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See Him Die

I liked Harry. He was a good guy. It was going to be too bad for the guy who turned him in.

A Novelette

BY EVAN HUNTER



WHEN you're the head man, you're supposed to get the rumble first. Then you feed it to the other kids, and you read off the music, and if they don't like it that's their hard luck. They can take off with or without busted heads.

So that's why I was sore when

Aiello comes to me and starts making like a kid with an inside wire. He's standing in a doorway, with his jacket collar up around his nose, and first off I think he's got some weed on him. Then I see he ain't fixing to gather a stone, but he's got this weird light in his eyes anyway.

"What're you doing, A?" I said.

Aiello looked over his shoulder as if the bulls were after him. He takes my arm and pulls me into the doorway and says, "Danny, I got something hot."

"What?" I said. "Your head?"

"Come down, man," he told me.

"Watch the talk," I warned him.

"Danny, what I mean this is something."

"So tell it."

"Harry Manzetti," he said. He said it in a kind of a hoarse whisper, and I looked at him funny, and I figured maybe he had just hit the pipe after all.

"What about him?"

"He's here."

"What do you mean, here? Where here?"

"In the neighborhood."

"You're full of it," I told him.

"I swear to God, Danny. I seen him."

"Where?"

"I was going up to Louise's. You know Louise?"

"I know Louise."

"She lives on the seventh floor. I spot this guy up ahead of me, and he's walking with a limp and right off I start thinking of the guys in the neighborhood who limp, and all I come up with is Carl. And then I remember Harry."

"There must be a million guys who limp."

"Sure, but name me another one, dad. Anyway, I got a look at his face. It was Harry."

"How'd you see his face?"

"He went up the seventh floor, too. I was knocking on Louise's door, and this guy with the limp goes down the end of the hall and sticks a key in the latch. Then he remembers I'm behind him, and he turns to cop a look, and that's when I see his face. It was Harry, all right."

"What'd you do?"

"Nothing. I turned away fast so he wouldn't see I spotted him. Man, that cat's wanted in more states..."

"You tell Louise this?"

"No."

"You sure?"

"Dad, I'm sure." Aiello looked at me peculiar, and then he turned his eyes away.

"Who'd you tell, A?"

"Nobody. Danny, I swear it on my mother's eyes. You the first one I'm talking to."

"How'd he look?" I said.

"Harry? Oh, fine. He looked fine, Danny."

"Whyn't you tell me sooner?"

"I just now seen you!" Aiello complained.

"Whyn't you look for me?"

"I don't know. I was busy."

"Doing what? Standing in a doorway?"

"I was . . ." Aiello paused. "I was looking for you. I figured you'd come by."

"How'd you figure that?"

"Well, I figured once the word leaked, you'd be around."

"How'd the word leak if you're the only one knows it?"

"Well, I figured . . ."

Aiello stopped talking, and I stopped listening. We both heard it at the same time, the high scream of a squad car siren.

"Cops," I said.

And then we heard another siren, and then the whole damn block was being busted up all at once, sirens screaming down on it from all the side streets.

2.

In fifteen minutes, every damn cop in the city was on our block. They put up their barricades, and they hung around behind their cars while they figured what to do. I spotted Donlevy in the bunch, too, strutting around like a big wheel. He had me in once because some jerk from the Blooded Royals took a slug from a zip gun, and he figured it was one of my boys who done it, and he tried to hang it on me. I told Donlevy where he could hang his phony rap, and I also told him he better not walk alone on our block after dark or he'd be using his shield for a funeral emblem. He kicked me in the butt, and told me *I* was the one better watch out, so I spit at his feet and called him a name my old man always uses, and Donlevy wasn't hip to it, so he didn't get too sore, even though he knew I was cursing. So he was there, too, making like a big wheel, with his tin pinned to his coat so that everybody could know he was a cop. All the

bulls were wearing their tin outside, so you could tell them from the people who were just watching. There were a lot of people in the streets now, and the cops kept shoving them back behind the barricades which they'd set up in front of the building where Harry was. It didn't take an Einstein to figure that somebody'd blown the whistle on Harry and that the bulls were ready to try for a pinch. Only thing, I figured, they didn't know whether he was heeled or not, and so they were making their strategy behind their cars, afraid to show their stupid faces in case he *was* heeled. I'd already sent Aiello for the boys, and I hung around on the outside of the crowd now because I didn't want Donlevy to spot me and start getting wise. Also, there were a lot of bulls all over the place, and outside of the tin you couldn't tell the bulls from the people without a scorecard, and nobody was selling scorecards. So when a bull's back was turned and the tin couldn't be seen, he looked just like anybody else — and Christ knows what bull would spot me somewhere doing something, and I didn't want to take chances until all the boys were with me.

There was a lot of uniformed brass around the cars, too, and they all talked it up, figuring who was going to be the first to die, in case Harry was carrying a gun. Harry was born and raised right in this neighborhood, and all the kids knew him from when he used to be king of the

hill. And Harry was always heeled, even in those days, either with brass knucks or a switch knife or a razor or a zip gun, and later on he had a .38 he showed the guys. That was just before he lammed out — the time he knocked off that crumb from uptown. I remember once when Harry cut up a guy so bad, the guy couldn't walk. I swear. I mean it. He didn't only use the knife on the guy's face. He used it all over so the guy couldn't walk later, that guy was sorry he tangled with a customer like Harry, all right. They only come like Harry once in a while, and when you got a Harry in your neighborhood, you know it, man. You know it, and you try to live up to the rep, you dig me? You got a guy like Harry around, well hell man, you can't run the neighborhood like a tea party. You got certain standards and ideals, I guess you would call them. So we was all kind of sorry when Harry had to take off like that, but of course he was getting all kinds of heat by that time, not only from the locals who was after him for that crumb uptown, but also he was getting G-heat because the word was he transported some broads into Connecticut for the purpose of being illegal, leastways that's the way they read it off on him at the lineup, and I know a guy who was at the lineup personally that time, so this is straight from the horse's mouth.

But if those cops were wondering whether or not Harry was heeled, I could have saved them a lot of trou-

ble if they wanted to ask me. I could tell them Harry was not only heeled but that he was probably heeled to his eyeballs, and that if they expected to just walk in and put the arm on him, they had another guess coming, or maybe two or three. It didn't make one hell of a big difference anyhow, because the cops looked as if they took along their whole damn arsenal just to pry Harry out of that seventh floor apartment. The streets were really packed now with people and cops and reporters and the emergency cop truck, and I expected pretty soon we would have President Eisenhower there to dedicate a stone or something. I began to wonder where the hell the boys were, because the rooftops were getting lined pretty fast, and if the cops and Harry were going to shoot this thing out, I wanted to watch him pick them off. And unless we got a good spot on the roof, things would be rugged. I was ready to go looking for Aiello when he comes back with Ferdy and Beef.

Ferdy is a guy about my height and build, except he's got straight black hair and brown eyes, and my hair is a little curly and my eyes are not brown really, they're amber — that's what Marie says, and she ought to know, dad. I been going with Marie since we was both thirteen, and that makes it close to three years now, so she knows the color of my eyes, all right.

"This the straight dope?" Ferdy

asked. Ferdy used to be on H, but we broke him of it 'cause there's no room in our bunch for a hophead. We broke him by locking him in a cellar for about two weeks. His own mother didn't even know where he was. We used to go down there and give him food every day, but that was all. He could cry his butt off, and we wouldn't so much as give him a stick of M. Nothing till he kicked the heroin monkey. And he kicked it, dad. He kicked it clear out the window. It was painful to watch the poor guy, but it was for his own good, so we let him claw and scream all he wanted to, but he didn't get out of that cellar. Pot is okay, 'cause it don't give you the habit, but anybody wants to hang around me, he don't have no needle marks in his arm. He can bust a joint anytime he likes, but show me a spoon, and show me a guy's bowing to the White God, and I break his butt for him, that's the truth, that shows you the kind of guy I am.

"Harry's up there," I told Ferdy.

"How you like that?" Beef said. Beef must weigh about two thousand pounds in his bare feet. He don't talk English so good because he just come over from the old country, and he ain't yet learned the ropes. But he's a big one, and a good man to have in the bunch, especially when there's times you can't use hardware, like when the bulls is on a purity drive or something. We get those every now and then, but they don't mean nothing, especially if

you know how to sit them out, and we got lots of patience on our street.

"What took you guys so long?" I said.

"A only just reaches us," Ferdy said.

"A's turnin' into a real slowball," I said. "Look at them goddamn rooftops. How we gonna watch this now?"

The boys looked up and seen the crowd.

"We shove in," Beef said.

"Shove this," I told him. "There's grownups up there. You start shoving with all them bulls in the street, and they'll shove you into the Tombs."

"What about Tessie?" Ferdy said.

"What about her?"

"Her pad's right across the way. We stomp in there, dad, and we got ringside seats."

"Her folks," I said sourly.

"They both out earning bread," Ferdy said.

"You sure?"

"Dad, Tessie and me's like that," Ferdy said, crossing two fingers.

So we lit out for Tessie's pad.

3

She didn't answer the door 'till we told her who we was.

Even then, she wasn't too keen on the idea. She played cat and mouse with Ferdy, and he's honeying her up, come on doll, open the door, and all that kind of crap until I tell her to open it or I'll bust the god-

damn thing right off the hinges. She begins to whimper she ain't dressed then so I told her to throw something on because if that door ain't open in three flat I'm going to bust it open.

She opened the door then, and she was wearing a sweater and skirt, and I said, "You're a fast dresser, huh?" and she nodded, and I wanted to paste her in the mouth for lying to me in the first place. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's anybody who lies.

We go over to the windows and throw them open, and Tessie says, "What's all the noise about?" and Ferdy tells her Harry's in the apartment across the way and maybe we'll see some lead soon. Tessie gets the jitters. She's a pretty enough broad, only I don't go for her because Marie and I are that way, but you can bet Marie wouldn't get all excited and shaking because there might be some gunplay. Tessie wants to clear out, but Ferdy throws her down on the couch and she sits there shaking as if she's got pneumonia or something. Beef goes over and locks the door, and then we all pile onto the window sills.

It's pretty good because we can see the apartment where Harry's holed up, right across the alleyway and only one floor down. And we can also see the street on the other side where the bulls are mulling around. I can make out Donlevy's strut from up there, and I feel like dropping a flower pot on his head, but I figure

I'll bide my time because maybe Harry's got something better for that lousy bull.

It's pretty quiet in the street now. The bulls are just about decided on their strategy, and the crowd is hushed up, waiting for something to happen. We don't see any life coming from the apartment where Harry's cooped, but that don't mean nothing.

"What they doing?" Beef says, and I shrug.

Then, all of a sudden, we hear the loudspeaker down below.

"All right, Manzetti. Are you coming out?"

A big silence fell on the street. It was quiet before, but this is something you can almost reach out and touch.

"Manzetti?" the loudspeaker called. "Can you hear us? We want you to come out. We're giving you thirty seconds to come out."

"They kidding?" I said. "Thirty seconds? Who they think he is? Jesse Owens?"

"He ain't going out anyway, and they know it," Ferdy said.

Then, just as if Harry was trying to prove Ferdy's point, he opens up from the window below us. It looks like he's got a carbine, but it's hard to tell because all we can see is the barrel. We can't see his head or nothing, just the barrel, and just these shots that come spilling like orange paint out of the window.

"He got one!" Beef yells from the other window.

"Where, where?" I yelled back, and I ran over to where Beef was standing, and I shoved him aside and copped a look, and sure as hell one of the bulls is laying in the street, and the other bulls are crowding around him, and running to their cars to get the ambulance because by now they figure they're gonna need it.

"Son of a gun!" I say, "can that Harry shoot!"

"All right," the loudspeaker says, "We're coming in, Manzetti."

"Come on, you rotten bastards!" Harry yells back. "I'm waiting."

"Three cops moving down there," Ferdy says.

I look, but I can only see two of them, and they're going in the front door. "Two," I say.

"No, Donlevy's cuttin' through the alley."

I ran over to Ferdy's window, and sure enough Donlevy is playing the gumshoe, sneaking through the alley and pulling down the fire-escape ladder and starting to climb up.

"He's a dead duck," I said.

"Don't be so sure," Aiello answered, and there's this gleam in his eyes as if he's enjoying all this with a secret charge. "They may try to talk Harry away from the fire escape."

"Yeah," I said slow. "That's right, ain't it?"

"I want to get out of here," Tessie said. "He might shoot up here."

"Relax," Ferdy told her, and then

to make sure she relaxed, he sat down on the couch and pulled her down in his lap.

"Come on," she said, "everybody's here."

"They only the boys," Ferdy said, and he starts mushing her up.

You can hear a pin drop in the street down there. Everybody on the rooftops are quiet, too.

"What do you think . . ." Beef starts, and I give him a shot in the arm to shut him up.

From inside the building across the way, and through Harry's open window, I can hear one of the cops talking. At the same time, while they're pulling Harry over to the door of the apartment, Donlevy's climbing up that fire escape. He's up to the fourth floor now, and going quiet like a cat.

"How about it, Manzetti?" the cop in the hallway yells, and we can hear it plain as day through Harry's open window.

"Come and get me!" Harry yells back.

"Come on out. Throw your gun in the hallway."

"Screw you, cop!"

"How many guns you got, Manzetti?"

"Come in and count them!"

"Two?"

"Fifty-two," Harry yells back, and that one really busts me up.

I stop laughing long enough to see Donlevy reaching the fifth floor, and making the turn in the ladder, going up to the sixth.

"He's gonna plug Harry in the back," I whisper.

In the hallway, the bull yells, "This is only the beginning, Manzetti. We haven't started playing yet."

"Your friend in the street don't think so," Harry answered. "Ask him if we started or not. Ask him how that slug felt."

Donlevy is almost on the seventh floor now. He steps onto the fire escape as if he's walking on eggs, and I can see the Detective's Special in his fist. I hate that punk with every bone in my body. I almost spit out the window at him, and then he's flattening himself against the side of the building and moving up to Harry's window, a step at a time, while the bull in the hallway is talking, talking, and Harry is answering him. Donlevy gets down on his knees, and he's got that gun in his right hand, and he's ready to step up to the window and start blasting.

That's when I started yelling.

4.

"The window, Harry! The window!"

Donlevy looks up for a second, and I can see the surprised look on his face, but then he begins to back off, but he's too late. The slugs come ripping out of the window, five in a row, as if Harry's got a machine gun in his mitts. Donlevy grabs for his face, and then the gun flies out of his hand, and then he clutches at his

stomach, and then he spins around and he's painted with red. He stumbles forward to the fire escape, and then he crumbles over the railing and it looks as if he's going to hang there for a second. The crowds on the rooftops are cheering their heads off by now, and then Donlevy goes all the way over, and Harry is still blasting through that window, pumping slugs into Donlevy's body, and then Donlevy is on his way down, and the cheers get cut off like magic, and there's just this godawful hush as he begins his drop, and then a lady in the street starts to scream, and everybody's screaming all at once.

"He got him!" I said, and my eyes are bright in my head because I'm happier than hell. "He got Donlevy!"

"Two down," Beef said.

"They'll get him," Aiello said, and he's got a worried look in his eyes now.

"You sound like you want that," I tell him.

"Who me?"

"No, the man in the moon. Who you think, who?"

"I don't want them to get Harry."

"Then stop praying."

"I ain't praying, Danny."

"There ain't a bull alive can take Harry," I inform him.

"You can say that again," Ferdy says from the couch.

Tessie ain't saying nothing any more. She figures she might as well play ball or Ferdy will get nasty,

and she knows Ferdy's got a switch knife in his pocket.

A phone starts ringing somewhere across the alleyway. It's the only sound you can hear on the block, just that phone ringing, and then Harry's head pops up at the window for just a second, and he waves up, not looking at us, not looking at anybody, just looking up sort of, and he yells, "Thanks," and then his head disappears.

"You saved his life, Danny," Ferdy said.

"And he appreciates it, dad," I answered.

"Sure, but what're they gonna throw at him next?" Aiello says, and from the tone of his voice I figure like he wants them to throw a Sherman tank at him.

"Look, meatball," I tell him, "just keep your mouth shut. You talk too much, anyway."

"Well, what the hell. Harry ain't nothing to me," Aiello said.

"Hey," Ferdy said, "you think the bulls are gonna come up here and get us?"

"What the hell for? They don't know who yelled. It could have been anybody on the roof."

"Yeah," Ferdy said, and he kisses Tessie and Tessie gets up and straightens her skirt, and I got to admit Ferdy knows how to pick them, but she still don't compare to Marie. She goes in the other room, and Ferdy winks and follows her, and I figure we lost a good man for the proceedings. Well, what the hell.

There's just me and Beef and Aiello in the room now, and we're watching through the window, and it suddenly dawns on me what Aiello said.

"What do you mean, Harry ain't nothing to you?"

"He ain't," Aiello said.

"A," I told him, "you're looking for a cracked head."

"I ain't looking for nothing. What the hell, he's a killer. He's wanted everywhere."

"So what?"

"So that don't make him my brother, that's all. I never killed nobody."

"He's from the neighborhood," I said, and I tried to put a warning in my voice, but Aiello didn't catch it.

"So it's not my fault the neighborhood stinks."

"Stinks!" I walked away from the window and over to Aiello. "Who said it stinks?"

"Well, it ain't Fifth Avenue."

"That don't mean it stinks."

"Well, a guy like Harry . . ."

"What about Harry?"

"He . . . well . . . he don't help us none."

"Help us with who? What're you talkin' about?"

"Help us with nobody! He stinks just the way the neighborhood . . ."

I was ready to bust him one, when the shooting began again outside.

I rushed over to the window. The

shooting was all coming from the streets, with Harry not returning the fire. It seemed like every cop in the world was firing up at that window. The people on the roofs were all ducking because they didn't want to pick up no stray lead. I poked my head out because we were on the other side of the alleyway.

"You see him?" Beef asked.

"No. He's playing it cool."

"A man shouldn't walk around free after he kills people," Aiello said.

"Shut your mouth, A," I told him.

"Well, it's the truth!"

"Shut up, you dumb crumb. What the hell do you know about it?"

"I know it ain't right. Who'll he kill next? Suppose he kills your own mother?"

"What's he want to kill my old lady for? You're talking like a man with a paper . . ."

"I'm only saying. A guy like Harry, he stinks up the whole works."

"I'll talk to you later, jerk," I said. "I want to watch this."

The cops were throwing tear gas now. Two of the shells hit the brick wall of the building, and bounced off, and went flying down to the street again. They fired two more, and one of them hung on the sill as if it was going in, and then dropped. The fourth one went in the window, and out it came again, and I whispered, "That's the boy, Harry,"

and then another one came up and sailed right into the window, and I guess Harry couldn't get to it that time because the cops in the hallway started a barrage. There were fire-trucks down there now, and hoses were wrapped all over the street, and I wondered if they were going to try burning Harry out. The gas was coming out his window and sailing up the alleyway, and I got a whiff of the apple blossoms myself, that's what it smells like, and it smelled good, but I knew Harry was inside that apartment and hardly able to see. He come over to the window and tried to suck in some air, but the boys in the street kept up the barrage, trying to get him, and I felt sorrier'n hell for the poor guy.

He started firing then and throwing things out the window, chairs, and a lamp, and an electric iron, and the cops held off for just a few secs, and Harry copped some air, but not enough because they were shooting more tear gas shells up there, and they were also firing and you could tell they had some tommies in the crowd because no .38 ever fired like that, and no carbine ever did either.

I was wishing I had a gun of my own because I wanted to help Harry, and I felt as if my hands were tied, but what the hell could I do? I just kept sweating it out, and Harry wasn't firing through the window any more, and then all of a sudden everything in the street stopped and

everything inside the apartment was still.

"Manzett!" the cop in the hallway yelled.

Harry coughed and said, "What?"

"You coming out?"

"I killed a cop," Harry yelled back.

"Come on out, Manzetti!"

"I killed a cop!" Harry yelled, and he sounded as if he was crying — from the gas those bastards had fed him. "I killed a cop, I killed a cop," he kept saying over and over again.

"You only wounded him," the cop yelled, and I shouted, "He's lying, Harry."

"Get me a priest," Harry yelled.

"Why he wants a priest?" Beef asked.

"It's a trick," I said. "He wants a shield."

"No dice," the cop answered. "Come on, Manzetti, throw your weapons out."

"Get me a priest."

"Come on, Manzetti."

"No!" he screamed. "You lousy punk, no!"

"Manzetti . . ."

"Get me a priest," Harry shouted. "I'm scared I'll . . . get me a priest!"

"What'd he say?" I said to Beef.

"I didn't catch," Beef said, and then the firing started again.

It must have gone on for about ten minutes, and then all of a sudden, just the way it started, that's the way it stopped again.

"They got him," Aiello said.

"Bull," I answered.

I kept watching the street. It was beginning to get dark now, and the cops were turning on their spots and playing them up at Harry's window. There wasn't a sound coming from the apartment.

"They got him," Aiello said again.

"You need straightening, you jerk," I told him.

The street lights came on, and after about a half-hour a few more cops went into the building.

"Harry!" I yelled from the window.

There was no answer.

"Harry!"

Then we heard the shots in the hallway, and then quiet again, and then the sound of a door being busted, and then that goddamn telephone someplace in the building began ringing again.

About ten minutes later, they carried Harry out on a stretcher.

Dead.

6.

We hung around the streets late that night. There'd been a big fuss when they carried Harry out, everybody yelling and shouting from the rooftops, like as if this was the Roman arena or something. They didn't realize what a guy Harry was, and what a tough fight he'd put up.

"They got him, all right," Ferdie said, "but it wasn't easy."

"He took two of them with him," I said.

"A guy like Harry, it pains you to see him go," Ferdy said.

"Yeah," I answered.

We were all quiet for a little while.

"Where's A?" Beef asked.

"I don't know," I told him. "The hell with that little jerk anyway."

"He got an inside wire, all right," Ferdy said. "He was the first cat to tumble to this."

"Yeah," I said. I was thinking about the look on Donlevy's face when those slugs ripped him up.

"How'd he tip to it, anyway?"

"He spotted Harry in the hall. Going up to Louise."

"Oh." Ferdy was quiet for a while.

"Harry see him?"

"Yeah."

"He should have been more careful."

"A guy like Harry, he got lots of things on his mind. You think he's gonna worry about a snotnose like A?"

"No, but what I mean . . . *somebody* blew the whistle on him."

"Sure, but that don't . . ." I cut myself dead. "Hey!" I said.

"What?"

"Aiello."

"Aiello what?"

"I'll bet he done it! Why, I'll bet that little crumb done it!"

"Tipped the cops to Harry, you mean?"

"Sure! Who else? Why, that little . . ."

"Now, hold it, Danny. Now don't jump to . . ."

"Who else knew it?"

"Anybody could have spotted Harry."

"Sure, except nobody did." I waited a minute, thinking, and then I said, "Come on."

We began combing the neighborhood.

We went down the poolroom, and we combed the bowling alley, and then we hit the rooftops, but Aiello was noplac around. We checked the dance in the church basement, and we checked the Y, but there was still no sign of him.

"Maybe he's home," Ferdy said.

"Don't be a jerk."

"It's worth a try."

"Okay," I said.

We went to the building where Aiello lived. In the hallway, Beef said, "Somebody here."

"Shut up," Ferdy said.

We went up to Aiello's apartment and knocked on the door.

"Who is it?" he answered.

"Me," I said. "Danny."

"What do you want, Danny?"

"I want in. Open up."

"I'm in bed."

"Then get out of bed."

"I'm not feeling so hot, Danny."

"Come on, we got some pot."

"I don't feel like none."

"This is good stuff."

"I ain't interested, Danny."

"Open up, you jerk," I told him.

"You want the Law to know we're holding?"

"Danny, I . . ."

"Open up!"

I began pounding on the door,

and I knew that'd get him out of bed, if that's where he was, because his folks are a quiet type who don't like trouble with the neighbors.

In a few seconds, Aiello opened the door.

I smiled at him and said, "Hello, A."

We all went inside. "Your people home?"

"They went visiting."

"Oh, visiting, huh? Very nice."

"Yeah."

"Like you was doing with Louise this afternoon, huh?"

"Yeah, I suppose," Aiello said.

"When you spotted Harry."

"Yeah."

"And then what'd you do?"

"I told you."

"You went into Louise's apartment, that right?"

"Yes, I . . ." Aiello paused, as if he was trying to remember what he'd told me before. "No, I didn't go in. I went down in the street to look for you."

"You like this gang, A?"

"Yeah, it's good," Aiello said.

"Then why you lying to me?"

"I ain't lying."

"You know you wasn't looking for me."

"I was."

"Look, tell me the truth. I'm a fair guy. What do I care if you done something you shouldn't have."

"I didn't do nothing I shouldn't have," Aiello said.

"Well, you did do something then, huh?"

"Nothing."

"Come on, A, what'd you do?"

"Nothing."

"I mean, after you left Louise?"

"I went to look for you."

"And before you found me?"

"Nothing."

"Did you blow the whistle on Harry?"

"Hell, no!"

"You did, didn't you? Look, he's dead, what do I care what you done or didn't do? I ain't the Law."

"I didn't turn him in."

"Come on, A."

"He deserved what he got. But I didn't turn him in."

"He deserved it, huh?"

"Yeah. He was rotten. Anybody rotten like Harry . . ."

"Shut up!"

". . . should have the whistle . . ."

"Shut up, I said!" I slapped him across the mouth. "Did you?"

He dummied up.

"Answer me!"

"No."

I slapped him again. "Answer me!"

"No."

"You did, you punk! You called the cops on Harry, and now he's dead, and you ain't fit to lick his boots!"

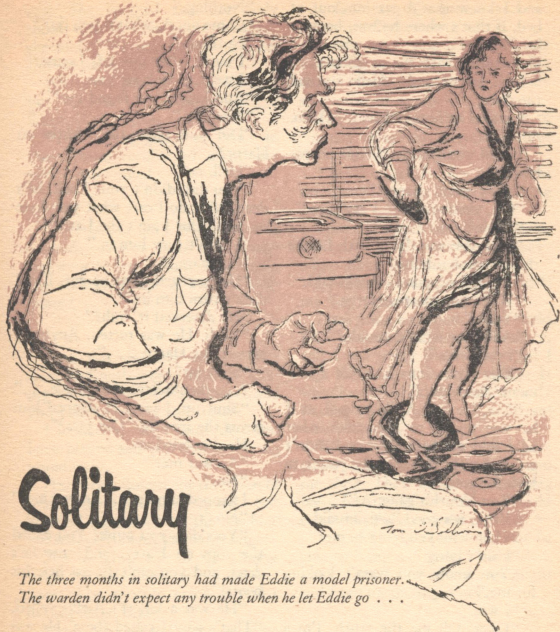
"He was a killer!" Aiello yelled.

"That's why I called them. He was no good. No damn good. He was a stink in the neigh . . ."

But I wasn't listening no more.

We fixed Mister Aiello, all right.

Just the way Harry would have liked it.



Solitary

The three months in solitary had made Eddie a model prisoner. The warden didn't expect any trouble when he let Eddie go . . .

BY JACK RITCHIE

JAKE shook my shoulder. "You want to spend these last couple of minutes saying goodbye? I'm the sentimental type."

I sat up and let my feet dangle over the edge of the bunk. "All right," I said. "Goodbye."

Jake's eyes studied me for a few seconds, his mouth edging toward a thin smile. "You strained yourself."

He peeled back the paper of his chocolate bar for another bite. "What does it take to make you happy?"

I rested my elbows on my thighs and stared at my shoes.

"Jeez," he said, after a while. "I hope I get a live one in here next."

"Sure," I said. "Put in for somebody who keeps his yap moving."

"It don't have to be much, but at least something. All you ever done since we been together is stare at the ceiling."

"That's what I done," I said. "And I'm broken-up it made you so sad."

Jake waited for a piece of chocolate to dissolve in his mouth. "According to some of the boys, you made a lot of noise when you first come here."

"Just like you still do. But I bit too."

"Them three months in solitary done something, though, didn't they?" He licked sweetness from his fingers. "I thought they ain't allowed to keep you in that long."

"It slipped somebody's mind."

The first bell sounded and I got off the top bunk.

Jake put on his cap. "Here's my hand," he said. "If you got the urge, you can shake it."

I shook hands with him and then we waited at the cell door for the second bell.

When it rang and the locks sprung, we stepped out on the steel walk. I marched to the main floor

with the rest of the men and there one of the guards told me to fall out.

It was O'Leary who took me through the gates and out to the administration building.

"I like quiet guys like you," he said. "No fuss. No bother. You can come back any time."

"Thanks."

We went up the concrete steps. "Heard you were pretty tough once. But that was before my time." He glanced at me with guard laugh in his yellow-brown eyes. "We bend them or we break them. Nobody walks without a stoop for long."

I sat on a hard bench in the warden's anteroom with O'Leary beside me. There were no bars on these windows and the one o'clock sun made free patches of light on the floor. I stretched my legs into some of its warmth and let it seep through my trouser legs.

We lay on the bank beside the pool and watched the high clouds for awhile and then we looked at each other. Her legs were slim brown and she rested her cheek on her arm as she faced me.

Her hair was golden with sun and had the softness of smoke. It responded to the faint flow of wind and I looked into the gray eyes that were waiting for me.

O'Leary poked me with his club. "Wake up, Collier."

"My eyes are open."

"But you weren't seeing anything." He crossed his legs and shifted on the bench so that he could look at me. "Let me guess the first thing you're gonna do when you get out. Will you have to pay for it or have you got it waiting?"

When the warden was ready for me, I went in alone and sat down in front of his desk.

He picked up my file and scanned it briefly. Then he tamped the papers to a straight edge and began to talk with words that had lost their accent sharpness because they had been memorized.

I had paid my debt to society and I should not cherish bitterness. I could become a useful member of society if I worked hard. I must avoid bad company. I must not drink.

My eyes went to the calendar on the wall behind him. It was cheap and glossy, but it did show a green valley. A valley green and hidden in security.

Her hand was soft in mine as we walked and I could smell the crispness of the ferns beside the stream. We stopped beneath a large oak to look at all the quietness that belonged to us and my arm went around her waist.

The phone on the warden's desk was ringing and he picked it up. He listened with his head cocked and then spoke. "I'll take care of it in a

couple of minutes. Just as soon as I finish here."

He put down the phone and his mind lingered on other thoughts. Then he returned his attention to me. "Did I cover the point about getting permission before you leave the county of your residence?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

His eyes dulled for a look into his memory. "No, I didn't," he said. He inspected me coldly and then resumed talking.

When he finished, his thumb carelessly riffled the records. "Well, that's that. Just be a good boy and we won't see you again." He consulted his watch.

"You could have got off more time," he said. "But those first wild years didn't help you any." He smiled slightly. "Ninety days in the hole made you a different man, didn't they, Collier?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

"It's the best way to handle the trouble makers. A few months alone with nothing but the dark. They can't stand that."

He enjoyed his reminiscent smile. "I'm hard, but I'm fair," he said. "Anybody who cooperates with me won't have a hard time. You learned that, didn't you, Collier?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

He laced his fingers in front of him. "Any questions?"

"No, sir," I said. And then I got up and went out to where O'Leary waited.

It was two more hours before they

opened the last gate for me. I stood outside on the walk in my new black shoes and looked down the line of cars in the parking lot.

Amy sat in a small sedan that needed repainting and she blew the horn when she saw me. She got out of the car and hurried toward me and she was out of breath when she put her plump arms around my neck.

My eyes examined her face and went to her brown eyes. "You wear glasses," I said.

"Why, Eddie," she said. "I been wearing them for three years now. You seen me in them lots of times on visiting days."

"That's right," I said. "Lots of times." I began walking toward the car and she caught up with me after a few steps.

"They're tinted a little bit because my eyes are sensitive to light. That's what the eye doctor told me. I got some astigmatism too."

I got into the car and she went around to the driver's side. I glanced at the shabby upholstery. "What have you been doing to keep alive?" I asked.

"Honestly, Eddie," she said. "You're so forgetful. I been waiting on tables for six years now at Grady's. You ask me every time you see me."

"That's right," I said. "And you tell me I'm forgetful."

She turned the car onto the highway and leaned forward in driver concentration.

I opened the window on my side and listened to the hum of the tires on the road.

"Did they give you a job, Eddie?" she asked.

"Yes," I said.

She waited a while. "Well, what kind of a job is it?"

I thought about it and remembered. "In a warehouse. I'm supposed to put things in piles."

Amy drove at a conservative speed and several cars passed her. "I got a small cottage for us," she said. "Just three rooms. Nothing like we used to have. I made all the drapes myself. Chartreuse. I wasn't sure they'd go with the walls at first, but I took a chance and it turned out all right."

"Yes," I said.

"I bought a couple bottles of good whiskey," she said. "And some beer in cans. We'll just take off our shoes and wiggle our toes until the boys show up."

"All right," I said.

"I kept all your classical-type records," she said. "I don't have an automatic phonograph, though. You got to change the records yourself."

I closed my eyes against the light and listened to the whistle of air against the body of the car.

I knew she was there and I smiled as I listened for her and at last opened my eyes. She leaned over me and there was the fragrance of perfume in her hair. She spoke softly to me and her hand

touched my face. Her lips came closer and rested lightly on mine.

The car came to a stop and I opened my eyes. I wondered at the darkness.

"Did you have a nice nap, Eddie?" Amy asked. She turned off the motor and put the ignition keys in her pocketbook. "There it is," she said, pointing. "That little place in the back."

I got out of the car and walked to the front door. I waited until Amy came with the key.

Inside she kicked off her shoes and began turning on lamps. I sat down in an easy chair and listened to the flat sounds her feet made when she walked on the part of the floor that was bare.

She came back from the kitchen with a tray of canned beer, a bottle of whiskey, and glasses.

"I don't mind if my man drinks," she said. "Remember how you used to just sit with a bottle and listen to those records. You could really put away the stuff without showing it. You always drank like a gentleman."

I poured some of the whiskey into a glass.

Amy punched open a can of beer and swallowed a few times. "I was true to you, Eddie," she said. "You can ask any of the girls where I work and they'll tell you the same thing. I even turned down dates with Mr. Grady. And he respected me for

that. He said that if all women were as loyal to their men as I was this would be a better world."

I tasted the first liquor in ten years and it was nothing to me.

"Beer is healthier," Amy said. "But I miss the champagne. We'll fix that, though, won't we, Eddie?"

My eyes went to the stack of record albums on the table next to me and I picked up the Franck symphony.

The doorbell rang and Amy struggled to her feet. "Probably the boys," she said.

Benny Eckers and Mike Kurtz came into the room with their right hands searching for mine.

I remembered them again now, and that Benny was small with a flesh-starved face of lines and seams.

"Benny's a truck dispatcher for a gasoline company," Amy said. "Can you imagine?"

"It's a nervous job," Benny said. "All kinds of time limits and responsibilities. It's been ten months now and my parole officer is running out of gold stars."

Kurtz filled a water glass with whiskey and buried it in his big hand. "Life has been rough," he said. "A man my size sweats when he has to move around."

"We been looking places over," Benny said. "Mostly loan companies. Our idea is to hit about five or six in a week and then take off for someplace where we can spend it. We'll make up for all those years, Eddie."

I watched the smoke of the cigarette I was trying.

"I'd like to see Florida again," Amy said. "All that excitement and all them people. We wouldn't have to be alone for a minute."

"Florida is out," Kurtz said. "Every second guy at the tracks is a dick."

"Kurtz is right," Benny said. "We spend our dough in Cuba or Mexico or some of them places where they don't care how you got it."

I stared at the amber glow in my glass of whiskey.

Her voice was quiet music and it spoke only of things in which there was beauty. I listened to her words and marveled at the gentleness in them.

Kurtz bumped his glass against the neck of the bottle as he refilled it.

"I like them big parties," he said. "All that fancy grub and them babes from the shows."

I took a record to the phonograph and put it on. "You like that, Kurtz?" I asked.

"That's what I said," Kurtz drank and wiped his mouth with his sleeve. "Big parties. That's really living."

"What was it like in solitary, Eddie?" Benny asked. "I was a meek con and never got a taste of it."

"What's to tell," Kurtz said. "I was in a week myself for heaving a

plate of stew across the dining hall. The last couple of days I would of give my right arm to hear somebody talk."

Benny's eyes went to the electric clock. "I'm getting on my horse," he said. "I gotta keep regular hours, being a working man and all. At least for another week or so."

"I got to shove off too," Kurtz said. "Think of it, Eddie. I'm a house painter."

When they were gone, Amy went to the bedroom. "I'll make myself more comfortable," she said.

She came back wearing a faded blue robe and sat down heavily in her chair. Her face was red and moist with the beer she had been drinking.

She scratched the calf of one leg. "Did you do much reading, Eddie?" she asked. "I remember you were all the time reading before you went to the pen."

"No," I said. "I don't have to read any more."

"That's good," she said. "Gee, sometimes you were a creep. Maybe now you'll learn how to enjoy life more."

I put another record on the phonograph.

Amy opened a fresh can of beer. "I guess one more won't hurt. But I don't want to overdo it tonight, if you know what I mean. You been gone a long time and I know what you want."

"Do you, Amy?"

"I know what boys want," she

said. She laughed and her body shook with it. "No hurry though," she said. "We got plenty of time. I'm off tomorrow."

When the record was finished, I put on the first movement of Smetana's Moldau.

"You're not going to listen to those damn records all night, are you?" Amy asked.

There would have to be music in our valley. Not the music that intrudes and must be listened to with attention, but the music that is always background.

Amy was standing up, her face splotched with anger. "I been talking to you for fifteen minutes and you just sit staring into space."

I looked at the record that had been played and was now revolving soundlessly.

Her eyes followed the direction of mine and then she moved. She grabbed the record off the machine and snapped it with her pudgy fingers.

She snatched one of the albums from the table and put it on the floor. The records cracked under her slipped heel.

She looked up as I rose and came to her. Her eyes showed fright before my hands went to her throat.

It wasn't at all difficult. My hands pressed mechanically until there was no more struggle in her.

I let her drop and looked down.

Her face was ugly purple and her eyes were flecked with blood.

I dragged her into the kitchen where she would be out of my sight, then I washed my hands carefully and returned to the living room.

There was now the question of running away and I considered it with a tired vagueness.

Then I heard the new music that shimmered faintly. It was beckoning and I had to get closer.

I put the album back on the table.

It made no difference now about what Amy had tried to do.

I turned out the lights and made my way to an easy chair.

I was going back now to the world I'd found in the darkness of solitary, and I was going back to the girl I had found there in the valley. It wasn't a real world. It stayed quietly waiting in my mind and that was why I liked it.

They would find me sitting here staring the same way they had found me then. They would see that my body breathed, but my eyes would show that I was not one of them.

And this time they would not be able to bring me back. I knew that, as my eyes followed the moonlight and fixed on the night sky.

I came back to my valley in the music and the moonlight and she waited for me. She was pale and lovely and her eyes searched my face.

And then she smiled.

I had come to stay.

WHEN a killer gets away with murder in real life, it's usually because he has learned the wisdom of silence, a polite way of saying keeping

The Repeater

He knew just how to get away with murder. He confessed.

his mouth shut. But there is one case on record where the killer deliberately confessed to a murder he had committed in order to beat the rap! What happened makes up not only the most unusual case in the modern history of Scotland Yard but one of the strangest in the annals of crime.

In some ways, Shaftesbury Avenue in London can be compared to Broadway in New York City. At one point the street is part of Piccadilly Circus, the Times Square of London, and is filled with bright lights, theatres and tinsel. But about a half-mile away it is just another street of small, unpretentious neighborhood shops.

