

THE MAD MURDER PARTY • A COMPLETE NOVEL

MYSTERY



NOVEMBER
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CENTURY MURDER MYSTERY • THE SINISTER CASE OF

The LISPING MAN

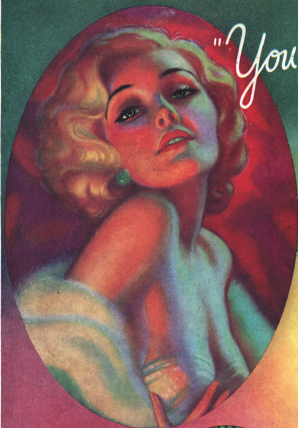
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Graceful girl... lovely manners... but her teeth are dingy, her gums tender!



Don't let
"PINK TOOTH BRUSH"
 ROB YOU OF YOUR CHARM

SHE's as gracious as she is graceful. She is intelligent...friendly. It's just too bad that the shadow of neglected teeth makes most people overlook her natural charm.

Yet sympathy is really misplaced. She ought to know better. The "pink" that appears on her tooth brush and dims the natural lustre of her teeth ought to warn her that *brushing the teeth is not enough*. Those tender gums say that gingivitis, Vincent's disease, even pyorrhea, may be just around the corner.

IPANA is needed

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gum walls. Start with Ipana today and keep "pink tooth brush" out of your life.

DON'T TAKE CHANCES!

A good tooth paste, like a good dentist, is never a luxury

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MYSTERY

ONE OF THE TOWER MAGAZINES

Catherine McNelis—Publisher

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VOL. X, NO. 5

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NOVEMBER, 1934



THE RIDDLE OF THE MARBLE BLADE

By **STUART PALMER**

Another adventure with Hildegard Withers, the school-ma'am detective, and the girl who was too curious for her own good.

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THE MAD MURDER PARTY • By Colver Harris (page 100)

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In this way you can *protect* your skin—keep it lovely!

Use Cosmetics? Yes, indeed!
But I always use **Lux Toilet Soap** to guard against Cosmetic Skin



Claudette Colbert

STAR OF
PARAMOUNT'S "CLEOPATRA"



I Go Sleuthing

A new kind of department for new writers. Do you know any true, unsolved, "unwritten mysteries"? This magazine will pay \$100 apiece for the best solution submitted each month! Below is this month's prize winner! How about you? See page 86 for contest rules.

Illustration by Robert Fawcett

"I GO SLEUTHING"
WINNER FOR
NOVEMBER

MARGARET
ANDERSON
CHARLOTTE, N. C.

I LIKE excitement. Normally, when I find myself almost in the very center of some nerve-wracking situation, I am able to keep my wits momentarily and later I become intensely jittery until the shock passes. It's like finding yourself suddenly in a tight place while driving an automobile, keeping your head until the crisis is over, and then, after all danger is gone, succumbing to the tenseness of the experience.

That was what happened to me once when I was visiting a friend who was doing newspaper work in Chicago. As it turned out, I was perhaps the only one of the "principals" present who felt no official pressure at the time and consequently I noticed things that some of the others might possibly have overlooked.

I had been in school with my friend. After our graduation, we corresponded and one Spring she asked me to visit her. She was to begin her vacation on Tuesday, but I arrived on Sunday. Monday evening we went to dinner about six o'clock. We had just left the hotel and were standing on a corner waiting for a cruising taxi when suddenly, a terrific explosion blasted away the ordinary noises of traffic and city bustle. An earthquake couldn't have sounded worse.

For a moment, both of us stood stunned. I felt a tingle of excitement course down my back, but this was forgotten as my friend, yanking at my sleeve, started on the run for the scene which apparently was just around the block. We took a short cut through a slushy alley and came out to find a crowd already in front of a restaurant. The front was a shambles. Obviously, the place had been bombed.

One side of the restaurant was on the alley through



which we had run and from windows set high in the wall on this side little wisps of smoke curled out through glass that had been shattered by the blast.

Several policemen already were pushing a crowd back but my friend exhibited her press card and we edged inside the lines. An ambulance rolled up with screaming siren and then took away a man who had stumbled from the wreckage. Several others stood about visibly excited. I guessed they had been diners and had escaped injury only because the dining salon was set deep in the building, whereas the explosion had occurred very nearly at the restaurant's front.

One bystander at the edge of the police lines stood just in back of us.

"About ruined the place didn't it?" he had commented.

My friend, seeking to get as much from the story as possible, began asking him questions. "Did you see it?" she wanted to know.

I turned about and saw the fellow, a wizened man, shake his head. "No, I run the cafe in the next block up there. Tough on this man. He just opened up."

"I saw it," said a man next to the one who had spoken.

Immediately my friend pounced on him. "What happened?" she wanted to know.

"I was standing over there," he said. "on the corner. I wasn't paying much attention but just before the explosion I saw a man about six feet tall hurry off in that direction." He pointed down the

street. "Then, in about ten seconds, I suppose, the front end of the restaurant blew out."

"Did you see the man throw anything in the front of the place?"

He said he didn't. In fact, he said, he had paid little attention at the time.

I appraised the man in the street light and he seemed to be telling the truth. Then, I thought perhaps I could help in gathering a little color, so I turned to the man who had first spoken. (Please turn to page 67).

DUST *on the* FLOOR

*A famous true-life mystery drama—
complete on this page. The Episode
of the Wagging Tongues.*



The house of Dr. Crippen, in London.

International

GOSSIP seldom accomplishes a useful purpose. Born largely of jealousy, it usually does more harm than good. But always there are exceptions. The gossip about the clothes Ethel Le Neve was wearing was one. Without it the perpetrator of one of England's most sensational crimes might have gone unpunished.

Ethel Le Neve was the petite and comely secretary of Dr. Alfred Crippen, a London physician, whose marriage to an American woman of means had long since grown cold. For appearance sake Crippen and his wife continued to share the same roof. But those acquaintances who knew of the ardent attention the physician paid his young secretary, often wondered how long it would be before the final break came between husband and wife.

They sensed it had arrived when the doctor announced that his wife had left England for a visit to California. Over tea cups they shook their heads knowingly and intimated that it was not for the climate alone that she had gone.

And then, several months later, Crippen announced that he had received word from the States of the sudden death of his wife. The statement was accepted on its face value, for, after all, there was no reason to doubt its authenticity.

But later, doubt commenced to make its presence felt, and tongues which had wagged only in private, did so openly. For Ethel Le Neve invariably accompanied by the doctor, was seen in public wearing clothes known to have been Mrs. Crippen's.

If Mrs. Crippen had gone to California, as her husband claimed she had, why had she not taken her clothes with her? And if she had not gone, what had happened to her? Had some grim fate befallen her?

The gossips asked themselves these questions, asked them over and over again until at length Scotland Yard found itself interested in the answers.

To Detective Albert Young of the Criminal Investigation Division, went the task of piercing the veil of mystery. He called upon Dr. Crippen and bluntly asked for an explanation.

The physician welcomed him graciously. He was glad the detective had come, he said, for he, too, had heard the gossip which was going about, and found it particularly embarrassing. No, Mrs. Crippen had not gone to California. The story that she had, and that she had died there, was one of his own concoctions, he frankly admitted. There had been a marital disagreement between his wife and himself, he told Young,

and his wife had left him, leaving all her belongings behind. He had told the "California story," he explained, to suppress, if possible, the scandal he felt certain would result if the truth was known.

He spoke in a straight-forward, conscientious manner; but as Young came away instinct told him that there was more in back of the strange disappearance of Mrs. Crippen than had been admitted. The detective had a feeling that something sinister had happened to the woman and that her husband knew what it was and had had a hand in it.

If such was the case, then, he realized, the doctor's home would be the logical place to seek a clue. Accordingly, he had the physician trailed and when, a few nights later, word was flashed to him at the Yard that Dr. Crippen was spending the evening out, he hastened there and forced an entrance.

Methodically and painstakingly, he went through the dwelling, from attic to cellar. Nothing escaped his alert gaze, but nothing suspicious revealed itself until he was about to abandon the basement. Then it was that his eyes were attracted to a dust-like covering on the tile floor. Examining it more closely, he discovered that it was a thin layer of pulverized mortar, and that beneath it there were cracks in the floor. Instinct told him that the surface had recently been disturbed.

The grim significance of his discovery was not lost upon Young. Hurriedly he summoned two subordinates and with shovel and pick they commenced tearing up the floor.

Several feet beneath the tiling they came upon the horribly mutilated body of a woman—the body of Mrs. Crippen. The mystery surrounding her disappearance had been solved.

But her husband had vanished. Nowhere in London was he to be found. And so, as is the custom in such cases, his description was broadcast throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles and upon the Continent. Also, for the first time in criminal history—the murder took place a score of years ago—the wireless carried it to ships at sea.

And from a vessel in mid-Atlantic, bound for Canada, came word that the fugitive doctor was aboard. Young, accompanied by other detectives from Scotland Yard, boarded a swifter liner and raced to Canada. They arrived ahead of Crippen and arrested him when he landed.

Because of gossip his "perfect crime" had turned out to be a very imperfect one indeed. And because of the self-same gossip he swung from the gallows.

*A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page. The
Episode of the Careful Detectives.*

By a HAIR

ON a foggy morning in October, 1930, United States Coast Guardsmen boarded the fishing smack *Phoenix IV*, which had been sighted drifting aimlessly with the tide off Point Higgins, Alaska, and found George Marshall, an aged fish buyer, lying dead in a pool of blood on deck.

His skull was crushed in. There was a bullet hole in his toe, and clutched in his clenched fist were several black hairs from the head of the murderer.

"He's holding on to them as though he did not want to part with them even in death," remarked the grizzled Coast Guard Captain.

All about the deck were evidences that the old man had not surrendered his life without a fierce struggle. It was in complete disorder. In the tiny cabin below were further evidences of the vain fight he had waged to protect his life. On the floor, open and empty, lay a small iron safe—proving that robbery was the motive for the murder. Nearby was a broken hack-saw blade.

It was a case for the Special Agents of the Division of Investigation of the United States Department of Justice to solve.

Embedded in the deck they found the bullet which had pierced the murdered man's toe. It was a thirty-eight. They also identified the broken hack-saw blade as one of a number which had been stolen, along with other accessories, from the Sunny Point Cannery some weeks before. And then, questioning settlers in the vicinity of Point Higgins, they learned that two men, Bert McDonald and Lloyd Close, had been seen fishing in the vicinity on the day of the murder.

They smiled grimly when they were informed that Close was suspected of being implicated in the Cannery robbery. And they had even more reason to smile when, checking his past, they discovered he had a criminal record.

Promptly they descended upon his boat, then moored at the City Float, at Ketchikan. He was not aboard, but his absence did not balk the Federal man-hunters. They ransacked every nook and corner of the vessel. They overlooked nothing, and when they were through they had a good portion of the Sunny Point Cannery loot and a wicked-looking

thirty-eight caliber revolver to show for their efforts. "We'll pack this gat off to a ballistics man and see if he can make it talk," declared one of the Special Agents. "Seeing it's a thirty-eight, it may have quite a story to relate about the sudden demise of old Marshall."

"And we'll find out what Close has to say about all this," the other rejoined.

Close was taken into custody. He admitted the Cannery robbery, admitted, too, that the thirty-eight caliber revolver was his, but he denied having murdered old man Marshall. The Government men listened to his story, and then had him lodged in jail to await the report of the ballistics expert.

"You noticed his hair, of course," one of the Agents asked his partner, as they left the jail.

"You bet I did. It's the same color as the hair clutched in old Marshall's hand—black."

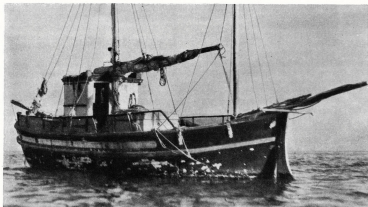
The ballistics report came in in due time, and it revealed that Close's revolver had fired the bullet which pierced the old fish buyer's shoe. Another link in the chain of damaging evidence against the prisoner was accordingly forged.

Damaging evidence, but not complete enough for the Federal man, taught to get the sort of evidence that will stand up in court. There was one flaw in what, to the layman, might have appeared an open-and-shut case. When subjected to the ultra-violet ray—the black light, as the laboratory sleuths call it—Close's hair, although black, did not show up in the same manner as the hair which had been clutched in the hand of the murdered man.

So, while Close lodged in jail, the Special Agents sought the trail of Bert McDonald, the other man who had been seen fishing in the vicinity of Point Higgins on the fateful day that Marshall's life was snuffed out. The trail led from Alaska to Idaho, then back to Alaska, and finally to Portland, Ore., where McDonald was arrested and confessed the crime. To guard against all possibility of the confession being retracted later on, the ultra-violet ray was again brought into use, and McDonald's hairs were found to tally perfectly with those Marshall had grasped in his death struggle.

McDonald had stolen Close's revolver, killed with it, and then replaced it. He believed he had committed a perfect crime. But he overlooked the hairs and the fact that science is one of the most valuable allies of the Federal man-hunters, and was sentenced to life imprisonment in the McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary as a result.

International



An Alaskan fishing boat, similar to the *Phoenix IV*.

WITH A WALTZ IN YOUR HEART

Surrender to the happy seduction of Ernst Lubitsch's most glorious picture holiday! When Maurice Chevalier with delicious gaiety flirts, sings, conquers Jeanette MacDonald, the rich and merry widow, it's your big new screen thrill! Because Franz Lehar's romance is the greatest operetta of our time M-G-M has spared no expense to make it memorably magnificent! With the stars and director of "The Love Parade".

In the hush of a lilac-perfumed night to the soft sobbing of gypsy violins . . . they danced the dance of love . . . the "Merry Widow Waltz".

MAURICE
CHEVALIER
JEANETTE
MacDONALD

an **ERNST LUBITSCH** Production

THE

Merry Widow

with

EDWARD EVERETT HORTON • UNA MERKEL

GEORGE BARBIER . . . MINNA GOMBELL

Screen Play by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson

A **METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER** PICTURE

What Goes into the STUFFING?



Give your family a delicious new turkey stuffing of your own invention as a treat for Thanksgiving dinner



Tower photo

Crackers, bread, noodles, tapioca, or other starchy food serve as the basis for your stuffing with other ingredients added to suit your own personal taste in texture and flavor.

PRAISE be to the cook who first invented stuffing to add to the enjoyment of eating the holiday bird. But don't forget that you or any other home cook can turn your inventive genius to account by devising a special stuffing with a tempting quality all its own. To do this successfully you must realize that there are just four different kinds of stuffing, as follows: (1) Those in which bread crumbs are used as a basis with the addition of desired amount of liquid, fat and seasonings; (2) Those in which some other starchy food, such as cooked rice, cornmeal, noodles, are used in place of the bread crumbs; (3) Those in which some agreeably flavored delicacy such as chestnuts or oysters are used in combination with the bread or starch; and (4) fruit stuffings.

The most usual turkey stuffing belongs to the first class, and a good basic recipe calls for the following ingredients: 2 cups dry bread crumbs, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup hot water, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup melted butter or other fat, with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

and other seasonings to suit the individual taste.

To make a richer dressing use less water and more melted butter or omit water entirely and use from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup melted butter. Finely chopped suet, bacon or salt pork may be used in place of the butter. Hot milk may be used instead of water and an egg may be added. Cracker crumbs may be substituted for the bread crumbs— $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cracker crumbs taking the place of 1 cup dried bread crumbs. Some sort of onion flavoring is almost essential—minced raw onion, onion salt, onion juice or minced onion first sautéed in butter. A little garlic may be acceptable. Other agreeable seasonings are summer savory, and sage or a combination of herbs known as poultry seasoning. Chopped nuts, celery, seedless raisins and chopped minced pepper may produce other appetizing variations.

Of the cereal stuffings, corn meal is the most usual or at least the most historic as it was used in New England in the Puritan days (Please turn to page 69)



Wide World

A street scene in Whitechapel, London.

A CONSTABLE patrolling his beat in Clapham Common, London, toward dawn of a New Year's morning some years ago came upon the body of a man lying in a clump of bushes.

In the dim light the officer thought at first that here was a citizen who had celebrated the passing of the old year in too lusty a fashion and decided the bushes were as good a spot as any in which to "sleep it off."

But the moment he flashed on his torch he realized he had been horribly mistaken. The man was dead, and murder was obvious, for a blood-stained silk handkerchief covered his crushed skull, and there were knife wounds in his chest.

A thumb-worn notebook in the slain man's pocket identified him as John Meeks, a collector of Whitechapel, but aside from the handkerchief, which was of a cheap variety, such as could be purchased in scores of London stores, there appeared to be no clues to the murderer. That is, until Detective Alfred Ward of Scotland Yard appeared on the scene.

"We need to look for a left-handed man, a strong, left-handed man," he announced after a careful inspection of the body. "He is the murderer."

The Constable's expression indicated that he was skeptical, but the expression vanished as Ward, pointing to the knife wounds, explained, "Their position is such that only a left-handed man could have possibly inflicted them. And they are deep, which shows he was a strong man."

But to find the right left-handed man in a city the size of London appeared to be an even more difficult task than the finding of the proverbial needle in the haystack.

Ward, however, had tackled seemingly insurmountable tasks before, so he was not dismayed by the one which now confronted him.

First, he had the corpse propped up in the morgue and a photograph taken of the slain man. He needed the picture because Clapham Commons is a good distance from Whitechapel, and he realized that the odds were about even that Meeks and his murderer had taken a cab to get there.

Several days of visiting cab companies, talking with drivers, and showing them the photograph proved he was correct. A cabbie was found who recalled picking up Meeks and another man.

"He was a big fellow, sir, big and husky-looking," the cabbie declared.

Ward smiled knowingly, and his smile broadened into a grin when the cabbie recalled the corner at which his fares had hailed him. But the identity of the strong

A Talkative MAN

*A famous true-life mystery drama—
complete on this page. The Episode
of the Double Mistake.*

man was still just as much a mystery as before.

In an effort to establish who he was, Ward took the blood-stained silk handkerchief and began the rounds of the laundries of Whitechapel with it. Again it was several days before he had the information he sought. It came from a Chinaman, who claimed the handkerchief resembled one which had once been left with him to be laundered by a man named August Stein. The celestial was not positive it was Stein's handkerchief, but Ward wasn't overlooking any bets.

"He's a little man, isn't he?" the detective asked.

The Chinaman shook his head negatively. "No, he big man," he said.

To the spot where the cabbie had picked up his two fares, a lonely corner deep in the heart of Whitechapel, the detective now hastened and there for a week he loitered, watching everyone who passed, studying them, seeking the murderer of John Meeks.

And finally he spotted a man who answered the description given by the cabbie and the Chinese laundryman. It was nearing midnight when Ward saw him slink slyly out of the shadows and enter an old, dilapidated house. Instead of accosting him immediately, as many a less clever detective would have done, Ward hung back in the shadows and waited for a light to flash on in the house. Then he moved silently forward and peered into the lighted window, for he wanted to be certain of one more thing before he took the man into custody. And when he saw him pick up a comb from the cheap dresser, he was certain of it. The man used his left hand.

But while he was a big man and left-handed and readily admitted his name was Stein, Ward realized full well that as yet there was no definite evidence with which the authorities could hope to convince a jury that he was the murderer of John Meeks.

So, in arresting him, Ward booked him as a suspicious character and deliberately ushered him to a cell without telling him the charge against him.

It was a truly clever move, and without it the previous brilliant work of Ward might have been for naught. But once the cell door clanged shut upon him, Stein supplied the missing link in the chain of evidence against him. His conscience proved too much for him, and, believing he had been charged with murder, he pleaded to be allowed to make a statement. The authorities were perfectly willing, of course, and in hysterical tones he babbed forth the account of how he had murdered Meeks in order to rob him of the few pounds he possessed.

His first mistake was in murdering; his second, one which many an adroit criminal has made, was in talking when he should have remained silent. And because he did not, he went to jail for the remainder of his days.



HOME BUILDERS' Question Box



T. W.
DAVIS,
Architect



*A helpful department for home owners and home builders
conducted by Theodore Whitehead Davis, architect.*

Q. We want to refinish our attic to make a playroom for the children. It extends over the entire house and has never been finished, as up to the present time it has been used for storage. Will you suggest the least expensive and best way to go about this?

A. Partition off the attic space where there is less than 4' 6" or 5' 0" headroom. Cover the walls and ceilings with wall board. If the attic has a rough floor only cover it with rosin paper and lay finished floor. Heat and light should be extended to this space, and additional windows may be an advantage.

Q. We have a small early English house which we built a few years ago. The downstairs walls are finished in rough plaster but as yet we have done nothing to the bedroom walls. We would like to use chintz design wall papers in these rooms but some of our friends tell us that wall paper of that type is out of place in an early English house. Is this so?

A. Wall paper was used in early English houses and would be suitable as a wall decoration. Besides the period designs of houses should not limit us to the materials used when these houses were first built. If so, we would have to leave out bathrooms, central heating, and many other conveniences. The use of these designs of precedent are of an inspirational character.

Q. How often should a house be painted and can you suggest some color combination that will not easily show the dirt and smoke?

A. It is generally believed that a house should be painted every three years properly to protect the wood work. Buff and grays are often used where subject to excessive dirt and smoke.

Q. Our cellar walls are whitewashed but it gets too look so dingy. Is it possible to use paint over the whitewash?

A. Whitewash on cellar walls is generally recommended. If the whitewash comes off readily it can be mixed with white cement, salt and glue to make a very permanent finish. If paint is desired the whitewash should be entirely removed before painting.

Q. The sash cords on the windows in our house are wearing out and need replacing. Would you advise using sash chains instead of the cords?

A. Sash chains would certainly solve the problem in your case. The disadvantage of using sash chains is the noise from them when being operated. A good grade of sash cord should last indefinitely so that in your case it may be the fault of the pulleys.

Q. When repapering does it make a room warmer to put up the new paper over the old?

A. The advantage as far as insulating value is concerned is very doubtful. I would advise removing the old paper in that it will mean a better job as far as appearances are concerned.

Q. As our kitchen has only two small windows it becomes extremely close and warm when the gas oven is being used. There is a chimney in the kitchen formerly

used for a coal stove. Would it be possible to have some sort of device to carry off hot air from the gas stove through the chimney? I have seen "hoods" over stoves in hotel restaurants and wondered whether they are ever used in private houses.

A. Most gas stoves are equipped with an outlet from the oven that could be connected to the stove and chimney with a vent pipe. A hood over the stove is very practical if it has a vent pipe to carry the fumes of cooking outside. There are small exhaust fans made to be installed in walls and used in kitchens to remove all smells and heat from cooking.

Q. We have a large house and are planning to convert two rooms and bath into a small apartment which we will rent to friends. Is there any way to treat the walls and ceilings to prevent the sounds passing from the rest of the house into the apartment? We are going to redecorate the rooms but before doing it would like to make any other changes that are necessary.

A. Walls and floors can be made practically sound-proof in many ways, during construction. When the sound deadening is applied afterward the problem is more difficult. There are large companies that specialize in filling walls with material that is either blown or poured into the walls through small openings to fill this need.

Q. We have started ivy growing on the side of our stucco garage, as the stucco looks so bare without it. I have been told that the ivy is likely to damage the stucco and would like your advice on the subject.

A. Ivy will not damage stucco by growing on the outside of it. Of course if the stucco develops cracks or has openings into which the ivy can grow it may harm the stucco but this condition should not exist. Properly applied masonry of any kind is not harmed by ivy.

Q. We are planning to build a small house in Dutch Colonial type of architecture. I am very anxious to have metal frame casement windows. Will you please tell me whether they would be appropriate for this type of house?

A. Our older examples of Dutch Colonial houses generally had double-hung wooden windows. But in those days they did not have metal casement windows as we have today. Inasmuch as we are looking for a style or an atmosphere for our designs today, we are not limited to the materials used in the older houses, so we may use metal casements with very good results if they are well proportioned.

The Home Builders' Question Box, a new department for readers of MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Every home builder has a problem which a few words of expert advice will often solve. If you would like to ask any questions on home building problems, write to Tower House Editor, MYSTERY MAGAZINE, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y., and the answers to your questions will appear in a future issue of this magazine.

MURDER on Horseback

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page. The Episode of the Colorless Water.



Golney Seymour.

HIGH among the pine-clad mountains of the White River Indian Reservation, in Arizona, in the Summer of 1931, murder raised its ugly head to snuff out the life of a white girl, Henrietta Schmerler, who, armed with a Columbia University scholarship to engage in anthropological research, had journeyed west to study the tribal habits and customs of the once-fierce Apaches, who dwelt there.

Dressed in full Indian squaw's regalia, she left her cabin toward dusk one night to attend a tribal dance at Canyon Dey, seven miles away. Five days later her lifeless body was found half-concealed in the dry wash of a canyon, known as Muddy Draw. Her clothes had been all but torn from her frail body; her face and arms were grim evidences of the fact that she had been stoned, and in her neck was a jagged knife wound.

White authorities of the reservation shook their heads sadly as they gazed down at her still form. They believed her murder would remain forever unsolved, for they knew the Spartan-like will of the redskins well enough to know that they would be as silent about the crime as the pine-clad mountains among which it was committed.

And so it seemed until Special Agent J. A. Street of the Division of Investigation of the U. S. Department of Justice, was assigned to the case. Former trapper, cowboy, and western sheriff, he knew intimately the ways and customs of the stoical Indians. And more important still, he knew their superstitions.

He made a tireless search of the canyon where Miss Schmerler's body had been found, and there he discovered something which the others had overlooked—the murdered girl's fountain pen. It had been stepped on and crushed by a horse's hoof. To Street, it meant that the murderer had been on horseback.

It wasn't much to go on in a country where horseback is the chief means of transportation, but it was the only clue to the mystery.

So, for several weeks, Street rode the range, mingled with the Indians, listened much, and said little. And finally he learned that on the afternoon of the murder Miss Schmerler had asked a certain Apache for a horse, so that she might attend the dance.

The Apache, Golney Seymour, had not been under suspicion before, and there was no evidence that he had complied with the white girl's request. But when Street checked up and learned that Seymour had but one horse and had ridden to the dance on it, he smiled grimly. He believed he had his man, but how to prove it was something else again.

Knowing well the reticent nature of the Apaches, he realized Seymour would admit nothing. He would adhere to the old Apache maxim of "Indian no talk, white man find out nothing."

And so he decided to play upon the superstitions of the suspect. It was his one chance of obtaining a confession.

He ordered Seymour to be brought in.

"Sit there," he told him, indicating a chair.

The Indian seated himself. His manner was defiant and confident. His eyes were expressionless.

Street studied him. He did not speak for several moments. When he did it was in a slow, drawling southern accent.

"Seymour," he said, "you killed the white girl."

The Apache's expression did not change, as he replied, "I no kill her."

"I know you did. I have talked with her spirit." Still the Indian did not flicker an eyelash.

Street studied him again, then reached into his pocket and pulled forth a small bottle of colorless liquid. He sprinkled some of it on his own hands. It remained as colorless as water. Next he told the Apache to hold out his hands. Methodically, the Indian did so. His face was a mask. Street sprinkled a few drops of the colorless liquid on his bronzed skin, and then settled back in his seat.

"On the evening of the tribal dance," the Federal man continued in a husky monotone, "you came to the white girl's house on horseback and she asked you to lend her a horse to go to the dance."

"You replied that you had only one horse, but that she could ride with you. Then, a little after sundown, you went to her home again and she got on the horse in front of you."

Street paused a moment and surveyed the Indian. His expression was still a blank one.

"When you arrived in the little canyon you pulled her off the horse," the Federal agent went on. His voice was harsh now. His words had a snap to them. The southern drawl had vanished. "You assaulted her and then you killed her with a rock and a knife."

Seymour shifted uneasily. He knew the murder had been committed in a lonely spot, unseen by anyone. Yet here was a white man unfolding a faithful picture of the tragic events of the fateful night. He was, as he had said, communing with the dead.

"I no—" the Apache commenced, but Street, rising to his feet, interrupted him.

"Look," the Federal man snapped, "the murdered girl's blood is on your hands."

Seymour looked down. His hands were covered with crimson smears. His eyes widened and his jaw dropped as though he were seeing a ghost. A few minutes later he had signed a cold, matter-of-fact confession.

Street had realized that, with one horse, the only way Seymour could have taken the white girl to the dance was by having her ride with him. It had enabled him to surmise what happened at the canyon.

But even then a confession, bringing with it life imprisonment for the murder, would not have been forthcoming had he not been familiar with Apache superstitions, and known, too, that their diet gives their skins an acid reaction, so that when colorless orcin, derived from lichens, comes in contact with them, it turns bloodlike.

A real department for MYSTERY readers! Write your opinions and suggestions for MYSTERY MAGAZINE every month. Tell us what story you like best—who your favorite mystery writer is. For every letter published we will pay one dollar! And, remember, if you don't like this magazine, be frank to say so! Write to the MYSTERY Editor, Tower Magazines, Inc., 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.



Six Reasons

PHILADELPHIA, PA.—I used to be an avid reader of mystery and detective stories, but they all became so similar that I stopped wasting the money on them.

Then the other day when confronted with a wait of about an hour in a dental office, I decided to run out and buy a magazine. It was MYSTERY. Boy, oh, boy, the quality and quantity of stories for ten cents nearly made my eyes pop. It kept me interested for more than an hour you can bet.

But may I make a few suggestions:

1. Almost the sole interest in a detective story lies in the unraveling of the plot. Now if we already know who the culprit is at the beginning of the story, as in "Thirty Hours with a Corpse," our interest lags immediately. Would enjoy more stories like "Four Men Loved a Woman"; "A Rare Room for Murder"; "The Man Who Hated Rats." These have an interesting and new slant on clues.

2. How about a few "ghost" and "riddle" stories that really chill your blood and spell MYSTERY in capital letters. The type like Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher."

The "Strange Affair at the Middlebrooks" was terribly disappointing. There was nothing "strange" about it except how such a trite story found its way into your magazine.

3. "Off the Record," and the racket exposé, "Don't Let Them Rob You," are intriguing because of their novelty, also the part in "Little Book of Strange Crimes" which tests one's memory of past notorious events. The startling real-life mysteries are interesting but there are too many of them. Why not omit some of them and add another short story.

4. "I Go Sleuthing" is great! So are some letters in "The Line-Up." Some of the others are either staff written or of the "your magazine is the most wonderful—now please send me the dollar" type. Would like to see more of the constructively critical type.

5. Why must stories like "The Two Who Smiled" be set in France and England with unpronounceable French names and phrases. There are thousands of interesting places in America we would like to see stories set in, such as: Grand Canyon; geysers in National Park, etc.

6. Could we have a story every once in so often of

the S. S. Van Dine type? The kind that is literary and makes you use your own head instead of the author's for a change.

After all that I suppose you'll wonder what isn't wrong with the magazine, but I really do like it, and of course "what's one man's meat is another man's poison."

So yours for a continued top-notch MYSTERY magazine.
Carlos N. Eggelston

Now, Mr. Eggelston Said

NEW YORK, N. Y.—Hulbert Footner's new stories of Edda Manby are the best I've read in your magazine. They're modern, very plausible, and have quick action. Keep them up! However, I've a criticism to make. In the August issue of MYSTERY, the photographs of Edda Manby pictures her as a beautiful blonde, while she is, according to Mr. Footner, in the September issue she is an altogether different person and has dark hair. Why not have the same models pose for the same characters every month. It would certainly make the stories more convincing.

This is the only flaw I've discovered in your otherwise perfect magazine. It's the best I've ever read.

Dorothy Lowce

Safe and Sane, and—Thrilling!

LINCOLN PARK, N. J.—How rapidly MYSTERY MAGAZINE has taken the lead in its field. I have occasion as an investigator to visit a great many homes during the course of a day. In at least two out of five homes I find a copy of MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Goodness knows how many of the other homes have them and I don't see them. Being a constant reader of the magazine myself I asked several parties what they thought of the magazine. I have yet to hear anyone speak ill of it. From children who are just learning to read to grandma and grandpa the magazine is interesting.

I can pretty nearly guess a person's character from the books and magazines they read and when I see a copy of MYSTERY MAGAZINE in a home I know they are people who enjoy the best things in life and know good reading when they see it.



Line-Up

As far as the children are concerned I know of several parents who won't allow their children to look at any other mystery or detective magazine but MYSTERY MAGAZINE itself.

Marjorie Donoean

Sporty Editors

TOPEKA, KANSAS.—Well, here I am doing the very thing that I had said I would never do, and that is, write a "fan letter." It had always appeared sort of disgusting to me to see a fan letter that was simply "gushing with dripping honey and flowery praises" for some something or some so and so, but since I have been reading your MYSTERY MAGAZINE I thought it quite appropriate to write to you and congratulate you on your wonderful magazine. I like it immensely and do enjoy reading its very entertaining stories and novels and your very helpful and most interesting articles concerning crime.

I also think you grand sports to publish the criticisms as well as the compliments in your "Line-Up."

I would not change MYSTERY MAGAZINE one particle as it is a fully entertaining and enjoyable book, and costs just one thin dime!

I personally like my old friend Stuart Palmer and loved the "House of Sleep" for the novel and the "Riddle of the Forty Naughty Girls" for the story.

All I can say now is to "keep up the good work."

Cecilia Fritton

How Hollywood Calls

NEW HAVEN, CONN.—I've been reading your "Line-Up" and I quite agree with your readers that your magazine is the best ten cents worth on the market. However, there is one point in which you are inconsistent, and that is in your illustrations.

In the July issue, the heroine of "The Man with the Crooked Finger," Edda Manby, is a very beautiful and clever blonde. In the September issue she is an equally beautiful and clever brunette, and this is not a case of hair-dyeing, for the girls in the pictures are entirely different. Personally, I prefer the blonde.

The same thing happened in the June and July issues. The Miss Withers of "The Riddle of the Blue-

blood Murders" is a different Miss Withers from the one who so cleverly solves "The Riddle of the Forty Naughty Girls."

This, however, is the only fault I have to find with your magazine, and I especially enjoy your book-length novels.

Josephine McKeon

A Wise Storekeeper

JERSEY CITY, N. J.—I read your magazine for the first time, while living in Florida, and have been a constant reader since.

I wouldn't miss MYSTERY as long as it is possible for me to buy it. That ought to express my liking for your magazine. Perhaps I should have said, our liking, as my husband is as fond of MYSTERY as I am.

It was by accident that I first read your magazine. One rainy Sunday I was disappointed to find I had read all the detective magazines for that month, the storekeeper suggested MYSTERY since I hadn't read it.

When I heard the price of it, I was a little discouraged about buying it, as I have purchased other ten cent magazines and I would never finish them. The storekeeper made me a promise that if I wasn't back for the next issue he would refund my money. I can see now the storekeeper made a safe bet.

I'll try and tell you the names of the stories I liked best. "The Fatal Broadcast" was great. "Going to Saint Ives," I lost a lot of sleep reading it. "The House of Sleep," I'll never tire of stories such as this. I thoroughly enjoy the true-life shorts. Please don't discontinue them. "I Go Sleuthing" is good and the "Line-Up" interesting.

I don't exactly care for stories that leave the readers in the dark such as "The Man in the Mirror." I think that was the name of it. "Whirlpool" was interesting but I don't like continued stories.

My hubby lost a lot of sleep reading "The House of Sleep." He couldn't stop reading until he finished it. I like your different articles on household hints and have profited by them.

Another thing the paper is easy on the hands. I can't stand to handle the rough paper some magazines use.

