch!

Snurl shivered at the thought. He wiped his clammy hands on his overcoat sleeve. He leaned in the furnace, and with the aid of his flashlight fixed the leads from the percussion caps to the igniters of the burner. Not satisfied with twisting the wires around the igniters, he soldered them in place, making sure of a perfect contact. He checked over the percussion caps and his wiring, although experience told him that everything was already satisfactory.

Replacing the front panel, he wiped his hands on a clean cloth and stood in front of the furnace.

The furnace looked as if it hadn't been touched. But what of it? There would be nothing of it left. Economical, efficient Mary always turned down the thermostat when she went out, to save oil, even though it meant an uncomfortable hour or more waiting for the house to warm up after she came in. But Mary wouldn't be uncomfortable this time. She wouldn't have to wait for the steam to come up. At this thought a thin smile appeared on Snurl's lips.

As soon as Mary set the thermostat at 70 degrees, it would happen. Like clockwork the circuit would be closed in the hall upstairs, the relays would shut here in the relay box, the trans-

former would be energized, sending high voltage current from the secondary to the igniters which, instead of sparking to ignite the oil spray from the nozzle, would send that current hurtling through the wires he had laid to the percussion caps.

MARY would blow herself into the next kingdom as soon as she pushed that thermostat above room temperature. Snurl chuckled. It was so easy! Just a little planning, that was all. Foolproof. He might even be back in Philadelphia by the time it happened.

There would be nothing to make Mary's insurance company suspicious. He had been her beneficiary for six years, ever since their marriage. The fire insurance company might wonder at the explosion, but the oil tank would surely be ruptured and take fire. Snurl had no doubt that the fire would destroy any evidence of his incendiaryism. The fire might wipe out evidence of an explosion. It was in the bag!



After a decent interval as a gesture to the conventions Stella and he could slip off. By that time he'd be twenty thousand richer. Snurl grinned at the sweet thought.

He looked at his watch. With luck he would be able to catch the five o'clock back to Philly.

After another glance around the cellar, he walked out to the stairs and threw on the main furnace switch. Immediately there was the horrible snap of a relay and the world flew apart.

Ironically enough, considering the quantity of dynamite he had put in the furnace, Snurl did not die for a few seconds. Just as he was losing consciousness he remembered the aquastat—it had gone on for hot water.

"THAT'S FOR ME FOR ENERGY"

BETTER TASTE...

PEPSI-COLA

BIGGER DRINK



The Duke kept pushing me toward the stairs

THIS LITTLE RAT WENT TO MARKET

By C. S. MONTANYE

Mel Allen Was Nearly Lured into a Trap, but—

WHEN I went past Gurry's Tavern, the clock said nine-fifteen. I walked faster. Duke Chantell didn't like anybody to be late. I reached the alley five minutes later, cut down by the warehouses and went up in the loft over the Duke's truck garage.

Most of the crowd were there—Eddie Devery, Johnny Cowan, "Woody" Benz.

Woody gave me a nod and said, "You're late, kid."

I sat down in the rear. There was nothing in the loft except undertakers' chairs, a long pine table where the Duke sat, some old beer kegs and boxes containing car parts that his crowd had stolen from time to time.

There were seven of us. The Duke was talking to Joe Bindmann. "Bindy," as we called him, was the sharpie of the outfit. Bindmann dreamed up all the deals and Duke Chantell strongarmed

them across. Somebody said Bindy had once practised law before he was disbarred.

"How about that truck coming in from Middleboro?" Eddie Devery sang out.

Chantell got up. The Duke's pretty tall and wide in the shoulders. They told me he was half Portuguese, but he might have been anything. He had an oily, dark-skinned face and black, shiny hair. He was careful about his appearance, and his clothes were always pressed, his nails manicured.

But nobody made cracks about the Duke playing dude. He would have knocked your teeth out if he heard them.

Chantell looked at Devery. He began to smile, a crooked smile that lifted his mouth up on one side and down on the other.

"That truck is cancelled," was all Chantell said.

I saw a how-do-you-like-that expression on Johnny Cowan's pan, and inside of me I had a funny feeling. When a truck full of stolen auto tires headed in for the Duke's Black Market was cancelled it meant something. Either the cops, or the F.B.I. guys, had moved in and taken over. It meant the driver would get plenty of grilling.

But he wouldn't sing.

The Duke's truckmen knew what would happen if they spilled to the law. Like Hitler, Chantell had a way of dealing with those who crossed him.

WWE SAT around, drank beer and gabbed for a while. Bindy and the Duke wound up a long talk. Bindmann finally eased himself out. Then Chantell took Devery, Woody and Johnny by turn. He whispered instructions and they blew. Finally the Duke's gaze came over to me.

"Look, kid, I'm going home. Walk a way with me."

I pulled on my hat and went downstairs with Chantell. He didn't say anything until we got out of the alley and into a lunch wagon a couple of blocks further on. The Duke loved his chow. He ordered four hamburgers for himself and one for me.

"Look, Allen," he said, reaching for the catsup bottle. "I've got a special for you." There was no one around to listen in so he opened up.

He wanted me to go over to New Cale-

donia the next day and case a parking lot back of a department store. He wanted a report on how many cars were there on week days, how many at night. He wanted information on the guys who ran the lot, what type they were. He wanted all the dope on the setup as soon as he could get it.

"And don't make any mistakes, kid. I've got to come through with two hundred and fifty tires by next Saturday or I lose a sweet order."

I knew what it meant. If the parking lot looked good, some dark night Chantell's boys would drop around. When they got through there'd hardly be a tire left on any of the parked cars.

"Okay," I told him, "I'll drop over tomorrow and give the place a gander."

"No mistakes, Mel," the Duke repeated.

All that day I kept thinking about Herb—wondering where he was, how he was doing. But I got the information Chantell wanted, and at four o'clock in the afternoon I was back in Southfield with it.

It was the kind of a proposition Chantell liked best. An old man and his son managed the parking lot at New Caledonia. There was a threater around the corner. The parking laws were tough so, every night, the lot was full up. And I found out that sometimes three hundred cars stood there from eight o'clock at night until eleven or later.

The Duke listened. He had clown eyes, bright and glittery, but with no expression. You never could tell from them what he was thinking. He didn't say anything until I was all through.

"Good going, Mel." He patted me on the back. "We'll probably operate tonight. Ten-thirty. I'll speak to Eddie and Woody. By the way, drop down at the alley toward nine. You're pretty good with a lug wrench. I'll need all the strippers I can get hold of."

About half past eight I stopped in at Gurry's for a beer. The place was crowded. Guys from the truck garages in the neighborhood, guys that were going on shift or coming off at the defense plants. They were standing three deep at the bar.

Up at the end I noticed Woody Benz. He had a glass in one hand, and he was leaning against the wall. A big poster advertising a bowling game between the

Orioles and the Southfield Tigers hung beside him.

Woody saw me and tipped me the stay-off, don't-know-me signal. I looked at him hard. After a minute he reached up as if to straighten his hat. Woody let his finger touch one of the letters on the sign.

The letter C.

Another moment and he did the same thing again. This time he touched the O in Orioles. C-O- I knew what was coming before his finger brushed the letter P in the sign.

There was a fly-copper in the crowd at the bar. It took me a couple of minutes to spot him. He was a short, red-headed guy in a blue serge suit standing a couple of feet away from me. I noticed his glance drift over to me once or twice.

Woody finished his beer and took a powder. He went past me as if he'd never seen me before. Five minutes later I strolled out, and when I got to the corner, a man came up to me.

"Just a minute, pal. Got a match?"

It was the red-headed guy in the blue suit.

"Yeah, I think so."

I took a paper package of matches from my pocket and handed them over. I told him to keep them, that I had more. He said "thanks" and walked on.

I waited until he was out of sight before I cut down the alley and hurried to the loft over the garage. I didn't want to be late again.

I OPENED the door and went in. There was nobody there except the Duke and a big lug who was called Sam. Sam usually fronted for Chantell with the boys who owned the gas stations along the main highway. A lot of the Duke's best customers for the Black Market came in that way.

The gas station operators passed the word to a guy with smooth rubber. He'd tell him where he could buy four practically new tires and tubes—at a price. Nine times out of ten the sale was made on the spot.

In the month I'd been working for Chantell's crowd, I'd gotten a small idea of the big profits. It was a softer touch than hard liquor had ever been in the old Prohibition days. The Duke was in on the ground floor, and that meant he

had the top of the bottle, the cream, for himself.

"Where's everybody?" I asked.

Chantell looked at me. "Out. Getting ribbed for the job you cased at New Caledonia."

Sam was reading an evening newspaper. There was a pack of cards on the table. I picked them up, shuffled them, and laid out a Canfield hand.

Any minute I expected the Duke, Sam and I would ride over to the next town to see how things were going. But Chantell just sat there, his eyes half closed, as if he were thinking.

I began to get restless. It was quiet. The only sound was the snap of the cards when I put them down and the rustle of Sam's paper when he turned the pages.

There was a telephone on the end of the table. Chantell glanced at it when he looked at his watch. He yawned, sat up straighter and rubbed his manicured nails on the knee of his pants.

"By the way, Mel. I don't think I told you this before. Maybe you'd like to know it."

Something in his voice made me put the cards down.

"What, Duke?"

"We've got a squealer among us. A 'stoolie' who's been tipping the cops to our moves. That truck from Middleboro last night—they knew all about it. They knew what time it would be at Route Nine, what was in it, who was driving. Bindmann was in court this morning, and the whole thing was like a beautiful picture—in a frame."

I didn't say anything. Sam folded his paper neatly. Chantell let his eyes move in the direction of the telephone again.

"Naturally," Sam said, "the Duke don't like things like that."

"So," Chantell continued, "Bindy and me figured out a way of learning who's been talking. Like to hear about it, Mel?"

My hands began to get damp. I looked him straight in the eyes and nodded.

"Sure, I'd like to hear."

The Duke lit a cigarette and grinned.

"The only guys who might spill were Devery, Johnny and Woody. And—you." He took a long drag on the cigarette. "I gave each of you four a different parking lot to case. At a different time. You come first, Mel."

I didn't move. "How do you mean?" Chantell didn't grin now. His face was as serious as death.

"It's a tryout, Mel. I've got a couple of the boys over there at New Caledonia now. I told you the time was ten-thirty. They're waiting at a safe distance to see if the cops show up at ten-thirty. If they do, it looks like you're the one who winds up in a ditch, full of holes. No cops, we go to work at eleven-fifteen. Catch the idea?"

I shuffled the cards. The Duke pulled up his sleeve and looked at his watch. Sam scratched his head. It was pretty close to ten-thirty now.

I dealt out a new solitaire hand, and tried to picture the layout of the place. There was a door to the left, the one that led to the stairs. Another door went into the hall that ended with a washroom. All the windows had iron shutters which were closed and locked. The place was like a trap—a trap for a rat.

I could feel sweat running down from my armpits. The solitaire worked good. For a minute I thought it was coming out. The three of spades would have done it. As it was, I got twenty-nine cards out.

THE telephone rang. The Duke reached out and unhooked the receiver. In the quiet I could hear Bindmann's voice as plain as if he was in the room.

"Duke?"

"Yeah."

"I'm in a drugstore on Avenue F. I cut back from the house across from that parking lot. Half the town police force is planted there! I just thought you'd like to know."

The Duke put the receiver back on the hook. My fingers gripped the edge of the table. The thought of Herb was like fire in my mind—or the fire in the eyes of Chantell.

"So you're the one who's been squawking, Mel!" His voice was like ice. "You're the punk who's angled for the law! You—"

I dove across the table before he had a chance to finish, although I figured I didn't have a chance with Sam there. Sam was the Duke's front and the fastest guy on the draw in the crowd. I didn't have a chance, but I wasn't going

to sit there and let him blow me up without lifting a finger.

I hit Chantell like an aerial torpedo. His chair went over backwards, and I landed on top of him. The Duke's head banged the wooden floor. He went out like a candle in a wind.

Sam couldn't shoot for fear of hitting Chantell, when I rolled the Duke over on top of me like he was a sand bag. I knew where he kept his artillery, and I got a hand under his coat and yanked out his snub-nosed automatic.

I took it off safety and poked a shot at Sam. He snapped two slugs so close to my head that they singed. I was a target if I couldn't get the light out. So I made sure to black it with the next shot and, in the dark, crawled away from the Duke's body.

Sam waited for the flash of my gun to locate me. I could almost see him straining his big ears to hear where I was. It got quiet again, so quiet I could hear him breathing.

By inches I got past the end of the table. I picked up a chair with one hand and threw it across the room. As it landed Sam squeezed his trigger three times.

I sent one shot to the flash mark, and Sam let out a yelp and thudded to the floor. It might have been a stall. I hunched up, waiting and listening. He breathed hard, in quick, deep sobs. I wasn't going to be fooled though. I didn't want to murder him, I wanted to save him for Stan Kelly.

A long time passed. I knew where the light switch was. I had shot out one light but there were others, turned off. I reached it, jammed the switch over and blinked as the rear lights came on.

Sam was in a huddle on the floor, and when he dropped, his gun had slid across the floor. As luck had it, the cannon was a few inches away from Duke Chantell and the Duke was coming out of it!

He grabbed Sam's rod, backed to the door and fired pointblank. Something sharp and hot tore through my shoulder, and the automatic dropped out of my fingers. A hot, sticky fluid oozed down my arm and dripped off my hand.

The Duke started to aim for me again. The slug that hit me had been a lucky shot. My own legs felt wobbly, but I had to keep that gun off.

I had to beat him to the punch.

"See how it feels to die, Mel—the hard way!"

He hissed the words out an instant before I grabbed him. We were out on the landing now, and I was getting dizzy by the minute. The hallway was spinning around, and I had to fight six Chantells dancing before my eyes.