This story opens on Shaftesbury Avenue, a half-mile from Piccadilly Circus, in London's West End. One of the small stores on the street had gone out of business and



*A True Story from Actual
Case Records*

BY EDWARD D. RADIN

a sign company was anxious to recover its property. On the morning of October 2, 1931, Douglas Barker, manager of the sign firm, arrived at the vacant store accompanied by Frederick Field, an electrician. Barker was to superintend the removal of the sign.

The men did not have the keys to the building, and, after checking the front and back doors and the rear windows, found all of them securely locked. They telephoned the real estate agent and received permission to force open a back window upon their promise to repair any damage.

The store consisted of a large front display area with a smaller stockroom in the back, the two sections connected by a narrow corridor. Using a heavy screwdriver, Field had no trouble prying open a rear window and the two men entered the dusty stockroom.

Barker opened the door leading to the narrow hall and paused on his way through to kick aside some newspaper spread on the floor. He stopped in surprise when his foot landed on something solid and he swept the paper away. His frightened outcry brought Field rushing to his side.

The body of a pert little blonde was stretched out in the corridor. A piece of cloth had been inserted into her mouth as a gag and a green belt that matched her coat was tied tightly around her neck.

To his credit, Barker did not pull

rank. Although he longed to get away, he realized that he was in charge and so he sent Field out to notify police while he elected to remain with the body.

The electrician dashed along the street until he found a bobby and blurted out the story of the discovery. The cautious officer visited the store first and then notified headquarters.

Within a short time technical experts and officials were at the scene with Superintendent George Cornish, one of Scotland Yard's Big Five, heading the investigation.

Because his territory included many of the best-known sections of the city and crimes committed in these areas are worth more newspaper space than crimes elsewhere, Cornish had become an almost legendary figure. Reporters boasted in print that he never had lost a case and helped the legend along by referring to him simply as "Cornish of the Yard." His appearance did not hinder the legend. A tall slender man, he moved quickly and gave orders swiftly. In profile, his fine features looked as if they had been chiselled by a master sculptor. His trademarks were a rolled umbrella and a derby hat, worn over closely cropped hair, and he was seldom without either, regardless of the weather.

From the dust in the vacant store, officials were able to reconstruct the crime. The murder had occurred in the rear stockroom, drag marks in

the soot showing how the killer had pulled the body into the corridor where he covered it with newspaper. Time of death was set by the police surgeon as within the past twelve hours, probably during the night. The killer first had throttled the girl with his hands, later using the gag and belt.

Technical experts worked over the interior of the store without coming up with anything in the way of a clue. With the exception of the window opened by Field there was no sign of any forced entry. The killer must have had a key to get in and, with no indications of a struggle in the tell-tale dust, it was obvious that the murdered girl had entered the vacant store willingly with the man.

To Cornish, the crime appeared to be a planned murder rather than a spur-of-the-moment strangling. The girl's pocketbook was missing and all identifying labels had been ripped from her clothes. The killer had not panicked, even spending time to spread newspapers over the body.

The victim's flashy clothes indicated that she was more at home in the bright lights of Piccadilly Circus than in the quiet section where her body had been found and this was borne out when neighborhood storekeepers filed in to look at her and none of them recognized her. Slightly over five feet tall, she was a shapely and pretty girl in her early twenties.

The mystery of how the killer had entered the locked premises was solved when Cornish questioned the building agent and Field. The realtor said that he had just one set of keys for the front and back doors and had given them to Field four days earlier so he could remove the electrical wiring from the sign in preparation for its dismantling. Field had not returned the keys.

Questioned on this point, Field said that while completing his earlier work on the sign, a man entered the store and presented a note from the real estate office instructing him to turn over the keys. He did so. The visitor told Field that he had rented the store and was going to open a leather goods shop.

On the lookout for business, Field promptly suggested that the man hire him to make any electrical installations. The caller was agreeable but said he had to finish drafting his plans for the store layout. The electrician left him in the store but arranged to meet him later that night at the Piccadilly station of the underground where Field customarily boarded the tubes on his way home from work.

The man showed up on time, outlined the changes in lighting he wanted, and after haggling briefly over price agreed to the terms and paid the electrician an advance of two pounds against the work to be done. Since the other had drawn only a rough sketch of the store, Field suggested that they return to

the shop so the new tenant could point out exactly where he wanted some lights located.

The new storekeeper thought it was a good idea but after searching his pockets remarked that he had forgotten to bring along the keys. He told Field to wait for him and that he would be right back.

"I stood there waiting and waiting," Field told Cornish, "and getting hungrier by the minute." After standing in the station for more than an hour, the electrician finally gave up and went home. He never saw the man again.

The renting agent said the store had not been leased and the man who presented the note to Field was an imposter.

The electrician quickly endeared himself to police by proving to be a witness with a photographic mind. Instead of the usual vague description officials are accustomed to receiving, Field was able to furnish a detailed account of the caller. He placed his height as somewhat taller than Superintendent Cornish, at about 6 feet 1 inch, said he was slender and in his early thirties. The man had mentioned returning from a holiday and his face and hands were deeply tanned. He wore his hair short at the back and sides, and had a thin black moustache. One of his right upper teeth either had a large gold filling or was gold capped. The observant electrician also noticed that he was wearing an expensive gold wristwatch which he

described as "wafer thin." The man had been attired in sports clothes, wearing a jacket and matching plus four knickers in a biscuit-brown color. The expensive cloth had been rather distinctive, containing a repeated two-inch square pattern. The visitor also wore a brown tweed cap.

With this satisfying description of the probable killer relayed to all patrolmen in the city, Cornish turned to the task of identifying the victim. No matching description of the girl was found in the missing persons files and men were assigned to check the theatrical district and the Soho restaurants and nightclubs. Meanwhile, Field agreed to accompany officers through the West End area to see if he could spot the man to whom he had given the keys.

Cornish's hunch about the girl being an habitué of night spots was quickly confirmed when bartenders in various places recognized her from the morgue photograph, but the investigators were puzzled because she seemed to be known by different names in different places. One of the men who had taken the girl out supplied an address in Chatham and detectives hurried there.

They were startled to find the girl alive, an almost exact double of the murdered blonde. She revealed that she was a friend of the victim and they frequently went about posing as each other, playing jokes on their admirers.

The murder victim was Nora Up-

church, a gay girl about town, who had left home several years before to live by herself in London. She had not written to her family in that time. While Nora had dates with many different men, her double said she had been "sweet" about a sailor and intended to marry him.

Questioning of some of her male admirers brought out a conflicting picture of the murdered girl. To some she was just another good-time girl whose world centered about the tawdry nightclubs. To others she was a quiet girl who enjoyed good music, quoted poetry, and read good literature. Cornish realized that as a girl of many moods she had attracted different kinds of men, making the task of finding her killer all the more difficult.

A roll of film was found in a camera in her room but when it was developed the pictures proved to be just snapshots of several girl friends taken on an outing. The missing pocketbook offered a possible lead and several of her closest girl friends were asked to examine the purses in her room to determine which one was gone. The girls then were taken on a trip through the wholesale district where they located an exact duplicate. Photographs of the model were distributed to newspapers with readers urged to notify Scotland Yard immediately if the missing purse was found.

Cornish had no difficulty in tracing Nora's sailor boy friend. He became a red-hot suspect when he

was found to be lying about his movements prior to the murder. Although he claimed he had been at his base all that week, Navy records disclosed that he had received leave twice in a week to go to London.

Confronted with this evidence the sailor soon poured out a story of how he had been torn by doubt as to the virtue of his intended bride. He had seen Nora on the Saturday before her murder, obtaining his first pass for this date. When he took her up to her room to say goodnight he was shocked when he saw a man's umbrella there. Nora said she had borrowed it from the father of a friend when she had been caught in a sudden downpour.

The unhappy youth returned to his base but after stewing about the story of the umbrella for several days, he managed to wangle a two-day pass. He returned to London and played detective for two days attempting to follow his fiancé around without her knowledge. He lost track of her both nights and still did not know whether she was true to him when he had to return to quarters. He was able to present an unshakeable alibi for the night of the murder and he was released.

Field was still working with detectives, making nightly tours with them on the lookout for the tall man in plus fours. But it fell to the lot of a suburban patrolman to pick up a tall slender suspect wearing knickers. Though he had no moustache

and no gold front tooth, his description did tally fairly closely with the one supplied by the electrician.

Scotland Yard was notified and Field, who was on tour with detectives, was ordered by radio to rush to the local station house. He was shown the plus fours the suspect had been wearing but said the brown was too light in color. But when the man himself was led into the room, Field walked right over to him and remarked, "Hello, I haven't seen you since that night at the tubes."

The prisoner denied ever having seen Field before. When the discrepancy of the gold tooth was pointed out, the electrician shrugged. "I thought I saw a gold tooth, but he certainly looks like the same man."

Moving with traditional British caution, Superintendent Cornish ordered the suspect detained for further questioning but did not book him for murder.

The case appeared to be solved when several days later Cornish announced he would present evidence at a coroner's inquest. Newsmen flocked to the hearing ready to write how Cornish of the Yard once again had woven a net around the suspect, but when the inquest opened they found the Superintendent had other ideas. He presented a parade of witnesses, all of whom definitely cleared the suspect in plus fours. As the hearing continued, the reporters suddenly realized that Cornish actually was demolishing

the story told by Field and that he suspected the electrician really was the killer.

While Field had been busy riding around with detectives, Cornish was conducting a quiet but searching investigation into his background. He presented evidence that Field had been in debt for two pounds, the exact amount that the stranger in plus fours had supposedly handed over to him. Field could offer no signed agreement covering the work to be done nor could he supply the name of the man who had hired him.

The Superintendent marshaled other facts. Field was the last known person to have the keys to the vacant store. By his own story, he was in Piccadilly Circus about the time of the murder, and he came into possession of the two pounds at the same time Nora's purse had disappeared. Although married, Field had the reputation of being a woman-chaser and he played the bright-light district, where he could have met Miss Upchurch.

At the same time Cornish meticulously pointed out that he had not been able to locate the missing keys or the girl's handbag, so Field's story could not be disproved.

The puzzled coroner's jury promptly cleared the man in plus fours but refused to take any action against Field, returning with a verdict of willful murder by some person unknown.

It was apparent to observers that Cornish of the Yard was in danger

of losing his first case. He would need more evidence to move against Field and he had none.

Even though he continued to work on the case, almost two years passed with no results. Then in July, 1933, Field unexpectedly surrendered himself to police for the murder of Nora Upchurch, explaining, "I want the whole matter cleared up."

Field confessed the murder to Cornish. He said that he had met Nora several months before the strangling and had fallen for her. They met on clandestine dates. He claimed that one night he admitted to Nora that he was married and the girl promptly began blackmailing him, demanding payments or threatening to inform his wife of their affair. On the night of the murder he met her at a busy corner and lured her to the vacant store for which he had the keys. He took her in through the back door and, once she was inside the stockroom, strangled her.

He proved to be hazy about many details, claiming that he could not remember all that had occurred. Asked about the missing purse and keys, Field said he had buried them under a tree about ten miles from London. The electrician took police to the spot but even though the officers dug and sifted around all the trees in the areas, they were unable to find either the keys or the purse.

The confession appeared to be a complete vindication of Cornish and

once again mention was made of how he had never lost a case. But, as it turned out, it was the lull before the storm. The only evidence against Field was his confession and when he took the stand he not only repudiated it but said he had taken the unusual step of confessing to a crime he had not committed in order to clear his reputation.

He painted a picture of himself as an innocent man forced to walk around with a cloud over his name as a result of the unjust suspicions of Superintendent Cornish. Because of the police official's constant prying he had been unable to get a job and found that former friends were shunning him, afraid they would be called in for questioning if seen in his company.

Standing erect in the prisoner's dock, he said he could not allow the situation to continue. "While matters stand this way, I know people are thinking that I might have done it. I could not do anything or say anything to change their minds. I wanted to be arrested and put on trial to have my innocence proved in a court of law."

The presiding judge glanced at the prisoner and remarked that he had chosen an unusual method, the understatement of the year.

"It is the only way," Field replied. He pointed out that his confession was vague because he did not know the details, since he had not murdered Nora Upchurch.

With the validity of the confession

in doubt and the failure of police to produce such vital evidence linking him to the crime as the missing handbag and keys, the case against Field collapsed and the judge in his charge to the jury directed them to return with an acquittal verdict.

The case was lost forever to Cornish of the Yard. Even if the keys and handbag now were found, it would be impossible to try Field again. He stepped out of court a free man, though Cornish still was convinced that he was the killer. The Superintendent realized now that Field had talked but not enough; he had cleverly omitted the details from his confession in order to get away with murder.

Even so, the case was far from over. Several weeks later Field confirmed Cornish's theory when he publicly boasted that he had committed the murder. He sold his detailed confession to a newspaper, in which he still claimed that he had murdered Nora because she was blackmailing him. In it he wrote, "I have never had any regrets. A judge has classified blackmail as a moral murder, so it is my contention that she got what she deserved."

Cornish of the Yard was grim when the second confession appeared in print. "He thinks now that he's cleverer than the law and he'll try something else," he predicted to fellow newsmen.

However, it seemed that Cornish had made his second mistake. Field seemed to enjoy the white light of

notoriety for a brief time and then he quietly enlisted with the Royal Air Force. He kept to himself and performed his duties as storekeeper efficiently, avoiding getting into trouble.

As the years passed, Field was forgotten. In April, 1936, the public and Cornish of the Yard had a new interest. Mrs. Beatrice Sutton was found strangled in the bedroom of her home in Clapham, a London suburb. The killer had vanished and officials could find no motive for the crime. Separated from her husband, she had lived quietly and did not run around with men. Her husband, who was shocked by the crime, was cleared when he was able to account for his movements on the night of the murder.

Cornish was assigned to the difficult case. He studied the meagre evidence, hoping to find a clue that somehow had been overlooked. He read again the description of how the strangling had been done and startled his colleagues by suggesting that the murder had been committed by the forgotten man, Field. He called for the dusty files on the murder of Nora Upchurch and read aloud from both reports. The method of strangling of both women was almost identical. Nora's body had been covered with newspapers; Mrs. Sutton's body was covered with pillows.

A request was made to the Air Force for information on Field. The former electrician had gone AWOL

in March, the week before the murder, and was still absent.

The long hours of work Cornish had put in previously checking on Field now began to pay off. He had a list of every woman the electrician had known then and officers were assigned to visit them. The missing soldier was found at the home of one.

When Field was brought into Cornish the scene was a playback of the one three years earlier. Once again Field was suspected of murder by the Superintendent. Once again there was no evidence to link him with the victim. And once again Field voluntarily confessed.

"I murdered Mrs. Sutton," he calmly told Cornish of the Yard. "I did it because I want to commit suicide and I can't carry it through myself."

He explained that he had run away from the Air Force in order to destroy himself. On the day of the murder he had purchased a bottle of poison but found that he did not have the courage to take his own life. Then he met Mrs. Sutton on the street, told her he had no place to sleep and asked if she would put him up for the night. The kind-hearted woman invited him to her home.

"I went there solely to murder," he said in his signed confession. "I put my hands around her throat and pressed for two or three minutes. She struggled a little at first and then lay still. I relaxed my grip, but then she moved her legs and I

gripped her throat again, and after two or three minutes she did not move again. I put two pillows over her face because I did not want to see it. I left the flat, closing the door behind me. I had never seen the woman before in my life, and had not the least malice toward her. I just murdered her because I wanted to murder someone. I had not the nerve to take my own life. Now the hangman can do it for me."

Understandably, Field's confession to his second murder caused a sensation in England. British newspapers, by law, are forbidden to comment on a case before trial, but there was no lack of discussion about it in every pub in the land. And everybody asked the same questions: What was Field up to now? Would he pull the same sort of trick he did in the Upchurch murder?

Hours before the trial got underway extra officers had to be rushed to Old Bailey to hold back the large crowd seeking entry to the small courtroom.

Once again history repeated itself in a situation too unbelievable to be dreamed up by any fiction writer. The only evidence against Field was his voluntary confession and Field again promptly repudiated the confession he had given to Cornish.

The only part of his confession that had been true, he told the jury, had been his desire to die and his lack of nerve. "So I thought I would stick myself in the position where somebody else would do it."

The position he stuck himself into, he maintained, was his false confession to the murder of Mrs. Sutton.

He said he had met Mrs. Sutton several days before the murder and she had allowed him to sleep in a small rear room. He had been in his room on the night of the murder and heard her quarreling with a man. Their voices suddenly stopped, there was an abrupt silence for some ten to fifteen minutes and then he heard the man leave.

When he failed to hear Mrs. Sutton moving about, he went to her bedroom, knocked on the door, but received no reply. He then opened the door and found her dead on the bed, covered with the pillows. That was all he knew about the crime. He had not seen the killer and doubted that the other was aware he was in the house.

The courtroom spectators looked at Cornish of the Yard wondering how he would counteract Field's new story. Although no mention of the Upchurch trial had been allowed, the facts were familiar to everybody there.

Cornish leaned over and whispered to the prosecutor who then announced to the court that the Crown had a witness in rebuttal.

The Scotland Yard man had not been caught this time. Immediately after Field's arrest he had interviewed the woman at whose home the suspect had been picked up. Field had come to her only several

hours after Mrs. Sutton had been murdered. He seemed excited and told her, "I have done something. I will try and tell you what it is, but if I can't you will see it in the newspapers." He said nothing beyond that.

The woman repeated Field's words on the witness stand. The prosecutor hammered home that four-word sentence, "I have *done* something," and suggested that since he admitted being in Mrs. Sutton's home it could only mean that he had done in Mrs. Sutton, murdered her.

Field had talked just four words too many after his second murder. There were no missing keys or purse to begot the issue this time and he was found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to be hanged.

In an appeal for a new trial before the Lord Chief Justice of England, his attorney admitted that Field's story was fantastic but raised the possibility that both confessions had been due to mental disturbance. The court turned down the suggestion and denied the appeal.

On June 30, 1936, Field was hanged at Wandsworth Prison. Although, officially, he was executed for the murder of Mrs. Sutton, as far as Cornish of the Yard was concerned, Field went to the gallows for the murder of Nora Upchurch. Cornish never would have connected Field with the strangling of Mrs. Sutton had not the details of his first lost case been etched so deeply in his mind.

The Baby Sitter

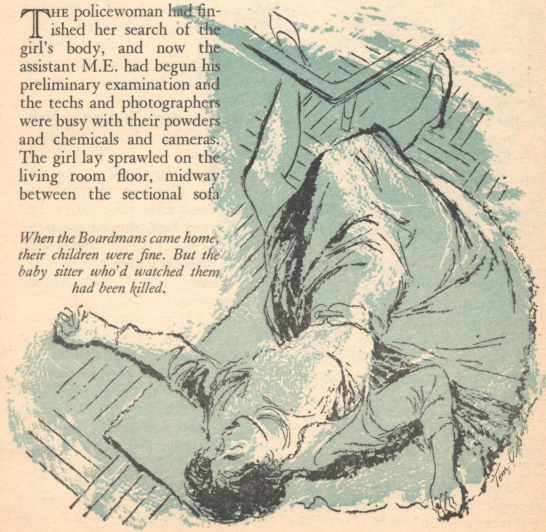
A Police Files Story

BY JONATHAN CRAIG

and the plate-glass coffee table. She had been very young, though well-developed, with long, tapering legs and unusually small feet in velvet ballet slippers. Her facial features were small and even, and her short, black hair glistened like washed coal. She'd probably been ex-

THE policewoman had finished her search of the girl's body, and now the assistant M.E. had begun his preliminary examination and the techs and photographers were busy with their powders and chemicals and cameras. The girl lay sprawled on the living room floor, midway between the sectional sofa

When the Boardmans came home, their children were fine. But the baby sitter who'd watched them had been killed.



tremely pretty, but after a girl has been strangled to death it's difficult to be sure.

"About how old is she, Doctor?" I asked.

The assistant M.E. pushed the girl's skirt back down to her knees and shifted his position to peer again at the dark marks on her neck. "Fifteen," he said over his shoulder. "Certainly no more than that."

"She looks at least seventeen or eighteen."

"They'll fool you. This girl's taller than most fifteen-year-olds, and much more filled-out. But that's all she is, Steve. Fifteen."

"Any doubt about the cause of death?"

"Very little. I wouldn't swear to anything, until after the autopsy, but there's every indication she died of manual strangulation. Note the gouged places left by someone's fingernails. I'd say somebody — almost certainly a man — simply got her throat in his hands and held it there till she was dead. There isn't another mark on her body."

"Any flesh under her nails?"

"I can't be sure. It doesn't look that way, but we won't know definitely until we put the scrapings under a microscope."

"How about assault?"

"There again, I can't be positive until I get her to Bellevue. Offhand, I'd say no."

I nodded. "There's no sign of a struggle, and none of her clothing was torn or deranged. I guess we can

forget about that part of it, unless you or the techs come up with something else." I got out my notebook and pencil. "How close can you come to the time of death, Doctor?"

He straightened, pursed his lips thoughtfully, and glanced at his wrist watch. "It's a couple of minutes past midnight," he said. "Taking one factor with another, Steve, my best guess is that she was killed about ten-thirty. I can't narrow it down to the minute, of course, but I'd say that if you worked on the assumption that she was killed no earlier than ten, and no later than eleven, you'd be within very safe limits."

I wrote it down in my notebook. "Anything else you can tell me?" I asked.

He shook his head. "No, I'm afraid not. Not now. I may have more for you after the autopsy."

I thanked him, slipped the notebook back in my pocket, and walked over to where my detective partner, Walt Logan, stood talking to the policewoman.

"How'd it go with your search, Rosie?" I asked. "You find anything Walt and I should know about?"

Rosie is rather plain and short and tends toward roundness. She shrugged. "Where would I find it? All that girl's wearing is a dress and rolled stockings and shoes. Not another stitch."

"What about her handbag?"

"I don't think she had one. I found a handkerchief with a dollar

bill and a lipstick tied in the corner. She wouldn't have bothered doing that, if she'd had a handbag."

"Uh huh. Well, thanks anyhow, Rosie. Sorry we got you over here for nothing."

Rosie shrugged again, smoothed down the skirt of her uniform, and started toward the door. "Think nothing of it," she said. "It's all in the night's work."

I turned to Walt Logan. "The M.E. says the girl's only fifteen, Walt."

Walt is tall and thin and studious-looking. You'd think he was a little frail. Actually he's as hard as a nightstick. "I'll be damned," he said, glancing over toward the girl. "I had her pegged for more than that."

"So did I. She was strangled by hand, the M.E. thinks, and there's no evidence of assault. She was killed somewhere between ten and eleven."

Walt nodded. "Mrs. Boardman's lying down, Steve. She's still pretty shaky."

"Her husband with her?"

"Yes."

"Well, we might as well get started. You keep a watch on things here, and I'll go back and talk to him."

Walt walked over to where the girl lay and I left the room and walked along the corridor to the bedroom. I reached it just as Mr. Boardman stepped into the corridor. He was still in evening clothes, a

graying, florid-faced man with heavy eyebrows and a build like a professional wrestler.

"She feels a little better now," he said. "I gave her a sedative."

"The doctor out there would have been glad to prescribe for her," I said.

"Perhaps. Personally, I didn't see the necessity." He closed the door behind him and gestured toward another door at the far end of the corridor. "I assume you want to talk to me again," he said brusquely. "We can do it down there."

I followed him along the corridor to a nursery where two small children lay sleeping, and through that to a room outfitted with a white, kidney-shaped desk, white book shelves, and two white leather chairs. Boardman sat down in one of the chairs and motioned me to the other.

"Now," he said. "What can I tell you that I haven't already told you?"

I got out my notebook again and studied it for a moment. "Let's see if I have everything straight," I said. "You and Mrs. Boardman got home from your party at a few minutes past eleven. You left the party early because Mrs. Boardman wasn't feeling well, and you happened to look at your watch when you came out on the street. It was exactly eleven, and it couldn't have taken you more than four or five minutes to reach here because the party's just down the street, at Four-twenty-seven. You and Mrs. Boardman entered the house to-

gether, walked through the entrance hall together, and came into the living room together. You saw the body, realized from the appearance of the girl's face that she was dead, and called the police." I looked at him questioningly.

"That's right," he said.

"The girl's name is Doris Linder," I went on. "You've engaged her several times as a baby sitter during the last four months. You met her through a business acquaintance of yours who recommended her to you when your previous sitter left the city. Your friend vouched for her, and you didn't bother to check into her background. You were usually able to reach her on the phone when you needed her, and both your wife and you liked her and found her dependable and cooperative. She seldom talked about herself, but you gathered that her parents were dead and she lived with an aunt."

Boardman gestured impatiently. "Yes, yes. Must we go over all this again?"

I closed the notebook on my finger and leaned back in the chair. "Did Doris ever mention being in trouble of any kind, Mr. Boardman?"

"No."

"She ever mention any enemies?"

He shook his head. "As I told you, she said very little about herself. She never even mentioned any friends or acquaintances, let alone enemies. Why should she? After all, she was merely our baby sitter."

"Baby sitters often have their

friends visit them while they're on a job," I said. "She never asked your permission to have a boy friend over while you and Mrs. Boardman were out?"

"No. I'm well-acquainted with that practice, sir. I made it quite clear to Miss Linder at the outset that under no circumstances was she ever to have company while she sat for us."

"Baby sitters sometimes don't concern themselves too much with permission," I said. "They have a habit of entertaining friends, whether their employer likes it or not. My partner and I think there's a good chance that Doris knew her killer, because she probably opened the door to him. There's no sign of forcible entry, and that lock on your front door is almost impossible to pick. It would take a professional locksmith."

Boardman seemed to have directed his thoughts elsewhere. "The children," he said, more to himself than to me. "Thank God they weren't harmed." He shook his head musingly. "The little devils, they slept right through everything."

And perhaps they didn't, I thought. But in any case, the children were too small to talk.

"Did you check your valuables, Mr. Boardman?" I asked.

"Yes, of course. There's nothing missing."

"Did either you or Mrs. Boardman call here at any time during the evening?"

"It wasn't necessary. We had full confidence in Doris. She knew where we were and had the telephone number there. If she'd felt there was something to tell us about the children, she would have called."

"And neither of you came home for a moment, to make sure everything was all right?"

Boardman smiled at me coldly. "I just told you we didn't even feel it was necessary to phone. Doesn't it follow that we wouldn't have thought it necessary to make a personal visit?"

"Just a routine question, Mr. Boardman."

His eyes narrowed slightly, the brows pulling together into an unbroken gray line. "Was it?"

"I thought you might have seen someone hanging around the building. The girl was killed within an hour of the time you got home, Mr. Boardman. Maybe only minutes before."

He nodded slowly, and some of the hostility went out of his eyes. "I see. . . . No, there was no one loitering around. At least I saw no one."

I got to my feet and turned toward the door. "I guess that'll be all for now," I said. "We'll want to talk to your friend. The one who recommended Miss Linder to you. Where can we reach him?"

"Doris sat for him and his wife just this afternoon, as a matter of fact," Boardman said, rising. "His name's Charles Steward. He and his

wife live at Five-seventy West Seventy-fourth."

Boardman walked back with me as far as the bedroom where his wife was resting. He went inside and I continued on down the corridor to the living room.

Walt Logan was just hanging up the phone. "That was Barney," he said as I came up to him. "He couldn't find a detective in a hurry, so he went over there himself."

Barney was Barney West, the squad commander. I'd called him and asked that he have someone locate Doris Linder's address, through the phone number Boardman had given us, and send a detective there to tell Miss Linder's aunt what had happened. I'd also asked that a preliminary interrogation be conducted to determine whether the aunt had any information that might give us a lead.

"Did Barney come up with anything?" I asked.

"Nothing that'll help much. The aunt says the girl didn't have any boy friends at all, that she knew about. Never even paid any attention to boys, to hear the aunt talk. Barney says he figures Doris just never bothered to tell her. She and the aunt weren't very close, Barney thinks, because right now the aunt's worried more about having to talk to cops and reporters than she is about what happened to her niece. He says she's one hell of a cold fish,

and he's a guy who's seen some cold ones in his time."

"Boardman says he thinks the parents are dead. Did Barney find out for sure?"

"It seems the father died when Doris was ten, and the mother died last winter. This was in Los Angeles. Doris came here right after her mother's death."

"Any other relatives?"

"No. Just the aunt. She told Barney that Doris had been baby sitting all summer, so she'd have money for new clothes when school started this fall."

"And that's it?"

"That's it. Barney says he's sorry but he can't do us much good. He's going to take the aunt over to Bellevue for the identification. That way, we'll be able to get an ID before they start the autopsy."

I nodded. "Well, if an old-timer like Barney can't dredge up anything from the aunt, there's no point in you or me trying it."

"That's for sure. . . . What now, Steve?"

I led Walt over to a far corner of the room and lowered my voice. "I think we'd better check a little more on Boardman, Walt," I said. "I get a very low reading on that guy."

"Yeah? Why?"

"I can't quite put my finger on it. He's got a hard-guy front, but that may be just his way. But I smell something phony. I wasn't too sure of it till I asked him if either he or

his wife had dropped over here to see about the children. He's sharp, and he knew right away what I was getting at. He got his feathers up a little, and so I told him I'd asked about it only because I thought he or his wife might have seen someone hanging around here."

"And?"

"And that's what got me to thinking pretty hard about him. He knew damn well I was just covering up, Walt, and yet he pretended to go along with it."

Walt nodded thoughtfully. "I see what you mean."

"That party's probably still going on," I said. "Suppose you drop over there and talk to people. See if either Boardman or his wife was absent at any time."

"You really think a woman could have done that much damage? It takes a hell of a lot of strength to choke someone to death, Steve. Almost all choke jobs are done by men."

"I know. But that's no reason to chalk Mrs. Boardman off completely. She's a big, sturdy woman and she outweighs Doris by a good fifty pounds. If she had enough motive she'd probably find enough strength."

"You see a motive?"

"I saw Doris Linder. That's a very desirable girl, Walt. She'd be enough to start trouble anywhere."

"You think Boardman might have got too interested in her?"

"He's human, isn't he? You put a man near a pretty girl often enough

— especially a very young one with a habit of wearing nothing beneath her dress — and almost anything can happen. If it did happen, and Mrs. Boardman found out about it — then you've got the makings for just what happened tonight."

"I'll get over there right away," Walt said. "What's that address again?"

"It's right down the street. Four-twenty-seven."

"Pretty handy, isn't it?"

"Either of them could have left the party, killed Doris, and been back inside of fifteen minutes."

"What's Boardman's full name, Steve? I missed it."

"William C. And listen, Walt. Be diplomatic over there. Make sure those people at the party understand this is just a routine check."

"Sure. You want me to come back here when I finish?"

"You might look in for a minute, to see if the techs have come up with anything, and then I think you'd better start talking to the people around the neighborhood. Hit the bars and drug stores and so on. Maybe someone saw something. It happens. Me, I'm going over to see a man named Charles Steward. He's the one who introduced Doris to the Boardmans. Doris used to sit for the Stewards, too, and maybe she opened up more around them than she did the Boardmans. They might be able to give us a lead."

After Walt left I called BCI and asked for run-throughs on William

Boardman and Doris Linder. I held the wire while the search was made, and by the time I'd lit a cigarette and smoked it halfway down, the clerk at BCI came back on to say that there was no record on either Boardman or Doris. I thanked him, had him switch me to Communications, and asked them to contact the Los Angeles police for the purpose of determining whether or not Doris had ever been in trouble there and, if so, whether it was anything that might have followed her to New York. Next I called a teen-age stool with a wide acquaintanceship among the younger neighborhood gangs and their feminine counterparts, and asked him if he'd known Doris or heard anything about her. He told me he had not and offered to start tapping his sources immediately. I agreed, told him to leave a message for me at the squad room if he learned anything, and hung up.

Then I went out to the Plymouth. Walt and I had come in, and headed uptown to see Mr. Charles Steward.

The man who opened the door to my ring was somewhere in his early fifties, very tall, with thinning brown hair, eyes that seemed fixed in a permanent squint, and shoulders far too stooped for a man his age. The skin beneath his chin hung in loose folds, as if he had recently been sick and lost weight, and the skin itself was sallow and unhealthy looking. But his voice, when he asked me

what I wanted, was unusually deep and strong.

"Are you Mr. Charles Steward?"

"Yes."

I showed him my badge. "I'm Detective Manning, Mr. Steward. I'd like to talk to you."

His eyes widened a little. "What's happened? Is it Eileen?"

"Eileen?"

"My wife. Has something happened to her?"

"No, Mr. Steward. This is something else. May I come in?"

He opened the door wide and stood back to let me step inside.

We took chairs in the living room and I said, "This is about Doris Linder, Mr. Steward."

He nodded. "She's in trouble?"

"Let's just say the police have an interest in her."

"I'm supposed to let *you* ask the questions, is that it?"

"It usually goes much better that way, Mr. Steward. Have you known Doris long?"

He eyed me narrowly, as if he didn't much care for my manner. "About six months," he said at last. "She started sitting for us in February, I think. . . . Yes, February."

"What's your impression of her?"

He shrugged. "She's a very nice person, so far as I know. She's always gone out of her way to help Eileen and me, and she seems to think as much of the baby as we do. She's the best sitter we ever had. I've recommended her to my friends, and they all say the same."

"Such as Mr. Boardman?"

"Yes. And Willie — that is, Mr. Boardman — will speak just as highly of her, I'm sure. He's a lifelong friend of mine, and I wouldn't have recommended her to him if I hadn't been entirely sure of her." He paused. "If she's in trouble, and there's anything I can do to help her, I wish you'd let me know."

"I will," I said. "Right now, we'll have to go along pretty much the way we have been. Does Mrs. Steward share your opinion of Doris?"

"Of course. Otherwise she'd never permit her in the house. Neither of us would trust our youngster to just anyone, Mr. Manning."

"Is your wife here now?"

"No. Her mother took ill this afternoon and Eileen went over to take care of her. She'll probably spend the night. That's why we had to call on Doris this afternoon. It was an emergency, and I couldn't get away from the office to take care of the baby myself. When Eileen found I couldn't leave, she called Doris. Luckily Doris was able to come right over. She couldn't stay later than eight-thirty, though, because the Boardmans were going to a party and Doris had promised she'd sit for them."

"I see. Has she ever told you much about herself, Mr. Steward? She ever mention being in trouble of any kind, or having any enemies?"

"No, she never has. She's really not very talkative. We're on friendly terms with her, of course, but I

doubt whether she would have confided anything like that."

"She ever mention her boy friends?"

"I think she must stick pretty much to one guy. At least I've never heard her speak of any others. A boy named Les . . . Les Ogden, I believe."

"You know where I can reach him?"

He frowned. "I'm not positive, but I think he works for a florist. Down in the Village. I'm not sure where I got the idea it's a florist, but the name of the place is Marland's."

"She and this Les getting along all right?"

Steward smiled a little. "Well, you know how it is with kids that age. Everything's a crisis and the end of the world's always just around the corner. He called her this afternoon, just after I got home. From her end of the conversation, I'd say the road for Les was beginning to get a little rocky."

"Why so?"

"Well, you know how girls that age tend to dramatize things. Boys too, of course. He was apparently trying to make a date with her, but she kept on making one excuse after another for not seeing him. She was very feline, very waspish, but in no hurry to hang up. It was amusing, in a way, though I felt a little sorry for poor Les, and when she finally did hang up I guess I must have been grinning. Anyhow she apologized for holding up the phone so long. I

asked her if she'd ever heard the saying about the way women ran away from men—that they ran away from them in circles—but she didn't think that was very funny. And that's what I meant when I said kids always dramatize things. She'd been so haughty and disdainful when she talked to him on the phone, and then she turned right around and told me he was so jealous of her that she was afraid for her life. I could hardly keep a straight face. She made poor Les out to be a real terror."

"Have you ever met this boy?"

He shook his head. "I'd like to, though. I'd give him some good advice. This puppy-love business is a lot more painful than most grown-ups remember. And with Doris so pretty, and dressing so provocatively and all, I imagine Les is in a terrible sweat about things."

"You said she got the phone call right after you got home this afternoon. What time was it exactly, do you know?"

"It was about a quarter to eight, I think. I remember she said something to him at the very beginning of the conversation about having to be at the Boardmans by eight-thirty. I gathered he wanted to see her after she got off here, and she was insisting there wouldn't be time."

"Did she say where this boy was calling from?"

"Yes. She said he was calling from the place where he works. It seems he had to work late tonight, but his

boss had said he could take a couple of hours off, and Less wanted to use them to see Doris."

I got up and moved to the phone on the table at one end of the sofa. "Do you mind if I use this, Mr. Steward?"

"Not at all."

I glanced through the directory, found the number for Marland's Floral Shop, and dialed the number. I had little hope that it would be open at this hour — though several florists in New York do stay open most of the night — but the phone might have been switched over to an answering service, and in that case I would have no trouble locating the proprietor. After the phone had rung long enough to tell me my guess about an answering service had been a wrong one, I hung up and looked through the directory again. There were only four private phones listed under Marland, and I started calling them in order.

I reached the proprietor on the third try. He told me Les Ogden's first name was Leslie and that he lived in a rooming house on West Fifty-first. I warned him against trying to contact Les, and then called the Boardmans' number to tell Walt Logan our case had suddenly turned very hot and that I was on my way to pick up Ogden for questioning. One of the techs told me Walt had not returned. I decided against trying to reach him at the party where I had sent him to check on the Boardmans.

I hung up and walked back to Mr. Steward. "Thanks for your help," I said. "I'll be leaving now."

He'd been listening to every word, of course, and now he searched my face intently, as if he could read some answers there. "This trouble Doris is in — it's pretty serious, isn't it?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Steward," I said. "I can't discuss it with you."

He nodded slowly, still studying my face, then got up and crossed to the door and opened it for me. "Well, as I said, if there's anything my wife and I can do to help her . . ."

"We'll let you know, Mr. Steward," I said. "And thanks again."

Leslie Ogden lived in a hall bedroom on the third floor of a run-down brownstone just off Tenth Avenue. He was a well-built young man, about nineteen, with crew-cut blond hair and features that were small without being effeminate. He had opened his door almost the instant I knocked on it, and now he stared at me with the kind of anxious wariness that comes when you expect trouble and realize there's nothing you can do about it.

I showed him my badge, closed the door behind me, and leaned back against it. The room was small and hot and held the dank, aged smell that long-time rooming houses all seem to have. There was a narrow bed with an Indian blanket thrown

across it in lieu of a spread, an ancient dresser, a straight chair with a stack of paperback novels on it, a few pin-ups stuck to the walls with Scotch tape, and that was all.

Ogden reached for the pack of cigarettes in his shirt pocket, then changed his mind and sank down slowly on the bed, all without saying a word or taking his eyes from my face.

"Most people are a little surprised when a cop comes around to see them at this hour, Ogden," I said. "But you're not. Why is that?"

"Never mind the cat-and-mouse routine," he said tightly. "I haven't done a goddamn thing, and you know it."

"That so? Well, let's talk a little, anyhow."

"Talk all you want. See what it gets you."

"When's the last time you saw Doris Linder?"

Ogden's eyes widened with what seemed to be genuine surprise. "Doris?"

"Yes, Doris. When's the last time you saw her?"

"Jesus," he said softly. "So she's the one."

"Answer the question, Ogden."

He leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees, and stared hard at the floor. "I saw her a couple of days ago," he said finally.

"You didn't see her tonight?"

"No." He spoke absently, his thoughts apparently far away.

"Talk to her by phone today?"

"No."