I can't find any fault with MYSTERY, only about continued stories and leaving the readers in the dark, but I don't expect you or ask (Please turn to page 98)

GIFTS *for* Christmas

*Here's a new assortment of useful and attractive accessories
you can make to carry your message of holiday good cheer*



No. 343—Make this engaging handbag for the girl who likes to go to parties.



No. 341—Your house-proud friend will be pleased with a linen and crochet table pad.



No. 344—A crocheted powder puff case makes a most acceptable small gift.



No. 340—Two wash cloths are used for a laundry bag for handkerchiefs and small lingerie.



No. 342—To keep her hat free from dust give her a dainty hat cover.

No. 338—Any woman of any age would be sincerely grateful for this becoming hand-crocheted circular bed jacket.

By
FRANCES
COWLES



No. 339—If she knits or crochets, she will be charmed with this new work bag.

If you would like to obtain patterns and directions for making these gifts, please turn to page 77.

Not a Professional



International

Detective Michael Fiaschetti

MURDER stalked on Rockaway Boulevard, Long Island, on a cold night in February, 1919—stalked into the cosy roadhouse of John and Helen Holbacks and stalked out again, leaving behind the lifeless bodies of the kindly, old couple.

And on the hands of the New York Police Department it left a mystery which seemed destined to be permanently written into the records as an unsolved one, for, aside from a dirty, shapeless felt hat, there were no clues to the identity of the perpetrator of the double slaying.

A famous true-mystery drama—complete on this page. The Episode of the Dirty Felt Hat.

Three weeks went by and the police found themselves no nearer a solution of the crime than they had been when the two bodies were discovered. And then it was that Michael Fiaschetti, brilliant head of the Detective Bureau's Italian Squad, was assigned to the case.

As soon as he saw the dirty, shapeless felt hat it became of significant import to him. He drew upon his long experience with the underworld and reached the conclusion that he would not find his quarry along its devious byways.

"The man who dropped this hat is a novice at crime," he said. "He is not a professional—not an experienced gunman or robber."

"How can you tell?" his less-confident colleagues demanded.

Fiaschetti smiled.

"I know them," he replied. "The professionals! The underworld element! They are a fastidious lot. They like to sport silk shirts and flashy clothes and, being vain, they would never think of wearing a hat like this one, soiled and battered, as it is."

Fiaschetti's colleagues admitted that possibly there was something in what he said. Anyway, the angle was worth trying, for the underworld had been combed without results, and stool pigeons had been unable to throw any light whatever upon the gruesome crime.

Fiaschetti gave the hat a thorough examination. He looked beneath its sweatband, smoothed out its creases and studied them, and allowed his keen, dark eyes to wander slowly along its brim. There he found what he sought, smiled knowingly, and then demanded:

"Is there any construction work going on out near the roadhouse?"

He was informed there was—that a new development was being opened up.

"I think we are making headway," he said when he heard it.

He was not mistaken. It was rapid headway from then on and, within a month's time, he had traced an Italian named Mike Casalimo to a farm in northern New York State, arrested him for the murders, and obtained a confession implicating three other men, as well.

But first, Fiaschetti had spent some time in the Italian colony of Ozone Park, not far distant from the roadhouse of the murdered Holbacks and the new development. There he had learned in his quiet way that Casalimo had disappeared about the time the double slaying was committed. Alone it meant nothing, of course. The man had a perfect right to go and come as he pleased. But when the detective had learned that he had been employed as a plasterer on the new development, his sudden departure had loomed as decidedly suspicious.

For on the brim of the dirty, shapeless felt hat left at the murder scene, Fiaschetti's keen eyes had found splashes of plaster—enough to advise him of the legitimate occupation of the murderer he sought.

Casalimo and his three confederates died in the electric chair at Sing Sing for their heinous crime. Robbery had been their object when they forced their way into the roadhouse, but they had killed instead.

The GIBSON FAMILY

MARTY, AS CLUB MAID, gives a good performance when she tells Jane to use Ivory Flakes for her stockings just as fine stores advise.

Good stores *do* tell you to use Ivory Flakes for your stockings. And here's why: The sheer silk of stockings is very sensitive. It needs a *pure* soap. Ivory Flakes are so pure that both the makers and sellers of fine stockings recommend them. These people know silk. They like the way Ivory Flakes are shaved up into tiny, curly wisps, too. Ivory Flakes won't flatten down on your stockings to cause soap spots and *runs!*

And here's a thought for you thrifty girls—Ivory Flakes cost less than other "silk stocking" soaps. There are lots more ounces in the box! Just hold on to that thought and the next time you're at your grocer's merely say, "A box of Ivory Flakes, please."

IVORY FLAKES · 99⁴⁴/₁₀₀ % PURE



IN THE DRESSING-ROOM

"'Scuse me, Miss Jane, but yo' sho' is luxurious on stockings. That soap yo' use must be pow'ful strong. Why doan yo' use nice gentle Ivory Flakes the way stores tell yo' to?"



"LADY, WHY YO' LEAVE dis chile wif me?" gasps Sam. "Yo' train goin' soon."

"Where's the station drug store? Where's my head?" demands Nurse Tippet. "Why did I forget to pack Jerry's cake of Ivory?"

"Lots o' time," says Sam, turning smooth as a chocolate custard, now that he knows the reason. Then he chuckles to Jerry, "So she's goin' to keep yo' 99 44/100% pure."

"PURE IVORY SOAP FOR BABIES" SAY DOCTORS



"REMEMBER THIS HAT, HENRY?" asks Mrs. Gibson softly.

"Sure!" says Mr. Gibson. "It chaperoned us on our honeymoon, Sara. And we knew we were made for each other because we'd both brought Ivory Soap!"

"It's still the finest complexion soap," declares Mrs. Gibson.

"Absolutely!" agrees Mr. Gibson. "Your complexion is as clear and fine as the day I first kissed it, 17 years ago!"

SENSITIVE SKINS ARE SAFE WITH IVORY SOAP

What Your Favorite Authors Are Like



STUART PALMER (above); and his stories which have appeared in MYSTERY (upper right).

If you like them so well, why not get acquainted?

On this page each month, there will be presented a short sketch of one of your favorite authors, so that you may get to know the men who bring you the world's best mystery fiction. For Stuart Palmer's latest contribution to MYSTERY Magazine, turn to page 20 for his thrilling short story,

"The Riddle of the Marble Blade."

ON a bright October morning just seven years ago, a lean and lanky youth set out from his native town of Baraboo, Wisconsin, with the avowed idea of hitch-hiking to New York City—on the strength of a single article about an Alaskan dancing girl sold to the *Dance Magazine*.

As his background, Stuart Palmer had a boyhood in the little town made colorful by the presence, in winter quarters, of America's two greatest circuses. After that there was training at the Art Institute in Chicago followed by two years at the University of Wisconsin, and a memorable season as supercargo for

Murder on the Blackboard

The Riddle of the Hanging Men

The Riddle of the Forty Naughty Girls

The Riddle of the Blueblood Murders

The Riddle of the Yellow Canary

The Riddle of the Brass Band

The Riddle of the Forty Costumes

The Riddle of the Flea Circus

The Riddle of the Dangling Pearl

The Riddle of the Black Spade

The Riddle of the Marble Blade

the Alaska Steamship Company sailing out of Seattle for Nome, Teller, and St. Michaels. Then came a Winter spent in writing publicity and public addresses for Mr. Samuel Insull of Chicago, and a Summer spent in a nine-foot boat on Lake Superior as an antidote to Mr. Insull.

And then Stuart Palmer set out for Manhattan. Unlike Dick Whittington in the fable, Palmer did not have even a pet cat as a mascot in trying his fortune in the big city, although a procession of gorgeous and blue-blooded felines has passed through the young author's life and through his stories since that time.

He immediately wrote and sold his first short story to *Ghost Stories*. For the next two years Palmer wrote persistently and voluminously for such varied publications as *Ghost Stories*, *Gun-Molls*, *True Strange Stories*—

(many of these, he now admits, were more strange than true)—*Smart Set*, *Dance*, and *College Humor*. Soon he became associate editor of *The Dance*, and then editor of *Ghost Stories*, which promptly expired under him.

Then one day a publisher looking for new talent happened to suggest the New York Aquarium as a good setting for a crime book. As Palmer set about devising the plot, he hit upon the device of having an old maid school-teacher and her class of pupils rushing about among the fish tanks, as comedy relief. Strangely enough, as the story began (*Please turn to page 68*)

The RIDDLE of the

All around them loomed the vast, monstrous creatures which spoke of the odd genius of Dravid the sculptor.

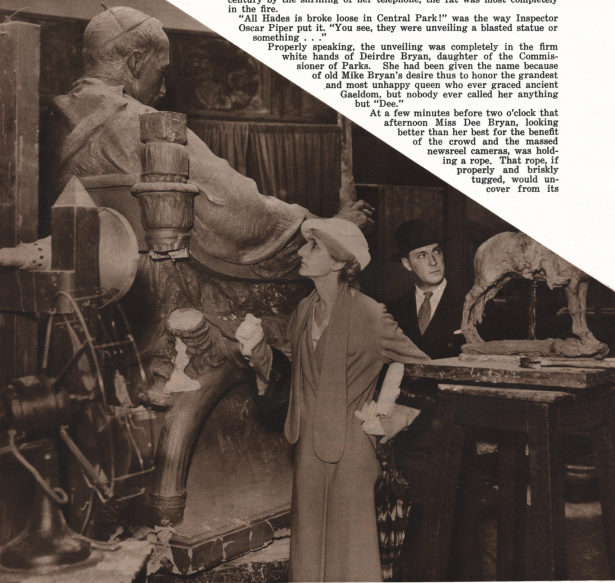
IN order to love her fellow man as she felt in duty bound to do, Miss Hildegard Withers found it necessary to avoid humanity en masse whenever possible. Had her inclinations led her otherwise, she might possibly have stood shoulder to shoulder with a thousand or so fellow Manhattanites in solemn conclave one bright October afternoon. In that case, one chapter in the history of criminology would have been considerably shorter.

As it happened, she spent most of the Saturday in her little West Side apartment with a stack of uncorrected examination papers beside her, reading. By the time she was dragged rudely back to the present century by the shrilling of her telephone, the fat was most completely in the fire.

"All Hades is broke loose in Central Park!" was the way Inspector Oscar Piper put it. "You see, they were unveiling a blasted statue or something . . ."

Properly speaking, the unveiling was completely in the firm white hands of Deirdre Bryan, daughter of the Commissioner of Parks. She had been given the name because of old Mike Bryan's desire thus to honor the grandest and most unhappy queen who ever graced ancient Gaeldom, but nobody ever called her anything but "Dee."

At a few minutes before two o'clock that afternoon Miss Dee Bryan, looking better than her best for the benefit of the crowd and the massed newsreel cameras, was holding a rope. That rope, if properly and briskly tugged, would uncover from its



Marble BLADE

His Honor finds a public-spirited corpse; the school-ma'am detective finds a murderer; and Inspector Piper discovers what was wrong with the four Fates, the beautiful marble hussy and the nice young man with the beard

A Miss Hildegard Withers Mystery

By STUART PALMER

drapes of flags and canvas the latest representation of the father of his country. Now the statue loomed shapeless and muffled against the sky, and thus it must remain until the last tune had been played and the last speech gasped.

The minutes dragged for Dee Bryan. His Honor the Mayor, looking even more like an angry sparrow than usual, was working himself up toward a climax. He had already disposed of politics, slum clearance, the widening of Broadway, and the five cent fare. Now he was in the middle of "the City Beautiful. . ."

When he finished, if ever, Dee would go into action with the rope, while the band struck up "The Stars and Stripes Forever" and the mayor shook hands with Dravid, the sculptor.

And then the mighty marble Washington, which the city of New York had just purchased for five thousand dollars as part of its program of encouraging the fine arts, would stand forth in impassive magnificence above the as yet uncompleted hole which was to be George Washington Uptown Pool Number Two.

Dee sensed by the Mayor's delivery that he was nearing the wind-up. She tightened her grasp of the rope, and cast a glance at the two newsreel cameras which were perched upon a nearby sedan. The news director, a bored little fat man in a leather jacket, waved at her to look up at the statue.

Then there was a commotion behind her. The brisk young secretary from City Hall who was acting as master of ceremonies had caught her father by the arm and led him out of a cluster of aldermen.

"Commissioner!" his voice came clearly to the excited girl. "There's been an upset. Dravid hasn't shown up—so you've

got to stand beside the Mayor and let him shake hands with you instead."

"Me?" The Commissioner of Parks looked unhappy. It was bad enough dressing up in cut-away and striped trousers. "But I had nothing to do with the statue," he protested. Then he pointed past his daughter. "That's Dravid's wife, the big handsome woman in white standing near the newsreel truck. Why not let His Honor shake hands with her?" "There isn't time!" hissed the master of ceremonies. He leaned toward Dee. "Understand the change? When His Honor shakes hands with your dad, haul on the rope!"

Dee nodded. Her father shrugged his shoulders. "All right," he said. "But it's a shame that Dravid isn't here."

THE Mayor was coming at last to his finale. "To dedicate this statue of the father of his country in the spirit of reverence, and to honor a true genius which has grown and flowered in our own fair city, the great Manuel Dravid. . ."

He half-turned, with his hand out—and caught the frantic signals of the secretary from City Hall. His Honor blinked, and managed a graceful about face. "Manuel Dravid, New York City's own, who is unfortunately unable to be with us today, but—but—"

The Mayor's hand went to his breast pocket, and brought forth a yellow bit of paper.—"but who has telegraphed to ask that his statue which is shortly to be displayed before you be accepted and understood as a true affirmation of his artistic faith! Ladies and gentlemen, in behalf of the people of the city of New York, I accept the Dravid Washington!"

He turned, as the band blared forth in Sousa's most stirring march, and grasped the outstretched hand of the Commissioner of Parks. There was an instant's delay, for the improvised twist in the end of the speech had caught Dee unprepared. She was staring for all her blue eyes were worth at a man who stood against the newsreel truck—a tall and bearded young man whose mouth was open.

He was gazing up at the veiled statue, with an expression of fascinated horror on his face. Then, as Dee was recalled to her duty by a hiss from the master of ceremonies, he seemed to melt into the crowd.

She gave a vigorous heave at the rope. Something stuck, and she tried again. Finally one of the aldermen gave a hand, and the rope loosened. . . .

There was a faint burst of applause from the crowd, which died away in a low moan of horror.

There stood the Dravid Washington, twice the size of life, dignified, handsome, and glistening with the white of eternal marble—the father of his country, one hand outstretched as if holding a torch.

But he was not alone. Caught in the crook of his great bended arm was the crumpled body of a man, a spare, roughly clad person whose face wore a look of blank surprise!

His head, with its shock of white hair, was bent forward and from the back of his neck the life blood had gushed forth to stain the immaculate marble of the monument in a long brown cascade.

The first thought that Dee had was: "I



Yves Stollen

Drawn by the mystery of the mighty images,
she took a step inside—then another—

mustn't faint in front of the cameras—I really mustn't!"

The cameras were clicking still, with an expression of pure and unalloyed delight upon the faces of the newsreel men. They'd come for another speech and a statue—and got this!

But there was more to come. The Mayor, speechless for the first time in his life, was pointing up at the body. He barked, cleared his throat, and finally managed—"But—that's Dravid!"

And then, for a full minute, there was no sound but the victim's horrible hysterical laughter.

"SO I thought you might possibly be interested," the Inspector finished.

"You mean you're stuck and you want me to lend you a hand!" Miss Withers told him over the telephone. "But it's a fine time to tell me about it—the body was discovered a little after two, you say. It's after five-thirty now."

"I know it," Piper admitted testily. "But there're no phone booths in the middle of Central Park. And you have no idea what it is to try to investigate a murder with His Honor the Mayor screaming for an arrest. I haven't had a second to slip away and call you until now. I'm on my way to have a look at Dravid's studio in the Village, and I thought you might like to go..."

"I'll be ready when you get here," she cut him off. True to her word, the angular schoolma'am was pacing restlessly up and down the sidewalk outside her flat when the Inspector, traveling incognito in a taxi, pulled up.

He started to give the man an address downtown, but Miss Withers vetoed the suggestion. "You can give me five minutes to look at the scene of the crime," she snapped. "You've had all afternoon." The taxi obediently headed up Central Park West and into the park.

There was still a good-sized crowd held back from the statue by a squadron of officers. George Washington had been covered with canvas again, but Piper lifted the drape to show her the tell-tale brown stain. The body, of course, had been taken away for an autopsy.

"He was killed with some sort of a stone hammer or arrow," Piper admitted. "Part of it stuck out of the back of his neck. Dead since sometime in the night, Doc Bloom said."

"Between twelve and one, I imagine," Miss Withers murmured.

"What? How did you know?"

"Because the park is quite crowded until twelve—and while I was waiting for you I called the weather bureau and found that there was bright moonlight last night—except for that one cloudy hour. The murderer would hardly risk working except in the dark."

"Oh, I see," Piper nodded. "Yeah, guess you're right."

"Elementary, my dear Watson," Miss Withers murmured softly. "By the way, Oscar, when was the statue set up here?"

"Yesterday—which was Friday," he told her. "Owen, Dravid's young assistant and a bunch of workmen got it into place; the newspapers took a few photos and then Dravid was handed his money from the city. Today's unveiling was just the usual official spurge."

"I didn't know," Miss Withers admitted. "I suppose the sculptor was in a last minute rush to finish the thing?"

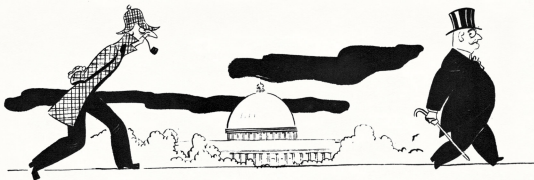
"Rush?" Piper laughed. "Why, the statue has been finished for weeks. It was chosen from a dozen others in a competition, you know."

"Hmm," observed Miss Withers, "I was just wondering why there are so many marble chips around the base, that's all. Unless the workmen had an accident setting it up."

She had gathered up a hatful of odd-shaped fragments. "For my rockery," she told the Inspector.

A stepladder leaning against a pile of scaffolding told how the body must have been lifted to its oddly macabre position in the crooked arm of the massive statue. "Cases like this usually are broken pretty easily," the Inspector was saying. "Contrary to usual ideas on the part of the public, the more unusual the crime and the weapon, the more easily it's solved. The whole situation here comes down to one point—the *how* of the crime. Why was Dravid killed with a piece of sharpened stone?"

"No doubt," agreed Miss Withers. She was thinking of something else, as usual. For most of her career as a sleuth she had been most successful when (Please turn to page 46)



OFF *the* RECORD

Second-hand Olives

IT is against the law in the District of Columbia for bartenders to mix drinks in the sight of the customers. That is becoming tough on the latter, from the Senators down.

To comply with the law, all the bars have a telephone booth arrangement in which the bartender slips, there to do his mixing in the dark.

Now it comes to pass that numbers of these out-of-sight barkeeps are practicing economies which give the lawmakers the willies.

In mixing old-fashioned cocktails, for instance, they use the orange peels and cherries over and over again—and don't even bother to wash the glasses between drinkers.

An olive for a Martini is said to last for days, or indefinitely, until some hungry drinker eats it. From the White House comes the word, nonetheless, that drinks oughtn't to be mixed in public. As soon as Congress comes back this Winter the problem doubtless will be taken up there.

The issue likely will result in a compromise, as most such things do in Washington. One solution, proposed by the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Alliance, would make it legal for bartenders to do their shaking in public—so long as the drinkers stay three feet away from the bar. A barbed-wire entanglement might serve to keep them at a proper distance, or maybe a white line on the floor.

It is a vexing problem.

Spelling in High Places

SOMEbody at the White House—we don't know who—is a bum speller, thereby making life pretty miserable for Messrs. O'Brian and Stacy.

William J. O'Brian not long ago was selected by President Roosevelt as Collector of Customs at the Port of Buffalo.

The president nominated him, the Senate confirmed him, and the powers that be commissioned him as "O'Brien."

That was okay with O'Brian, but it wasn't with the Treasury Department, which discovered the error twenty-four hours before he was to be sworn in. The department refused to let the ceremony go on.

O'Brian had to get himself renominated, reconfirmed and recommissioned under his right name. That cost him about six week's pay.

The other victim of the White House's misspelling is Judge Walter P. Stacy, chairman of the new National Steel Relations Board.

The executive order by the President of the United States creating the board and naming the three members of the board, spelled the judge's name "Stacey." It went through all the official channels, including the State Department, and has been printed officially in that form.

Judge Stacy also may have his check cashing troubles until he goes through the tedious routine of getting a dozen or so governmental records corrected.

SPECIAL!

Have you any questions, serious or otherwise, to ask about your government? John Alexander, MYSTERY MAGAZINE's special correspondent in Washington, will answer the most interesting questions sent in by MYSTERY readers every month. If you want to know how your government works; if you wish information on any subject of national importance; or if you just want to gossip; address your queries to this expert on political happenings—John Alexander, Reporter of Capitol Comics, care of Tower Magazines, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Questions and answers will be printed each month in this magazine.

By

JOHN ALEXANDER

Statues, Beware

THE Congressional statutory situation has come to a sorry pass. If something isn't done—pronto—the architects say the floor of the Capitol is going to cave in and bury the nation's lawmakers in a pile of bricks and busted statues.

The crisis is cumulative, starting in the gay nineties, when Congress set aside one of its main rooms at Statuary Hall, for the safe-keeping of heroes in marble and bronze.

Each state was allowed two heroes in Statuary Hall. There being 48 states, that meant 96 full-size statues in a chamber none too big in the first place. At first it didn't matter, because not all the states had statues to display. Now they have, and the floor is groaning.

The safety engineers claim there is no telling when the floor will collapse under the load. Maybe tonight, maybe next year, unless Congress acts in the meantime. The engineers have recommended that the statues be taken out of the room and distributed in the corridors throughout the Capitol, so that there won't be a concentration of weight in any one spot.

Collectively, Congress thinks that is a good idea, but individually turns thumbs down, as a matter of pride. A hero from Idaho, it seems, is just as great a man as a hero from Alabama, and therefore his statue is entitled to just as prominent a position. The same obtains for all the other (Please turn to page 78)

"SHOW him in!" said Albert J. Penfield, with something between a snarl and a cry. We heard the savage order across several intervening rooms.

The timid maid returned to us, at the door. "Step in, please," she murmured. "Mr. Penfield will be happy to see you at once."

An ironic smile for a moment curved Jimmie Lavender's lips; then we bowed perfunctorily and stepped into an old-world corridor. We left the bustling, modern world behind us and entered the fourteenth century. It seemed incredible that we had got out of an elevator only a few minutes before.

The next stop was almost certainly Italy. Crossing a vaulted living-room, two stories high, we passed through ancient double doors and stood blinking in a garden. A *giardino*, I should call it, I suppose. It was bewildering and it was magnificent. Under foot was fine, soft grass—a veritable lawn—and in its center a weatherbeaten fountain burred. On the left a loggia was supported by carved wood pillars, stained by time. On the right a stone parapet overlooked the boulevard, twenty floors below. Beyond the garden were other ancient doors, heavily bound and studded with old iron; set with keys of monstrous size and pattern. On all the sun shone brightly.

I almost rubbed my eyes. But there was no time for comment. A man was stepping through the farthest double doors and coming toward us. A little man, but with the fierce eyes and predatory jaw of the country which he affected. I cannot recall a more sinister-appearing face in my experience. "Show them in!" had been his first cry; and I thought his second was going to be, "Throw them out!"

I was agreeably surprised. The savage voice was now courteous and attractive. "It was good of you to come. I am really greatly worried."

He shook our hands with smiling cordiality and piloted us back into the huge living-room through which he had passed. In a moment we seemed dwarfed by its immensity. Rich tapestries were on the walls, and the early sunlight streamed through a glory of stained glass.

Modern women and modern men, destructive phantoms and the vanished ruby made the 14th Century murder in the penthouse one of the most colorful and dramatic cases Jimmie Lavender had ever tackled. A masterpiece of mystery fiction by one of America's prominent authors—and one of your favorites.

"This is where the thing occurred," said Albert J. Penfield. He shrugged his narrow shoulders and added a single word: "Incredible!"

"Wanton destruction is always difficult to understand," admitted Jimmie Lavender, sententiously. "It traces usually to some curious brain quirk. But this is really too bad!"

We were bending over a magnificent mediaeval vase, which lay in a dozen or more fragments on a corner table.

"There were four of them," said Penfield. "There are the others!" He indicated three other splendid, mutilated vases, one on another table, two on a wide mantel that lay across the end of the room, above a fireplace. What their value might have been I had no idea; but it must have been considerable. I rather respected Penfield, however, for not mentioning it.

Lavender, a bit of a collector himself, was genuinely distressed.

"Tchk, tchk!" he deprecated, clucking his tongue like an old woman who had burned her biscuits. And again: "Tchk, tchk, tchk!"

"Infernal swine," muttered Penfield. "I'd like to have him by the throat for just five minutes."

Jimmie Lavender stopped his puttering with the ruined vases.

"I doubt that there are any fingerprints," he said. "Even if there were, they would probably be valueless. But I fancy our vandal used a stick."

He straightened, and for some minutes turned his

The LISPING

eyes upon the room in which we stood. His quick glance darted from one priceless artwork to another; from bronze to porcelain, and from porcelain to gold and silver. There were statuettes and images, and antique clocks, and little boxes wrought with exquisite artistry by hands long gone to dust. There were icons and there were ancient weapons, chased in silver and set with precious stones. The place was better than a museum.

Only the quartette of vases seemed to have been touched.

"What else?" asked Lavender, at length. "Was anything stolen?"

"That's all," said the collector, "except for the umbilical ruby."

"The umbilical ruby! Great Scott," cried Jimmie Lavender, "what's that?"

"It was stolen," said Albert J. Penfield bitterly. "God knows why! But it's missing from its setting."

He crossed the room and lifted a small bronze piece from the mantel. His pointing finger indicated a cavity that might have been mistaken for the exaggerated navel of the little Oriental god that squatted on the heavy base. A sort of twisted smile accompanied his gesture.

"That's where it used to be! But its value is trifling as compared with that of other things around the room."

"I see," said Jimmie Lavender; but I was confident he didn't see at all. He added: "Tell me about it all."

"Come into the garden," said Penfield shortly. "I talk better when I'm drinking."

SO we returned to the amazing mediaeval garden, blooming twenty floors above the modern city of Chicago. We seated ourselves at an old-fashioned table, upon which a servant was already laying out a set of glasses, a decanter, and a siphon. Remotely, from the



Power Studios

Cartwright was jealous of Penfield, and had quarreled with Harriet about him.

MAN

By
VINCENT STARRETT

depths below, the city murmured. The sun shone warmly through the branches of stunted trees and garden growths. A breeze blew inland from the lake. It was an enchanting spot.

"It happened last night," began the collector abruptly. "My wife was alone, except for the servants, who—I understand—had gone to bed. But she was alone, in any case, for the servants live and sleep on the floor below. A telephone call came through, and my wife answered."

He sipped at his Scotch-and-soda.

"She heard a man's voice which she took to be mine. It was, in fact, intended to be mistaken for mine. And the voice asked her—speaking as if it were mine, you understand—to join me at the Blue Pavilion. She left the house within ten minutes, took a cab, and did join me at the Blue Pavilion within half an hour."

"You were really there?" asked Lavender, surprised.

"Yes. So it is obvious that whoever called knew I

was there, and certainly acted on that knowledge."

Jimmie Lavender nodded. "That seems an allowable inference," he agreed. "Just what did the voice say?"

"It said, 'Hello Millie?' And then, 'Bert calling. I'm at the Blue Pavilion. I want you to join me right away.' Penfield spread his hands. 'That was all! She said she would; the fellow said, 'All right,' and that was that. Naturally, I was surprised to see her. I said so, and she told me about the call. A little later we came home—to find the vases smashed to pieces and the ruby gone. Otherwise, things were pretty much as you saw them."

"Whom do you suspect?" asked Lavender, as soon as the collector had finished.

"Nobody!" Penfield suddenly laughed. "She suspected me of drinking, when I told her I hadn't made the call; but she changed her mind when she got home."

"I see," said Jimmie Lavender again. "What made

her think you had been drinking? The voice on the telephone?"

"Yes—it sounded like mine, she said, but with a little difference. The fellow lisped, it seems."

"Lisped!"

"Yes. Not much, but enough for her to catch it."

"Do you know anybody who lisps?"

"Neither of us does."

"How many people might have known that you were at the Blue Pavilion, last night?"

"Dozens, I suppose. Hundreds, maybe, if you count those who may have seen me there and recognized me. When I left the Club, some hours before, I said I was going to the Pavilion; so there was also a clear record of my intentions."

It was Lavender's turn to shrug. "What time did it occur?"

"Mrs. Penfield left the house a little before midnight; the call was about ten minutes earlier."

"There are the things here more valuable than your vases and the ruby. Why should only the vases have been broken, and only the ruby stolen?"

"Ask me something easy," said Penfield. "I can't imagine—unless," he added, "the broken vases were just a blind to cover up the theft of the ruby."

Jimmie Lavender nodded. "It's conceivable," he admitted. "The vases were a set, I take it? Where did you get them?"

"They were given to me by a young woman I was once engaged to marry."

Lavender looked at the collector over the rim of his glass. "What happened?" he asked with interest.

"Between us?" Penfield was surprised. "Nothing in particular. We just cooled off and decided to quit. Don't get any funny ideas about her. She's a fine girl. Harriet Proctor—you've probably heard of her."

"I've read about her," smiled Lavender. "Of the Proctors, I believe? She's going to be married, anyway, if I remember rightly. Wasn't it in the papers recently?"

"Yes—fellow named Cartwright." Penfield shrugged. "Lives in this building, as a matter of fact. Downstairs. Maybe he did it, eh? What a story that would be!"

Jimmie Lavender laughed. "Good fiction, anyway," he said. "I'm bound to ask questions, you know."

"Sure, sure," agreed Albert J. Penfield, without enthusiasm. "Go ahead and ask 'em." He rose suddenly to his feet, and we followed suit. Mrs. Penfield was entering the garden.

"Please sit down," she begged. "It's Mr. Lavender, isn't it? I'm glad you've come. No whisky, please, Bert! Too early in the morning."

SHE was enormously attractive. My pulses, as usual in such circumstances, beat more quickly. Whatever else Albert J. Penfield might have lost, I reflected, he was still a lucky stiff.

We repeated ourselves and listened to what the collector's wife could tell us. I think she rather bowled Lavender over, also.

"I am particularly interested in the voice on the telephone," he told her. "It's apparently our only clue. Mr. Penfield tells me that the fellow lisped."

"Yes," said Millie Penfield, "I certainly got that impression. I wondered if Mr. Penfield had been drinking. And yet it was quite definitely his voice." She nodded vigorously, and I wondered if she still suspected Penfield of untruth.

"Easy to imitate," Lavender observed. "Now that you know it was not Mr. Penfield, what do you think? Isn't there someone else who—?"

She shook her head. "I've been over all that until I'm frantic. And yet it must have been somebody who knew us, don't you think?"

"It would seem so," Lavender agreed. "But it is to be remembered that this man, in all probability, does not lisp at all. I have no doubt that the impression you received was deliberately conveyed—to mask his

actual speaking voice.

The idea, if I am right, would be to send us scurrying about in search of somebody who lisps."

"And who actually does not exist?" cried Mrs. Penfield. "That's almost too clever."

"The whole affair would seem to have been cleverly managed. He knew your name was Millie, that your husband was known to you as Bert, that Mr. Penfield was at the Blue Pavilion. And he didn't talk too much.

Just a sentence or two, I understand. 'Hello, Millie? Bert calling. I'm at the Blue Pavilion. I want you to join me right away.' Have I got it right?"

Mrs. Penfield nodded. "It's exactly what Bert would have said," she insisted.

"You didn't try to trace the call?" Lavender looked at Penfield.

"Tardily. Not a chance!"

"What about your servants?"

"All downstairs, as I told you. Only three of them sleep here, as a matter of fact; two maids and Rackham—the fellow who served our drinks. There's a chauffeur, of course; but he sleeps over the garage, a block away. They're good servants; that's all I can say."

"They're splendid servants," corrected Mrs. Penfield. Jimmie Lavender sipped his liquor thoughtfully. "The self-operating elevator is a great boon to thieves," he commented. "There's a man at the door, of course?"

"Downstairs, yes; but he goes off at midnight. I suspect he ducks a few minutes earlier than that."

"He wasn't there when I went downstairs," added Mrs. Penfield. "I hunted up a cab myself."

"Called away, himself, perhaps?" questioned Lavender, ruminatively. "So that somebody could slip past? H'm!" He was thoughtful again for some moments.

"Well, well! Will you take me round the place, please?"

WE recrossed the vaulted living-room and re-entered the ancient corridor. The door at the far end was a formidable-looking piece of furniture. It was fitted with the toughest of modern locks. On the outer surface of the lock, however, was a deep scratch where, presumably, a key had slipped. Lavender examined it without much interest.

"This is the only entrance?" he inquired.

"Except a staircase at the back, leading to the servants' quarters. This is really the roof, you see," explained Mrs. Penfield. "Even the freight elevator and the fire escape end on the floor below."

Jimmie Lavender made a little gesture of disgust. "It looks impossible," he commented, "unless he



As the door opened, something began to slip in horrible and eerie fashion toward the opening.

flew in over the parapet. The scratch upon the locks means nothing."

"It is impossible," said Mrs. Penfield, with a glance at her husband; and suddenly I felt that I was right. She did suspect him—of something. Had Lavender noted it?

For some time we stood at the parapet and looked into the streets and lawns below. Even the treetops were far, far beneath us. Lavender's eyes, however, saw nothing of the scene; he was looking out across the lake, and thinking.

His examination of the servants' quarters, the freight elevator, and the fire escape was curiously perfunctory, I thought; but it is likely that nothing of importance escaped him. The whole establishment was beyond belief: the vaulted dining-room, with its arched doorways and richly colored frescoes; the extraordinary bedrooms, with their walls of red and blue and green and their great four-poster beds; the amazing bathrooms, with sunken pools and walls of green and gold; the art gallery, filled with priceless oils, its vaulted ceiling done in replica of Michelangelo's designs. It took the breath away. And one knew that Penfield was a wealthy man.

But at length we were back in the long corridor that led to the elevators and the world outside. We paused beside a door set in the corridor wall.

"What's this?" asked Lavender, his hand upon the knob. He tried the handle without invitation and discovered that the door was locked.

"A closet," answered Penfield. "A bit of a nuisance, as a matter of fact. It has a spring lock on it, and needs a key to open it. Fortunately, we don't use it often."

"May I look inside?" asked Lavender. "Quite silly, I suppose; but I've looked at everything else. I may as well be thorough."

Penfield was surprised. "Very well," he replied coldly. "There are only winter garments in it, though."

"I'll get a key," said Mrs. Penfield. "I have one on my ring."

"So have I," said Penfield. "But the fellow couldn't possibly have got inside."

He fumbled with the lock and ultimately drew the door ajar. Mrs. Penfield stepped forward and jerked it widely open.

Then she screamed and keeled over into my arms. It was my good fortune to be standing just behind her.

"Good God!" said Albert J. Penfield, in a feeble bleat. He leaned against the opposite wall and stared with eyes that fairly bulged with horror. "Good God!" he whispered.