The Duke kept pushing me toward the stairs, but I managed to give him the knee in the pit of the stomach and get my left hand on his windpipe. I didn't have much strength to squeeze with, and I didn't know what had become of the gun. He wasn't using it.

I hung on like a terrier to a hunk of cloth until everything went black. . . .

KELLY was standing beside me. The light was on his red hair and the blue of his serge suit matched his eyes. I tried to smile at him. I was mighty glad I'd made the instructions complete on the inside flap of the paper

of matches I'd given him.

I was stretched out on the same table where I'd played solitaire. An ambulance surgeon had fixed my shoulder up—I could feel the bandages.

The Duke, Sam and Woody were across the room, wearing cuffs. A couple of coppers had them in charge.

"Nice work, Mel," Kelly said. "You're going to be all right, kid. The lead went through and came out clean. In a couple of weeks you'll be good as new."

I smiled. "Did you tell the Duke why I crossed him? About Herb?"

Kelly, one of the ace operators for the government, looked across the room and laughed.

"Sure, I did. I told that punk he didn't have a chance from the first. How could he win with his Black Market, undoing all the good our boys are piling up down there in the Pacific, when he had the brother of a fighting Marine matching wits with him? It just can't be done, can it, kid?"

*G-Man Jerry Grey faces desperate odds in a grim fight
to uncover a nest of Nazi sabotage in*

AGENT OF DESTRUCTION

A Thrill-a-Minute Complete Novelet

By NORMAN A. DANIELS

COMING NEXT ISSUE

MY! THIS
SUBWAY STRAP
IS SMOOTH!

LADY, THAT'S MY
FACE! I SHAVE WITH
STAR BLADES!



4 for 10¢





A Department for Cipher Solvers

By M. K. DIRIGO

World-Famous Cryptographer

LOOKING through my files recently I came across two interesting cipher solutions. These had been submitted to me several years ago and then somehow, they were misplaced. Both of them are by one of the crack cryptanalysts in America, Mr. H. Hyman, otherwise known as the Shadow.

The first one we present in this issue with the solution as presented by the Shadow. The second one we will publish in the next issue—without the solution—which will follow in the issue after that. This should be a test for you experts who have been clamoring for tough crypts.

The first solution as given by Mr. Hyman follows in full:

One afternoon at my radio I happened to tune in a club program and the announcer proceeded to give out a cryptic message. This message ran as follows:

KEY: K 4

10—21—26—6—2—21

24—6—8—21—14

25—20

13—6—19—13—1—8—8—6

This message struck me as being one of the simple substitution. Examining it more close-

	A	B	C	D	E
KEY K—4: 6	10	13	x	21	
KEY C—25: 18	22	25	x	7	

	N	O	P	Q	R
KEY K—4: 20	x	x	x	2	14
KEY C—25: x	15	x	x	x	14

This comparison showed me that the two alphabets were, for the main part, separated by an interval of 12 and that each number fol-

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	5	8	11	16	12	2	6	20	18	25	14	7
2	6	9	12	17	13	3	7	21	19	26	15	8
3	7	10	13	18	14	4	8	22	20	1	16	9
4	8	11	14	19	15	5	9	23	21	2	17	10
5	9	12	15	20	16	6	10	24	26	3	18	11
6	10	13	16	21	17	7	11	25	1	4	19	12

This tableau was filled in more completely from later decipherments.

Remembering that the KEY LETTER equals the KEY NUMBER enables me to crack the system, i.e.—when the key letter is

ly I noticed the group 13—6—19—1—8—8—6 had a very peculiar pattern. Looking this index up in my pattern list I tried CALCUTTA. Substituting in the message it read: BEWARE YATES IN CALCUTTA.

The message that I received a few days later:

KEY: C—25

24—7—14—14—10

25—23—14—11—26—20—24—18—26

20—15

25—5—13—22

24—7—24—22—7—14—26

Upon examination I decided symbol 26 twice used as a final letter, was "S". Substituting in the second group I hit upon the word CHRISTMAS. The last group showed an unusual pattern which proved to be the word MEMBERS. Deciphered the message ran: MERRY CHRISTMAS TO CLUB MEMBERS.

When substituting I happened to notice that 25 equalled "C" and peculiarly enough the KEY was C—25. This seemed strange but I passed it by for the time being. Now having two decipherments, I decided to compare them as follows:

F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
x	x	x	25	x	x	19	x
x	x	25	14	x	x	5	24

S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
14	8	1	x	26	x	24	x
26	20	13	x	x	x	10	x

lowed in regularly numbered sequences.

This discovery enabled me to produce the following tableau:

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
15	24	4	x	23	9	3	22	17	21	x	19	x
16	25	5	x	24	10	4	23	18	22	x	20	x
17	26	6	x	25	11	5	24	19	23	x	21	x
18	1	7	x	26	12	6	25	20	24	x	22	x
19	2	8	x	1	13	7	26	21	25	x	23	x
20	3	9	x	2	14	8	1	22	26	x	24	x

etc., etc.

given you read down that letter to the line containing the key number, that is the correct alphabet. To produce the tableau, it was necessary to write the key line out first and build the other lines around it.

TRY THESE NEW CIPHERS

SEND IN YOUR SOLUTIONS

No. 304. *A Limerick for Beginners.*

GWNKN HYC YE JUV XYE HWJ CYZV "WJH
CWYUU Z QUNN QKJX GWZC WJKKZPUN SJH
Z HZUU CZG JE GWZC CGZUN.
YEY SJEGZELN GJ CXZUN,
HWZSW XYA CJQNE GWN WNYKG JQ GWYG SJH."

Clues:

1. One-letter word
2. Common pattern of GWNKN
3. Frequency of E

No. 305. *Ideas.*

AJ AT PAJG ANFKT KT
PAJG BAFMFT IQ EISFX
JGITE IQ JGF ZFKTJ
CKZRF VFSFYKZZX MAYMRZKJF JGF EITJ.

No. 306. *Inconsistency.*

CLMX NC HNQPGX KCHMX
NC GPLKHXNMP PGKQHGNZPGNX
NC PATRN RPRRPW NC
QOGICXNHG OGIJMAPGKPX NC WCZP.

No. 307. *Experience Is the Best Teacher.*

JGF NAQQFYFSMF WFJPFFS K
PATF EKS KSN K QIIZ
AT JGKJ JGF QIIZT
EATJKUFT SFCFY JFKMG GAE KSXJGAS.

No. 308. *A Pedantic Proverb.*

NQP WCJNP NC APQPGGH OX
BCGXNWJBNPI CY PDBPMPMPCN IPXOAGX.

(First solve the cryptogram, then convert it into plain English.)

WITH OUR READERS

ROBERT M. FRENCH of Pike, New York, inquires about Major Millikin's course in cryptanalysis and we have forwarded his letter to the Major at New York University.

FRIEDA L. NIEMZYK of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, also inquires about Major Millikin's book, which was forwarded. She also complains about a typographical error in a recent cipher. Sorry.

SHIRLEY KATZ of Las Vegas, Nevada, sent us nine cryptograms with solutions. Nice work, Shirley. We didn't think you would have time for cryptography out there in Las Vegas.

JOHN M. WEEKES (Volund)—Providence, Rhode Island, has promised us a copy of his text book on fundamental cryptography.

R. H. MATTOX, Sea., I.C., of Norfolk, Virginia, sent us a cryptogram to be solved. Please continue following us, and let us hear from you again.

W. A. BERGERON of Chicago, Illinois, asks whether the Pattern Words and Non-Pattern Words will eventually be put into book form. Yes, but we are sorry it may not be for some time.

F. R. MARTIN, Seamen's Institute, New York! Thank you for your solution. Nice work and try 'em again, sailor.

PVT. JOHN J. JANKOWSKI, Engineer



JAMES M. CAIN



THE BEST INVESTMENT WE CAN MAKE

By JAMES M. CAIN

Famous author of "The Postman Always Rings Twice," "Serenade" and other best-selling novels

AS THE war proceeds, as we feel our growing strength, we realize more vividly that before us waits not only an armistice, but a peace.

The shape of that peace, in some aspects, is already discernible, and already attractive. To us, who are primarily makers of things, the chance to start afresh, with all molds broken and no hampering link with the preconceptions of the past, and supply a world that must have the progeny of our skill, is indeed an exciting prospect.

Yet every child senses that this peace, in other aspects, may be more turbulent than the war. Its chief danger will be inflation, that bloody abstraction. For in the past, inflation has preceded great convulsions: it led to the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the rise of Hitler; its chief evil is the way in which it divides a nation against itself, sets taxpayer against bondholder, security owner against land owner, and a whole new class of the ruined against any scapegoat it can find.

Can we shoulder this lethal mountain

which we have created, and stagger with it to the point where amortization works its blessed relief and it lightens? Or shall we fall and have it crush us, as it has crushed other nations?

This much we can be sure of:

We shall be ruined unless a fair share of this load is accepted by every man, woman, and child, in the United States.

If we, as owners of the great American corporation, must pay taxes to ourselves, as holders of the great American debt, then a circle is made, but it is not a vicious circle, and we can survive. But if in any large degree we lose this double identity, if we split off into factions, then truly we enter a dizzy spiral.

We can escape being a nation of bagholders, but only by becoming a nation of bondholders. Purchase of the national securities is not only the surest way to win the war, but the solidest support we can give the peace.

It is also the best investment we can make, because fundamentally it is the only investment: unless this investment pays, all other investments collapse.

A WAR BOND MESSAGE FOR ALL AMERICANS



As Cavallo swung up a chair,

*A Complete
Novelet*

DEATH WEARS A

CHAPTER I

Murder on Fifth Avenue

THEY called in the F.B.I. two days after Carlo Tolfa was gunned down on Fifth Avenue because the thing had certain political overtones and the cops thought it was Washington's baby. As it happened, the F.B.I. was present at the murder, though not officially.

Agent Lincoln Foster, working out of the Rector Street office, was strictly off duty. He was at a party in a penthouse atop one of those swanky apartment houses just below Eighth Street on Fifth Avenue. It was a mild spring evening and Link Foster had followed a likely looking blonde out on the terrace and was turning on the charm.

She was playing hard to get and it was for this reason alone that he saw the actual murder. The girl—he never did

Lincoln Foster of the F.B.I. Tackles the



Foster's second shot crumpled him

COLORED SHIRT

BY DIXON
WELLS

get her name—leaned over the balcony. "Look, Fifth Avenue," she said dreamily. "The most glamorous street in the most glamorous city in the world. How tired it looks in the dimout!"

She sounded like a bad actress in a third-rate play.

"Who writes your dialogue?" Link asked, parking himself alongside her and leaning his elbows on the balcony edge. "That routine could stand a few gags."

He looked down at the street, twenty stories below. Two men, crawling like ants, had come out of Eighth Street and turned south on Fifth Avenue, toward Washington Square. He watched them idly.

A figured darted behind them with furtive speed. Foster tensed. The two men turned. There was a little winking light down there and the flat ugly bark of gunshots. One, two—a man spun and fell to the sidewalk. His companion

Strange Case of the Murdered Anti-Fascist!

stood petrified, unable to collect his wits.

The assassin ran across Fifth Avenue, jumped into a car parked at the curb. Instantly it roared into life, spun past the body of the victim and was gone up Eighth Street's darkened length.

"What was that?" the blonde asked, leaning over. "Car backfire?"

"Sure," Foster said, running for the telephone.

He called the police, identified himself, and reported the shooting. He gave his number in case they wanted him. Then he went back to the balcony to watch.

"Look," the blonde said. "A man's lying down there on the sidewalk. He must be sick or something. People are running."

A police car, with siren wailing, fled down the avenue and pulled up. Others came until there were three or four of them converging on the crowd that ringed the sprawled body. The slain man's companion was still there, wringing his hands helplessly. Then the ambulance came and when they did not take the man away, Foster knew the fellow was surely dead.

THE blonde had excitedly called the party outdoors so Foster went inside and he was alone when the phone rang. It was for him and it was his boss, Paul Smith.

"Link," Smith said, "the police called me and told me you reported a murder. You near there yet?"

"Yes, sure, Chief."

"Look it over, will you? It might come under our jurisdiction. The man shot was Carlo Tolfa."

"Doesn't mean a thing to me, Paul."

"Well, Tolfa isn't so important for what he was as for what he was against. He was an anarchist—a professional revolutionist—a stormy petrel. He was always in trouble. He didn't make it exactly, he just went where it was and nourished it until it got big enough so that the army had to be called out."

"What'd he want?"

"I don't know. He was against everything. He didn't like the Communists, the Fascists, the Nazis, the Democrats or Republicans. He was running a little eight-page paper called *The Nihilist* in an old building on Eighth Street. I understand he was getting ready to pull an

exposé—maybe of Nazi fifth column stuff here in New York. See what you can dig up."

"Okay, Chief. I'll call you back."

Foster got his hat and coat quietly and left the party hanging over the balcony. Downstairs, he pushed his way through the sidewalk crowd to where the police were holding back the most avidly curious. He showed his credentials.

"Oh, sure," the policeman said. "Didn't know you boys was taking over."

"We're not. I just want to see if there's any reason for us to step in."

Carlo Tolfa had been a man of average size, with a short spade beard and the sad face of the intellectual. He had worn a striped shirt with soiled cuffs and a threadbare tweed suit. Standing nearby was his companion of the evening, a little man with a frightened, gentle face. This was Paoli Grosseto, his assistant on the paper.

"He had a premonition," Grosseto said, in a strong accent, wringing his hands. "All day he was sad and quiet—this is not like him. He is gay, laughing, argumentative. And when we speak of life he says, 'Who knows how long we live? Maybe it is in the cards one of us die tonight.' Ah, Carlo, you *knew*!"

"Did he have enemies?" Foster asked.

"Did he have enemies?" The little man drew himself up as if he had been insulted. "They were *all* his enemies! They hated him!"