"You didn't call her at Charles Steward's house and have a fight with her?"

"I don't even know any Charles Steward, for God's sake."

"What kind of work do you do at that florist's shop?"

He shrugged. "All right. So you've got a big gold badge and that means I have to go along with the gag. I help out around the place, that's all. I wait on customers and make up floral pieces and work on the books some, and anything else the boss wants me to do. Next question."

"How many phone calls did you make today?"

"I didn't make any. The boss doesn't like it."

"I understand you're Doris Linder's steady boy friend."

He laughed shortly and bitterly. "Man, you've got one hell of a sense of humor. You fracture me, you really do."

"What's your relationship with her?"

"I've had a few dates with her, that's all."

"You worked late tonight, did you?"

"That's right. Keep the gag going. Sure I worked late tonight. This is our big day. I went in at noon and didn't get off till midnight."

"How many times did you leave the shop during that time?"

"Well! So you're finally going to get around to it. I didn't leave at all, except that once."

"When was this?"

"Boy, you like to stretch things out, don't you? You know when I left. It was right after I got that phone call."

"When, Ogden?"

"It was about nine-thirty when I got the call, and I started up there right away."

I studied him for a moment. "To Mr. Steward's house, you mean?"

"I told you I don't know any Mr. Steward. What're you trying to build, anyhow? What's all this production for?"

"Listen, Ogden . . ."

He got to his feet suddenly and took two short steps toward me. "No. You listen to me, copper. I've had just about all of this I mean to take. You hear? You think you're going to shake me down, you're wrong as hell. This is one slimy deal you and your buddy aren't going to get away with."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Just what I said. When you first got here I figured you were the same guy that called me. But you haven't got the same kind of voice."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Ogden."

"If you think I'm going to stand still for this, you're crazy."

"Stand still for what?"

"For a dirty shakedown. Your buddy called me up and said some jailbait kid was going to charge me with statutory rape, but that he was a lawyer and all it took was a couple of hundred bucks and he could get

it fixed for me. He said he knew the right people and that . . . Hell! Don't make out you aren't in on it, copper. I know how you crooked cops work with these shysters. You figure that badge'll throw a scare into me and I'll come up with the dough just that much faster. All right, go ahead. Haul me in and see if you can make it stick."

I didn't say anything.

"The only thing that surprises me is that the girl turns out to be Doris," Ogden went on. "I never figured her for a deal like this."

"Slow up a bit, Ogden."

"So where was your buddy? He was so damned anxious to talk it over with me. What happened to him? I went there, and stayed there. I must have waited almost half an hour."

"Where?"

"You know where. In front of that house at Four-nineteen West Sixty-first."

I felt my jaw slacken. The street number he'd just given me was the address of the house where Doris Linder had been murdered. And not only that. Ogden had said he'd left for there about nine-thirty, which would have put him there around ten. And he'd waited almost half an hour after he got there, which meant he'd not only been in the right place but that he'd also been there at exactly the right time.

I must have stared at him for fully half a minute without saying anything at all. Ogden's story had

stopped me cold. There had to be an angle, of course. Nobody as intelligent as Ogden would make such an admission without a damn good reason behind it. But what could it be? The only thing I could think of offhand was that Ogden had been seen there, knew it, and had worked up his fantastic story of a shakedown to explain his presence there. . . . But I discarded that possibility almost as soon as it occurred to me. For Ogden to tell such a story, and then top it by admitting that he had a solid motive for the murder — because Doris Linder had been a party to the shakedown — would be doing everything but pulling the switch in that little room up at Sing Sing.

"Let's go, Ogden," I said.

"You're taking me in?"

"Yes."

He surprised me. He went along with no protest at all.

Walt Logan was waiting for me in the squad room. I took Ogden back to one of the interrogation rooms, locked him inside, and went back to talk to Walt. I briefed him on my movements since I'd seen him last and asked him what he'd found out at the party where he'd gone to check on Mr. and Mrs. Boardman, the couple in whose living room Doris Linder had been killed.

"Neither of them left the party, Steve," he said. "They were with two other couples the entire time

they were there. They and these other people were playing cards, and neither Boardman nor his wife even left the table for more than a couple minutes at a time."

"Uh huh. Well, I think our boy Ogden is going to do wonders for us on this case, Walt. The sooner we start working on that story of his the better."

"There's one thing, though," Walt said. "Boardman got a phone call while he was at the party. The guy who was throwing the party took it. Somebody wanted to know if Willie Boardman and his wife were there, and when the host said yes and that he'd call him, this other guy hung up. The host said he figured it must be one of Boardman's real close friends, because nobody else ever calls him Willie. Seems he can't stand the name, and he won't let anybody but a few old cronies of his call him by it. Anyhow, the host assumed that whoever had called must have wanted to be sure Boardman and his wife were there before he came over. He started to tell Boardman about it, and then he got busy with something else and forgot it." He paused. "Hey! What's wrong? You look like I'd just called you a dirty name."

"Did you check the bars and the drug stores in the neighborhood," I asked.

"Sure. Nobody saw anything. A guy made a couple of phone calls from the booth in the candy store across the street, but that's all.

There was nothing suspicious about him. The guy that runs the place said he'd never seen him before, and that the only reason he noticed him particularly was that he came in two different times."

"Does he think he could identify him?"

"Sure."

"Walt," I said, "we've got work ahead of us tonight."

"That's what we get paid for, isn't it? Putting guys in the tank?"

"Not always," I said. "Sometimes we can keep them out."

"That's a nice switch. Where do we start?"

"With Mr. William Boardman."

We did start with Mr. Boardman, and we worked hard and steadily throughout the remainder of the night. And it paid off. At eight-forty the next morning we were sitting in a department car parked outside Charles Steward's house on Seventy-fourth Street.

When Steward came out Walt touched the horn ring and I beckoned him over to the car. I got out, held the rear door open for him, and followed him inside.

"You boys are still on the job, I see," Steward said pleasantly. "I assume this means you've reconsidered my offer to help Doris. I spoke to my wife on the phone, just before I left the house. She's quite concerned about her. She made me promise that —"

"You *received* a call, too, didn't you, Mr. Steward?" I asked. "About an hour ago?"

His smile faded. "Why, yes. Yes, I did. Very strange, too."

"Was it?"

He frowned at me. "I don't follow you at all. Was it you that called me?"

"No. As a matter of fact, Mr. Steward, you received two calls."

"Yes, I did. Do you mind telling me what this is all about?"

"Not at all. Both calls were from people you called last night. We had them call you to see if they could identify your voice. They could, and did. You have a very distinctive voice, Mr. Steward. Both of these people are absolutely certain you're the one who called them."

He stared at me speechlessly, his lips moving, as if he wanted to say something but couldn't summon the words.

"In a few minutes we're going to take you over to a candy store," I said. "The one you went to to make your calls last night."

He suddenly found his voice. "Are you crazy? Why, I never —"

"Oh, but you did, Mr. Steward. You made two calls, both from that candy store. The proprietor remembers you and he'll be able to swear you were there."

Walt Logan had turned around in the front seat and was watching Steward carefully. "You called the Billings' residence, because you wanted to make certain Mr. and

Mrs. Boardman were there," he said, "You knew they had gone to the Billings' party, but you had to be sure they hadn't left for a few minutes to check on the children. You didn't want to get there while they were there, and you didn't want them to walk in on you. Your other call was to Leslie Ogden with a cock-and-bull story about a shake-down. You wanted to set him up, Steward. You knew you'd have to scare him bad enough to make him take off from work and make the trip uptown, and you figured the shakedown story would do the trick. What you hoped for, naturally, was that somebody would see him at the place you said you'd meet him. But even if they didn't, you'd still leave him with no alibi."

"What are you trying to do to me?" Steward asked incredulously, "My God, I . . . What are you trying to *do*?"

"We talked to your friend Boardman last night," I said. "You told me you were lifelong friends, and you referred to him once as Willie. That might not sound like much to you, Steward, but little things like that go a long way in this business. Especially when we found out that only a very few people are permitted to call Mr. Boardman by that name. You're one of them. In fact, you're the only one in New York just now who has that privilege."

"This is ridiculous," Steward said. "Why, my lawyers will —"

"Let's hope you have good ones,"

I said. "You'll need them. I was about to say that the man who asked for Mr. Boardman and his wife at the party last night — he used the name Willie, too. It made me think of you, Mr. Steward. And once I started thinking about you I began to see how Leslie Ogden's story might not be so fantastic after all."

Steward started to get to his feet, but I put out an arm and pushed him gently back into his seat. "You told me that Doris and Leslie had words on the phone yesterday evening, just before she left to baby-sit for the Boardman's. But that never happened. We've talked with Les's boss, and he tells us that Les used the phone only once during the entire day, and that was when he talked to you, late that evening. The boss is certain of it because he and Les weren't out of each other's sight at any time from noon till Les got your call and left. They were so busy they even had food sent in. Les made no phone calls at all, and his boss will swear to it."

Steward sat perfectly still, his thin body rigid, staring straight ahead of him with eyes that had suddenly grown moist.

"We know what you did," I said, "but we don't know why. We know you'd heard Doris talk about Les enough times to know where he worked and when he worked late, and we know you were aware the Boardmans were going to that party. With your wife away for the night, you had a good setup. After you got

over there you simply made your telephone calls and went to work."

Steward turned sick eyes toward me. "You rotten louse," he whispered.

"Why? Because my partner and I didn't let you get away with choking a girl to death and trying to frame her boy friend for it?"

"But you don't understand! She had it coming! Oh, God, you don't know how much she had it coming. She was going to ruin me. She would have killed my wife. She deserved to die, I tell you!"

"Why?"

Because she was going to swear she was pregnant and that I got her that way. Did you hear that? She was going to my wife and to my boss." He paused for breath. "God, I had to kill her. I had to."

I glanced at Walt and nodded, and he started the car and pulled it out into the morning traffic.

"It was her fault," Steward said. "The way she acted when my wife wasn't around . . . God, you just don't know what it was like. She'd come over in a real thin dress with nothing under it and show herself

off to me. She drove me crazy. I—I couldn't help myself. Nobody could."

"It wasn't necessary to kill her, Steward."

"But it was, I tell you! She wouldn't go to a doctor. Not until she got the money. That's what she wanted. She'd found my bank book and she knew I had four thousand dollars saved up and she wanted every penny of it. And she meant business, too. She wouldn't have hesitated a second to do exactly what she said she'd do, and she wouldn't take anything less than the whole four thousand. She hated it here and she wanted to go back to California. She . . ." He broke off.

Steward said nothing more until Walt started to park the car in front of the station house. Then he looked at me with eyes that were too full of fear to focus properly, and touched my arm.

"What'll happen to me now?" he asked.

But I knew he didn't really expect an answer. He already knew the answer. Nothing else could have filled his eyes so full of fear.





Scarecrow

ANDY TEVIS, the rural mail carrier, A tooled his jeepster at an angle to the curb directly in front of a No Parking sign outside the county courthouse in Clayville. He was a small, aging man, but he seemed made of taut wire and saddleleather as he leaped from the ancient vehicle with the agility of a self-important squirrel. It was the first Saturday of the month, court day, and there was a big crowd in town from the nearby farming areas. The loafers in front of the courthouse, most of them wearing overalls and mackinaws, regarded Andy curiously as he pushed his way through,

BY DAVID ALEXANDER

Nobody liked old Jeff Purdy, so there were no broken hearts when Purdy's Scarecrow killed him.

Dick Sheldon

and a few called after him, "Hey, Andy! What's the matter? You got a letter from the President?"

Tevis did not bother to answer them. He hurried to a basement entrance of the courthouse with the urgent concentration that always marks the bearer of disastrous tidings. He entered the mildewed, neo-Classical building that dated to pre-Civil War days and made his way down a narrow basement corridor that was dimly lighted by fly-specked, low-watt bulbs. He found a heavy door with the legend "Sheriff's Office" inscribed on it and pushed it open.

Inside, Sheriff Charley Estes and his deputy, Coates Williams, were bent over cards and pegboards playing cribbage. Andy called out loudly, "Charley, old Jeff Purdy's dead!"

Estes, a lean, weathered man, totted his score carefully before he spoke. Then he said, "You mean Martha finally killed the ornery old boy, Andy?"

"I didn't say that," Andy answered. All I said was he's dead. Been dead five-six days, maybe a week now. The Scarecrow don't keep much track of time, I guess."

"He must be plumb ripe by now," Coates Williams commented. "There ain't no embalmers out near Rocky Farm that I've heard of."

"The Scarecrow says he got drunk and fell off'n the big cliff into Winding River," Andy said. "He must of floated all the way to the Mississippi by now, I guess, the way that river

runs when the spring thaws come."

"Don't call Martha 'Scarecrow,'" the sheriff said to Tevis.

That's what her own husband called her!" the little man flared. "And she looks like a raggedy scarecrow, if you want to know it. Something on a broomstick, that's what she is. I guess you ain't seen her in recent times. I have."

"I knew her all right when she was young," the sheriff replied. "She was Martha Parsons then and there wasn't a prettier girl in Jarrod County. I walked out with her myself when I was a young buck. She's not more than pushing forty-five right now, today. Old Jeff must of been pushing sixty-five, at least. It was a plain cruel shame the way her old man married her off to that ornery drunk, twenty-five years ago, at least, it was. She's been out there on that God-forsaken farm ever since, never seeing anybody and never coming into town. If she's a scarecrow now, Jeff Purdy made her one."

Andy Tevis said, "I guess we never would have known old Jeff was dead, even, if the Scarecrow — Martha, I mean — didn't order one of them Burpee flower seed catalogues every living year. It was the only mail they ever got out there. I guess even the government didn't know they was alive because they never even got no income tax forms. I don't know what the hell she wanted with them catalogues. You couldn't grow flowers on that rocky

land. You couldn't grow nothing but weeds and pigs and poke salad."

"How'd you find out?" Coates asked.

"Because the catalogue come and I had to drive up that old road to Rocky Farm that nobody's used since Dan'l Boone shot the b'ar. Damn near broke my axle. When I got there I just reached out and stuck the catalogue in the mailbox. Damn place gives me the creeps. No smoke from the chimney. No light in the window. House ain't had a coat of paint or even whitewash since Sherman come a-burning through these parts. Damn place leans in the wind like the town drunk on Saturday nights. Dismal, that's what it is."

Andy Tevis bit off a chew of tobacco, softened it in his mouth and chewed on it. He spat at a brass cuspidor, missed. He said, "I was starting up to turn around back to Route 16 when I heard this screeching that would curdle up your marrow. It was the Scarecrow calling to me. She was standing back there in the doorway and waving her skinny arms at me to come in. Well, I didn't want to, but I went."

He spat another brown stream and hit the mark this time. The cuspidor rang like a tiny bell. Andy shook his head. "First time I was ever inside. Never saw nothing in all my life to equal it. Broken-down furniture and dust thick on everything and empty corn-squeezings jugs all over the place and a stink to make you wish

your head was stuffed. I tell you that woman's plumb crazy daft, and don't lose no bets on it. She made me come inside and set down and didn't say nothing about her old man being deader'n a doornail all the time. She said I had to have a cup of tea with her, and nothing I could tell her would stop her from brewing me one. Honest to God, I got right sick, just looking at her. Part of the rags she was covered with was plain old burlap bags, I swear it. And it's a living cinch she hadn't washed herself all over in a year, but there she was brewing me a cup of tea, like she was some fine lady in a big, white house. She got some cups out of an old trunk and told me they were the fine china she'd got for a wedding present. At least she washed them and they wasn't broken up like everything else in the place. Then she give me this cup of tea and said maybe I'd like some brandy in it! Brandy! She said it was from her father's cellars. Hell, old man Parsons didn't have nothing but the chamber pot beneath his bed when he passed away."

Andy spat and nodded with satisfaction when the cuspidor rang. "The brandy she gave me was the corn-squeezings old Jeff made in his still. Then she told me. She said she was planning to do a lot of entertaining now that her husband was dead. She said she wanted me to invite all her friends from town out to see her. She mentioned you especially, Sheriff, by the way. Then she told me

her husband had got drunk and beat her up and then stumbled up to the cliff and fallen off into Winding River some five-six-seven days ago, she wasn't quite sure when. I asked her why she hadn't reported it to the authorities, and she said she couldn't walk fourteen miles to town and that the old Model T that's rusting on the place didn't run no more and she didn't know how to drive it if it did. So I gulped down the tea and corn squeezings and finished up my route and come into tell you to get up there."

Charley Estes said, "Poor Martha. I was right sweet on her when I was young but I couldn't marry her because I was working in the livery stable and studying correspondence courses and didn't have an extra pair of britches to my name. Jeff Purdy had just been left a little money and old man Parsons married Martha off to him. She was pushing twenty, maybe and Jeff was forty-up. They had a good farm for awhile in east Jarrod County, but Jeff drunk that and all the money up and moved out to that Rocky Farm on the river that no redneck's ever scrubbed a living out of in fifty years. They been there ever since. You reckon the poor woman's had anything to eat, even, since the old bastard died?"

Andy Tevis said, "She said there was some side meat in the smoke house. She's been eating off of that and turnip greens."

"Poor Martha," Charley Estes

said, picking up his cards and scrutinizing them.

"Ain't you even going out there?" Andy Tevis asked.

"Sure," said the sheriff. "I'll have to get Martha and bring her back here and find some place we can keep her. She can't live out there all alone if she's as bad off as you say. But there ain't no hurry. He's been dead a week, he'll stay dead till we finish this game. Coates is six bits up on me."

Coates picked up his cards and they resumed their game of cribbage. The taut little mail carrier stood by, fidgeting. Finally he said, "Charley, you think she killed her old man?"

Charley Estes played a card and grinned. He said, "How do you like that, Coates?" He turned to Andy Tevis, said, "I guess maybe I'll have to ask her while I'm up there."

Tevis spat at the cuspidor, turned his back on the card players and left the office in disgust. He was glad it was court day. There would be plenty of rednecks at Dan Squires' saloon who would listen to his story.

The sheriff and his deputy finished their game unhurriedly, and in the end, Charley Estes regained his losses and won a dollar-ten. They put on mackinaws because it was early spring and there was still a chill in the air and it was getting on toward late afternoon now. They left the office and piled into a 1952 Buick sedan outside the building.

Coates said, "Think we ought to pick up the coroner?"

Charley Estes shook his head. "If he's in the river, there ain't no body, and if there ain't no body we don't need a coroner," he answered.

They drove to the east end of the town and the plankings of the old covered bridge over Clear Creek set up a thunderous rattling as they crossed it to reach the high-crowned road called Route 16. They drove in silence for awhile, both seeming at peace with the red-gashed southern clay that formed the country landscape. At length Coates Williams spoke.

"Charley, you think this could really be a murder?"

Estes shrugged. "I wouldn't know," he said. "God knows, she had reason enough to kill him. It was a scandal the way he used her all their married life. Just after they moved to Rocky Farm she was going to have a child, but he wouldn't call a doctor in. Delivered the baby himself, I heard, and it was stillborn. Martha almost died, too. She had black eyes and broken arms from his beatings half the time. Once a fellow who'd been fishing in Winding River drove by there and he swore he heard screaming and saw Martha tied up to a post like an animal and old Purdy was blazing drunk and stripping the clothes right off her with a blacksnake whip. Then he got himself a hired girl from the county orphanage a long time ago. No more than fifteen, she was. He used to come into Squires' saloon on Saturdays in those days and he'd brag

how he'd kicked Martha — the Scarecrow he called her; by then — out of his bed and taken the hired girl in to keep him warm. I flattened him with my fist once for calling her the Scarecrow. He starved her. It's no wonder she got skinny and lost her looks."

"I can't remember ever seeing him, even," Coates said.

"You're young," Charley replied. "He couldn't get more credit and he quit coming to town. He didn't do nothing much but make moonshine in that still of his. Sold some, but drunk most. He had some pigs for meat and turnips and weeds for poke salad and he got his kicks, after the hired girl run away, just torturing poor Martha. He was the meanest man who ever lived."

"It sounds like murder, all right," Coates declared.

"Maybe," said Charley, his face tight. "But it might be kind of hard to prove."

They drove for ten miles on the highway. Finally they came to a rutted, red-clay road that was littered with boulders as large as a man's head. Charley turned the car north on the dirt road.

"Jesus!" said Coates. "We need an Army tank for this."

The car jarred and jolted and careened over the dirt road. Once they hit a boulder and had to stop entirely after they almost skidded into the ditch. There was no sign of life except for a red fox that scurried across the road in front of them.

It took them longer to cover the four miles than it had taken for ten on the highway. It was twilight when Rocky Farm came into view.

When Coates Williams saw the decaying frame house he exclaimed, "God almighty! What's holding it up?"

Rocky Farm was covered with scrub and tangled weeds and boulders. It sat at the bottom of a high cliff that rose precipitously to frown down upon the rapid-running Wind-ing River, a stream colored by the red clay of the southern land that seemed blood-red in the sunset.

There was a tiny curl of smoke from the broken chimney now and the feeble glow of a lamp through one of the windows. Charley Estes parked the car outside the rusting, broken barbed-wire fence and he and his deputy walked up the weed-grown path to the crumbling house.

Charley had prepared himself for it, but when he saw the woman in the shadowy doorway, his stomach went sick. Unclean, mottled flesh that sagged in flaccid sacs on her bones showed through the many rents in her rags. Her graying hair was wildly matted and her mouth was almost toothless. He knocked her teeth out, Charley thought. To make the horror worse, the ragged woman's misshapen mouth was smiling at Charley expectantly.

Charley cleared his throat. He said, "Martha? I'm Charley Estes. You remember me?"

Her voice was cracked, like a

voice that has not been used too often. She said, "Why, of course! You took me to the barn dance that the Knights of Pythias gave! And we had strawberry ice cream at the church social and I spilled some on my nice yellow dress. I've been expecting you. I told the man who brings my flowers to invite you out for tea. Come right in and bring your friend. I'll put the kettle on and show you my flowers and we'll have a pleasant time. I just love entertaining."

They entered the littered, unswept room with the broken furniture. It seemed to be a combination kitchen and living room. She motioned them toward rickety chairs, busied herself filling a tea kettle from a hand pump. She put the kettle on the stove in which a fire was burning. She said, "The tea may be a little dry, I've saved it so long, but it's been in a metal can, tight sealed. It's fine tea, the kind we served in my father's house."

Once she had the tea kettle going, she went to the table. It was spread with clippings from the seed catalogue. She had cut out the pictures of roses and African violets and dahlias and had apparently been busy tacking them to the bare walls when her visitors arrived. She said, "I've always loved flowers. They're sent to me every year, you see, by an admirer. Such lovely flowers. Very rare, some of them, too. But my husband, Mr. Purdy, did not fancy flowers. He's dead now, you

know, so I can have all the flowers I want and lots of parties with tea and brandy. Only there's no cake today, I'm afraid."

"When did Purdy die?" the sheriff asked.

"Oh," the woman answered airily, as if it were of no consequence at all, "I think it was around a week or so ago. I'm really not quite sure. I've been so busy with my flowers and entertaining. Why, you're the second visitors I've had this very afternoon!"

Estes said, "Tell me how he died, Martha."

She turned her thin back on him and went to the stove. She said, "The water's boiling. I'll give you your tea."

She shook tea leaves that seemed to have crumbled to dust out of a canister into an old flowered teapot. While they were brewing, she said, "It was an accident."

"Tell me about it, Martha," urged Estes, his voice patient and kind.

"We mustn't let the tea spoil," she said. She put cups in front of them. They were good china, with flowers painted on them, Charley noted. They had been scrubbed to gleaming brightness that contrasted with the squalor of the room. She said, "This is my best china. A wedding present. I've hardly used them. Mr. Purdy did not enjoy tea parties."

The hands that held the delicate teacups were sandpapy rough and

big-knuckled and crossgrained with black dirt and the filth-caked nails were crinkled as tiny clamshells. Estes thought of the times, long ago, he had held Martha Parsons' hands when they were courting and going to socials and barn dances. They had been tiny then and very white and soft as the petals of a garden flower.

Estes said, "I've got to tell you this, Martha. I'm the sheriff now. This here young fellow is named Coates Williams. He's my deputy. You know what that means, Martha?"

The Scarecrow who was pouring his tea said, "Why, of course, I do, Charley! It means you're a big success in life, just like I always knew you would be, working and studying so hard. Do you wish a little of my father's fine brandy in your tea, gentlemen? We'll drink to your success, Charley."

The sheriff looked dubiously at the cloudy corn whisky in the half-gallon jug and shook his head. He said, "Coates and I are temperate men, Martha, and we're on duty. We'll just have the tea. Now, Martha, when a man dies under what you call suspicious circumstances, like Jeff Purdy did, it's the duty of the sheriff and his deputy to investigate and to ask some questions, you understand?"

Martha's swimming eyes regarded Estes for a moment and there was a puzzled look in them. She said, "Well then, ask all the questions you want, Charley, but it will kind

of spoil our nice tea party. There was nothing suspicious about Mr. Purdy's death, though. He just walked up that path to the cliff while he'd been drinking and fell off into Winding River and got carried downstream."

"Did you see him fall off, ma'am?" Coates Williams asked.

The woman said, "Why, I suppose so. Why, yes, of course I did. I mean he was drinking a lot and I sort of missed him and I went looking for him and I saw him standing up there on the top of the cliff and then he staggered and tumbled off into Winding River. That's all there was to it."

Coates looked at Estes as if expecting him to continue the interrogation. The sheriff tried to gulp down the bitter tea. He said nothing.

"What time of day was this, ma'am?" Coates asked.

"Oh, late. I mean it was eveningwards, about dark."

"It was dark?"

The woman nodded.

"But you said you *saw* him fall. How could you see him if it was dark? It's quite a piece from the house to the cliff. A hundred yards, at least, I'd say."

The woman looked appealingly at Charley Estes. The sheriff did not meet her gaze. He sipped his tea noisily.

Finally Martha Purdy said, "Why, now I remember! There was a big bright moon!"

Coates Williams rose from his

chair. He crossed to a corner where an old shotgun was standing against the wall. It was a dusty corner but the gun was not dusty. As he crossed the room, Williams said, "You say he died about a week ago. There's been rain and clouds over the moon for at least a week in these parts."

"Not out here!" the woman flared. "We've had big, bright moons every single night. They shine right through the window into my eyes and keep me wakeful."

Coates picked up the gun, smelled the barrel, broke it, examined the chambers. He said to Estes, "One barrel's been fired, not so long ago, either, I'd guess. There's a shell in the other one and the safety was left off."

"That's right dangerous," the sheriff commented. "You better click that safety on, Coates. A jar could fire it and hurt somebody."

The woman licked her dry, cracked lips and once more she looked appealingly at Estes. This time he met her eyes briefly, then he gulped the remainder of the tea in his cup and said, "Martha, that's right fine tea. How about another cup?"

"Why, *certainly!*" the woman exclaimed, seeming delighted. "It's imported tea, very costly, you know. I'm sorry there's no more cake, but I've had so many guests, it's all gone. I must remember to bake another tomorrow. I use an old family recipe. You remember when my mother's cake won the blue ribbon at the county fair, Charley?"

Charley nodded dumbly as she poured more of the dark, vile brew into his cup.

Coates said, "Ma'am, tell us what happened just before your husband fell off the cliff into the river."

The woman said, "I don't wish to speak evil of the dead, young man. But Mr. Purdy was a violent man when he was drinking and he hit me and knocked me down on the floor unconscious, so I don't know too much about what *did* happen, to tell the honest truth."

Coates' eyes narrowed. "You say you were unconscious?"

"That's right. He blacked my eye and I hit my head when I fell down."

"But you said you *saw* him fall. How'd you see him fall if you were unconscious?"

Martha Purdy inhaled audibly and clamped her hand to her mouth. Finally she stammered, "Well, I mean I was unconscious there on the floor for a minute and then I sort of woke up and I missed Mr. Purdy and I went out to look for him and I saw him fall off the cliff into the Winding River."

"He was drunk and violent and he knocked you down but you went looking for him," said Coates doubtfully. "Tell me, when was the last time that old shotgun was fired?"

Martha said, "Is your tea all right, Charley? Can't I give you a little to warm yours up, young man? You've hardly touched your cup."

Coates shook his head and waited. Charley Estes swallowed tea.

The woman said, "Mr. Purdy was quite a hunter. He — he liked to kill things. Little animals, like rabbits and squirrels, although he never even skinned them. He went hunting in the woods the very day he died. That's when the gun was fired last."

Coates said, "Let's step outside the house a minute, so you can show us right where you were standing when you saw your husband fall."

"No hurry," Charley Estes protested. "We haven't finished our tea yet."

"No use waiting till it's dark," Coates persisted. "It's almost dark already."

They went outside the rickety house. The woman was standing on the doorsill. An old tree cut off her view of the towering cliff, but she said, "I was standing here. Just inside the door."

Coates said, "But you can't even see the cliff from here, ma'am."

She said, "Well, I was a little farther out, I guess. I was kind of dazed from being unconscious on the floor. I don't just remember."

They moved out farther into the weed-tangled yard. The evening was falling fast now and in the gathering dusk the cliff above the river reared like some misshapen monolith. Coates stiffened, and exclaimed, "What the holy hell is *that*?"

There was a rock-strewn area at the base of the cliff. In the center of it stood something that resembled a human figure with outstretched arms.

Charley Estes said, "It's nothing, Coates. It's an old tree got hit by lightning years ago. The branches stick out like arms, the two lower ones that was left."

The old woman spoke hurriedly. She said, "It's a scarecrow. Mr. Purdy hung a scarecrow up to the tree. He didn't fancy birds. I liked to see them fly and hear them sing, but Mr. Purdy said birds were pesky things and he shot at them and built a scarecrow to frighten them away." She turned to Estes. "Mr. Purdy called me 'Scarecrow' sometimes when he was drinking. He called me that because I'm not pretty like I used to be, I guess."

Coates was walking toward the rock patch and the stunted tree. Charley Estes called, "Wait up a minute. Where you going?"

Coates said, "I want a look at this scarecrow."

"Come back here!" Charley Estes snapped. "It's dark and that's a rough path. No use wasting time with scarecrows. You going dauncy?"

Coates said, "I think we ought to look at it."

Estes shook his head. "I said come back and I'm the sheriff. That's an order, Coates."

Coates returned reluctantly and they went back into the house.

"I don't see any reason we shouldn't take a look, at least," Coates Williams grumbled.

"It's getting dark," said the sheriff. "I don't want you stumbling into the river, too."

The woman was lighting another coal-oil lamp. She said, "You two gentlemen must stay and have dinner with me. I just love having visitors. Mr. Purdy never liked social life, but I'm going to have lots of parties now, with all the fine china I got for my wedding present and never used. I'll go to the smoke house and get some meat and . . ."

Charley said, "No, Martha. Not tonight. Coates and I are married men and our little women are expecting us for supper. But we can't leave you out here alone. You need a rest a while in a hospital and have the doctors look you over and get fed up so there's some meat on those bones. After that, I'm going to see if I can't get you a job of some sort or other around the courthouse or cleaning up for some nice folks in town. You pick up whatever you need and put a wrap on and come with us."

"But I can't!" the woman cried, cowering away from him. "I can't go with you now!"

"Why?" asked Coates Williams. "Why can't you go with us?"

"Because there's things to do before I leave, that's why."

"What things?" Coates asked.

"Why, I've got to pack up all my wedding china and the trousseau clothes I never wore, and — and lots of things," the woman said.

"All right, Martha," Charley Estes said gently. "You do your packing and whatever else you've got to do. Coates and I are going in

to eat our supper. I'll drive back here in a couple of hours or so for you. You be ready."

He shoved Coates toward the door. Coates said, "Why don't we wait for her? There's no point in coming all the way back here tonight, Charley. Those last four miles are rough."

Charley Estes said, "I won't need you . . . I'll come back by myself."

They got into the car. They were both silent as they drove over the boulder-strewn clay road.

When they reached Route 16 at last, Coates said, "Charley, old Purdy was a hunter. Had been all his life, I hear. Hunters don't leave the safety off when they set a loaded shotgun in a corner."

Estes said, "Purdy was a drunk. You can't calculate the things a drunk might do."

The car sped over the high-crowned road and the night fluttered like dark moruning streamers.

Coates said, "That's a funny place to put a scarecrow, in that rocky patch there at the foot of the cliff, beside the river. There's not even any ragweed for birds to pick at."

Charley Estes did not answer.

Coates said, "He called her 'Scarecrow,' Charley. She must have hated him for that. Now just suppose — just suppose, I say — that she shot him there beside that stunted tree the lightning hit. The tree that's got two arms reaching out like a man. Just suppose she pulled him up and hitched his body to the

tree, like a scarecrow. You couldn't see it from the road. She would be the only one could see it — from the house. Did you notice the smell when that wind came up from the river, Charley?"

"Can't say I did," Estes answered. "Dead fish wash up when the river's running, anyway. And there's lots of skunks in this country, Coates."

Coates grunted doubtfully. "Just suppose she did what I said, though. Can you imagine what it was like the past week or so out there? The thing hanging to the tree and the old woman remembering all his drunken meanness while she stood there outside the doorway, screeching. I can almost hear her yelling at the thing — 'Scarecrow! Scarecrow! Scarecrow!'"

"You got quite an imagination, Coates," said Charley Estes. "Maybe you shouldn't be my deputy. Maybe you should be writing story books."

They were silent until the twinkling lights of Clayville and the hulk of the old covered bridge came into view.

Then Coates said, "Tell me the truth, Charley. Do you really think old Jeff Purdy's in the river?"

Charley Estes didn't seem to hear the question. He said, "You know, it was downright pitiful poor Martha wanting to stay on awhile to pack up things she never used."

"Yeah," said Coates. "Yeah, I forgot. She said that she had things to do. I guess the scarecrow won't be there tomorrow."

KNEELING, the boy stared in silent fascination at the rippling water which fanned out in an ever-widening circle, shimmering and rolling gently against the opposite side of the swimming pool. Earlier the ripples had been violent.

Thoughtfully he studied the high-water line where the wet concrete had turned from a sun-bleached grey into a dark, lustrous brown. But even now the pool's thick upper lip was drying quickly.

When the water subsided, the boy

Tim sat by the edge of the pool, watching the red color at the bottom. He knew everything was okay. He still had

shifted his attention to the flame-red patch of color in the depths. It was not moving now.

Finding it difficult to see clearly, he leaned forward from the hips until his freckled nose nearly touched the surface. A broad smile split his chubby face as the reflection appeared.

In turn, he grimaced fiercely and grinned at the image. Leaning back, he watched the reflection shrink, then bent forward again until the long bill of his baseball cap brushed the water.

The Watch

BY WALLY HUNTER



Instantly, the reflection was torn apart by tiny, skittering, newly-formed ripples. Heaving back from the edge, he sat on his heels, staring.

His thoughts wandered, but returned incessantly to an overheard conversation. Guiltily, silently he had crouched behind the big chair in the living room, listening.

"But he's too young for a watch. That's no present for a six-year-old boy. Tim's just a baby. Let's get something he'd really like." That was his mother.

"Name one thing," his father said heavily. "You name one thing and I'll agree. Wagons, capguns, tricycles, trucks . . . he ignores them. Maybe you'd like to try live animals again?"

"Oh no! Nothing alive!" The woman shuddered. "That white rat business cured me." She swallowed. "Let's talk about something else."

"Okay, okay," the man said, "but I'd like to try something more grown-up. Like a watch." Silence.

"Look, maybe he'll like a watch."

Her laugh was brief, brittle. "You really think so? I don't. He'll ignore it, or lose it. Really, it doesn't matter at all," she added sharply.

Instantly compassionate, one hand on his arm, she said, "I'm sorry, but he worries me. Tim's so distant . . . so far away." She brushed abstractedly at a stray wisp of hair.

"I know," his father's voice was troubled. "But what can we do? Good heavens," his voice rose, "we've tried everything."

"It's beyond me," the woman answered. "He's like a stranger. Sometimes when I speak to him, it's like walking on forbidden ground." Her worried look was out of place in the cheery kitchen.

"Now look," the man attempted brightness, "we're making too much of this. Why, he's just a little boy. He'll come out of it. Worrying won't do a bit of good."

Confidentially, then, "It's just growing pains. That's all, just growing pains."

Gravely the boy considered the remembered conversation. Different? He was different? How, he wondered, do you decide such things? But he was neither surprised nor bothered.

Sitting at the pool's edge, he was as composed as a meditating Buddhist priest. Abruptly, he thought of the watch. His face came alive. Anger lines furrowed his forehead.

Debbie should never have tried to take it. She was too little. Triumphant, he thought: It's mine, not hers. He considered this.

If the watch were lost or broken, it would be just as they said. They'd think he didn't care. Actually, he thought slyly, I don't care. But they think it's important.

He *had* grabbed the watch before she fell. Hadn't he? Frantically he jammed exploring fingers into the watch pocket of his blue jeans.

It was there! Carefully bringing forth the watch, he squeezed it possessively and then admired it at arm's length. Twisting the buckskin

cord between thumb and forefinger, he stared dreamily as the glittering surface reflected the sun's lowering rays in brief, bright flashes.

By ordinary standards, the watch was inauspicious. Corner drug stores sell them for three or four dollars. The boy knew this. Why was it so important he cherish it?

Parents were strange. Always watching his reactions. Like the birthday party when he got the watch. Just the four of them, Debbie, his mother and father had been there.

The party was okay. There was plenty of cake and candles, and everything, but it wasn't so good that anyone should get excited and sick like Debbie did. What a mess that had been.

After opening the package and finding the watch, he'd said "thank you." But he knew from the way they looked at him that they had expected more. It was strange.

Rising, he pushed clenched hands deep in his pockets and walked slowly away from the pool. On the patio, he vaguely considered a row of vari-colored chairs before choosing one.

Sighing gustily, he sat down and stared at the swimming pool. Nothing marred its glassy surface. From here, the red patch near the bottom was not visible.

I wonder, he thought, if I should tell them. Frowning, he considered. Usually they wanted to know everything. He thought on this. Yes, he

decided, they'd want to know about this too.

He made his decision. After dinner, that's when he would tell them. That would be a good time. His mother's voice, brisk, imperative, interrupted the meditations.

"Debbie! Timmie! Dinner time!"

The boy remained immobile, out of her view.

"Timmie! Do you hear me?" Her tone was impatient. "Bring Debbie! Dinner is ready!"

Deliberately, Tim leaned forward, dropped his feet on either side of the long chair and stood up. Pivoting on one foot, he swung the other leg over the chair and headed for the house.

Opening the door, he stepped into the warm, heady cooking smells. His father leaned against the refrigerator, scanning the evening paper.

"Where's Debbie?" his mother asked.

The lad was dismayed. He was going to tell them *after* dinner. He shrugged. Maybe it didn't matter.

"Answer me, Tim," the woman demanded.

"What?" the boy answered vaguely.

"Your mother asked you a question, Tim. Where's Debbie?"

"Debbie? Oh, she won't be in to eat tonight."

"She what!" The woman's voice was overloud.

"Debbie won't be in to eat tonight," he repeated, spacing each

word as though addressing a dull child.

Controlling his voice, the man asked quietly, "Why won't she be in to eat? Where is she, Timmie?"

"Oh . . . she's in the swimming pool . . ."

The woman gasped.

"Tim!" The man's voice was harsh. "This is no time for jokes. Where's your sister?"

The boy frowned. "It's like I said. She's in the swimming pool. She

tried to take my watch and I pushed her in. I timed her. She's been there seventeen minutes," he added proudly.

The woman screamed, a long, ear-piercing wail. Grey-faced, the man dashed for the kitchen door. Flinging it open, he raced outside.