Crushed back against a standing truck, on three sides of which hung garments redolent of camphor balls, was the body of a man. As the door flew open, it had begun to slip in horrible fashion toward the opening.

Quite suddenly, before anyone could stop it, the thing pitched forward at our feet.

A DEFERENTIAL China boy opened the door of the Cartwright apartment on the seventh floor, some minutes later.

"Mister Cartwright not in," he told us amiably, and slowly began to close the door.

"We know that," said Lavender, abruptly. He inserted a foot to block the door, then followed it over the threshold. "I'm a policeman—see? You'd better let me in."

It wasn't strictly true; but it sufficed. The China boy unwillingly gave ground.

"What you want?" he asked.

"When did Mr. Cartwright go away?" asked Lavender. "Where is he?"

The Chinese servant spread his hands. "Don't know," he answered. "Solly, don't know! Mister Cartwright not come home las' night."

Lavender nodded. He had a sneaking fondness for Orientals, and was inclined to treat them as pets. He reached out a hand and pinched the servant's elbow. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Joe."

"Mr. Cartwright is dead, Joe. Somebody killed him." There was no change in the China boy's face. He simply stared. But his voice betrayed his shock.

"Dead?" The word was as lifeless as its import.

We pushed past him into the living-room, leaving him staring. In orderly haste we made the circuit of the dead man's rooms and found exactly nothing that seemed to have a bearing on the case. But there was really no longer any mystery about it, that I could see. I wondered what Lavender was looking for. The culprit, obviously, had trapped himself in Penfield's closet and had paid the penalty of his carelessness.

"Went up in the freight elevator, probably," I said. "The Penfield's servants had gone to bed; it was close to midnight. Took the servants' staircase to the penthouse—after making the call that sent Mrs. Penfield to the Blue Pavilion. It seems clear enough."

"Does it? What motive would you ascribe to Cartwright, if your explanation is correct?" asked Lavender, with interest.

"Jealousy of some kind," I answered promptly. "He was engaged to the girl who gave Penfield those damned vases. We don't know what Penfield's relations with the girl may actually have been. She may just have talked to him a lot about Penfield—until he was pretty sick of it. He wanted to hurt Penfield somehow, and he attacked him through his collection. He began with the vases, naturally; then he gouged out the ruby, and he'd have gone farther if he hadn't trapped himself."

"Very ingenious," acknowledged Jimmie Lavender. "How do you suppose he trapped himself?"

"Thought he heard someone coming, I suppose—one of the servants, maybe—and stepped into the closet without realizing that he was locking himself in."

Lavender smiled gently. "Nonsense, Gilly! He could have let himself out any time he wanted to. The door opens from the inside, like any other door."

I stared at him. "Then he wasn't locked in?"

"Apparently, but not (Please turn to page 54)

At the *End* of the

PATROLMAN NATALE BONNO came up Esther Street into Chaumont Avenue at twenty past eleven of a mild, lush night in early Fall. This is one of the high parts of the city. Bonno knew it was eleven-twenty by the illumined face of the high clock atop the Medical Life Building, six blocks distant down Chaumont. He checked with his wrist watch, holding it up into the glare of the street light. Quiet, orderly neighborhood; old homes of weathered stone, most of them darkened at this hour, a few five- or six-storied apartment houses. He would walk eight blocks up Chaumont and ring in as usual from the box on the corner of Chaumont and Cull.

Natale Bonno strolled on, twirling his stick, taking a few deep draughts of the sweet night air. It was a new post for him. Nice. Quiet. Not like Domingo Road, where he'd pounded his heels for most of the Summer and smacked into race riots, crazy shootings.

small, deserted lobby containing a potted plant and a long, leather divan. At his left was a door with a ground-glass panel; the door was part-way open, revealing an elevator cage. Hanging from it was a sign: Out of Order.

Feet came hurrying down the stairway. Bonno stepped over beside the potted plant, drew his gun. The bottom of the staircase was concealed to him by a jutting corner of the wall. The footfalls were hurrying, drawing nearer, and presently a girl ran into view. "Hey, you!" Bonno snapped.

She stopped with a quick intake of a breath and an "Oh!" that was sucked in between parted teeth. She was young and slender, with a diminutive hat aslant a crop of thick, lustrous black hair. Her eyes, now, were round, almost popping. She raised a hand, knocking her mouth crushing her parted lips against her sparkling, white teeth.



He was a young man—twenty-six—and hard-boned, strapped with muscle; dark, dark-eyed and dark-browed, with a proper sense of importance, without which—say what you want to about it—a copper certainly is lost.

When the shot banged, wrenched the stillness apart, Bonno did not duck—he merely stopped, flat on his feet, his knees bent a trifle—though he knew it was near at hand, muffled by walls. Instantly there was a second shot, and mingled with the second shot the brittle snarling of shattered glass.

Bonno looked up at the facade in front of which he had stopped. An apartment house of six stories, with two heavy glass doors at the entryway. Parting the doors with a thrust of his shoulder, he barged into a

"Peter," begged the girl, "be good, Peter. Don't get them angry. Please don't."

Bonno towered toward her, his thick bushy brows coming together threateningly. He ripped her large, patent leather handbag from her hand, popped it open, glanced inside,

closed it and thrust it back into her hand.

"What's the rush?" he muttered.

"Why—I was just—"

"You was just!" he snapped. He jerked his hard dark jaw. "Get back upstairs."

She was breathless. A harried look came into her eyes and her face was dead white and this made her eyes seem darker. Her lips worked and she made a few idiotic gestures.

Bonno gave her a shove. "Up."

She hastened up to the next landing, Bonno at her

Alley was a DOOR

heels. As they were starting up the narrow staircase beyond, a man started down. At sight of them he stopped short, began to retreat. With his left arm Bonno thrust the girl to one side; his right held his gun leveled upward.

"Make up your mind, mister," he said.

The man above remained motionless.

"Oke," Bonno nodded, his eyes hard and dark and cagey. He rushed the girl up the staircase and, a few steps from the man, said, "Back up—and just for luck, put up your paws."

THE man was young, about as young as Bonno. He wore a light gray suit of herringbone material, with a flair to the lapels. His soft collar was white with blue horizontal stripes, and pinched tight by a collar pin. A gray felt was yanked over one eyebrow.

"You're in a hurry, too, I suppose," Bonno muttered,

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slapping the man beneath each arm, then his coat pockets then his hips—swiftly, certainly. "Well, say something."

The young man had a grayish, narrow face. "What should I say?" he asked, regarding Bonno steadily.

"Skip it. You can say things to the inspector. Where was that shooting?"

"I don't know."

Doors had begun to open in the corridors and now, heads began to pop out.

Bonno raised his loud voice. "Where was that shooting?" he spun on the girl. "Maybe you know, lady?"

She looked at him as though his manner or his uniform held her transfixed. Color began seeping back into her cheeks in feverish, ragged splashes.

Bonno grabbed her by the arm. "All right, lady. May-

be you know what room you came out of. Get a move on you. You heard me, didn't you? I said what room?"

She nodded stupidly. "Yes . . . yes."

"You get along, too," Bonno told the young man.

The girl led the way past gaping tenants to the last door on the right. Stopping, she turned and looked at Bonno. Her face was quiet now, set, and there was a film like wet silk on her eyes.

"This one?" Bonno asked.

"Yes," she said, sliding her eyes toward the door.

Somewhere distant a man's voice was calling, "Dermody! Say, Dermody! . . . Dermody!"

Bonno pounded on the door but no one came to open it. He rattled the knob. The door was locked.

"Dermody! . . ." the man's voice called again.

Bonno turned to the girl. "Is his name Dermody?"

Her voice was hardly above a whisper. "Yes."
"What, what, what?" panted a small, fuzzy-haired man, running up with the folds of a bathrobe clutched tight at his waist.

"Who are you?" Bonno demanded.

"The—well, the building super. My name's Gregory."

"You got keys?"

The little man bobbed his head, hauled a bunch of keys from his pocket. His lower lip blubbered wetly: "But whuh-what—"

"Never mind. Open the door before you need a repair job."

The little man opened the door and instantly there was a deep silence. The girl did not cry out, though her eyes widened with horror, her knuckles ground against her lips. The tall man in the herringbone suit moistened his lips, looked sidewise at the girl.

"Get in," said Bonno, in a low, hoarse voice.

The woman entered as though she walked on stilts, stiff-legged. The man in the herringbone suit followed, his face a little grayer. Bonno, entering, took one look at the man on the floor, at the heavy revolver lying a few feet from his outstretched hand. Then he stepped over the inert figure and thrust his head out the open window beyond. Across the court, a man in pajamas was leaning out of a window.

"Were you doing the yelling?" Bonno demanded.

"I was calling Dermody."

"Why?"

The man looked upward, pointed. "A bullet shattered my window and woke me up. I saw Dermody's place lighted up and I called out to him."

"Who are you?"

"Sundstrand's my name. I'm an M. D."

"Oke. You better put your pants on and come over, doc, and take a look at this guy."

SO the dead man's name was Dermody. Clinton Dermody. He was, up until the moment, the instant of his death, an author of some repute. A journalistic author. He'd written a number of actual biographies of notorious characters, still living. He had always written of the moment, never of the distant past.

Dermody was about fifty. With his great shock of yellow hair, he looked picturesque even in death. A large man with a large face and thick down on his hands, and large, squarish fingernails. Jacobs, the coroner's man, had finished with the preliminary examination. He was a fattish small man with a hard-looking belly and uninspired eyes.

"It could very easily be suicide," he said from beneath his fat nose, looking over his glasses. "I daresay it's suicide."

Inspector Tom Rockford, who had been hauled out of an important bridge game at headquarters, growled, "You're sure, huh?"

"No one can be sure, Tom," Jacobs said. "We know the gun is Dermody's. It's a thirty-two on a forty-five frame, with an extra long barrel. A target revolver. The cartridges are smokeless."

Rockford turned on a blunt heel to say across the room, "You hear that, Marcus?"

Marcus Corcoran, the district attorney, was standing in a corner smoking a cork-tipped cigarette and thumbing the pages of one of Dermody's latest books. He closed the book, laid it aside and came over to stand above the body, pinching his lower lip thoughtfully between thumb and forefinger. The district attorney had a taste in suits and linen. He was a slender, erect man, with a casualness of manner, with the unpretentiousness of a thoroughbred.

He said amiably to Jacobs. "You've of course seen other cases of suicide by a firearm where there were no powder burns."

"Of course," the coroner's man nodded. "All suicides don't jam the gun against themselves."

Corcoran lifted his eyes. The girl was seated across the room, and beside her the thin young man in the herringbone suit. Doctor Sundstrand stood to one side, a gaunt man with a picturesque splash of gray at either temple, intelligent eyes, full, mobile lips. He was



wrapped in a dark blue dressing gown. The fuzzy-haired little building superintendent stood near the door, beside two uniformed policemen.

Corcoran said, "Miss Powers . . ."

The girl started.

"Miss Powers, Inspector Rockford tells me you took a lot of dictation for Mr. Dermody."

She nodded. "Yes."

"How long were you here tonight?"

"Well, from eight until some time after eleven—ten or twenty minutes after eleven, I don't know exactly."

"What do you usually do, take the notes home and type them there?"

"Yes, I do."

Patrolman Natale Bonno said, "Nix. All she had when I snagged her was a pocketbook."

She colored a trifle, then nodded. "Of course. Mr. Dermody was dissatisfied with what we'd accomplished tonight and told me to tear the notes up." She pointed. "I think you'll find them in that waste basket. He—he didn't seem in a mood for working."

"What kind of mood was he in?" Corcoran asked.

She swallowed. "He seemed—depressed."

"Was he often depressed?"

"No. He was usually—I don't know how to express it—rather gay, even funny at times. As though acting a part."

"How long have you done this work for Mr. Dermody?"



Corcoran said, "I thought you didn't love your wife any more." "Who said so?" Powers shouted.

"A little over a year, I should say."
"When you heard those shots, why did you run? Patrolman Bonno said you were running."

Again she colored and seemed confused. "I really don't know. Maybe it was instinct. They sounded close—certainly in the building. I think I felt that at any moment someone would burst out of a doorway with a gun and—I don't know—I just ran. I guess I was just frightened."

"You're sure you recognize the gun?"

"Positive. He bought it about two months ago and showed it to me then in its plush case."

Corcoran crossed the room to deposit his butt in an ashtray. He turned and looked at the thin, gray-faced youth in the herringbone suit. "Your name is—let me see—Browning?"

"Browning, yes."

Corcoran smiled drily. "Patrolman Bonno said you acted suspiciously when he accosted you on the staircase."

"It all depends on what you call acting suspiciously. I was starting down the stairs when I saw him and the girl coming up. He was a policeman with a gun in his hand. Naturally I stopped. Maybe I looked a little confused."

Bonno mocked him: "It's all what you consider acting a little confused."

Corcoran said, "Mr. Browning, do you live here?"

"No."

"Then what, the next thing to naturally ask is—what were you doing in the building?"

Browning's face looked a shade grayer. He withdrew from his inside pocket a thick sheaf of pinkish slips and held it out. Corcoran crossed and took the sheaf. The sheaf must have contained a hundred-odd slips, each about four inches square and advertising certain bonded liquors.

Browning was saying, "I was on my way up to the top floor. Then I was going to start down, slipping a sheet under each door. Advertising. When I heard the shots—well, I gave up the idea and decided to leave."

"It's a gag," growled Bonno. "The gent looked guilty as hell."

Corcoran said, "Thank you, Mr. Browning." He retained some of the slips, gave the rest back to Browning. Browning moistened his lips and let out a quiet, unobtrusive sigh.

And then Corcoran said amiably, casually to Dr. Sundstrand, "Mr. Dermody was of course dead when you examined him, doctor?"

"Quite," Sundstrand said, nodding grimly. "Quite dead."

"As a medical man, have you any theories? You knew Dermody pretty well, I gather."

"Yes, pretty well. We used to go on a lot of shindigs together. As to any theories, I don't know. While you gentlemen have been talking, I've been trying to figure out why Clint Dermody should have committed suicide. It seemed quite unlike him. His health was good. I know that personally. He made (Please turn to page 79)

Tower Studios

Her Husband's FRIEND

IT was early on a hot morning in August that headquarters heard Dr. Wilhelm Mott had been murdered down in Pawhanssett. Dr. Mott, who was perhaps the most eminent physician in southern Staten Island, had been one of the guests at a party the night before at the Ring home—the name Ring is one of the most venerable of the district and the Ring house is a landmark—and it was in the summerhouse on the vast Ring lawn that he was found.

Now Pawhanssett, being what it is, is a matter of concern to the officialdom of New York. It is one of those queer, isolated spots within the shadow of the world's greatest metropolis—belonging, in fact, within the limits of that metropolis—that clings jealously to its individuality and scorns—when not legally compelled otherwise—any relations with the giant that is New York. A sizable portion of its population, having immense local pride, never have crossed the bay to Manhattan, not deeming such travel either necessary or beneficial.

Hence, its policemen, although technically under the supervision of Centre Street, are recruited locally and refer to themselves as the Pawhanssett Police Department; and so with its firemen and other officials who draw municipal pay.

Therefore, when the news of Dr. Mott's destruction came through, the matter was immediately laid before the Commissioner. The Commissioner, a weary man, looked over the report. He saw that one David Gray, a patrolman, had found Dr. Mott.

"Local man?" asked the Commissioner.

"Yes, sir," said the Inspector of the Homicide Squad. "Oldest they got over there."

"And these people—are they suspects?"

"Well, yes sir, in a way. There's Mrs. Ring—Unity's her first name—who gave the party and I suppose she's at least a material witness, if not a suspect. They say she and Dr. Mott were to be married. Her husband and Dr. Mott practised together."

"What happened to the husband?"

"Blew his brains out after he'd lost everything in the market. Family fortune, it's said. He left his widow the house and a sizable lump of insurance, but that was all."

"Was Mott wealthy?"

"Fairly so."

"And these others?"

"Well, sir, now comes the queer part of it. It seems odd that Mrs. Ring should give the party at all because these three, the Proveens and Simon Lingle, the only other guests at the party, detested Mott."

"Why?"

"Well—they all grew up together, it seems—Mott had a heavy love affair with Prudence Proveen at one time, but he threw her over—there's a child somewhere according to local gossip—and it broke her heart. She's never married and they say she hates Mott now."

"Then, there's her brother, Caleb. He

worships his sister—always has. They live together. And when Mott did her the nasty trick it was all Prudence could do to keep him from bumping off Mott then and there. She did, but there's always been the chance Caleb would do Mott in if he got half a chance."

"As for Lingle, he hates Mott like poison because when Mott threw over Prudence, he took up with Lingle's wife. Mott's been a local ladies' man all his life. Finally there was a divorce, but what adds to Lingle's hatred is that Mott, after the divorce, gave the wife the run-around and went chasing the Ring widow."

"So you can see that the party wasn't what you could call hilarious."

"Did Lingle and the Proveens know Mott was to be there?"

"Apparently not. They came early, and he came in later. He'd been at a hospital. The party broke up just a little after that, but Mrs. Ring apparently wasn't through with her little joke, if it was a joke. She asked Proveen, who had his car, to take Mott home. That sort of staggered them, I suppose, but Proveen said he would and Mott accepted. Lingle went along, too."

"Well, according to the story the three of them tell, they dropped him off at his house, but they had words. Both Lingle and Proveen warned him to keep out of their way in the future, but it seems he laughed at them."

"Did he go right into his house?"

"Yes, the housekeeper heard him come in, but nothing more. She says there's something supernatural about it."

The Commissioner looked annoyed.

"What do Lingle and Proveen do?" he asked.

"Lingle runs a hardware store and Proveen—" the Inspector laughed queerly—"is a Professor of Primitive Religions and the History of Witchcraft. He's a Doctor of Philosophy."

"It sounds," said the Commissioner, gaping, "quite mad. Any real clues?"

"None we can find out about."

"Well, find out!" snapped the Commissioner.

In the little village of Pawhanssett, where superstition and beautiful women were abundant, Ashel Mayhew, of Huntsdale, Mo., not only found that the world was against him, but that he had to solve murder by committing robbery. A town where anything was liable to happen—and did!

By HENRY LACOSSITT



Both Ashel and Graney caught their breaths sharply, for Unity Ring was beautiful.

The Inspector was embarrassed. "That's just it, sir. You see, Pawhanssett's such a queer place. They dislike interference, you know. I was wondering if it would be better to let them——"

"That's only encouraging them. We've had this situation before. Send a man with tact who knows his business. That's all!"

The Commissioner was final. Sighing, the Inspector took his leave. He sat down miserably at his desk.

"Tact!" he snarled. But then his face lighted. "Tact?"

He reached for the telephone.

IN thirty minutes Ashel Mayhew, the sheriff-like gentleman from Missouri who was such a distinguished member of the Homicide Squad, was on his way with his son-in-law, Detective Sergeant Vincent Graney.

They went in a rather unusual fashion, for they traveled in a trim, twenty-four-foot speedboat, which

went flying down the East River through the lazy summer day toward Staten Island.

The speedboat was Ashel's idea. They had bought it recently.

"Mistuh Graney," he had said at the time, "now that we're livin' over on the East River, we oughta get nautical. 'Side, we might need it to get some place in a jiffy sometime."

Neither reason had appealed to Graney, Irish and husky, red of hair, blue of eye, and thrifty, but there they were.

Ashel, tall, gaunt, gray eyes mild, long mustache drooping over his jaws, looked at Graney over his steel-rimmed spectacles as they sped along and said:

"What'd I tell you?"

He was, of course, referring to the justification of their purchase of the boat. Graney looked at him sourly.

"Ain't you *never* wrong?" he asked bitterly.



Tower Studios

"You'd better hurry, Professor, 'cause I'm not waitin' on you," Ashel warned.

"Mistuh Graney," said Ashel, "for nigh on fifty years I was wrong, so I got a license to be right now. I spent enough time learnin', didn't I?"

Ashel here referred to the fact that, until he had become such a brilliant member of the Homicide Squad, he had contrived to fail signally at various pursuits in diverse lands; and also to the fact that, although he had failed, he had acquired knowledge and experience in the aggregate, which made him, as it were, a walking almanac of vital information.

He leaned back in his seat lazily as Graney steered the boat down the river. They passed beneath the Williamsburg, the Manhattan, the Brooklyn bridges and swung out into the bay. Behind them, the piled masses of Manhattan rose in the clear summer sky.

Graney steered the bounding boat through the Narrows, sped along the shore of Staten Island, then cut southwest as the island curved. Presently, they drew

up at an old wooden pier that thrust out into the water from a narrow beach. The beach extended back from the water to meet a sandy cliff that rose for perhaps sixty feet. A flight of wooden stairs ran up the cliff.

Down the beach about a quarter of a mile a sprawl of little houses nestled on a point. That, they knew, was Pawhanssett.

They moored the boat to the pier and crossed the beach to climb the stairway. At the top they came upon a wide, grassy lawn where splendid old trees—maples, elms, oaks—grew, and from the stairs, winding in and out among the trees, a flagged path, on either side of which grew a privet hedge, ran to the house. The house was frame, a New England Colonial, and on the top of it was the famous platform known as the "Widow's Walk," significant of Pawhanssett's maritime past.

THEY started down the path, but stopped abruptly at a turn. A policeman stood there at a break in the path. The break gave on a side path that led to the octagonal summerhouse. It was about ten feet off the main path and painted white.

"How-de-do," said Ashel. "I reckon you're Officuh Gray."

"Guess I am," said the policeman. A man in his fifties, he was tall and thin, with sunken face and eyes.

"You found him?"

"Guess I did."

"How'd you happen to go in the summerhouse, Officuh Gray?"

Officer Gray's eyes were almost black. They flashed.

"Guess we know our business 'round here," he said, "'thout any 'dvice fr'm Noo York. Guess we don't ask it, neither."

"Guess not," said Ashel. He smiled, a very friendly expression, but Officer Gray remained sullen. Ashel asked: "You s'spect anybody, Officuh Gray?"

"Guess if I did, I'd say so, wouldn't I?"

Behind Ashel, Graney growled like a mastiff as Officer Gray turned on his heel and walked down the path.

"I'll report—" began Graney, but Ashel had gone into the summerhouse. Graney followed him and, as Ashel had done, stopped at the door.

"Good God!" said Sergeant Graney.

Directly across from them, seated upright on the wall seat that ran around the eight sides of the building, was the body of Dr. Mott. His hands were crossed in his lap; his feet rested carelessly on the floor; his head had fallen back in a horrible angle against the only unopened window of the eight the place contained, and his open, staring eyes looked at them with something more than horror.

In the throat was a gaping gash. It was the gash that permitted the head to fall back against the window.

For a moment they stood staring and then they were startled when somewhere in the summerhouse a little bell chimed once. It was a ship's bell wired to the chronometer that hung on the narrow window panel next to the window where Dr. Mott sat. It was eight-thirty.

(Please turn to page 70)

LITTLE BOOK OF STRANGE CRIMES

Political Rivalry

ARISTEO BADILLO was a member of the Mexican House of Representatives. He served during the year 1933. Since the newspapers are silent on the subject, only the records of the Mexican legislative body can show whether he was competent or otherwise.

But competent or not he was a Mexican politician and Mexicans take their politics and politicians with an advanced degree of seriousness. Aristeo Badillo was taken seriously. He developed a number of deadly political enemies. But that was natural. Aristeo Badillo was playing the game of Mexican politics. It is an old game, played violently and perhaps Aristeo Badillo was a fatalist. Perhaps he expected that sooner or later he would be forced to trade bullets with his political enemies. There is certainly no doubt that he had ample precedent on which to base his expectations.

But Aristeo Badillo had no inkling of the terrible disaster that was in store for him.

He had beaten his enemies at the polls in Campeche, one of the states forming the Yucatan Peninsula. It infuriated them. And when he took passage on the *SS. Yalton* recently, they hatched a plot. They learned the destination of the steamer was the town of Frontera, on the coast of Tabasco. And when it docked they were ready.

They seized Aristeo Badillo, taking him forcibly from the steamer. They bound him, placed him in a small boat, spirited him away to a small island off the coast.

There was a straw hut there. Within its steaming walls they placed Aristeo Badillo, helpless in his bonds. And then, because Aristeo Badillo was their political enemy, because he had beaten them in elections and was inimical to their political interests, they sprinkled the hut with petroleum and set it afire.

And they stood nearby and watched and listened as the man, who had only followed principles in which they did not happen to believe and concur, died the most horrible of all deaths.

Truth is stranger than fiction! And this new diary of odd occurrences will acquaint you each month with the most peculiar events of the day! A monthly record of strange things that happen to strange people!

Serenade at the Tombs

THE prison in New York, known as the Tombs—because the original building resembled the famous sarcophagi of ancient Egypt—is famous throughout the world. Through its gloomy walls a parade of internationally notorious criminals has passed. Perhaps the ghosts of many of these criminals—from Mose, the Bowery Boy, to Gyn the Blood and Two-Gun Crowley—haunt those corridors and dungeons. At any rate it is not too pleasant a place. One may brood there, upon Hicks, the famous axe murderer of the last century, upon Monk Eastman, gangster peerless, upon Gallus Mag, the fearsome female slayer of old New York, and others, and one may shiver at his recollections. In fact, one does.

Therefore, one summer day, the prisoners, within the Tombs, looking through the bars at the drowsy sunshine, probably dreamed of green fields and rushing brooks and cool forests. Probably they yearned with a powerful nostalgia for the freedom of the open road. Their tempera, it may be imagined, were not in too placid a state.

Hence, when the strains of a certain song drifted on the warm summer air through the barred windows, they were at first incredulous, then infuriated. The stone walls rang with their fury. They stamped, shook the bars, growled ominously.

From the offices came the officials, apprehensive of break or riot. They endeavored to quiet their charges, but without success. So finally, in desperation, they rushed to the street. There, they discovered an itinerant German band, familiar to the New York streets, puffing solemnly away in the monotonous com-pah of their style—playing the song that had so infuriated the incarcerated men.

"Oh, if I had the wings of an angel . . ."

The strains of the "Prisoner's Song," brassy rendered, echoed and reverberated in the street. The Tombs officials stopped the musicians, explaining that a riot was being brewed by their none too innocuous tune.

But, explained Fritz, Heinrich, August, Edward and Willie, they were under contract. A nice man, they said, had got off a bus and given them \$1.50 spot cash to play the song beneath the windows at the Tombs.

The officials explained again, and patiently. They said it probably was a joke.

Whereupon Fritz, Heinrich, August, Edward and Willie nodded solemnly, took their instruments and went on their merry way.

Order was restored in the Tombs.

Lingo

THE confidence men have words for it. And words and words. In the bright lexicon of the swindler are to be found such as the following:

Pick-up—The act of getting acquainted with the prospective victim.

Steerer—The man who makes the pick-up and guides the victim into the web of the plot.

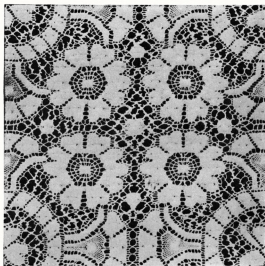
Feeler—The first gentleman actually to sound the victim. He is usually a bland, suave person and impresses the victim with his importance in the world of affairs.

Spiler—The gentleman who seals the scheme by smooth lan- (Please turn to page 85)



MR. EDWARD L. GREENE, OF THE NATIONAL

THE *Terrible*



The United States is infested with a multitude of crooks who, in the guise of honest business, prey upon the public and collect untold millions of dollars annually. . . .

I believe the most practical way to combat these crooks is to expose them. For this reason I am glad to recommend these articles. . . .

Edward L. Greene

In order to inform the American people of the vicious system of domestic racketeering that exists in this country, and of the illegitimate practices that flourish under the guise of honest business, this magazine presents the third of a series of cold-blooded fact articles, which the editors hope will aid in stamping out the insidious and malignant growth of "gyp" racketeers in the home

By
D. E. WHEELER

UP the path to the porch of the little suburban home of Mrs. Ewan Morse, outside of New York City, straggled a strange pair in the hot afternoon sunlight. The woman approaching was middle-aged, short and plump. Her clothes were poor and shapeless and she carried a large, bulky brown-paper bag. Alongside her ambled a gawky boy of sixteen, his trousers away above the tops of his shoes, and the sleeves of his jacket at least three inches too short.

"Look like immigrants," thought Mrs. Morse, who was busy typing a report of the local relief committee of which she was secretary. While so engaged, she had sighed over the cases of many well-to-do acquaintances reduced to accepting municipal help, and here, to complete her feeling of a world gone wrong, right before her eyes was the personification of poverty.

"Could I spake a moment to you, ma'am?" came the voice of the woman in accents that suggested an Irish origin, though she might have been Dutch or Swedish from her looks.

"Yes, certainly—what is it?" Mrs. Morse got up from the typewriter.

"O—o—h, see the beautiful little printin' press, Ma!" exclaimed the boy, pointing at the typewriter in naive delight.

"Hold yer tongue, Willie!" admonished the woman; then turning to Mrs. Morse she said apologetically: "He ain't used to the ways of this country yet, and he's never seen a typewriter before, God help him! Both of us is pretty green, you see, ma'am."

Immediately, Mrs. Morse grew more interested in the visitors, which was what they were after if their act was to get over. And if it hadn't been a typewriter, it would have been something else that would have exhibited Willie's touching simplicity. For

BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU WARNS AGAINST

Williamsons



Posed by models in Tower Studios

Willie, you must know, was a sort of "stooge" for his mother in the game they were working.

"Well—?" said Mrs. Morse.

"I'm sorry to take yer time, ma'am, but please look at this," replied the woman.

Out of her bulky paper bag she drew what looked like a large wad of lace. Motioning to Willie to take hold, they shook it between them and spread out a beautiful lace tablecloth made of small circles webbed together and containing a shamrock design.

"Goodness me!" breathed Mrs. Morse, involuntarily.

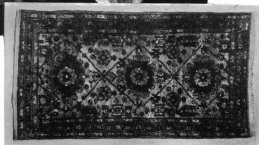
"'Twas made by me grandmother, ma'am," explained the shabby owner of it, "and she's over eighty and gone blind now. It took her the best part of a year to make this grand cloth. But I must sell it to get food for me children's mouths. Me husband hasn't been able to get anything to do since we came to this country, and we have nine young ones to clothe and feed—"

Hard times had made Mrs. Morse vow not to buy a thing that wasn't a necessity until the New Deal had established better days. But real hand-made Irish lace, and a great spread of it billowing before her! Her eyes sparkled as she gazed. Like every daughter of Eve, she loved genuine hand-made lace, always wanted to possess it, but her pieces of it had been few and small. On her husband's salary Mrs. Morse had never dreamed of possessing real lace in such quantity as this, any more than owning a necklace of genuine matched pearls.

"How was it made?" she inquired, examining one of the many encircled shamrocks.

"With bobbins, ma'am, on a pillar," said her visitor. "Just consider the patience and eyesight it took to make all them circles exactly alike and put them together without a hair's difference!"

"Yes indeed," said Mrs. Morse, sympathetically; then a bit more sharply: "But this cloth looks new."



"It is that, as you might say," smiled the visitor, "for I niver used it, faith! I had it put away till the time me children grew up and it wouldn't be destroyed, so."

Tempted as she was, Mrs. Morse knew that she could ill afford such a luxury, even if it was the chance of a lifetime.

"I'm sorry—" she began.

"You can have it for thirty dollars, ma'am," interrupted her visitor, "and it's a treasure that will outlast yer grandchildren's grandchildren!"

Mrs. Morse knew that a real hand-made Irish lace tablecloth of that size was worth five times that sum, at least. She had her vacation money tucked away, and might use half of it in the purchase. But she shook her head again.

"Why don't you try it on yer dinin'-room table, ma'am," urged the temptress in that wheedling voice.

Persuaded, Mrs. Morse tried it on her walnut table. It was perfect. She could fairly hear the delighted exclamations over it by Ewan, her husband, and her friends. Hesitating, coveting, she was lost when the forlorn creature who offered it for sale said:

"Sure, and it belongs right there, ma'am! Take it for twenty-five dollars—if I can afford to give it for that, and God knows I can't, then surely you can afford to take it, so!"

(Please turn to page 94)

The Well-Known



William Fortune could always unburden his troubles at Casey Cohen's bar to Casey Cohen himself.

THE pinochle joust at Precinct 53 had lasted till well after four in the morning and Sergeants Druby and Howard were riding home in style. Captain Shoeman, thrilled at having won some three dollars, and generous to a fault with the taxpayers gasoline, had ordered his chauffeur to drive them home in the station squad car. They were lolling against the rear cushions, making mental promises to mend their ways and get their rightful sleep when the chauffeur, Hagan, snapped them alert. He had hit the lever controlling the riot-gun box. The cover popped up, laying the deadly pump guns easy to hand and both policemen eased their pistol holsters and surveyed the scene. There was a visible commotion a block or so ahead. By this time, Hagan had gunned the powerful car into its stride and they arrived before the entrance of Casey Cohen's Four Hundred Club in time to witness the closing scene of a tableau.

One burly young man stood over another, all the evidence tending to prove that he had just knocked the other man down, for even now the fallen one arose. This resurrection was short, however, for his assailant treated him to a first person singular demonstration of that ancient trick of battle known as the "Dublin Flip." This antiquated form of assault was handed down from the old Irish mixed-ale fighters and consists of deftly kicking your adversary's feet from under him with a sort of rugby hook-kick and dealing him a lusty backhander at the same instant. The newly arisen one flopped back into the street sprawled out, arms and legs extended, starfish fashion. The aggressor then looked up, perceived the oncoming squad car and popped into the Four Hundred Club, and there found sanctuary, for the owner, Casey Cohen, was brother to the Democratic district leader and the police were forbidden to trespass on these hallowed premises for anything short of murder.

The group of late-to-beds who had been standing about admiring the technique of this thuggery now saw the policemen and their faces went suddenly blank as if wiped with a sobering sponge. They began an idle gaping into space, adopting that vacuous, deaf-dumb-and-blind look with which a policeman is normally greeted in certain neighborhoods. Not so the young lady who had been an interested spectator.

"Bill Fortune," she shrieked at the policemen. "It was Bill Fortune; he did it. I just got out of a cab and was going in the club as he was coming out. I just said hello to this guy and Bill puts the slug on him. He won't let me alone and you gotta do something about it. What the hell are

WORKS

BY
JAMES EDWARD
GRANT

In response to a demand from MYSTERY readers, the editors present this thrilling story of two smart policemen, who, in spite of chiselry, fixed juries and crooked lawyers, got their man

coppers for if a guy can get away with that stuff? I want protection."

"Bee Morgan," said Sergeant Druby meanly. "So it's you. And you want protection? Well you can have it. I think we'll take you down and put you in the parade for Sunday morning when they show up all the dolls from the Saturday night raids. You'd feel right at home, wouldn't you, Bee? Little Bee Morgan, the sweetheart of Clark Street."

Sergeant Howard had picked up the prone gentleman, recognized him, and dropped him again as if fearful of soiling his hands.

"Eddie Latimer," said the Sergeant in disgust, as if that were sufficient explanation of this calloused action. He had recognized him as a young man who emulated the lily; beautifully was he attired, but he spun not. Gigolo is a mild—very mild—phrasing of his occupation.

"Listen, copper," continued the young lady, "you can't pull this kind of stuff on me. I know people that will take your buttons off if I say the word. You gotta make this Fortune let me alone. I don't want no part of him. I got a new sweet and I'm off William like that." Here she snapped her fingers. "I don't want no part of him. I'm leavelling, I tell you. I'm working at the Elite. Ask anybody."