"Who?"

"All! Those jackals—the Blackshirts, the Bund. In Italy Carlo tells Mussolini, 'You are faker and liar.' For this he is put in concentration camp and given the castor oil to drink, but he escapes."

"You think Mussolini killed him? Who was the man who fired the shot? Did you recognize him?"

"No. I never see him before."

"Did you get the license number of the car?"

"No. I was scared. It was dark. I think maybe he have no lights."

That was true. The murder car had been blacked out. A new idea struck Foster. He turned to the patrolman.

"Sergeant, can I borrow Grosseto for a while? I'll bring him back."

"Sure, Mr. Foster."

On the way up Eighth Street, Foster explained,

"We'll go back to your office. I want to find out what Tolfa was doing, what he was planning, and you can help. Was he working on an exposé?"

"Si. I think so. He did not tell me, but I think he make something in the editorial for tomorrow's paper."

They climbed the steps of the rickety old building and Grosseto let them into the *Nihilist's* office. It was a bare loft with a tiny office partitioned off from a crude print shop. There was a single ancient vertical press and a rack with a few fonts of type. An unshaded bulb threw harsh shadows about the cluttered, grimy place.

FOSTER began looking through the editor's desk.

"Where's the lead editorial he was writing?"

Grosseto smiled sadly. He was still shaken and trembling.

"Ah, Meester Foster. Carlo was old-time newspaperman. He did not write on typewriter. He make up editorial directly in type—write and set up all the same time." He pointed to the type cabinet. "He was working on this when we start out to have dinner. He said he would finish when we come back. Now he never finish."

Foster crossed over and saw a printer's metal form with several lines of type. He began to spell out the reversed letters with difficulty.

"I will read them for you," Grosseto murmured.

He picked up the form and tilted it toward the light.

I ACCUSE . . .
I, Carlo Tolfa, accuse these men:
John Edward Fiskdale
Benito Cavallo
Max Heidrick . . .

A shot which roared from the doorway was like an explosion. Grosseto's slender form jerked as though a sledge-hammer had smashed into his back. Instinctively the G-man's hand shot for his gun and he dived beneath the cover of the type cabinet.

He caught a fleeting glimpse of a shadow in the doorway. The gun there blasted again and lead pounded the wood near his body. Grosseto's body came down in a plunging arc. The type form flew from his hands and the unfinished

editorial was instantaneously reduced to individual letters flying in all directions over the wooden floor.

The door slammed. Foster was up and leaping forward. He grabbed the knob and yanked. It did not open. Grosseto had left the key outside and the murderer had simply locked him in.

Two shots blasted loose the lock, but he knew it was too late. The rickety hall was barren of life when he looked out. He wasted no time in pursuit, but came back to kneel beside Grosseto. The little man was dead.

Heavy feet pounded up the stairs. Three men came in. One was the patrolman from the scene of the first murder. The second was a police detective. The third was a dapper, well-dressed stranger.

Foster got up.

"Sorry," he said to the patrolman. "I promised to bring him back, but I'm afraid I can't. The murderer came back."

The stranger pushed his way forward. "You Foster? F.B.I.? I'm John Collier of the *Bugle*."

The name was well enough known. Collier was one of the numerous imitators of Winchell who fought for a place in the gossip spotlight. His column in the *Bugle* was not much like Winchell's, however, for it was rife with innuendos, hints, and stories which skirted the thin edge of libel.

He listened to Foster's explanation with undisguised eagerness. Then he attached himself to the agent as Foster turned over the office to the police and started. Foster had told what had happened, holding back only one thing, the names of the three men in Tolfa's last editorial. These he had managed to write in his notebook while they were still fresh in his mind.

WHAT are you going to do now?" Collier demanded as they went out into the street.

"I don't know," Foster said patiently. "I've already told you that officially we're not in the case yet. I'm just looking it over to see if there's any reason for us to step in."

"Somebody took a shot at you, didn't he?" Collier smirked. "I'd call that reason enough."

"The evidence is gone," Foster pointed out. "No one got the license

number of the murder car. Grosseto, the one man in world who might have told us what Tolfa was planning that brought on his death, is gone. No one else knows."

"Are you sure?"

"What do you mean, am I sure?"

"I mean there's still one person who might have known what Tolfa was doing."

"Who?"

"Tolfa has a daughter. Didn't you know? She was close to the old man. She might know."

"Where is she, since you seem to know all about her."

"She lives at the Hotel Madison and her name is Louise Tolfa. I'm going with you."

"You . . . Oh, all right. Wait here while I call my office."

Foster made sure Collier was well out of earshot of his phone booth. He called Paul Smith, gave a succinct account of the night's happenings.

"I'm going up to see this Louise Tolfa," he said. "Meanwhile, get a line on John Edward Fiskdale, Benito Cavallo and Max Heidrick."

"I know a couple of those birds already," Smith said dryly. "See what the girl knows and I'll have the dope ready for you when you come in."

Foster hung up and came out to the waiting Collier.

"Ready for the woman in the case," he said.

CHAPTER II

Death Is Not Choosy



HE Madison was a solid, old-fashioned structure in the Seventies, west of Broadway; the family type of hotel. A chatty room clerk volunteered the information that Louise Tolfa did not answer her phone and was presumed to be out. Were the gentlemen friends of hers? Miss Tolfa—

a most refined young lady—usually told him when anyone was expected. There were comfortable chairs in the lobby if the gentlemen cared to wait. He'd try

Room 906 again in a little while.

"It's a cinch he hasn't heard about the murder," Collier said, depositing himself comfortably in a chair and feeling for a cigar. "In fact, if he even knew Louise Tolfa was the daughter of a famous revolutionist and firebrand, they'd toss her out of this Victorian funeral home." He waved his cigar at the artificial palms in the lobby.

"Watch and see if the girl comes in," Foster told him. "I'm going to take a look around."

He walked through the lobby and pushed through the revolving door. This main entrance was on the corner of Broadway and the side street. He turned down the darker side thoroughfare. As he had guessed, there was another entrance down here which led into the bar. He glanced back at the corner, waited a few moments, but there was no sign of Collier. He went through into the bar.

From here a doorway led back into the lobby. Shielded by the palms he could look through and see part of Collier's body over the side of his easy chair. The columnist seemed to be in a brown study. He was blowing smoke straight ahead of him and drumming with his fingers on the arm of his chair.

To get to the elevators, Foster saw he would have to come out from behind the palms in full view. But there was a stairway to the left, which he could reach, still screened by the phony shrubbery. He glanced behind him. Two patrons at the bar were paying no attention, but the barkeep was staring at him curiously. He walked through the doorway, turned left and began to climb nine flights.

He was relieved, when his head finally topped the ninth landing, that there was no floor clerk in this hostelry. The carpeted corridor, with its familiar, dusty odor stretched before him, lit by dim bulbs, with the blank doors on either side. He stopped before Room 906 and listened.

Somewhere there was a faint whisper of sound. In the carpet-deadened air of the hall it was impossible to tell from where it came. Gently he touched the knob.

At once he knew something was wrong. The knob had a dead feel to it—not as though it were locked, but as though the lock spring were broken. He

pushed the door and it swung open. He was right. The lock had been forced and the mechanism broken.

The room was small. It had a three-quarter bed, a dresser and a night table. A shaded lamp was burning on the table. The blinds were drawn. Beyond the bed was a closed door, evidently the bathroom.

Link Foster saw all this in a single observant glance. Then his eyes fastened on a man's shoe, sticking up over the far edge of the bed.

He closed the door behind him softly. With a hand on his gun he slid forward and rounded the end of the bed.

A man was sprawled on his back between bed and radiator. One leg was still caught on the edge of the bed as though he had tumbled from there. Slack fingers were tangled in the counterpane. And in his chest stood the silver handle of a letter opener.

Agent Foster stood there staring, while his mind ran in circles and hooted

eyes and a smooth oval face. The trembling lips were richly full and warm.

"Okay," Link Foster said. "I'm not moving. Couldn't you point that at the floor—or the ceiling? It makes me nervous."

"Who are you?" the girl whispered. "What are you doing in my room?"

"What—"

For a moment Foster was puzzled. He was standing so that his body concealed the dead man's projecting shoe. The rest of the corpse was hidden by the bed. Was it possible that she didn't know?

"Are you Louise Tolfa?"

"Yes." She drew in her breath sharply. "And now I know who you are. You are from *them*. They want to strike at my father through me. Well, they won't. I'll turn you over to the police."

Holding the gun on him she began to edge toward the phone.

"I wouldn't do anything hasty," Link Foster said. "What about *him*?"

"Who?"

Next Issue: AGENT OF DESTRUCTION, by Norman A. Daniels

at him. Three murders in a night? It was mad, fantastic. And that silver letter opener sticking upright in the corpse. Just like the movies! Those things didn't really happen except in stories.

"Neither do things like Hitler," he said, shaking himself.

The dead man looked like a delicatessen store keeper. He was corpulent, middle-aged, with brown hair and several chins. His blank, staring eyes were brown. He was such an ordinary, almost a comic figure, that the blade in his chest seemed like a false note, as though tragedy did not become him.

FOSTER leaned forward, his hand outstretched, to go through the dead man's pockets.

"Don't move," a voice behind him said.

The best nerves will jump at such a moment. But even in his alarm, he noted that the voice was a girl's and that it quavered with fright. He straightened up slowly, turning his head.

She stood in the bathroom door, a little snub-nosed gun pointed at him. She was scared white. The gun trembled, her lips trembled. She was lovely. She had black shining hair and great dark

He stepped aside carefully so that she could see the shoe. If it were possible, her already pale face became even whiter. She staggered and her gun drooped. Link Foster took a step forward and removed the gun from her shaking hand.

"Who is it?" she whispered.

"I don't know. Don't you?" He put an arm around her and brought her forward so she could see the dead man. She began to shudder violently.

"I never saw him before," she said faintly.

"Ever see the letter opener before?"

"Yes," she said. "It's mine." Then she closed her eyes and sagged.

Link Foster laid her on the bed and went into the bathroom for ammonia. The telephone shrilled. He came out with a little bottle and glanced at the girl speculatively. She was stirring and moaning. The telephone rang and rang. At last it stopped. Foster went over to her and put the ammonia under her nose.

She winced away from it and her eyes opened. They were big and dark and haunted.

"Who are you?" she begged.

"I'm Link Foster, of the F.B.I."

"The F.B.I." She clung to him. "You must help me! I—"

"Who killed that man? Did you?"

"No, please! I swear it! I did not even know he was there, until you showed me. I—"

"Where were you fifteen minutes ago?"

"In the bathroom."

"Didn't you hear anything?"

"No, I had the water running. I was going out."

"At this time of night?"

"Yes. My father and I meet at all hours. He's a night owl—works anytime."

That reminded Foster of her father. He decided not to tell her then.

"What did you mean when you said I'm from *them*?"

"My father is exposing a group of men. They've threatened him."

"Are their names—"

"He never told me who they were. Said it would be safer for me if I didn't know too much about it."

The telephone shrilled again. It might be Collier, trying the room. Or it might be the police, trying to reach the girl to tell her about her father. In either case, Foster decided, he didn't want her to get any more shocks tonight.

"Come on," he said abruptly. "We're getting out of here."

"Where?"

"Some place you'll be safe. Somebody knocked off this guy in your room. First, who is this guy and what was he doing here? Second, who knocked him off and why? And where is the murderer now? Whatever the answers, it might be a good idea for you to be some place else when the cops discover all this—until we can figure out some answers."

SHE grabbed a few personal things and stuffed them into her bag. Her nerve was returning and she was able to control the trembling of her limbs. He led her to the door.

It was still utterly quiet in the hallway. At the far end of the corridor, the stairway bulb glowed red. They shut the broken door behind them and went swiftly down the carpet. Foster pushed open the door and glanced through.

"It's all right," he said. "Let's go."

There was a coughing sound from somewhere in the corridor. Something

whined evilly in the air and a piece of the plaster wall sprang out with a flat smacking noise. The girl gave a little sigh and started to fall.

Foster caught her and sprang through the doorway onto the landing. He kicked the metal door shut behind them. Without a moment's hesitation, he swung the limp body to his shoulder and started to race down the stairs.

Another murder attempt—it was wild! But probably not as wild as it looked. Whoever had killed Tolfa originally had a job to do. Eliminating the old man had not done it. He could not stop now short of completing his task. He must go on until the thing he sought was found, or he was stopped.

Carrying the girl in his arms, Link Foster stopped to look at her under a landing bulb. The bullet from the silenced gun had barely touched her scalp. There was an angry burn at the edge of her hair, but no real wound. Concussion had dizzied her, made her fall. She was already coming out of it.

He set her on her feet.

"Hold on to me," he said. "We've got to move fast. Somebody took a shot at you and didn't miss by much. He may be waiting for us at the bottom. We've got to run!"

At the bottom they did not turn off into the bar but went on into the basement. They ran through the laundry room, quiet now, and with a little search, found the delivery entrance. This led them out to a tiny paved court, from which a concrete ramp led to the side street. Foster went first, scanned the sidewalk. No one appeared in sight. He went back for the girl and they marched out boldly on the street. Foster flagged the first cruising cab, and put the girl inside.

"Go to the Ritzmore hotel," he said softly in her ear, "and register under the name of Rose Birkey. Stay there until I come for you. Got any money?"

"Yes, enough."

"Okay. Don't leave the hotel. Remember."

He watched then, to see that no other cab followed hers. In Broadway's thinned traffic the job was easier than it might have been at another time. Satisfied, he swung back through the revolving doors of the Madison, scarcely twenty minutes after he had gone out.

CHAPTER III

A Paradox



JOHN COLLIER was not in his chair. Suspicions instantly fired, the G-man raked the lobby with his eyes. Then he saw Collier. The newspaperman was sitting on a couch with another man. And him Foster knew.