Screaming shrilly, the boy followed. "Dad! Dad! It's all right! It's all right! I grabbed the watch before she went in! I've got the watch! I've still got the watch!"



What's Your Verdict?

No. 13 — The Sympathetic Friend

BY SAM ROSS

LOU GREEN wanted to be a foreman. He was sure he could be one, too — if only Ric Ragan would retire. But Ragan had been foreman for ten years, job after job, and Lou was still just another factory hand. After a while, Lou started to get jealous. Then he began to wish something would happen to Ric — at first something easy that would just keep Ric home on a pension, and later something final and fatal. From there it wasn't a very big step to thoughts of making that nice fatal accident happen, thoughts of murdering Ric Ragan. But Lou was too smart to do anything about such thoughts. He had a cousin on the Police Force and he had great respect for police science. He was sure they'd catch him if he killed Ric, so he just sat back and listened to his wife and got madder and madder.

"After all, that job pays more money," his wife would say. "And don't think we couldn't use it. There's keeping up expenses, and food and rent, and there's the bills . . ."

Lou knew about the bills. They made him madder than ever.

And then things started to happen to Ric Ragan. It was just a string of bad luck, the kind every man runs into sooner or later, but in Ric's case it didn't look as if it were ever going to end. First he was laid up with laryngitis. Then he lost his lucky charm — a scarred brown penny he'd carried for years. After that Ric was expecting the worst and made no secret of it around the factory. Ric lost three poker sessions in a row and began to get nervous. He lost a fourth and was convinced that fate was on his heels. And when his son came home with the news that the college he was attending had dismissed him for non-attendance, the dam broke. Ric would sit staring off into space for minutes at a stretch, his long dark face sad and still.

Lou expected Ric to be fired — but he wasn't. Lou waited around and listened to his wife some more, and then he got his bright idea. One day during lunch hour he went up to Ric.

"You know I've always been your friend," he said, "and I'm telling you it's this place that's doing

bad things to you. Move away. It's the best advice I can give you, as a friend."

But Ric refused to listen. A couple of days passed.

Then Mrs. Ragan packed up and left. She was sick, she said, of Ric's mooning around the house. She'd stood enough. She was leaving for good.

Ric still wouldn't even think about moving away, though, so Lou tried a simpler method — the fatal one. "You've had your life," he told Ric, time after time. "You're an old man and there isn't anything but disappointment left for you. If I were you I'd take the easy way out." His voice was always friendly now, and when he was advising Ric to "take the easy way out" it got warmer than ever. "As a friend," Lou said, "I'm telling you to be rid of the whole business. A couple of pills and you won't feel a thing."

At first it had no effect. But gradually Lou began to get his point across. After a few weeks the regular lunch-hour discussions centered around ways and means of suicide.

And one night Ric Ragan went home and took forty-eight sleeping pills. He never heard the nine A.M. whistle.

It was a fellow-workman, who'd heard a few of the conversations, who started the proceedings that led to a hearing. Lou found himself the defendant in a murder trial before he could turn around.

He admitted talking to Ric about suicide, even admitted advising it.

"But so what?" he asked the judge. "You can't hold a guy responsible for advice. If I told you to jump in the lake and you did it, does that make me a murderer?"

"Lou Green killed Richard Ragan as surely as if he'd shot him," the prosecution held. "The weapon was talk, but that doesn't make the crime any less."

"All I did," Lou smiled, "was to give my friend some friendly advice. What's criminal about that?"

Who was right?

What's *your* verdict?

SOLUTION:

Lou Green was right. According to law, since he wasn't present at Ric's death he could only be called an accessory before the fact — and, as such, he couldn't be tried unless the criminal (in this case, Ric, since suicide was the only crime at issue) was tried first. That, of course, was impossible, and Lou was set free.



Illustration by Ray Houlihan

Juvenile Delinquent



Everybody was sure the boy was a killer. Nobody even wanted to prove him innocent—except Manville Moon.

A Manville Moon Novel

BY RICHARD DEMING

I WAS having breakfast at my usual hour, noon, when Ed Brighton dropped by to see me. When I opened the door I was a little startled, not only because he hadn't visited my flat for some years now, but because it's always a little startling to be confronted unexpectedly by a man as big as Ed. He goes six feet six and weighs approximately two hundred and seventy-five pounds, most of it muscle except for a slightly rounded stomach.

When I had recovered from my surprise, I said, "Hi, Ed," and held out my hand.

He shook it jerkily, at the same time giving me a rather uncertain smile, and I got another surprise. He was stone cold sober.

But he had the jitters so bad he was nearly shaking apart. Which wasn't surprising. You can expect them if you suddenly sober up after keeping yourself at a certain alcoholic level for five straight years.

At forty Ed Brighton was still in pretty good physical shape in spite of his heavy drinking, largely because his job involved heavy labor and daily he sweated out a good deal of the whiskey he'd consumed

the night before. But his eyes were always a little puffy and he always smelled faintly of alcohol. At least before today. Today his eyes were perfectly clear and he smelled only of clean shaving lotion.

As I stepped aside to let him come in and he moved past me into my front room, I said, "I'm just having breakfast. Like a cup of coffee? Or maybe a coffee royale?"

He shook his head. "No whiskey, thanks. Maybe some coffee, if you don't have to make it extra."

I led him out to the kitchen, poured him the last cup from the pot and sat down across from him to resume my meal of sausage and eggs.

"You off the stuff temporarily?" I asked curiously.

"Permanently," he said.

I grinned at him. "Sure. I swear off permanently myself every time I get a hangover."

"I've got a reason to stop." He raised his coffee cup, spilling a little even though he held it with both hands.

"You thought you had a reason to start five years ago too," I said around a mouthful of sausage.

When he remained silent, I went on, "Maggie was a wonderful gal, and maybe losing her was an excuse to hit the bottle. But five years seems like a long time to need an anaesthetic. I've never preached to you before, because I believe in letting people live their own lives. But trading everything you had for the bottle wasn't very kind to young Joe."

He took another sip of coffee and managed to get the cup back on the saucer with only a faint rattle. "Joe's my reason for swearing off, Manny," he said huskily. "If it isn't too late. It took a sledgehammer over the head to make me see what I've done to him, but it's a permanent cure. I'll never take another drink as long as I live."

"You finally woke up to what a slum environment was doing to him, eh? I could have told you that three years ago."

"I wish to God you had." Then he added moodily, "Not that I'd have listened. I was too busy feeling sorry for myself to see what bringing a kid up in a neighborhood that breeds nothing but criminals would do to him."

I took a bite of egg. "Now, he isn't that bad, Ed. Joe's a little too big for his pants, but he's a long way from a criminal."

"That's what you think," he said with a mixture of savageness and despair. "He's in jail right now on a murder charge."

I laid down my fork and blinked

at him. "Young Joe?" I asked incredulously.

"Young Joe," he affirmed. "Or, more accurately, Knuckles Brighton, as he's known by his fellow members of the Purple Pelicans."

"The Purple Pelicans? What in the devil's that?"

"A so-called club," Ed said wearily. "Bunch of teen-agers. They all wear purple jackets and hats with purple bands. It's supposed to be just a social group, but in reality it's a juvenile gang. I think they must pull petty crimes like stealing hub caps and so on, because they seem to have a lot of spending money. I never stopped to wonder where Joe got his until this happened. I was too busy trying to make the distillers work overtime. But now I realize he's had a devil of a lot more to spend for the last couple of years than I ever gave him."

"A teen-age gang, eh?" I said thoughtfully. "One of those bunches that carry switch blades and zip guns?"

Ed nodded. "When they arrested Joe, they found a switch knife on him, and both a knife and a zip gun on the dead kid."

"What happened?" I asked. "The Purple Pelicans have a rumble with some other gang, and Joe accidentally killed somebody?"

Ed shook his head. "Worse. On something like that, they'd probably only stick him with manslaughter. He's clipped for pre-

meditated murder, for knifing the leader of his own gang. The cops think it was a fight over leadership. They caught me when I was drunk last night, and before I knew what had happened, and got out of me that Joe was vice-president of the damned club. I also kindly identified the murder weapon for them before I learned it had been found sticking in young Bart Meyers' chest."

He brooded a minute, then added almost as an afterthought, "Joe says he didn't kill the kid."

Ed explained that the knifing had taken place in the basement club room of the Purple Pelicans, and Joe had been caught practically red-handed. The police had raided the place on an anonymous tip that a marijuana party was in progress, and found nobody on the premises but Joe and the dead boy. Joe insisted he had walked in only a few moments previously for a pre-arranged meeting with the juvenile gang leader, and found him dead when he arrived.

But the murder weapon, still sticking in the boy's chest, was a hunting knife which had belonged to Ed Brighton for years. Ed hadn't had occasion to use it for years, and as a matter of fact had even forgotten he owned it, but he recognized it immediately because a small cross was burned into the plastic haft. It had been so long since he'd thought about the knife, he couldn't even tell the police where it had

been kept, but he assumed it must have been in a small trunk at the rear of his closet, which he used as a storage place for similar little-used items. The police assumed Joe had found it while rummaging through the trunk and had been carrying it around stuck in his belt with the jacket buttoned over it, as the knife didn't possess a sheath.

"What's Joe say?" I asked.

"That he never saw the knife before. He asked the cops with some logic why he'd carry a hunting knife when he already had a switch knife, but they just brushed that off."

"When all this happen?"

"Last night about ten. I was drunk, as usual, so I didn't really get into action until this morning, when I went down to headquarters to talk to both Joe and the cops. What I came to see you about, Manny, is . . . well, I don't know the ropes about stuff like this. I thought maybe you could talk to the boy, arrange for a lawyer and so on. And, if you think Joe's innocent after talking to him, poke around and see if you can uncover anything to clear him."

"Sure, Ed. Be glad to."

"About your fee," he said hesitantly. "I'm not very well fixed right now, but I make pretty good wages down on the dock when I work, and when I've been off the liquor awhile . . ."

He let it die off when he saw my face redden.

"Well, you do this kind of work for a living," he said defensively.

"Just mention it again and I'll flatten out your pointed head for you," I informed him.

"That'll be the day," he said in automatic retaliation, but I could see the relief in his eyes.

I'd known Ed Brighton for fourteen years, ever since I walked out of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum to conquer the world armed with nothing but a high school diploma and the blessings of tough old Father Eugene. Ed had been foreman of a dock-walloper gang I worked for down on the river front, and also a part-time fight trainer.

It was he who introduced me to the fight game and acted as my trainer for my three pro fights. When that career blew up in my face because the boxing commission discovered the manager I'd picked was crooked before either Ed or I discovered it, and I went to work as a private cop, the two of us still remained friends.

After his wife Maggie was killed in an auto accident, he started drinking heavily, drifting towards his new barroom pals. I lost contact with him after that but I still regarded Ed as a close friend. Ed never visited me, so the only place we could get together was in his own social environment.

And I didn't feel impelled to take up heavy drinking just to prove he was still my friend.

As he was leaving I told him I'd

drop down to Police Headquarters that afternoon to see what I could find out, and let him know what I learned either that night or the next day. I added that there was no sense going to the expense of a lawyer until we were sure we needed one.

2.

The relationship between me and Inspector Warren Day is a little hard to define. I suppose you could call it a competitive friendship. There's little either of us wouldn't do for the other, but a casual observer who didn't understand our peculiar relationship would probably think we hate each other's guts.

In the eight years I've known the chief of Homicide, I doubt that we've spoken a dozen courteous words to each other. But beneath the surface wrangling is a solid liking based on mutual respect, which neither of us would admit under oath.

When I walked into my irascible friend's office shortly after one P.M., he raised his skinny bald head to peer at me over his glasses, looked pained and automatically moved his cigar humidor out of reaching distance.

I said, "I brought my own today, Inspector," took a seat, produced a couple of cigars and offered him one.

He accepted it dubiously, sniffed it before sticking it in his mouth, then shook his head when I offered a light, preferring to chew. I don't know why Day is so particular about

cigar brands, since he rarely lights any of the half dozen a day he consumes, usually just chewing them down until they disappear.

As I lit my own cigar, he said, "If this is a bribe, Moon, it'll take more than a cigar to fix any murder raps."

"I didn't happen to kill anybody this week," I told him. "I'm just after information. Understand you've got a kid named Joe Brighton down here on some trumped-up charge."

The inspector's eyebrows raised. "Trumped-up? The young punk's a killer."

"Mind telling me what you've got on him?"

"Mind telling me why you want to know?"

"His father's an old friend," I said. "And I've known the kid since he was three. I'm sort of a foster uncle to him. His dad asked me to look into it and do what I could for the boy."

"Oh." The inspector was silent for a few moments while he adjusted his mental attitude. He'd been prepared to resist any request I made just to keep in practice, but my personal interest changed things. He isn't exactly unreasonable, even though he is approximately unreasonable.

Finally he said, "You can't do anything for him, Moon. His old man should have done something for him years ago. With a razor strop. It's a little too late to start now. Sorry the kid means something to

you, because he's as tough a nut as I've seen in a long time. He's a cinch for life at least."

"How about giving me the details," I suggested.

Usually I have to dig out bit by bit any information I get from Warren Day, even when it's something he intends to release to the newspapers as soon as I leave. This isn't because he likes me less than newsmen, but solely because he seems to derive some kind of fiendish satisfaction from making me work. But today he recognized I wasn't much in the mood for games and gave it to me straight.

"The switchboard got an anonymous call from some female about a quarter of ten last night," he said. "Claimed she was the girl friend of one of the Purple Pelicans, which probably makes her a teen-ager. The switchboard operator says she sounded young. She also sounded mad, as though she were getting even with her boy friend for something. She reported the gang was holding a reefer party in their basement club room. The place is at 620 Vernon, just south of Sixth. Fifteen minutes later the narcotics boys raided the joint and nabbed young Brighton just as he was running up the steps. When they shook him down, they found a switchblade knife over the maximum legal length in his pocket. Then they went on down to the club room and found the dead boy. Another seventeen-year-old named Bart Meyers.

He was still warm and the cops figured he hadn't been dead more than a few minutes when they walked in. There was no sign of a struggle and no evidence that anyone at all aside from the dead kid and Joe Brighton had been in the place that evening. The theory is that young Brighton stuck the knife in him unexpectedly before the Meyers kid could start to defend himself, because the dead boy had both a clasp knife and a zip gun in his pockets."

"What's Joe say?" I asked.

The inspector shrugged. "That he didn't kill the kid. Nothing more. Wouldn't give a reason for being at the club room, except that he was supposed to meet Bart Meyers there. Wouldn't say for what purpose. For that matter, he wouldn't even admit belonging to the Purple Pelicans, though the police know all about the gang and Joe was wearing the uniform. That's a purple jacket and purple hat band. Besides, his father let it out and gave us the added information that Joe was vice-president. He killed the kid all right. We traced the knife to his old man, who admitted he hadn't seen it around for some time."

"That doesn't necessarily mean Joe swiped it," I commented.

Day snorted. "He's the only person aside from his dad living in their flat. And his dad didn't kill Meyers because a dozen witnesses testified he was leaning against the bar in a tavern near his place from the time

he got off work at five until we located him there at eleven."

"Any fingerprints on the knife?" I asked.

"It had been wiped clean. By young Brighton, we think."

I puffed my cigar silently for a time. Finally I asked, "The police find any evidence of the reefer party?"

"Not exactly. They found a few home-made reefers in the dead boy's pocket. Also a heroin kit hidden behind a picture in a hole made by removing a brick from the basement wall. The whole works: syringe, needles, spoon and alcohol lamp, all in a little tin box. But no dope."

The heroin kit depressed me. Youngsters Joe Brighton's age fooling with dynamite for kicks. Flirting with a habit which ninety-nine times out of a hundred eventually leads users to one of three places: a penitentiary, a mental hospital or a morgue.

"Joe have any needle marks on him?" I asked.

Warren Day shook his head. "Or the dead boy either. But some of the club members must ride the stuff, or they wouldn't keep a rig right in the club room."

I said, "Did it occur to you this anonymous call may have been timed deliberately?"

"It occurred to us," he admitted.

"Yet presumably it came about the time of the murder."

"We're aware of it, Moon. We're not exactly dunces down here."

"Doesn't that smell faintly like a possible frame?" I suggested.

"Not necessarily. Maybe the girl knew the two boys planned to meet at the club room and have it out, and wanted the police to break it up because she was afraid whichever one was her boy friend would get hurt."

"Have what out?"

"Didn't I mention the motive we figure?" he asked. "This Bart Meyers was president of the club and Joe was vice-president. We think Joe was pushing for president, which is the polite title these juvenile gangs give their leaders."

I snorted. "You think a seventeen-year-old kid would kill somebody just to become president of a club?"

"It isn't a club," Day said. "They just call it a club. It's an organized gang modeled after adult criminal gangs. Adult gang leaders get bumped off by ambitious underlings all the time. Why shouldn't a juvenile gang leader get bumped occasionally?"

"Is this just a wild guess, or do you have some evidence of conflict between the two boys?"

"No actual evidence, but it's a little more than a wild guess. Call it an informed guess. We rounded up most of the Purple Pelicans last night and grilled them. About fifteen altogether. But we couldn't even get them to admit they'd ever heard of the gang, let alone that they belonged to it. We've had

enough experience with these teenage gangs to know how they operate, though. They don't elect officers; the toughest kid in the gang is president, the second toughest vice-president, and so on down the line. The president is expected to be able to whip everybody else in the gang. Any time another member thinks he's a better man, he can challenge the president. Then they have a fight, and, if the challenger wins, he's the new president. We think young Brighton challenged the Meyers kid and they met by prearrangement to have it out."

I said, "You couldn't even get that theory before a jury without substantiation."

Day shrugged. "We've got the knife as evidence, plus virtually catching the kid in the act. We don't need a motive."

I said, "The murder weapon strikes me as a little peculiar too. Why would the kid carry a hunting knife when he already had a switch blade?"

"You should see how some of the other Purple Pelicans were armed when we rounded them up," Day said sourly. "Half a dozen carried both sheath knives and pocket knives."

"But I understand this hunting knife didn't have a sheath. Kind of awkward to carry a thing like that just stuck under your belt."

"Maybe he only carried it when he expected trouble," the inspector said. "Look, Moon, we thought of

all these objections you're making. We've had nearly as much experience in evaluating evidence as most private eyes. Believe me, the kid is guilty."

"All right," I said wearily. "Mind if I talk to him?"

"I mind, but I don't see what harm you can do," Day growled.

Picking up his phone, he spoke into it and a moment later his chief assistant, Lieutenant Hannegan, stuck his head in the door. The lieutenant didn't say anything, because he rarely does, merely raising his eyebrows inquiringly.

"Moon wants to see young Brighton," Day said curtly. "Give him ten minutes."

Hannegan just nodded.

3.

Joe Brighton was stretched out on the drop-down canvas bunk of his single cell, but he couldn't have been very comfortable. The detention cell bunks are only six feet long, so four inches of him hung over.

When Hannegan unlocked the door, Joe pushed himself to a seated position, swung his oversized feet to the floor and self-consciously smoothed back his theatrically long hair. Hannegan locked the door behind me and moved away down the hall.

Joe had outgrown the habit of calling me Uncle Manny, but after knowing me most of his life, apparently he couldn't quite bring

himself to call me Mr. Moon. At the same time he seemed to feel I was too adult for the logical compromise of plain Manny, with the result that he hadn't called me anything for more than a year.

Now he simply said, "Hi."

"How are you, Joe? Your dad asked me to look in and steer you through this. Arrange for a lawyer and so on."

"Yeah?" he asked.

He didn't smile, but his attitude wasn't particularly unfriendly either. His long, big-featured face was merely warily morose. He rested gangling arms on his bony knees and let his hands dangle downward limply. They were big hands, knobby and powerful. I could see how his gang might nickname him Knuckles.

"What's the pitch?" I asked. "You actually knife this kid?"

He looked disdainful. "The blue-shirts are way out in left field. Why would I use a knife on Bart Meyers? I could whip him with one hand."

"Who did knife him then?"

Joe merely shrugged.

"Better tell me the whole story," I suggested.

While he considered me estimatingly, I said a little sharply, "Stop looking at me like I was a cop. I'm here to help you, and I'm only allowed ten minutes. You want to take this rap sitting down, or you want to give me something to work on so I'll have at least an outside

chance to prove your innocence? If you are innocent."

"I'm not looking at you like you're a cop," he said defensively.

"You're sure as the devil not looking at me like I'm your foster uncle. You want my help, or don't you?"

"What can you do?" he asked. "The blueshirts have got this rigged."

"The police don't rig murders," I said. "If it was rigged, the real killer rigged it. Probably one of your Purple Pelicans."

"Them? Nobody in the club would do a thing like that." When he gave me that estimating look again, I said in an exasperated tone, "For God's sake, kid, you're on your way to at least a life sentence, and maybe the gas chamber, for a crime you claim you didn't commit. You don't owe any fake loyalty to anybody. Anyway, I'm not a cop and I'm not going to blab your club secrets to anybody. My sole interest is to do what I can for you because your father's a friend of mine. Now open up. How many members in the Purple Pelicans?"

He brushed his hand over his hair again, hesitated a moment, then said reluctantly, "Around sixty."

The figure surprised me. Warren Day had said the police had managed to round up fifteen members for questioning, and had implied that was most of the gang. Apparently the police had underestimated its size considerably.

"Sixty," I said. "All of them such staunch friends they wouldn't dream of framing you?"

Joe reddened a little. "We don't pull stunts like that on each other," he muttered.

"Then what's your theory?"

"The Gravediggers, probably. A club down the other side of Lucas. The boys will take care of it."

"You mean go down and knock off their president in revenge? And frame the Gravediggers' vice-president? That'll be cozy. The two of you can hold hands in the gas chamber."

He popped his knuckles nervously. "Well, cripes, what can I do, Uncle Manny?"

His calling me Uncle Manny for the first time in over a year told me what his real mental state was beneath his surface indifference.

In a little softer voice I said, "Just spill everything you know or suspect, Joe. Start with how you happened to be alone with Meyers at the club room last night."

"That'll only make it sound worse," he said miserably.

"Spill anyway."

He looked at me a long time before responding. Then he shrugged hopelessly. "I gave Bart a challenge. A lot of the guys thought I should be president. It's been building up all year. We were supposed to meet at the club room at ten o'clock and go somewhere to have it out. That's why none of the other guys was around. They knew it was coming

off and stayed clear. But when I got there Bart was dead."

"You say you were going somewhere to have it out? You weren't going to fight at the club room?"

"No. We don't allow fights there. Bart and me just fixed to meet there."

"Where were you going?" I asked.

His bony shoulders lifted in a shrug. "Behind the car barns, maybe. Or some vacant lot. We'd have decided that after we met."

"When a fight for the presidency takes place, are there certain rules?"

"Sure," Joe said. "You can't use nothing but your hands. That's how the guys would know this was a bum rap. They know I wouldn't use a knife and they know we wouldn't fight in the club room. Besides, Bart had on his jacket."

When I only looked puzzled at this, he explained. "Our jackets cost fourteen bucks apiece. We don't even wear them on a rumble. Nobody in the club would fight without taking his jacket off first."

I asked, "If the Gravediggers framed you, how'd they know you planned to meet Bart last night?"

"Everybody knew. The Purple Pelicans wouldn't spread it around, but the auxiliary knew all about it too, and some of them pal around a little with members of the Gravediggers' auxiliary."

"What are these auxiliaries?" I asked. "The members' girls?"

"Yeah. Only they have to be taken in."

I took this to mean the girl friend of a member didn't automatically become an auxiliary member, but had to be approved by either the club or the other auxiliary members, or perhaps both.

"So you're reasonably certain the Gravediggers knew of your planned meeting with Bart, then?"

"Sure. That stuff gets around fast."

"How would they get at that knife your dad owned?"

He laughed a little sardonically. "Our flat hasn't been locked in years. What's there to steal except a lot of empty whisky bottles?"

"The police say some girl phoned in anonymously at a quarter of ten to report a reefer party was going on at the club room. Which is why the cops happened to arrive just when they did. Any idea who the girl would be?"

His face darkened angrily. "First I heard that," he said. "Probably some gal in the Gravediggers' auxiliary."

"The cops think maybe it was either your girl friend or Bart Meyers', trying to prevent the fight because she was afraid one of you'd get hurt."

"How'd the cops find out about the fight?" he asked in astonishment.

"They didn't. They're only guessing. You think it could have been either your girl or Bart's?"

He shook his head decisively.

"Give me their names anyway."

"Bart's girl friend was Stella Quint over on Sixth. I don't know the exact address."

"How about yours?"

After the slightest hesitation he said, "I haven't got one."

I suspected he was being gallant about involving his girl, but before I could follow up, Hannegan appeared outside the cell and attracted my attention by banging his keys against the bars. When I looked at him, he pointed at his watch.

"Don't be so G.I.," I said. "Give me another minute."

"Kid's got another visitor," the lieutenant said stolidly.

"All right. Just one more question then. Joe, who do I see in the club to steer me around down in that neighborhood?"

He looked thoughtful, glanced at Hannegan, then asked, "Got a pencil and paper?"

I gave him my pocket notebook and a mechanical pencil. I stood beside him, watching as he laid the notebook on his knee and wrote: *Stub Carlson, 722 Vernon.*

Below this he wrote:

This guy is Manny Moon, who I've told you about. You can level with him about anything and it won't go no farther.

He contemplated what he had written, scratched through the *no* and substituted *any* above it. I put the notebook and pencil back in my pocket and waited in silence for Hannegan to come over and unlock the door.

When the lieutenant and I arrived in the lobby together, I discovered the other person waiting to see Joe Brighton was his Aunt Sara. Sara Chesterton looked too young to be anybody's aunt, and as a matter of fact was still short of thirty, but she was a full-fledged aunt nevertheless. She was the sister of Joe's dead mother.

She was also a strikingly pretty woman in a businesslike sort of way. Years back Maggie Brighton, who was something of a matchmaker, had tried to brew a match between Sara and me. But it didn't take. While the girl always seemed to like me well enough, she showed no indication of swooning in my presence. And she was a bit too briskly self-sufficient for my taste.

Sara Chesterton was a caseworker for the Division of Public Welfare, and years of dealing with relief clients had given her an impersonal and businesslike manner which carried over to her social contacts. She was a rather small woman, brunette, with attractive gray eyes and a well-rounded but not too plump figure.

When she saw me, she rose from the bench where she had been waiting, came over and thrust out her hand like a man. "How are you, Manny? Haven't seen you for ages. What have you been doing?"

"Hello, Sara," I said. "Working, sleeping, eating. Drinking a little occasionally."

"I'll bet a little. Married to that Fausta girl yet?"

She meant Fausta Moreni, blonde proprietress of El Patio night club, with whom I've carried on a sporadic and volatile romance for some years.

"Hardly," I said. "We're just friends."

"You ought to get married, Manny. You're past thirty now, aren't you?"

I grinned at her. "This is me, your old boy friend Manny Moon, Sara. Not one of your relief clients."

When she had the grace to look a little guilty, I said, "I gave up all thoughts of marriage when you tossed me over a career."

"Phooey. Maggie practically threw me at your head, and you never even noticed me." Then her responsive grin faded. "You been in to see Joe?"

"Yeah."

"How's he taking it?"

"Pretty well."

"What'll they do to him, Manny?"

"Prison, probably, if he's convicted. He's a little young for the gas chamber. He claims he didn't kill that kid."

"Oh?" She looked dubious. "I understood he was practically caught in the act."

"He thinks he was framed by some teen-age club his club has rumbles with. I'm going to poke around down there and see what I can turn up."

Again she emitted an inquiring,

"Oh?" Then her expression turned reflective. "Want a guide, Manny? That's my relief district, you know, and I know the area pretty intimately."

"I hate to bother you," I said.

"Bother? Joe's my real nephew, not just a foster nephew. And I'll bet you're doing this poking around on the house. My saturated brother-in-law certainly hasn't paid you any retainer, has he?"

The bitterness of her tone surprised me. I knew she hadn't been very thick with Ed since he took up drinking as a hobby, but I'd never before heard her speak of him with anything but liking tempered by faint impatience. But apparently now her attitude toward him was about the same as his attitude toward himself. She was blaming Joe's situation on Ed's drinking.

I said mildly, "Ed's a friend of mine and I like Joe. Ed's done me enough favors in the past."

"Name one in the last five years," she challenged.

When I merely shrugged, she said, "You haven't said whether or not you want a guide."

"If you can spare the time," I said. "I may spend a couple of days down there."

"I hadn't thought of that," she said doubtfully. "I was thinking of volunteering some evenings, but of course you'd want to work in the daytime."

Then she brightened. "At least I can give you a briefing on the neigh-

borhood before you go down. I'm only going to drop in on Joe for a minute, because my lunch period is practically over. Why don't you wait and I'll give you a travelogue as you drive me back to my office."

I hadn't contemplated going anywhere near the welfare office, but she put it in such a way I couldn't very well refuse without being blunt. I said I'd wait a few minutes.

After a wait of about five minutes, Sara Chesterton took me to her office in the building housing Public Welfare. She chatted all the way about various technical aspects of her work as a relief investigator. As we passed a long counter in a large waiting room, Sara gestured toward it and said, "Intake. I get stuck for a week there every summer when the regular Intake girls go on vacation. Not that I mind too much. It's kind of dull, but it's a change from my usual routine."

We stopped before the elevator and Sara pushed the signal button.

I asked, "What's Intake?"

"Where they accept original relief applications. After Intake takes down the basic data, applications are sent upstairs to Records, where the information is carded." She went on to tell me about the way Records sorted the cards into geographical districts and so forth, finally assigning them to caseworkers for investigation.

The elevator doors opened, we stepped in and Sara punched the button marked "Two." The ancient

cab started with a shake and crept upward.

I said, "Then you're the one who decides whether an applicant is eligible for relief or not, eh?" I didn't particularly care, but thought I ought to show at least polite interest in what she had been saying.

"I make an investigation, write it up and recommend either approval or denial. My casework supervisor, Mrs. Forshay, makes the actual decision based on my report, but almost never does a supervisor reverse a worker's recommendation."

The slow-moving elevator came to a stop and the doors opened. We stepped out into a huge room containing dozens of desks, about half of which were occupied. Sara hurried toward a desk situated in the center of the room.

As she seated herself and pointed to a chair next to her desk for me, she said, "But what you really want to know is about Joe's neighborhood, isn't it?"

I told her I wasn't sure, since there were so many possibilities, but that a thumb-nail picture of the area would probably be the best starting point.

"Well, it's a typical slum area," Sara said with a reflective look on her face. "Cramped housing, low incomes, low educational level. A large foreign-born element. Very little parental control over the children of high school age. Not that the parents aren't strict. Most of them are quick to use a strap and

the children jump when their parents speak. But homes are too crowded for much family life, and most parents down there are just as glad to have their offspring out from underfoot. That puts them out on the streets, and roaming the streets without much to do, the kids tend to get out of control."

Then she went off into a long involved discussion of the psychological reasons behind mass juvenile delinquency. But I was after information about the two specific juvenile gangs, interesting as were the things she was saying.

I said, "What do you know about the organization of the Purple Pelicans and the Gravediggers?"

"Not too much about the Gravediggers, I'm afraid. That's out of my welfare district. But a number of my clients have children who belong to the Purple Pelicans. I've seen them with their purple jackets. The girls wear similar jackets, and wear their hair in pony tails tied with a purple ribbon."

"Know anything about their criminal activities?"

"Only suspicions. There are frequent muggings and also frequent shop burglaries, the loot usually easily disposable stuff like candy, portable radios and so on. It's a safe assumption no outside gang would pull them in Purple Pelican territory — the gang wouldn't tolerate it for long."

"Ever pick up any rumors about narcotics traffic?"

"Vague ones. Several of my clients reported their teen-age children were using narcotics, and wanted me to do something about it. But there wasn't much I could do, except authorize them to take the children to a doctor at agency expense."

"Did you know this Bart Meyers kid personally?" I asked.

"Oh yes. His mother was a client of mine once. I closed her case a couple of years ago, though, so I haven't seen much of Bart since."

"You wouldn't know of any enemies he had, then?"

Sara shook her head.

I got up out of my chair. "Thanks a lot. I don't know whether anything you've told me will help, but at least it gives me a picture of the environment."

"If you think of anything else you want to know, ring me up. Or better yet, drop by my apartment. I can serve you a drink there."

"Sure," I said. "I may take you up."

It was well after two P.M. when I got out of the place. I didn't know whether the boy whose name Joe Brighton had given me was a high school student or not, but I knew high school let out at two-thirty. By the time I could get down to Seventh and Vernon, there was a good chance I'd find him home.

He was just putting his books away when I stopped at his apartment on seven-twenty-two Vernon, a so-called railroad apartment house, like the rest on the block. That is,

they were three or four rooms lined up in a straight row from the front of the building to the alley, much like railroad cars.

Stub Carlson was a stocky youth of about eighteen, wide-shouldered and well muscled. He had a square, not unpleasant face, a firm mouth and steady eyes. He wore his hair long, this apparently being a club trademark.

After he looked up from the note I handed him which Joe had written, there was faint interest in his eyes. "Manny Moon, eh? Joe's told me about you. Private dick, aren't you?"

I admitted I was.

His eyes strayed to my foot with a touch of curiosity. I've seen the same look in too many other eyes not to recognize what caused it. Joe had told him one of my legs is false from the knee down.

"It's the right one," I said dryly.

Guiltily his eyes jumped back to my face. He looked at me, though, with a natural and direct assurance. "Okay, Mr. Moon. What's the deal?"

We went out to my car on my invitation, and I told him. At first he hesitated giving me any direct information, but, since Joe was his "number one pal" and because my note, I emphasized, gave me Joe's guarantee, he agreed to cooperate with me. I impressed on him that I had no personal interest in him, or the Purple Pelicans, or the Grave-diggers. "I don't approve much of

these clubs you kids form, because they get out of hand and grow into nothing but bands of hoodlums," I said. "But you've got my word and Joe's that nothing I hear will go any further."

He told me of the club's organization. It had four officers: president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. "The bylaws say they're elected at an annual meeting by voice vote, but it isn't quite that simple," he explained. "When a guy stands up for president, you either have to vote for him or fight him. Because if you vote against him, it's a challenge and means you think you can whip him. The same thing for the other officers. Usually there's no challenges because they've all been settled on a vacant lot somewhere in advance of the meeting."

"Like Joe and Bart were going to settle things?" I asked.

He gave me a startled look.

"Joe told me why he was meeting Bart at the club room," I said. "Don't worry. I'm not going to spread it. The police already suspect it anyway, though they haven't any proof. What's your office, Stub?"

"Secretary right now. Plus acting president until next week's election. I'm in line now, with Bart dead and Joe in jail. But I don't care much about it. I could probably whip any of the guys, but it seems a hell of a lot of trouble."

Apparently Stub didn't know it, but he was on the verge of graduating from membership in the teen-

age gang altogether. He seemed to be gaining adult perspective enough to be vaguely dissatisfied with the group, and only habit, I guessed, was keeping him in the group now. I also sensed he wouldn't graduate into an adult criminal gang as would others of the Purple Pelicans. He would be one of the lucky few who could rise above his slum environment.

He wasn't hooked with heroin like twenty percent of the gang, having learned his lesson after one unpleasant session when he was fourteen. The most important thing I learned from Stub, besides a closer picture of the gang itself, was that Bart Meyers was "getting religion" and had been influenced by a YMCA worker. He had been against the use of narcotics in the gang, and that's why some of the guys wanted Joe to challenge him. Like most of the others, Joe thought little of Bart's reform plan. Gradually Stub warmed to his subject, and for the next fifteen minutes I listened to an amazing story of how an organized adult gang was deliberately exploiting a bunch of teen-agers. The Purple Pelicans' contact with this adult group was a hoodlum named Buzz Thurmond. But the Gravediggers were organized similarly by a different hood named Limpy Alfred, so there was evidently a big boss above them. Who this boss was, Stub had no idea. But it was generally accepted by both juvenile clubs that they were under the protection of a

powerful adult gang which would furnish them with bail and legal service if they ever got in trouble. This had been going on for four years, and now this adult gang had ruled a cessation to hostilities between the Purple Pelicans and the Gravediggers. The boys got their narcotics from pushers introduced by Buzz Thurmond, who also supplied them with a fence. The pushers were a barber named Sam Polito, and a pool room habitué named Art Cooney. The fence's name was Harry Krebb. I noted these names but I was primarily interested in Buzz Thurmond and Limpy Alfred, and their boss, whoever he turned out to be.

"Did Buzz Thurmond know of Bart's reform campaign?" I asked.

Stub looked startled. Glancing at me sidewise, he said in a suddenly thoughtful voice, "Yeah. I guess he wouldn't like it much, would he?"

"I shouldn't think so," I said dryly. "Might put a crimp in his business. One more thing, Stub. Did you know the reason the cops showed up so conveniently to catch Joe on the spot was that fifteen minutes previously they got an anonymous phone call from some girl telling them a reefer party was in progress at the club room?"

"No," he said with surprise.

"Any idea who the girl might be?"

He shook his head. I told him the police thought it was either Bart's girl or Joe's wanting to break up the fight because she was afraid her

boy friend would get hurt. Stub didn't think much of this idea, though, since Bart's girl didn't like fighting but she wouldn't dare "pull a stunt like that, while Joe's girl would figure he'd win, she wouldn't call."

I tried to get the name of Joe's girl from him, but he told me if Joe hadn't told me her name, Joe mustn't want to get her mixed in, so I didn't press the point.

Before I left, he told me that any time I needed him, to either drop at his home or look for a purple jacket. "I'll pass the word that you're okay," he assured me, and added, "And I'm going to get a few of my closest friends to work with me, in helping you."

"I can use help," I said. As I started to drive away, he stood on the sidewalk and waved me a friendly goodbye.

6.

The rest of the day, I spent visiting. First, I saw Stella Quint, the dead boy's girl. She was an attractive blonde of about sixteen, whose eyes were deeply shadowed and flecked with red.

She spoke to me without enthusiasm when her mother left us alone in the small, crowded room, furnished with cheap sofas and ancient easy chairs, and tables and lamps, and a brand new television set. Her tone indicated she never expected to get over the shock of Bart Meyers'

death, and I couldn't get much from her. After telling her who I was and why I came, I asked bluntly, "Stella, did you phone the police at nine forty-five last night?"

Surprise formed on her face, but no alarm. "Me? No. Phone them for what?"

"Do you know of any girl who did?"

She shook her head, in a disinterested way.

"What's Joe Brighton's girl's name?" I asked.

"Ruth Zimmerman," she said dully.

"Live around here?"

"Around the corner on Tamm. Six forty-six."

I left her feeling that Bart Meyers had probably been the girl's first love, and that the tragic effects on the girl could be more permanent than if both of them had been adults.

Ruth Zimmerman was something else again. She was about sixteen, too, but self-possessed. I asked her to take a walk with me since her house was such a bedlam of television sets going full blast, from her own parlor and those of her neighbors, with her mother trying to quiet a howling baby.

She walked in a sinuous way that was calculated to give a sensual effect, but instead gave her a curiously defenseless air. Her development of coordination hadn't kept pace with her bountiful physical development. Ruth's general attitude was that of a woman who has lost a man, but isn't

going to cry about it because another would be along soon.

I spoke bluntly to her, when we reached the sidewalk. "You think Joe's going to take this rap, don't you?"

She moved her shoulders slightly. "I hope not. From what the kids say, though, the cops have got too good a case. Even if he's innocent, he's cooked."

I asked her the question I'd asked Stella. "Why'd you make that call to the police last night, Ruth?"