"The Elite!" barked Howard. "And she calls it leavelling."

The fallen gentleman now arose for the second time and gazed about him with glazed dead-fish eyes. He saw the policeman.

"I didn't do nothing," whined Eddie Latimer. "I'm standing here doing nothing when this dolly here hops out of a cab. I give her hello and just then this guy Fortune comes out of the club and gives me the clouts. How about it, copper? What about putting the collar on him? That's assault and battery."

"Good," said Sergeant Howard and climbed back into the car. Druby stood for a moment on the running board and stared wistfully up at the Four Hundred Club. "I would like nothing better," quoth the Sergeant, "than to put Billy Fortune under glass. Maybe we ought to kick the joint and sleeve him."

"For what?" Sergeant Howard wanted to know. "For assault? Don't be dumb. His lawyer would spring him out of there in the morning and all we get is lost sleep. Come on, it's after four. Roll it, Hagan."

THE object of this discussion, Mr. William Fortune, (none of whose respectable Czechoslovakian ancestors would have answered if addressed as Fortune) meditated as he climbed the flight of stairs and entered the gaudy Four Hundred Club. That's life for you. Always something. It seems like every time a guy starts to put the slug on someone, along comes John Law and butts in.

And you take dolls now. There's something no guy can figure. Imagine this Bee Morgan giving a rising



"Listen, copper, I know people that will take your buttons off," threatened the young lady.

young public enemy, a promising young labor racketeer like Billy Fortune, the air. Dolls just don't make sense, that's all. Didn't I always treat her right? Sure. And then she gives me the air. It ain't as if Bee were hard to get. Any small time checker, heist-guy or back porch climber on the West Side will tell you different. But they hadn't better—not where I can hear them. And then the mob will razz a guy that lets some doll throw him over. Especially after you invest a lot of dough in her like I did. Well, any guy that makes a play for her better watch his step that's all, and I mean watch his step.

Musing thus, young Mr. Fortune made his way through the club to the bar. Here he would find the owner, Mr. Casey Cohen, and unburden himself of his troubles. Mr. Cohen could be depended upon to help Billy carry his cross, for Mr. Cohen was a saloon keeper and William was a wine buyer and times being what they are, wine buyers are few and far between. Also, Casey was a pal, not at all the type to quibble over a little perjury. Was William being prosecuted by the police in connection with certain acts of violence he was alleged to have committed then Casey came to bat. "Absolutely Mr. Prosecutor, William Fortune was in my place all night that night. I remember perfectly because it was the night of the Canzoneri-Ross fight and we made a little bet. I remember that Billy liked Canzoneri, but I said, watch Ross belt him over—all right, I won't go into that—but he was in the place all night."

Mr. Cohen had had many occasions to offer his services thus for William, in his capacity of Business Agent for the Leather Workers' Union and Mutual Protective Benefit, was constantly subject to police persecution. For William was a soldier in the gallant, and profitable, struggle of protecting labor from the depredations of capital. Unfortunately the members of his union were continually running to the police with the claim that they needed protection from William far more than from the oppression (Please turn to page 59)

SEVEN Meant

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE:

Warren Lorrimer Exonerated by Death-Bed Confession

Governor Extends Full Pardon to
Millionaire Sportsman Who Served
Seven Years for Crime of
Which He Was Innocent

IT seemed to Warren Lorrimer that he had lived the last few days in a state of complete mental fog. First, his unexpected release from prison after serving seven years for a crime of which he was innocent; then his meeting on the train with Lyman Bracker which had resulted in his introduction to the strange men that constituted the Tribunal; and finally the death of Greyfield Platt. It had all happened with a kaleidoscopic rapidity that had left him quite dazed and with a devastating sense of unreality.

Added to this was his meeting with Monica Greffer, the daughter of the man whom he held responsible for his imprisonment. His mind dwelt for some time on Monica and he found himself strangely moved. He saw her quite clearly—tall, graceful, alluring and markedly aloof. Yet, despite her aloofness, she had shown a definite interest in him and had made a determined effort to keep him from joining the Tribunal. He was unable to fathom her reason for this. Did she want him to keep free of these ruthless men, for his own sake, or was it because she was afraid for her father? Did she think that backed by the Tribunal, he, Lorrimer, was in a better position to wreak vengeance on Norman Greffer than he would be single-handed? Warren Lorrimer frowned. The more he thought of it, the more his mental confusion increased. Now go on with the story:

WARREN LORRIMER leaned back in his chair and looked about. This penthouse, which he had rented furnished, at least was real. This sunshine-flooded room was real. He was no longer hemmed in by gloomy walls; his door was no longer a set of steel bars; and the man who stood deferentially back of his chair was not a keeper but his servant, ready to do his slightest bidding. His name was Jablowski, or something like that, and it was he, himself, who had suggested to Lorrimer that he adopt some other, simpler name. Lorrimer had agreed and after a moment's thought had said: "I'll call you Warden." It was the first time in many years that he had smiled.

The man came forward. "More coffee, sir?" "No, I've finished," said Lorrimer. "You may clear away, Warden."

The man bowed and began to remove the breakfast dishes. He was only half finished when the sound of a buzzer interrupted him and took him to the door.

"A Mr. Bracker wishes to see you," he came back and reported a minute later.

Warren Lorrimer started. "Show him in," he said. Lyman Bracker entered briskly. Lorrimer made a mental note to ask him some time for the name of his tailor. Despite his short dumpy figure his clothes fitted him beautifully. No one who saw him would ever have suspected that he had once been in prison, or would imagine that this ordinary, though prosperous looking individual, belonged to an association whose members stood ready to avenge their wrong at any cost.

"Good-morning," said Lyman Bracker. "Sorry to disturb you so early in the day, but a matter of importance has come up that requires our immediate attention. Freda Hayward goes to trial the day after tomorrow."

Warren Lorrimer stared at him blankly. "Freda Hayward? Did you say Freda Hayward?"

Do You Want Serials in MYSTERY?

Here is a chance for MYSTERY readers to vote on a much-debated question—shall a monthly magazine carry a continued story, or devote its pages entirely to complete, short stories? Write to us, and tell us your choice. Here is the second installment of the newest serial by one of your favorite authors. If you like it, say so; if you don't like it, say so. The editors wish to publish the kind of magazine you like to read, and by giving you this excellent four-part story on which to cast your vote, we feel confident that the results will be an accurate gauge of MYSTERY readers' tastes. What is your choice?

"Freda Hayward," Bracker explained, "is what is commonly known as a gangster's moll. She is a pretty thing and originally played around with Eddie Coakley. Coakley is a racketeer of outstanding reputation. Unfortunately, Freda made the acquaintance of one 'Red' MacCracken and transferred her affections to him. Even before this there had been considerable feeling between Coakley and MacCracken. They were leaders of rival gangs, and prior to repeal MacCracken had muscled in on Coakley's territory. Afterward they both went into the slot machine racket and the two men got to hate each other more than ever. When Freda Hayward deserted Coakley and went over to MacCracken, it was the last straw. The career of 'Red' MacCracken came to a sudden end. He was found with half a dozen bullet holes in his stomach. Freda, apparently, was the last person who had seen MacCracken alive. The police pulled her in and questioned her. There was some circumstantial evidence against her. For instance, the gun which had killed MacCracken was found in her possession. She and 'Red' had been out together on the night he was shot. They had just come out of a restaurant. It was raining and 'Red' had gone on ahead to find a taxi. Then she had heard the shots and had run to him. Her claim that she had found the gun beside the body and had picked it up with an idea of tracing it to its owner, was ridiculed by the police. Still they wouldn't have had much of a case against her if it hadn't been for Eddie Coakley, who came forward and swore that he had seen her shoot MacCracken. It was easy after that to invent a motive . . . to say that 'Red' was interested in another girl and that Freda had killed him because of jealousy."

"How does that concern us—the Tribunal?" Warren Lorrimer broke in stiffly.

DEATH *By* WALTER F. RIPPERGER



Tower Studios

"I'm Eddie Coakley," the fellow announced. "I thought perhaps your girl-friend would like to dance."

For a moment Lyman Bracker's round, bulbous eyes rested thoughtfully on the other.

"It is part of our creed to prevent innocent people from being convicted. I, for my part, consider that more vital than avenging ourselves on those who sent us to prison. This girl isn't important, perhaps, but the principle involved is. Your old friend, Norman Greffer, who got his start by convicting you, is getting a lot of publicity out of this. The papers reek with the fearless prowess of District Attorney Greffer who has sworn to put an end to racketeering. He is going to send this girl to the chair or at least to prison for life. She's innocent! Do you want to stand by and not lift a finger—?"

"No," said Lorrimer dully. "On the other hand, I don't wish . . ." he stopped and stared intently at Lyman Bracker. "Was Greyfield Platt murdered by the Tribunal?"

Lyman Bracker turned away. When a minute later he again faced Lorrimer, his eyes were more vacuous than ever.

"Platt was a traitor," he said evasively. "It has been reported that he died of heart failure. Whether or not he was murdered needn't be the cause of any worry to you. You certainly had no hand in it."

"I know I didn't," said Warren Lorrimer. "Just the same," he added obstinately, "I'm not with you when

you try to bring about justice by committing other injustices. I won't be a party to indiscriminate murders."

LYMAN BRACKER'S brows came together. For the first time since he had known him, Lorrimer saw him lose his temper.

"When you joined us, what did you think we were going to do to right the wrongs which we'd suffered—write letters to the newspapers? We don't commit indiscriminate murders. We punish and we punish justly, and we save others from being the victims of injustice!"

Lorrimer shook his head doggedly. "I'll resign," he said. "I won't be a party to proceedings of that kind."

Lyman Bracker looked at him not unkindly.

"We can't let you resign," he said softly. "It wouldn't be fair, it wouldn't be safe for the rest of us." He took a turn about the room, came back and confronted Warren Lorrimer. "Think of what happened to Greyfield Platt," he said significantly.

Lorrimer, aghast, fell back a step.

"You mean . . . you mean you'd do the same to me?"

"It depends on how far you go. I, for one, wouldn't vote for such extreme measures," said Bracker meditatively, "but Paul and the others might. They've sworn not to let anything stand in their way . . . I don't do anything rash, Lorrimer . . . I like you and in time you'll see things differently."

Warren Lorrimer sat down heavily. His emotions were inextricably mixed. He could see the others' point of view, but just the same, he had a feeling of anger that they dared to threaten him. He was conscious of sympathy for the girl to be tried shortly for her life and possibly convicted unjustly, just as he had been. Yet the thought of saving her at the expense of committing other crimes, no matter how necessary, repelled him.

Monica Greffer had been right when she had warned him against joining the Tribunal, but she had come too late, at a time when, overwhelmed by the injustice he had suffered, he was prepared to do anything. He looked thoughtfully at Lyman Bracker. The man's warning was not to be taken lightly. They had meted out grim, swift justice in the case of Greyfield Platt. He was in a trap. There was no doubt about it. He had no choice for the moment except to accede to their wishes. Perhaps his decision was influenced a little by the thought of Norman Greffer. He had moments when nothing that they could ever do to Greffer would seem too brutal, too horrible. Lorrimer's eyes grew slightly veiled.

"Why have you come to see me?" he said.

"For two reasons," Bracker answered. "There will be a meeting of the Tribunal tomorrow night. I will call for you in my car. The other is to tell you some things you've done and still have to do."

"Things I've done?"

Lyman Bracker nodded brightly.

"You do not know it," he said, "but you've bought and own the Three-Way Club. It's not much of a club. It's a hang-out for prosperous gangsters and racketeers. But you needn't own it for long. We'll only require it for a short time. Eddie Coakley is one of its best patrons. He visits it nightly. You've also bought a little private house on Bank Street, a few blocks from the Three-Way Club. And you're the owner of five taxicabs."

"A night club, a house, and five taxicabs!" Warren Lorrimer was staring at Bracker in bewilderment. "What have I bought them for?" he demanded. "And who paid for them?"

"You've bought them," said the other, "because the Tribunal needs them to straighten out this matter of Freda Hayward. As to who paid for them, that brings me to the other reason for my visit. Everything was paid for out of the Tribunal's treasury. We are provided with ample funds. Still the drain on us is constant and considerable. We expect you to make an initial contribution of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. But take your time about it. We appreciate that just having come back, your affairs may be in

a somewhat tangled condition. If it is a drain on you—"

"It will be no drain on me," said Warren Lorrimer slowly. "My affairs are in excellent shape. My attorney has looked after them during—my absence."

"That's fine," Lyman Bracker remarked. "Paul says we are going to need a great deal of money—a great deal."

Lorrimer said nothing to that. Instead he referred back to the matter that Lyman Bracker had first brought up.

"As regards Freda Hayward, I suppose there's no alternative except to—eliminate Eddie Coakley?"

"I'm afraid not," Bracker declared firmly. He picked up his hat. "I'll see you tomorrow," he announced.

Lorrimer, alone, took stock of his complex position. He had been too impetuous; he should have investigated before he joined the Tribunal. Lyman Bracker had made it plain enough that they would not allow him, at least at this time, to withdraw. Perhaps it was because they wanted his financial support. If that were all, he would gladly give it to them, but even then he would be, in a sense, compromised and partly responsible for their acts. A wild idea flashed into his mind. He would go away, go abroad and live in some other country. But that might be worse than staying. There was no telling what crime they might commit and fasten on him; something that might result in his being extradited and brought back. Then, too, in a way he sympathized with the motives that actuated these men. They were human and altruistic. Their idea of saving this girl, Freda Hayward, who could mean nothing to them. . . .

A night club! A house! And five taxicabs!

"Sit up, Eddie," said the girl. "Sit up



His years of incarceration had, to an extent, dulled Warren Lorrimer's spirit but not his keen mind. He had a very clear notion why these had been bought in his name. He now appeared on the records as the owner and so he was definitely involved in whatever steps they took to do away with Eddie Coakley. Damn them! He'd shake himself free somehow.

He got up and went for his hat. There were some matters he wanted to discuss with his attorney, Ronald Graham.

RONALD GRAHAM was a short man of slight build with grayish, kindly eyes. His expression was constantly harried; there were so many people dependent on him, so many people who came to him to get them out of their difficulties.

He was delighted to see Warren Lorrimer. His eyes lit up as he clapped him on the back.

"You old buzzard," he said, "why didn't you let me come up and call for you when you were released?" Then his face clouded. "I've saved many a guilty man from going to prison and to think that I couldn't save you who were really innocent." He shook his head sadly.

Warren Lorrimer gripped his hand.

"You did the best you could," he said. "I never blamed you and I want to thank you for looking after my affairs while . . . I was away. Nobody could have done a better job. I appear to be richer by a million or so."

"Just luck," said Ronald Graham carelessly. "Anything special on your mind?"

and tell the driver where to go." Disgust was in her voice.

Warren Lorrimer hesitated for a moment or two. "Nothing of importance," he said. "I want you to look up some people for me. Try and find out who they are. There's a man named Lyman Bracker—"

"I've heard of him," said Mr. Graham. "He's pretty well fixed and is a director of a dozen important corporations. He was once—" Then Ronald Graham stopped abruptly.

"He was once in prison, like myself," Lorrimer finished for him.

"You knew that, did you?"

Warren Lorrimer nodded. "Put these down," he said, "and have someone in your office look them up." He gave him the names of Lyman Bracker, Dr. Tolger, Joe Anaropulos, Dennis O'Mara, and Morris Grender, which besides himself and Paul constituted the Tribunal.

There was no use in giving him Paul's name.

"I'll have them looked up," said Mr. Graham. "I can't do it myself. I've got a case coming up the day after tomorrow, a girl accused of murder. Perhaps you've read about it. Her name is Freda Hayward. There's been a lot of publicity. The man she's accused of murdering—'Red' MacCracken—was one of the most notorious racketeers in the country. There isn't a doubt in my mind but that she's innocent."

"Has she a chance?" Warren Lorrimer interrupted.

Ronald Graham shook his head despondently.

"I'm afraid not. It's a shame. She's a nice little thing. Honest in her way, despite her unfortunate background. If it weren't for a rat by the name of Eddie Coakley, I could get her off easily enough, but he's prepared to swear that he saw her shoot MacCracken. I'm positive that he and his gang did the job themselves, and this is his way of getting even with the girl. She used to play around with him."

"I know," said Warren Lorrimer.

Mr. Graham looked up in surprise.

"You know?"

"I must be going," said Lorrimer hastily.

He had a curious sense of depression, a feeling of responsibility toward this girl whom he had never seen. The Tribunal—if Bracker had spoken the truth—had it in its power to save her. But at what price? Was it to be another cold-blooded murder? For how many details, he wondered, had they been responsible before he had become one of them?

Out in the street Warren Lorrimer stood for a minute irresolute. It was as though he were in the middle of a stream helplessly being carried along by a swift current. Things were happening that he couldn't understand. The situation was growing steadily more involved, his thoughts were muddled and he felt he must get them cleared up. Possibly the information he had asked Graham to get might help. He formed a swift resolution. Monica Greffer—she knew things. She had been prepared to give him information on the night

(Please turn to page 87)



WHAT NEXT *in*

By PAMELA PINKERTON

Short hair prevails. Carefully dressed up and off the face it follows the graceful lines of the modern airplane and automobile, giving the effect of smartness, simplicity and intelligence



Courtesy Dumas Coiffures



Courtesy General Motors Corp.

Here's the streamline coiffure at its loveliest—extreme, youthful, modern, simple and vastly becoming.

HAIR styles follow the crowd.

They've gone streamline, just like everything else, and are as much a reflection of present day conditions as the latest style in automobile or airplane.

Which means that they are strikingly modern, smart, significant. The new coiffure is designed for hard wear. But it has a look of tremendous freshness, lightness, airiness. It is simple to the point of plainness, but it is daintier than any complicated arrangement of curls ever devised.

Dumas, hairdresser, at the Savoy Plaza in New York, explained this new streamline tendency. The hair is short. It is up and off the face. It is up and off the neck. The hair line shows across the nape of the neck. The bun is gone. The outline of the head is followed. The whole movement is extreme—it is modern, it is intelligent.

But what must the poor girl do who likes a bit of length to her hair, we asked Dumas.

Ah, she must try to look in the mode. She must on no account wear a bun. She must have her hair arranged in a sort of chignon, flat from nape of neck to crown, so that the outline of the head is preserved. The line must be up, up—and off the face. Up and off. Smart, simple, intelligent.

So there you are. That's the news about hair. And from what we have seen of the new coiffures, it's good news. Good looking, at any rate. And becoming.

For there is no one, cut-and-dried style for everybody in this new coiffure. It is adapted to suit the face, the head. Wide, soft waves soften the severe outline. If the shape of the forehead demands it, a thin, slightly waved bang, still following closely the shape of the head, is arranged to make the coiffure more becoming but not a bit less smart.

The streamline mode of hair dressing demands immaculately kept hair. All modes of hair dressing do, for that matter. But there is so little artificiality about this one—the quality and condition of the hair have so much to do with its smartness. So it is regular trips to the hairdresser for the girl who wants to look her best, and the most careful attention to everything that keeps the hair soft and shining and lovely.

To have heavy hair is of no special advantage. Of course, your hair must not look skimpy. But all the hairdressers stress the fact that it must be thinned out with regularity and with unsparing scissors if it is to take and keep the new lines satisfactorily. And that's another job that the hairdresser must do for you.

With the aid of all the lovely hair cosmetics—lotions and pomades, curlers and wavers and shampoos of one sort and another—a girl can do a pretty good job of keeping her hair neat. But she can't thin it out and she can't trim it, and she needs a professional wave now and again to train it in the way it should go.

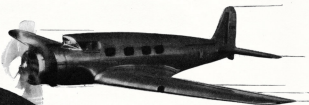
Hair brushing has gone a bit out of vogue, perhaps. That is to say, women don't spend the hours and hours

HAIR STYLES.

And here's the streamline coiffure adapted to the face that looks best with more and softer waves and with a shadowing bang over the brow.



Courtesy Dumas Coiffures



Courtesy American Airways

Paris, this season, sponsored a number of 1880 fashions, and with them came a modified 1880 method of doing the hair. There are little hats, tilting forward, that leave room for a soft mass of curls rather high at the back. These curls are not kinky, fuzzy curls. They are soft, somewhat flat, clinging closely to the outline of the head. They are entirely bewitching on certain girls, they and the demure little hats that go with them.

Something besides appearance is a great advantage in a coiffure. And that is the substantial quality that keeps it looking well.

That's a point in favor of the new, simple arrangements. They wear well. The modern girl is busy, whether she works for a living or leads a life of so-called leisure. She hasn't time to repair to her mirror every hour and "do" her hair over. She likes to hurry it into shape in the morning, confident that it will stay there all day—while she plays tennis or golf, takes dictation, goes to a committee meeting or a business conference, a bridge, or an after-office party. She can usually find time for a few corrective moments to devote to her appearance before the evening's diversions set in. But not too many, even then. So the hair arrangement that depends for its effectiveness on good grooming and a sturdy line are all in favor, so far as she is concerned.

This good grooming matter applies in all matters of beauty, of course. And the well-groomed head is an incentive to keep the whole beauty ensemble in its most attractive state. The basis of modern make-up works down to a matter of good grooming, if you analyze it carefully. Rouge and lipstick and all the other cosmetics are used to make the face look as nearly in perfect condition as possible. They make a woman look attractive, alive, healthy. They make her a part of the smart world around her.

Clothes that are well pressed, immaculately clean, in smart style—well-groomed clothes that make frequent visits to cleaner and tailor and home pressing board—are part of the well-groomed picture. The new coiffure doesn't look well unless clothes and features are all smartly well groomed.

Of course, in hair, shampooing is of first importance. For hair that is not fresh never lends itself well to any mode of hair dressing. And untidiness of hair is more apparent in this new mode than in others more ornate. There's nothing to hide untidiness or lack of fastidiousness in the new streamline coiffure.

in a lifetime that they used to brushing their long locks. A hundred strokes of the hair brush meant something when each stroke had to cover two or three feet of hair. Just the same, short hair, even hair as short as it is this year, benefits by intelligent brushing.

And here's how: Brush the hair up. Don't brush it down. For one thing, the hair must assume upward lines to be smart. For another, the scalp is more stimulated when an upward stroke of the brush is used. You'll look something like the conventional idea of a Fiji Islander as you follow the right method of upward brushing. But your hair will be the better for it.

Besides training the hair in an off-the-face direction and giving the scalp a good massage, this upward brushing lets the air in under the hair. And this does good to both scalp and hair.

A hundred strokes a day may not be necessary. But try fifty. Fifty good, vigorous strokes, each one intelligently directed to give the hair a real airing, the scalp a real massage.

Hat fashions always influence hair styles. Obviously enough. You can't wear a heap of curls and a hat both on top of the head at the same time. The new hats are especially smart on the new coiffure. The hat is worn high enough so that it does not rumple or disturb the wave—or, to put it the other way, the wave is placed low enough so that the hat does not disturb it. And when curls are worn they, too, are low enough to keep out of the hat's way.

The Riddle of the Marble Blade

(Continued from page 22)

she set her course as far as possible from the Inspector's reasoning. "Well, I'm ready to go with you to the studio," she decided.

The taxi swirled southward with the incessant howling of newsboys rising at every corner. It was not often that the papers got hold of a story like this. "HIS HONOR FINDS CORPSE" was the way the tabloids handled it.

"His Honor finds corpse and ye dicks find murderer—or go back to walking a beat somewhere in Queens," Piper remarked.

"They say the suburbs are much more healthful," Miss Withers retorted wickedly. And then they pulled down a narrow street beneath the Ninth Avenue El, in a noisy, dirty world of garages, rooming-houses, and lofts.

They finally stopped before what appeared to be an ancient stable. In spite of the neat brass plaque which read "Atelier Dravid" Miss Withers looked dubious. But the Inspector swung out of the taxi.

An exceedingly unemployed-looking person, in rusty clothing, casually detached himself from a railing and walked past. "Nobody come in since I got here," he granted out of one corner of his mouth.

"Swell!" said Piper. He led the way to the big double door, and tried a key in the padlock. It worked.

"Stole it from the stiff's pocket," he informed her. "Come on in—it's only housebreaking."

THERE were mingled smells of clay, trockdust, cooking and decay at which Miss Withers wrinkled her nose. Piper closed the door behind them and cast his flash around the rudely furnished hall.

There was a stairway at the left and a locked door directly ahead of them. "Let's see what's in here," Piper suggested. He tried another key, and then led the way down a long passage. The place still looked more like a barn or warehouse than a dwelling, in spite of the overalls and other rough clothing which hung here and there. At the far end the hallway made an abrupt turn to the right, and opened through a doorway into what at first seemed to be a starless and skyless outdoors. From somewhere came a cool draft. . . .

Piper cast his flash ahead, and Miss Withers squeaked. It shone full in the face of a black and evil giant who was crouched as if ready to spring down upon them. A second glance told the school-teacher that the giant was cut of black stone, and eternally unable to move.

All around them loomed the vast, monstrous creatures which spoke of the odd genius of Dravid, the sculptor. Some of them, like the black giant, were roughly shaped. Others, most of them in ghostly white marble, were finished and ready for exhibition. Farther on were various smaller projects, some of them barely begun—models in clay and the like.

Walking softly, almost unwilling to speak for fear of disturbing the massive and brooding figures, Miss Withers and the Inspector pushed farther and farther into the vast studio.

Once Miss Withers paused to admire a fanciful interpretation marked with

a brass placard—"The Fates," which consisted of four crouching female figures completely hooded in marble drapery. A moment later the Inspector, stepping back suddenly from an unlovely model of Judas Iscariot writhing beneath a thorn tree, lost his balance on a pile of rock chips and staggered into the outstretched arms of a vast and naked lady who loomed back at him. . . .

"Oh!" he gasped. Then, to Miss Withers, "You know, I almost said 'pardon me!'"

He raised his flash, and they both stared at the voluptuous, Junoesque figure—truly a caricature of desirable womanhood. Her robe had just slipped to her feet and her face wore an expression of invitation, of evil knowledge—all in all, here was sculptured with all the clear cold hardness of marble, a woman perfect in her fleshiness.

"Isn't she something?" Piper remarked gaily. But Miss Withers was frowning.

"Hussy!" she accused the marble figure. Then—"He must have known some woman—much too well," she analyzed.

But they were not to spend the evening in admiration of the murdered sculptor's genius. From somewhere in the upper regions of the place sounded the shrill ringing of a telephone.

"Say—I'd like to answer that!" Piper told her. "Maybe if we hurry. . . ."

They ran back past the Fates, past the Judas and the black crouching giant, and came into the little hallway again.

Here both stopped short, and Miss Withers, who was normally a person of calm and restrained temperament, gave her second squeal of the night. Coming toward them was the white marble woman which they had just left in the studio!

She seemed smaller, and she was wearing a white negligee which hardly concealed her large and Junoesque figure—but it was the same woman. Even though this woman had red lips, and walked smoothly. . . .

She was not surprised to see them. "I am Mrs. Gretchen Dravid," she said. "If you're the detective, you're wanted on the phone!"

Piper gurgled a bit. "But—but my man said you hadn't come home!"

SHE pointed past them. "Perhaps your spies don't know of the studio entrance—it opens on another street," she explained. "I heard you come in the front door, and I'm sure I don't mind your poking about. But I wish you'd have your telephone lists somewhere else. I've stood all I can today!"

Without a word, the Inspector followed her back down the hall, through the front entryway, and up the stairs. Miss Withers, taking one look over her shoulder at the looming black giant, threw her dignity to the winds and scampered after them.

"The telephone is in here," said Gretchen Dravid, leading the way to a chaste and modernistic bedroom. She sprawled out on the bed, where she had evidently been comforting herself with smelling salts, a gay-looking novel, and a bottle of wine.

"She's the type of woman who never sits down," Miss Withers told herself. Piper was looking for the telephone. "Lucky I left word where I was going," he remarked, "for this must be a matter of life or death."

Gretchen had to point out to him the location of the phone, which was reached by lifting the silken skirts of a saucy French doll. The Inspector looked somewhat abashed, but he finally got the instrument in his grip.

"Hello!" he barked. "There was a long pause, after which he said 'Yes' five times and 'My God' twice. Then he put down the phone and stared at Miss Withers with bewildered eyes.

"They've found the murderer?" Miss Withers prompted.

He shook his head. "It's Dee Bryan, the girl who unveiled the statue," he told her. "She's been kidnapped!"

At which, for no particular reason, Mrs. Dravid was hysterical again.

IT was not until five that afternoon that Park Commissioner Bryan was able to leave the blood-smeared statue in Central Park. Miss Deirdre Bryan had waited, in spite of his efforts to make her drive on home without him. "It's a terrible thing for a girl your age," old Mike had told her.

"It's the most thrilling thing that ever happened to me," Dee insisted. "And if you make me go home I'll disown you." Dee had stayed, all through the fruitless questioning of the crowd, the preliminary examination by Dr. Bloom, and the removal of the body.

Then, and not until then, she drove her father along the boulevard in a smart new Packard roadster. They came out of the park onto Fifth Avenue, and headed downward.

"I've got to change my office," Bryan told her. "Pull up here a moment, and have a cigarette."

Dee was surprised at this, which was a breach of discipline. "Your driving shows that you need a sedative," her father told her. He gave her a cigarette, and then headed down Fifth Street to where a Childs' gleamed white.

Bryan was barely in the phone booth when Dee caught a glimpse of the tall young man with the beard. He was walking very fast down Fifth Avenue. Instantly she remembered something.

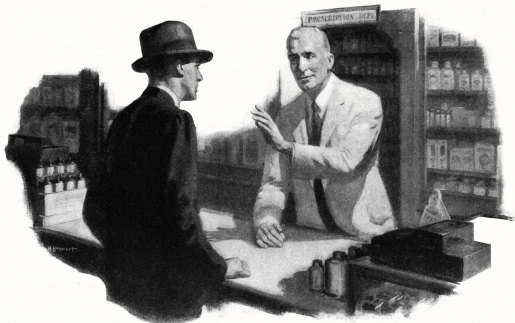
This was the man who had stood near the newsreel sedan at the unveiling—the man who before the unveiling had stared up at the hooded statue with a wild and fascinated horror on his face. He must have known, then, what was hidden from the rest of them!

Suddenly she knew what she must do! Though her knees trembled and she found difficulty in breathing, she slipped from the car. Her rouged cigarette dropped to the leather upholstery; she left the motor running and the door open. . . . but minor matters.

The young man who was hurrying away into the twilight was either a clairvoyant—or a murderer! And Dee Bryan was going to find out which.

Tense as a steel spring, eager as a cat at a mouse-hole, Dee trailed her (Please turn to page 48)

Appendicitis Warnings



"I can give it to you, of course. But if I were you I wouldn't take anything for it without the advice of a doctor. Those abdominal pains may mean appendicitis."

THE symptoms of appendicitis vary. Almost always, continued pain and tenderness in the abdomen are the first indications of an acutely inflamed appendix. Of course, not all intestinal aches are caused by appendicitis, but anyone who has continued, unrelieved abdominal pain, especially if it is accompanied by nausea or vomiting, needs competent medical attention at the earliest possible moment and not self-medication.

If it is appendicitis the use of a laxative is dangerous. It stimulates violent intestinal action and may spread the inflammation, cause the appendix to rupture, or induce peritonitis. Moreover, the sufferer should not be given food, drugs or medicine of any kind unless prescribed by the attending physician.



Send for your doctor immediately if there is any suspicion of appendicitis. In making his diagnosis he may find it necessary to make one or more blood cell counts or to observe your temperature for a few hours, keeping you quietly in bed under close observation.

Your doctor may decide that the attack does not clearly denote appendicitis and can be relieved without an operation. But if it is a clear case of acute appendicitis, he will probably recommend an operation within the shortest possible time.

Performed by an expert surgeon, early in the attack, before the appendix has burst or peritonitis has begun, an operation for acute appendicitis should cause little concern.

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

FREDERICK H. ECKER, PRESIDENT

ONE MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y.

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The Riddle of the Marble Blade

(Continued from
page 46)

quarry. He stopped and looked cautiously around before he descended the stairs to the BMT subway station at the corner of the park, but Dee was across enough to walk briskly across the street as if there were not a thought in her head except a desire for tea at Rumpelmayers.

Then, as he went out of sight, she doubled back and slipped down the farther stair. A southbound train swung past and stopped noisily. She saw the bearded young man enter the middle door, and she managed to slip into the end door of the same car.

He leaned against a pillar, though there were many seats. Dee crowded between a fat woman and a couple of stenographers and picked up a discarded extra which shrieked of "The Statue Murder." Casually she turned to the sports page, now and then peering over the top at the man she was trailing.

He was not over thirty, she decided, in spite of the beard. Hatless, dressed in rumpled clothing of excellent cut, he looked lost, appealing, and exceedingly romantic. He stared constantly out of the windows at the bleak ugliness of the subway cavern which flashed past. At 42nd Street he suddenly left the car, and she almost had to tread on his heels to get out before the door closed. But he did not look back.

"I wonder if I have the nerve to ask him," Dee breathed. But he was already hurrying up the stairs. At the top he turned left and made for the IRT turnstiles. Luckily she had another nickel, and got through in time to see him go down the downtown stair of the other subway.

HERE the platform was crowded with homeward bound office workers. Dee saw the bearded young man buy a tabloid and stuff it into his pocket. Then he moved along.

He was standing on the express side of the platform, but as a local train pulled in he turned suddenly and slipped through a closing door. For a moment Dee imagined that he cast a triumphant backward glance at her, and then she realized that if her suspicions were correct he was running away, not from her, but from everybody.

She managed to get her arm in the door of the last car, and the automatic release flung it open long enough for her to crowd inside. The man with the beard was two cars ahead, and there was too much of a crowd for her to force her way forward even if she had dared to risk being noticed again.

But she thought of another idea. There was room on the rear platform, and she paid no attention to signs forbidding passengers to ride there. Shoving the door open, she took her stand at the gate, where she could at least see if her intended quarry got out on the platform.

Penn Station . . . 28th Street . . . 23rd . . . 18th . . . 14th . . . slowly the train emptied, and was refilled, but still no sign of the man with the beard. Sheridan Square came next, the heart of Greenwich Village. But this was another blank. The train started forward with a jerk, and then she saw him!

The young man with the beard and the hunted eyes had concealed himself behind a pillar on the platform. Now he was hurrying toward the stair which led to the street.

He knew, then! Yet he was not looking back toward Dee. "It must be the police he fears," she told herself.

There was nothing for it now—she was gone, with his terrible secret. Yet Dee's Irish was up. She had followed him this far, and she was going to track him down.

Climbing up on the gate, she balanced herself a moment and then sprang toward the platform from the rapidly accelerating train. She landed sprawling, overturned a tin container full of old newspapers, and then rose dizzily to her feet. The train roared into the tunnel.

"Me and Tarzan!" said Dee Bryan proudly. And then, as the straggling crowd stared open-mouthed, she ran briskly past them and up the stairs.

Her quarry was luckily in sight, walking fast in the direction of the North River. "Now to see where you live," Dee remarked, not without triumph, "and then a phone call to daddy and the cops. . . ."

He went on, with Dee keeping as close behind as she dared—one block, two, three . . . and yet another. They were coming into an odorous and unsavory region, the borderland of the Hudson waterfront. Overhead the elevated roared deafeningly.

The man with the beard hurried past a building where Dee caught a glimpse of a sign "Atelier Dravid." There was a lounge across the street, but Dee did not realize the significance of his hump-toed shoes. To her all policemen were bright cheerful brass buttons and carried nightsticks.