He was Webster Granville Holliston,

one of New York's bluest bluebloods, Collier's boss, publisher of the *Bugle*, a tabloid with a million and a half circulation weekdays and close to two million on Sunday.

It might have been a paradox—the aristocratic Holliston publishing a sheet which dealt in love nests and the juicier details of divorces, gossips and sex murders. There was, however, another reason. The editorial page of the *Bugle* danced to Holliston's tune and that time was strongly isolationist, anti-England, "let's stay at home and guard our own shores" and so forth. All genteel, of course, but always with a faint sneer as though this fighting of Hitler was ridiculous. Why not mind our own business and let Hitler organize Europe? Isn't that what Europe needs?

In short, Webster Granville Holliston was a man who by instinct and breeding distrusted democracy and leaned toward dictators. It was indicative of his own muddled thinking that he should publish a paper with the greatest mass appeal of any.

If this were not the last man in the world whom Foster expected to see in the lobby of the rundown Madison Hotel, he was surely next to the last.

Collier saw him and motioned him over.

"Foster, this is Mr. Holliston, my boss. This is Link Foster, of the F.B.I." Then he added, with amusement bubbling far back in his sly eyes, "Mr. Holliston is here to see Louise Tolfa, too. She's his fiancée, you know."

Foster certainly didn't know. And even long training in achieving a poker face did not keep all the shock from his eyes. Holliston apparently saw it, for

he smiled. He was a handsome man, tall and wellbuilt, with an aristocratic nose and a fine sprinkling of silver at his temples.

"Surprised, Mr. Foster?" he said. "Don't be. Louise Tolfa happens to be a very beautiful girl and her family is quite good, in spite of her father's ability to make trouble and his—ah—unfortunate record to date. I'm afraid he is, frankly, a psychopathic case."

"Was, you mean," Foster said.

"Yes, was," Holliston said smoothly. "I should be lying, Mr. Foster, if I said I were broken up by his death. Of course, it's an unfortunate thing. But his influence on the girl was bad. In all modesty, I think I can do much more for her than he."

"Why was she living here—alone?"

"That was her father's idea. Even he did not want her in contact with the strange people he saw constantly. Of course, I would have been happy to have her stay with my mother and myself—or at least in a better hotel. But she wouldn't take a penny from me. An independent girl. I wonder where she is?"

"Did you leave the lobby?" Foster asked Collier.

"Me? I did not. I sat right there until Mr. Holliston came in and then we moved to this couch."

"Well, you'll excuse me then, I'm going back to my office. I won't wait any more. I'll speak to Miss Tolfa some other time."

"Is the Department of Justice investigating this case, Mr. Foster?" Holliston asked.

"No. I'm just looking around to see if we would be interested."

What an expert liar he was turning out to be, Foster thought, going through the revolving door again.

A phone call to the Ritzmore connected him with Rose Birkey.

"I'm all right—fine," Louise Tolfa said. "Where are you?"

Foster told her he was on his way home to get some sleep and mentioned Holliston's visit to the hotel.

"YES, I'm engaged to him," she said. "It's not been announced. My father is terribly against it. Stormed and raved. He doesn't like the *Bugle*. Neither do I, but that shouldn't stand in the way of people in love, should it?"

"No, I suppose not," Foster said vaguely. "Anyway, stay put. Don't even buy a newspaper, *Bugle* or any other kind."

"But Webster will be worried about me," she protested.

"Tomorrow I'll tell him where you are. I've got to do some checking up first."

He got four hour's sleep before he presented himself at the office next morning.

His chief, Paul Smith, had the morning papers spread on his desk.

"You must have had a busy night," he said. "Where were you when the corpse was being made in Louise Tolfa's bedroom?"

"Coming up the stairs, I think," Foster said. "I got there shortly after. So the police found him, huh?"

"Yes. John Collier, a columnist for the *Bugle* was there to see the Tolfa girl about her father's death and when she didn't show up, he got the cops and they entered the room. Come on, what do you know about this?"

Foster told his story, mentioning the engagement between Holliston and Louise Tolfa and pointing out that Holliston had again kept his name out of the papers, even though he was obviously there when the murder in the girl's room was discovered.

"The only thing I didn't find out," he said, "was the identity of the stiff. Do the cops know?"

"Sure." Smith tossed him the paper he had been concealing with his arm.

MAX HEIDRICK, BUND LEADER MURDERED

Convicted Nazi Found Stabbed In
Girl's Hotel Room.

"Heidrick" Foster said unbelievably. "One of our suspects for the Tolfa killing. One of the three names in Tolfa's editorial?"

"The same guy."

"There goes our case," Foster said, sitting down heavily.

"Why? You think Heidrick killed Tolfa?"

"I thought one of the three, Heidrick, Cavallo or Fiskdale, did. So what does it mean when we find Heidrick with a knife in him? What have the cops discovered?"

He ran through the news account rap-

idly. The cops had discovered only three things. One, that Heidrick had been stabbed to death. Two, that the silver letter opener which was the murder weapon belonged to Louise Tolfa. Three, that Louise Tolfa had disappeared, which made things look kind of bad for her.

"That's a big help," Foster muttered.

"I've got another for you," Smith volunteered. He flipped up the switch on his inter-office communicator. "Bring in Cavallo and Fiskdale." Aside, he said to Foster, "I had them both picked up this morning. Tried to get Heidrick, too. I didn't know he was decorating a hotel floor uptown."

Fiskdale and Cavallo were ushered in through the door. Cavallo was a swarthy Sicilian, a pro-Fascist street corner orator and the organizer of the Blackshirt brigade, an organization which boasted thirty thousand members and which, according to the F.B.I.'s own check, had actually three hundred members who spent most of their time protecting Cavallo from the indignation of Italian-Americans who disliked Mussolini's methods on New York streets. Though without influence, Cavallo could yet be dangerous because he was mad, as all Quislings are mad, and because he would obviously stop at nothing—he and his muscle-men—to further his ambitions.

Fiskdale was vermin of another stripe altogether. Pure American stock, with a name that went way back, he was a victim of that twisted mind which resented "foreigners" in America. Fiskdale was a small, neat little man with delicate features, a mane of silver hair and pince-nez glasses on a black ribbon. He had organized the Green Shirts, an "America for Americans" movement which specialized in smashing windows and writing filthy remarks on sidewalks with chalk. He also published a four-page sheet called *The Patriot* in which all the poisonous vituperation of his Goebbelslike mentality was poured forth.

The paper had been recently banned from the mails.

THESE two, so different, and yet so alike, stood gazing defiantly at Smith and Foster.

"Well," Fiskdale snapped, "what new

nonsense have you thought up to badger us with?"

Smith glanced at Foster, signifying that he was to ask the questions. Foster addressed himself to Fiskdale.

"Get one thing out of your head, Fiskdale," he said. "You're not here to be persecuted for your political opinions. When you step over the line we're going to slap you for sedition, but this is not a sedition hearing. All I want from you and Cavallo now is for you to tell us what you know about the Tolfa murder."

"Nothing!" Fiskdale snapped.

"I know notheeng," Cavallo echoed.

"Where were you last night? Got an alibi for your movements?"

"I was at the theatre with my wife and daughter," Fiskdale said swiftly.

"I had a meeteeng—a social meeteeng," Cavallo said.

"We'll check your alibis. I want—"

"Just a moment," Fiskdale interrupted. "May I ask why we are under suspicion in the Tolfa murder? I never met the man."

"No? Did you, Cavallo?"

The Blackshirt leader's face darkened.

"Of course. I knew Tolfa. In the old country. We were in prison together—Mussolini, Tolfa and I. All day Benito and Tolfa they argue politics."

"How about in this country?"

"We are not friends," Cavallo shrugged. "He is crazy—an anarchist, nihilist, whatever that is. Dreams."

"What connection have you two with Max Heidrick?"

Fiskdale smiled.

"You're stupid, Foster," he said maliciously. "In your ignorant mind, anyone who opposes the meddling, war-mongering activities of this administration is a Nazi or Fascist. When will you learn that there is not the slightest connection or similarity between my Green Shirts and these other movements? Mine is an American organization, completely patriotic, and—"

"All right, I've heard it," Foster interrupted. "Then explain this, you two. How is it, the night Tolfa was killed, he was writing an editorial in which he was about to make an accusation naming all three of you?"

There was a moment's silence. Fiskdale glanced appraisingly at Cavallo.

"How should I know what that mad-

man was cooking up?" he finally asked. "Let me see the editorial?"

"I can't, unfortunately. It was set in type and was destroyed when Grosseto was killed, just a little later?"

"Then why should I believe you, or bother denying anything?" Fiskdale shrugged. "In fact, why should I waste time here at all? Are you finished, Mr. Foster?"

"Yes. You can both go."

Smith chuckled as the men filed out.

"Learn anything?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm pretty sure now that they had a hand in this. Old Tolfa knew what he was trying to write about. Something is definitely up." He smacked a fist into his palm. "Louise Tolfa is our key to this. Old Tolfa didn't want to involve her so he didn't let her in on much. But she's seen and heard bits, snatches, here and there, which might give us a clue, if we knew what she knows. We've got to get that girl here and pump her dry."

He reached for the phone. Rose Birkey's room did not answer.

"She's gone out, sir," the operator told him.

Foster's face went gray.

"Paul, someone tried to kill that girl last night and now she's gone out! Or maybe they've found her and taken her out? Why didn't I bring her here?"

CHAPTER IV

The Woman in the Case



SPECIAL editions of the *Bugle* were on the street when Link Foster left the office. He bought one and took it into a cab with him to scan on his way to the Ritzmore. There was a lead editorial on the front page screaming for the capture of Tolfa's killer, demanding that the F.B.I. be called in if the New York police could not handle the case.

Anyway, argued the editorial, with its political and international implications, its suggestion that the long arm of the Nazis and Fascists had reached across the ocean to strike down their old-time enemy, this was a case for the F.B.I. any-

way. Who were these Nazis who thought they could come into America to carry on their policy of extermination at will?

"Pretty decent of Holliston," Foster mused. "Considering that he had no use for Tolfa. He's doing this for the girl. Well—"

Maybe she had found out about her father's death and run out on him. He turned to Collier's column HEARD ON BROADWAY to see what that oracle had to say. But for once, Collier's meaty paragraphs were free of his usual inside dope on the triple killings. He mentioned that Tolfa, Grosseto and Heidrick had been killed in a single night. He called them "the Shirt murders." Collier had written:

Cavallo of the Blackshirts and Fiskdale of the Greenshirts remain. Are these two also slated for death? Or has a certain G-man got his tag on them for Tolfa's killing?

There was no mention of the girl. Holliston would have had Collier's head if she had been mentioned.

At the Ritzmore Foster showed his credentials and demanded information. The floor clerk's records showed that the girl registered as Rose Birkey had gone out alone at 10:12 that morning. The phone operator's records showed that at 10:00 A.M. she had made a phone call. The number was Winterset 3-8006.

"She made a phone call at ten and went out at ten-twelve," Foster thought. "That makes."

He called information and asked for a check on Winterset 3-8006.

"I am sorry, sir," the girl answered. "That is a private number."

Foster did not argue. He hung up, then dialed Winterset 3-8006.

A woman's voice answered in finishing school accents.

"Mr. Holliston's office."

That made, too. Holliston's private line.

"I want to talk to Mr. Holliston. This is Lincoln Foster of the Department of Justice."

"Just a moment, Mr. Foster. I'll see if Mr. Holliston is in."

A moment later Holliston's voice was on the wire, smoothly amused.

"You really are a G-man, Foster. How'd you get this number?"

"The same way I found out that Louise Tolfa left the hotel against my ex-

press orders, after phoning you. Where is she, Holliston?"

"There's no cause for alarm, Foster. Louise found out about her father this morning. She heard a broadcast on the radio in her room."

Foster groaned. What a lunkhead to forget the hotel had a radio in every room!

"Of course you realize the shock," said Holliston. "She called me at once and insisted upon coming over here. I tried to comfort her and finally I put her in a cab and sent her to my home. I am going—"

"Where is it?"

"My home? Fifth Avenue and Eightieth Street. Now Foster, there's no need—"

"No need? Holliston, someone tried to kill that girl last night and may try again. I want her. I'm going up to your house to get her."

"Oh, I see." Holliston was silent a moment as though thinking. "In that case I'll go with you. Wait there and I'll pick you up."

"Okay."

Foster hung up, wondering how Holliston got gasoline coupons.

A few moments passed before Holliston's big car slid up before the hotel entrance. The publisher was in the back.

I'D NO idea you were so anxious about this business," he said apologetically. "Of course I know Tolfa was killed, but he played around with these strange creatures—he was one of them. Why should it touch Louise or me?"

The man was either heartless or incredibly naive. Foster shrugged and did not answer the question.

Above Sixtieth Street, traffic all but disappeared on Fifth Avenue. With the exception of a lone yellow cab, they had the street to themselves.

"That's one consolation about gas rationing," Holliston observed. "It keeps the jalopies off the road."

A traffic light halted them at Seventieth Street. A cab panted up alongside. Then the cab door opened and two men stepped out. Moving with practised speed, they yanked the doors of the limousine open, one in front and one in back.

Foster's hand, darting for his gun,

froze as an automatic jabbed his ribs.

"Drop it, G-man," the yegg warned.

He slid into the seat beside them and yanked the door shut. Up front, his companion was already sitting beside the driver. The whole thing had been done so quickly and smoothly that the few people on the sidewalks never looked in their direction.

"I'll take your gun." Foster's pistol was removed from his shoulder holster.

The car got under way again, swung east and started across town.

"You're monkeying with dynamite, friend," Foster said quietly.

The yegg looked at him, with his lips skinned back from his teeth.

"You think everybody's gonna fall down dead because you're a G-man, huh?" he said unpleasantly. "You're a punk like everybody else. I ain't scared of you guys."