Her eyes opened wide. "What?"

"Some girl phoned and said she was Joe's girl friend," I said, distorting the truth a little. "Naturally, I thought it was you."

"Some *other* girl? Well, that's a nerve. What'd she want? Permission to see Joe?"

Apparently she thought I meant the call had come after Joe's arrest. Since I doubted that she would have the ability to make such a perfect parry on the spur of the moment, I decided she couldn't know anything about the call.

"I suppose," I said, wanting to kill the subject. "When the police wouldn't give out any information, she hung up."

My next stop was to visit Bart Meyers' mother. She lived in a two-room walkup of a building which looked as if it should have been condemned years ago. She was alone.

The woman was only about thirty-five, thin, but not unattractive in an

undernourished sort of way. She had little to say that could help me, although I got a picture of Bart himself that was at considerable variance with the previous picture I had had of a tough juvenile gang leader. Granted that it was a mother's-eye view, and further sugar-coated by the fresh grief which makes people recall virtues and forget vices of loved ones, it was still rather surprising. Even after discounting a good portion of the panegyric, Bart Meyers took shape in my mind as a basically nice kid.

He had always been an organizer, his mother told me, and if he got into fights and at one time or another whipped every kid in the area, she blamed this on the tough neighborhood, where children either fight or are labeled sissies.

He was a loving son, too, she told me with some pride. She said that many of Bart's friends were openly contemptuous of their parents, but he constantly showed his affection for her with kisses every time he left the house, or upon his return.

She knew he had been president of the Purple Pelicans, and I didn't try to disillusion her about the nature of that group, since she thought of it merely as a teen-age social club. She couldn't tell me what the odd jobs were which enabled him to have a regular supply of money. It seemed never to have occurred to her that Bart might have been raising money illegally.

After I left her, I visited the club

room of the Purple Pelicans. It was staked out by a detective I knew, a guy named Hogan. It was just a basement room about twenty feet wide and fifty feet long, with brick walls, and unfinished ceiling. It was decorated with bright green drapes over the four windows, and pictures of nudes cut from magazines or calendars were placed in dime-store frames. There was a homemade bar painted and trimmed in the same combination as the cement floor and base — battleship grey with a decorative border of red. The place was furnished with second or third hand benches all around the walls, a number of cheap card tables and about twenty folding chairs.

The spot where the body had been found was marked in a chalk outline in front of the bar. When I looked closely, I could see a couple of small spots of dried blood in the center of the outline.

"Where's that hole where they found the heroin rig?" I asked Hogan.

Hogan went over to the wall and pushed aside a framed drawing of a Petty girl who was, as usual, phoning somebody, in the standard garb of nothing. Behind it one brick had been removed from the wall, leaving a small oblong cavity. It didn't tell me anything.

"I guess that's all," I said to Hogan. "Thanks."

"See anything the boys missed?" he asked with a touch of indulgence.

"Naturally," I said. "The killer

couldn't have been Joe Brighton, because he was a short, redheaded man who wore elevator shoes, a checked jacket and an Alpine hat with a feather in it. He's ambidextrous, has just arrived from Australia on a cattle boat and snores when he sleeps on the left side."

"Amazing," Hogan said in simulated awe. "How do you do it?"

"Elementary," I said negligently.

7.

It was getting late, and I had decided to call it a day and get started in the morning until I neared Grand Avenue and realized I was passing within only two blocks of Sara Chesterton's apartment. Since it was still early in the evening, on the spur of the moment I decided to stop by and see her.

Sara lived in a modern, tan-brick apartment house in a neighborhood which was nice without being exclusive. She had a comfortable, four-room apartment on the second floor.

She came to the door wearing a white terry-cloth housecoat.

"Why, Manny!" she said. "This is a pleasant surprise."

"I was going through the neighborhood and suddenly thought of something I wanted to ask you," I said. "Got a few minutes?"

"Of course. Come on in."

As she led me into the front room, I saw that it had been redecorated since the last time I was there, which wasn't surprising since I hadn't been

in the apartment for over five years. She also had some new furniture: a handsome gray living-room suite, a fragile blond cocktail table with a glass top and a twenty-four-inch-screen television set.

"You've fixed the joint up," I said. "Compared to my trap this is luxury."

"I'm beginning to accumulate a few nice things, more than I can afford, really. But I keep buying things on time, and somehow eventually they get paid off." She looked around with satisfaction, then turned to me. "What do you drink? Still rye and water?"

"If you've got it."

"I've got it. You can get ice cubes out for me while I'm mixing drinks."

I followed her to the kitchen and by the time I had emptied the ice tray and dumped the cubes into a bowl, she had our drinks all measured out.

"I take soda," she said, "and I know there isn't any in the refrigerator. Be a doll and get a bottle from the clutter room, will you?"

What Sara called the "clutter room" was merely a small back hall which was recessed both sides of the door. She used it for storage and it got its name from the fact that it was as cluttered with odds and ends as the average attic.

I found the soda without difficulty, and was preparing to return to the kitchen when I noticed a bamboo spinning rod standing in a corner of the alcove. On the floor

next to it was a dust-laden bait box.

No fishing enthusiast can resist peeking into a strange bait box, and fishing has been my favorite sport since I was a kid. I lifted the lid and looked admiringly at an expensive and complete collection of spinning lures worth at least a hundred dollars. When I didn't see any with which I was unfamiliar, I closed the lid again.

When I had returned to the kitchen and opened the soda for her, I asked, "You like fishing, Sara?"

She glanced at me in surprise. "A little. I haven't been for several years. Why?"

"Some Sunday I'll pick you up and we'll try the river for a few jack salmon."

"I'd like that," she said agreeably.

She suggested we take our drinks into the front room. When we were settled there, Sara on the couch and me in an easy chair, I said, "What I stopped by for was to find out if you knew anything about either a man named Buzz Thurmond or one named Limpy Alfred."

She looked at me in amused surprise. "You mean there's actually a real person with a name like Limpy Alfred?"

"Apparently."

She shook her head. "I've certainly never heard of him before. Nor of anyone named Buzz Thurmond. Why do you think I would have?"

"I didn't have much hope about Limpy, because I don't know his

last name. But I thought Buzz Thurmond might possibly ring a bell. I understand he originally came from the neighborhood, and I thought possibly the family had been on welfare at some time or other."

"Buzz Thurmond," Sara repeated thoughtfully. "Thurmond sounds familiar, but the first name doesn't mean anything to me. It must be a nickname, isn't it?"

"I imagine," I said dryly. "I don't think many parents would be likely to christen a child Buzz."

"I think I had an Aid to Dependent Children case named Mrs. Thurmond about six years ago," Sara said. "Tomorrow I'll have Records look it up for me. Possibly your Buzz Thurmond was one of the children. How old is he?"

I shook my head. "I haven't the faintest idea, except that he's been connected with an adult criminal gang for at least four years. Doesn't seem likely he'd have been a child six years ago."

"No. He would have had to be under sixteen at the time. He may have been an older son not living at home, though. If I can find anything on him in the welfare files, what is it you want to know?"

"Anything you're able to dig up. I don't know a thing about him except his name and that he's a hood."

"You think he may have had something to do with Bart Meyers' death?"

I said, "I can't tell you why I'm interested without violating the con-

fidence of my source. I'm afraid you'll have to work in the dark."

"All right," Sara said agreeably. "I'll do my best to control my curiosity. Why don't you phone me at work between one-thirty and two tomorrow? I'll either have something by then, or the news that I can't find anything."

We left it at that. We had one more drink together before I went home and let Sara get back to her case records.

8.

As Sara Chesterton worked in the field mornings and didn't arrive at her office until one-thirty P.M., and since Stub Carlson was in school until two-thirty, there wasn't much I could do the next morning except take care of a couple of routine matters. I started by checking with Warren Day to see if there had been any new developments.

There hadn't been.

When I left the inspector's office, I went down the hall to the record room and asked the cop on duty if he had anything on Buzz Thurmond or Limpy Alfred.

He didn't have any trouble locating the card on Thurmond, but Limpy Alfred took him a little longer. I studied Thurmond's record while he continued the search.

Buzz Thurmond's given name was Leroy, I noted, and he was a two-time loser. His first conviction was for assault and battery at the age of

nineteen, and had gotten him a six-month term. The second, for extortion, had occurred when he was twenty-two and had cost him two years. The front and profile pictures on his record card had been taken at the time of his second conviction, which made them eight years old, since the man's age was listed as thirty. They showed a thick-featured man with a strong jaw and a sullen cast to his mouth. He was a big man, I noticed, his height being listed as six feet two and his weight as two hundred and six.

By the time I had finished reading over Leroy Thurmond's record, the cop had located Limpy Alfred's card by checking the nickname file.

His full name, according to the record, was Alfred Lloyd Leventhal, and he was forty-two years old. He'd only been in circulation thirty years, however, because he'd spent twelve years behind bars. His time had been served in two separate sentences, with several years intervening: the first a five-year term for armed robbery, of which he had earned four years, and the second a fifteen-year term for second-degree murder. Two years previously he'd been paroled after doing eight of the fifteen.

The front and profile views on the card dated from the time of his parole. They showed a thin, sharp-featured man with a receding chin and a slit for a mouth. His height was given as five-eight and his weight as only one-thirty-five. He had

earned his nickname because, according to the description, he had a pronounced limp as a result of an old gunshot wound in the left knee.

Both men, from these records, had been picked up for questioning a number of times since their respective releases from the penitentiary, but had never been charged. Two of Buzz Thurmond's had been on suspicion of homicide, one for receiving stolen goods and one for attempted extortion. The crimes for which Limpy had drawn the suspicious attention of the police included everything from assault to homicide, even, in one case, arson.

I gave the record room cop a cigar for his trouble.

Instead of phoning Sara Chesteron, as she had suggested, I decided to drop by the welfare office. She was busy at work, but put it aside and told me what she'd learned. "I phoned Records from home this morning before I started out in the field and asked them to pull my old Thurmond case, Manny. I haven't had a chance to look at it yet, but it should be in my box."

She rummaged through a pile of case records and correspondence in her in-box and gave a grunt of satisfaction when she found a manila folder labelled *Thurmond, ADC-6251*.

As she opened it and started to look through it, I said, "I've learned Buzz's real name is Leroy."

"Leroy," she repeated, studying the face sheet. "According to this Mrs. Thurmond had only two minor children named Thomas and Grace. Wait a minute. Here he is, under 'Relatives Not Living in the Home.' Leroy Thurmond, eldest son of client, age twenty-four." She glanced at the date of the record. "That would make him thirty now, as this is six years old. His address is listed as the Bremmer Hotel, where he worked as a night clerk."

She thumbed through several pages of the record. "According to this, his mother phoned she wouldn't need ADC anymore because her eldest son was now giving her support. That's when we closed the case."

"He fell into money, eh?" I said thoughtfully.

"Apparently." Again she thumbed through the case record. "There isn't a thing more on him."

"I've learned Limpy Alfred's name is Alfred Lloyd Leventhal," I said. "Could you check your old records for him?"

For answer she picked up the phone and called Records. Then she excused herself, and returned in about three minutes with a manila folder similar to the other. Sitting down at her desk again, she opened it and studied the face sheet.

It turned out Limpy was from another district, and his common-law wife had applied for relief when he was in the state penitentiary. "Leventhal was paroled two years

ago," she said. "Here's a notation that the worker visited him to ask if he was willing to support his common-law wife. And guess where he was living?"

"The Bremmer Hotel," I said.

Sara looked at me in surprise. "How'd you know?"

"Intuition," I said.

It was to some degree, but I knew the reputation of the Bremmer Hotel, as did everybody in town who had dealings with crime. A second-rate place at the edge of the slum area, it was respectable on the surface, but those in the know, including the police, were aware the respectability was only a veneer. The place was the on-and-off residence of numerous known criminals, including a good number of freshly-released convicts who made it their first stop after getting out of the can.

The police raided the Bremmer Hotel with monotonous regularity, they'd never been able to make any charge stick, as a matter of fact, because, while the proprietor wasn't very particular about his guests, he carefully avoided harboring criminals who were wanted at the moment.

A reputed racketeer named Sherman Bremmer owned the place, which made me wonder if I hadn't stumbled onto the leader of the gang which maneuvered the Purple Pelicans and the Gravediggers into criminal activity. It seemed too much of a coincidence for both gang lieutenants to have a connection with

the Bremmer Hotel unless they also had a connection with the owner.

Sara broke into my thoughts by saying, "Any of this helpful?"

"It's given me another lead," I said, rising. "Thanks a lot."

Before I closed the door behind me, she called, "Don't forget that fishing date we have some Sunday. You won't forget?"

"I won't forget," I said.

It was pretty close to two-thirty when I left the welfare office, but I made it to the flat where Stub Carlson lived by twenty of three. I found no one home.

As I waited downstairs, a boy in a purple jacket turned to come into the building. "Stub isn't home," I said.

He looked startled, and then smiled. "You must be the guy Stub told us to be on the lookout for, Manny Moon. I'm Dave O'Brien."

He explained to me that the club members were being rounded up for a special meeting. "I guess it's about Stub and you," he said. "Some of the guys don't like it you're a private cop. I think Stub'll change their minds."

I decided I'd see Stub later, after the meeting, when he could tell me what had been decided, and I'd know how much I could depend upon the Purple Pelicans for help.

To kill a couple of hours, I visited the downtown YMCA, and had a talk with an affable man in his fif-

ties, the YMCA secretary, named Gardner.

He sent me to see a vital, well-muscled young man named Wilfred Reed, as the one most likely to know about the Y's program of converting juvenile gangs into law-abiding clubs.

He knew Bart, and felt bad when I suggested Bart might have been killed because of his plan to reform the club.

"You shouldn't blame yourself," I said. "Your program seems a fine one to me. If you dropped it more kids would get killed in rumbles than could possibly get hurt in fighting for reform."

"I know that," he said ruefully. "But that doesn't make me feel any better about it. As a matter of fact, I tried to slow Bart down."

"How was that?" I asked.

"He wanted to convert the Purple Pelicans into a straight club at one fell swoop. I knew it wouldn't work, since the gang, like the Gravediggers, was too highly organized for criminal activity. Also both have a high percentage of narcotic addicts."

I talked a while longer with him, but basically he knew little that could help me. He hadn't heard of Buzz Thurmond or Limpy Alfred, either. As there didn't seem to be anything else he could tell me, I thanked the man and left.

9.

I planned a visit to the Bremmer

Hotel to see if I could turn up a connection between racketeer Sherman Bremmer and the two hoods who acted as advisors to the Purple Pelicans and the Gravediggers. But I decided to hold off on this until I knew how much I could make use of the friends Stub was working on to help me. One thing I didn't want. I didn't want to make Buzz Thurmond suspicious that the kids were plotting against him. Most of the club members just thought I was digging up general information to help Joe, but Stub's close friends would know the truth, and I had to hope none of these close friends were hooked, and would try to protect their source of supply.

When I reached the corner of Sixth and Vernon and started to run right, a purple-jacketed youngster stepped from the curb and waved me down.

It was Dave O'Brien, the kid I'd met a couple of hours before.

In an excited voice, he said, "Stub told me to head you off. Everything's blown up."

When I'd parked the car, I got out and joined him. "What's blown up?"

"The whole deal. They're holding a kangaroo court for Stub. For telling you club secrets." The kid's face was pale and his speech was so hurried the words ran over each other.

I mulled this over a minute, then asked, "If this kangaroo court finds Stub guilty, what are they likely to do to him?"

The kid looked worried. "Maybe kick him out of the club."

"Any danger of physical punishment?"

"I don't think so," he said in an uncertain voice. "They brought along the cat-o-nine-tails, of course, but that's just to sort of scare guys. Only thing is, a lot of the guys seemed to be riding pretty high."

I thought this over. It seemed reasonable to assume that if Buzz Thurmond was behind the kangaroo court, he would have seen to it that the addicts in the group were all doped to their eyebrows.

"I think I'd better look in on this meeting," I decided.

"Stub said no," the redhead insisted. "He wants you to get clear out of the neighborhood. He didn't like the way some of the guys were talking about you."

"I don't like it either," I informed him. "I think I'll do some talking back."

"There's sixty guys down there," Dave O'Brien said doubtfully as he followed me hesitantly to the brown-stone entrance.

"Sixty *kids*," I corrected. "I think I can handle kids, even if they're doped up."

None of the Purple Pelicans saw me enter the room, for they were all crowded to the far end with their backs to me. The green drapes were not only drawn, the windows were shut so no sound could emerge.

As I started to move forward slowly, from beyond the crowd there

came a whistling sound followed by a dull spat and a groan. What I had heard sent me charging through the mass of youngsters, scattering boys in all directions.

Directly before me in an open area at the far end of the room Stub Carlson was spread-eagled on the floor, a purple-jacketed boy holding each of his arms and legs. He was stripped to the waist and his back was a mass of bloody welts.

Over Stub stood a muscular youth of about eighteen, also stripped to the waist and glistening with sweat. His back was to me and he was just raising a vicious-looking cat-o-nine-tails.

My right hand grasped the whip just as it reached the top of its up-sweep and my left gripped the boy's shoulder. Swinging him around, I slashed the knotted leather thongs across his bare stomach and chest with such force that he let out a howl of pain and stumbled backward until he crashed into the rear wall. I slashed at the four boys holding Stub, too, and they screamed and rolled on the floor to get out of my range.

No one had moved during my attack, being stunned by its suddenness. Turning to face them, I got them to move by taking a step forward and swinging the cat in a vicious circle at head height. It would have ripped to pieces any face it caught, but though I was boiling with rage, I wasn't berserk enough to want to mar any of the kids per-

sonally. I only swung close enough to make the boys jerk back in terror. The ring widened appreciably.

Then I threw the lash half the width of the room at the boy I'd taken it from. He let out another yell when the handle caught him in the stomach.

Ignoring him, I let my eyes move around the circle of faces slowly, and the boys shifted uneasily under the contempt they could see in my expression.

Stub had managed to come erect, but he was weaving on his feet and staring around him with glazed eyes. A shirt, jacket and snap-brim hat lay on the floor near where he had been spread-eagled. Stooping I picked them up, set the hat on his head, draped the jacket over his lacerated shoulders and handed him the shirt to hold. When I took hold of his arm he let me start to steer him through the now silent crowd, as though he were a punch-drunk fighter being led from the ring.

A path silently opened before us, but we had gone no more than a few steps when a sharp click behind us made me release Stub's arm and spin around.

The youngster from whom I had taken the cat-o-nine-tails stood spraddle-legged not two paces away, a switch knife with a seven-inch blade thrust out before him. His voice broke the silence, "That's the private cop Stub's been ratting to," he said loudly. "The guy who's trying to break up the club."

Despite his youth the boy was an impressive-looking opponent. Naked to the waist and with his well-muscled body shiny with sweat, he looked like a pirate getting ready to board ship. A half dozen livid welts had raised across his chest and stomach from the single lash I had given him. His face was white with rage, and as I examined him warily, I saw that his eye pupils were mere pin points.

I also noticed for the first time that both forearms were dotted with needle punctures.

There's no point in trying to talk down a guy full of heroin, because the stuff makes him feel big enough to whip the whole world. But his words, which couldn't have been news, brought an angry muttering from the rest of the group, and I knew I had to move fast.

The only way to keep a mob under control is to step on the first person who tries to arouse it and step on him hard.

Swiftly I moved toward him. He didn't need any further invitation. He moved with the smoothness of an expert, the knife thrust forward at waist level with the blade pointing upward. As the light glittered on it I could see that it was honed to razor sharpness and tapered to a needle point.

As the blade suddenly slashed up at my stomach, I crossed my forearms, the right on top of the left,

and grabbed with both hands. My left hand clamped about his wrist and my right about his forearm. I pushed downward with my left, pulled forward with my right and simultaneously pivoted to swing my hip into his.

Before you could say, "Judo," he was flat on his face on the floor and the knife was in my hand.

Hefting the weapon casually I looked around at the group, then snapped the knife shut and dropped it in my pocket.

As I started to push the still-dazed Stub on toward the stairs, the boy twisted on the floor and screamed, "Don't let that cop out of here! Kill them both!"

Up to that moment I'd had the rest of the mob pretty well cowed, none of them wanting to make the first move against me. But the muscular boy's enraged scream acted as a trigger.

Abruptly the crowd stopped opening a reluctant lane before us and we were suddenly walled in. A dozen clicks sounded as switch knives appeared.

I told myself that probably a third of the crowd was full of heroin, and even though they were a bunch of kids, some as young as fourteen and none of them over eighteen, it was time for shock tactics if either Stub or I expected to get out alive.

Keeping my hold on Stub's arm, I said with a weariness I was far from feeling, "You kids are beginning to bore the hell out of me."

Then I dipped my hand under my arm, flicked the safety off my P-38 and smashed a bullet into the light bulb immediately over our heads.

Instinctively every kid around us recoiled. Somebody yelled unnecessarily, "He's got a gun!"

I took careful aim and shot out the other light twenty feet away.

Pandemonium set in as the room plunged into pitch darkness. I reholstered my gun before some kid could bump into me in the dark and accidentally set it off again.

All around us there were shouts, curses and the noise of people stumbling over each other. I made directly for the stairs, moving ahead of Stub and dragging him along behind me. Whenever we ran into anyone in the dark, I put my right hand under his chin, if I could find it, or against his chest if I couldn't, and pushed, a maneuver which was invariably followed by the sound of several boys falling and thrashing around on the floor in an attempt to untangle themselves from each other.

We had made the foot of the stairs before anyone thought to flick on a lighter.

At the first flash of light every boy in the room got the idea, however. Within seconds matches and lighter flames sprang to life all over the club room.

I pushed Stub up the first two steps and said, "Move!"

In the flickering light I could see

the entire horde surge toward us.

At the top of the stairs, I unlatched the door, put my hand in the middle of Stub's back and shoved. Not waiting to see if he retained his feet, I turned my back on him, gripped either side of the door jamb and raised my right knee to my chest.

When the first boy reached the top of the stairs, I planted my aluminum foot in the center of his chest and shoved. His mouth popped open and he spread his arms wide in a sort of backward swan dive.

The flickering lights on the stairway winked out as milling bodies rolled down the stairs amid thumps and roars of anger and yells of pain.

When I slammed the door shut, I found Stub dazedly resting on his hands and knees where he had fallen after my shove. Jerking him erect, I hustled him out to the street.

Outside Dave O'Brien peered at us frightenedly.

"What were those shots?"

"Ask me later," I said. "Let's get out of here."

I started to trot toward my car at the corner, dragging Stub Carlson along. Recognizing that something was wrong with Stub, the redheaded O'Brien grabbed his other arm. Between us we managed to work him up to a fair burst of speed.

When we reached the car, I left Stub for Dave to manage and raced around to the driver's side. While I was getting the engine started, Dave helped Stub into the front seat and slid in next to him.

Since Stub's home was only a block from the basement club room, I decided that wouldn't be the safest place in the world to take him with sixty out-of-control youngsters after our hides. While I doubted that even with a third of them hopped up they'd go so far as trying to beat down his door, I saw no point in taking the chance. Anyway, in their present mood, they'd almost certainly strip my car and possibly wreck it completely, if they found it parked in front of Stub's place.

I drove right on past and headed for the El Patio, Fausta Moreni's place.

When we had traveled a couple of blocks Stub groaned and inched his back away from the seat.

Dave O'Brien asked, "What's the matter with him?"

I gave him a brief rundown of what had happened in the club room.

"My God!" the redhead said in an awed voice. "Have the guys gone crazy?"

"Just temporarily," I said. "They're full of H and they've been whipped into a mob. And I'd guess on Buzz Thurmond's orders."

After a moment I added reflectively, "I think I'm going to enjoy meeting the Purple Pelicans' friend and advisor."

II.

I took Stub to El Patio for two reasons. The first was that, except

for jail, I couldn't think of a safer place in town to take him, both because of its structure and because of its personnel. The second reason was that I knew he'd be welcome.

It was typical of its proprietress, Fausta Moreni, that she didn't question the advisability of harboring a kid who was sought by gangsters. She helped put Stub on a cot and made him comfortable while I called a doctor to see him. The doctor was Tom Mason, a tall and skinny man in his early forties, who told me that Stub was in mild shock and would have to rest for a few days. When I let him know that Inspector Warren Day was interested in the whole incident which caused Stub's beating, since it concerned a murder he was interested in, and that I'd tell Warren about the beating, he let it go at that and didn't report it to the police. I told him I thought an adult put the kids up to the beating, and if a lot of cops descended on the neighborhood where it took place, he'd probably take to cover. I wanted him out in the open where I could get at him.

Once Stub was taken care of, I put Dave O'Brien in a taxi and sent him home. When I went home myself I knew Stub was in good hands. Prior to being taken over by its present owner, Fausta Moreni, the El Patio had been a gambling casino, and it had been constructed with the idea of making it invulnerable to both hijackers and raiding cops. It was like a medium-sized

gray prison, even to ornamental but burglar-proof bars on the lower windows, and it was isolated in the center of a three-acre patch of ground at the extreme south edge of town.

On the off-chance that Buzz Thurmond or one of his pals managed to break into the building anyway, or the more likely chance that an attack might be made during the time the club was open for business, I talked to my old friend Mouldy Greene, Fausta's bouncer and formerly a basic in the company where I was first sergeant during my army days. He still called me "Sarge," and I'd given up trying to break him of the habit for fear he'd coin me an even more picturesque nickname.

Mouldy, a nickname he'd acquired from army buddies because of a mild case of acne, wasn't long on brains, but he could follow orders to the letter. I told him to refuse to allow Stub to leave El Patio under any circumstances until I countermanded the order.

"Sure, Sarge," he said. "Want me to lock him in my room daytime?"

"Of course not. He's not a prisoner. He's just here for his own protection."

"He'll get it," Mouldy promised.

He would, too, I knew. Since I'd given Mouldy such strict orders, there was the risk that if I dropped dead Stub would remain a prisoner for life. But at least I was reasonably certain he'd be safe. I was tempted

to give Mouldy contingent instructions in case I did drop dead, but decided cluttering his mind with anything more would only confuse him. With Mouldy it's best to keep things as simple as possible. "I don't think there's a chance in a hundred any of the Purple Pelicans would make a try for him here," I told him, "even when they're full of heroin. But keep on the lookout for purple jackets anyway."

As usual when I saw Fausta I found that, despite my resolve not to feel any reaction toward her, the familiar lump formed in my throat. Fausta Moreni was born in Rome, but her coloring isn't olive like most Italo-American beauties, it is the color of coffee with cream, and her hair is a vivid natural blonde. Nevertheless you would never mistake her for anything but a Latin. If her expressively liquid eyes didn't give it away, her emotional explosiveness would.

When I left Stub with Mouldy, and started to walk with her to my car, she threw her arms around my neck and made me agree now that she was taking care of Stub that I'd take her out one evening for each day she furnished him room and board. The dates would start tomorrow night at 9 P.M. Before the war when Fausta was only nineteen and I was twenty-four, we had a violent romance which we both expected to eventuate in marriage.

But when I returned to civilian life, I found a sophisticated woman who had parlayed her culinary genius into a fortune, until she now owned half the money in town.

I have an old-fashioned notion that the man should be the breadwinner in the family, and the richer Fausta became, the further I backed. Both of us long ago accepted the fact that we aren't going to marry, but Fausta seems to enjoy seeing me try to struggle off the hook. It's my own feelings I have to struggle against rather than Fausta, a fact she understands perfectly.

Once she'd won her bargain with me, she asked, "Are these gangsters after you, too, Manny?"

"Not the juvenile ones," I said. "The adults don't like me much."

"Maybe you had better hide out here too," she suggested. "There is a day bed in my upstairs apartment."

She cocked an inquiring eye at me and I said, "I've got work to do."

"Let the police do it. If the gangsters are after you, just call them up and report it. I would not like it if you got all shot up and perhaps were made even uglier than you are."

I left before I gave in to her on that, too.

12.

The next morning, just before noon, Dave O'Brien called me. "You sure Stub's safe?" he asked.

"Couldn't be safer. Why?" I asked.

"The guys are out to get him. Or some of them, anyway. They say Stub has to be shut up before his squealing wrecks all the club's rackets."

"Bump him off, you mean?" I asked.

"The whole gang's gone kind of nuts." Dave's voice was high-pitched. "I went back to the club room after I left you last night, and they had a party till nearly morning. Buzz Thurmond dropped in with a whole flock of H and passed it out to anybody that wanted it. I don't think a guy in the club made school today."

"Buzz suggest that the gang get Stub?" I asked.

"Not exactly," Dave said. "The guys were all talking about Stub squealing to a private cop, and Buzz just said if it was his gang, they'd know how to handle it. The next I knew half the guys were saying squealers ought to be rubbed out."

Almost as an afterthought he added, "Buzz let it drop that his gang was going to take care of you, Mr. Moon."

"I was having similar thoughts about Buzz and his gang," I said dryly.

When Dave had hung up, I called Stub at the El Patio, and got him to release me from my promise and let me bring the cops into the case, giving them everything I knew.

When he sounded stubborn, even after hearing about the gang's threat, I said with mild exasperation, "For cripes sake, kid! These people intend to kill you! What in the name of jumping Jehosaphat do you think you owe them?"

There was a moment of silence, and I knew he struggled between self-preservation and loyalty to an underworld code that had been bred into him. A code which regarded squealing to the police as the lowest crime in the book, no matter what the pressures were.

Finally he said with a peculiar mixture of apology and belligerence, "I'm not just going to sit still and wait for a bullet. You tell the cops anything you want, Mr. Moon."

Inspector Warren Day was dubious at first.

"Maybe Buzz Thurmond is just concerned because he's afraid your digging around will mess up his racket," he said. "That doesn't necessarily mean he had anything to do with Bart Meyers' death."

But after I filled him in on all the details, he began to look pleased with me. "You've given me enough dope to keep Narcotics, Vice and Burglary busy for a long time just checking up. We'll go over Thurmond when the other boys are through with him. But I can't offer you much hope about tying him to the murder. Without evidence, what do you expect me to accomplish? He doesn't sound like he'd confess because of a bad conscience."

I hadn't expected him to do much more than give my theory about Buzz being connected with the murder careful consideration, so I was satisfied with this answer. Grouchy as Warren Day is, he's not the type of cop who closes his eyes to any lead which points away from his prime suspect. I doubted that I had lessened his belief in Joe Brighton's guilt in the slightest, but that didn't mean he wouldn't follow up the theory I had dumped in his lap. And he'd do just as thorough a job of investigation as if he believed Thurmond guilty.

For once we parted mutually satisfied with each other.

I knew that as soon as Warren Day passed along the dope I had given him to the proper departments, whole squads of cops would begin a co-ordinated effort to smash the gang of which Buzz Thurmond was a member. Before that evening Thurmond, Limpy Alfred, Sam Polito, Art Cooney, Harry Krebb and Sherman Bremmer would be under twenty-four hour surveillance. None of them could make a move which wouldn't be eventually relayed to headquarters and entered in a co-ordinated intelligence record on the whole gang. If Bremmer was the leader of the gang, as I suspected, the police would establish the fact beyond any doubt through the record of his contacts. From here on out every bit of stolen merchandise received by the fence, Harry Krebb, or the two

dope pushers would be recorded, and each boy who brought stolen merchandise in to them would immediately acquire a shadow.

I gave the Purple Pelicans, the Gravediggers and the adult gang exploiting them another week before the police moved in for mass arrests and smashed the entire setup.

That didn't necessarily mean they'd uncover any evidence concerning Bart Meyers' murder, however. I was reasonably certain that if Buzz Thurmond actually had killed the boy and framed Joe Brighton for it, none of the Purple Pelicans knew anything about it. And unless one of the adults broke under questioning, there didn't seem much likelihood of freeing young Joe without turning up actual evidence.

Instead of seeking the safety of El Patio, I decided to stick my neck out a little more. The Bremmer Hotel seemed to me to be the logical place to stick it.

The Bremmer Hotel was a three-story brick building on Ninth, at the very edge of the slum area. It was old, but it wasn't a particularly disreputable-looking place. As a matter of fact it looked cleaner than most of the second-class buildings and stores in the same neighborhood.

The hotel lobby was a bare but relatively clean room with only the faintest odor of antiseptic about it. As I was asking the skinny old man in his seventies at the desk if Buzz Thurmond was in, and getting no

satisfaction, a smooth voice behind me said, "Can I help you?"

Swinging around, I looked down at the moon-shaped face of Sherman Bremmer, the hotel's proprietor.

13.

I had to look down a full eight inches, because Bremmer was only about five feet four. He was built like a snowman: round pillars for legs, a round ball for a body, fat arms, and a round head with tiny black eyes. A complexion resembling sooty snow helped the illusion.

His body grew momentarily rigid when he saw whom he had addressed, but he didn't change expression.

"Afternoon, Mr. Moon," he said, relaxed again. "May I do something for you?"

"Possibly," I said. "Got an office somewhere?"

He led me into a small office containing a plain desk, two extra chairs and a safe. There was one window with frosted glass in the panes.

I told him I wanted to see Buzz Thurmond, when we were seated.

"What do you want with Buzz?"

"Nothing," I said. "He wants it with me. I heard he was looking for me, and thought I'd save him the trouble."

"Looking for you? Why?"

"Tell me where to find him and I'll ask him."

"Don't you know?"

"Don't you?"

"I haven't the faintest . . ." He broke off and a look of enlightenment suddenly grew in his small eyes, almost instantly to be suppressed again.

"I really couldn't say," he said calmly.

I grinned at him. "It just registered, eh? What happened? Buzz just refer to me as a private cop, and forget to mention my name?"

He managed to get the puzzled expression on his face again, but this time it was obviously forced. "I haven't the faintest idea of what you're talking about, Mr. Moon."

"I'll bet," I said, rising. "Thanks for the information, Bremmer."

I meant it. I knew for sure Sherman Bremmer had given the order to get rid of me, without even knowing it was me. Either his Purple Pelican informant had forgotten my name when he initially passed along to Buzz the information that a private detective knew all about his connection with the Purple Pelicans and hoped to pin a murder rap on him, or Buzz had simply neglected to mention my name when he relayed the news to his boss.

As I started to leave, Sherman Bremmer said, "Don't go yet. If you want to see Buzz, I'll get him for you. Meanwhile, have a drink." He picked up the desk phone. "Scotch or rye?"

He was so glaringly obvious, it was almost funny. Now that he knew who I really was, he was as anxious for me to meet Buzz Thur-

mond as I had been. Since I was still interested in meeting Buzz, I said, "I'll take rye."

In a few minutes the door opened and the old man who had been at the desk carried in a tray containing a bowl of ice cubes, a bottle of soda and a half-full quart of Mount Vernon.

I felt by the way the old man kept looking at me as he put down the tray before he left that something more than a request for whiskey had gone over the phone when Bremmer called him. A signal of some sort? I watched Bremmer warily as he poured the drinks, or I might not have given any significance to the way the hotel proprietor first handed me my drink, and then let his disappear for a moment beneath the desk. I switched my drink to my left hand, dipped my hand under my coat to produce my P-38 and pointed it at Bremmer. "I prefer my rye without chloral hydrate," I told him and clicked off the safety.

His small eyes grew big at the sight of the gun and his mouth popped open.

"When Buzz Thurmond gets here, does he expect to pick up my dragged body, ready for disposal?"

"I . . . don't know what you mean."

Centering my gun on his stomach, I let my face grow expressionless and slowly increased the trigger pressure. It was a ticklish thing to do, because the safety wasn't on. But though I have an aversion to shoot-

ing unarmed men in cold blood, even accidentally, I suspected Bremer was too familiar with guns for me to work a bluff with the safety on, and that he knew even an expert can't always control trigger pressure.

"Don't!" he squeaked. "For God's sake, don't!"

"Where's Thurmond?" I asked.

"Outside, waiting," he managed to whisper. "But it's not what you think. I swear . . ."

"Shut up," I cut him off.

Relaxing my trigger pressure, I thrust the glass I was holding in my left hand under his nose.

"You've got a choice," I informed him. "Gulp this down in two swallows, or take a bullet in the guts. Don't strain my patience by stretching it to three swallows."

He stared at me fascinatedly until I let my expression become a little resigned and at the same time steadied the gun on his stomach again. Then he quickly reached out, grabbed the glass from my hand and drained the contents in two shuddering gulps.

By my watch it was only four and a half minutes until the hotel proprietor dropped off to slumber still sitting in the chair.

14.

I didn't have long to wait. In a few minutes, there was a light tap on the door, and then it opened, and Buzz Thurmond came in. He froze

as his eyes took in the room and the gun I held pointed at him.

Buzz Thurmond had changed considerably during the eight years since the photographs on his police record card had been taken, but he was still recognizable as the same man. His description at age twenty-two had listed his weight at two hundred and six; I guessed it now as two-fifty. His thick-featured face was also much heavier than it had been in the photographs, but it had the same strong jaw and the same sullen expression.

"What do you want?" he asked huskily.

I motioned him into the room. "Just a little conversation. First about why you felt you had to stir up the Purple Pelicans against Stub Carlson. Then about the announcement you made to the club that you'd take care of me. If you're still conscious when we finish those subjects, we'll talk about Bart Meyers' murder."

His eyes narrowed. "What. you mean, still conscious?"

"I wouldn't expect a crumb who steers kids into dope addiction and crime to talk freely without a little persuasion," I explained. "Matter of fact, I'd be disappointed if you did."

I reached behind me to push the door shut, but instead my hand encountered rough cloth. This startled me, but not enough to make any sudden moves. Cautiously, I pressed against the cloth and discovered a thin leg beneath it.

After that I wasn't terribly surprised to feel a gun muzzle press into my back.

"Put your hands on top of your head," a thin voice said in my ear.

I put my hands on top of my head.

"You got here just in time, Limpy," Buzz Thurmond said. "This is that Moon character I was telling you and Bremmer about."

Moving forward, he relieved me of my P-38 and patted my pockets for other weapons.

"He's clean," he finally decided.

Aside from his slight build and receding chin there was little resemblance between the two-year-old photographs in his file and Limpy Alfred Leventhal himself. The features were the same, of course, but the police pictures had shown a sinister-looking man with a gash for a mouth and the expression of a habitual criminal. This must have been a trick of photography, for he actually resembled Caspar Milquetoast without a mustache. Nor could his halting gait properly be described as a limp. It was more of a stiff manner of walking, as though he had general arthritis instead of a game leg.

On top of everything else he looked fifty-five instead of the forty-two he was. In the pictures his hair hadn't even been grey.

"What's the deal?" Limpy Alfred asked Thurmond.

The big man shrugged. "Bremmer was supposed to have the guy Mickey

Finned. With Bremmer out, what are we supposed to do now? Bremmer didn't tell me what he wanted done with this guy."

"I thought he wanted him bumped."

"Not here, he didn't," Thurmond said. "He had it figured where he wanted us to take him, but he didn't get around to telling me. He said he'd outline it to both of us when we got the guy."

I said, "He can't tell you now. Guess we'd better call the whole thing off."

Ignoring me, Limpy Alfred said, "Why not just take him out somewhere and dump him?"

Thurmond shook his head. "I think Bremmer had some kind of plan to frame it like an accident. Or maybe frame somebody he didn't like for it."

"Like you framed Joe Brighton for the Bart Meyers kill?" I asked.

Both of them looked at me.

"Why don't you just shut up?" Thurmond inquired in an irritated voice.

Limpy Alfred said, "I guess all we can do is wait for him to sleep it off. How long you think he'll be out?"

Thurmond shrugged, and looked at a gold wrist watch. "It's three-thirty now. The way he's sleeping, I don't guess he'll stir before dark anyway."