Around the corner and along a side street went the bearded man—and then suddenly he disappeared into thin air.

Dee stopped, stared all around and up into the narrow lane of sky, but there was no sign of him.

She went ahead softly, and then she saw the door. It was a large door, almost large enough to permit the passage of a truck, and it was open. Everything would have been different if the door had been closed. But it was open, suggesting untold possibilities.

DEE bolstered up her courage, and walked briskly past the door. Nothing happened. Yet the man she had pursued must have gone through that door! If she could only be sure!

It seemed so easy to her—just a peek at the door. After all, this was New York City. There was a taxi at the corner, and some children were noisily playing cards on a nearby stoop. And an open door isn't like a closed one. It's so easy just to take a step inside, and as long as the door is open, a person can turn around and come right out again. . . .

Dee took a deep breath, and peeked in at the door. In the murky twilight she caught a glimpse of looming marble figures. "Why!" she told herself, "this must be a side door to the studio!"

Drawn in unsophisticated wonder by the mystery of the mighty stone images, she took a step inside . . . and then another. . . .

She knew that it was madness as soon as she heard the soft closing of the great door behind her. She turned, and her red mouth opened in a silent scream as the darkness engulfed her, rising like water over her head. . . .

"WHAT are you going to do?" demanded Miss Withers.

"Blanked if I know," admitted the Inspector. "But I've got to drop this murder case and do what I can on the Bryan kidnapping. That girl has to be found! I suppose the Federal detectives will be hornin' in any minute. . . ."

"Fiddlesticks," Miss Withers came back. "Can't you see? The kidnapping of that girl is part of your murder case! She must have known something or seen something. . . ."

"What?" demanded Piper, not without reason.

Miss Withers admitted that she didn't know. "But while Miss Dee Bryan was holding that rope at the unveiling, she must have involved herself somehow. . . ."

"But what could she see that a thousand others didn't see?"

Miss Withers shrugged. "If I'd been there, I could tell you, no doubt. Saving that, I'll have to have a talk with an eye-witness. Can you suggest anybody?"

"The Mayor—but he's hard to reach. Her father—but the Commissioner is so upset at losing his daughter he can't think straight. Says he left her in her roadster and came back five minutes later to find her wiped off the face of the earth—"

Miss Withers shook her head. "No, I don't want to talk to any of the official personages involved. You don't happen to know any newspapermen who were there? They usually see what's to be seen. . . ."

She was suddenly cut short by a bellow from the Inspector, who turned and burst back into Gretchen Dravid's bedroom. Rudely he seized the telephone from beneath the skirts of the French doll, and barked a number. In a moment he was back, jubilant.

"It's all fixed," he said. "And I've got you an eye-witness that is an eye-witness. Just wait!"

As Gretchen Dravid, widow of the sculptor, watched with wide and slightly bleary eyes, the two oddly-matched sleuths went scurrying out of the studio and into the street, where a taxicab was noisily summoned. Fifteen minutes later Miss Withers was hustled into the Times Square offices of the Paradox News Service. She was whisked to an upper floor, elbowing into a pitch-dark room which seemed to be well provided with leather chairs, and after a brief delay the Inspector joined her.

"Just out of the drying racks," said a voice somewhere above and behind them. "No cutting down yet, but here we go. . . ."

Then a great white square appeared before them, and a moment later the projection machine cast upon the screen a flickering picture of a public gathering. With a gasp Miss Withers recognized the Mayor, who was beginning his speech—and beyond him, a great draped figure, and a pretty dark-haired girl nearby who clutched the release cord. Everywhere else

(Please turn to page 50)

Seven Years Apart— Yet Both have Skin equally Young

Beautiful Vanderbilts examined
by Dermatologist for Skin Age
... both get 20-Year-Old Rating



Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt

famed for her brunette beauty. Her skin was rated by the dermatologist as being practically the same as it was eight years ago. Mrs. Vanderbilt says: "The thorough cleansing Pond's Cold Cream gives keeps my skin clear—fine-pored—seems to wipe away tired lines."

Miss Frederica Vanderbilt Webb

is an enchanting young blonde with a skin exquisitely fair. The dermatologist declares it to be "a perfect skin of twenty." She says: "I've never had a coarse pore, blackhead, or blemish. I'm sure this is due to Pond's Cold Cream."

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OLD skin is loose, lined, crêpy—its texture is thick and coarse—its color dull—sallow—dark.

These conditions, dermatologists report, are due to loss of tone—impaired vasomotor circulation—failure of glands to produce youth-sustaining oils.

When the two charming Vanderbilts, pictured above, were examined by a dermatologist, their rating was the same. In

actual age, they are seven years apart.

Both of these two noted society beauties are faithful users of Pond's Cold Cream. Could there be more convincing proof that this cream actually keeps the skin young—the young skin at the height of its loveliness?

Cleanse your skin with Pond's Cold Cream every night. Pat it in briskly. It will sink into the pores—float away impurities that linger there. And every morning freshen your skin with this fragrant luxurious cream.

Then your skin will look alluringly

young—clear—silken. Powder and makeup will smooth on evenly and lastingly.

New quick-melting cream

Pond's now makes a liquefying cream. It melts instantly on the skin. It contains the same specially processed oils for which Pond's Cold Cream is famous.

Send coupon for a 3 days' supply of Pond's Cold Cream, 3 other Pond's effective beauty aids and powder.

POND'S EXTRACT COMPANY, Dept. L, 48 Hudson Street, New York City. . . I enclose 10¢ (to cover postage and packing) for a 3 days' supply of Pond's Cold Cream with samples of 3 other Pond's beauty aids. I prefer three different Light shades of powder ☐ I prefer three different Dark shades ☐

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Test your skin for these age signs. Your mirror will tell its true age. Specially Processed Oils in this cream correct Skin Faults:

CORRECTS SKIN FAULTS USUAL in the 20's



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Blackheads and large pores



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Laughter lines



Little defects

FIGHTS OFF AGE SIGNS USUAL after 30



Crêpy skin



Worry lines



Sallowness



Sagging tissues



Discolorations

The Riddle of the Marble Blade

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there were people, crowding up against the base of the statue, even a line of heads before and below the camera . . . in the background were the trees of the park and, far to one side, the spires of Manhattan.

Miss Withers and the Inspector listened to the Mayor's speech—they noted the last minute bustling of the master of ceremonies and saw, but could not hear, his hurried change of instructions to the Commissioner and to his daughter.

They watched, spell-bound, while Dee Bryan nodded to show that she understood her instructions. They saw her glance right at the camera, and then up at the muffled statue.

THEY heard the Mayor make his clever recovery of the climax of his speech, and heard him read again the telegram "from Manuel Dravid" . . . expressing his regrets at not being able to attend the unveiling.

"That was a quickly thought-up lie of His Honor," said Piper. "You got to hand it to him."

Miss Withers did not answer. She was staring with wide blue eyes at the white, glaring screen. If there was a detail she missed, it must have been a very slight one indeed.

Directly before the camera, and somewhat out of focus, she could see the back of Gretchen Dravid's head. That head, and the full neck and shoulders, were unforgettable . . . The Mayor was winding up his speech now, but Gretchen Dravid still was calmly staring straight ahead.

At that moment Miss Withers realized that the woman could not, by any possible chance, have had the slightest premonition of what hidden thing lay beneath the covered statue.

Yet Dee Bryan, the lovely black-haired colleen who held the rope, was staring in the direction of the Dravid woman with an expression of incredulous wonder on her face. She began to tug at the rope.

"Stop it!" shouted Miss Withers. And suddenly the moving figures on the screen were frozen into immobility.

"She isn't looking at Mrs. Dravid!" Miss Withers told the Inspector excitedly. "She's looking at the young man beside the Dravid woman—the hatless young man with the rumpled coat!"

Only the back of his head and his ears could be seen, and those none too clearly because the camera had been focussed some distance further off. But even now, it was clear enough that he was staring up at the statue as if he expected the thing to topple over and crush him beneath its weight—crushing away a little.

"And that," declared Miss Withers, as the screen became alive again, "that is what Miss Bryan happened to see."

They watched the end of the film—saw the canvas fall from the statue, and disclose the fearful crumpled burden which grotesquely was held in the arm of the sculptured Washington.

"You're wrong, Oscar," said Miss Withers softly. "The answer to this puzzle isn't How—it's Where!"

"You mean the setting for the murder? But maybe Dravid was killed somewhere else, and brought to the statue. . . ." Piper stopped. "No, because the blood was on the marble.

Bodies don't bleed after death, so Dravid was killed while climbing on his own statue. But I don't see. . . ."

"You will," Miss Withers told him. "The film was ending—but not before they both saw the young man who had stood beside Gretchen Dravid as he turned quickly and melted out of range—and not before they both saw that he wore a soft brown beard!"

They came out of the projection room, and Piper thanked the official who had arranged for the preview. "I hope that we'll get permission to release the film tomorrow," the man was saying. "It'll be the biggest scoop since we caught the death plange of those men from the Macon. . . ."

The Inspector said that he had to call his office. Miss Withers suggested another telephone call that he might make.

"But that was only a graceful way out for the Mayor. . . ." Piper began. "He didn't really have any telegram from Dravid."

"Ask him, anyway," Miss Withers insisted. He hurried away to the telephone, and for the first time that day the school-teacher had an opportunity to study the marble fragments which she had juggled around with so much difficulty. It was very much like working a jigsaw puzzle, one of her minor vices, and by the time the Inspector returned she was surveying her results with considerable triumph.

THERE was a little table in the waiting room of the newsreel offices, and upon this table Miss Hillegard Withers had spread out her bits of rock. The Inspector stared at them.

"Well—whatever have you got there?"

"The weapon," she told him. "Weapon? But I just talked to Doc Bloom. Dravid was killed by being stabbed with a marble blade, which Bloom just took out of his neck. A nasty weapon, too. . . ."

"Exactly," Miss Withers nodded in agreement. "And that's fitted right on the end of this!" She pointed to her joined fragments, with a few gaps representing a stone hammer and a stone sickle with the end of the blade missing. . . .

"When Dravid was struck, the blade broke off in his neck and the rest of the weapon, along with its hammer, fell to the base of the statue and shattered. The murderer didn't have time to hunt for the pieces, or else he thought they didn't matter. . . ."

"Good Lord!" But still Piper didn't understand. "The statue was complete as it stood, wasn't it? Anyway, forget that! I just talked to His Honor, as you suggested—and he says yes, that telegram was on the level. He'd forgotten clean about it until Dravid didn't show up—but it really was delivered to him this morning. So Dravid never meant to be on the scene."

"If he sent the wire," Miss Withers reminded him.

"But he did! I called the Western Union at Penn Station office and got a description of the sender. It was Dravid—at eleven o'clock last night. Luckily the night staff have just gone on duty again, and one girl remembered seeing a young man with a beard standing in the doorway last night waiting, while Dravid wrote the wire. They went away together. . . ."

Miss Withers nodded. "And just

when was Dravid sent last—alive?"

"His wife told one of my men that he left home late in the evening without saying where he was going. He had a bundle under his arm, and he seemed very excited and almost gay . . . as if he was up to something."

"So he was," Miss Withers agreed. "Let's get out of here. I don't suppose there's any news about the missing girl?"

"Well, she has been reported seen cloping on the Chicago plane, and she's been noticed driving a taxi on Staten Island and walking across a road in Bronxville. But I'm afraid it's the usual thing."

"There's nothing about this case which is unusual," Miss Withers retorted. "I'm beginning to see part of it, but it's that girl who worries me. And another thing—I don't remember my mythology as I should. How many Fates were there, according to the ancient Greeks?"

"Eh? How should I know?" Piper looked blank. "Four, I guess. Yes, there were four. . . ."

"And their names were—"

"Athena, Porthos, and Aramis," the Inspector surprised her by answering. "Or something like that. . . ."

"Oscar!" They're the three musketeers," she snapped back. "The real Fates were Atropos, Clotho and Lachesis, if I'm not mistaken. But there were only three Fates!"

"Four!" insisted Piper stoutly. "Why, there were four figures in the statuary group that we saw a little while ago in Dravid's studio!" He stopped short. "Hillegard! What's the matter?"

For Miss Withers was having some difficulty keeping her teeth from chattering. "Three Fates," she repeated dully. "One who spins, one who holds the thread, and one who cuts with the dreadful shears. . . ."

Piper shook her by the shoulder. "Lord, woman, you're hysterical!"

But she shook her head. "Not quite, Oscar! Not hysterical, just a blind, silly old woman." She suddenly turned and ran, like some strange, long-legged bird of prey. "Come on!"

"But where?" insisted the Inspector as they burst out into the lights of Times Square. Miss Withers told him, with a voice which sounded weary.

"In the case, we need the boys," said Piper resolutely. "There was a police signal box on the corner, and he unlocked it and spoke into the mouthpiece, 'Emergency, and I mean emergency,' he said."

THEN they climbed into a taxi, but before it had gone two blocks in the direction of the Greenwich Village, the wail of several car sirens sounded behind them, and from then on they raced through town like Admiral Byrd returning from the Antarctic, only much faster. There was no deluge of ticker tape and scrap paper, but a driving squall of rain made up for that.

The sirens were stilled as they raced down Ninth Avenue and came to a stop outside the studio of Manuel Dravid. Miss Withers made for the door.

The Inspector caught her arm, and pointed out a light in an upper window. It was the widow's bedroom.

"I know," Miss Withers came back.

(Please turn to page 52)



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The Riddle of the Marble Blade (Continued from page 50)

"She doesn't matter, though. I suppose she was really the cause of the whole thing. But women like her make their own hell on earth, given time enough. You'll never get anything on her. But come on—unlock the door or break it in. I want to find the Bryan girl—or what's left of her!"

They raced down the long hallway, and came at last into the high-vaulted studio with its grim looming figures. Even a hard-boiled copper might well wince as his flashlight struck the grinning face of the black, crouching giant, or the tortured figure of Judas in the thorn tree. But it was before the statue group labelled "The Fates" that Miss Withers paused.

"I'll be something!" gasped Piper. "There were only three figures, after all!"

"There are only three," Miss Withers corrected. "Which means that we are too late!"

Then she felt a draft across her ankles—just as she had done on their other visit to this world of the stone figures. But this time there was the faint sound of a closing door.

"Quick!" she gasped. "There's another way out of here—find the door!"

Blue-clad officers scurried like flies among the great implacable figures, their flashlights slashing the darkness in frenzied and futile endeavor. It was five minutes, at least, before the great doorway was discovered and flung open.

They plunged out into the street, and stopped short. Across the way was a lounging figure in an old overcoat.

"Mullins!" yelled the Inspector. The plainclothes cop snapped to attention. "What are you doing here?"

"Why—nothing. But I had an idea that maybe this studio place had an exit on the side street here, so I was just having a look. . . ."

"All right . . . but who did you see leave by this door?"

Mullins shook his head. "Why, nobody, Inspector. Nobody that doesn't belong here, that is. . . ."

"For God's sake, man, speak up! Who did you see?"

"Why, there was nobody but a guy named Owens, who works for the sculptor. A nice young guy with a beard."

"You saw him leave, just now?" Miss Withers pressed on.

MULLINS nodded. "He came out of there with a big white statue on his back, and dumped it into an old car that was waiting at the curb. I figured he had to deliver it somewhere. . . ."

"Remind me to recommend Mullins for promotion to a school for the feeble-minded," gasped Piper, as he led the way in a race for the squad cars. "If we only knew which way the fellow went."

"North—to the Bridge!" Miss Withers breathed. "Can't you see? He'll throw it over the rail!"

"Can't you go any faster?" de-

manded Piper of the driver, who was already doing seventy through crowded West Side streets. But it was fast enough, all the same.

At the foot of 57th Street a ramp leads up to the elevated auto highway, later connecting with Riverside Drive. As the squad car raced up this ramp Miss Withers screamed, and pointed ahead.

There in an ancient open touring car, she had glimpsed a single young man who was driving like a maniac—and there was a white bundle in the rear seat.

The squad car leaped forward, sirens howling—and the lone driver knew that the long trail was over. He turned back for one glance, showing a face paper-white above his beard, and then suddenly jerked the wheel in a reckless death leap toward the thin wooden railing and the street fifty feet below. . . .

THERE was a crash of wood as the touring car plunged through. The police car slowed, with a terrific screech of brakes, and Miss Withers shut her eyes.

But she opened them again—for the fugitive car was hanging awkwardly halfway through the railing, with its front wheels spinning in thin air.

The bearded young driver stood up suddenly, his face a mask of defiance and desperation. Then he turned and dived over the side of the car—down, down, down. . . .

"Best thing he could have done," the Inspector was saying, as his men worked the touring car back from its perilous position. "With two murders on his conscience. . . ."

Deft hands were unwrapping the cleverly draped sheets which had given the soft young form of Deirdre Bryan the semblance of a draped marble statue. Then somebody yelled, a shrill exclamation of amazement and glory.

"She's breathing!" "And so she was. 'You can't kill the Irish with one whack on the back of the head,' Piper told Miss Withers proudly after the ambulance had borne Dee Bryan away. 'She's been knocked cold for two hours or more, but the doctor says she'll be right as rain in a couple of days.'"

"I'll teach her not to follow murderers home," Miss Withers agreed. "Well, Oscar, it wasn't as bad a tangle as I feared."

"Bad enough so I'm still entangled," he returned. "I catch on that Owens killed his boss Dravid, but why?"

Miss Withers didn't try to tell him until they were in a nearby Coffee Pot. Then she spread out her rock samples on the counter. "You didn't study these sufficiently, Oscar."

"Study them? Just broken pieces of some statue or other. . . ."

Miss Withers rearranged the roughly assembled fragments, so that the head of the hammer came inside the curve of the sickle. "Does this mean anything more to you?"

"Huh? No—why, yeah! That's the symbol or whatever you call it of the Young Communist party. Only the other day there was great excitement because one of the CWA mural artists tried to slip it into the design of a wall painting he was doing for the new building on Ellis Island!"

Miss Withers nodded, in triumph. "Right! Well, Dravid was trying to perform the same sort of practical joke on the city—by slipping a marble sickle and hammer into the hand of his own statue of George Washington! It would be great publicity, too, on account of the newsreels and the Mayor's speech. But he couldn't risk being there, so he sent a wire begging off, and then sneaked up to the park last night with his assistant to help him. It was no easy job to get those extra pieces of carved marble into the outstretched hand of the statue. . . ."

"And Owen, being patriotic and all that, hit him in the back of the neck with the sickle? And then just walked off and left the body there under the canvas?" Piper looked dubious.

"I told you that the important part of this case was the location of the murder, and not the weapon. Why was Dravid stabbed while mounted on his own statue—why, unless he was making a last minute change?" Miss Withers took a large bite of ham and egg. "But I wonder about the motive, Oscar. Perhaps young Owen thought he was being a patriot when he seized the opportunity and killed Dravid. A little overemphasis on the patriotic side, perhaps. But my own idea is that his motive was that big white woman who was married to Dravid. Remember the statute that her husband made of her? It was a terrible revelation of her true nature—and I'm very much afraid that, whether Owen admitted it to himself or not, that woman was really the reason why it happened that a great surge of hatred swept over him when he was alone with Dravid at the statue last night."

"JEALOUSY causing a rush of righteousness to the head, eh? When it was really only a rather silly practical joke that Dravid was trying to play on the city." The Inspector finished his coffee, reached for a toothpick, and then tossed it away under Miss Withers' disapproving stare. "Seems a lot of shooting over small potatoes, to me."

The school-teacher agreed. "The only lucky one is Miss Dee Bryan," she pointed out. "When that inquisitive and charming Miss gets out of the hospital she'll have the unique memory of being fourth among the Three Fates!"

"She won't remember much, she was out cold all the time," objected Piper.

Miss Withers' blue eyes twinkled. "I have an idea that, being Irish, Dee Bryan will have a grand rousing story to tell, all the same—one that will get better as she grows older."

And again Miss Withers was right.

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The Lispering Man

(Continued from page 27)

actually. All he had to do was turn the door knob and step out."

"Good Lord!" I said. "Then why didn't he do it? Do you mean—he didn't know it?"

The detective shrugged. "He could easily have ascertained." He drummed his fingers on a chairback. "At any rate, he died a very ugly death, it would appear. Suffocation isn't pleasant, I imagine. We must be certain, however, that he really suffocated."

There was a soft step behind us; then Joe, the China boy, was standing at our side.

"Solly," he said apologetically. "Who kill?"

JIMMIE LAVENDER clapped him on the shoulder. "We don't know yet, Joe," he answered. "Mr. Gilruth,"—he pointed at me—"thinks he killed himself."

The Chinese shook his head, "Dam' lie," he said, with complete courtesy. "You find out."

"You betcha," answered Lavender. "Yep, I'm going to find out."

He caught the servant by an arm as he was turning away. "Look here, Joe, who was with Mr. Cartwright, last night, before he went away?"

"A lady," answered Joe, with steady eyes. "Mister Cartwright going to mally her."

"Ah!" said Jimmie Lavender. "Miss Proctor?"

"Miss Plector," said the China boy. "What time was that?"

"At ten o'clock she go away."

"And Mr. Cartwright with her?"

"Only downstairs. When he come back, he tell me, 'That is all! I go to moving picture.'"

"The deuce you did! A little late for the pictures, wasn't it? Well, have it your way! You sleep here on the premises? I mean, in this house?"

"In back."

"The back room, you mean? Was Mr. Cartwright here when you got home?"

"Mister Cartwright come away."

"I see. Thanks very much! That's all." The servant vanished from the room, and the detective turned to me.

"Very clear now, isn't it, Gilly?" he chaffed. "Or don't you think so?"

"If Cartwright had a quarrel with Miss Proctor about Penfield," I began, "our case—"

"Is strengthened," finished Lavender. "Well, Gilly, I think there was a quarrel."

"Then Joe can tell us all about it." I protested. "Let's call him back and ask him."

He shrugged and shook his head. "Joe may or may not be telling us the truth. He may or may not have heard them quarreling. I prefer to ask Miss Harriet Proctor herself."

As we talked, I had a momentary glimpse of Joe, the China boy, furtively listening in another room, although pretending to be doing something else.

Lavender also saw him. "Hey, Joe!" he called. "We want you. The police are coming soon. They want you to identify the body."

"All right," said Joe, and went to get his hat.

"You won't need that," said Lavender. "We're only going up to Mr. Penfield's penthouse."

If he expected an exclamation of

surprise, he was disappointed. Joe laid his hat upon a table, without emotion, and indicated that he was ready to accompany us.

IN the Penfield living-room, the collector was talking with a young physician. The body in the corridor had vanished. Mrs. Penfield, the doctor told us, had had a serious shock and was not to be disturbed.

"You'll get the devil from the corner and the police for removing Cartwright's body," Lavender observed. "You should have left it where it was."

The young physician flushed. "I hope not," he replied. "Mr. Penfield thought there was a possibility that life remained. It was impossible to try the restoration exercises in the corridor. I've sent for the pulmonologist, although I'm certain it's quite hopeless."

"I'm afraid so," agreed Lavender. "However, I'm glad you've notified the police. It was imperative, and I was going to suggest it. How long would you say the fellow was in that closet, Doctor?"

"I can only venture an opinion. Suffocation to some extent depends on the strength of the heart; and naturally, in a case like this, on the depth of the closet. I'm afraid his oxygen was practically gone in a short time."

"Six hours, perhaps?"

"I should be inclined to think so. Certainly he would have been dead in twelve."

"But you can give a certificate, Doctor," clamored Penfield. "It was accidental, after all; and, whatever he may have been up to, I knew the man! In the circumstances, I am willing to forget the—the—vandalism."

The physician shook his head. "I'm afraid an inquest must be held," he replied, with a certain asperity; and Lavender heartily agreed.

"To what do you attribute Cartwright's vandalism?" asked the detective, looking at Penfield.

"God knows!" The collector was somewhat distracted. "Perhaps jealousy—of some sort! He may have heard her talk so much about me—and the collection—and the vases—Oh, damn it, I don't know! Motives are always so dreadfully obscure."

"At any rate, I'll see Miss Proctor," Lavender remarked. "Her opinion of the motivation may be interesting."

"I won't permit it," snapped the collector. "It's absurd! There's no need to drag her into this."

She was with Cartwright last night, before this happened," said Jimmie Lavender. "I think they quarreled."

"What if she was? What if they did?" Penfield's eyes fell for the first time, consciously, on the China boy. "What's this boy doing here?" he asked.

"It occurred to me that the police would want to question him," said Lavender. "He's Cartwright's valet."

"Know Mister Penfield velly well," contributed the China boy, as if he were acknowledging an introduction.

"It's ridiculous," said Penfield irritably. He took himself in hand and continued with greater courtesy. "The truth is, of course, Mr. Lavender, I've dragged you into this without quite realizing where it was going to lead.

Naturally, I didn't dream that Cartwright was the man who smashed my vases. In a way, he's somewhat of a friend of mine—more than an acquaintance, at any rate. The fact is, I'm willing to let the whole thing drop."

"Too late for that, I'm afraid," said Jimmie Lavender. "You may drop me, of course, at your convenience; but there is a strange body on your premises, and the police are now entering the case." An authoritative knock sounded on the door panel at the far end of the old-world corridor, and Penfield jumped. "They are, in fact, outside the door," concluded the detective, gently.

CLENDENNING CARTWRIGHT was, of course, quite dead. The efforts of the police pulmonologist squad had been useless. Lavender had had no doubt from the beginning—nor, probably, had the young physician—but he watched them toil over the horrible, lifeless thing that had been Cartwright, until the terrible task was over.

In the vaulted living-room, where still lay the shattered fragments of the mediaeval vases, a bulky police lieutenant looked at Jimmie Lavender, and asked a question.

"What the hell do you make of it, Jimmie?"

"It's very puzzling," admitted Lavender, not quite truthfully.

Lieutenant Andrew Clyde was awed by his surroundings. "It's all perfectly crazy," he exploded, with a gesture that embraced the whole fantastic ménage. The splendor of the place annoyed him. He resented it, without knowing precisely why.

"Well," said Lavender, "whatever may be back of it, Lieutenant, there's little doubt that the 'guilty' man—if there was any guilty man—was Cartwright, and that he is now dead. Don't you agree?"

"I'm not so sure," growled Clyde. "Suppose this Penfield's whole story is just a lie, and his wife's protecting him by sticking to it. There's one thing you can't get by—the fellow wasn't locked in! You pointed that out, yourself. Why the hell didn't he come out? I'll tell you why! Because he was already dead when Penfield stuck him in there!"

But he looked at Lavender as if he didn't really believe it.

"Well," he snapped, "how about it?"

Lavender laughed. "This is your case, Lieutenant," he protested. "I understand your point of view. There's bound to be an autopsy. Why not wait until it's over? If you find poison in Cartwright, or any other indication of murder, I'll cheerfully agree with you."

"But where's the ruby?" continued the lieutenant. "It isn't on the body. Has Penfield had a chance to go through this Cartwright's pockets?"

"Oh, yes! Plenty?"

"Then he's got it?"

"He may have. I honestly don't think so."

Lieutenant Clyde snorted and puffed to his feet. "If I didn't know you were a square shooter, Jimmie, I'd think you were double-crossing me," he said, and stamped out of the room.

Joe, the China boy, was sitting de-

(Please turn to page 56)

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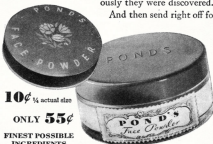
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The Lispering Man

(Continued from
page 54)

jectedly in a chair in the adjoining chamber. He had withstood a cross-examination that would have shaken an ex-convict, but it had taken something out of him. He looked at Lavender a little wistfully. Somewhere at the back of the garden, we heard the harsh voice of the disgruntled lieutenant; he was asking loudly just when he would be permitted to talk with Mrs. Penfield. The softer voice of the young physician was replying, but we could not catch his words.

Lavender put up a finger, and the Chinese servant glided to his side.

"LOOK here, Joe," said the detective, in a low voice, "I want you to answer a question. Mind what you told the policeman. Did Mr. Cartwright and Miss Proctor quarrel, last night? I mean, did they have a fight?"

The black eyes looked steadily into Lavender's gray ones. There was a struggle going on behind them.

"Just little," said the China boy. His tone was deprecating. "Quite small!" He indicated with his hands. Apparently the fight had been no bigger than a minnow.

We endeavored not to smile. "I see," said Lavender, seriously. "That was after Mr. Cartwright received his telephone call—wasn't it?"

The black eyes wavered and came back. The boy's head slowly nodded. "Good!" cried Lavender, elated. "Now we're getting on. One more question, Joe, and then we're through. When you were up here last night, and stole the ruby out of that Buddha's belly, was anybody else around?"

It is not true that a Chinaman does not display emotion. The question was a thunderbolt. I was as paralyzed by it as was the Chinese servant. The boy's lip quivered; there was a wild fear in the dark eyes. Then the sleek black head was being violently shaken.

"No, no!" he gasped "I am not here! I do not—Oh, no, no!"

Jimmie Lavender gave an impatient shake. "Be quiet, will you?" he grated. "Do you want that big policeman to come back? I only said you stole the ruby. Now pull yourself together." After a moment he held out his hand. "Give it to me!"

The China boy surrendered. From somewhere in the waistband of his trousers, he produced the stone. It came forth with the celerity of a conjurer's trick. Then it gleamed sordidly in Lavender's palm. The detective slipped it into a waistcoat pocket. There was a glint of humor in his eyes.

"You're a hell of a Chinaman, Joe," he said. "To rob a Buddha!"

"Not Buddha," said Joe sullenly. "Just little Indian god. Joe Christian Chinaman."

"A hell of a Christian, then," smended Lavender. "Now answer me. I asked you if anybody else was here."

The sleek black head was vigorously shaken. "Not nobody!"

"You didn't go to a moving picture, did you?"

"Solly, didn't go."

"What time was it when you came up here—by the fire escape and servants' stairs?"

"Was hapass-leven."

"Half-past eleven! And there was

no sign of anybody in the room." He took the servant's word for it. "All right! Go back there and sit down; and keep your mouth shut. Maybe I'll get you out of this."

Lavender plucked the ruby from his pocket and turned it in his fingers. Then with a gentle toss he sent it flying across the room; it fell among the logs in the gaping fireplace. "In the grate," smiled Jimmie Lavender. "Curious how I came to overlook it, in my first search!" He added, in a low voice: "I thought there was something worrying the beggar, when we caught him trying to listen to our conversation. I've had an eye on him ever since we brought him up. If he's looked at that image once, he's looked at it forty times; and every time it scared him."

I managed to find my tongue at last. "What the devil does it mean?" I asked. "Why did he come up at all? Last night, I mean."

"HE knew that Cartwright had preceded him," said Lavender, "and he knew why. His instinct told him there was likely to be trouble. He knew that Cartwright and Miss Proctor had quarreled. So when he came back early, from whatever picture it was he didn't go to, and found his master missing, he was worried. I think he liked Miss Proctor, and was afraid that she had followed Cartwright up here—after she was supposed to have gone away. It's all a big confusing web. He had to use the fire escape, of course. He wouldn't come the front way, and the freight elevator would have been too noisy. He says there was no one here; but in point of fact Cartwright was here—only poor Joe didn't know it!"

"You mean—?"

"Yes, Cartwright was in the closet, suffocating. It's horrible to think of it, with help so close at hand. But it's the only solution that will fit the curious situation."

"What is the truth?" I asked, and looked him in the eye.

He put up his hand to stop me. "Easy, Gilly! Here's the lieutenant, coming back. The doctor too. I'll be glad to see the last of both of them." The police officer approached, snarling.

"I'm off, Jimmie," he snapped. "Mrs. Penfield is still muttering, and they're going to get a nurse. God knows when we can get a word with her. We've got Penfield's story, anyway—what he's got. The corner will be hers. Shortly. I'm glad you're on the job. If anything develops, let me know."

He tramped out of the place, followed by his men, and shortly afterward the doctor also went away. Penfield was with his wife.

"I go 'way now," said Joe, the China boy, with sudden alacrity. He ambled into the room and stood beside us, looking at Lavender inquiringly.

"All right," said Lavender. "Go 'way."

"Solly," said the China boy. There was something else upon his mind, it seemed. It came out. "Much thanks!" he finished.

"Don't mention it," said Lavender. And he added significantly: "To anybody!"

The door closed softly behind the Chinese servant; and again I looked at Lavender. But now it was Penfield who interrupted. He came in hurriedly from the garden and dropped into a chair.

"They're gone," he said.

"Yes, the police are gone," said Lavender. "But there'll probably be an inquest and a lot of trouble. It's quite a nasty mess. I know the truth about it, Mr. Penfield. Let's get it straightened out between us, before Lieutenant Clyde arrests you on a charge of murder."

It was a harrowing session for Penfield.

"I have been employed by you to solve this mystery," said Jimmie Lavender, "and I am ready to submit my report."

He lighted a cigarette and leaned back in his chair. In a back room, beyond the garden, a dead man lay silent upon a fourteenth-century bed, not far from where a woman tossed and muttered.

There was an intolerable pause.

"TO begin with, Mrs. Penfield lied," said Jimmie Lavender, almost briskly. "That was the only tangible clue I had to guide me. She had lied, and I wondered why. The story she told you, at the Blue Pavilion, and that later you told me, was not the truth. There was no lispering man, no telephone call, and the vases were probably broken by herself. It was evident from the beginning that she was covering something up; but in themselves the vases were hardly that important. When Mr. Cartwright's body was discovered in the closet, it was obvious that it was Mr. Cartwright she was covering up. I'm sorry," added Lavender, "but I think you must have realized it yourself, when Cartwright popped out of the closet."

Penfield's nails were digging into his palms; his knuckles were white.

"I want to know what happened," he said.

"I assume that Cartwright had been seeing her for some time. Last night she telephoned him, while Miss Proctor was in his apartment. Miss Proctor apparently had her own suspicions. There was a quarrel. Probably there had been quarrels of the sort before. At any rate, Miss Proctor went away, and Cartwright joined your wife. Then there was another row. Or, or the other of them smashed the vases—I imagine it was Mrs. Penfield; quite deliberately, of course, and in a towering passion. No doubt he was trying to break off relations; and, anyway, you had received them from Miss Proctor. I rather think Mrs. Penfield had heard of Harriet Proctor's virtues, from you as well as Cartwright, until she was fairly sick of hearing them. I'm not excusing Mrs. Penfield," said Jimmie Lavender, with a little shrug. "I'm trying to explain her."

After a moment he went on. "She came to her senses in a little while. I think, and regretted what she had done. Then there was an interruption. She heard someone coming, somewhere along about half-past eleven. Coming up the back stairs, quietly! Naturally, she thought it was a servant. (Please turn to page 58)

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The Lispering Man

(Continued from page 56)

ant who had heard the quarrel and the smashing. She had no wish to be caught with Cartwright at that hour, alone; nor he with her. This is the only explanation of Cartwright's curious action in stepping into the closet and remaining there, when at any time he might have opened the door and come out. She pointed out the closet, in a panic, and hustled him into it. She told him to keep quiet until the servant had gone away, then to come out and leave the house. She probably told him that she was getting out immediately. Then she grabbed her hat and fled.

"Jimmie Lavender paused. 'Now bear in mind,' he continued, after a moment, 'that she had no reason to suppose that Cartwright would not escape in a little while. The servant would not investigate the closet, since it required a key, unless he heard a noise inside. All Cartwright had to do was to keep quiet and wait for sounds to cease outside—at least until he felt sure the servant had gone away. That was the situation. But it was not one of your servants, after all. The intruder, we have discovered, was poor Joe, the Chinese boy looking for his master. He had anticipated trouble, it appears, and was worried.'