"Then you're a fool," Foster said curtly.

He saw the automatic swing up, but there was little he could do about it. It brushed past his upflung arm and came down on his head. He could hear the *bonk* and he wondered in that split second if his skull would be cracked. Then he stopped wondering about anything. . . .

Stabbing pain in his head was his first returning sensation. He moaned and moved and the movement sent fresh pain darting through him. After a while he opened his eyes.

He was lying on cold ground. There was a wall beside him. Looking around painfully, he saw that he was in a vacant lot. The wall was one side of a warehouse or other building. The river was near, for he heard the mournful toot of boats.

A scuffling sound roused him. He twisted around and saw Holliston, bound and gagged, on the ground nearby. His own hands were not tied.

After a moment he found the strength to untie the publisher and both men staggered to their feet. Holliston appeared pale and scared.

"What does this mean?" he asked shakily.

Foster held his aching head in his hands.

"They didn't kill us," he said, "which means they just wanted time—wanted to delay us. They wanted to get to your

house before we did. I'm afraid Louise isn't there any more, Holliston."

He was right. Louise Tolfa was gone. Foster sat in Holliston's immense library and drank a foaming concoction for his headache while Holliston tried to get information from the butler.

"All I know, sir," the man insisted, "is that someone came with a note and Miss Tolfa went with him after reading it."

"All right," Foster said. "There isn't much we can do now. I'm going back to the office."

He realized belatedly how much time had elapsed, for it was dark when he came out. He walked down to the corner and breathed the air coming across the street from Central Park. A man strolled down the sidewalk behind him and passed.

"Keep walking," said a familiar voice. "I want to talk to you."

FOSTER turned south and walked. At the next corner he caught up.

"How'd you know I'd be here, Collier?" he asked. "And what are you doing here?"

"I didn't know," the columnist answered. "Snooping, is the second answer you want."

"Spying on Holliston?"

"Not exactly. I'm keeping tabs on Louise Tolfa. There's a scoop here somewhere and I think Louise is the key. You looking for her?"

"Yes. She was supposed to be at Holliston's. Somebody came with a note and got her out."

"Yes," Collier agreed. "It was Fiskdale."

Foster should have been surprised, but he wasn't. It only proved that old Tolfa had known what he was talking about.

"Let's go," he said. "All we've got to do is find out where Fiskdale lives."

"I know," Collier said. "He lives out in Queens—Forest Gardens."

"You knew? What were you waiting here for?"

"For you. You don't think I'd go out there without protection, do you?"

The cab dropped them at the corner of a sparsely built-up section on the outskirts of the city. It was neither country nor city. There were no fields, only grassy, weed-grown lots, with occasional houses like gravestones in a cemetery.

"This is what is known as commuting

to the suburbs," Collier remarked, staring at the uninviting landscape.

"That's the house, isn't it? Come on."

"You go first," Collier said. "You're the law. If you get shot I can write your obituary, but if I get shot there's no story."

The house was totally dark. They crept up to the grounds cautiously and circled the place.

"All blinds drawn," Foster whispered. "Looks like heavy curtains, too. They may have light inside."

"Well, if we can't see any light inside, they can't see out," Collier said. "What are we sneaking around for?"

"Well, one reason is that I haven't got a gun."

"No gun! What a G-man! I'm gonna call the cops."

"Come back here, you fool! We have no evidence for a pinch!"

But Collier was gone, whether to phone for help or because he was frightened, Foster could not decide. He made his way to the back door and tried it. It was securely locked. After some search he discovered an open basement window and slid through to land in the coal bin. Some coal went sliding down with the glassy tinkle coal makes and he held his breath. Footsteps sounded overhead occasionally and through the floor came the murmur of voices.

CHAPTER V

The Missing Name



OSTER groped for a pen flashlight he carried and risked a quick look around the cellar. He spotted the stairs and made his way toward them.

At the top of the steps was a closed door. He listened carefully and satisfied himself that no one was on

the immediate opposite side. Carefully, he edged it open.

He found himself in a kitchen. A door on the far side was open and through this came a gleam of light and the sound of voices.

Foster was not immediately interested in the men. He wanted first to know

where the girl was. The layout suggested she might be upstairs. Down here, besides the kitchen in which he stood, there was a dining room, dark, and the living room in which the men seemed to be gathered.

He edged his way into a short hall which led past the living room to the front door and from which he could reach the stairs going up, unobserved. In a moment he was climbing the steps as lightly as a cat.

There were three bedrooms upstairs and Louise Tolfa was in the second one he entered, bound and gaged on the bed. Her lovely eyes were haggard in the light of his little flashlight.

She clung to him when he released her, but she did not seem as weak as the first time they had met. There was fire and strength in this girl and she was rallying to the repeated shocks of the past two days like the thoroughbred she was. She now wanted to fight back.

"Who are the men downstairs?" he whispered.

"The only one I know is Cavallo. The little one they call Fiskdale. The third I do not know. He carries the gun. He's a killer, I think."

"Did they say what they were going to do with you?"

"They were waiting for the 'boss'," the girl replied.

That sounded promising. However, it might be wiser to shun a fight and get the girl out safely first.

"Follow me," Foster said. "We'll try to sneak out the way I got up."

She hung onto his coat and they crept down the stairs carefully. They reached the bottom safely. Then from the living room, three men stepped into the hallway. Cavallo and Fiskdale and the selfsame yegg who had knocked Foster out in the car. He held a gun and it pointed at Foster's middle.

"The G-man!" he said, smirking. "I'm gonna get to bounce this rod off your dome again, I guess."

Fiskdale looked at him through his pince-nez, looked at him like a vicious little weasel smelling blood.

"You are careless, Mr. Foster," he said in his precise accents. "That floor squeaks when you walk on it, no matter how careful you are."

"Should I bump him now?" the yegg asked.

"Please, not here." Fiskdale shuddered. "You know I can't stand the sight of blood. You'll have to take him somewhere. Wait, just a minute, I hear a car. That must be the boss." He glanced at Foster. "This will be a surprise to you."

"Hardly," Foster said. "I've got the loose ends tied up."

Footsteps sounded on the porch and Cavallo then went forward toward the door.

"It's Holliston, isn't it?" Foster said.

"You're clever, Foster," Holliston said, coming through the door. "You should have been clever enough to stay away from here. I'm afraid there's no way we can avoid killing you now." He glanced at the gunman. "Take him out. And be quick."

Louise Tolfa had shrunk away from Holliston as he came in and full realization burst upon her.

"You!" she said hoarsely. "You killed my father!"

"Nonsense," Holliston said sharply. "Of course I didn't kill him."

"He didn't," Foster said. "That is, not with his own hands. He got Heidrick to do it. Then Heidrick got yellow, as Nazis will and tried to make a deal with you to turn in his little playmates here and save his own skin. Holliston knew the kind of idealists he was playing with, so he followed Heidrick to your room and stabbed him. That right, Holliston?"

THE publisher bowed.

"I said before you were clever."

Foster looked at the others.

"That'll give you an idea of the kind of guy you're doing murder for. He'd sell you out in a minute. Still, for that matter, you'd sell him out in a minute, so you're even, I guess."

"Shut up," the gunman snarled. "Let's get moving."

He edged toward the door and motioned with his gun.

From the shadows a hand darted. It closed on the yegg's gun wrist and yanked him off balance. Foster sprang like a panther. He seized the gun barrel and wrenched the weapon free of the fingers that held it.

"I've been waiting for this!" he gritted, and swung with all his strength at the gunman's head.

As the man went down he reversed the weapon and spun.

Holliston's hand was coming out of his coat with a pearl-handled automatic. Foster wasted no time in picking fancy spots for a hit. He shot Holliston through the middle. Cavallo had swung up a chair and Foster's second shot crumpled him, sent him down with the chair falling on top of him.

Fiskdale was on all fours, scuttling for the safety of a davenport and squealing, "Don't shoot—don't shoot!"

Then it was over. Collier stepped out from behind the door and surveyed the wreckage.

"Thanks, pal," Foster said coolly.

Collier shuddered.

"Wonder if I'm out of a job?" he said, staring at Holliston's body in fascination.

* * * * *

"The thing we overlooked completely, of course," Foster explained to Paul Smith next morning in the office, "is that Tolfa never finished that editorial. We took it for granted that those three names were our three suspects—and they were thoroughly involved, no doubt about that. But there was a fourth name that Tolfa never got a chance to put down. Webster Granville Holliston."

"Tolfa must have paused when he came to this name. Even this stormy petrel was concerned about tangling with someone so powerful. Before completing the editorial he must have decided to think over carefully what he was going to say. He knew the consequences would be extremely dangerous for him. He knew, as we didn't, that Holliston was supporting a flock of fifth columnists, native Fascists and outright murderers. So he knocked off for dinner and to think over carefully what he must say. And he never came back."

"I am sure Tolfa would not have changed his mind. The man had magnificent courage. But his hesitation nearly let Holliston get away with murder. He was watching Tolfa. I am inclined to think that his engagement to Louise Tolfa was for that purpose more than any real affection for the girl. Holliston was not the kind of man who cuts through social lines for the sake of love. Notice how careful he was to keep the engagement secret. No, I'm sure he was convinced that Tolfa was a dangerous

enemy and that the situation warranted his going to the extreme of making love to Louise on the chance of finding out what he could about her father.

"Apparently he learned enough to send Heidrick to kill Tolfa. What happened to Heidrick after that I can only guess. But I suspect that he got a bad case of cold feet. Whatever it was, he went looking for Louise Tolfa. Holliston must have suspected his motives, because he followed Heidrick and killed him in Louise's room."

SMITH asked a question then.

"Then who killed Grosseto?" he said.

"Oh, that was Heidrick. After shooting Tolfa, he came to the office to make sure that the evidence Tolfa had was destroyed. He heard us discussing the editorial, heard his own name mentioned.

"Heidrick is a good example of the Nazi mind, Chief. They're tough as the devil when the going is good, but when they scare, they scare all to pieces. As for Holliston, I'm glad he's dead. I'd rather not have the bad taste in my mouth his trial would bring. A man of wealth and power mistrusting and hat-

ing democracy so that he would plot with his country's enemies—" He broke off. "Say, that reminds me. I booked those mugs on a Federal indictment and forgot to notify New York Police Homicide that the Tolfa case is solved."

"I'll take care of it," Paul Smith said. "Just one more thing. What about Collier?"

"That columnist should get a medal. You know, for a while I suspected him. But he had his eye on Holliston all the time. He was trailing him and that's how he picked up Fiskdale's track at Holliston's house. His going to phone was a break for me. I thought he'd run out, but he came back in time to see Holliston's car pull up, so he came in the front way behind Holliston, just in time to save my goose. Good-bye, Paul."

"Where you going?"

"I've got a date with Louise Tolfa."

The phone rang. Paul Smith picked it up.

"What, Sure . . . Sure. Glad to. Hey, Link! The Police Department wants to know, if on the basis of your investigation you want to come in on the Tolfa case with them. They can't crack it!"

Dan Fowler tackles his most difficult case when sudden death strikes the mining pits—impeding the Nation's war effort and creating havoc in

DEATH STOPS THE COAL

By LAURENCE DONOVAN
NEXT ISSUE'S COMPLETE NOVEL

NEW SUCCESS OVER ATHLETE'S FOOT

NEW SCIENTIFIC 2-WAY TREATMENT WITH QUINSANA POWDER - ON FEET AND IN SHOES - IS PRODUCING AMAZING RESULTS. IN TESTS ON THOUSANDS OF PERSONS, PRACTICALLY ALL CASES OF ATHLETE'S FOOT CLEARED UP IN A SHORT TIME.





THE SOLDIER'S FARE RACKET

Look Out for Smooth-Spoken Strangers Who Claim
to Know Your Kin in the Armed Services!

MR. AND MRS. FREDERICK FULLER were seated together before the flower-lined garden that had been the pride of their young son John. Now John was in the Army, and was en route to a Port of Embarkation for transfer overseas. At least that was the impression they had gained from his latest letter. Mrs. Fuller held the letter and read its passages over and over.

The white-painted picket fence at the edge of the garden drew their attention as they heard someone open the gate. A soldier was standing there. At first they thought, by association, that it was John. Then they realized that it was a stranger wearing the chevrons of a sergeant.

John's Friend

He strode up the path with certain step, and went directly to Mrs. Fuller as he said: "You're Mrs. Fuller, Fred's mother. I'd recognize you anywhere. He's proud of that picture of you he always carries."

Feeling that this was a friend of their son's, both Mrs. Fuller and her husband immediately made him at home, and they talked about a number of things connected with Army life. Finally "Sergeant Crane" said:

"I got a lucky break getting home just before we left for overseas. John wanted to come, but he didn't have enough money for the fare."

"Why didn't he let us know?" Mrs. Fuller asked promptly.

"Oh, you know John," Crane said. "He likes to figure he's standing on his own two feet. He can still make it if he gets the money wired to him. I have his address, and I'd be glad to take care of it for you."

The Fullers figured out how much it would cost to get John home for a few days before his departure overseas, and turned over fifty dollars to the sergeant to take care of things.

"Wouldn't you like to have a drink before you leave?" Mr. Fuller invited. Sergeant Crane was willing, and Mr. Fuller went indoors to take care of this chore. Fifteen minutes later the soldier was on his way. When he was out of sight Mrs. Fuller turned to her husband and said:

"Won't it be wonderful to see John again before he goes overseas?"

"Yes," agreed her husband, comforting her and caressing her with his rough, toil-worn palm. "But I don't think we will see him until this business is all over."

"But Sergeant Crane and the fifty dollars?" Mrs. Fuller was amazed. Mr. Fuller smiled coolly, then said:

"I'm afraid he was a phoney. I heard the boys talking about a bogus soldier working this racket. And we all decided to gang up and try and catch the fellow. Maybe Crane's our man."