"I have a dinner engagement," I said. "Maybe I'd better leave and come back later on."

Again I was ignored. Stiffly Limpy

Alfred walked over to the table and examined the bottle of rye. Approximately a half pint remained in the bottle.

"This the stuff?" he asked Thurmond.

"I don't know." He looked at me. "Is it?"

"Naw," I said. "The knockout drops are in the soda. That's pretty good whiskey. Let's all have a couple of snorts for old times' sake."

"That's the stuff," Thurmond told Limpy Alfred.

Still keeping his gun on me, the gray-haired man uncorked the bottle with his left hand, sniffed at it and then poured about four ounces in a tumbler.

"You're going to take a little nap," he informed me. "You can take it this way, or get a gun barrel bent over your head. Take your pick."

I considered the two alternatives with equal lack of enthusiasm. "Why can't we just all play pinochle until Bremmer wakes up?"

Thurmond said, "Just belt the guy and shut him up, Limpy."

When Limpy Alfred's expression indicated he was about to do just that, I said hurriedly, "I'll take the Mickey Finn."

When I awoke the room light was on, and I could see from the frosted glass window that it was evening. I was lying on the couch. When I tried to move, I discovered my hands were lashed behind my back. They felt as they were asleep.

Only one other person was in the room. Buzz Thurmond sat in the chair where Sherman Bremmer had previously slept, an automatic lying in his lap and his eyes studying me broodingly.

"Decided to join the party, eh?" he said.

"What time is it?"

"Eleven o'clock. You been sleeping seven and a half hours."

"Where's Bremmer and Limpy Alfred?" I asked.

"The boss is lying down with an icebag on his head. Limpy's on an errand."

A few minutes later the door opened and Sherman Bremmer came in. His normally sooty white complexion was even sootier than usual and his eyes possessed the slightly glazed look of a man with a terrific hangover. Apparently he still had a headache, because when the sight of me distorted his face into a snarl, he winced and smoothed out his facial muscles again.

Behind him, Limpy Alfred moved stiffly into the room and handed Bremmer a leather key case I recognized as my own.

"He wasn't there," the gray-haired man said. "What now?"

Bremmer frowned, and then glared down at me. "Where'd you hide that kid, Moon?"

When I merely looked at him silently, he started to bend forward with the apparent intention of slapping me, but the instant his head lowered he winced and straightened.

"Get out of him where he put the kid," he ordered Thurmond.

Rising, Buzz Thurmond walked over to me and grabbed my shirt front and jerked me to a seated position. I swung my legs over the side of the couch, closed my eyes until my head adjusted to its new position and the ache subsided, then looked up at him.

"Where'd you put him?" Buzz asked.

"He's in jail," I said. "He was describing you to the cops, and they arrested him for indecent language."

Buzz growled deep in his throat. Leaning over me, he grasped my shoulders and dug a thumb into the joint on each side. When he found the nerves he wanted, he pressed until I had to bite my lips to keep from screaming.

Eventually he let up and asked, "Where's the kid?"

I had to wait a minute for the pain to subside before I could speak. Then I asked thickly. "Have you tried his home?"

With an exasperated expression, Buzz started to dig in his thumbs again.

This time, I did scream. I'm not an expert screamer, but it was enough to make Bremmer say, "We can't have screams like that in the hotel." He paused a moment and then his face brightened. "Sam Polito's the one could make him talk. We'll take him to Harry Krebb's house, and work in his soundproof basement. I'll pick up

Sam Polito and meet you there."

Harry Krebb was the fence the juvenile gangs dealt with, and I remembered Sam Polito as being one of the narcotics pushers.

Limpy went out into the lobby a minute, and then came back in. "There's a kind of stupid looking cluck sitting in the lobby," he said.

Bremmer considered. Then he ordered my wrists untied, and as we went into the hotel lobby, Bremmer went over to talk to the man Limpy had mentioned, to block off the view.

Just before we went outdoors, with Buzz Thurmond's pocketed gun pressing into my back, I risked a quick glance back. This got me a scowl from Buzz, but didn't prevent me from getting a profile view of the man Bremmer was talking to.

To my complete amazement I saw it was Mouldy Greene.

15.

It was only about twelve blocks to Krebb's place, near a darkened repair garage. I was hustled downstairs after the door had been opened by someone I guessed to be Harry Krebb himself, and into a newly decorated game room at the rear of a furnace and laundry room. It was about fifteen by twenty feet, with a pool table, a fireplace, and a bar. The ceiling was white acoustic board, and the walls were of light blue painted plaster. A wicker sofa was in front of the fireplace and two

small round cocktail tables were near the bar.

In a few minutes footsteps sounded in the laundry room and Bremmer entered with a swarthy man I took to be Sam Polito. He was about fifty with short gray hair which lay close to his head in tight ringlets. He had an insensitive, almost sullen face, thick lips and dull black eyes which contained none of the Sicilian spark common among his countrymen.

Bremmer told him, "What we want, Polito, is to find out where Moon here hid out Stub Carlson. The kid's not at home and he's not at Moon's flat. It's your baby."

The swarthy barber merely nodded.

"Lay him out on the pool table," Bremmer ordered the others. "Strip him to the waist first."

When I was lying on the table, stripped, Sam Polito reached in his pocket, brought something out, there was a sharp click and a thin blade with a razor edge jumped from his fist. At a signal from Bremmer, Buzz Thurmond grabbed both my arms and Limpy Alfred clasped his arms around my legs.

"Sam doesn't like to talk much, so I'll explain things for him," Bremmer said. "Sam's so expert with that thing, he can peel off skin a square inch at a time without even cutting the tissue underneath. According to Sam, a man can live until two-thirds of his skin has been cut away. But I imagine he'd stop wanting to long before that. Now I don't enjoy this sort of thing, Mr.

Moon, and I'd just as soon dispense with it. Why don't you tell us where the kid is, and save both us and yourself trouble?"

I examined Sam Polito. There was nothing sadistic in his sullen face. His expression was simply unfeeling. He had a job to do and he'd do it efficiently, but he didn't really care one way or the other whether he had to do it or not.

This unnerved me more than if he had done a little gloating. The man impressed me as little more than an animal, standing there holding his knife and patiently waiting for an order to begin. I felt sweat pop out on my forehead and roll off the side of my face.

I clamped my mouth shut and looked at Polito's knife.

Bremmer gave a resigned nod and the point dipped toward my chest.

I brought my legs up, shot them forward again and hurled Limpy Alfred halfway across the room. The knife retreated and the barber said unemotionally, "Such a little man cannot hold his legs alone."

"You can say that again," Limpy Alfred said as he returned to the table and dusted himself off. "Why not bring Krebb down from upstairs?"

Bremmer nodded and went to the door.

He opened it just as a figure reached for the knob on the other side. But it wasn't Krebb or one of the Bremmer's gang. When the doorknob receded from his seeking

grasp, Mouldy Greene changed the direction of his grab and instead gathered a handful of Bremmer's shirt front.

Pushing the hotel man before him, Mouldy came all the way into the room, gave me a friendly wave with his free hand and said, "Hi, Sarge."

Both my arms were released as Thurmond decided to straighten up and draw his gun. Mouldy picked all two hundred pounds of Sherman Bremmer off the floor and tossed him at Buzz Thurmond like a medicine ball.

I didn't see what else happened, because I was rolling on my side and clamping one hand across the cylinder of Limpy Alfred's revolver as it appeared. I clamped down tight, preventing the cylinder from rotating and consequently making it impossible to fire. At the same time I swung my left leg around, got my foot under his armpit and pushed.

Limpy let loose the gun and staggered across the room to crash into the bar.

When I turned my attention back to the rest of the room, Mouldy was nimbly leaping aside to let Sam Polito's knife whistle past him and sink into the door jamb. As I scrambled off the pool table Mouldy stepped forward and landed a six-inch jab on the barber's chin. Polito made a complete spin and collapsed on his face.

Catching the fat hotel proprietor in his stomach had knocked Buzz

Thurmond down and jarred the gun from his hand. I scooped it up and turned to cover the room with both guns. "What brought you rolling in like the Marines?" I asked y Mouldy.

He gestured toward Limpy Alfred. "I spotted him coming out of your flat and followed him."

I thought about Harry Krebb, upstairs. "There's another one," I told Mouldy.

"You mean the guy upstairs? He's hung up in the laundry room. That's what took me time in getting to you."

"What do you mean, hung up?"

"By the seat of his pants on a spike in the wall," Mouldy said. "I checked upstairs before I tackled this room. I hogtied him with his necktie first, so he couldn't reach up and turn himself loose."

It occurred to me that it must have taken incredible bad luck for Mouldy Greene's former employer, the owner of Fausta Moreni's club when it was a gambling house, to get himself killed while Mouldy was acting as a bodyguard for him.

I said, "Let me get this sorted out a little. You followed Limpy Alfred from my apartment. What were you doing at my apartment?"

Mouldy's brow furrowed in an effort to remember. Then an expression of enlightenment crossed his flat face. "Oh yeah. Fausta sent me. When you was nearly an hour late for your date with her and didn't answer your phone, she sent me to check up. I got there just as the

little guy came out. Boy, if you think you had trouble with these guys, wait until Fausta catches up with you."

"I think I had a fair excuse," I said dryly.

Handing the two guns to Mouldy so that he could supervise our captives, I put on my shirt, tie and coat. Then I retrieved my P-38 from Buzz Thurmond's pocket and thrust it under my arm.

I was just rising when a voice from the door said, "Freeze, buddy. And put those guns down real slow."

My gaze jumped to the door. A tall, lean man in a light gray suit stood there covering the room with a short-barrelled pistol. "This one's a stranger," I said to Mouldy as we slowly lowered our guns to the floor. "I thought I'd gotten to know the whole gang."

The tall man advanced into the room. His left hand dipped into his breast pocket and came out with a small leather folder which he flashed open to exhibit a badge and an identification card.

"Sergeant Hudson of Burglary," he announced. "You're all under arrest."

It took me some time to convince the sergeant that Mouldy and I weren't criminals. But after he had examined my license and listened to my story, he finally decided to believe me.

It developed the place was practically surrounded by police. On the basis of the information I had given Warren Day, and he in turn had passed along, the Vice Squad, Burglary Squad and Narcotics Squad had all gotten together and detailed men to cover each of the suspects starting at five that afternoon. Sergeant Hudson was in charge of the combined detail.

When Limpy Alfred had been seen leaving the Hotel Bremmer that evening by the man assigned to tail Sherman Bremmer, the word was passed along to Limpy's assigned shadow, who had been patiently waiting in a doorway across the street from Limpy's living quarters. The gray-haired man's shadow joined Bremmer's shadow at the hotel in time to see Limpy return from his trip to my flat and also to spot Mouldy Greene tailing him.

On a hunch that Buzz Thurmond might be at the Bremmer Hotel too, as he hadn't showed at the place he lived, Buzz's shadow was also ordered to the Bremmer Hotel. Consequently the car in which I rode to Krebb's was followed by two cops in addition to Mouldy, and when Bremmer drove over to pick up Sam Polito, he was followed by one.

At the barber's place Sam Polito's shadow joined the caravan. Krebb's tail was watching the garageman's home. When the other four cops arrived on the scene, they all got together, decided something important was up and phoned Hudson.

The next morning I got back on my normal schedule by sleeping until noon. Probably I would have slept even later, since it was two-thirty A.M. before I fell into bed, but the phone woke me up.

It was Ed Brighton.

"Sorry to bother you, Manny," he said. "But I wondered if you've turned anything up."

"I've been at least partly responsible for getting some hoodlums thrown in the can," I told him. "The gang I mentioned to you which may have been responsible for killing the Meyers kid and framing it on Joe. There isn't material evidence tying the mob to the murder, and they're being held at present because of narcotics and stolen goods found on their property last night. So all we can hope for is that somebody breaks down and talks. Homicide's got a pretty good staff of interrogators. It'll probably be tomorrow before they're even turned over to Homicide, so we'll just have to wait and see."

Actually I was a little more hopeful than I sounded, since there was a good chance Joe Brighton would be released even if Homicide couldn't prove a case against the Bremmer gang. All that was necessary was for Warren Day to become convinced the gang had engineered the kill. Even if he couldn't prove it, he'd recommend to the D.A. that charges against young Joe be dropped.

I didn't mention this to Ed, though, as there was no point in building what very well might be false hopes.

At one-thirty I dropped by Warren Day's office.

"You certainly loused things up good, Moon," were his first words to me. "Burglary, Vice and Narcotics wanted to check that gang's contacts for a few days before they moved in. Now we can't nail any of the kids they were dealing with."

"You're too big to pick on kids anyway," I said. "Heard how Burglary et al are making out with their catch?"

"Pretty good, I guess," Day said sourly. "They found Krebb's house loaded with stolen stuff and got a confession from him on receiving stolen property. Claims he didn't know it was stolen, of course, and can't remember the names of the boys who brought it in. Not because he's trying to protect them. He's just afraid the kids will break down and implicate him even worse."

The pushers' apartments also yielded a good supply of reefers and heroin, Warren Day told me. Buzz Thurmond gave the inspector the impression he was telling the truth, and didn't have anything to do with Bart Meyers' killing.

"I got the feeling Thurmond was lying about everything else but the murder," Day said. Then, he added grudgingly, "If it makes you feel any better, I've requested the D.A. to hold off asking for an indictment

against young Brighton until we've gone over the Bremmer gang."

That was some consolation anyway, I thought as I left the inspector's office. But not much. I wouldn't have admitted it to Warren Day, but I had a healthy respect for his ability to judge the veracity of suspects.

17.

After leaving the Inspector's office, I had a few words with Joe Brighton in the detention cells. He looked listless and dispirited. When he saw me, he swung his feet to the floor and gripped his knees with his large-knuckled hands.

"Get me out of here, Uncle Manny," he said in a low voice. "For God's sake, get me out of here!"

I told him I was doing my best and let him know about the gang's capture. Briefly I told him what had happened since I last saw him, and that there was an outside chance Homicide might pin Bart Meyers' murder on the gang.

"It would help if we could establish opportunity for Thurmond or some other member of the gang to have gotten hold of that hunting knife," I said. "You ever mention it to him or to any members of the Purple Pelicans?"

"I never even knew Dad owned it. Honest, Uncle Manny. I never saw it in my life until the night I found it sticking out of Bart's chest."

I only stayed a few minutes, having stopped by just to see how he was getting on, and not because I wanted anything in particular. When I left I told him to hang on to hope a couple of more days, as by then Warren Day should have made up his mind definitely as to whether or not Bremmer's gang was responsible for Bart Meyers' death.

It was shortly after two-thirty when I got back to my flat. I had hardly entered when the phone rang. Dave O'Brien was on the other end. He told me the whole neighborhood knew that Buzz Thurmond and his gang were in jail, and were worried about being pulled in themselves. With the gang in this mood, it seemed to me a good time to talk to them, and Dave O'Brien arranged the meeting.

The Purple Pelicans were strangely subdued when I arrived in the club room. The boy who had tried to knife me sat as quietly as the rest, and it looked as though most of the members were present, either seated on folding chairs or on the benches around the walls.

I let them know that I'd consider my experience with them past history, and start fresh. "I think by now most of you boys must realize you were suckered into making that play. Is there anyone here who doesn't by now know that Buzz Thurmond deliberately worked you up into a mob in order to block my investigation into Bart Meyers' murder?"

There were a few mutters, but no one said anything aloud.

I explained that Bremmer's gang had been arrested for offenses ranging from possession of stolen property to pushing narcotics. "The police seized plenty of narcotics as evidence, but what really concerns you is the stolen property since you all know, and I know, and the police suspect, that most of it came from members of this club."

I paused and the group shifted uneasily.

"However, I doubt that the police will be able to break down the fences and implicate you boys," I said.

There was a murmur of mingled surprise and relief.

"But not because any of them give a hoot in Hades what happens to you," I said brutally. "They won't give your names only because you're just a bunch of kids, and they know you'll squeal back. Right now they're only hooked for possession. They know that once the cops got hold of you, they'd be hooked for everything from conspiracy to commit burglary to contributing to the delinquency of minors. So if you're tempted to admire your adult pals for not breaking, forget it."

I stressed that they'd been suckers for a gang which made one-third of their members dope addicts, to widen the market for their pushers, and were advised on burglaries in order to drum up business for the

gang's fences. I finished up by telling them that Stub Carlson would be home in a day or so, and that I'd beat the living hell out of the instigator if there was any ganging up on him such as happened before. If they were sore with him for telling me club secrets, they could take him on one at a time. Stub was a big boy and could take care of himself that way.

I asked them if they had any questions. No one had. I made the trip across the room in dead silence until I was within feet of the stairs, then somebody gave a tentative clap.

That set it off, and the kids began to applaud as though I had sung like Mario Lanza instead of bawling the hell out of them.

I grinned, gave them a wave and started up the stairs.

18.

The next day I stopped by headquarters in the afternoon to check how Homicide was making out with its interrogations. The results were depressing.

Back in the inspector's office, I asked, "Think there's any hope?"

He shook his head. "I don't think he's guilty. Or anybody else in the gang. They were after you because you threatened their rackets, not because you were digging into the murder."

"So what's the situation on Joe Brighton now?"

"What do you think?" he growled. "The D.A.'s going ahead and ask for an indictment."

When I left headquarters I was more irked than I was discouraged. I was personally convinced of Joe Brighton's innocence, which meant there had to be evidence of it somewhere. The only thing to do was continue digging.

One phase of the thing I hadn't looked into was young Joe's theory that he had been framed by the Gravediggers. I'd skipped it because it seemed such an unlikely possibility it hardly seemed worth checking. But with the probability of pinning the killing on Buzz Thurmond growing more remote by the minute, it was time to look into even unlikely possibilities.

Another point I hadn't managed to make any progress on was the identity of the girl who had phoned the police at about the time Bart was killed and reported a reefer party in progress at the club room. Turning her up might answer a lot of questions.

I checked with Stella Quint and Ruth Zimmerman again, but got nowhere. Stella was no longer listless and her thoughts seemed to have stopped turning inward at least enough for her to be aware of her surroundings. When I asked if she had ever heard any rumors about who the girl who had phoned the police might be, she said she had

heard some speculation about it, but nobody seemed to know.

Ruth Zimmerman had apparently thrust out of her mind everything connected with the murder just as she had thrust Joe Brighton out of it, for she had to concentrate a moment before she figured out what I was talking about. "Oh, you mean the girl who said she was Joe's girl friend," she said. "She had some nerve. I asked everybody in the auxiliary. Not a one of the girls even knew what I was talking about. I bet there never was such a girl."

That seemed to put the damper on my bright idea of tracing the girl down.

After leaving Ruth, I decided to call at Mrs. Meyers' flat again. I had an idea that she would probably be at work, but I tried anyway. I timed it just right, because I caught her just coming in. She was in the lower hall collecting her mail.

"Hi, Mrs. Meyers," I said. "I thought probably you'd be at work, but I took a chance on catching you."

"Oh hello, Mr. Moon. I just got off work at three-thirty. I go into the restaurant at seven A.M. Come on up."

She led me up the worn stairs to her kitchen and motioned me to a chair. Like Stella Quint's her grief had now settled into a quiet hopelessness, but she seemed to have adjusted to the necessity of going on with her everyday life. I waited without saying anything while she

checked over what the mailman had brought that morning.

A card which looked like a gas bill and an envelope I recognized as the kind the electric company uses, she placed in a tray on top of the ice box. An envelope addressed in a flourishing feminine hand she put aside on the kitchen table without opening. A slim brown envelope with a typed address she tore open, drawing from it a small printed form of some kind. She examined the form puzzledly.

Reading half aloud and half to herself, she muttered, "Due to your new employment, you are no longer eligible . . . If you are not satisfied with the decision of this office, procedure for request for review of your case is . . ."

She looked up at me and emitted a humorless chuckle. "This is good. The welfare finally got around to letting me know I'm off relief, when I been off two years."

Crumpling the form into a ball, she dropped it into a waste basket under the sink and took a chair across from me. "Now what can I do for you, Mr. Moon?"

"Probably nothing," I said. "I'm still convinced Joe Brighton is innocent of your son's death, but I've come to a dead end, so I'm starting the investigation over."

I explained to her about the girl I was trying to locate. "Would you have any idea who made that call?" I asked.

Wonderingly she shook her head.

"How would I know, Mr. Moon?"

"I didn't think you would," I said, rising. "But none of the Purple Pelicans' auxiliary seems to know either, and I thought it was worth the chance to ask you."

After I had thanked the woman and left, I sat in my car out in front of her place and brooded for a time. There didn't seem to be any logical next move to make except to tackle the Gravediggers, and I was so unenthusiastic about that possibility, it hardly seemed worthwhile checking. Nevertheless this seemed to be the only remaining field of research, so I unenthusiastically decided to tackle it. But to put it off, I decided to drop by and see Ed Brighton first.

It was near the close of Ed's work day, and he'd already done his piece-work quota for the day, evidently, because he was sitting on a piece of crated machinery with other workers when I found him. When Ed saw me, he jumped up, took my arm and led me to one side.

"I'd rather not talk about this thing in front of the guys," he said. "They know Joe's in jail, of course, but you know how it is working with guys. They're embarrassed about it and so am I, so we just skip it. Anything new?"

I gave him the bad news about the D.A.'s going ahead with asking for an indictment on Joe, and Ed looked as though I had kicked him in the stomach. "I'm sure the kid's innocent," I assured him. "There's

bound to be proof of it somewhere."

"Where?"

"That's the question," I said.

I told him of my unsuccessful attempt to run down the girl who had phoned the police, and also of Joe's theory about the Gravediggers.

"Planning a slick frameup like this seems to me beyond what you'd expect of a kid gang. Then too, whoever swiped that knife must have been familiar with where Joe lived, which would seem to narrow it to a resident of this section."

When Ed merely silently brooded over what I had told him, I said, "Can't you remember where you kept that blamed knife? Joe insists he never in his life saw it before he found it sticking in Bart Meyers."

He shook his head. "I hadn't used the thing in years, Manny."

"What in the devil did you ever buy the thing for?" I growled at him. "You never did any hunting, did you?"

"I used it to clean fish."

We both lapsed into moody silence. For some reason Ed's last remark lingered in my mind and wouldn't go away. "You used it to clean fish," I repeated. "That why it didn't have a sheath?"

"Yeah. I just used to pitch it in my bait box."

I felt a peculiar tingle race along my spine. "Say that again."

"What?" he asked, surprised. "I just said I used to pitch the knife in my bait box. When I was getting ready to go fishing, I mean."

It was as simple as that. For more than a full week I'd been pounding my legs off, talking myself hoarse and ducking knives and guns without making an inch of progress. Then Ed Brighton made a casual remark and I knew who had killed Bart Meyers.

I wasn't sure of the motive, but I even had an inkling about that. And now that I knew where to look, it wasn't going to be much trouble to check.

19.

It was nearly ten after five when I pulled up in front of the building where Public Welfare was officed, after fighting traffic across the most congested part of town.

The first thing I did was check with Sara's plump supervisor, Mrs. Forshay, catching her just as she was about to leave for the day.

"Welfare cases are confidential, Mr. Moon," she told me, when I explained what I wanted. "I'm afraid I'd need a pretty good explanation before I could accede to a request like that."

So I gave her a pretty good explanation. When I finished, she stopped looking astonished and started looking upset. Without any more argument she led me to the Record Room.

When I found what I wanted, she agreed not to take any action until she heard from me, but she wasn't ready to let me go. First she wanted

to know how the swindle had been worked.

I wasn't sure, but I had some ideas. With my ideas and her knowledge of agency procedure, we worked out most of the answers between us.

When I left the welfare office, I worked straight on through until eight o'clock in the evening without even stopping for dinner. I made five calls, and the answers I got in each case were the same.

Each of the women I called on was either a widow, divorced or separated. Each worked, so was not at home in the daytime when the mail was delivered. Each had at least one son who belonged to the Purple Pelicans.

And while all of them had been on relief at some time or other, none had been on the rolls for over two years or more.

I didn't call on Mrs. Meyers again, because I knew her situation. And I skipped the last three names because I knew I'd find the same answers there and I already had enough evidence.

20.

When I rang the buzzer, Sara came to the door dressed in a neat gray suit which must have cost a hundred dollars. She looked at me in surprise.

"It's nice to see you, Manny!" she exclaimed.

She led me into the well-furnished parlor and I looked it over again, as I had the evening I stopped by while she was doing case records. But this time I was doing more than just admiring it. I was adding up the cost of the obviously expensive furnishings and trying to reconcile it with the kind of salaries received in the underpaid profession of social work.

"Drink?" Sara asked.

"No thanks," I said. "I'm afraid I've come on business, Sara. About that fishing rig in your clutter room."

"You want to borrow it?" she asked.

"It really isn't yours to lend, is it? Doesn't it belong to Ed?"

Her eyebrows raised. "Why yes, as a matter of fact. But he certainly wouldn't mind."

"I should have guessed it the first time I saw it," I said. "I knew that when Ed lost his house and moved into that two-room flat, he couldn't move everything with him. Most of the extra furniture he sold, of course. But there's always a certain amount of stuff you hang onto no matter where you live. Like camping equipment and cameras and fishing gear. But Ed didn't have any storage space at all in that tiny place he moved to. So naturally he had to get someone to store his stuff for him. And who else would he ask but a relative?"

"What are you talking about?" she asked uneasily.

"The knife that killed Bart Mey-

ers. It never was in the trunk in the back of Ed's closet. It was in his bait box back in your clutter room."

Sara's face suddenly paled. "What . . . what do you mean, Manny?"

"Just what you're thinking," I quietly informed her. "I know the whole story, Sara. I happened to be at Mrs. Meyers's flat this afternoon when she took in the mail. She got a notice from Public Welfare that she'd been cut off relief. But she hadn't been on relief for two years. How'd you happen to make a mistake like letting that notice go out?"

Weakly she sank into a chair. It seemed to take an effort for her to speak, but finally she managed to say in a dull voice, "I couldn't stop it. They're mailed out of the state office, just like the checks. I hoped she'd just throw it away instead of making an inquiry as to why she got it."

"She did," I admitted. "And I suppose you figured the boys in the other nine homes would have sense enough to destroy the notices when they came in."

When she made no reply at all, merely sitting with hunched shoulders and looking down into her lap hopelessly, I said, "It was a kind of clever racket. Mrs. Forshay and I had quite a little discussion before we figured out just how you worked it."

Her head came up. "Mrs. Forshay knows?"

When I nodded, she let her head droop again.

"I remember you told me you worked at Intake for a week each summer when the regular Intake workers were on vacation. That's when you put through the applications. You picked all old cases, ones you'd had before and whose present circumstances you knew well enough so that you were reasonably sure the families were now on their feet economically and wouldn't louse you up by coming in to apply for relief when they were already on the rolls. Since they were all in your district, naturally the applications all ended up on your desk for investigation. Normally a caseworker couldn't work such a deal, because at least two agency people have to come in personal contact with a client: the Intake worker and the investigator. But in this case you were both people. And since the records of investigation were all in order, your supervisor automatically approved them. How'd you line the boys up for the racket?"

"Bart did it," she said dully. "I knew he was leader of his dreadful little gang and would do almost anything dishonest for money. Before he turned religious and decided to reform the world, anyway. He gave me a list of the members and I checked it against my list of closed cases. There were over twenty families who had children in the Purple Pelicans, but Bart eliminated all but those he was sure he could trust. That left ten."

"And the kids collected the

checks," I said. "With their mothers all at work when the mail came, that was a cinch. And even if a mother happened to be home sick, the kid could make a point of getting to the mail box first once a month, since the checks always arrived on the first. What'd they do then? Turn them over to you and collect a commission?"

"To Bart," she said in a lifeless voice. "Bart had a contact with a tavern keeper who'd cash them without question for a twenty-five per cent commission. The kids each got another twenty-five per cent and Bart and I split the rest twenty-eighty."

I did some quick arithmetic. "Mrs. Forshay figured the checks averaged sixty dollars a month. Which would leave three hundred a month for you and Bart to split. Sixty for him, maybe seventy or seventy-five including his split on his own mother's check. Enough for spending money and for him to turn in a bit at home without arousing suspicion. You'd get two-forty. It's a nice tax-free bit of additional income, but it hardly seems enough to kill for."

"He was going to report it to Welfare," she said. "He wouldn't let me just close the cases and not do it any more. He had to get religious. I'd have been ruined, Manny. I'd not only have lost my job, I'd have gone to jail."

"The state's probably a little stuffy about people embezzling its

money," I conceded. "But if you were going to kill the kid, why'd you frame your own nephew?"

She looked up at me again and her eyes were completely empty. "I didn't mean to do that. I didn't even mean to kill Bart. I took that old knife along because it was the only weapon in the house and I wanted to scare him. When he wouldn't listen to reason and insisted he was going to report the whole thing to Welfare even if he went to jail for it, because he wanted to start out living straight, I lost my head. I struck at him with the knife and he went down. I didn't know he had a date to meet Joe in the club room a few minutes later, and it never occurred to me anybody would be able to identify that silly knife."

"It was you who phoned the police right after the killing and reported a reefer party, wasn't it?" I asked.

"I just wanted them to find the body so he wouldn't have to lie there alone," she said. "I didn't mean to get Joe in trouble."

"But after he was in it, you'd have let him burn for your crime, wouldn't you, Sara?"

Tears formed at her eye corners and began to edge across her cheeks. "I don't know," she said brokenly. "I was hoping you'd prove that gang committed the murder. I've been going crazy. You know I always loved Joe."

"Sure," I said. "You even visited him in jail."

As I crossed over to the phone, she mumbled through her tears, "All I wanted was nice things."

I dialled Homicide and waited while the phone rang several times.

"They never paid us enough," Sara said, now crying freely. "You don't know what it's like, skimping and saving and not even being able to afford a television set when even most of your relief clients had them. All I wanted was a few nice things."

"They have television at the state penitentiary now," I told her.

"What?" a voice asked in my ear.

21.

About two weeks later I got a phone call from Wilfred Reed.

"Mr. Moon? Just called to tell you how things are going in the Purple Pelicans. Stub Carlson was elected the first president under their new by-laws."

"You mean he managed to whip Joe Brighton?" I asked in astonishment.

"Oh, they don't elect officers that way any more. They have straight elections now. Matter of fact, Joe Brighton put his name in nomination."

"Oh. Well, I'm glad to hear it."

"I thought you might be interested in our organizational setup," he said. "After we've brought a club into the program, we usually invite one or more of the parents to act as

adult supervisors, you know. On a volunteer basis, of course. They act as liaison between the club and the Y in organizing baseball and basketball games, do a little referee work and chaperone teen-age dances. That sort of thing."

"Sounds like a good idea," I said.

"Oh, it is. A good deal of our success depends on parent cooperation. And that of other adults."

He paused and I waited for him to say good-by.

"Ah . . . Mr. Moon, we generally ask the boys who they'd like for an adult supervisor before we approach any of the adults."

"That sounds like a good idea too."

"Ah . . . when we asked the Purple Pelicans, they requested you."

While I just sat there in astonishment, he went on hurriedly, "I know you're probably a busy man, but before you say no, will you drop by and let me explain what duties are involved. It's certainly a worthy cause, and it won't tie you up more than an evening or two a week."

I thought of sixty kids who only a couple of weeks ago had been on a one-way street leading to the penitentiary, the morgue or mental hospitals. Then I grinned into the phone.

"I'll drop down for a briefing, Mr. Reed. But you can forget the sales talk. I'll take it."



CRIME CAVALCADE

BY VINCENT H. GADDIS

Deadlier Sex

In King's Lynn, England, Mrs. Evelyn Wright, 56-year-old landlady, captured a burglar by tripping him up, then sitting on him. She weighed 210 pounds, and the thief, Robert Taylor, a mere 135.

An 84-year-old grandmother in Minneapolis, Minn., gave the boot to burglars in the grocery store below her home. Hearing a disturbance, she flung all the old shoes she had, along with a milk bottle, at them through a window. They dropped the cash register they were carrying and escaped.

A woman teller in Los Angeles, Rosemary Cocco, thwarted a man trying to hold up a branch of the Security-First National bank. When he passed her a hold-up note signed Wild Bill, Miss Cocco turned to the girl in the next cage and said, "This fool is trying to hold me up; kick the alarm." The man promptly fled.

Putting on the Bite

In San Francisco, Humane Society dog-catcher John L. McKenno was fined \$25 by Municipal Judge Clayton Horn, after he bit Patrolman Loren D. Clem, an officer trying to arrest him.

In Kansas City, Mo., another pa-

trolman had bad luck, when Officer Carey Majors went on the hunt for a small dog who had bitten a citizen. He found the dog, when the animal bit him.

Hooked

In Fayetteville, N. C., Cumberland Co. Sheriff L. L. Guy and his deputy hooked a 200-gallon whiskey still on a fishing trip, with their lines. When their hooks caught a wire connected with a tree on the bank, they found it led to a copper condenser and other equipment submerged in the pond. They decided that the bootleggers ran moonshine back in the woods, and then hid their equipment each time under water.

Burglars in New Haven, Conn., used hooks to get bags of coins totalling \$900 at the Savin Rock Arcade. After drilling a hole in the floor from below, they ran a twisted wire up and hooked the two bags down through the hole.

Farm Fantasies

Miss Emma Mae Severs of Hamonton, N. J., thought she really had a safe spot for her money when she wrapped it in aluminum foil and hid it in the farm's deep freeze. But the day before she planned to take it to the bank, a hungry burglar

prowled among the green stuff and made off with her \$4,300.

While in Logansport, Ind., a burglar joined a farm family in watching TV before he made off with the money. Mr. and Mrs. Donald Heckard told Sheriff Claude G. Berkshire they were watching Arthur Godfrey with their young son when a window in the next room was broken and a masked, six-foot man entered. He forced the wife to tie up her 30-year-old husband with a clothesline. Badly frightened, she got her husband's wallet for the intruder, first taking out \$10. He returned \$4 of the remaining \$101, "so the boy can have some breakfast." Then he sat down, announcing he'd stay till ten P.M. to wait for traffic to lessen, and finally left at midnight on foot after deciding that their car would be "too hot" to get away in. He wore gloves and a half-mask all during the TV session.

That Different "Touch"

In Elyria, O., a scar-faced hoodlum held up the Household Finance Company office and got away with \$577. After emptying the cash drawers the man forced Office Manager J. J. Boreski and three women to remove their shoes, which he took to the hall, then flung back toward them a box full of tacks to cover the floor.

Another hold-up man in El Soerante, Calif., discouraged pursuit by using intoxicants. He robbed a taxi driver and service station at-

tendant of \$20, then gave them a fifth of whiskey and stood over them till they finished the bottle.

Justice First

A Detroit policeman, William J. DePhugh, hearing the police radio reporting a beer store hold-up, recognized his own brother from the robber's description. After he led officers to his home to investigate brother Henry, they found a sack of beer bottles and \$200 concealed in the house.

In Nashville, Tenn., Justice of the Peace Clay E. Smith fined three men \$25 and costs for illegal hunting of deer with buckshot. The Justice himself was one of the three men.

Wild West

The man recently appointed state cattle inspector to check brands and stolen cattle in Yuma, Ariz., is named Jack Outlaw.

Stuck-Up

Sheriff Shelby L. Smith of Lucedale, Miss., reported that thieves stole a 400-pound safe from the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railway Station. It contained only a gallon of glue.

Heel Homicide

One of the most bizarre crimes of the century in Italy was solved by the police in Rome after years of bafflement. Back in 1938, Army Captain Gualtierotti set off an explosion that blew him to bits when

he clicked his heels in cavalry style before his commanding officer. The police investigation, delayed for some years by the interruptions of war, finally bore fruit when authorities found that a cousin of the cavalry captain had engineered the murder. Buying a pair of expensive military boots, the killer had holstered the heels and filled them with dynamite, then presented them to his relative. The two men were in love with the same girl, who committed suicide when she learned of the captain's death.

No Bull

In Lisbon, Portugal, the leading bullfighter, Manuel Des Santos, was recently acquitted of killing a bull while in the arena. He explained to the court that the animal's demise was an accident, because he himself was carried away by excitement. In Portugal, unlike Mexico and Spain, the law forbids killing the bull, and the matador must only pretend to do so.

Slow Burn

Tokyo, Japan, police arrested a young laboring man for setting fire to a telephone booth. He explained that the operator was entirely too slow getting his call through.

Valuable Paper

The Los Angeles police bureau recently printed a picture of a woman named Grace, wanted for forgery and issuing bad checks. She

had been cashing the worthless checks with a single identification — the felony conviction registration issued by the Los Angeles police department.

Sweet Samples

In Long Beach, Calif., Jack E. Graham, 25, was arrested on the complaint of two housewives that he was handing out kisses while trying to get subscriptions to a love-story magazine.

Courtesy Always

Cambridge, Mass., police reported a single clue to the theft of \$2,500 from Moll Motors Company. On leaving, the bandits put on a desk top a number of pennies lined up to spell the word:

"Thanks."

Penance

Roney Dotson of Knoxville, Tenn., had an excuse when charged with forcing the car of Deputy Sheriff J. E. Warwick off the road, while driving under the influence of intoxicants. "I was on my way to church to pray for forgiveness," he explained.

Handicapped

A Montreal, Canada, milkman, Gil Couture, reprimanded for not chasing three men who had robbed a tavern keeper, was excused when he told the court, "They were in a Cadillac. I only had a horse and wagon."

Futile Felonies

In Anderson, Ind., thieves pried a 900-pound safe from the wall of a bakery but couldn't open it. Then they stole a bakery truck and began pulling the safe with a tow chain to make it spring open. The chain snapped and the thieves sped off, leaving the safe in the middle of Ind. 9. About half a mile down the road they skidded and overturned the truck. Then they gave up and ran.

In East Providence, R. I., a would-be thief pointed a gun at a hardware store proprietor. He snatched the weapon, which proved to be unloaded and rusty. A customer recognized the man. Then the get-away car ran out of gas at the curb just as the police arrived.

A Denver, Colo., shoe salesman, B. F. Hilligloss, reported the theft of 25 men's oxfords and 20 over-shoes, all for the left foot; 25 children's shoes, 18 men's workshoes, 30 assorted men's, women's and children's shoes, all for the right foot.

Socialite Crime

In London, England, a dashing Mayfair playboy, Harold Lough White, was sentenced recently to seven years for safe robbery. His "intelligence officer," Gordon Simpson, 35, got a six-year sentence for

using his information as insurance agent to tip White off on the location of heavily insured valuables. Two other accomplices with long police records got ten years. All four had blown up a Mayfair jeweler's safe last summer and escaped with 37,000 pounds (\$103,600) worth of gold leaf. Lough White, a doctor's son, lived in style by his robberies and was on first-name terms with most of London's notables. At the time of his conviction he owned two airplanes, a yacht, three cars, a town house and a country cottage.

Mystery on the Beach

A bizarre and still unsolved mystery confronted citizens of Mateghan, Nova Scotia, back in 1860, when an unidentified boy was discovered mutilated on the beach. Both his legs had been recently amputated and skillfully bandaged. Although he wore expensive clothing, the labels were missing, and he had no possessions except a bottle of water and a bag of crackers. About 20, he either was, or pretended to be, deaf and dumb and unable to read or write. For 52 years, until his death in 1912, the mysteriously marooned fellow remained, cared for in turn by various families but unidentified. To this day, no one knows who he was or whether terror or a genuine physical handicap sealed his lips.



The Big Score

The killers got even more money than they'd expected. That was part of the trouble . . .

By SAM MERWIN, JR.