LAVENDER frowned. "Joe, I am sorry to say, did not go away at once. Your museum fascinated him. He hung about for some time, when he failed to find Cartwright; and all that time, Cartwright, cut off from air and possibly slightly stupefied by whatever liquor he had drunk—either he or in his own apartment—was rapidly falling asleep in the closet. It is the only conceivable explanation, and I am convinced it is the true one."

Penfield's face was white. "If we had investigated—" he began.

"Yes, if you had looked into the closet when you returned last night, there might possibly have been a chance to save him; I don't know. But, of course, it would be quite the last thing Mrs. Penfield would suggest to you. And, in fairness, it must be admitted that she thought he had escaped long since. Her horror and surprise, this morning, when the closet was discovered, were too genuine to be acting. Her mistake, from one point of view, was in hurrying off to you with that cock-and-bull story about a telephone call and a man who lisped. But she was in a panic, and there were the broken vases to be explained. She should have come back in twenty minutes and released Cartwright."

Lavender shrugged. "But, after all," he added, "I can't expect you to be sorry for Cartwright!"

"I am," said Penfield miserably. "I'm sorry for both of them. 'Good man!' cried Lavender. 'There is no reason, though, why all this hideous background should be dragged out at the inquest. The ruby was not stolen. It's in the fireplace there, where I discovered it a little while

ago. And the vases were broken by Mr. Cartwright in a foolish escapade, in which he unfortunately lost his life!"

The collector's eyes brightened momentarily. "Yes," he muttered, "it's up to me to protect them both—and Harvey Proctor too. You'll help me?"

"Of course," said Jimmie Lavender. Suddenly he bounded to his feet. "Good God!" he cried, "What's that?"

An eerie, horrible laugh had floated to us through the open door that gave onto the sunlit garden. And then the high-pitched patter of a woman's voice at the peak of some hideous delirium.

"I murdered him," the screaming voice repeated. "It was I—I—who killed him!"

Lavender dashed across the living-room and out into the garden like a man possessed. I was half dead, his heels and the collector was pattering behind me. We ran like madmen—and we were all too late.

She was climbing up onto the parapet, and her agility was catlike and bewildering. She was rising at full height against the foreground of blue sky and floating cloud. The sunlight struck through her flimsy garments and revealed the outlines of her splendid body.

Below, the city murmured and the treetops swayed.

Our footsteps seemed to sink into the grassy fire of warning broke from Lavender's lips; he hoped to make her turn. Then his last leap brought him to the parapet and his hand clutched wildly into space.

The parapet was no longer habited. Lavender looked downward, and swiftly drew in his head, a hand across his eyes. A long scream rose upward from the pit; but whether it was the last cry of Millie Penfield or the sudden terror of a spectator, we never knew.

Then a dreadful silence seemed to fall upon the world, and I looked into the sun and found no explanation of the human tragedy.

"JIMMIE," I said, when once again the world seemed good, and we had put the shocking scene behind us, "there's still one thing I do not understand."

"Only one, Gilly?" questioned Jimmie Lavender. "How did you know that Mrs. Penfield was lying? You said you knew it from the beginning; and that it was your only clue at first. But how could you be certain?"

He laughed. "The lispering man was obviously an invention. Surely you remember what he said? 'Hello, Millie? Bert calling! I'm at the Blue Pavilion. I want you to join me right away.' But in her eagerness to describe him he did not exist. Mrs. Penfield overplayed her hand. She was too clever—or not clever enough. She should have said a man who stuttered. Just try to lisp that line, Gilly! There's not a sibilant in it. Go on—just try it on your lips!"

More short stories by Vincent Starrett will appear in future issues of this magazine. Watch for announcements of new and thrilling stories by this master writer.

The Well-Known Works

(Continued from page 39)

of any group of employers. Immediately after one of these claims, Mr. Cohen would be called on to help his friend. The complainant would go to the hospital with a fractured skull or be found dead in a roadside ditch and the police would again be persecuting William. Oh, life is full of troubles. Listen, Casey. . . .

SOME eighteen hours later Mr. Fortune again gazed on Mr. Latimer, though Eddie did not see his late assailant. William was skulking in a darkened hallway directly across the street from the gay-lit entrance of the Elite Dancing Parlor (100 Lady Hostesses).

Eddie strolled gayly up and down, bedazzling the citizenry with his pristine splendor. From his hideout, William bent a stern gaze upon him. The Elite, in keeping with the city's mid-night closing ordinance was discharging its crowd of slick-haired youths, itinerant working men, and a sprinkling of uniformed sailors. A lull, and the hostesses came down the stairs, most of them stepping into cars for a round of partying or a busman's holiday of pleasure dancing.

Then William snapped alert, for Bee Morgan came down the stairs on ludicrous four-inch, spike heels. She stopped at the curb, applying lip-stick to lips already over carmined, and looking cautiously up-street and down. Then she crossed, toward William, but farther up the street, out of his line of vision. He turtled his neck out. There was Eddie Latimer, obviously not interested. That gentleman was, for a change, innocent. A cavalier, indistinct in the gloom, stepped out and took Bee's arm. They turned, coming toward William's hiding place.

"I'll have a look at the monkey," opined the lurking one and popped from his hideout to confront them.

Bee Morgan's cavalier was a dapper coffee-colored Filipino!

That staunch Caucasian, Mr. Fortune, was stricken motionless with amazement, just the split instant necessary for the tan gentleman to wheel like a polo pony and make tracks, his highly polished shoes flickering. Bee goggled, her spit-curls stinging straight out from surprise, and then she decided that certain urgent matters called her elsewhere. She craved naught but distance between herself and her violent ex-lover when he was aroused. William made after the Filipino.

But, the hare was fleet; the hound had indulged in too many beers and it looked as if the race would be to the swift. Bee's Filipino had the early foot, as the racing people phrase it, and William was badly off pace and not racing to form. Perceiving this his flame flamed the more. He had only intended giving the burnt-sienna gentleman a severe kicking, but now he pulled up, and reaching under his arm, unlimbered a piece of ordnance that should have been mounted on artillery wheels. He pointed this after the flying one and squibbed off half a dozen shots. No man can outrun a .38 Police Positive.

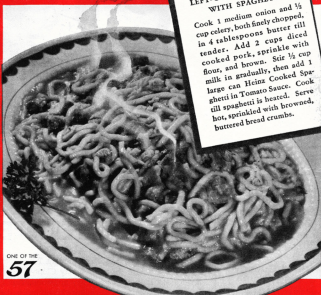
The Filipino faltered in mid-stride, threw up his arms like a man going off a spring board, and slithered to a falling stop in the gutter, his light topcoat gleaming, woolly and bright, under

(Please turn to page 60)

A NEW LEASE ON LIFE FOR LEFT-OVERS

LEFT-OVER ROAST PORK WITH SPAGHETTI

Cook 1 medium onion and ½ cup celery, both finely chopped, in 4 tablespoons butter till tender. Add 2 cups diced cooked pork, sprinkle with flour, and brown. Stir ½ cup milk in gradually, then add 1 large can Heinz Cooked Spaghetti in Tomato Sauce. Cook till spaghetti is heated. Serve hot, sprinkled with browned, buttered bread crumbs.



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(Continued from page 59)

the street lamps. William, profiting by the experience of other and like incidents in his career, jerked his hat down over his eyes and stormed away through a cross-aisle.

After sailing two blocks at full steam, he heard a police siren, and, being wise in the ways, promptly slowed down to a saunter. Officers in flying squad cars have a habit of shooting at running men and asking questions of the corpse. He now hailed a cab and followed his routine procedure; a search for his counsel, one Bourke Hanlon, or to be familiar with the legal gentleman, "Ropes" Hanlon. He was certain he would need Mr. Hanlon because of the presence of Eddie Latimer at the scene. Mr. Latimer, he was sure, would promptly tell all, as melodrama puts it, for the majority of the gentlemen who follow his profession are police informers. It grants them a certain amount of immunity from rough handling. Mr. Fortune, in the shadows of his cab, cursed Eddie Latimer.

Now finding Mr. Hanlon entailed a search of the better class speakasies, and it was outside of one of these that William spied a celebrated badman. A thief, famous on two continents, must be a tall steel-eyed indomitable hero, or a slinky, shifty-eyed rat, depending on which school of fiction receives your patronage. But Fred Castle, or Ferdinand Kessel, was neither. He was a plump, sandy-haired Swiss. A dapper little man sensitive of his lack of height, wearing high heels. He had the chubby, harmless face of a Poland-China piglet, but devils of cocaine waved danger signals in his pale eyes.

The idea leaped full-formed into William's mind.

"Glad to see you, Fred," he greeted, pumping the small man's hand. "That was a bad break the boys got on that Berwyn payroll job, wasn't it?"

This was reference to a fiasco in which the police had received advance knowledge of a hold-up and had exhibited their usual lack of sportsmanship. They had ambushed the mob, leaving two of them dead and two others now nursed their wounds in durance vile. One had escaped and that venomous old lady, Dame Rumor, whispered that the lucky one was Mr. Castle. Mr. Castle was extremely desirous that this fact should never be proved, for he already was a two-time loser, and by the rule of the new habitual criminal law, he needed just one more tag to make it three times and out, nevermore out.

"Did somebody say it was my mob?" asked the robber mildly enough, but releasing William's hand and turning a shoulder to him.

"By no means," denied William swiftly, "but if you meet any of the mob tell them I know who rattled on them. A pal of mine at the Bureau tipped me."

"Yes?" said Mr. Castle or Kessel, "who?"

"A canary named Eddie Latimer," said William, "I just saw him up near the Elite on Clark Street."

"I know him," barked Mr. Castle, signaling for a cab, "the dirty stool! Be seeing you, Bill!"

"That," decided Mr. Fortune, looking after the vanishing cab and enjoying the pleasant feeling of a man

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who has found someone else to do his rat killing, "should put a period after Eddie Latimer. Now where in the hell is Hanlon? That's the way with a lip, never around when you need him."

CONTINUING his hunt, he ran Mr. Hanlon to earth in the swanky Arts and Professions Club and, peculiarly, Mr. Hanlon was nearly sober, thanking his stars for this unusual condition he led the lawyer into a private dining-room and swiftly explained his predicament.

"The facts," said the legal gentleman. "Let's get the facts."

He telephoned hither and yon to certain sources of information that were peculiarly his own. A certain coroner's deputy talked, then a police stenographer in the Homicide Department, then a clerk in the State's Attorney's office followed suit. All these various gentlemen gave out information that they had sworn sacred oaths, hand on the Book, to keep firmly locked within their several breasts. When Hanlon turned from the phone he was aware of the facts. Mr. Fortune had completely killed one Aurelio Suarez, 24 years old, medical student, part-time bus-boy, and full-time Lothario. Also, Mr. Hanlon was informed, one Eddie Latimer, witness to the crime, had sung his song, swearing to the Homicide Squad, under Sergeants Druby and Howard, that Mr. Fortune had perpetrated this murder. The squad was even now engaged in assiduous search for William Fortune, or as their John Doe warrants chillingly state, "his body."

"Billy," said the lawyer, "one of these days you are going to get into trouble."

"This," answered his client, "will do until real trouble comes along."

"Let me see," Hanlon rose, striding the length of the room, pleading his case before an imaginary jury. The man was pure theater. Even now, with no audience, his tone was dramatic, his gestures violent, now fist in palm, now arms out-flung, now pointing a finger. He thrust the finger in William's face.

"Certainly you killed this Flip," he informed the startled thug, "and why not? Why any man with red blood in his veins would have killed the filthy scum who seduced his sweetheart, a girl fresh from the sweet cloistered life of the convent, a girl who knew nothing of the vileness, the—"

"Bee?" queried Mr. Fortune without illusion.

"No. No good," Hanlon decided. "The prosecutor would put her on the stand and take her reputation apart and that wouldn't look so hot. I'd pull an alibi defense if it weren't for Latimer and Bee. She'll howl if they put the screws on her and he sang already."

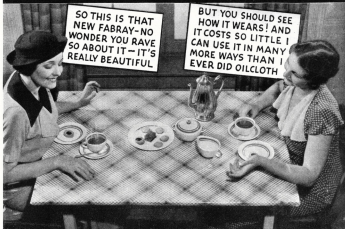
"Don't worry about Eddie Latimer," his client assured him, thinking happily of the violent Mr. Castle. "He won't be around to testify."

"Another?"

"I didn't do it myself," Bill said proudly. "I tipped Fred Castle to a little phony information. I told Fred that Eddie sang on that Berwyn job." "That settles that," Hanlon said, secure in this knowledge, for he had acquaintance with Mr. Castle, that gentleman being one of his clients. "Now about Bee?"

(Please turn to page 62)

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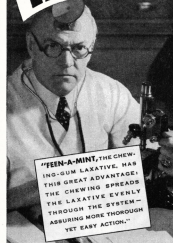
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(Continued from page 61)

"She'll go places," William said. "O.K. Then it's an alibi defense. But it will have to be a good one. These juries are getting tough. They won't hold still for these speakeasy-gambing-joint alibis any more. Let's see."

He resumed his pacing, thinking aloud. William buzzed for a drink. Why worry? That's what we pay Hanlon for, isn't it? Well, why worry? Suddenly Mr. Hanlon stopped shortly, smacked fist into palm with a mighty thwack and again pointed that threatening, dramatic finger at William.

"Billy," he said. "You had a liaison with a married woman."

"Sure," Mr. Fortune agreed easily. "What's a liaison?"

"A date," said Mr. Hanlon, coming down to his client's speed in English. "Who said you killed this egg? Let them prove it. I'll take their witnesses apart. Then we spring the alibi. Make it dramatic. Give the jury a thrill. You were out with a married woman. How can you kill a guy over on Clark Street at the same time?"

"It was on Goethe Street," Billy told him.

"How do you know where it was?" barked his lawyer. "You weren't there. You don't know anything about this. Fix that fact in your mind. This chap was killed at midnight on September 4th. At that exact moment you were out with this married sweetheart of yours, hoping for the day when these clandestine meetings should no longer be necessary, when your true love should be able to rid herself of this husband who does not understand her and you two shall unite."

"Where was I with this doll?" "That's just a detail. Let me see? Movie? No, that means other witnesses. Speak! No, that puts a bad complexion on the affair and I want this jury to go overboard on the idea of a sweet wholesome girl with a brute for a husband. Here it is. Lincoln Park. Good. The 'moon and you,' gag. That will slay them. There certainly can't be any harm in a couple of lovers that stroll beneath the moon in the park. That's the location. Lincoln Park, at, say, where the bridge crosses the North Culvert. That's a favorite meeting place for lovers. William, you certainly have a lawyer."

"I pay for him. Who furnishes the doll?" the practical one wanted to know. "And how much?"

"Detail," the lawyer said in the grand manner. "I'll take care of it. Now let's go down and surrender and put up a bond."

"Good," approved Bill. "I don't want Druby and Howard to pick me up on the street and put a plea in my head on the way to the station. There ought to be," added the hoodlum, "a law against these guys hitting people the way they do."

THEY proceeded to the Detective Bureau and there Mr. Hanlon surrendered his client. A judge with pressing political obligations got out of bed and came breakfastless to court to set a bond. William posed prettily for the press photographers. Mr. Hanlon gave out a press statement. He said nothing in a great many words and William was temporarily free. Free to go about the manslaughter, arson, assault and battery that, with him, were a business.

Bee Morgan, entering her hotel—at least it had a hotel license—was not surprised to find a visitor waiting in the lobby. Mr. Casey Cohen lifted his eyebrows in invitation and she walked over and sat down beside him. She did not look forward to the coming interview but it was decidedly unhealthy to antagonize Mr. Cohen.

"Hello, Sweet," said Mr. Cohen with no saccharine in his voice. "Nice day, ain't it? Boy, this is the kind of a day that a guy would enjoy out in California. If I didn't have business holding me down—Bee, why don't you go to the Coast, you got nothing holding you."

"I been there," Bee said sullenly, "I don't like it."

"It grows on you, Bee. I know a guy was dying here, and now out there he is as healthy as forty thousand dollars in bonds. You don't look so good, Bee. The Coast would be a healthy place for you. And I wouldn't let anybody know where I was going. Kind of lay low and get a good rest."

"It costs money," she said still sullen.

Mr. Cohen's eyes raised in mock surprise. "Money? Don't be silly, Bee. I got plenty money. I'll give you five hundred and you take a lam for the West Coast. Quiet like."

"Five hundred ain't enough. You tell Bill I want at least a grand. I got to live, don't I?"

CASEY dropped his eyelids suggestively. "It ain't absolutely necessary. By the way, I ain't seen Eddie Latimer for some time. Let's see, the last time was the night that Filipino got killed on Goethe Street. I wonder what ever happened to him. No, Bee, a grand wouldn't go. Five hundred, yes. And the Coast is a nice place. Lots nicer than the drainage canal, for instance. Did you ever see a stiff after he or she was fished out of the canal?"

"Gimme the five hundred. I'll go. It's a hell of a note though, when a girl gets run out of town just because she gives some hoodlum the air. Gimme the five hundred."

"Four-twenty," Casey said softly, "the other eighty went for this railroad ticket. Here it is. And just so you don't make no slip, a couple of boys will pick you up about this time tomorrow and drive you out to Englewood and put you on the Chief there. Just so nobody sees you leaving the Union Station. And if I were you, Bee, I'd be careful how I acted on the Coast. Don't shoot off your trap. You know," he added suggestively, "we have friends out there and sometimes they get pretty rough."

"I've been around," Bee said, "I know what it's all about. Gimme the money. And if I never see you or Billy Fortune again it's still about twenty years too soon."

"That's a good girl," said Casey Cohen with soft suggestion in his voice. "You're smart. So long."

A murder trial is like a championship prizefight in many respects. There is too much at stake for the referee to quibble over minor fouls. The lawyers know this and ride rough-shod over the judge. Judge Fry scowled at the lawyers; he scowled at the spectators. He disliked murder trial spectators as a class. A manly crowd of thrill seekers who haunt courtrooms to revel in the great gamble the defendant is taking;

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to gain a taste of how it feels to gamble with all the chips on the table.

Mr. Nayland, opening for the State, announced that two very important witnesses had vanished and insinuated that the defense could explain this act of magic. Mr. Hanlon leaped to his feet and volubly resented this accusation. In fact, Mr. Hanlon seemed carried away by his feelings for he strode dramatically across the courtroom and shook his fist under Mr. Nayland's nose. The prosecutor shrugged out of his coat and advanced on Mr. Hanlon. The spectators leaned forward. This was quite according to schedule.

"Gentlemen . . . that will be all," Judge Fry scowled. "Never mind holding the gentlemen, bailiff, nothing is going to happen. For twenty years lawyers have been threatening each other with fistcuffs in my court, and I have yet to see a knockout or a drop of blood. We will now proceed. There will be no more ten-twenty-thirty dramatics, if you please. We are here presumably to try a murder case. Continue, Mr. Prosecutor."

The legal gentlemen bowed to the court and to each other. They murmured faint apologies for losing their tempers but the warning they heeded not at all. They had a public, these two, and their public must see a good performance. Mr. Nayland continued. After him Mr. Hanlon, opening for the defense, spoke thirty minutes, eloquently and passionately.

Then Mr. Nayland placed on the stand one Veronica Lessing, rooming-house keeper. Under examination by the State, Mrs. Lessing stated that on the night of Sept. 12th, about midnight, she had seen one man pursuing another down Goethe Street in front of her establishment. Right, as she phrased it, before these very eyes, the pursuer stopped, drew a pistol and shot the fleeing one dead.

Mr. Hanlon, cross-examining the witness, forced the admission that on certain rare occasions Mrs. Lessing took in paying guests who were, at the moment, without baggage. Pursuing this trend, Mr. Hanlon persisted in addressing the lady as Madame, until she lost her temper, blew up, and climbed down from the stand thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the jury. The twelve good men and true grinned broadly at her.

Mr. Nayland produced a working man, one George Kostis, laborer, a roomer at the home of Mrs. Lessing. Mr. Kostis' testimony bore out Mrs. Lessing's story. Mr. Kostis made a positive identification of William as the man who shot and killed Aurelio Suarez.

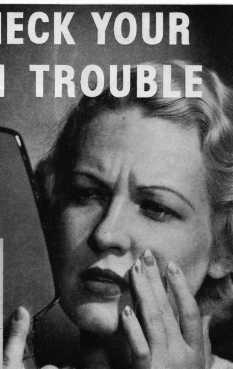
Cross-examining, Mr. Hanlon brought out the fact that Mr. Kostis suffered occasional attacks of vertigo. He enlarged on this disease until, when Mr. Kostis got down, the jury doubted whether the sufferer could have recognized his own reflection in a mirror, let alone a running man at night.

Mr. Nayland then produced a cab-starter who testified to seeing Fortune's flashy roadster with its distinctive license plate number near the scene of the crime.

Hanlon matched him with a greasy mechanic in overalls, who testified that he, personally, had dismantled the motor of the defendant's roadster on the night of the 3rd and that it was, (Please turn to page 64)

✓CHECK YOUR SKIN TROUBLE

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- ☐ BLACKHEADS
- ☐ DRY SKIN
- ☐ OILY SKIN
- ☐ TINY LINES
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When pores become paralyzed they become enlarged and conspicuous. Blackheads and whiteheads appear. The whole breathing and functioning of the skin is impaired and it becomes lifeless and drab and either too dry or oily. It is simply impossible to have a beautiful skin with "Paralyzed Pores".

A Penetrating Face Cream!

Lady Esther Face Cream is unique for the

fact that it penetrates. It does not stay on the surface. It does not have to be rubbed in or massaged in, which only stretches and widens the pores. You just smooth it on. Almost instantly, and of its own accord, this face cream finds its way into the pores. Penetrating the little openings to their depths, it dissolves the accumulated grime and waste matter and floats it to the surface where it is easily wiped off.

Also Lubricates the Skin

As Lady Esther Face Cream cleanses the skin it also lubricates it. It resupplies it with a fine oil that does away with dryness, harshness and scaliness and makes the skin soft and smooth and flexible. For this reason face powder does not flake or streak on a skin that is cleansed with Lady Esther Face Cream.

At My Expense!

I want you to try Lady Esther Face Cream at my expense. I want you to see the difference just one cleansing will make in your skin. I want you to see how much cleaner, clearer and more radiant your skin is and how much smoother and softer. Write today for the 7-day supply I offer free and postpaid. Just mail the coupon or a penny postcard, and by return mail you'll get a generous 7-day supply of Lady Esther Face Cream.

FREE

(You can post this on a penny postcard!)

Lady Esther ()

1000 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Illinois.

Please send me by return mail your 7-day supply of Lady Esther Four-Purpose Face Cream.

Name

Address

City State

(If you live in Canada, write Lady Esther, Toronto, Ont.)

Copyright by Lady Esther, 1934



On top of the world!

CLIMB A BUILDING! Walk through air! Conquer space! Anything seems possible, nothing beyond reason, when digestion is good, when irritating little pangs aren't ragging your nerves.

Beeman's is a delightful and pleasant way to help keep digestion in order. For Beeman's is first of all a delicious chewing gum with a different flavor—cool and refreshing—kept fresh always by the unique new Triple Guard Pack.

Chew Beeman's for its savory goodness, its fragrant freshness. Buy a package today.

Chew
**BEEMAN'S
PEPSIN GUM**



The Well-Known Works

(Continued from page 63)

to his positive knowledge, still dismantled on the night of the 4th. This witness was due to appear on William's bill as . . . Special Service . . . \$100.00

The State produced four more identifying witnesses, each of whom the defense attorney maligned to the best of his ability.

Mr. Nayland then placed on the stand a meaty-faced captain of police who swore that he had often arrested the defendant while the latter was in possession of a pistol. This was stricken out after Mr. Hanlon's emphatic objections, and Mr. Hanlon proceeded to take the captain apart. Mr. Hanlon forced the captain to admit that he had often been sued for false arrest. He deftly forestalled the officer's attempted explanation that no copper is worth his salt unless he is sued often for this violation. This repression angered the captain who, if the redness of his neck be a criterion, was a man very easily angered. The captain, unasked, offered, in a loud voice, the observation that the town would be a better place to live in if certain public improvements were made. The most important of these were, in the captain's estimation, the removal of William Fortune and all his type of labor-racketeers. This was, of course, stricken off the record but it reached the jury's ears and Nayland grinned.

THEN Mr. Hanlon decided it was time to wipe the grin off the prosecutor's face and at the same time provide an alibi for his client. He made an imperceptible sign and a young clerk from his office who had been lounging in the rear of the courtroom left hurriedly. And now the alibi, in the person of an attractive brunette, came down the aisle. Following her was a sullen-faced individual.

William leaped to his feet and protested her appearance. She threw her arms about him and wept a little, daintily. William raged at Hanlon shouting that he had expressly forbidden his counsel to bring the lady into court. The sullen-faced individual surpassed all previous records for glaring, gazing at William with venom in his eye. Bailiffs restored order, forcing William back into his seat. This was all per instruction.

On the stand, the young lady identified herself as Mrs. Janet Fundy, occupation, housewife. Hanlon, putting the questions to her, was pleased with himself. He had dressed her carefully for this show and she made just the right appearance, not flashy, but then again not dowdy. Just the nice respectable type of pretty young housewife that one sees shopping on a Saturday afternoon or strolling on the boulevard pushing a trim baby carriage. The jury was sitting up. Out of the corner of his eye, Hanlon noted happily that Mr. Nayland's smile had been replaced by a worried frown.

Mr. Hanlon then showed the lady a legal paper and asked her if she recognized it. Yes, she did, it was the first notice in the divorce case of Fundy vs. Fundy. This was no news to Mr. Hanlon for he had a friend draw up the papers in this suit merely to use them as a stage prop. She was, she said, divorcing her husband. Mr. Hanlon then assured the judge that his next question was pertinent and asked the

lady if she intended remarrying when she was freed to do so. She was, she said, and pointed out Mr. William Fortune as the prospective partner of her next search for marital bliss. Mr. Hanlon asked one more question. Had she seen William the night of Sept. 4th?

She certainly had. She had met William on the North Culvert of the Lincoln Park Lagoon and they had talked there until well after one o'clock in the morning. She could not be mistaken about the date because she remembered very well that she had attended a recital by Roland Hayes that afternoon at Orchestra Hall and she still had the program, dated the 4th. Also, the 4th had fallen on a Saturday which was her husband's payday and he had come home intoxicated and very disagreeable. Mr. Hanlon turned her over to Mr. Nayland.

That gentleman ranted at her but made no inroads on her testimony. Perjury always sounds better than fact because the recitation is well rehearsed. Mr. Hanlon then put the sullen-faced gentleman on the stand. This gentleman, glaring his dislike at his prospective successor, admitted under Hanlon's rough assault that the lady who shared his life and pay check had been absent from his bed and board on the night in question till long after one.

The jury was alert now, pleased at playing a part in the unfolding of this pregnant drama. The scene and the characters had changed in the twinkling of an eye. When prosecutors they had been ready to cast William in the role of Cain, suddenly he had become Galahad. And the girl was a honey. And her husband abused her, the big heel. It was rather grim justice that he had been forced to help establish an alibi for Galahad even though Galahad was presumably decorating a firm with an ancient royal headress. Well, men of the world must take a broad view of these things.

They took a broad enough view, in that they brought in an immediate verdict of not guilty despite Mr. Nayland's hysterical closing speech. William leaped to his feet, pumped each of their hands and went away a free man, to celebrate that freedom. Judge Fry omitted the thanks to the jury and strode away into his chambers. Here he delved into a bookcase, and removing a book titled, "Suit in Trover with Malice Count," brought forth a bottle. He poured a drink and held it up to the light. Squinting through the amber fluid he could see his little plaster of Paris statue of that much imposed upon myth, Justice. Beneath her blindfold the judge could see, he was sure, a vague dissatisfaction darkening the lady's face.

"WELL, if it ain't the Dolly sisters. Mama, that man is here."

The Four Hundred Club doorman gained little by this levity for the leader of the "Dolly Sisters" dispassionately spanked him over the jawbone with a black-jack and stepped over his prone figure.

"Just in case," Sergeant Druby muttered in half-hearted explanation, "I don't want no buzzer announcing us."

Sergeant Howard made no answer. Having been teamed with Druby for some ten years at Homicide, he needed no explanation for violence. They

The Well-Known Works

climbed the stairs and entered the gaudy Four Hundred, causing no little consternation as they passed through the cabaret.

They crossed the dance floor and entered the bar, pushing unhesitatingly through the crowd. William Fortune was celebrating his legal vindication in the royal manner. Bubbly wine flowed. Druby edged his way to a position behind William and seized him by the coat collar. With his other hand he pressed the muzzle of his service revolver against a spot just under William's left shoulder blade.

"Just make a play. That's all. Just make a play," Sergeant Howard hopefully assured Casey Cohen who had put a hand under the bar. Mr. Cohen decided on the better part of valor. He put both hands on the bar in full view.

"You can't make a collar in here," he asserted firmly.

"Of course not," agreed the Sergeant soothingly, clamping metal bands on the struggling William. He then ran practised hands over the thug.

"What is this?" complained Fortune. "You guys got nothing to put the collar on me for. Don't you read the papers?"

"You're all buttoned up, William," quoth Howard, pleasantly. "This ain't for knocking off the little brown guy. Look—we fished Eddie Latimer's body out of the Lincoln Park Lagoon this morning. The coroner says he's been in there about three weeks which makes his take-off about Sept. 4th, and that was the last night he was seen alive. You proved you were in the park on the night of the 4th. You didn't like the guy—slugged him only that morning. What the hell, this is right in the sack. Presence at the scene, premeditation, motive, and the old well-known *corpus delicti*. It's a cinch. You're all wrapped, stamped and ready for mailing."

Mr. Fortune's bluster faded. "I didn't do it," he said, paling.

"Why hell," argued the Sergeant, surprised, "Who cares whether you did or not. The point is you are going to fry for it."

HOLIDAY TREATS

Nuts, raisins, and other delicious dried fruits are among the traditional foods of the Thanksgiving and Christmas season. This month's food circulars contain dozens of new recipes making use of these wholesome products, as well as tested and revised recipes for the old favorites. Here are the subjects:

1. Prunes
2. Raisins
3. Dates and Figs
4. Apricots and other dried fruits
5. Walnuts
6. Brazil Nuts
7. Pecans
8. Almonds and other small nuts

If you would like copies of these circulars, send ten cents to Rita Calhoun, care of MYSTERY MAGAZINE, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Remember they are printed on loose leaves so that you can keep them in a loose-leaf binder.

● "Let's see—how does this walking business go? Clench fists, put one foot ahead of the other—but what do I do after that?... Oh, why did I ever take up walking anyway? I was doing fine, getting carried or going on all fours—"



● "Oops! Something wrong with that idea! Feet are all right, but the rest of me's getting left far, far behind! That's an awfully hard floor down there, too—I remember it from last time! Well, look out below—I'm coming..."



● "Well, so far, so good! It won't be long now till I get to that nice splashy tub—and then for a good rub-down with Johnson's Baby Powder!... Now which foot goes ahead first? Might try both at once—the more the merrier—"



● "... Everything's O. K. again, now that I've had my rub-down with Johnson's Baby Powder... Just test that powder between your thumb and finger—it's so smooth! Not gritty, like some powders. No zinc stearate or orris-root in it either."

Send 10¢ in coin (for convenience, fasten coin with strip of adhesive tape) for samples of Johnson's Baby Powder, Soap and Cream. Dept. 76, Johnson & Johnson, New Brunswick, N. J.

JOHNSON'S Baby POWDER

"SPANKY" MacFARLAND
says: "Okie - Dokie, Kids
—Get in on this CRAYOLA
DRAWING CONTEST"



"SPANKY" MacFARLAND featured in
Our Gang Comedies produced by Hal Roach

**Join CRAYOLA Drawing Club and
get a dandy gift—win or lose!**

Boys and girls of 14 years or under should take "Spanky's" advice and enter this new CRAYOLA Drawing Club Contest—because, win or lose, you'll get a free packet of lovely Christmas Cards. Just make an original colored drawing for a Christmas Greeting Card. Draw any picture or design you like—or ask your teacher for a suggestion. Make your drawing on paper not over 8" x 10" in size and color it with colored wax crayons. But be sure to get the packet of Christmas Cards now, so that you'll have them in plenty of time to color and mail to your friends before Christmas.

Join CRAYOLA Drawing Club now to enter the contest—and get both the Official Membership Card and the packet of Christmas Cards. Just check the No. 1 square on the coupon below and mail the coupon with the flap from a box of CRAYOLA Colored Crayon.

Present members may enter the contest merely by checking the No. 3 square and mailing the coupon with their drawings. But members who want the packet of Christmas Cards should check the No. 2 square and mail the coupon with a flap from a CRAYOLA box.

**All Drawings for the Contest must be
mailed on or before December 20, 1934**

THE PRIZES

BEST DRAWING, \$15; 2nd PRIZE, \$10; 3rd PRIZE, \$5; TEN FOURTH PRIZES: Ten sets consisting of 24-color assortment of "Rubens" CRAYOLA and box of "ARTISTA" Water Colors.

BINNEY & SMITH CO.
41 East 42nd Street, New York City
SOLE MAKERS OF

CRAYOLA
THE FAVORITE COLORED CRAYON

BINNEY & SMITH CO.

TM-11-34

41 E. 42nd St., New York City

☐ I want to join CRAYOLA Drawing Club. Enclosed is flap from CRAYOLA package. Please send me Official Membership Card, Contest Entry Blank, and packet of Greeting Cards.

☐ I belong to CRAYOLA Drawing Club. Please send the packet of Christmas Cards and Contest Entry Blank. Enclosed is flap from CRAYOLA package.

☐ I belong to CRAYOLA Drawing Club. Here is my drawing in Christmas Greeting Card Contest. It is yours to keep and I hope it wins a prize.

NAME.....

AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

MAKE-UP BOX

**SETTING-UP EXERCISES FOR TIRED TEETH AND TWO
ALLURING FACE CREAMS IN THIS MONTH'S BEAUTY NOTES**

The Rule of Three

DO you know how to brush your teeth? Silly question? Not at all! There are three rules to remember: A good toothbrush with firm bristles, a reliable dentifrice, and a knowledge of how to brush your teeth correctly. Strange, isn't it, that women who are so particular about the shade of powder they use and the color of nail polish they choose, are downright careless when so important a health and beauty accessory as a toothbrush is concerned. Now, this very hour, is the time to examine your toothbrush and replace it if bristles have become soft and worn. The brush illustrated is made by a well-known maker of brushes and is designed to reach places in your mouth never touched by ordinary brushes. What's more, the bristles can't come out. They're fastened in by a new last-ever device. The little brush pictured with the toothbrush is for daily care of the nails. For detailed information on how to make your teeth gleaming and lustrous by the "rotary" brushing method, send for this month's beauty circular which is yours for the asking.



A Little Is a Lot

"A COMPLEXION like lily petals in the sunlight" is the promise of this new liquid finishing cream which lends the complexion a softness as fresh and dewy as the early morning mist and a transparency as glowing. This delightfully fragrant liquid cream is much more than a powder base. Applied in the morning, it keeps the complexion looking fresh all day and ends fear of a shiny nose. A little of it goes a long way, too. Just a touch smoothed gently into the skin before applying make-up is sufficient. It's available in

If you would like further information about the articles described, and other beauty news, write enclosing stamped envelope to the Beauty Editor, Make-up Box, Tower Magazines, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

four shades—white, flesh, cream, and tan. If you are at all doubtful about what color to choose, try cream. We were simply fascinated with the package—a leather-like pink box wrapped in transparent cellophane—and you'll love it on your dressing table too.