The Capture

They waited for several hours for some news, then a police car drew up to the gate in the white picket fence and three officers stepped out. Sergeant Crane was with them. The quartette came up the path.

"Hello, Mrs. Fuller," greeted the senior officer, "How are you, Fred? Is this your racketeer?"

"That's the fellow who collected fifty dollars from us," Mr. Fuller said soberly.

"Well," replied the police official. "We put a tail on him when he left your house, as you suggested on the phone. He went to eight other places around here and pulled the same story. Then with about four hundred bucks, he was heading for the nearest railroad station. No thought in the world of going near the telegraph office to send your fifty dollars to your son. We've checked on him, and find that he's wearing this uniform illegally. Bought it at a costumers, said it was for an amateur stage production. He's no more a soldier than I'm King Tut."

Mr. Fuller received his money back, and because of his quick wit and his alert action his neighbors were saved from financial loss, and the heartbreak when their sons failed to come home on furlough.

Be Wideawake!

You can be as wideawake as the Fullers were. Use your common sense when dealing with strangers, no matter how legitimate they may seem; and beware of soft-spoken gentlemen who try to talk you out of any money, no matter what the purpose may be.

If there is a chance of getting your son home on a furlough, the U. S. Army Transport Officer in your area, or your local Red Cross or Traveler's Aid Society will give you complete and accurate information on how it may be done. If an emergency develops and the presence of your son, husband or father is required, the Army is more than glad to help you all it can.

They Licked **THE FIFTH COLUMN**

By SAM MERWIN, JR.

**THE F.B.I. HAS WON AMERICA'S GREATEST VICTORY
IN WORLD WAR TWO—HERE'S HOW THE G-MEN
FOUGHT THE ENEMY WITHIN OUR GATES!**

"THE United States is in a condition of chronic disorder. It will not be difficult to foment civil war and strife within its borders when the time comes."

Those, of course, were the words of Adolph Hitler as he regarded us, the ripest of all the plums to be plucked in the Nazi plan for world domination, while the Axis was still on the upgrade. The fact that he reiterated this statement many times prior to December seventh, 1941, indicated his sincere belief in its truth.

Whether he still believes it, it is not possible to say. But there is a mountain of evidence that, as in the case of Soviet Russia, he has again underestimated his foe. This evidence also offers proof that, underestimating or not, the swastika boys didn't fail within our borders for lack of trying.

However, as the *Wehrmacht* was stalemated in the *steppes* of Russia, the Nazi fifth column met its match when it attempted to provoke

the promised disunion in America. The organization that operated with devastating success in Norway, France, and the lesser countries of Occupied Europe was almost a total flop.

The Fifth Column Meets Its Match

The causes and story of this failure make up a vital chapter in the criminal history of this nation. For the Nazi fifth column was, four years ago, as well organized, as richly subsidized and almost certainly more numerous than it was in any of the other free countries it helped to destroy.

The *Gau*, Nazi district leadership for foreign countries, is ruled by the Foreign Organization of the National Socialist Party, and has belonged to von Ribbentrop's Foreign Ministry since 1937. Its head man is Ernest Wilhelm Bohle, a British-born and Boer-raised Nazi official.

"All Germans who live abroad," Bohle stated in an appeal to German emigrants in both hemispheres, "are not German by chance, but by the will of God. Along with our comrades in the Reich, we are called upon to help in the magnificent work of Adolph Hitler, and we must do so."

They Once Numbered Thousands

In the United States, the "magnificent work" in question was carried on by several levels of agents who were presumed to permeate all classes of American society and were abetted, voluntarily or otherwise, by every individual citizen who listened to their poisonous stories or obeyed their commands.

Before Pearl Harbor, more than two thousand Axis agents went about their dirty business almost unhampered in this country. Orders were given, reports taken and information assembled at the various Nazi consulates and travel bureaus throughout the country. Suave, brilliant Fritz Wiedemann, consul-general at San Francisco was kingpin among these. An intimate of the *Fuehrer*, he got his instructions direct from Berchtesgaden, and had a hand on the steering wheel of Nazi subversive activities in America.

Hans Thomsen, German charge d'affaires in Washington, D. C., was another tophand in the Nazi American stable. Through such



International Newsreel Photo

FRITZ KUHN

Ex-Fuehrer of the German-American Bund

The Spirit of America!

"INSPIRED by the sacredness of a common task, law enforcement presents a solid front of courage and integrity ready to continue at any sacrifice to carry out its assignment of protecting America.

"I am certain that in this time of war the country can feel safe in the knowledge that its internal defenses are manned by these gallant, skilled, self-sacrificing, patriotic law-enforcement officers, trained in modern methods and vitalized by the spirit that has made America great—the spirit that will continue to make our America endure and conquer every foe from within and without.

"May we continue to dedicate ourselves to the task."

—J. EDGAR HOOVER.



J. EDGAR HOOVER, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

agents as the Princess von Loewenstein, Italian opera and movie star Tullio Carminati and others of the well-to-do, many of them anti-Roosevelt to begin with, those who would listen were pumped full of Nazi, high pressure lies.

Influential people were fed tales of the Communist peril, of the pink "dictatorship" of the White House, of the dire tax loads that lay ahead under democratic rule. Against this picture was painted a rosy landscape of the increased influence and prosperity enjoyed by industrialists and professional men who played ball with Adolph in the Third Reich.

Plea for a Totalitarian Set-up

They were made to understand the "need" for some sort of totalitarian set-up in America to protect their fortunes and—in a few ultra-credulous instances—their lives. Pictures of rolling tumbrils in the hands of a blood-crazy mob were put in their lightweight heads.

Some of our so-called better citizens, including Laura B. Ingalls, the aviatrix, and several women of wealth and social position fell for the personal charm and glibness of these agents. Others, less scrupulous, saw a chance to "get theirs" by playing along. The great bulk of the supposed victims, of course, never wavered in their loyalty to the United States government. But a few germs can kill an elephant, and those who became Naziphiles, did a lot of harm.

Men like William Dudley Pelley, George W. Christians and Robert K. Noble flourished with their "Silver Shirts" and "Crusader White Shirts" and other openly fascist organizations. *Social Justice*, *The Galilean*, and the *Philadelphia Herald* were but three of seventy openly seditious publications which carried the Nazi message of hate throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Crackpot Lads

On a slightly less exalted plane of society were other crackpot movements, cranks and pressure groups which, mostly through fanaticism toward one especial idea, were virulent agents of Nazism involuntarily or otherwise. Even the "Thirty-dollars-every-Thursday" lads were in there pitching for Adolph whether they knew it or not.

Each of them, parading as an apostle of patriotism, nationalism or increased social justice, found followers among the ignorant or disgruntled elements of our population. Each of them was a force for the disunion the Nazis were so confident they were promoting against the time of open conflict.

Furthermore, as pressure groups representing a certain number of voters, each of them was able to exert more influence on some of our less steadfast legislators than any American likes to think about. They sent out literature, in some cases under the mailing franks of our senators and representatives. And they kept a certain small percentage of the population in a state of chronic discontent and semi-revolt.

The Methods of Social Sabotage

But these were all indirect methods of social sabotage. The Nazis, no people to leave any stone unturned in their preparation for dividing the country against itself, also worked through more direct channels—in this case, through the German-American Bund and similar organizations.

Fritz Kuhn, of course, was the big noise in the Bund. He had as aids Otto Willumeit, who worked in Chicago, and Wilhelm Kunze, of New York. Bund members were trained in the use of modern military weapons in a

number of large reservations, were expected to step in when civil dissension broke out and take part in a Nazi *coup d'état*.

Then there were fellow travelers and organizations, one of which, purportedly Russian and anti-Communist, was a full-fledged private army. Its little *Fuehrer* was one Anastase Vonsiatsky, a dangerous Fascist who worked hand in glove with the Bund.

Less than four years ago, this multi-faced monster for American disruption was operating full blast. The police forces of our government, fettered by the basic American belief that anyone, even an enemy, may have his say and rights as a citizen, were unable to do more than look on and watch sedition grow.

Growing Distrust

The tempo of fifth column activity quickened here as it did in Europe. Unrest and worry made many people all too ready to credit false rumors and they were ripe for such subversive attack. Hitler had every reason to feel that, with Europe conquered, America would dismember itself and fall into his lap.

What happened to defeat this process of boring from within? For it was defeated as thoroughly as the Nazi Sixth Army before Stalingrad in one of the truly decisive battles of this war.

The outbreak of the military war in Europe was the first factor which began the move toward neutralization of the Axis fifth column in America. Virtually all Americans with memories extending back to the First World War were instinctively and unalterably pro-Ally. Nazi efforts to justify by "logic" their reasons for bringing war back to the Western World didn't carry much water in a country so predominantly pacifist as the United States.

The well-to-do, even more pro-British than they were anti-Roosevelt, began to look on their charming Nazi friends with growing distrust. The Bunds kept going, as did their more crackpot fellow travelers, but they operated under increased pressure from Federal and other agencies.

With Teeth in the Laws

The fall of France, instead of promoting Nazi interests in America, was actually another nail in the coffin of their fifth column organization here. And when Britain made its magnificent lonely stand in 1940-41, the seditionists were doomed. The forced recall of the Nazi consuls and travel bureaus and the declaration of a state of emergency by the President two years ago were the beginnings of the end.

A reawakening Congress put teeth in the laws, finally unleashing the expert Department of Justice operatives who had previously been forced to bite their nails on the sidelines and content themselves with assembling evidence and information. Now they had their chance to put this information to work. And they moved in with all of their accustomed efficiency.

"Vested with the principal authority for maintaining internal security during wartime,"

says Attorney General Francis Biddle in a summary of the work of the Department of Justice since war began, "the Department has moved against hundreds of foreign and native-born enemies seeking by violence or otherwise to cripple the nation's war program.

"It has secured conviction in the courts of at least eight persons charged with the highest crime in the land—treason. It has sent to prison for terms aggregating five hundred and thirty years, forty-nine spies who were in the pay of Germany and Japan.

"No major act of sabotage—none at all that could be traced to foreign inspiration—was committed during the first year of war."

Prevention of Sabotage

A swell record—but it only begins to tell the full story. More than two thousand foreign agents, many of them openly engaged in propagandizing American public opinion have been brought under rigid control.

"As early as nineteen thirty-nine," Biddle goes on, "the F.B.I. began actively to scrutinize the records and activities of certain characters whose foreign connections drew its suspicion. In June of that year, the President designated the F.B.I. to coordinate the activities of all Federal Intelligence agencies with respect to counter-espionage. In consequence, the fields of suspected persons grew, their missions, their contacts, their methods of operation gradually unfolded.

"The absence of sabotage as a serious menace thus far in the war may, in large measure, properly be credited to the preventive work of the Department of Justice. By prompt apprehension and punishment of potential saboteurs, by the alertness of the F.B.I. and local law enforcement agencies and by the adoption of plant protection programs, conditions conducive to sabotage have been held to a minimum.

"While there have been eighty convictions under the sabotage statutes during the first year of war, the majority of cases involved nothing more serious than malicious mischief, or acts growing either out of personal spite or the desire for publicity."

A Comprehensive Record

It's quite a record when the horrors of sabotage inspired by German agents in World War One is remembered. The Black Tom affair in Jersey City, when millions of dollars' worth of Allied munitions awaiting shipment abroad was destroyed as well as scores of men trapped by the blast, is still an all-time high in American sabotage. And it happened in 1918!

In April, 1942, the President signed the amended Foreign Agents Registration Act. This was aimed at propagandists laboring as Axis public relations men in a wartime America.

Since the act became effective last June, the F.B.I. has received more than 330 complete registration statements covering the activities of more than 2,000 foreign agents. About one-third of these represent friendly nations. The others are the enemy.

From its studies, the Department of Justice estimates that there are in the United States

some 80,000 members of active or reserve foreign military forces. There are at least 20,000 non-diplomatic officials and employees of foreign governments, 10,000 to 15,000 foreign business representatives and about 750 publications under foreign control or influence.

Stringent Control for the Duration

When war broke out, there were 934,100 German, Italian and Japanese aliens living in the United States. They are held under stringent control for the duration, may not travel without permission, possess firearms, short-wave radios, cameras and other items, or to enter prohibited and restricted areas.

All the same, that is a lot of potential enemies to nourish in one's national bosom while engaged in total war. But the F.B.I. is handling them. Empowered to arrest any enemy alien and intern him for the duration, the G-men took more than a thousand of the most dangerous Japanese, Germans and Italians in custody within forty-eight hours after Pearl Harbor.

At the end of one month of war, the number of dangerous enemy aliens arrested by the F.B.I. had grown to over 3,000. At the end of 1942, it mounted to 12,071. All of these persons had been watched for weeks, months or, in some cases, years before they were picked up. Some 3,500 of them were released after questioning, while 3,546 were interned for the duration, 2,933 are on parole and 1,048 were released outright.

A few hundred cases are still being heard. Of those interned by the Department's Alien Enemy Hearing Boards, before whom most of them were tried, 1,974 were Japanese, 1,448 were Germans, 210 were Italians, and fourteen were of other nationalities.

Behind Bars—Pronto

Saboteurs were behind bars before they had a chance to light a match once the Department was given its teeth by the President. Some of our internal enemies were citizens who could not be put away under the enemy alien category. Fritz Kuhn and Vonsiatsky were caught in criminal actions and sentenced to prison. Others, including Fascist editor Domenico Trombetta, Herman Ange, August Klapprott and Gustave Elmer, Bund officials all, were denaturalized and interned as aliens.

Of the other proud Nazi beauties and their fellow travelers who strutted about in the national picture so haughtily before Pearl Harbor, few, if any are still at large. The G-Men got them, but good.