THREE days after the killing of F. Hubert Fellowes in his porticoed white mansion, set back from Hillside Boulevard, the story was still crowding Cold War news, the Miss America contest and a new local housing project off the front page of the City's one morning newspaper, *The Gazette*. Under a big black banner headline that read

Five-State Dragnet For Fellowes Killers, it stated:

Thanks to new clues turned up by the police, state and local constabularies over a five-state area have set up an airtight dragnet to trap the murderer or murderers of F. Hubert Fellowes, prominent businessman and philanthropist of this

city, who was murdered while alone in his home late last Monday night or early Tuesday morning. Two as-yet-unidentified men, seen speeding away from the murder scene a few minutes after one A.M. on the night of the slaying in a maroon convertible, are the subjects of the search.

Mrs. Barbara Fellowes, widow of the victim and prominent local socialite and clubwoman, returned early yesterday from the summer resort for which she had departed, with her two small children, only last Saturday. Mrs. Fellowes' return was delayed because she was staying at an isolated Canadian mountain resort and could only be reached by automobile. In a brief interview with *Gazette* reporters, Mrs. Fellowes said: "I cannot imagine why anyone would want to kill Hubert Fellowes. He was a man without enemies, a man . . ."

The Thursday noon news-broadcaster over Radio Station WZZQ was punchier. He said, in staccato Winchell-esque syllables, "Police interest in the F. Hubert Fellowes murder is focussing on the safe in the late philanthropist's bedroom, where his bullet-riddled body was found. This safe, concealed behind a Utrillo painting of Montmartre, had been opened and rifled when the body was found by Tony Martello, gardener for the Fellowes es-

tate. To date, police have no clue as to what was taken by the killer or killers. They are giving more and more weight to the opinion that the murder was the result of a carefully planned, professional job, such as the city has not known in years. Every effort is being made to . . ."

Gino extended a hand and turned the dial. Mambo music flooded the tenement room, whose dinginess was only partially masked by the semi-darkness of almost fully drawn yellow shades at the two windows. He said, "How do you like that — 'Carefully planned, professional job'?" He permitted himself a faint smile of satisfaction over work well done. He was a dark-skinned youth with large, luminous eyes and the grace of a professional dancer — or a coiled snake.

Mike, who was lolling beside Dora on the unmade cot that, with two tables, a battered bureau and two wooden chairs, comprised the room's total furniture, said, "What I like is that five-state alarm and those creeps in the convertible. Not a sign they're onto us. What a breeze!"

Gino spoke sharply. He said, "Watch it, Mike. We aren't out of the woods yet — we're just into them. The cops don't spill everything they know to the papers."

Arne, his silver-blond hair one immense rat's nest, spoke up from the chair by the window, where he was trying to get some air. He said, in his slow, stupid drawl, "No cops — I can smell 'em a mile away."

Dora got up from the cot and pushed uncombed blonde hair back from her forehead. She wore only a bra and panties, bobby-sox and shoes, and her skin shone with sweat. She crossed to the table and picked up one of the packages and said, "Here's what I like — who'd have thought the old jerk would have a load like this stashed in his bedroom? Once we start travelling, we travel in style."

"You sure your mother won't get on your tail, kid?" Gino asked her, for perhaps the fifth time in the three days they had been cooped up in the tenement.

The girl said, unpleasantly, "You're making me laugh! Ma won't come off this bender she's on for another ten days. And then she won't have the nerve to ask questions. The last time she came after me, she damn near got jailed herself for parental negligence."

She gave the crisp bills a riffle before laying them back on the table. "No more sitting," she said. "No more getting them glasses of water, no more burping, no more wiping their snotty little noses. Am I glad!"

"You got a date tonight, haven't you?" Gino asked quietly. Like the others, he had stripped to a minimum of clothing.

Dora turned on him like a panther. She said, "If you think I'm going to keep that date, you're out of your mind. I set up this score for you lice, remember? So why do I get stuck with the dirty work afterward?"

Gino slapped her hard across the face. The sudden, sharp sound was shocking in the silence of the room. He said, his voice moderate, "Don't get out of line now, Dora. If you don't show up, the people might start asking questions. And we don't want that, do we? We're clean so far. We want to stay that way."

Dora, who had endured the slap without a sound, said to Mike, "You going to let him maul me around, you big goon? You just going to sit there and let him beat me up?"

Mike, the biggest and oldest of them all, sat up straight on the cot and said, "Take it easy, Gino."

Gino looked at him quickly and with contempt. Then, to Dora, "Sure you set it up — but you didn't know it was going to be this big. Thirty-two gees — the old guy must have been out of his mind to keep that kind of loot stashed in his home. You're going to get your share, chick, so relax. But you'd better start eating radishes right now."

She said, "Drop dead, you louse!" and her blue eyes were smoky with rage. But she reached for the bag with the radishes, alongside the collection of half-empty food cans and bottles on the other table.

2.

Gino had a lost feeling under his diaphragm. He knew they were treading water way over their heads. Neither the murder nor the size of

the haul had been included in the range of their plans. They were just kids, all of them, kids without connections.

Arne was only seventeen, though he had the face and body of a man ten years older. He sat there by the window, silent, sweating, impassive in his shorts and shoes. An animal, Gino thought, a stupid, unimaginative, unfeeling animal.

Dora was a year older. A smart little tramp, with a boozier for a mother and an unknown father, she had finished high school at sixteen. A little girl with big ideas. The noise she made, munching on a radish, was like the crackling crunch of a tooth extraction. Gino said, "Dammit, can't you keep your mouth shut while you eat?"

She bared her teeth and made the munching louder, looking at him with eyes of hate. Still sitting on the cot, Mike said, "Get off her back, won't you, Gino? It's hot enough in here."

Gino just looked at him. Mike was his big worry. Mike was twenty-one, a year older than Gino himself. Six months earlier Gino had had it out with him and carved him up a little. Even in the dim light the knife-scar showed, livid under his right ribs. Gino could have taken Dora away from him then, but he hadn't wanted any of Mike's cast-offs.

Mike was the soft spot. While it was Gino who had killed Mr. Fellowes, it was Mike who had fired

the four other bullets into an already dying body. The murder had been necessary, once Fellowes spotted Dora. Gino had done it, if not calmly, at least efficiently, as he did whatever had to be done. There was no call for Mike to go berserk, even if the bullets from two guns in the body must be causing a lot of head-scratching among the cops. That part hadn't come over the air as yet.

Dora belched and threw the last bitten-off radish-top on the floor. She said, "These things always give me a bellyache," rubbed her flat tummy above the waistband of her panties and sank back on the cot beside Mike.

Gino wondered how long they were going to have to stay in the hideout, if they could stick it out a bit longer without exploding. It was important they show themselves, a while longer, in their regular haunts, so their absence would not make them a magnet for police attention.

Gino wasn't worried about the police. Not in this city, this beautifully policed city where big-time crime had not been known for years, this city that was known from Coast to Coast as a "safe" spot for important crime figures. That was the deal — in return for a clean community, the syndicate got a sanctuary. The City was full of criminals, but its crime record was a shining example to other towns of similar population.

What held the four of them to this tawdry tenement hideout was the dough — the thirty-two grand

piled in neat stacks on the table against the wall. They didn't dare leave it alone. Worse, they didn't dare leave any of the others alone with it. They were stuck.

When they did go out, they always split up by twos — and always so Mike and Dora were not together. It was a laugh. They might as well all have been stuck in the same bathroom. The same dirty, hot, stinking bathroom. Nobody dared unlock the door.

There was a break in the program. An announcer came on with a special news bulletin. He said, "City Police have just reported the finding of the maroon convertible sought over five states in the Fellowes killing. It was located on a side road of Highway 1145, where it had been abandoned by the men seen leaving the scene of the crime. A new alarm has been broadcast over a nine-state area."

Mike rubbed his red hair and said, "Jeez! How do you like that? Maybe this will make the big brass pay attention."

"Yeah," said Arne, flicking a fly off his damp chest.

"Don't get delusions of grandeur, Mike," said Dora. "We haven't spent any of the loot yet."

"On the nose, chick." Gino permitted approval in his voice. He looked at his wristwatch, with the flexible gold band that was turning green in the heat. He said, "Four o'clock. Mike, you and Arne take a turn out. And Mike — don't talk. Listen."

Mike stood up and yawned and reached for his trousers. He said, with mild resentment, "Why pick on me? Arne's going too, ain't he?"

"Right," said Gino. "But when did Arne ever open his mouth?"

Mike was amused. He said, "You got something there, kid. Come on, Arne." He gave Dora a poke in her bare midriff, added, "Keep it under control, honey."

"Bring back some beer," said Gino. "And pay for it."

"Ha, *hal*!" said Mike, closing the door behind him.

3.

Dora sat down in a chair, facing the back and straddling it, toward Gino. She said, "Give me a cigarette," and brushed away the fly, which had transferred its attentions to her from the departed Arne. Gino gave her a limp smoke, even lit it for her.

Dora pushed back her hair again and looked at him thoughtfully and said, "How long is this going to last, Gino?"

He thought it over and shrugged and said, "A few days more — a week, maybe. Why? Piling up on you?"

"Maybe a little," she said. "Mike's such a jerk."

Gino looked at her, reading her as he'd had to learn to read people since he was five years old. He said, "Like loves like."

For a moment, he thought she was

going to spring over the back of the chair and stick the lighted cigarette in his face — or try to. Then her eyes fell away and she looked sulky and said, "Maybe that's not entirely my fault."

Gino kept on looking at her for a long, heavy moment. It occurred to him, not for the first time, that Dora was nice — physically at any rate. And she was smart. But he had no intention of breaking down at this late stage of the game.

He said, "Use that damn brain of yours, will you, chick? What busts up every big score, sooner or later? How many of the Brinks' holdup mob ever got to enjoy that two million bucks?"

"I've heard that sermon before," said Dora intensely. "You've got what it takes, Gino — you and me. Arne's a zero, Mike's a dope. You and me, Gino — together we could run up a *real* score."

"Get smart, will you?" he said with a mixture of patience and irritation. "We duck out with the loot and what happens? Mike starts singing and we're dead. Besides, I got ideas of my own."

"How far do you think *you're* going to get on eight gees?" The girl dripped scorn. "And who's going to set up your next score if I'm not in the picture?"

"Eight gees can carry one guy a long way," he said. "And who wants to go on making this kind of score? We were lucky this time — about five ways. It don't figure to last."

"So all right," she retorted. "So we leave the creeps their cut and take off together. We still got sixteen instead of eight. And I don't have to stay a baby sitter forever to set them up for you. I'm educated and I can look as good as I have to."

He studied her and nodded and said, "Yeah, I guess maybe you can, chick. But why me? You know I won't ever go for a girl who's had Mike."

"What do you want — some debutante?" she blazed at him. "You wouldn't know how to pick up the right fork! Why you? Why *not* you? You're not bad looking once a girl gets used to you. Maybe I go for you."

Gino said, "You can turn that on and off like a faucet. For now, turn it off. Do I have to lean on you again?"

"Try it!" she said. "Just try it, you cheap punk." She dropped her cigarette on the floor and crushed it under a shoe and went back to the cot and flung herself face down.

4.

For the hundred and twenty-first time, Gino went over the Fellowes robbery, which had developed into murder and such an unexpected big take. Dora had set it up. Since she began going with Mike, she had learned to turn her career as a baby-sitter to profit. At one time or another, during her high-school years and since, Dora had baby-sat in just

about all of the big houses on Hill-side Boulevard and in the whole wealthy Woodvale district.

With the eye of a camera and the memory of a tape-recorder, she had, on deposit in her brain, exact floor and furniture plans of every house she had worked in. More important, she had trained herself to know what was valuable and what was not, to pick up odd bits of gossip as to which families kept cash on hand and which were going to be away on trips.

When Gino had taken charge of the group, he had taught her how to spot burglar alarms and other precautions against intruders. It was information Gino had acquired two years earlier, in reform school in another state. For he was a young man who had long since forfeited his home. He was a waif, a wanderer, a seeker after a way of life neither he nor the others had ever known.

In short, a punk.

He had come to the City riding a freight car, with two dollars and sixteen cents in a ragged pants pocket, less than a year before. He had known about the City, of course, like every other youth who had ever spent time in a reform school. He had taken a succession of jobs while he looked around and learned the local ropes — bowling alley pin-boy, bellhop at the City Hotel, copy boy on the *Gazette*. None of them had offered him a promise of the future he sought, a future in which Miami sands and fifty-dollar-a-day

suites and luminous blondes and Las Vegas gaming tables loomed large.

It was impossible for a local boy to make a good connection. All such contacts belonged to the upper-bracket businessmen and politicians, and these plump citizens had them sewed up tight.

The City was out of bounds.

That was why he had decided on the Fellowes job, when Dora revealed the opening. He wanted a stake to get out of town, enough to set him up in business elsewhere. It had looked open-and-shut. Fellowes' wife and kids were going to Canada for a month. The old man was going up there with them to spend the first few days. Dora had learned about the safe and got the combination from the younger kid.

They hadn't expected Fellowes to come back so soon — and they hadn't expected to find the thirty-two gees in the safe. Fellowes was dead — Gino would never forget the stupid look on his face when he sat up in bed and saw Dora opening the safe. He had turned on the light and said, "Why, Dora, what's the idea?"

So Gino had shot him. And Mike had fired more bullets into him. And they had taken the dough and let the silver alone.

A perfect job. No one had seen them coming or going. They had the money. In a day or two, a week at the outside, they could make their split and take off. *If* Mike didn't do something stupid or Dora didn't make trouble.

Gino looked at her, lying curled up on her side, breathing softly, innocent as the gold chain with the cross on it around her neck. In the dim light, he could see the red spots beginning to appear on her face. Radishes gave her an allergy.

She had discovered this as a kid, used it to fake measles when she was a kid in school and wanted a few days off. She ate radishes now, before she went baby-sitting. "They feel a lot happier if you look unattractive," was her logic. "That way, they're not so afraid of a girl's boy-friends coming to call."

For a moment, Gino was tempted to wake her up and say, "Come on, chick, let's grab the loot and take off."

But Mike would howl like a banshee and they wouldn't get far. Gino yawned and scratched his damp chest and sat there, half-listening to the radio, making half-cooked plans toward what he would do when he got out of here.

A long, hot afternoon.

5.

It was after five when Mike and Arne came back, sweating out the beer they'd been drinking. Arne had a bag filled with cans of ale and an opener. He put it on the table with the rest of the food and Mike said, as if he'd brought it, "Open up, characters. Fresh from the big yeast cow."

Dora sat up and yawned and

stretched. Mike squinted at her and giggled. He said, "Gawd, honey, you're a mess."

Dora gave him a look of contempt, pushed back her hair and spurned the can he offered her. "You crazy?" she said mildly. "I can't keep a date reeking of beer." She was covered with spots now, all over.

Arne sat down again in his chair by the window. Except for his daily outings, he might have taken root there. He even slept in it, rather than taking his shift on the cot. He said, "Town's white hot," then lapsed into habitual silence.

"What's cooking — outside of us?" Dora wanted to know.

Mike took over, standing in the center of the floor, a beer-can in one hand, a cigarette in the other. He said, "Arne's not kidding. We got it from Ozzie himself. Philadelphia, Chicago, Kansas City — even some of the boys from Las Vegas and the Coast. They must be setting up a big shift or something."

Gino said a sharp, hard word. Here he was, successful boss of a big score, a clean score, a score that would be bound to make any of the boys sit up and take notice of him. And he had no way of letting them know it. He wondered what you had to do to stop being a punk.

The news came on again. There was nothing about the gathering of the criminal clans in the City. There wouldn't be. More important, there was nothing new on the Fellowes murder.

The announcer was giving the ball scores when the radio went dead. "That damn box!" He went over and banged it. Nothing.

Gino said, "Try the light switch."

Mike did and again nothing happened. Dora looked at him and said, "Mike, what'd you do with that dough I gave you to pay the electric bill last month?"

Mike opened and closed his mouth three times, like a goldfish. He looked around him, wildly. He said, "Jeest, so I blew it on a filly at Aqueduct. And then forgot to tell you. So what? Have I committed a crime or something?"

Dora just looked at him. She was barely half his size, but she dominated him like a tugboat dominating an ocean liner. Then she said, "I got to use the bathroom to get ready." She picked up her dress from one of the chairs, and her bag, and went out to the hall. Seconds later, Gino could hear the banging of the pipes as the water came on in the bathroom that served the floor.

A glance at his watch told him it was too late to pay the electric bill until the morning. They could manage without lights — candles or electric lanterns were available at any drugstore. But they needed a radio, not only to keep increasingly frazzled nerves down but for the news broadcast. There was always the possibility that something might break that would affect their security.

It might, Gino decided, even be

turned to their advantage. If he could somehow pick up a portable with a police broadcast band . . . He decided to talk to Ozzie, the fence, wondered briefly what Mike had had occasion to talk to him about during his afternoon outing. Before he had time to ask questions, Dora came back.

She looked about fourteen years old, with her broken-out face, her hair clubbed back and clipped with a rubber band, her little red dress and white patent-leather belt. He got up from his chair and began putting on his own outer clothing — trousers and a red, brown and yellow aloha shirt. He said, "Let's get going."

"Hey! What about the lights?" Mike wanted to know. "It'll be dark in here real soon. You want Big Stupe and me to sit around without seeing each other?"

"It should be a relief — for both of you," said Gino. "Come on, Dora."

6.

She said nothing till they got outside. Hot as the room had been, the radiations from pavement and sidewalk struck them like a blow in the face, as they emerged from the tenement door. Dora said, "Damn, it's murder!" Then, "What a bird-brain — can't even be trusted to pay a lousy bill. Aren't you afraid to leave him there with Arne?"

"Maybe — but not as afraid as

I am of having him outside," Gino told her. In the late-afternoon sunlight, Dora's induced-allergy complexion was ghastly.

He waited with her for the bus that would take her to her job. She said, "Any chance of you changing your mind, Gino?"

He shook his head, told her, "Forget it, chick. You and me, we're going places, all right, but not together — not now. Maybe we can hook up later when we're both in the clear. But we got too much dead wood hanging to us."

"You mean Mike?" Dora asked, incredulous. "You could take care of Mike. You already have."

"Listen," said Gino. "I'm not after small fry. I'm going to be big. I'll run my own show. It's not like the old days. If you want to be big today, you got to be responsible. I freeze Mike out and I got trouble. I kill him and maybe I queer the whole pitch. I'm not connected strong enough yet — not a chance of it in this stinking burg. But if I play what I got smart, I can make it. So can you if you cut loose and get moving. How about it?"

"A girl like me's got to have a guy to cover her," said Dora quietly. "It's a tough pick. She goes for a wrong guy and she's trimmed like a seal. She holds back from a right one and she's out in the cold. That's why I want you. We'd make a team."

"Don't you ever get tired?" Gino asked her. "What about Mike?"

"I'll think of something," she said. "I've got all evening to think of something. How about it if I do?"

"It better be good," said Gino. "Here's your chariot."

"See you at midnight," she said. Then she was aboard the bus.

Gino walked four blocks to the Alcove, thinking about Dora and her proposition. He wondered what he would do if she did come up with something good. Gino had an orderly mind. He liked to carry through with a plan the way it was set up. Eight thousand dollars was a lot of money. But twenty-four grand was a lot more, even for two people instead of one. If they did get rid of Mike, what about Arne? Arne, the silent, Arne, the cop-smeller, Arne, the stupid — or was he as stupid as he looked and acted? Could anybody be that stupid? Gino wondered. Arne was Mike's friend. They'd been palling around together since grammar school. It took a lot of figuring out.

The Alcove was air-conditioned. It was a good spot for that part of town. Gino could feel the excitement like a singing high-tension wire, the moment he got inside. The usual noise was missing. The boys and girls were talking low to each other, instead of shouting it up, at this time of day.

There were three characters in one of the booths, beyond the bar. Gino could see them in the back-bar mirror. They were wearing loud, light-weight sports jackets and open-

collar shirts. From the neck down, they looked like college boys on vacation.

But not from the neck up. Their faces bore the stamp of their trade. Any colleges they had attended wore bars on the windows. They were part of the big picture, maybe a very small part, but branded major league all the way. Gino regarded them thoughtfully, without envy for once, wondering how long it would take him to be one of them — or better. Eight gees, sixteen gees, maybe twenty-four gees — not big money in their world, maybe, but big enough to get inside if he handled it right.

"Beer, Gino?" It was Murphy, the bartender, with his face like a Swiss cheese. Seven holes in its round, yellow surface — two for his ears, two for his eyes, two for his nose, a big one for his mouth.

Gino said, "Yeah, a beer for now." Then, nodding toward the men in the booth, "I see we got company tonight."

Murphy scraped foam off the top with a black wooden spatula. He nodded and put the beer on the bar in front of Gino. Gino said, "Ozzie around today?"

"He was," said Murphy. "He said he'd be back." He turned his back on Gino and went down to the end of the bar to wait on somebody else.

Gino stared after him, a sardonic smile on his lips. Murphy usually liked to pass the time of day with

him. But with the big boys in town, Gino was just a punk. Murphy didn't even want to be seen talking to him. Someday, he told himself, Murphy would be dancing to a different tune. Not that Gino intended ever to walk into the Alcove if he ever came back to the City. He'd be occupying the Presidential suite at the City Hotel, the one with the black-marble bathroom. He thought of the lush ladies the bell-captain held on tap for favored customers. During his term as bellhop there, he'd seen enough of them cruising the corridors with their fur stoles and huge shoulder-bags, always carried by the strap in the hand.

He wondered if Dora would raise any hell about that and decided he'd have to take steps if she did. What right, he asked himself, did she have to put in any claim on him? He caught himself and smiled faintly. Hell, he was thinking as if he was already married to her. Married to Dora? *That* was out, come what might.

Sitting there, alone in the midst of the taut excitement and rising merry-making around him, waiting for Ozzie, a sudden flicker of panic passed through him, almost making him upchuck his beer. What if he had the picture all wrong? What if Dora's proposition had been a last chance? What if the others had ganged up on him?

They could have made it easy enough, he thought. Arne was Mike's

pal, Dora was Mike's girl. What if she'd gotten off the bus after a couple of blocks and cut back to the hideout and the three of them had taken off with the dough? Not for a moment did he kid himself she wasn't capable of it. Maybe he should have kidded her along instead of playing hard to get.

How could he make trouble for them without showing himself up as F. Hubert Fellowes' murderer? He had no underworld connections, he had no dough — hell, he didn't even have a gun. But he'd been right to have Arne throw the weapons into the river after the killing. That way there was no question of a weapon-chase, no ballistics evidence.

Gino got himself back under control. Arne lacked the brains to make such a move, and Mike lacked the cold guts. Dora had both, but she wouldn't saddle herself with such a pair of creeps. Gino ordered another beer from the nose-lofty Murphy and helped himself to a handful of peanuts from one of the bowls on the bar. He told himself he was getting punchy, dreaming up combinations like that.

He wondered what kind of a plan Dora would dream up to get rid of Mike. Sitting there, he discovered he was not sweating for the first time in days. Time was passing. It was already dark outside. He glanced at his watch, saw it was almost nine o'clock. Where the hell was Ozzie? Gino didn't want to leave Mike and

Arne alone too long in a radio-less, unlighted room. Not Mike, anyway, not full of beer and God only knew what else.

Ozzie came in then, a dumpy, plump, friendly little man with gold-rimmed glasses and a seersucker suit. Gino gave him a sign but he went back and talked to the three big-timers in the booth. He could hear their voices, their laughter, but he couldn't make out what they were saying. Ozzie was a great one for stories.

After a few minutes, he came to the bar, alongside Gino, and asked Murphy for a napkin to wipe his glasses on. He said out of the corner of his mouth, his voice low, "Boy, it's hot — too hot!"

Gino got it. He looked down at his beer and rolled a couple of peanuts around the base of the glass. He said, "I'm not selling, I'm buying for a change."

Murphy hesitated, then nodded as he put his gold-rimmed glasses back on. He said, "The place — half an hour." Then he was gone.

Greedy little man, Gino thought. Like everyone else.

7.

Ozzie was one of the few criminal institutions the City could boast, one of the few it allowed to operate. Ostensibly, Ozzie ran a discount store, one of those semi-converted lofts in which the smart purchaser can pick up anything from a claw-

hammer to a five-hundred-dollar camera or a thousand-buck color TV set — at from a third to a half off the listed market price.

Actually, Ozzie was a fence, part of a nationwide string of stolen-goods dispensers with international affiliations. He'd buy anything, under any circumstances, sell anything, ditto — and always at his own price. According to the grapevine, he had a stucco mansion with a swimming pool in Miami, and an apartment on Central Park West, as well as his suite in the City Hotel. That was where Gino had got to know him, during his bellhop hitch. Without Ozzie, he wouldn't have been able to operate at all.

But to Ozzie, Gino was a punk, now, always and forever. Ozzie had no use for ambitious kids, though he was willing enough to make money off them. The only reason he was allowed to operate in the City was because the big shots insisted on it. Sometimes, when they hit town, they had hot items to dispose of fast. Ozzie was the answer. He never sold in the City what he purchased there. The stuff he picked up went to syndicate outlets in other cities, just as his stock came from them in return. It was safe as houses. And Ozzie was a rich man, getting richer. No crook dared touch him, not with his syndicate protection. Having them on your tail was worse than G-heat.

Gino would have enjoyed parking a knife in his guts.

He had another beer and sipped it slowly. All at once he discovered he was hungry, hungry as hell, but this was no time to eat. When twenty-five minutes were up, Gino tossed a crumpled dollar bill on the bar and went outside. Three doors down the block, he turned into an alley, passed through a dilapidated wooden door in a high fence and picked his way among ashcans and cartons of other refuse until he reached the back door of Ozzie's discount store. He rapped twice, and then three times fast, and after a moment the fat little man with the glasses opened up for him. He led the way without talking into a shadowy basement, lit by a single globe hanging from the ceiling.

There he stopped and said, "What the hell do you want?"

"I want to buy a radio," said Gino. "A portable, with batteries, maybe one with a police band. And a good electric lantern."

Ozzie mopped a streaming brow with a silk handkerchief. "I want to buy a radio," he mimicked, "and a good electric lantern.' Hey, kid, you brought me over here for that?"

"I've got to have them," said Gino. He pulled a small, sweat-stained roll of bills from his pocket. "Cash," he said.

Ozzie raised his hands to heaven — or, more literally, to the pipe-lined ceiling. He said, "God have mercy on my soul. The City's hot as a pistol, I'm up to my ears in trouble, and you punks keep bother-

ing me. First your pal Mike, this afternoon, tries to sell me a gold table lighter. Then you want to buy a radio. Why don't you guys get together and leave me alone?"

"You make money off us," said Gino. Then, as realization swept over him, "You know Mike and I ain't friends. Not since that trouble we had last spring."

"Friends, enemies, who can keep up with you schlemiels? As for money, you're all peanut operators."

"Money's money to you, Ozzie," Gino told him, getting angry because he was scared. "You'd take a penny profit as long as it was profit. That's the way your old man raised you." Inside, he was remembering the only gold table lighter he'd seen recently. It had stood in the living room of the Fellowes mansion. He remembered Mike noticing it, saying, "Hey, that smoke-pot must be worth a coupla hundred bucks." He remembered himself telling Mike to forget it till they'd tried the safe. Good old Mike — always wrong!

Interpreting Gino's silence as determination, Ozzie grumbled and said, "Wait here a minute — I'll see what I got."

Gino waited, his fears crowding in around him with the shadows cast by the irregular stacks of crates and cartons that all but filled the basement. In the raw dimness of the light, he saw the stenciling on one of the biggest. It read *Electric Trains* in lampblack letters. He thought back to his own childhood, a child-

hood of fear and misery at home. He had never had an electric train, except for a cheap one his mother had bought him one Christmas. He'd laid it out under the tree and then his old man had come in loaded and stepped all over it and broken it to bits.

Ozzie came back in the wake of his footsteps, carrying a couple of cardboard boxes. He said, "Here's your lousy radio," and pulled it out of the larger box. It looked like a good one. Gino turned it on. There was a brief hum, then it was working. He tuned it, heard an announcer's voice say, "... are following every possible lead but are not expecting an immediate break in the Fellowes murder."

He switched it off, noted the short-wave police band, tested it, then turned to the lantern. It was okay.

He said, "How much for this junk, Ozzie?"

Ozzie said, "To you, fifty bucks the pair."

Gino laid down a twenty and two fives — which left him a ten, three ones and some silver. He said, "Take it or leave it — thirty bucks." Without waiting for Ozzie's reply, he picked them up, stuck them back in their boxes and walked out. Ozzie was still screaming at him when he kicked the door shut behind him. Something about staying away from Mike if he wanted to be smart.

I'm smart, okay, he thought.

Arne let him in. Gino looked around, saw the big dope was alone. He put down the radio, got the lantern out and turned it on. Then he said, "Where's Mike?"

Arne said, "Mike went out. He got thirsty."

Gino sat down and looked for the money and counted it in the light of the lantern. It was all there — thirty-two grand. Then he turned the lantern on Arne and said, "When you and Mike went out today — did he sell something to Ozzie?"

Arne nodded. He said, "We had no dough for beer. Mike sold a lighter — a gold lighter."

"You ever see that lighter before?" Gino asked. Arne nodded. Gino said, sharply, "Where'd you see it?"

"Fellows' house," was the reply. "Mike got ten for it."

"If the damned fool hadn't played the ponies, he'd never have had to sell it. If he'd had the brains of a gnat, he'd never have stolen it. I told him not to take anything out of the Fellows house."

Arne shrugged, nodded at the radio, said, "This one's better than the old one."

"Maybe you think I should have got a hi-fi set?" snapped Gino. Sudden awareness that they hadn't gotten away clean with the big score, thanks to Mike's dumbness and greed, frightened him. Frightened, he was sore and getting sorer. He wondered what the big jerk was up

to now? All they needed was for him to get drunk and start bragging — or get into a fight and get picked up. Gino cursed Mike, Ozzie, all of them.

Arne said nothing. He just sat there in his chair by the window and listened. Gino tried to eat some cold canned chili, gave it up when his stomach began heaving. The sweat on his forehead was cold.

After a while, Mike came in. He had a bag with a bottle in it under one arm and a silly, drunken grin of triumph on his face. The grin stayed when he saw Gino and the portable and the lantern. He said, "Well, well, look what *you* brought back! Mam-bo — mam-bo!" He snapped his fingers and rotated his hips in time to the music.

"Why'd you steal that lighter, Mike?" Gino asked.

"What's it to you?" Mike countered. "I did it, didn't I? And I got paid off for it, too. What the hell!" He pulled the bottle of whiskey from the bag, uncapped it and took a long swig.

Gino's first impulse was to give him a going over, try to beat some sense into him. But he didn't want a row — not in a warren like the tenement, especially not in hot weather with all the windows open. He said, "Go ahead — get stewed. You're more use passed out than you are conscious."

Mike glowered at him and lifted the bottle as if to swing at Gino with it. He gave no sign of noticing the spring-blade that had suddenly

appeared in Gino's hand. He returned the bottle to his lips and took another swig. He had to fight to keep it down. Finally, he collapsed across the cot and, minutes later, murmured, "Wake me up when Dora darlin' gets back. Wake me up when Dora dar —"

"We heard you the first time," Gino cut him off.

He hoped Dora had a good plan. They were going to have to get out of town fast — and do something about Mike first. In another twenty-four hours, he'd do something to queer the game for all of them. The guy simply didn't have the stability to stay with it.

Dora slipped in at ten minutes of twelve. She looked at Mike, lying asleep on the cot, still holding the bottle. She looked at Arne, at the portable radio, at Gino. Then she said, "What in hell's been happening around here? The block is full of cops."

Gino was on his feet without knowing how he got there. So was Arne. Arne said, "I knew it. I can smell 'em."

"Where are they?" Gino asked the girl.

She said, "Still a dozen doors away. They're making a house-to-house. I think they're getting warm. How come?"

"Your friend Mike," Gino said bitterly. He told her about the lighter.

Dora was silent a moment. Then she said, "We got to get out of here

quick. If they find us with that loot. . . ."

"Right," said Gino, "but what about him?" He nodded at Mike.

All at once, Mike was sitting up. "Yeah," he said thickly, "what about me? If you think you're going to take a powder now and leave me holding all the sacks you're out of your mind, all of you. So maybe I made a mistake. I did my share on this sting."

"Any ideas, Dora?" Gino asked softly.

"Maybe," she said.

Mike advanced on Gino. He said, "You think you're such a Goddamned Napoleon, trying to boss the show. You couldn't boss a chicken-yard, you little punk. You don't have the guts to pull anything now. I'll cut you down to your shoetops. I'll —"

He stopped talking suddenly. His eyes rolled upward and he crumpled to the floor. Dora was standing beside him, holding the portable. One of its corners was crumpled in.

Gino said, "Nice work, Dora. But we got to make sure he won't come to and talk."

Arne advanced ominously into the beam of the lantern. He stood between Gino and the fallen Mike and said, "None of that. Mike's my pal."

"He's your death-warrant if you leave him here," said Gino.

"Knife," said Dora, snapping her fingers at Gino. In the shadows, Gino could not see her face. All he could see was her small white hand,

outstretched, waiting. He threw her the knife.

Before Arne could turn, she had it open and into him, right through the kidney, up to the hilt. He made a sodden, gasping sound. She pulled it free with a wrench, jammed it into his back, higher up. There was a shrill scrape as it glanced off a rib, then it was through. Arne fell forward across his pal.

Gino picked up the portable and hit Mike hard in the temple, twice. The second time, he felt the bone crumple. He wiped off the grip and stood erect, warily. But Dora was just finished wiping the blade of the knife. She snapped it shut and handed it to him. "Come on," she said.

The money was in three packets of ten \$1,000 bills each, two more of ten \$100 bills. They divided it swiftly, gravely, wordlessly. Gino put his half in his pockets, Dora stuffed hers in her handbag. They left the lantern and radio on behind them. Let the cops figure it out — they'd have a ball with it. Gino locked the door carefully behind them.

A cop looked them over at the end of the block. He said, "Where do you think you're going?"

Dora blasted his head off. She said, "If you must know, officer, we're on our way to New York to start a new Jelke Ring. We got big plans. Maybe you'd like to come along with us — protection, you know. You'd run up a lot better score than

you can here, bothering a girl whose boy-friend is walking her home."

The cop shook his head and said, "Kids!" and let them through.

When they were safely past him, Gino said, "I'm handing it to you, Dora. You're going all the way — you and me. Was this the plan you worked out for us?"

"Not exactly," she said, "but it seems to have done the trick. Let's get the hell out of town."

"How?" said Gino. "They got a lot of cops out — not looking for us, maybe, but if they nail us with this loot . . ."

"How do you think?" said Dora. "We walk. We walk to that motel on the main highway. We tell them we got ditched by our pals. We take a room. Tomorrow, we make some contacts there and get a lift with a family. Leave it to me. By tomorrow night, we'll be a thousand miles away."

"I'm sold," said Gino and he meant it. By the street lamps, he could see that her complexion was almost clear. Put her in decent clothes, put him in decent clothes, and they'd be a good-looking couple. They'd be welcome anywhere. They walked on past the factories and the houses got further apart. Gino said, "It's a fine night for singing."

"You can say that again," said Dora. "Those two so-and-so's were driving me bats. We start clean, you and me?"

"We start clean," said Gino. Right then he was as close to being in love

as he had ever been in his life. This was a girl in a couple of million, a girl who could kill when she had to, yet who could make respectable folk trust her. Some baby-sitter — some baby!

They swung hands in the moonlight, like a couple of kids at the beach. They could hear the locusts chirruping and zinging in the stretches of grass alongside the road. They couldn't hear the big yellow Cadillac creeping a hundred yards behind them with only its parking lights for guidance. They weren't even aware it was following them, had been following them all the way, until it drew alongside them and a voice said, "These your pigeons, Ozzie?"

Ozzie replied, "That's them." And, to Gino and Dora, "Come on in, kids. You look like you could use a lift."

Gino felt like something on a slow motion film. Time seemed to have braked down to a creep. He seemed, to himself, to take minutes to recognize the three sport-jacket sharpies from the booth at the Alcove. He wanted to break and run, run until the world was behind him like a bad dream — but the snout of the submachine-gun pointed at him from the rear seat held him as fixed as if he were an insect held to a piece of card by a pin.

He tasted copper at the base of his tongue — he tasted paralyzing fear. Yet, as he followed Dora wordlessly into the car, he didn't even

know *why* he was afraid. He only knew he was.

They searched him, coldly, impersonally, as they searched Dora, with regard neither for modesty nor her quickly checked gasp of outrage. Ozzie was polite about it. He said, "Sorry, girly, but we got to be sure."

They took the money away from them, took Gino's knife and Dora's handbag, then sat them side by side in the rear seat, where the man with the submachine-gun covered them. As they got the car under way, still moving out of town, Ozzie leaned over the back of the front seat and shook his head at them paternally.

He said, "You gave us a bad time, kids. You really had us scared there for a few minutes. We lost you right after you cleared the block and didn't pick you up again until a couple of miles back."

"Stop twisting the knife," said Gino. "Take the dough, Ozzie, and let us go. Why get on our backs just because we made a big score?"

Ozzie chuckled and said to his companions, "Score? Get that — they don't even *know* the score." Then, to Gino and like a teacher to a very stupid pupil, "Kid, it's all a matter of who you score on. I guess it didn't enter your fat little heads there had to be a reason for Fellowes having that kind of dough in his house."

"Why should it?" Gino was defiant. "What's it to you?"

Again Ozzie found him funny. So

did the others this time. They didn't actually laugh, but their chuckles reverberated inside the big car. Finally, unable to stand the tension, Gino shouted, "Come on, what's the big boff?"

"The boff is," Ozzie said owlshly, "that Hugh Fellowes was the payoff man for the syndicate. That dough you lifted was syndicate money. You punks had the whole organization walking on its heels. Until your pal Mike walked in with that lighter this afternoon, it could have been Joe Blow as far as we knew. We called a meeting and decided to let the cops handle it for us, and then you walk right through them,

you and the girl. A lucky thing we were hanging around."

"Not lucky," said one of the sports jackets. "Just insurance."

Gino felt himself begin to tremble. He was up against something he couldn't hope to get through. He didn't know what irony was but there was bitterness for him in the thought that this job, that was to open the syndicate door for him, had put him forever beyond the pale.

He heard Dora ask, as if from a long way off, "For God's sake, what are you going to do to us?"

And he heard Ozzie reply, without raising his voice, "What do you think, girlie?"



Portrait of a Killer

No. 24 — Oliver Bishop

BY THOMAS O'CONNOR

OLIVER BISHOP was such a moral man that, finally, he just had to commit murder. His son didn't live up to the standards Bishop had set — so, of course, there was nothing to do but kill him.

It started when Oliver's son, George Bishop, met a distant relative of his, a pretty girl named Louise, and fell in love with her. It wasn't long before George and Louise were thinking about getting married — but the blood relationship between them might mean that they wouldn't be able to get a license. For a while they were stymied. Finally, though, George decided there was only one thing to do. He gave Louise an engagement ring and, later on, a wedding ring. So far as George and Louise were concerned, that made them married. When Oliver and his wife moved to Palmetto, Florida, George and Louise came along, telling everyone they were man and wife. They stayed with Oliver, during the winter months, and when spring came around George, a woodcarver, was able to get himself a place on some traveling carnival. Late fall, he came back to the Bishop home in Palmetto.