A Lemon-Aid!

"KNOW'ST thou the land where the lemon trees bloom?" asked Goethe many long years ago. Well, Goethe may not have been sure of their location but we can tell you with enthusiasm where to find a lemon lotion and lemon cream that will do much for a very oily complexion or weathered skin.

The fresh juice of lemons has an excellent effect upon oily skins, as we all know, and to normalize those busy oil glands, try spreading on this lemon cream as you do any cleansing cream. Wipe it away and pat on the lotion.

THIS month's circular also contains news of an oil polish remover, a new polish of the cream type, and lipsticks in six grand shades from an English-American House... the shade called "poppy" has a tendency to make teeth appear whiter.

Let it dry by itself and the velvety finish is an ideal foundation for make-up.



I Go Sleuthing

(Continued from page 6)

He had said nothing else since his first remark or, if he had, I hadn't heard him. There was a great commotion, naturally, and I had been following my friend's technique in getting something for her paper.

"What's your name?" I asked, pretending that I, too, was a newspaper woman.

"Name's Muller," said the man, as if resenting the question; he deliberately ignored me and scraped a spot of mud from his shoe with the toe of the other. But I was determined.

"How'd you happen to get here so quick?" I asked. "Tell me what happened. We need color for the story."

"We were pretty busy at my place," he said, "and I was slicing some bread at the time. The explosion scared me so that the knife slipped and cut my finger, see?" He held up a finger on his right hand and I saw a little streak of blood. "I threw down the knife and ran straight down the sidewalk. It's not far, you see. I had just got here when you came up."

I WAS pretty excited but I managed to remember what he said and, also, I was taking in what went on as much as possible. I thought I'd quiet my nerves a bit so I opened my small handbag and took out a cigarette. Then, since Muller had given me what I thought might be valuable color, I offered him a cigarette. He thanked me and took one, carefully keeping the cigarette from becoming covered with blood. He produced a match and we lit up.

Then, suddenly, I thought I knew what had happened. I took my friend to one side and told her my suspicions. She looked at me for a moment, then casually walked away. In a moment she returned with an officer who arrested Muller.

My friend immediately telephoned her story and then we caught a taxi and went to the precinct station, where we learned my suspicions were correct.

An officer said Muller at first had vehemently denied bombing the restaurant, but later had broken down and confessed when confronted with the little evidence I had given my friend.

Muller had said he was afraid the new restaurant would hurt his business and that he had planned to dynamite it. He had thrown the bomb through one of the windows in the alley, then had stepped back up the alley out of harm's way, but a piece of flying glass had cut one of his fingers. When the crowd gathered, he had calmly walked out of the alley and mingled with it. I had become suspicious when he told me he ran from his cafe down the sidewalk to the scene for I had seen mud on his shoes and there was no chance of his getting fresh mud from the sidewalk. He also said he had cut his finger while slicing bread, but he had taken my cigarette with the same hand, the hand that was cut. He also lit my cigarette with the same hand and I figured that, naturally, he was right handed and that he would not have been holding a knife in his left.

After the whole thing was over and I found out that I really had suspected the right person, my nerves became so upset I nearly had to go to bed.

(See page 86 for contest rules.)



Two is company
(MAYBE FOR KEEPS!)

IF YOUR COMPLEXION STAYS

MIRROR FRESH

LET him look at you with ardent eyes! You can stand the close-ups all evening long—if your complexion stays as clear and fresh, as free from shine, as the moment you left your mirror. And it will—if you're using Marvelous Face Powder, the sensational new powder perfected by Richard Hudnut.

Marvelous Face Powder actually stays on from four to six hours—and you can time it yourself. Through long hours of dancing, driving in the wind, you can count on looking your very best. Marvelous Face Powder contains a remarkable new ingredient discovered by the Richard Hudnut laboratories—an ingredient that makes the powder cling as though part of your own skin texture. Yet Marvelous Face Powder never looks floury, never cakes

or clogs the pores. It is as light and fine a powder as science can make. The fifty-year reputation of Richard Hudnut, as the maker of fine cosmetics, is your assurance of its purity.

Marvelous Face Powder costs only 55¢ for the full-size box, at any drug store or department store. Yet so sure are we that you will like it that we will send you free trial packages in the four most popular shades. You may put it to the only convincing test—a trial on your own face. Won't you clip the coupon and mail it right now?

OTHER MARVELOUS BEAUTY AIDS

Marvelous Liquefying Cream...Tissue Cream... Foundation Cream...Hand Cream...Skin Freshener...Rouge...Lipstick...Eye Shadow...Lash Cosmetic...Manicure Preparations...Dusting Powder...Only 55¢ each

New Discovery BY RICHARD HUDNUT

FACE POWDER NOW STAYS ON FROM 4 to 6 HOURS
(BY ACTUAL TEST)

MARVELOUS Face Powder 55¢



Free Four trial packages of Marvelous Face Powder, in the four most popular shades—also Marvelous Make-up Guide, with authentic information on correct combinations of powder, rouge, lipstick.

RICHARD HUDNUT, 693 Fifth Avenue, New York City
Please send me, free and postpaid, trial packages of Marvelous Face Powder and Marvelous Make-up Guide.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

BOTH

Mother and Daughter PREFER Maybelline

**EYE
BEAUTY
AIDS**



The
Approved
Maybelline



... absolutely harmless
... most effective
... of highest quality

... the quickest and easiest way to have the natural appearance of attractively beautiful eyes.

BLACK, BROWN AND BLUE



BLACK AND BROWN

From sweet sixteen to queenly fifty, women of all ages the world over have learned that Maybelline Eye Beauty Aids are the safe, simple way to lovely eyes—eyes that instantly appear larger, brighter and more expressive. Beauty-wise women appreciate, too, the never-failing high standard of purity and harmlessness guaranteed by the famous name of Maybelline. Try these delightful aids to a new and more beautiful YOU!

Maybelline Eye Shadow
Maybelline Eyebrow Pencil
Maybelline Eyelash Tonic
Cream
Maybelline Eyebrow Brush
and the world-famous, approved Maybelline mascara.

All Maybelline Eye Beauty Aids may be had in *purple* sizes at all leading *10c* stores. Try them today!



BLACK OR WHITE
EYESHADOW



BLUE, BROWN, BLUE-GRAY
VOILET AND GREEN

What Your Favorite Authors are Like

(Continued from page 68)

to take shape the spinster schoolma'am amazed the embryo author by refusing to remain in the background. She forced her way into every situation, dominating the story and at last forcing Palmer to give in and let her play detective. Thus Miss Withers was born, almost, it might be said, in spite of her creator.

The response to "Penguin Pool Murder" was gratifying and immediate—and very shortly afterward Palmer was amazed to have Hollywood congratulate him upon his clever creation of the perfect role for Edna May Oliver—whom he had actually never seen!

Seduced from the editorship of a New York publishing firm by the lure of Hollywood, Palmer spent months in the movie capital. His great delight was to slip away from the writing assignments which the movie moguls handed him, and get underfoot on the set where George Archainbaud was directing the film version of "Penguin Pool Murder." Unlike most writers in a similar situation, Palmer was unreservedly delighted with the treatment given his brain-child, and with the cast consisting of—besides Miss Oliver—Jimmy Gleason, Mae Clarke and Oscar, the trained penguin.

Back in New York, "Murder on Wheels" had already been published in book form. From Hollywood, Palmer sent on the manuscripts of "Murder on the Blackboard" (one of the best-liked complete novels that MYSTERY ever published) and of "The Puzzle of the Pepper Tree," his first book for the Crime Club. This recounts the adventures of Miss Withers while on a vacation trip to Catalina Island, and will presumably be third in the series of Edna May Oliver detective films. "Murder on the Blackboard" (dedicated in book form to Edna May Oliver as "Miss Withers come true") is now playing neighborhood picture houses through this country and also in England.

IN the meantime Stuart Palmer had begun devising a series of Miss Withers' adventures in short story form, which have been running almost without a break in MYSTERY MAGAZINE for the past fourteen months. Many of the stories have reached our editorial offices with London postmarks, and some from "Mousehole, Cornwall," where this wandering young man stopped long enough to set down his latest book-length mystery, "Puzzle of the Silver Persian," best-selling Crime Club selection of last Spring.

At the present time Miss Hildegarde Withers has become a familiar and well-loved figure in several million households, extending over America, England and France. The lean New England spinster with the equine visage, the Queen Mary hat and parasol, and the sharp but kindly tongue has won for herself a unique position among fictional sleuths.

The author confesses that having seen the two movies already made from his books, he cannot visualize Miss Withers as otherwise than Edna May Oliver, nor the Inspector except as James Gleason. It is one of his highly cherished ambitions to write a play in the very near future which will bring the Oliver-Gleason combination to the Broadway footlights.

Visitors to Stuart Palmer's modest apartment on 56th Street in Manhattan, if they happen to find him between wanderings, will see a tanned, boyish-looking young man proudly sporting his first few gray hairs. The chances are that there will be a blue or silver Persian cat upon his knees, or a rough-and-tumble wire-haired terrier chewing at his shoelaces. Moreover, they will see through a haze of smoke from one of the thirteen pipes which Palmer brought back from London on his last trip, a collection of penguin statuettes second only to that possessed by Roland Young, the well-known actor.

Apart from the religious collection of pipes and penguins, Stuart Palmer's dearest hobby is the gathering of old books and pamphlets dealing with the murder mysteries and murder trials of yesteryear. From time to time he has emulated Edmund Lester Pearson by bringing to life again one of these musty *causes celebres* in the pages of one magazine or another.

At present he is American correspondent of the London *Dancing Times*, as well as special writer for the *Calling All Cars* series of fact crimes solved by police radio now running in *Radio Guide* magazine, jobs which in conjunction with his output of short stories and of Miss Withers novels, make him a very busy young man indeed.

We have tried without success to discover what this young author does for breakfast, but it is our own suspicion that he eats breakfast at noon and calls it lunch. His writing habits are to sit down at his desk after a day's work and the evening's pleasures are through, and to write with the help of black coffee until finished or well-nigh exhausted.

HIS life's ambition is to own a home in the country where there will be room enough for all the dogs and cats and horses that he wants to own, together with a landing for a boat or two. He is fond of tinkering; might have made a good veterinary surgeon had he not turned to writing; illustrates his own books when permitted, and goes in for almost all sports with vast energy and a moderate amount of skill.

He is a crack shot with a rifle, plays a good but reckless game of chess, and writes finished copy directly upon the typewriter. His books are filled with animals and with light whimsical touches because—says the author—"Too many mysteries read as if the author was bored to death with his story."

The most demanding reviewers agree that Stuart Palmer plays fair with his readers in regard to clues and that he is succeeding in his avowed ambition to write mystery stories which can stand comparison with novels in regard to characterization, plot structure, and psychological development. But he refuses to take or have his books taken too seriously.

Every Summer he travels back to Wisconsin over the route on which he hitch-hiked so laboriously just seven years ago—but now he, Mr. Palmer and the gay terrier, Jones, at flash over the once-formidable miles in a sleek gray car.

What Goes into the Stuffing

(Continued from page 10)

as well as in the sunny South. Well seasoned mashed potatoes, boiled rice or noodles all have their advocates. When chestnuts are used for stuffing they are first cooked tender, then riced and mixed with dried bread crumbs. Oysters are combined with equal quantities of dried bread crumbs and melted butter and duly seasoned with minced parsley, lemon juice, etc.

Fruit stuffings are most easy to prepare. You may use plain sliced apples, or apples combined with raisins or prunes first soaked in boiling water five minutes and then drained.

The type of stuffing should depend not only on personal taste but on the type of bird you have to stuff. Duck, for instance, suggests a mixed prune and apple stuffing, mashed potatoes or a bread stuffing with sage and onion flavoring.

The mild flavor of chicken combines well with a chestnut or oyster stuffing. Chestnuts may be used in goose, but greasiness of the goose makes it desirable to use a minimum of butter or other fat in the stuffing. Almost any good type of stuffing is agreeable with turkey, the usual choice being a well seasoned bread-crumbs mixture containing enough moisture to prevent undue drying of the turkey meat, which is naturally less moist than that of chicken, duck or goose.

Here are new stuffings that may serve as inspiration for your own inventions:

Brazil Nut Stuffing

- 2 chopped onions
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup melted fat
- 2 cups sliced Brazil nuts
- Sage or other herbs
- Salt, pepper
- 8 cups soft bread crumbs

Mince onions and cook two minutes in the fat. Mix seasonings and nuts with bread crumbs and stir into fat. Cook two minutes more, stirring constantly. If a moist stuffing is desired, add a little water. This amount of stuffing is enough for a ten-pound turkey.

Walnut Stuffing

- Giblets from one turkey
- 1 onion
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 large loaf of stale bread
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 2 tablespoons poultry seasoning or sage
- 2 cups walnut kernels, chopped fine
- 4 tablespoons melted fat or oil

Cook the giblets, onion and bay leaf in the boiling water until tender. Then chop the giblets fine. Remove crusts from bread and crumb the bread fine. Mix the giblets and crumbs with the salt, poultry seasoning or sage, walnut kernels and fat or oil. When roasting the turkey, baste with the water in which the giblets were cooked.

If you are interested in this month's recipe and menu circulars, please turn to page 65.

The
Comfort
I declined
so long

"I don't know why I refused so long to believe that Midol might help me, unless it was because I had tried so many things that never did. But I'm thankful I *did* try it, about two years ago, and haven't had a severe time since I learned to rely on this form of relief."

Some such endorsement could truthfully be given by numbers of women who have found, sooner or later, that Midol does relieve periodic pain. In many cases, these tablets have spared women even any discomfort at this time; nearly all receive definite relief.

Perhaps you have feared to take anything that acts as quickly, but

don't be afraid of its speed! Midol is *not* a narcotic. Midol is quite as harmless as the aspirin you take for an ordinary headache.

Should you decide to try this remarkable form of relief for periodic pain, remember the name of this special medicine—and remember that Midol is a special medicine for this special purpose. Do not take instead, some tablet that is made for aches and pains in general, and expect the same results. Ask the druggist for *Midol*. Do this today, and be prepared!

An Invitation

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Name

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until a
"scrap of paper"
led me to loveliness

I used to be considered plain and dull and couldn't seem to make friends or attract men at all. I was so lonely that many a night I cried myself to sleep. How strange to think that a chance visit to the 10¢ store led me to loveliness and changed my lonely life to smiles.

I accepted from the girl at the cosmetic counter a sample card sprayed from the giant atomizer of Blue Waltz Perfume. What exquisite fragrance! It made me think of music... moonlight... romance. Quickly I bought this perfume and other Blue Waltz Cosmetics, too.

Next day I made up carefully with Blue Waltz Lipstick and Blue Waltz Face Powder. I finished with a touch of Blue Waltz Perfume. I left home with a fast beating heart... Would others notice how unusually nice I looked? Would they think my new perfume alluring? I soon learned the answer. Men who used to pass me with a cold nod looked at me twice and stopped to chat. Girls were friendlier, too. Soon I actually began to be asked for dates. What a thrill to be told I'm glamorous... even though I know it's really Blue Waltz Perfume that turns men's thoughts to romance.

Girls, go to the cosmetic counter of your 6 and 10¢ store... get a free sample card sprayed from the Blue Waltz Giant Atomizer... you'll love its enchanting fragrance. Buy Blue Waltz Perfume and all the marvelous Blue Waltz Cosmetics... certified to be pure and only 10¢ each.

Seize this opportunity to assemble your beauty preparations. You find the same alluring fragrance in Blue Waltz Perfume, Face Powder, Lipstick, Cold Cream, Cream Soap, Brilliance, Talcum Powder. Only 10¢ each at your 6 and 10¢ store.



Blue Waltz
PERFUME AND COSMETICS
FIFTH AVENUE - NEW YORK

Her Husband's Friend

(Continued from page 34)

The bell caused them to take their eyes from the ghastly sight before them and look about the summerhouse. Here, an old anchor stood upright in a niche cut in the floor that was paneled like a ship's deck. There, a mast rose from the floor. Here, again, was a table on which several old logbooks lay, and depending from the ceiling a figurehead stared gravely at them.

A quaint place and a quiet place and through the windows the breeze from the sea blew gently; beyond, the sea and bay were placid; behind, the trees whispered softly in the breeze.

But there sat that horror. Ashel, shuddering, crossed the summerhouse and saw that Dr. Mott had been handsome, a dark man, powerfully built, with a ruddy face. He was deeply tanned by the summer sun.

"From ear to ear, Mistuh Graney," said Ashel. He lifted Dr. Mott's head carefully and looked at the back of it. There was a bloody bruise on the crown.

"Made sure, didn't they?" said Sergt. Graney.

"Unh huhn," said Ashel. "But that was just a tap. Somethin' big an' heavy, though."

For a moment he stood gazing steadfastly at the corpse; then, suddenly, he peered more closely. About the mouth the skin next the lips seemed irritated, as if chapped. Ashel reached out and placed a forefinger delicately at the side of Dr. Mott's mouth.

There was a slight stickiness there. "What the hell, pop?" asked Graney. He was shocked.

"Don't rightly know, Mistuh Graney." Ashel was now examining Dr. Mott's wrist; also he rolled down the physician's socks. And on either wrist as on either ankle, there was an irritation something like that about the mouth, but harsher, as if something had burned the skin.

Ashel looked as if he had expected that, but just above the irritation on the right wrist he saw something that puzzled him. This was a break in the deep tan of Dr. Mott's skin, a band of white that completely encircled the wrist.

Ashel frowned, tugged his mustache and left the summerhouse abruptly. Graney saw that he was scrabbling in the sod on either side of the short path that ran from the main path to the summerhouse.

"What you doin', pop?" he asked. Ashel looked up. "Mistuh Graney," he said, "that fella got tapped on the head an' tied up mighty tight 'n' adhesive tape was stuck on his mouth. Then they hauled him down to this place 'n' cut his throat. The wound in the throat's newer'n the one in the head. Then they took off the rope 'n' adhesive tape 'n' stole somethin' he wore on his wrist—a watch, prob'ly."

"How do you get that?" Ashel explained. "But why," he went on, absently, "they took the watch, I don't get. Nothin' else gone from his pockets at all. Don't make a bit o' sense."

"Maybe it was worth lots o' dough," "Maybe," Ashel looked up from the sod—"but Mistuh Graney, why'd they do to all that fuss to tie him up 'n' gag him 'n' bring him down here after tappin' him on the head, to take a watch—if it was a watch—an' then cut his throat?"

Graney didn't know. Ashel went off

like a hound on the other side of the hedge toward the house. Graney, following along the path, met him at the end of the hedge by the house.

"No sign," said Ashel. "Brought him by the path, I reckon."

Officer Gray was sitting on the stoop of the side door to the Ring house. Officer Gray was grinning sardonically.

"Guess y' didn't find much," he said. "Reckon not," said Ashel.

"Guess I could 'a' told you that." Officer Gray fanned himself languidly with his cap. "Guess y' got some more smart alecs over in Noo York, huh?"

"Lissen—" began Graney, but Ashel interrupted.

"Did Doctuh Mott have a watch, Officuh Gray?" he asked.

"Guess he did. Guess he'd have one, bein' a doctor."

"Wear it on his wrist?"

"Guess I don't know."

"Reckon we'll go see Miz Ring," said Ashel, and then: "D' you ever go to sea?"

"Sure I went to sea. Everybody over here, pretty near, goes to sea one time or 'nother, I guess."

"So I reckon you're pretty good with knots, Officuh Gray?"

Officer Gray's sullen expression deepened. "Guess I ain't on to what you mean," he said.

"Guess not," said Ashel. With Graney, he entered the house.

UNITY RING awaited them, in her living-room. It was a quaint room, Colonial and charming, with Duncan Phyfe sofas and tables and with heavy old mahogany Windsor chairs. On the walls were fine prints of old clipper ships.

Unity Ring, herself sat erect in a Windsor chair across the room from the hall entrance, and both Ashel and Graney caught their breaths sharply. For Unity Ring was beautiful.

Her hair was dark and long and her eyes blue and streaky, with a hint of tragedy in their depths. The corners of her otherwise gracious mouth were turned down in an expression that told either of intense suffering or intense emotion. A rather tall woman, she sat calmly in her chair and she smiled at them.

"How-de-do, ma'am," said Ashel. "Sorry to bother you, but it's gotta be done, I reckon."

"Of course," she said. She rose and drew up two of the heavy chairs for them.

Her hands were long and shapely. Strength and character were in them. And there was a strange, unfamiliar fascination about them. In a way they were beautiful.

"You do your own housework, ma'am?" asked Ashel.

"Why yes," she said, "I have to, since my husband—" she hesitated—"died. I can't afford a servant. Why do you ask?"

"Just gettin' placed. This house belonged to your husband's family?"

"For over a hundred years. It was left to me, since he was the last of the line."

Ashel was thoughtful. The woman looked at him quizzically.

"I suppose," she said, "you found old David rather a trial?"

"Unh huhn, not so pleasant."

"You'll have to excuse him," she said. "You see, they're rather provincial over

Her Husband's Friend

here. I am, myself, I suppose."

"Was you engaged—" Ashel's question was startling—"to marry Doctuh Mott, Miz Ring?"

She seemed confused. "Why," she said, "we—that is, there was nothing really definite, but—"

"He wanted to?"

"Very much . . . But, officer, isn't this a little—" "Maybe. He was your husband's good friend?"

"His best. My husband worshipped Dr. Mott. They went through school together." Her eyes filled. "There were those who thought Dr. Mott was not all he should be, but not my husband. He loved him. They were friends and confidants."

"I see," said Ashel. "Was your husband wealthy?"

"Not very. But he wanted to be. That's why he made those speculations." Again her eyes filled. "We would sit in the summerhouse on warm nights and he'd talk about it. He'd tell me his dreams there, looking out at the bay, and he was like a poet, then. He was very ambitious for us. His life's dream was a hospital down there and he wanted Dr. Mott and himself to control it. That was why he wanted wealth, why he made those speculations. For the hospital. Next to myself, I think, came the hospital. And when he lost everything, when he realized his life's dream was broken, why—" She brushed her eyes and looked at Ashel. "Do you know what it is to dream, officer?"

Ashel looked at her with kindly gravity. Did he know what it was to dream? There had been almost fifty futile years.

"Yes, ma'am," he said. "I surely do."

"Then you'll understand, perhaps . . . I go there at night now and relive all those dreams." She paused, shook her head. "I'm sorry," she continued.

"I'm afraid all this isn't at all interesting . . . Is there anything I can tell you that you'd like to know?"

Ashel cleared his throat. "Just two things ma'am," he said. "What—" he spoke slowly—"did Doctuh Mott wear on his wrist?"

Her eyes showed her surprise. "Didn't David tell you?" she asked. "Something my husband gave him . . . A voodoo charm."

"Charm!"

Ashel's voice was sharp.

"Why yes," she said. "My husband, like so many Pawhanssett boys, went to sea. He got the charm, a wooden bracelet with a leather clasp, from a witch-doctor down in Haiti. It's a rare thing, very difficult to obtain, and very valuable. Professor Proven was so excited about it. He really yearned for it—he specializes in things like that, you know—and said he'd give half his money for it. He was forever studying it—that is, until the bitterness between him and Dr. Mott. He tried to get it away from Dr. Mott, but Dr. Mott is rather superstitious. He put great faith in it and always wore it. But I'm afraid—" her voice broke a little—"it didn't work very well."

"Did you know it was gone?"

"Gone!" She started. "Why that's strange!"

"Professor Proven," said Graney suddenly. "Don't he work in witch-

(Please turn to page 72)

"Sticky Hand Lotions are Impossible—"

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IMPOSSIBLE, especially for bridge players. I don't like to be conscious of my hands at a card table; they must look well and feel well if my mind is to stay on the game. I use Pacquin's all the time because I don't have to wait for it to dry," says Mrs. Culbertson. "I just rub a bit on and each time I am

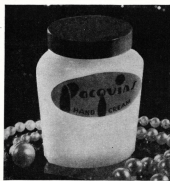
amazed how quickly it goes in! There is none of that sticky film lotions usually leave. And it has an immediate softening and whitening effect. It's really the only hand treatment for a busy woman. I take Pacquin's everywhere I go. My hands can't do without it."

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The result will more than delight you. For in place of that faded, dull, aging look, your hair becomes lustrous and sparkling, color vibrant with a shimmering sheen of youthful, toned glamour. Try it after the next shampoo.



Her Husband's Friend

(Continued from page 71)

craft an' voodoo an' things like that?"

"Yes, he—" She stopped, her eyes suddenly wide with consternation. "No, no!" she cried. "You mustn't think that! Caleb Proveen would never— Even if Wilhelm and Prudence—" "But who'd want the charm, ma'am? Why'd anyone take it?"

"I don't know, but Caleb—" She breathed deeply. "Is there anything else you'd like to know, officer?"

"Yeah," said Ashel after a short silence. "Miz Ring, why'd you ask all those people here together, knowin' their feelin's?"

Unity Ring managed to smile then. It lighted the tragic beauty of her face, mitigated a little the sorrow of her eyes.

"I thought you'd ask that," she said. "Well, they were all my friends. I wondered—I hoped, since we'd all grown up together, that somehow they could be reconciled, but it didn't work out that way. I'm sorry now. And after what happened—"

She shuddered. "Do you s'pect anyone, ma'am?"

"Not a soul. Mr. Lingle," she said, "could no more have done that horrible thing than Caleb Proveen."

"But they threatened him." "What of that? They were angry and upset because of my silly party, that was all."

Ashel rose. "Come on, Mistuh Graney," he said. "We gotta be on our way. Thank you, ma'am. You been a lot o' help."

"Have I?" she said. "I don't see how."

"Never mind," Ashel smiled at Unity Ring. She was standing now, and again they caught their breaths. Unity Ring was statuesque; not over thirty, her beauty in full bloom. Ashel, watching her, felt a strange stirring in his heart. He sighed.

"Don't worry," he said.

SHE thanked him with her eyes. She lifted the heavy chairs, put them back in their places as Ashel and Graney started from the room. But Ashel stopped before a photograph that sat alone on a little table near the entrance. It was of a man who had strong, handsome features and the wide, affectionate eyes of the dreamer. The silver frame was polished and burnished and fresh flowers stood by it on the table.

"Your husband, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"He must 'a' been a fine fella, ma'am."

"I loved him," she said, "more than my life."

Ashel and Graney went outside. Officer Gray, still fanning himself, looked at them with disgust.

"Officuh Gray," said Ashel. "'d you know that Doctuh Mott wore a bracelet?"

"Guess I did."

"'N' 'd you know it was missin' now?"

"Guess I knew that, too."

"Then why'n't you tell us?"

"Guess you never asked me."

Ashel heard Graney draw in his breath in an angry hiss and said hurriedly:

"Reckon we didn't. You c'n have the body taken to the undertaker's now, Officuh Gray. You'll do that, won't you?"

"Guess I will," said Officer Gray.

"Guess I'd take care of everything, if it warn't fr' smart alecs from Noo York."

"Maybe so," said Ashel, grabbing the irate Graney's arm, then: "d'you know how Doctuh Mott got down here, Officuh Gray?"

"Nope."

Officer Gray turned and entered the Ring house. Ashel, still holding Graney, went around the house to the street.

"By God!" said Graney. "If that guy was a little younger, I'd take a poke—He'll get reported, though!"

"No he won't, Mistuh Graney," said Ashel. "He won't a-tall! Officuh Gray's all right in his way."

"Why hell!" blustered Graney. "He acts like we was dirt. He—"

"Mistuh Graney, he acts like we was intruders."

Graney, grumbling, fell silent. They walked on, but they were acutely aware that from the windows of the old houses furtive faces looked out at them with hostility.

"God, what a town!" said Graney.

"What a woman!" said Ashel absently. "What an uncommon woman!"

THEY reached the residence of the Proveens and found it, like the Ring home, old and dignified, surrounded by dense shrubbery. Their knock was answered by a woman in her early thirties with sombre black eyes and a grim mouth. But there were traces of an early beauty in her fading face. One, it seemed, that mouth, well shaped, would have been beautiful in laughter; the eyes, sombre and bitter now, might have been lovely with the light of happiness. She looked at them coldly.

"How-de-do," said Ashel. "You Miss Proveen?" and when she nodded: "I'm Ashel Mayhew of the Home Guard, and this is Sergeant Graney o' the same outfit. We come to look into that Mott business, Miss Proveen."

The woman's deep eyes clouded. "I suppose we'll have to put up with it," she said. "Come in!"

They followed her into the house. "Caleb," she called up the stairs, "the New York police are here. We'll have to tolerate it, I suppose. . . . In here," she finished, entering the first room off the hall.

It was a grim room, rather hideous in its Victorian manner. The corners stood strange objects. There were voodoo drums; there were fetiches and totems; there was a curious stone with a cavity in the top of it. It was, Ashel knew, a primitive sacrificial altar.

With Graney, he sat down on a horsehair sofa across from Prudence Proveen. She looked at them with cold indifference. And they said nothing until Caleb Proveen came into the room. He was a tall man, gaunt and bald, with burning black eyes and the same grim expression that marked his sister.

"Well," he said coldly, "what is it?"

"Just a question 'r two," said Ashel. "I s'pose you knew 'bout Doctuh Mott's bracelet, Professuh Proveen?"

Proveen started. He seemed confused, but he controlled himself.

"Naturally. It is a rare bracelet, only worn by certain voodoo papalois."

"It is supposed to bring infallibility and invulnerability to the wearer. I always wondered how Amos Ring happened to get it."

"You'd like to have it, Professuh?"

Her Husband's Friend

"Naturally. I would have given a great deal of money for it."

"An' I s'pose you know it wasn't found on the body?"

Caleb Proveen started. Prudence Proveen, a peculiar smile on her face, her eyes reflective, said:

"It came true!"

"What you mean by that, Miss Proveen?"

"Why—" Prudence Proveen's voice held a note of triumph—"he always said that if he ever lost it, disaster would overtake him. And it has! It has!"

"Prudence!" Her brother's voice was at once a reproach and a warning. He turned to Ashel.

"I suppose," he said, "you are implying some connection between the murder and me because of the bracelet. That is your privilege. However, I can tell you you're wrong. I'm glad that man is dead, but—" He paused. "And I'm not surprised. It was his destiny. The only thing that surprised me about last night"—he spoke as if thinking aloud—"was Unity's extraordinary tactlessness."

"You threatened Dr. Mott," said Graney suddenly.

Caleb Proveen laughed with contempt.

"Quite right, and what of it?"

"Nothin'," said Ashel. "Nothin' now, anyway. Come on, Mistuh Graney."

He rose. "An' thank you so much."

At the door, however, he hesitated. Caleb Proveen had vanished, but Prudence Proveen was showing them.

"I s'pose," said Ashel, "that Miz Ring is usually a very tactful woman?"

"Very!"

The door slammed in their faces.

"Chees!" said Graney. "We ain't what you'd call popular in Pawhansett, pop . . . What about the Professor? That bracelet . . ."

"Mistuh Graney, I doubt if Professuh Proveen'd commit murder f'r that bracelet, although Professuh Proveen might commit murder . . . Let's go palaver with Lingle."

The hardware store was on Pawhansett's main street. Simon Lingle, behind the counter, looked at them peevishly as they entered. He was of medium height, fair of hair, blue of eye, rather plump, average and commonplace in general appearance. He was looking over a tray of knives as they entered. Ashel eyed the knives as he questioned the hardware merchant. But Simon Lingle, like the Proveens, added nothing to their information, at first, although he admitted threatening Mott; admitted, too, that the death of the doctor gave him satisfaction.

"He had it coming," he said. "I'm not surprised. The only thing—" he paused, as Caleb Proveen had paused—"that surprises me about last night was Unity's tactlessness."

"Do you know where your wife is, Mistuh Lingle?"

"My wife?" The commonplace face flushed. "Yes, I know where she is. I've phoned her every day—" his voice broke a little—"since she left. Lately, she's been with Mott again and most of the time, if that's any information to you."

From the expression on Ashel's face it was, and important information. There was excitement in Ashel's eyes.

"But today—" Simon Lingle's face (Please turn to page 74)



"Ssh, Betty! . . . You're much too big to cry. Let's get Aunt Alice to tell us why a nice little girl feels so weepy and cross all of a sudden."



"This little girl says she doesn't want to play, either, Mother. Perhaps it's constipation that's making her so listless. I'd give her Fletcher's Castoria tonight."



"Oh, Aunt Alice!—I'm just fine today!—Yes, I had my Fletcher's Castoria last night—and Mother says to tell you that she thinks it's simply wonderful!"

- "I'm so glad you're better, Betty, dear! You tell your Mother that Fletcher's Castoria is made especially for children just like you. And it hasn't a thing in it that would hurt your little baby brother, either. He'll love the taste of it just as much as you do."

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Her Husband's Friend

(Continued from page 73)

suddenly glowed—"she phoned me. She's coming back. And—" he spoke almost fiercely now, as if defying them to blame him for his lack of pride—"I'll take her back!"

He turned to wait on a customer. Ashel, still excited, beckoned to Graney and started from the store, but at the door they were met by a small boy.

"You Ashel Mayhew?" asked the boy, and when Ashel nodded, he thrust out a piece of paper. As Ashel took it, the boy darted out the door.

"Get him!" snapped Ashel and Graney hurried into the street.

But presently he was back. "Damn it!" he snarled. "These yokels're like clams. The kid's gone up in this air!" "Never mind," said Ashel thoughtfully. He handed the sergeant the paper. And Graney read:

"The wise mind their own business. They find it pays."

The note was printed in straggling letters and in pencil.

"What the hell!" Graney looked angrily about at the people on the street. "I'll bring over some strong-arm boys and take this damned town apart. I'll—"

"Let's go home now, Mistuh Graney," said Ashel quietly.

They went home, strangely subdued. Ashel lost in thought, Graney grimly attending to the operation of the boat. But when they were moored at the little anchorage in the East River near their home, Ashel said:

"Mistuh Graney, you make the report. I got business."

"What kind o' business, pop?"

"Business," said Ashel, as if the murder of Dr. Mott had vanished from his mind, "with the New York Stock Exchange . . ."

BUT the murder of Dr. Mott had not vanished from Ashel's mind. That night he strapped on his holster and prepared to leave the house.

"Where you goin', pop?" asked Graney.

"Staten Island," said Ashel.

"Well, why'n't you say so? I'll go along."

"Mistuh Graney, you're not goin'. I gotta rob a house, maybe."

Graney gaped as Ashel hurried out. The boat sped down the river through the summer moonlight, past the great piled illumination of Manhattan and Brooklyn, bounded out across the wide bay and out down the dark shore of Staten Island, turning as the coast curved southwestward. Ashel had stilled the motor before he threw a line over an old board on the wooden pier and warped the boat against the dock.

The boat fast, he hurried up the beach to the next stairway and ascended it softly. At the top, he paused, listening, but the night was quiet. Cautiously, then, he made his way through the trees to the edge of the Ring lawn, there turning sharply to work toward the front of the property. When on a line with the rear of the house, he stopped to listen again.

But the only sound was the distant sigh of the sea and the murmur of the night wind in the old trees. The trees filtered the moonlight, mottling the lawn.