Pelley, Christians and Noble, along with twenty-three others, were sent to prison for sedition. Forty-six others of their stripe are awaiting early indictment and sentencing. The newspapers, *Social Justice*, the *Galilean*, and the other sixty-eight which made such a fine anti-Democratic stir, have been muzzled. The "Silver Shirts" no longer march.

Forty-four persons have been convicted under the Foreign Agents Registration Act and been handed a total of a hundred and five years in prison among them—paid propagandists for Germany or Japan, caught in the net.

Otto Willumeit, Wilhelm Kunze, Dr. Wolfgang Ebell of El Paso and the Reverend Kurt B. Molzahn of Philadelphia, Nazi agents all, were trapped in the Fritz Duquesne investigation which ultimately enabled the G-men to run down the eight submarine saboteurs before they could ply their evil trade with effective results.

It was no accident that those men were caught. The Department of Justice had been keeping a close, if cautious, eye on them for some time before they went to Germany to learn the secrets of sabotage. In a way, the G-men were expecting them just about when they landed, and had little trouble picking them up when they resumed or tried to resume old contacts. Six of them were shot, and those who aided them, electrocuted or put away for long prison terms.

Princess von Loewenstein was finally run to earth in the home of a wealthy friend and deported. Tullio Carminati has been languishing behind bars for a year and a half. And the Bunds are as defunct as the Silver Shirts. The G-men and their associates have really cleaned up for Uncle Sam.

Some Who Remained Loyal

So shrewdly have they operated, that the Italian citizenry of America has remained loyal in a manner that must have Il Duce crying into his *chianti*. So fine has their loyalty proved that Attorney General Biddle ordered their removal from the alien enemy category even where citizenship had not been granted. This action is known to have produced strong political repercussions in Italy and throughout Occupied Europe.

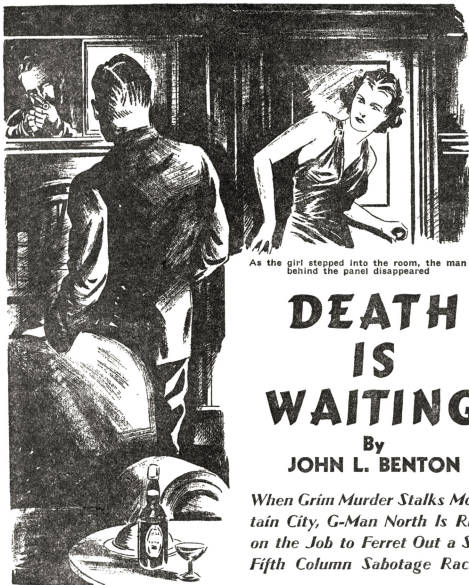
Yes, the G-men have had too much on the ball for Adolph and Tojo so far in this war. And the enemy will never again have the opportunity to get organized as he was in 1939. America is well aware of its danger, has pulled together for victory as no foreign dictator believed possible.

Today, suspicious characters are voluntarily reported by their fellow citizens no matter how harmless they seem—as witness the salesman with a cold who was stopped recently by a motorcycle policeman in a Middle Western state on suspicion of sending up carrier pigeons from his car. Actually, he was discarding used cleanex as he drove.

There is no room for totalitarian sympathizers in free America—now or after the war is won. And the gratefulness with which all good Americans, no matter how kindly their instincts, received news of the execution of the U-Boat saboteurs and their helpers is proof that the country knows it.

Listen to rumors, sure—but pass them along only to the authorities.

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As the girl stepped into the room, the man behind the panel disappeared

DEATH IS WAITING

By
JOHN L. BENTON

When Grim Murder Stalks Mountain City, G-Man North Is Right on the Job to Ferret Out a Slick Fifth Column Sabotage Racket!

THE library of Jefferson Rockland's mansion was a place of shadows. The light diffused from the table lamp seemed to hesitate and shrink away from the corners of the big room as though it feared the blackness lingering there, when two men paused in the doorway.

"Mr. Rockland wishes you to wait for him here, Mr. North," the gray-haired one, obviously a butler, said to the younger man he ushered in. "He will see you presently."

"Thanks," Bob North said, low-voiced. "I hope he won't be long?"

From the moment he had entered this house a few moments before, he had

found something about the big old place that inclined him to speak in a hushed voice. As if it were an art gallery or an elaborate tomb.

He seemed rather out of place here in this gloomy spot, like some successful young business executive who had stepped off the beaten track. A meticulously groomed young business man whose neatly brushed, thick dark hair gleamed faintly in the mellow lamp-light.

Young North stepped into the library and the butler quietly retired, closing the door behind him. North heard a faint click, as though a key might have been turned in the lock. He moved

slowly, his eyes fixed on the closed door.

A hint of uneasiness swept over him. When a man has been with the Federal Bureau of Investigation for nearly ten years he frequently develops a sort of sixth sense that warns him when danger is imminent. North sensed it as he looked at the closed door.

He walked over and turned the knob cautiously. He had been right—the butler had locked that door. His hand slid into a side pocket of his well-tailored suit. The cold steel of the automatic there felt good as his fingers touched it. Then suddenly he stood stock-still, as a slightly muffled voice that seemed to come out of the air reached his ears.

"In the corner behind the big chair," it said, "death is waiting for you."

Bob North's eyes narrowed and his strong jaw tightened. His gaze slowly circled the room, probing into the black shadows, seeking the spot from which the voice had come. He stared at the panels of the oak wainscoting above the built-in bookcases along the east wall, waiting for the voice to speak again. But he did not hear it. Silence mocked him—made the hush that had hung over the mansion a nebulous, yet malignant thing.

Little details of his surroundings registered on his mind, though apparently they were unimportant trifles. For instance, the bottle of wine standing on the table, and the filled glass beside it. Things like that.

NORTH stared at the big chair at the far end of the room. It was half hidden in the shadows. The thick pile of the Oriental rug made his footfalls noiseless as he walked over to the chair and circled it.

And then he saw! A stocky, gray-haired dead man, clad in trousers, white shirt, and smoking jacket. A knife had been driven through the shirt, into the man's chest, and his blood crimsoned the shirt's whiteness.

"Jefferson Rockland!" the G-man muttered.

He stared down at the body of the millionaire who had been such a power in Mountain City, and thoughts sped quickly through the F.B.I. man's brain. With this man's death, it was as though the main cogs in many vital wheels had stopped. The newspaper that Rockland

had owned, the local radio station that had been backed by his money, the war production plant of which he had been president—what would happen to them now?

"He hated crime," North thought grimly. "And now he's been the victim of some criminal—murdered!"

Bob North knelt and examined the body.

"Still warm," he muttered. "Hasn't been dead long."

North got to his feet, his brow furrowed with deep thought. Jefferson Rockland had phoned the local F.B.I. office in Mountain City and asked for a Government man to be sent out to his residence that night to talk to him. The millionaire had refused to say any more than that over the wire. Bob North had been given the assignment—his first case since arriving in town the day before.

The G-man's frown deepened. Here was irony for you. Only that day National Crime Prevention Week had started, and the citizens of Mountain City were eager to rid their town of all crooks and racketeers. Jefferson Rockland, one of the foremost citizens in making the reform wave a success, had been scheduled to do a series of broadcasts as part of the campaign. His paper, the Mountain City News had orders to play it up big all week.

"This is a job for the police," North decided. "If I knew where that voice I heard came from maybe I could give them something to go on."

He made a quick search of all the shadowy places around the big room, but found nothing. And all the time one thing was nagging at him—what a hard blow this murder would be to Jefferson Rockland's daughter, Nancy. She adored her father, from all that North had heard—and she was an only child. Her mother had been dead for five years.

North caught sight of something then, and his hand dropped to the automatic in his coat pocket. One of the panels above the bookcase had slid silently to one side and a man's head and shoulders were in the opening. He was covering Bob North with an automatic he held in both hands. And then he spoke.

"Call me Nemesis," he said. "If you don't let them think that you killed Rockland, you die!"

North's fingers tightened on his gun, but he did not pull the trigger. This "Nemesis" had him covered and while he might be able to put a bullet in that lean, sardonic face gazing at him through the opening in the paneling, there was a good chance of his dying as he did it. Which would do no good to anybody concerned.

HE WAS still standing as if turned to stone, his eyes glued to that sinister face above him when he heard the key turn in the door of the library, the only door leading into the room. It opened and Nancy Rockland stepped into the room—a brown-haired girl in a dark evening gown that set off her slender figure gracefully.

"Mr. North?" she asked, as she closed the door behind her.

The panel above the bookshelves slid silently closed and the thin face of the man who called himself "Nemesis" disappeared. Bob North gave his attention to the girl. She had not seen the man in the panel.

"Yes, Miss Rockland," he said. "I'm Bob North, Federal Bureau of Investigation."

"Parker said you were here in the library," she said, a little disturbed. "But why should the door be locked from the outside?"

"Apparently a little whim on Parker's part—if he is your butler," said North. "I don't know why he locked the door."

"You haven't talked to Dad yet?" Nancy asked quickly.

Bob North hesitated before he answered. This girl could not see that still form lying behind the big chair at the other end of the room. And he was reluctant to tell her of the murder—now.

"No," he said truthfully. "I haven't talked to Mr. Rockland."

He wondered if Nemesis was behind the panel listening. It seemed quite likely.

"I want to help in the town's crime prevention campaign this week," said Nancy. "I've tried to talk Dad into letting me take part, but he refuses to listen." She smiled, and she was even lovelier when she smiled. "He says it is no job for a girl, particularly a girl who is engaged to John Clark."

"John Clark," North repeated. "Oh,

yes. He's running for district attorney in the county election next week, isn't he, Miss Rockland?"

Nancy nodded. "And he must win!" she said emphatically. "For with John Clark and the rest of the Reform Party in office Mountain City will be a better place in which to live. I think—"

She stopped short, startled by the sudden sound of gruff voices in the hall. She had started for the door when the gray-haired butler appeared. He drew his heels together and bowed from the waist. His square face was expressionless.

"The police are here," he said in a monotone. "In regard to Mr. Rockland's murder."

"Murder!" Nancy gasped, and clutched at the back of a chair. She clung to it as she looked around wildly. "Oh, no! You can't mean that—that Dad is dead!"

"I'm sorry, Miss Rockland, but it's true." North went closer to her and gently laid a hand on her arm. "Your father has been killed."

"Oh, no—no!" Nancy dropped into the chair, staring ahead dazedly. "It just can't be!"

But the next moment men from the Mountain City Police Department were entering the library. Four detectives and six officers in uniform. A thin-faced man had arrived with them, and North stared at him, wondering just who he was.

"I'm mighty sorry to hear about this, Miss Rockland," said the detective-sergeant in command of the police. "Can you tell me anything about it?"

"I know nothing about it!" wailed Nancy. "I—I've just heard about it!" She looked wildly about. "Where is he? Where is Dad?"

"Perhaps it's best for you not to see your father now," North said gently, and beckoned a frightened woman servant who was standing in the hall. "If your maid could take you to your room—I know what a shock this has been Miss Rockland, but if you'd go now—"

NANCY nodded and got staggeringly to her feet as he helped her. She walked out into the hall as in a daze. There the maid took charge of her and led her away.

"I'll phone Mr. Clark," Parker, the butler, murmured, as he stepped through

the library door. "I should have done that when I called the police."

"Who are you?" the detective-sergeant demanded of North.

"Bob North—F.B.I.," the G-Man said, and produced his credentials. "You'll find the body over there behind that chair."

He glanced again at the thin man who had arrived with the police—and he knew that face then! The sardonic countenance of the man who had stared at him through the panel-opening and covered him with a gun. Nemesis—here in person! But there was no trace of recognition in the faces of either of the two men as they stared at each other.

The thin man must have thought it time, though, for him to say something, because he came over to Bob North then.

"I'm Ralph Heath of the Mountain City *Blade*," he introduced himself. "Saw the police come in here as I was passing, so I figured something must be going on."

"There was—and is," North said.

The police gave the body a hurried examination, then Detective-sergeant Olsen questioned North. The F.B.I. man told him that Jefferson Rockland had asked that a G-man be sent to the house that evening, and said that he had been alone in the room when he found the body. He said nothing of the voice he

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had heard, nor that Heath, calling himself Nemesis, had been hidden behind the panel.

The newspaperman, standing close by, did not appear much interested in Bob North's story.

"And you don't know what Mr. Rockland wanted to talk to you about?" asked the sergeant, when North had finished. "It must have been important, too. Kinda too bad you didn't get a chance for a few words with him.

"I wish I had," North said. "It would be a big help now. But I haven't the slightest idea what he had on his mind.

The coroner who had appeared now was examining the body. The ceiling lights had been turned on and the big library was no longer a place of shadows. Heath wandered over there idly and watched.

North did not miss a move the newspaperman made. Which was why he saw a piece of paper apparently slip out of Heath's pocket accidentally and drop to the floor. The reporter reached down and picked it up, and with the same move he picked up another piece of paper from under the big chair and thrust both into his pocket.

"I've got to get back to the office," North told the sergeant. "You don't need me here now, do you, Sergeant?"

"Guess not." Olsen shook his head. "We know where to find you if we need you."

Bob North nodded and left. The hush still lingered over the house as he got his hat and topcoat in the hall and put them on. Now he understood the stillness he had sensed when he had first arrived. It had been the silence of death.

It was dark on the porch and no police had been left on guard there. North stepped into the shadows at the side of the door, dropped his automatic into the side pocket of his topcoat, and waited. The door opened and closed as a tall, thin man stepped out onto the porch.

"All right, Heath," North said and the barrel of his gun prodded the reporter's back. "Suppose you tell me why you tried to frame me and pulled that Nemesis stuff?"

"You're crazy!" growled Heath. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Too bad." North breathed a sigh. "I hoped you'd be reasonable—now it looks as if I'll have to find a way to make you talk."