All this irritated Oliver at first, and as time went on he grew more and more angry. He was seventy-four, but still strong and active, and he treated his son and Louise to lecture after lecture, warning them not to go on flaunting their Godless sins before the world.

One day in early spring George announced that he and Louise were leaving, as usual, for a carnival the next morning.

"You wouldn't dare!" Oliver said.

"Why not?" George wanted to know.

"Because the finger of shame will be pointed at you! The whole world knows of your shame — living in sin with that — woman! I'm warning you! Don't start off for any carnival. Stay right here, where you'll be safe from the eyes of the world. I don't want you flaunting your sin . . ."

George dismissed these ravings easily enough. He'd heard plenty like them before. But this time old Oliver Bishop meant business.

When George and Louise were asleep that night he punished them for their sins. He tiptoed into their bed room and bashed their heads in.

Oliver was perfectly willing to

commit murder for the sake of the Commandments of the Lord. But he didn't trust the Lord to save him from the consequences. He worked out a nice plan for disposing of the bodies.

His wife was away for the day, sleeping at some neighbor's house, so Oliver didn't have to worry about anyone seeing him; and the neighbors were asleep. He carried both bodies out to his son's car and also took with him a shovel, a large cardboard box and a little quicklime from among his gardening tools. Then he drove out to the causeway near the beach, buried them, sprinkling them with quicklime.

It took a few days for the ocean to wash away enough sand to uncover the bodies again, and by the time they were discovered they were little better than skeletons. Identification was impossible — all the police knew when they were called in was that there were two bodies, one male and one female, and that they'd been killed by blows on their heads. The police broadcast an appeal. Many people with missing relatives sent in descriptions or viewed what was left of the bodies, but they remained unidentified until Oliver's wife spilled the beans.

She was getting nervous. Oliver had told her that George and Louise had left to join the carnival, but she'd expected a letter from George in a few days' time. When a couple of weeks had passed she got in touch with the police.

Oliver went down to the morgue and identified the bodies. He acted old, feeble and grief-stricken; the police never even thought of him as a possible killer. He'd sold his son's car, which had a few bloodstains on the back seat. There was nothing to tie him to the crime.

Police started working on motive and turned up none at all. George and Louise had been well-liked throughout the community. No one except Oliver and his wife knew they hadn't been married, and Oliver convinced his wife to say nothing, telling her that the shame was better left undisturbed. The police questioned the "feeble old man," but never seriously considered him a suspect.

Oliver began, very slowly, to relax. Everything was going perfectly. His plan had worked; the police were off on the wrong trail and nothing could center attention on Oliver Bishop.

But he'd forgotten about the car. It turned up in routine investigation, and the police took a look at the sales papers. One look was enough to tell that the signature of George Bishop on those papers was a forgery. A long look at the car disclosed the bloodstains in the back seat, which Oliver had covered with wax and which the new owner hadn't bothered to clean off.

But the police still couldn't believe that the "feeble old man" had committed two murders and carried bodies from a house to a car. They

were sure, instead, that Oliver had had some help, and for a while they thought of Mrs. Bishop as an accomplice.

Some detailed questioning of Mrs. Bishop, though, showed that either she was one of the world's great actresses or she really hadn't had anything to do with the killing. The police got only one thing out of that questioning: the fact that George and Louise weren't married.

They confronted Oliver with their knowledge and accused him of the murders.

For a long while he said nothing. Then he asked: "Do you think

they would electrocute a man as old as me?"

He threw off his "feebleness" at once, startling the police completely. He confessed to the murders with no further pressure and was brought to trial.

The judge sentenced him to life, saying that "only the murderer's age has saved him from the electric chair."

Maybe it was some consolation to seventy-four-year-old Oliver Bishop, as he was taken away to the State Penitentiary to live out his few, but far from feeble, remaining years.



You Can't Kill Her

Jassie wanted Sarah to be happy — so he stopped her from shooting her drunken husband.

BY
C. B. GILFORD

JASSIE thought about her little white neck, and he thought about the coarse, rough hemp of the hangman's noose coiling fatally around the soft, smooth, creamy-pale skin of it. That was why he pressed listening against the thin clapboard wall and wondered what he could do to save her.

It was a quiet night, lacking even animal sounds from out in the brush. There was no wind in the air, and the stars wheeled noiselessly through the sky. So Jassie



could hear the two of them. He knew exactly what they said and what they did.

He knew, for instance, from the sound of the gurgling liquid, that Van was drinking. And he knew, to the ounce, how much. Half of what had been in the bottle. Enough to make even Van a little drunk.

And Sarah. It was harder to tell about her. There was the rustle of her skirt whenever she moved, and the muffled groan of floorboards complaining against her small weight. And when she sat, the sofa squeaked but once, and once again when she rose from it. In between times she must have stayed very still, looking at Van and listening to the same gurgling that Jassie heard.

Though she said very little, the tone of her words spoke a vast meaning. Shame, loathing. Bitter ingredients boiling and fermenting into hatred.

"Van," she said once, "we can't afford so much whiskey."

"It's cheaper here than in town," he told her, and poured again.

Then later she asked him, for the thousandth time that Jassie had heard, "Why do you do it?"

He didn't answer.

"This happens every night," she went on. "This is all you do. Why? Why does it always have to be like this?"

His face must have been sneering, because he said, "A man's got to have entertainment. It's too far to go to town every night. I've got to

have some entertainment, don't I?"

Jassie felt the insult as keenly as she must have, and he cursed wordlessly to himself. But Sarah? She walked again, in Jassie's direction, to the mirror that hung on that part of the wall where Jassie was listening. He heard her quick breathing, almost the beating of her heart. She was inspecting herself in the mirror.

The mirror would be kinder than Van. For Sarah was beautiful, and the mirror couldn't lie. It would remind her that her hair was still dark and shining, unbleached by the scorching sun, and that her skin was still unmarred by six months of the desert wind. But small comfort for a woman like Sarah. Sarah needed more than a mirror to compliment and love her.

She walked again, across the room. Her steps seemed hurried, swift.

"Where are you going?" Van demanded.

The question halted her. "Outside," she said.

He laughed, set down the bottle, and fought his way to his feet. "What for?" he persisted.

"Fresh air," she told him. "This place stinks of you and your sour whiskey."

Van moved then, crashing over a chair in his path. He got hold of her, because the door didn't open though her skirt rustled angrily with her own violent motion. And when he had her, all sound ended, except their breathing, harsh and mingled.

Van's bad breath being exhaled into her face. She would not ask him for release. Only her proud silence could be so eloquent of her nausea and disgust.

"I know where you're going," Van sniggered. "I just want to tell you that I'm not so dumb I don't know where you're going. You're heading out back to pay Jassie a little visit."

Pressed hard against the wall, Jassie's big body shuddered. It was the passage of a vague, undefined, dimly realized longing. Anger overwhelmed it. Sarah was a good wife, so far as Jassie knew.

Sarah was angry also. Her voice was taut, like stretched steel wire. "I'll likely go visiting some day," she said. "But it won't be with Jassie."

She'd never threatened Van that way before. It surprised him, because he sucked in his breath audibly. Then came the sound of a blow, sharp, almost like a shot. Van's big, calloused hand cracking hard against Sarah's soft round cheek.

After that, the sounds were confusing to Jassie. There was a struggle of some kind. Van cursing, maybe trying to strike her again. Sarah fighting to get free of him. Van was drunk, unsteady. Sarah was agile and desperate. Jassie thought of the shotgun cradled on the wall near the front door. The thought terrified him.

He left his lean-to shed and ran. He could move fast, despite his great

bulk and his limping, uneven gait. He ran around the house, careless of noise because he knew he would not be heard over the din inside. But when he reached the door he slowed, became cautious and silent as a cat. He used the knob with creeping patience, pushed the door ajar enough to see within.

And as he did, he heard Van say, in a scared, different voice, "Put that down, Sarah! Put it down!"

Sarah was nearest the door, but her back was turned to Jassie. She had the shotgun sure enough. It looked huge in her tiny grip, and were she to fire it, its rearward thrust would maul her soft body. The muzzle of the thing yawned toward Van. Over Sarah's shoulder Jassie could see him, his face pale under its deep burn, his eyes bleary but suddenly sober, as if he'd just been awakened from his drunken stupor to find the Day of Judgment had arrived.

He saw Jassie. He was smart. Smart enough not to betray the thing he saw to Sarah. But his eyes gave clear instructions. "Grab her, Jassie."

But it wasn't for him that Jassie moved. It was for Sarah and her beautiful soft white neck, to save it from the cruel rope.

One step took Jassie to her. One of his hands snaked past her cheek and pushed the barrel of the gun aside. The other circled her across her shoulders, tightened in a sudden vise and held her.

She couldn't pull the trigger, but she fought him. He realized her teeth had sunk themselves into the flesh of his forearm. Still he felt no pain. He was too aware of her writhing body pressed against his own. The fact of it sent chaos through his brain, left it helpless to direct his muscles. He could only hold her there.

So it was Van who took the gun away. Van, trembling from his release from fear. He grabbed the weapon from her, put it in its proper place. And then, quickly, to stop his trembling, he crossed to the table and poured himself a bracing drink.

And not till then did Sarah cease to squirm. Jassie felt her become limp and yielding. That was what allowed him to let her go. She dropped from his grasp, to the floor at his feet. And there she sobbed, great heaving sobs that shook her like a leaf in the wind.

"Thanks, Jassie," Van said when he'd had his drink.

Jassie remained, confused, staring down at Sarah, till Van came over to him and told him, "You can go now, Jassie. I can take care of things here now."

He went, and heard the door shut behind him. He walked aimlessly about while his wits came slowly back to him. Gradually he got to know that his arm hurt a little, and he explored the drying blood that Sarah's teeth had drawn. But pain had never mattered much to him.

It was a long time, perhaps an hour, before he tired of trying to find company in the desolate stars and crept miserably back to the lean-to at the rear of the house. The lean-to wasn't much of a shelter, for its board walls leaked air. He was seldom aware of that deficiency, and least of all at this moment. He moved his bed close against the house itself not to escape the drafts, but to listen again.

For a while he could hear nothing. Then finally Sarah. Her sobbing hadn't stopped completely. The tiny choking sounds came infrequently and very softly.

And Van's voice, saying to her, over and over, "Stop it, Sarah . . . you've got to stop it . . ." The words were spoken in little more than a whisper. He must have been near her, kneeling on the floor beside her perhaps.

Maybe it was toward midnight that the sobs came to an end, and the whispers changed, became strident, took on a new kind of urgency. "Come on, Sarah . . . please . . . let's forget everything . . . start all over again . . . come on . . ."

"No," was the answer she kept repeating.

"I love you, Sarah."

"No, you don't. Don't pretend."

"Well anyway, you're my wife, Sarah. Don't forget that." Anger was creeping into his voice again. Already he seemed to have forgotten how the shotgun looked pointed at his belly. "Come on, Sarah."

Hardly a plea any longer. More of an order.

"No, Van. Never again."

"Don't say no to me. I'm your husband."

There were confused sounds again. Possibly he had picked her up and was carrying her. But she must not have struggled. The fight had emptied out of her.

Jassie listened. He heard the door into the far room opening. Then it shut again. Afterwards there were other sounds that Jassie might have heard. But he put his fingers in his ears and rolled away from the wall. This was something he couldn't save her from. And there was a great disturbance in him that he couldn't comprehend.

In the morning the sun woke Jassie as it always did. Mechanically, without thinking that anything should be different on this morning, he did his early chores, made the rounds of the pens. It was what he had been taught to do.

When he came into the kitchen to get his breakfast just before seven o'clock, he found Sarah there alone. It never occurred to him to be embarrassed, and he scarcely noticed whether her attitude toward him had changed. She'd always been somewhat afraid and shy of him.

"Where's Van?" he asked her.

"Still asleep," she said. "He always sleeps late when he's been drinking."

When she was filling his plate she saw the teeth marks on his arm. "Is that what I did?" she questioned him. She paled a little, and seemed horrified that she could have inflicted such a wound.

He nodded.

Without further hesitation she brought things to repair the damage, water, a wash cloth, antiseptic and bandages. He sat placidly while she worked. If she hurt him at all in the process, he gave no sign. He was too fascinated with the deftness of her small, soft hands. He had never seen her head bent quite so close to him. He admired the luster of her hair. And her neck, slim, delicate, so white . . .

She caught him looking at her that way, and her customary fear of him brightened in her eyes. Her fingers worked even faster after that. She seemed glad when she was finished, but she sat opposite him nevertheless, and ate her own breakfast.

Finally, when the food was gone, she asked him another question. "Jassie, why did you stop me last night?"

He looked at her, but he knew no words to explain.

"Why did you want to save Van's life?" she pursued. "Do you like him?"

"No," he admitted. "I don't like him."

"Then why did you do it, Jassie?" She was persistent, relentless.

He thought for a while, and then a lie occurred to him, a lie that was

part truth. "If Van was dead, I wouldn't have a job. Where would I go?"

She didn't seem to know whether to believe that. "There ought to be plenty of jobs for someone like you. You're big and strong . . . I found that out last night. You're stronger than Van."

"Yes, I'm strong," he agreed with a smile. He liked to be told that. He was proud of his strength.

"I don't know why I should be asking you questions," she said. She wasn't really talking to him. She was thinking aloud. "I should be asking myself. What am I doing here? Why should I be spending my life in a place like this? With a drunkard and . . . and you . . ."

She looked at him, letting her revulsion and her instinctive wariness of him show in her face. Then suddenly she laughed. "When I wanted to go outdoors last night," she went on, "Van accused me of wanting to go to you . . ."

She left the table with a sudden movement, and crossed to the window. Then she laughed again, even more bitterly. "Ye gods . . . from the frying pan to the fire."

Jassie sat still at the table and tried to understand. He said nothing because he couldn't understand. Instead he let his eyes admire her. She was small, like a toy. It was her smallness which most fascinated Jassie. Her smallness and her beautiful little white neck . . .

"I could leave," she was saying.

"I could leave any time. I can drive the truck. I could get in it right now and leave this place . . . But I can't. I don't want to go back to being what I was before. That's why I married Van . . . No, I can't do that. I haven't got the courage. I have it only when he's like the way he was last night, when he drinks . . . I have courage then. But then I get mad at him and I want to kill him . . ."

She turned around to him, showing her lovely, innocent, childlike face. "I guess I'll never leave here on my own," she said. "But some day . . . some day I'll kill him . . ."

"No!" Jassie spoke finally. His fear for her made the word explode out of his mouth. He got up from the table and walked toward her slowly. "No. You mustn't do that."

She shrank away from his advance, but she argued defiantly. "Why not? What have I got to lose? Tell me that. What can I lose?"

He had gotten very close to her. Her back was against the window and she could move no farther. He towered over her, looked down on her, his face just inches above hers.

"You mustn't do it," he repeated with a desperate emphasis. "If you do it, they'll say you murdered him. And they'll take you to a prison . . . and there'll be a rope . . . I've seen it . . . it's a big, thick rope, with a loop and a knot . . . they'll put it over your head, and you'll stand on a place where the floor falls open . . . and when you drop

through, the rope will tighten . . . around your neck . . .”

His fingers, heavy and strong though they were, went out and caressed her soft, white neck with the tenderness of a lover, the daintiness of a girl. Her eyes never left his, and she didn't move, seeming to be afraid that were she to move the fingers might behave quite differently.

“You mustn't kill him, Sarah,” he repeated with a kind of sternness. “You mustn't kill him.”

And they were standing there like that, in a mutual fascination born of different emotions in each of them, when Van's voice sounded at Jassie's back. “I'll take my breakfast now, Sarah.”

Jassie removed his fingers and retreated a few steps away from her. He had a vague sense of having been caught doing something wrong. But still he didn't quite understand the ugly look in Van's bloodshot eyes as he sat down at the table. Nor did he understand the sudden crimsoning in Sarah's pale cheeks. She didn't move at all. She just stood and stared at her husband.

“Van,” she said.

“What?”

“What do you think you saw?”

He made no answer. He just smiled, with a smile that was a sneer.

“I asked you,” she pressed him. “What do you think you saw just now . . . Jassie and me?”

“Nothing, nothing I didn't expect to see.”

Now a fury began to drain the blood from her cheeks. Her voice thinned and started to tremble. “Say what you mean,” she demanded.

He didn't relax his smile. But his eyes were malevolent. “You haven't changed, Sarah,” he said.

Jassie watched them and listened to them. He could feel Sarah's anger even though he did not know all of the reasons for it. He saw her turn away, saw her small fists clenching and unclenching.

Then Van spoke to him. “You're kind of dumb, Jassie,” he said. “You should have let her kill me last night. Then you could have had her all to yourself.”

Van didn't understand Jassie, any more than Jassie understood them. Even if he had noticed some things about Jassie now, like for instance the way the blood pounded visibly in the corded veins of Jassie's big hands, he would probably have misinterpreted such portents. But he didn't notice. He preferred to taunt Sarah.

“How low do you think I am?” she was asking him.

“About right where I found you. As I said, you haven't changed, Sarah.”

She whirled back to face him then. She didn't say anything. Just looked at him. There was more in her eyes than words could have said. And what he saw there made Jassie afraid.

But all she did was to go to the

stove and begin fixing Van's breakfast. Jassie watched her, lingering longest on her delicate, graceful, snowy-white neck.

"Get out of here, Jassie," Van said.

Jassie hesitated. Sarah said nothing. Then he went. But something had happened inside him. He knew finally what he was going to do.

He lay on his cot in the lean-to shed. He had come there right after he had left the kitchen, and he hadn't stirred in the hour that had passed since. But he'd been busy. Not with his hands. With thoughts.

Thinking didn't come easy to Jassie. It never had. And most of the time his life didn't require thinking. So he had never gotten the habit. But now he was doing the biggest job of thinking he'd ever done. The thing that spurred him to this immense task was a horrible vision that he couldn't empty out of his mind — the vision of a hemp rope around Sarah's neck.

He didn't move when he heard his name called. He was almost certain he would hear it sooner or later. Now it pleased him to have predicted so accurately. Van calling. "Jassie!"

He didn't answer. He didn't do anything. There was nothing to do. His preparations had been made, inside his brain.

"Jassie! Dammit, there's work to do."

Yes, there was work to do. But not yet.

He could hear Van slamming around through the outbuildings. Looking for him, no doubt. Imagining that he could be found hiding or napping under or behind something. A stream of curses drifted to Jassie on the breeze.

Then at last, after his search in the outbuildings was complete, Van started coming. Jassie knew that he would, and was pleased again. He could hear Van's boots approaching over the hard earth. But he lay still.

And he was there when Van lurched into the doorway and blocked out the image of the sun. Jassie lay in the shadow and stared back at his employer.

"What the hell!" Van said.

Jassie remained silent, calculating many things, like Van's strength and the distance between them.

"Get up!" Van said, through his teeth. He swayed on the threshold. Some of the haze and fog of last night's whiskey still unsteadied his movements, clouded his eyes. And he'd been angry even before he'd arrived.

"I pay you for working, Jassie," he snarled. "Not for lying there thinking what you'd like to be doing with my wife."

He hurled himself into the lean-to, toward Jassie. Jassie let him come. He let him come all the way, even to getting his fingers around Jassie's throat, his knee into Jassie's belly.

Then Jassie reacted. With a surge

of legs and back muscles he rolled off the cot. Van had been on top of him. Now suddenly he was underneath. Jassie's fingers tore at the other's wrists, broke the hold that was shutting off his breath. Van learned then how strong Jassie was.

"Let me up, Jassie," he said.

Jassie didn't feel he owed Van an explanation for what he was doing. And he didn't want to wait to give it. His thick fingers, which had been so gentle on Sarah's neck, made a steel noose around her husband's. Once the fingers found their place, Van didn't talk or breathe any more. His eyes didn't question the why of this. They only spoke of the terror of knowing there was no more air. And they stayed open, with the terror frozen in them, when Jassie was finished.

He did not move Van's body. When he crawled from off it, he saw there was no need to. This was the best way for Van to be found, just as he was now.

Jassie sat down on the end of the cot and waited. He waited for Sarah. He knew that eventually she would have to come. It never occurred to him to go and fetch her. He could afford to be patient now. And he had a kind of animal patience as a compensation for his small, insufficient brain.

Time passed, on toward noon. He had not expected her to come immediately. Very likely she would think that the two men were working together somewhere. Only when

they didn't return for lunch would she begin to wonder, and then to search. So Jassie waited and watched the progress of the sun by the shadows of things outside.

He didn't mind staying with the dead body. Jassie knew what death was, and it held no fears for him. Van's staring, protruding eyes made no accusations that Jassie was aware of. His innocence was intact and his conscience was clear.

He watched the creeping of the shadows across the ground. When the sun stood high, he heard Sarah stirring in the kitchen. Jassie sat and listened, thinking without emotion that some of the food she was preparing would go uneaten.

The busy noises ceased after a while. Now she was waiting too. Jassie knew somehow that her patience wouldn't be as enduring as his. He was correct again. In less than half an hour he heard the opening and closing of the door.

From where he sat he could see most of the yard. After a moment he saw her cross it. She was wearing her wide-brimmed bonnet, and Jassie approved of that. He didn't want the sun to molest the whiteness of her skin. She wandered among the outbuildings. She would see that they could not have gone far, because the truck was still there. Several times she called out, "Van." And once, "Jassie." Somehow he didn't care to answer her summons. He wanted her to come here and see for herself what he had done and

how he had done it. If he had wanted things any other way, he would have gone to her before this.

And he knew, as he had known everything else, that she would come to the lean-to sooner or later.

He saw her now as she came, across the dusty yard. She didn't see him at first, because she was walking in bright sunlight and he was still sitting on the end of the cot in the interior shadows. But she saw him just before she arrived at the doorway. And she must not have seen the body, because she came right ahead, right to the threshold, saying, "Jassie, where is Van?"

She saw it then, and she stopped abruptly. Her eyes widened. Her breath caught in her throat and seemed to stay there. She stood still as a statue and didn't say anything.

Jassie talked. He told her everything. "I killed him, Sarah. I know you're glad he's dead. And I know you wanted to do it. But I had to be the one. Because I didn't want them to hang you. It's all right if they hang me."

He spoke earnestly. But he couldn't tell whether she was listening. She gave no sign that she was. She kept looking at the body, couldn't seem to take her eyes away from it.

"Now everything's all right, Sarah," he went on. "That's why I wanted to kill him here. So they'd find the body here and know it was me. And I wanted to kill him the way I did, choking him with my two hands, so he'd be killed in a

way that they'd know you couldn't have done it to him. That way they'd know it was me too. You see, I figured all that out, Sarah. I can do that, you see, because I know how they work when they're deciding who killed somebody."

If she heard him, she gave not a twitch of response. Perhaps there wasn't room in her mind at this moment for anything except plans of her own.

"Now here's all you have to do, Sarah," he was telling her. "You can drive the truck, remember. So you drive it into town now and tell the Sheriff that the hired hand has killed your husband. And I'll wait right here for the Sheriff to come and look at the body and pick me up. And I'll tell him too that I killed Van, you see. That way there can't be a mistake. Nobody'll think that you killed him. That way they won't hang you. They won't put a rope around your little neck . . ."

He stood up for the first time, and took just one step toward her. But it was enough to jar her back to life again. It was as if she hadn't even breathed all the time Jassie was talking. Now the breath was released, and it came out in a scream.

Or perhaps it was just because he had reached out and touched her soft little white neck with the fingers which had stopped the breath forever in Van.

She screamed and ran from him. She lifted her skirt and ran as if the devil were behind her. Jassie didn't

understand, but it did occur to him that very possibly she hadn't been listening to him.

Then he would have to explain it again. He would have to tell her to get the truck and go after the Sheriff. So he ran after her. He didn't run as fast as he might have. He didn't try to catch her exactly, because there wasn't any place she could go to get away from him.

When she ran around toward the front of the house he followed her. When he arrived there, he saw that she must have gone inside. But she'd left the door open, and he started to follow. He didn't see her standing in the middle of the living room with the shotgun in her hands until he was well past the threshold.

The blast ripped into his chest and belly, but there was no pain. He only knew that he could go no farther and that he would have to lie down there on the floor and die.

"You got to tell them, Sarah . . ." He was on his knees, and he tottered there for a moment. ". . . Tell

them you shot me because I was trying to kill you too. It looks that way, you see. That's all right. Because they won't hang you that way . . ."

He perhaps would have had something else to say to her, but she fired the second barrel.

And he needn't have worried about it at all. They didn't put a rope around her little white neck. Nobody thought about doing anything like that, because of the other thing that Jassie had neglected to tell her.

The Sheriff had to tell her after he found out about it himself. "This guy was a killer. He murdered a man and a woman in cold blood, and then a guard when he escaped off the train. Your husband made it four. You'd have made five . . ."

He was wrong, of course. About the last part anyway. But then Jassie had kind of planned it that way.



Win \$50.00!

Here's your chance to be a detective! All the clues you need to follow Sergeant Fred Beal's reasoning and come up with a killer are in the story. In 200 words or less, finish the story. Find the killer and the clues which point to him in the story. The best ending to this story, in the opinion of the editors of MANHUNT, which reaches us before August 1, 1955, will win for its author a \$50 prize. The name of the winner and his entry will be published in our January 1956 issue. Because of the number of entries, no correspondence can be entered into regarding any submission, nor can entries be acknowledged or returned. Duplicate awards will be made in case of ties. It is not necessary to purchase this magazine in order to enter the contest. All entries should be addressed to Contest Editor, MANHUNT Magazine, 545 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.

YOU, detective

No. 5 — The Timed Murder

BY WILSON HARMAN

THE BODY was lying at the farthest corner of the small room, diagonally opposite the door. Sergeant Fred Beal didn't look at it. Instead, standing in the doorway, he puffed a curved short pipe and stared at the three figures huddled around the big fallen grandfather's clock that lay across the smooth, unscarred wooden arm of a massive chair directly opposite from the body.

"You all had some interest in the death of Craig Hendry, didn't you?" he said.

The young blonde woman looked up. "That's a very casual way of

putting it, Sergeant. After all, he was my father."

"I realize that, Miss Hendry. I'm not trying to be tough; but you profit by his death. You'll inherit a great deal when his will is probated."

"I haven't seen his will," the dead man's daughter said calmly.

"I suppose I might as well confirm the Sergeant," the dark, nervous man said, glancing at his wife before going on. "Craig made me executor. Miss Grace Hendry will inherit something over a quarter of a million dollars." There was bitterness in his tone, but it dropped from his voice as he went on: "That's what the fight was about. Making me executor, I mean."

The nervous man looked round. "I thought the servants would have told you. They must have heard the voices. Just an argument, really. I had — have — no desire to be ex-

ecutor for Craig's will. Morbid idea."

Beal's eyebrows rose. "In spite of the money that being executor would mean to you?" he asked.

"In spite of it," Collins' wife said.

"That's what she says," Grace Hendry cut in quickly. "But we all heard the fight. That was when Mr. Collins killed my father. See how the clock is knocked over. That must have been in the fight, and then he took something and hit my father over the head from behind. They had a fight . . ."

"An argument, not a fight," Collins said. "I didn't kill him."

They were all looking at the body now. As Beal stood in the doorway he could only see the legs and lower torso projecting from behind the big couch at the wall. He moved forward a few feet, into the room,

and saw the battered head. "When was that argument?" he asked.

"About three o'clock, something like that," Collins said. "Miss Hendry discovered the body at 5:05."

"The servants alibi each other," Beal said. "But you three are unknown quantities. At five minutes after five, Miss Hendry, you came up to the room?"

"Yes," the blonde said. "With Mrs. Collins here. I got to the door and saw him and screamed."

"You said someone had bashed his head in," Mrs. Collins whispered.

"I was shocked," Grace Hendry said. "That's what happened, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Beal cut in. "Someone bashed your father's head in, Miss Hendry. And, thanks to you, I know who that someone was."



Contest Winner: YOU, detective

No. 2—THE GREEN BEARD

*Mr. Lou Glanzman
27 West St. Joseph
Indianapolis, Indiana*

Lt. Reardon faced the dark man. "You're under arrest, Mr. Fane, for the murder of Jason Howard."

"What are you talking about?" Fane asked.

"Color-blindness," Reardon said softly. "You referred to Mrs. Browne as having black hair; the lady's hair is red. That makes you color-blind, and that explains

why, when you picked a beard for disguise, you chose a green one."

Fane shook his head quickly. "You haven't proven a thing," he said. "I admit I'm color-blind, but that doesn't make me the killer. Browne knows I'm color-blind; maybe he wore the green beard just to throw suspicion on me."

Reardon took out his gun. "There's only one thing wrong with that," he said. "If Mr. Browne had been the killer, you, with your color-blindness, would have seen a black-bearded man in the hallway—instead of the man with the green beard you claim to have seen. Let's go." He motioned with the gun.

Fane went out the door ahead of him.

The Death of Arney Vincent



The kid only had a couple of hundred bucks, but that didn't matter. I was getting \$7500 for working on him.

BY C. L. SWEENEY, JR.

I SAT and looked at the kid's picture with the "Wanted For Murder" caption over it there on the front page of the Evening Herald and smoked a couple cigarettes while I tried to piece together the little fragments of thought that were whirling around in the back of my head. When they began to take shape I got up and walked past the old operating table to the battered cabinet at the far side of the room. I opened a drawer and took a picture out of it and switched on the strong light over the table and held the pic-

ture up beside the one in the paper. Remarkable, I thought. About the same age, same hair, same height, same build, same general head and facial contours. It should be easy. Then I put the picture back in the cabinet and stuck the paper in my pocket and made a little call on Arney Vincent.

I drove over to the other side of the city and parked a couple blocks from the apartment house and walked down through the alley and in the back door. I went up the stairs and down the hall with the fly-specked bulb at one end to the room where Arney had been laying low since he pulled the bank job. You've got to lay low after one of those. Cops don't like people who stick up banks. Even more, cops don't like people who shoot other cops. Arney hadn't exactly made himself a candidate for Queen of the Policeman's Ball with that one.

I knocked and heard someone move up behind the door.

"Let him in." That was Arney.

I walked in and across the littered room to where Arney sat in the big easy chair with a drink in his hand. It almost gave me the willies. It was Arney all right only it didn't look like Arney. I couldn't get used to it. But what else would you expect? I'm not the best plastic surgeon in the city for nothing, even if they have got my license. I'd done a beauty of a job on Arney — for five grand. His own mother wouldn't have recognized him.

"Well, Doc? Come to give a quick look at your handiwork?" Arney rubbed his hand down his face, young and tough, feeling for traces of the scars that should be there but weren't. My jobs are strictly the best.

I took the paper out of my pocket and unfolded it and tossed it to him. "There's your answer," I said.

He looked at it for a minute but I could see that it didn't register. "Cut out the riddles," he said. "I got no time for games."

So then I explained the whole thing to him. Arney is a cute customer and I knew he liked it. Why shouldn't he? A guy never found a way to get the heat turned off him any easier.

"Okay," said Arney. "How much — if it works?"

"It'll work," I said. "Ten thousand."

"Five," said Arney.

"Cut it out," I said. "I get all the risk and you get all the gravy. Ten thousand."

"How do you know he'll go through with it, even if you find him?"

"He'll go through with it. He'll be glad to. Ten thousand."

"Seventy-five hundred," said Arney.

"Sold," I said. "When do I get it?"

"When it's over." Arney was watching me closely.

"How about a couple grand now?" I asked.

"When it's over," said Arney again, softly.

"Suit yourself," I said.

I went back to my office in the rear of the old tenement and thought about it. The next thing was to find the kid. That only took about three days. After all, I've been in and out of the rackets for better than twenty years and I know most of the places where a frightened kid could hide from the cops. Or I know how to find out about them.

He was standing behind the filthy bed in the riverfront hotel and he was a very scared boy when I busted in. I closed the door behind me before he could move.

"It's okay, son," I said. "I'm going to help you."

"I didn't do it," he said, very quiet. "It was a frame. A dirty rotten frame."

"Sure it was, son," I said. "I know it and you know it but the cops don't know it. That's why I'm here to help you."

All the time I was measuring him, especially his face, with my eyes. I was relieved; it was going to be even easier than I had thought.

He was pretty suspicious at first, as I'd figured he would be, but I sat on the edge of the bed and talked to him for a long time and after a while he quieted down a little. Then I gradually worked it around to telling him that I was a plastic surgeon and that with a new face he could get out of town and go to Detroit or somewhere and start all over. The kid

thought about it for a while and he was still scared, but he was grasping at straws and he saw what looked like an out.

"Okay," he finally said. "I suppose you'll want some money."

"That's not important." I reconsidered. "How much have you got?"

"A couple of hundred bucks." He fished in his pocket.

"That'll do," I said, and put the money in my billfold.

Then I got him out of there and back to the office and went to work on him. He was still pretty worried, but he felt better when he saw that I really meant to do the job. I raised the head of the table and got him on it. Then I washed his face and hands with the antiseptic and injected the local. It hurt him, but he didn't say anything. He was a game kid. I went to the cabinet and got out the picture and propped it up where the kid couldn't see it. Then I lost myself in the scalpels and flesh and gauze as I always did.

Three hours later I stepped back. It was beautiful. A little time to heal and it would be superb. I was an artist and I took an artist's pride in my work. Even to the fingertips where the skin had been rolled back by my own special method to obliterate the prints, it was the work of a master.

"How is it, Doc?" the kid grimaced, the raw cuts burning as he moved his lips.

"Don't try to talk," I warned. "It's fine. It's swell."

The kid tried to smile with his eyes. Then I put on the bandages and the adhesive and helped him to the cot in the corner.

"It'll only take a couple weeks," I said. "You can stay here while it heals."

The two weeks went by very slowly. More so for the kid than for myself, I suppose. Two weeks of pain and itching and drinking through a straw and sleeping with the hands tied and then more pain and more itching. I took care of him as best I could and I think he appreciated it. He couldn't talk, but he kept looking at me through the slits in the bandages, his eyes sort of big and round and scared. Always looking at me. After a while it kind of got on my nerves.

Finally the two weeks were up and I could cut away the bandages. I worked fast, impatiently, and eventually ripped off the last piece of gauze. I stared at the new face with the same awe I always felt when I saw my work unveiled for the first time. It was exquisitely done. And why not? I was the Michaelangelo and the Rembrandt of my profession.

The kid looked at himself in the mirror for a long time. He looked pleased, so I knew he didn't recognize the new face, and I felt relieved. Couldn't have followed the papers very closely, I thought.

At last he turned to me. "Gee, Doc," he said. "Thanks. It's swell."

Sure it's swell, I thought. Seventy-

five hundred bucks worth of swell.

Then he grabbed hold of my hand and just hung on and gave me that hurt-dog look of his.

"Okay, kid," I said. "Forget it."

I gave him the new set of clothes with all the identification tags ripped out, and the wallet.

"Don't open it," I said. "There's a little money in there. You'll need it."

He put it in his pocket. Then I handed him the small black automatic with the serial numbers carefully filed off.

"Just in case," I said.

He put that in his pocket, too.

"Now," I said. "I'm going to get you out of town. Go down to the drug store at Third and Broad and wait for me. I'll be right along. It's okay. Nobody will recognize you."

He thanked me again, which I wished he hadn't done, and left and I waited until I couldn't hear him on the stairs any more and then I followed him down. Only I didn't go to the drug store. Instead I went into a lunch cart a couple blocks away and changed a quarter and went into the phone booth.

"Give me the police," I said. Then, "Don't ask any questions. Just listen. Arney Vincent is in a drug store at Third and Broad. He's armed, so don't take any chances." Then I hung up.

I went out of the lunch cart and up the street and leaned on a mailbox about a block away from the drug store. Pretty soon I saw the

black police cars pull up in front and saw the coppers jump out and fan around the store. Very neat. Then came the shots, first one and then a lot of them, and in a little while I heard the meat wagon siren coming up the street.

I went back to the office and waited until the evening papers came out. I went down and bought one and took it back up with me. It was all over the front page in big black print. "Arney Vincent Killed," it said. "Mysterious Phone Call. . . . Drug Store at Third and Broad. . . . Identification Through Photographic File and Papers in Dead Man's Wallet. . . ." I didn't read any more. I didn't have to. But somehow I didn't feel as pleased as I'd thought I would.

I stuffed the paper in my pocket and went up to see Arney. He was still sitting in the easy chair with the drink in his hand. I threw the paper in his lap.

"I've seen it," said Arney. "Pretty. Very pretty. You did a good job."

"Yes," I said. "It was a good job. All my jobs are good."

I waited, but he just sat there looking at me.

"We had an agreement," I finally reminded him.

"I changed my mind," said Arney, still looking at me. "I only pay for things I'm going to have a use for. That lets you out."

I lit a cigarette and took a long drag. "I don't brush off that easy," I said. "I made one phone call today. I could make another."

"Yes," he said, "you could do that." He grinned at me. "You could if there was any way to prove it."

I stood there and looked at the tip of my cigarette. I was, after all, the Michaelangelo and the Rembrandt of my profession. There didn't seem to be anything left to say.



MUGGED AND PRINTED

EVAN HUNTER is the author of the best-selling novel, *The Blackboard Jungle*, just released as an M-G-M movie. Enthusiastic reviewers are predicting an avalanche of Oscars for the picture, which would crown all successes the book has had. Serialized in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, it's been sold to Pocket Books, Inc., and will also appear in foreign countries.

It's just as popular in other parts of the world, incidentally; *The Blackboard Jungle* is a choice of the Danish Book-of-the-Month Club! The teenage background present in the novel appears again in Hunter's newest *Manhunt* story, *See Him Die*.



RICHARD DEMING is the creator of *Manville Moon*, the one-legged tough private detective who's appeared in two Rinehart novels (*The Gallows In My Garden* and *Tweak The Devil's Nose*) and many short stories, prior to his present full-length debut in *Manhunt*, in the complete new novel *Juvenile Delinquent*. Deming, who lives in upstate New York, is now at work on some more *Manhunt* stories. He writes that *Juvenile Delinquent* contains the millionth word he's sold for publication — but instead of sitting back and resting on these considerable laurels Deming's now pushing for the second million!



JONATHAN CRAIG's latest Police File story, *The Baby-Sitter*, appears in this issue. The Police File series has drawn a lot of enthusiastic comment from *Manhunt* readers, and fans will be happy to know that an expanded version of Craig's *The Dead Darling* (published in our October 1954 issue) will soon appear as a Gold Medal book. Craig, a former musician and arranger, is now at work on

"three projects at once — about normal for me." He lives in New York City.



DAVID ALEXANDER's new story, *Scarecrow*, is full of the same realism and toughness that have marked his previous work for *Manhunt*. Such stories as *The Wet Brain* and *First Case* have received a tremendous amount of mail, and we're sure *Scarecrow* will prove just as successful. Alexander's the author of several topselling detective novels, the latest being his new Random House book, *Paint The Town Black*. He's now at work on some more *Manhunt* stories.



EDWARD D. RADIN, the country's top fact-crime writer, has come up with one of his most unusual cases in *The Repeater*, the true story of a man who got away with murder — by making a full confession. ♦ JACK RITCHIE is on hand with another fresh idea in his latest *Manhunt* yarn, *Solitary*. ♦ SAM MERWIN, JR., whose newest story, *The Big Score*, appears in this issue, is a former editor and an author whose work has covered virtually every field. Like Merwin's first *Manhunt* story, *Revolving Door*, *The Big Score* is an original and surprising yarn we're sure you'll like. ♦ WALLY HUNTER's first story for *Manhunt*, *The Watch*, marks the first time young Hunter (no relation to the better-known Evan H.) has appeared in print. We think you'll agree, though, that it won't be the last appearance for this talented new writer.

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