BUT Ralph Heath had no intention of "talking." Suddenly he leaped forward and raced down the porch steps. He seemed sure that North would not use his gun with the police so close, and the G-man did not. But he ran swiftly in pursuit of the reporter. They were some distance away from the house when North overtook Heath and brought him down in a flying tackle.

The newspaperman's head hit the sidewalk so hard it knocked him out. North carried the unconscious man to somebody's lawn, laid him beneath a big tree and went swiftly through the fellow's pockets. He found the papers the reporter had stuffed into the pockets and whistled softly as he read one of them with the aid of a pocket flashlight.

"So that's why Rockland wanted the F.B.I.!" North thought grimly. "Nice! Very nice."

Ralph Heath moaned, sat up dazedly, and saw North standing there with the note in his hand.

"You found it then," he mumbled.

"'Jefferson Rockland,'" said North, repeating the note word for word, watching the reporter sternly, "'this is to warn you that unless you persuade John Clark that it is not advisable for him to continue as candidate for district attorney your daughter will be kidnapped and we cannot promise that you will ever again see her alive.'" The G-man placed the note in his pocket. "You and that gang you're working with must be pretty desperate, Heath."

"What do you mean?" demanded Heath as he reeled to his feet. "That kidnap threat was just a gag to get John Clark scared into not running for district attorney."

"Oh, sure," said North. "And murdering Rockland was all in fun, too."

"We had nothing to do with that!" protested Heath. "And listen! About my being behind that paneling . . . I ran across the floor plans of Rockland's place in the office of the architect who designed the mansion months ago, and tonight I remembered there was a secret passageway leading from the cellar to the library. I—I went there—"

"Why?" demanded North curtly.

"Because I hoped I'd learn something we could use against Clark in the campaign," Heath said surlily. "I didn't kill Rockland—but I know who did it."

"I did, I suppose," snapped North.

"No." Heath shook his head. "It was that butler, Parker, I think. I heard him quarrel with Rockland about something but their voices were so low I couldn't hear what they said. Then Parker stabbed Rockland and—"

"You tell the police that?" demanded North.

"How could I, without implicating myself?" The reporter was badly frightened now. "When I peeked through the crack in the panel and saw you alone in the room I gave you that mumbo-jumbo about Nemesis. I wanted you to find the body. Oh, I was trying to frame you all right, but—"

"Sure, and you'd have kept on trying if you hadn't found out that I was a G-man," growled North. "You got scared when you discovered you were fooling around with a guy from the F.B.I."

"You're darned right," agreed Heath. "The bunch I'm working for on this election are in the saddle in this town and they plan to stay there—but they won't stand for murder."

"Why should Parker have killed Rockland?" demanded North.

"I can't figure out," said Heath, shaking his head. "Parker has no tie-up with the political crowd who are running Mountain City now. It's beyond me."

"So this," said North, "is one case

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where we know the butler is guilty and can't prove it unless we find a good reason for him killing Rockland. Under the circumstances, you'll be no good as a witness against Parker."

"You going to turn me over to the police?" Heath asked anxiously.

"Not yet," said North. "Run along and do your dirty work. I'll find you if I need you, Heath. I wouldn't advise you to try and get out of town."

"I'm not that big a fool," the reporter said shortly.

H Heath walked toward the street and North made no attempt to follow him. The G-man just stood there in the deep shadow beneath the tree branches. Bob North was no fool and he knew that Ralph Heath had a gun. But where the G-man was now he was not a good target.

He was thinking about all that Heath had told him. Wondering if the fellow's paper was back of him. Would the *Blade* approve of the way one of its men was working with a crowd trying to scare off John Clark, to keep him from running for office? North was not too interested in that local political angle, but there were a lot of other things he wanted to know about this town. He had learned a few things from the F.B.I. office, but there were others he had to know.

Obviously Rockland's newspaper, the *Mountain City News* and the *Mountain City Blade* on which Heath worked were rival sheets. The *Blade* obviously was controlled by the political party now in power in the town.

Bob North was thinking intensively about that gray-haired butler as he returned to his office. Was Parker guilty of the murder? One thing made North feel that the butler must be the killer. Parker had locked the door after ushering North into the library.

"The only reason for that must have been that Parker knew Rockland was in there dead," decided North. "And wanted to keep me there while he phoned for the police."

North sighed. All he had to do was find Parker's motive for killing his employer. He didn't want to report his suspicions to the police yet, but if they had any reason to arrest Parker that would be fine. But North did not feel it wise for him to accuse the butler un-

til he discovered Parker's motive—if he had committed the crime.

The news of Jefferson Rockland's murder put Mountain City in a state of turmoil. Too many people had depended on the millionaire for their livelihood to accept his mysterious death calmly. And such a murder certainly was not an auspicious beginning of National Crime Prevention Week.

By evening it was announced that, despite her grief over her parent's death, Nancy Rockland had become a member of the local crime prevention committee. She was going to talk over the radio at eight in a special broadcast at the local station NXY which had been owned by her father, and it was rumored that what she would have to say might blow the lid off the local political situation.

The editorial staff of the *News* had a field day. The paper hinted in articles and editorials that the men in City Hall were having a bad case of jitters.

At 7:30 that night Nancy Rockland was in one of the broadcasting studios at NXY. A white flower was in her hair and across the front of her red dress a big yellow ribbon declaimed "Fight Crime," in big black letters.

She was lovely—but defiant, because she knew she was in danger. Just half an hour before she left home she had received a mysterious phone call. A harsh masculine voice had warned her that if she dared go through with the broadcast she would die.

Even though she had been frightened, she had not reported the call to the police. All she wanted was her chance to speak over the air to tell everybody the reason for her father's murder. That was all that mattered.

"WE'RE all ready for you, Miss Rockland," Carson Garvey, the stout station announcer, greeted her. "We thought it might be wise to have you broadcast from one of the smaller studios without an audience. So we'll use this one."

"Whatever you say," said Nancy, but she had already prepared for any trouble that might eventuate, for in one hand she carried a large handkerchief which concealed a small, fully loaded automatic.

She had an idea that stout Carson Garvey probably would be overcome with shock if he knew that.

Nancy had had difficulty in keeping John Clark from coming with her to the broadcast, but she had finally persuaded the candidate for district attorney she preferred to go alone. She had been relieved when finally her fiancé had reluctantly agreed to stay away from the station. She had not told even him about the phone call, for she did not want him to suspect she might be in danger.

Just a few minutes before she had reached Studio Number Two she had run across Ralph Heath and another man in the second floor corridor of the radio building. She had passed with head held high, and the thin-faced reporter had made no attempt to question her.

"You have a copy of your talk of course, Miss Rockland," Garvey said to her when they were alone in the small studio. "We have to keep such things on file, you know—and the control operator has to have a copy to check while you are on the air."

"Yes, I have it." Nancy handed him two typewritten copies. "I can remember everything I'm going to say, word for word, so I won't need to read my speech."

Carson Garvey frowned as he took the papers. "But working without a script is risky," he protested. "You might be cut off the air from the control room if you don't follow your speech exactly."

"I'll take a chance," said Nancy.

The announcer nodded, and took a copy of the speech to the man in the control room. When he returned he pointed out the mike at which Nancy was to stand and adjusted it to the right height for her. Then he seated himself at a table a little behind her and looked over her speech and his own announcement. There was a second mike at one side of the table into which he would speak.

Garvey tested Nancy's voice, with the control room operator listening, then the announcer nodded as he glanced at his watch.

"We're on the air in two minutes," he said. "As soon as I finish the introduction I'll signal you to start speaking, Miss Rockland."

Nancy nodded calmly. "I'm ready."

Yet as she stood there in front of the microphone, waiting, the two minutes seemed an hour long. She was growing afraid—of what she did not quite know,

[Turn page]



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but the feeling that an unseen menace lingered somewhere close by could not be shaken off.

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Nancy clutched the mike in front of her by the tubing as though she found the touch of the cold metal comforting, then quickly released it as she forced herself to speak.

"It is difficult for me to talk to you all over the air now because of circumstances which you know," she said into the mike. "I do so only because my father hated crime, and some criminal was responsible for his death."

SHE paused as though for breath before going on, but in that brief moment her eyes had grown wide. In some way Ralph Heath had entered the studio and had circled around in front of the table at which Carson Garvey sat. The thin face beneath the reporter's pulled-down hat brim was sardonic as he stared at her.

Heath placed his finger to his lips in a gesture of silence, but Nancy shook her head defiantly. Her left hand went quickly behind her back and the handkerchief covering the gun in her slender fingers floated to the floor unseen.

"I know that Jefferson Rockland died because he put too much trust in others," she went on bravely, her eyes fixed on Heath's face. "My father was murdered because—"

She faltered as she saw the abrupt hardness in Ralph Heath's thin countenance. With a small pair of wire cutters he drew from his pocket, he reached for the wire leading from the mike.

Behind Heath and the girl a hard-faced man stepped closer to Carson Garvey with an automatic raised to bring the barrel down upon the head of the stout announcer.

Nancy's left hand flashed out from behind her back, her grip tightening on the little automatic. The gun roared, the sound loud in the silence of the studio. Heath reeled, the wire cutters dropping from his hand unused—and fear

whitening his face.

"Stop it, both of you!"

Nancy spun around as she heard the commanding voice. Bob North stood in the open doorway of the studio, his gun covering the man who was about to knock out Carson Garvey.

"Don't try it, Hogan," North said sternly.

For an instant the man he called Hogan stood there his gun raised above Garvey's head. Then he lowered the weapon and swung around to face the F.B.I. man.

"Finish your talk, Miss Rockland," said North. "Everything is all right now."

"I hope you will all pardon the slight interruption," Nancy said into the mike, a little tremulously, but bravely. "That sound you just heard was merely something that dropped here in the studio, though it might have sounded like a shot over the air. And now I will go on with what I have to say.

"My father was killed because of sabotage in the war plant which he owned. There is not time for me to give you the details now—but the murderer has been placed under arrest. You will learn all about it in the Mountain City News tomorrow." There was a mocking light in her eyes as she looked at Ralph Heath, who stood holding his side where her bullet had creased his ribs. "I can assure you that the crime was not a political one though many of you may have believed that. Thank you, and good-night."

[Turn page]

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Garvey signaled, and the studio was cut off the air. North was unwaveringly covering the gangster he knew as "Lug" Hogan with his gun, while Nancy's gun was steadily on Heath.

"Sabotage at the plant," the newspaperman said slowly. "So that was the reason for the murder. But I thought she was going to talk about that other—that's why we tried to stop the broadcast."

"And you even had a known gangster like Lug Hogan working with you when you tried it," North growled at him. "There has been sabotage at the plant—I investigated that today. Rockland knew about it, but he had not reported it to the police. And his own butler, Parker, was a member of the fifth column gang."

"Yes, he is," said Nancy. "Parker has been our butler only for the past six months, but my father trusted him—didn't even suspect him. Parker must have taken the job in order to watch Dad."

"And when Mr. Rockland phoned the F.B.I. and asked that a man be sent to the house Parker grew frightened," North said. "Parker thought he was suspected and killed Rockland to keep him from talking." The G-man smiled soberly. "When the police arrested Parker late this afternoon he broke down and admitted the whole thing."

"I've been a fool," muttered Heath. "District Attorney Lewiston got me into all this—gave me a thousand bucks to make sure John Clark didn't get elected. All the rest of the crowd at City Hall didn't seem to know anything about it."

LUG HOGAN said nothing. He looked worried as he stared at the gun he had dropped to the floor when North covered him.

"You were not only a fool but a cat-spaw, Heath," said North, and at his signal police appeared behind him at the door. "Parker confessed that Lewiston was the head of the fifth columnist gang here in town. The F.B.I. have Lewiston now. His political party had nothing to do with it."

"Then the kidnap note to Rockland was all Lewiston's idea!" Heath said bitterly, his gaze bleak as he watched the police enter. "He sent it! He didn't care what he pulled as long as he stayed in office! He *had* to stay if he was head of that fifth column sabotage outfit!"

Bob North nodded. "And he must have been afraid to trust you too far or he wouldn't have had Hogan working with you. Hogan is a fifth columnist."

Lug Hogan started to protest, but lapsed into silence as two detectives grabbed him and led him out of the studio. Ralph Heath sighed as two detectives moved toward him.

"Just one question before I go," he said to North. "What made you think Parker was a fifth columnist?"

"First he locked me in the library," said North, "evidently hoping I would be accused of the murder, without guessing, of course, that you were behind the secret panel. What's more, he clicked his heels together when he bowed." The G-man grinned. "The Nazi influence no doubt."

"I've written plenty of articles proving that crime doesn't pay," the reporter said sourly as detectives led him away. "I should have believed it."

"John Clark will be elected now," Nancy said to North and smiled sadly. "Thanks for all you have done, Mr. North."

"It's my job," said North.

"My goodness!" Carson Garvey glanced at his watch and leaped to his feet. "I've got to announce the Murder Baffler program and it's on the air in three minutes in Studio Ten."

The stout announcer rushed away and Bob North smiled. Crime was the radio man's job, too.

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- No. 300—In time of prosperity, friends will
be plenty. In time of adversity, not
one amongst twenty.
- No. 301—"Mid pleasures and palaces though
we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no
place like home."
(John Howard Payne.)
- No. 302—"Tis distance lends enchantment to
the view, and robes the mountain in
its azure hue."
(Campbell.)
- No. 303—Justice perches on the broad shoul-
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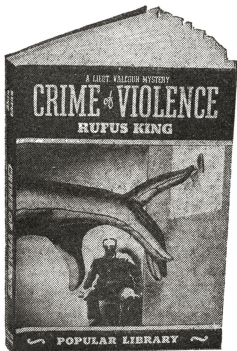
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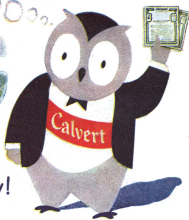
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