He started across the lawn, keeping in the shadow of the trees, but halted abruptly. Directly ahead, behind a huge oak, he had seen a shadowy figure.

Who it was, what it was, he did not know. He could not be entirely sure it was anything. What he had seen was a wisp of movement, a shadow-like restlessness by the tree.

He remained motionless for a moment, then advanced slowly. And although he was so watchful, he was not prepared for the sudden rush of a man who stood behind the oak. The rush brought the man to Ashel, knocked the man from Missouri to the ground.

Silently, then, they rolled over and over, Ashel holding a wrist of his assailant, bending the arm back farther and farther, for in the hand was a gun. His assailant suddenly loosed the hold he had on Ashel with his other hand and reached for the gun. But Ashel, who had struggled until he was now on top, had been waiting for that. His other hand free, it streaked out in a sharp uperect to his assailant's jaw. Beneath, him, the struggling form became quiet.

Ashel threw his flash on the man beneath him and stared with wide eyes into the sunken features of Officer David Gray.

He frowned, but gradually a smile broke his face. He looked about the grounds, but saw no one. Apparently, the fight had had no witnesses. Then he dropped to his knees and chafed Officer Gray's wrists. Presently, the old policeman opened his eyes. For a moment he stared vacantly, then glared as he recognized the detective.

"Damn you!" said Officer Gray. "You horned in! I guess—"

But Ashel had his hand over the policeman's mouth. Ashel, his voice suddenly and surprisingly hard, said:

"Quiet! One more chirp out of you, Officer Gray, and I'll have you under! I'll have you sent up the river f'r interferin' with justice, Officuh Gray!"

The sudden features beneath him contorted with anger, but then relaxed in a tremor of fear. Ashel rose and helped the old cop to his feet.

"Where's Miz Ring?" asked Ashel.

"In the summerhouse," said the old cop.

"Unh huhn," said Ashel. He grinned. "So you was gonna try for it, Officuh Gray? You guessed it, too?"

"Yeah," said Officer Gray.

Ashel stood in thought for a moment.

"I reckon I'll have to do it, instead, Officuh Gray," he said. "Sorry." He handed the gun to the policeman. "Take that and put it up f'r the time bein'."

"I'm goin' in the house."

Officer Gray nodded. He seemed afraid of Ashel's hardness.

The man from Missouri, without so much as a backward glance at the old policeman, started again across the yard. He crouched, keeping below the line of the shrubbery, keeping within the shadow of the trees, avoiding the pools of moonlight that fell between them. At the rear door of the Ring house, he paused again and glanced toward the summerhouse. But he could only see it vaguely through the trees. That meant, conversely, that if anyone were in the summerhouse, it was improbable that they could see him.

He opened the screen door and slipped within. The house was filled with a ghostly silence. Ashel, his steps painfully slow, moved down the hallway to the living-room entrance. There, a stairway ran up to the second floor and he halted abruptly. Above

Her Husband's Friend

he had heard something, slight but definite. It was the creaking of the stairway. For a moment, he thought that it might be only the stirring of the old house, but the creaking became regular. Someone was descending the old stairs.

Ashel jammed himself into the corner by the front door. Whoever had been on the stairs was in the hall now and was moving stealthily toward the door. Ashel could feel the uncanny presence of a human body in the darkness. He heard the latch rattle, heard the knob turn, and then, slowly, a vertical beam of light widened as the door was opened cautiously. In it, Ashel beheld the figure of a man.

The man was moving slowly and stealthily, but he froze to the floor as the finger of Ashel's flashlight struck him.

"Good-evenin'," said Ashel.

The man turned. Ashel looked into the skull-like face, into the burning eyes of Professor Caleb Proveen. The Professor's lips drew back in a wolfish snarl.

"You scoundrel!" said Proveen. "You devilish scoundrel!"

It occurred to Ashel that Professor Proveen's face resembled the ritualistic masks of the religions he studied.

"I guess I'll have to take it from you," said Ashel.

Professor Proveen's lips trembled. "Take what?"

"I reckon you know, Professuh Proveen. I reckon—" again the curious hardness crept into Ashel's voice—"you'd better hurry, too, 'cause I'm not waitin' on you, Professuh Proveen!"

By the source of the light in Ashel's hand an old .44 gleamed. Professor Proveen saw it and in his burning eyes there appeared a glitter of fear. He reached in his pocket and jerked something from it, which he handed to Ashel.

Ashel thrust it into his own pocket. "Y' see, I was after it, too, Professuh Proveen. Where was it?"

"In her bureau drawer."

Ashel nodded. "So you'd even commit burglary for it, Professuh Proveen?"

The scholar's eyes glowed weirdly. "Anything," he said huskily. "You don't know. It's a wonderful thing! It's rare and precious. God, how I've wanted it!"

"Tough!" said Ashel and then: "Well, get goin', Professuh Proveen, but don't go too far. You won't be able to any more, but I'm just warnin' you. I'll want you later, Professuh Proveen, an' I don't want to have to hunt!"

The professor glared, then hurried out, closing the door gently behind him.

Ashel, with odd carelessness, walked through the house and to the path that was flanked with privets. He walked rapidly, but softly, down the path, until he came to the walk that led to the summerhouse. At the door of the summerhouse, he stopped.

Within the summerhouse, standing by the anchor beneath the figurehead and looking out to sea, was a motionless form.

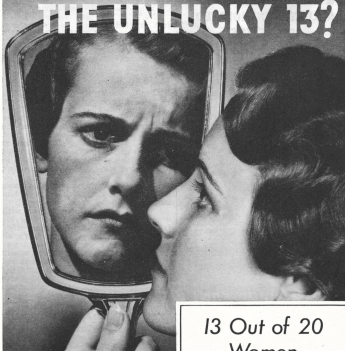
Ashel knocked on the door frame. The figure whirled, a little scream escaping its lips.

"Is only me, ma'am," said Ashel.

Unity King stared. In the moonlight that fell through the windows she could

(Please turn to page 76)

ARE YOU ONE OF THE UNLUCKY 13?



Lady Esther

13 Out of 20 Women

Use the Wrong Shade of Face Powder and as a Result, Look Years Older Than They Really Are!

Think of the many times a day you powder your face. And all the time you may be only succeeding in making yourself look years older than you really are!

It's an actual fact, as you can readily demonstrate, that the wrong shade of face powder can add years to your looks. Just as the wrong color hat or dress can make you look dowdy and years older than your age, so can the wrong shade of face powder make you look worn and faded, and, apparently, years older.

It's a shame, the women who are innocent victims of the wrong choice of face powder shades! Otherwise pretty, young and fresh-looking, they actually, if unknowingly, make themselves look years older than is their age.

Are You Being Fooled?

Is the shade of face powder you are using making you look your youngest and freshest or is it making you look years older than you really are? It all depends on how you choose your shade. It's a "snare and delusion" to choose a face powder shade simply on the basis of type.

A brunette may have a very light skin while a blonde may have a very dark one. Moreover, to try to match any tone of skin is practically impossible, for there are endless variations of white, ivory and olive skin.

A face powder shade should be chosen, not to match any particular type, but to flatter one. What would be the most flattering to one shade of

But I don't ask you to accept my word for this. I say: Prove it at my expense. So I offer to send you, entirely without cost or obligation, a liberal supply of all five shades of Lady Esther Face Powder.

When you get the five shades, try each one before your mirror. Don't try to pick your shade in advance. Try all five! Just the one you would least suspect may prove the most flattering for you. Thousands of women have written to tell me they have been amazed with this test.

Stays on for Four Hours—Ends Shiny Nose

When you make the shade test with Lady Esther Face Powder, note too how exquisitely soft and smooth it is. It is utterly free from anything like grit. It is also a clinging face powder! By actual test it will stay on for four hours and look fresh and lovely all the time. In every way, as you can see for yourself, Lady Esther Face Powder excels anything ever known in face powder.

Write Today! Just mail the coupon or a penny postcard. By return mail you'll receive all five shades of Lady Esther Face Powder.

(You can paste this on a penny postcard!)

Lady Esther (3)

2001 Bldg Avenue, Evanston, Illinois.

Please send me by return mail a liberal supply of all five shades of Lady Esther Face Powder.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

(If you live in Canada, write Lady Esther, Toronto, Ont.)

FREE

Your Shade Is One of These Five

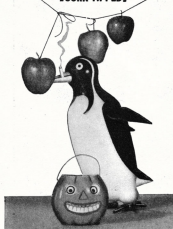
Lady Esther Face Powder is made in the required five basic shades. One of these shades you will find to be the most flattering to you! One will instantly set you forth at your best, emphasize your every good point and make you look your most youthful and freshest.

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KOOL

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(CORK TIPPED)



WORTH GOING FOR!

An apple a day may keep the doctor away, but a carton of KOOLS is a sure way to keep a comfortable smoking throat always on tap! KOOLS are mildly mentholated to cool the smoke, to bring out the full flavor of the choice tobaccos used. Cork-tipped to save lips. B & W coupon in each pack of KOOLS good for attractive nationally advertised merchandise. (Offer good in U.S.A. only.) Send for latest illustrated premium booklet.

SAVE COUPONS for HANDSOME MERCHANDISE



15¢ for TWENTY 25¢ in CANADA

Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., Louisville, Ky

Her Husband's Friend

(Continued from page 75)

see him plainly. The chime of the ship's bell sounded six times.

"You—you forgot something?" "No," he said and he smiled. "I just wanted to tell you something, ma'am."

"What is it?"

"She sat down on the wall seat that ran around the summerhouse and he sat nearby."

"It's a story," he said.

"A story?"

"Yeah, a story about two men 'n' a woman." He glanced at her and saw that she watched him intently. "These two men was best friends, ma'am, or leastways, they seemed to be. An' one of 'em really believed they was best friends. But the other'n was jealous of his friend. He wanted his friend's wife an' he was jealous of his friend in professional ways, too. But he didn't let on."

"Gen'rally, he was a pretty bad one, an' sev'ral people'd 'a' liked to do him in, but his friend was always loyal."

"Now this fella was good with women, so first off he goes after his friend's wife. An' he finds the wife's had a yen f'r him, too, so that's all settled. They knew the husband was plannin' big things, 'cause naturally he told the wife an' he confided in the friend, so they see a way to ruin the husband an' when the husband starts carryin' out the plans they take steps. The plans got to do with investment an' speculation an' when the husband starts buyin' on margin, they, havin' 'nother broker, start sellin' short what the husband buys an' that ruins the husband. That breaks him absolutely. An' then the husband, seein' all his plans an' dreams busted, but not knowin' the reason, gets depressed an' does away with himself, as they knew he would, knowin' how sensitive he was."

"So then they're free to do what they like an' they got a lot o' money."

Aschel paused and looked at Unity Ring. She was watching him narrowly, her chest heaving with her labored breathing.

"Now that's all clear," he continued, "cause it's easy to investigate at the Stock Exchange an' at the brokers', an' the wife made the mistake o' goin' there with the friend, so her part's 's clear's his."

"Well, everything looks good to the wife, she havin' the man she wanted, they was goin' to get married after a respectful period o' mournin'—but she'd forgot that he's a scoundrel like herself, an' suddenly he takes up with a woman he'd been goin' with before he made his play f'r the wife. Havin' the money an' the friend's professional practice, he don't care so much f'r the wife anymore. An' this is clear, 'cause the husband o' the other woman c'n testify to it."

"Well, it 'bout drives the wife crazy, I reckon, so she does a little plannin' all her own an' gives a little party an' invites everybody who's been hurt by this man, which makes 'em wonder 'bout her, 'cause with all her nastiness, this woman's always been smooth an' tactful."

"But I guess she sort o' wanted to round everything off that night an' thought it fittin' an' proper f'r everybody to get a good look at the fella f'r the last time. 'Sides, it's a good alibi f'r her, 'cause he leaves with the rest."

"But she's told him to come back, so

when the people'd taken him home—something else she had in mind, thinkin' it'd be fit an' proper that night an' that it'd help her alibi, which it did, f'r a while—he slips out an' comes back, 'cause in spite o' takin' up with the other woman, he ain't a man to miss a trick."

"The story ain't so clear, here, but it don't matter. Maybe they had a drink an' a sandwich; maybe they sat an' talked an' maybe the woman plead with him, but anyway, gettin' her opportunity, the widow conks this man on the head with somethin' an' then, with him unconscious, she ties him up, bein' good at knots 'cause she's f'r'm seafarin' people an' puts adhesive tape over his mouth."

"Then—she's strong, 'cause she does the housework herself, not darin' to hire a maid yet, 'cause folks'll wonder where she got the money; an' her furniture, bein' heavy, makes a mess of her arms—she lugs him out to the summerhouse an' waits 'til he comes to."

"Then she takes f'r'm his wrist the luck piece he's always worn an' that must 'a' scared him half blind, 'cause he's a very superstitious man. Her husband'd given it to him an' that was 'nother detail she'd thought of."

"Then, when she'd said all she wanted to, she got up an' cut his throat an' watched him die, 'cause she hated this man now, an' despite the fact she looks gentle an' sweet, she is fierce and terribly cruel underneath."

"Then, when he's dead, she takes off the rope an' the adhesive tape an' leaves him, figurin' nobody'll suspect her on account o' him goin' home with the other woman, on account they was 'sposed to be married some day, an' he was her husband's best friend."

Aschel paused. He was looking out at the moonlit sea.

"But o' course," he went on, "that story ain't worth a thing, unless one thing's found, but I found it, ma'am. Rather Professus Proven found it. He knows the story's well's I do, I reckon, an' I took it from him a minute ago. He'd even commit burglary to follow that study of his. He got it f'r'm your bureau drawer, ma'am, where you put it, after you'd taken it off'n Doctuh Mott's wrist."

Aschel held out the voodoo bracelet. She came at him with a harsh, snarling scream, the corners of her mouth drawn back, her lips drooling with rage. In the moonlight her eyes glowed like those of a tigress. There was no beauty in Unity Ring's face now; there were murderous rage and unbridled ferocity. Her face was the face of a killer unleashed. And her hands, her beautiful hands, were like claws. They were weird and horrible hands now—hands of cruelty and lust.

She came at him clawing, but he caught her arms, held her as she struggled with her horrible rage. He held her until, spent as much because of the fury of her emotion as the physical effort she was making, she crumpled, exhausted.

Aschel drew from his hip pocket his handcuffs and put them on her.

"Officuh Gray!" he called, but he was startled. Officer Gray was standing in the door of the summerhouse. He was staring at Unity Ring. Then he looked irritably at Aschel.

"Well, I guess you got her," he muttered. "Guess you did a good job, too,

Her Husband's Friend

but I'd 'a' liked to do it myself."

Ashel smiled. "Why," he said, "Officuh Gray, she's your pris'ner. I just helped out, that's all. An' here's what'll clinch the case f'r you. Professuh Proveen found it in Miz Ring's drawer." He handed Officer Gray the voodoo bracelet. "Professuh Proveen was just leavin' as I went in the house, but he won't go far so you c'n subpoena him. He'll talk, too, 'cause no matter how int'rested a man is in what he's studyin', it ain't no license f'r burglary so I guess he'll make a good witness in tradin' off." Ashel grinned at the gaping Gray. "You wanta take her over, now? I got my boat down there. I s'pect it'd be better, so's you c'n get in your report."

Officer Gray was grinning, now. He said nothing; he only held out his hand.

"Guess you're a nice fella," said Officer Gray. "Guess you know how much this'll mean to me."

"I guess," said Ashel, but when they were in the boat, speeding across the dark bay, with the raging murderess manacled to a seat behind them, he said: "I got your note, Officuh Gray. I wouldn't do that again, if I was you, no matter how much I wanted to handle a case myself. Just s'pose I'd 'a' thought you might 'a' had something to do with it? An' look how much easier it'd 'a' been if we could 'a' worked together."

Ashel looked owlishly at Officer Gray. The old cop shook his head thoughtfully. But later Ashel, after listening to Graney's outraged surprise because Officer Gray had been given a medal for his solution of the affair, said:

"Why, Mistuh Graney, Officuh Gray's a smart man. He's a good cop."

And Graney, smarting from the memory of Officer Gray's snubbing, could not for the life of him tell whether his sardonic father-in-law was serious.

GIFTS FOR CHRISTMAS

With the aid of our New Method Circulars you can make these attractive and practical gifts for Christmas. Here they are:

No. 338—A becoming crocheted bed jacket.

No. 339—A new style work bag.

No. 340—A laundry bag made of two good-looking wash cloths.

No. 341—Directions for making crochet and linen table pads.

No. 342—A dainty transparent hat-stand cover.

No. 343—An engaging handbag which may be made of velvet or corded silk.

Write to Miss Frances Cowles, care of MYSTERY Magazine, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y., enclosing 4 cents for one circular, 10 cents for 3 circulars, or 15 cents for all six. Be sure to indicate which circulars you want by the numbers given in the accompanying descriptions.



*DOUBLE MINT GUM is good for your teeth. Enjoy it daily. The chewing sends new life-blood to roots and nerves and also whitens and beautifies.

Grandma Binker has no trouble at all in getting her errands done—for she pays liberally with **DOUBLE MINT GUM**.

Amazing new NAIL POLISH harmonizes with your Natural Coloring



New shades LADY LILLIAN Nail Polish—in transparent and creme types—made to enhance the true color tones of your skin.

—See Special Offer Below*

• This great nail polish news, announced in Vogue, has made many a woman stop, think, and change all her nail polish ideas. Beauty experts say that nail polish shades should first of all match your natural coloring—should lift the color of your eyes, your hair, your skin, to their fullest expression—thus giving to your own natural beauty that vital, vivid charm men idealize.

No wonder the new shades of Lady Lillian Nail Polish are creating such a sensation. They include a full series of nine lovely colors, based on the true colors of the artist's palette, in both transparent and creme type polishes.

The new Lady Lillian Polish shades flow on smoothly, leaving an unbroken surface without bubble or crumb. They dry rapidly, leaving no odor to collide with your perfume. They last and last because they do not chip and do not fade.

Individual bottles of Lady Lillian Nail Polish, Oil Polish Remover, Cuticle Remover and Cuticle Oil, cost but 25¢ at Department Stores and Drug Stores. There are ten sizes at "five-and-tens." And you can buy complete Lady Lillian Manicure Sets at prices that will surprise you. Lady Lillian Products are approved by Good Housekeeping. Booklet "How to Enhance Your Natural Coloring" comes with polish and sets.

*TRIAL OFFER—One daytime and one evening shade of Lady Lillian Nail Polish—made especially for your color type—with Oil Polish Remover, Cuticle Oil, Nail White, Emery Board, Manicure Stick and Cotton—and valuable booklet "How to Enhance Your Natural Coloring"—All for 10¢.

I enclose 10¢ for the new Lady Lillian Manicure Set described above. I prefer Transparent...or Creme Polish...
I am True Blonde...Ash Blonde...Light Brunette...
Chestnut Brunette...Dark Brunette...Russet Red...
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Send also booklet "How to Enhance Your Natural Coloring."

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City..... State.....

LADY LILLIAN (Dept. A)
1140 Washington Street, Boston, Mass.

Off the Record

(Continued from page 23)

heroes from all the other states. The lawmakers always change the subject therefore when the floor in Statuary Hall is mentioned.

The statue of George Washington without a shirt is another of Congress' artistic worries.

In a little-visited chapel of the Smithsonian Institution stands this long-enduring shame of the Father of his Country.

It was back in 1832 that Congress decided it ought to have a statue of Washington for the place of honor in its Statuary Hall, and so commissioned one Horatio Greenough to sculpt it. He had achieved his reputation as an artist by producing naked cherubs in wholesale lots. If a man could carve a cherub out of marble, figured the legislators, he ought to be able to do the same for George Washington.

Greenough made the statue of Washington, all right, and then Congress' troubles began. The great figure, far larger than life size, fell through the bottom of a boat in a New England harbor. It cost \$1,200 to rescue the statue and repair the boat.

The sculptor then brought it to Washington for the unveiling. When the cloth was pulled aside, Congress shuddered. There sat Washington, fifteen feet tall, with a marble statue draped around his otherwise nude torso—he even wore Roman sandals.

That caused so much snickering that Congress hid its work of art in the Smithsonian Institution. There it has remained during the years. Tourist guides are careful to avoid it. So is Congress.

When the Truth Hurts

THE Treasury Department is fitted with giant vaults, safes and such, which hold gold and which are supposed to be impervious to the blow torches and the drills of the most expert cracksmen. That much has been reported in these columns before.

In publicity handouts, formal statements and radio speeches Treasury officials always stress the impregnability of their strong boxes. They think such news ought to keep robbers out of the Treasury. The theory is that no self-respecting safe-cracker would attempt to open a safe which wouldn't open. It isn't reasonable.

But:
The treasury had to hire a safe-cracker the other day to open one of

its safes and—all the publicity notwithstanding—the blow-torch cut through the steel door like butter. That presented a problem of conscience to Herbert E. Gaston, special assistant to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr.

The safe held about \$1,000,000 to pay off thousands of clerks on the first of the month. A lock slipped and jammed, department workmen wrestled with it to no avail, and a professional cracksmen was called in. He did his stuff in short order, the clerks got their money, and everybody was happy, save Gaston.

His job is that of press agent of the Treasury Department. He wondered whether he should deny that there had been any safe-cracking, and so uphold the legend of impregnability, or whether he should tell the truth. The truth hurt, but Gaston told it.

N. B. Those fake gold bricks, which some rascal swiped from a glass case in the Treasury's lobby, still are missing, although the Secret Service sleuths under Chief W. H. Moran claim they're still looking for them.

The gold-plated bricks, which were installed for the benefit of the tourist trade, aren't worth much, but the Treasury wants them back, badly. Says its reputation is involved.

How to Torture a Railroad

THE Pennsylvania Railroad got a real scare when it ran smack into the Federal Commission of Fine Arts, composed of seven gentlemen whose duty it is to keep the nation's capital pretty.

The railroad, which is electrifying its lines between New York and Washington, is erecting towers to carry the power lines and trolleys. Plain, ordinary poles did very well in New York and all the cities enroute, but when the pole setters reached Washington the Fine Arts Commission said "Whoa, you can't put up any poles until we see whether they're artistic."

So the Pennsylvania bought some assorted fancy poles and had them erected as samples. Then the Fine Arts Commissioners drove out, inspected the poles and finally o.k'd one of the fancy electrification standards.

What might have happened had the Commissioners failed to approve any of the poles is too dreadful to contemplate. Ask the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The December Issue of

• MYSTERY •

will be on Sale November 1st. Get your copy early... The supply won't last all month.

At the End of the Alley Was a Door

(Continued from page 31)

a fine income. As a matter of fact, Mr. Corcoran—when the patrolman called me over, when I came in here and looked at Clint, I didn't consider suicide at all. I thought naturally, perhaps instinctively, that Clint had been shot. Of course, now, in the light of what this young lady said—Clint's being depressed tonight—I am not so sure."

They were interrupted by Bonno, who had been standing in the hallway conversing with someone. Bonno said, "Here's an old lady from down the hall said that just after the shots she heard a door bang and like feet running."

"Yes," said a little old lady in an antiquated boudoir cap. "Just about a minute after the shots."

Tom Rockford barked, "Browning, what are you looking so scared about?"

"Am I looking scared?" Browning asked flippantly.

"By cripes, if that ain't cooperation for you!" Tom Rockford stormed. "I ask him a question and he turns right around and asks me one!" He stamped his blunt heels across the floor and towered above Browning. "Young man, I didn't like your puss when I first laid eyes on it and I ain't getting to like it better. And I don't like your wise-cracks, either. I suppose you didn't hear a door bang, Mr. Browning!"

"I did," said Browning. "I distinctly heard a door bang while I was up on the next floor above. It sounded—well, down below somewhere."

Rockford turned on the girl. "Miss Powers, did you slam a door on your way out?"

"N-no."

"Did you hear a door slam?"

"I think—I think I did."

"You think you did! You mean you think you slammed it?"

"No. I mean I think I heard a door slam. But I was so upset after hearing the shots, I can't remember."

Corcoran said, "Let's go over and take a look at Dr. Sundstrand's place. Do you mind, doctor?"

"Come on," Sundstrand said, starting for the door.

Corcoran and Rockford went with him. They walked down the corridor, turned left, walked a matter of thirty-odd feet, then turned left again and proceeded down a corridor similar to the one on which Dermody's apartment was located. Sundstrand explained that the apartments were built around a rectangular court, with the rear end open; his apartment was the last on the north wing. When they entered Sundstrand's apartment, Corcoran noticed that, except for the furnishings, it was structurally the same as Dermody's.

Sundstrand pointed to the window. It was open at the bottom, and above the opening the glass in both frames was shattered. Corcoran leaned in the open window, looked down, looked upward, and across at Dermody's apartment.

Rockford said, "Here's the slug." He was digging it from a panel of the wall opposite the window.

"All right," Corcoran nodded. "Let's go back."

The three men left, and as they turned into the corridor on which Dermody's apartment was located—

(Please turn to page 80)

*Blonde Hair must be
EVEN and LUSTROUS to be
Really Beautiful*



Be Sure of Lovely EVEN Tints —Use Marchand's

UNEVEN or dull blonde hair is so unattractive and so unnecessary—really unnecessary when MARCHAND'S GOLDEN HAIR WASH is being used so successfully to EVEN-UP and to brighten blonde hair.

No matter what you've tried or how you've tried before—if you want lovely natural-looking blonde hair use MARCHAND'S. Marchand's is not a dye or a powder. It comes to you prepared, in liquid form. That's one reason why it is easier to get even, uniform results with MARCHAND'S. It has a lasting effect on the hair, it will not wash out or come off. Thousands of blondes have found there is one fine reliable product that can be depended upon to produce clear EVEN tints—and that is MARCHAND'S GOLDEN HAIR WASH.

Marchand's is used to keep blonde hair from darkening—and to restore the youthful golden

sheen to faded hair. Easy to use at home. No skill is required, yet beautiful results are assured.

Also Makes Arm and Leg Hair Invisible!

The same reliable Marchand's makes dark excess hair INVISIBLE like the light unnoticeable down on the blonde's skin. This avoids shaving—you have no fear of regrowths at all because you do not cut or attempt to destroy the hair. Limbs look dainty and attractive, even thru the sheerest of stockings.

MARCHAND'S GOLDEN HAIR WASH

Ask Your Druggist Or Get By Mail
—Use Coupon Below

MARCHAND'S HAIR EXPERTS DEVELOP MARVELOUS NEW CASTILE SHAMPOO—FOR ALL SHADES OF HAIR

Now—a shampoo that brings out the hidden, innate beauty of the hair—natural, rich color—soft, silken texture—free of soap film because it rinses completely. Does not change color of hair. Ask your druggist for Marchand's Castile Shampoo or write us.

C. MARCHAND CO., 251 W. 19th St., N.Y.C.
45c enclosed (send coins or stamps). Please send me a regular bottle of Marchand's Golden Hair Wash. T.G. 1124.

Name.....

Address.....City.....State.....



This face powder will flatter you

SOME women are "finished" at sixty. Some girls are "finished" at thirty. Then there's the type who never suffers defeat. At any age she's able to attract and hold men. Is it because she's so beautiful? Not always. At least half of these women are not beautiful. But they do breathe romance. They're glamorous. They know the art of being a woman... of flattering themselves.

To such a woman face powder is very, very important. The chances are her skin is imperfect. So she avoids all the heavy powders. She must have one of fairy-like fineness that spreads smoothly and makes imperfections invisible. No ordinary powder does this. It must be MELLO-GLO. This is why:

First: MELLO-GLO, the new soft-tone face powder, is made by a new method. It's so fine in texture that it spreads with unbelievable smoothness. It covers enlarged pores. It minimizes blemishes.

Second: MELLO-GLO preserves a lovely, natural, dull smoothness through hours of play or work. Being so light it does not draw out oil and perspiration from the pores to soak and spoil itself. So MELLO-GLO stays on longer and allows you to keep lovely. A coarser powder would soon be ruined and shiny by oil and perspiration. When you use MELLO-GLO you look exquisite. You are the type that never suffers defeat.

A brand new creation in face powders. Look for the blue-and-gold box to avoid a mistake when buying MELLO-GLO Soft-tone face powder. One of the largest selling \$1.00 face powders in America. Special purse size 10¢—now on sale at your favorite 5 and 10¢ store. Get a box today!

At the End of the Alley Was a Door

(Continued from page 79)

body's apartment was located, they saw two uniformed cops rough-housing a man.

"Hey!" yelled Rockford. "What are you doing?"

One of the cops turned, said, "We found this guy downstairs."

"What do you mean, you found him downstairs?"

"Across the street, I mean. Me and Ike seen him leaning against a tree. We were grabbing a smoke downstairs. So when Ike called out, the guy starts walking away. We ran over and colared him."

The young man was big and burly. His tie was half undone and the crown of his hat was lopsided. Brown hair bunched at his ears and his eyebrows were thick, bushy, and his face was red with anger and his breathing was heavy, noisy.

Rockford growled, "Well, young fellow, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"What have I got to say? I've got this to say: If these two mugs would chuck their nightsticks and come in the street with me, I'd take 'em apart!"

"Oh, you would, would you?" said Rockford, jamming his fists against his hips. "You're a tough baby, eh?"

"Who said I'm tough? Did I say I was tough?"

"You open your mouth again in that tone, sweetheart, and I'll bust a tooth out," Rockford told him dully.

"That wouldn't surprise me a bit. With these two apes holding my arms, a baby could do that."

Corcoran said, "Look here," amiably. "You're all in a sweat and you're talking through your hat. Take it easy. You're not talking sense and you look like a pretty sensible fellow. When a murder's been committed, you can't expect policemen to go around mincing words or actions. What's your name?"

"Powers."

Corcoran and Rockford looked at each other.

"Come on," Corcoran said, and led the way to Dermody's apartment. Inside, he looked down at the girl. "Miss Powers—"

Her heels scraped suddenly on the floor as she saw the burly young man being thrust into the room. Her lips flew apart and an inarticulate cry was choked somewhere in her throat. The burly young man was scowling about the room, refusing to look at the girl.

"Miss Powers," Corcoran said, "I believe this is some relative of yours."

SHE began crying and through the tears her eyes looked harried, hunted, and she beat her small fists upon her knees, dug her teeth into her lower lip. Perspiration beaded her forehead and small, strangled sounds twisted in her throat.

The burly young man said, "Cut it out, will you! Cut it out!" He frowned. His lips, though taut, worked minutely against great tension.

Tom Rockford grabbed hold of the woman's hand, barked, "Crying ain't going to get you anywhere, sister! Lay off it!"

"You lay off it!" the burly young man roared.

Tom Rockford looked dully at him.

"Boy, keep your mouth—"

"Let her alone!"

"Boy, I tell you—"

"And I tell you to let her alone or I'll kick your face in!"

Corcoran stepped between them. "Tom," he said, "pay no attention to him. Powers, take my advice and calm down. You're an uncommonly hot-headed young man, and doubtless you're able-bodied, but you can't—"

"Peter, Peter," sobbed the girl, "be good, Peter. Don't, don't get them angry, Peter. Don't—please, don't."

Rockford chuckled roughly. "Oh, so he's Peter to her."

"He's my husband," she said weakly.

"What!" exploded Tom Rockford. "You never said you were married!"

You never said—

"No one asked me. You asked me my first and last name and I told you it was Elinor Powers."

Rockford pivoted and bent a chilled stare on Powers. "Did you ever slam a door behind you?" he demanded.

"Hundreds of times. What's it to you?"

ROCKFORD reddened with regret. He muttered, "Somebody remember to remind me to poke this guy in the snoot at headquarters." He looked at Corcoran mutinously. "There's Powers. There's his wife. There's Browning. Three people that've been doing an awful lot of clowning around. And there's Dermody—dead, Marcus. I don't believe it's suicide."

Corcoran shrugged, said, "Tom, I never did believe it was suicide."

"And why not?" asked Jacobs, the corner's man.

"Because," said Corcoran, "the fact that two shots were fired, Dermody's hobby was guns. You saw his collection in the other room. He was a member of a pistol club. He knew guns and how to handle them. He would have made a clean job of the first shot. I can't see any motive for a second shot. And I'm going to be old-fashioned on another premise—I think there'd have been powder marks if he'd shot himself. Jacobs, it's murder."

Rockford was pointing. "Powers—his wife—Browning."

"One of them, Tom," Corcoran said; and he added, "I hope it's not the young lady." He turned away. "I'm now going to make a thorough search of the apartment." He paused, then said, "By the way, where's the gun?"

"I sent it to headquarters with Schmidt for fingerprints," Tom Rockford replied.

"Five will get you ten if there are any prints on it."

"Meaning?"

"If there are prints on it, they'll be Dermody's, and that'll mean suicide," Corcoran said. "No prints—and that'll mean murder. In this day and age murderers don't leave prints on guns."

Tom Rockford had a notebook out, pencil poised. He said across the room to Powers, "Your first name is Peter, eh? What's your age?"

"Twenty-five."

"And your address, 695 Washington St.—"

"No, I'm living in a rooming house in Sykes Street—85 Sykes Street."

Rockford scowled. "But your wife's address—"

"Who said I was living with my wife?" the unruly Mr. Powers interrupted. "I'm living alone."

Rockford snapped his book shut. His

At the End of the Alley Was a Door

eyes and mouth became very round, and then his eyes grew very narrow, his mouth very stern, tight.

"I get it!" he muttered. "The young wife was playing itchy-kitchy with Dermody and young Powers took a bat at him and the wife is—by George!—the wife is trying to cover him up! We've been blind, Marjorie! Blind!"

Corcoran said bleakly, with a sigh, "You'd better arrest them, Tom. The three of them, Powers possibly as the killer, his wife and Browning as material witnesses."

Browning jumped up, a sneer on his face. "Me? Why, I never saw these people before. You can't pinch me—"

Rockford was to the point: "You're pinched, mister."

AT two the next afternoon Corcoran came briskly into his large, darkly paneled office, laid hat and lightweight chamois gloves on his desk and spent twenty minutes with routine matters.

No fingerprints had been found on the gun. It was obviously, definitely a case of murder. All that morning men out of Corcoran's office had been sent on various missions, here and there, throughout the city. Most of their reports, brief but full of facts, now lay on his desk. Corcoran, as early as nine that morning, had made a complete search of Dermody's apartment, in which, since the death, a policeman had been placed. He had found in one of the closets a small motion picture projector and several tins of exposed film. He had studied Dermody's collection of guns, of various calibres, various makes, all affectionately cloistered in plush cases. Not leather, because leather, in damp weather, is inclined to sweat and thereby the finish and operating mechanism of a gun are impaired.

At ten past two Corcoran's secretary looked in and said, "The sergeant just arrived with those three suspects. Do you want them in all at once?"

"No," Corcoran tossed some correspondence into a wire basket. "Browning first."

Browning, when he entered, looked a little less dapper, and this was due to the shadow of stubble on his face. He had not slept much and his eyes looked swollen, red.

"Sit down, Mr. Browning," Corcoran said amiably, in a matter-of-fact tone, and picked up a slip of paper. When Browning had seated himself, Corcoran said in the same amiable manner, "Why did you lie about your name, Mr. Browning?"

"Lie about my name?" "You ought to have known it was silly. One of my men checked up on you. It was simple. He merely went to the liquor concern that published those throw-aways and asked if they'd employed a Mr. Browning to dispose of them. They said no. He described you and they said the description sounded like their Curran, although Mr. Curran was not employed to dispose of the throw-aways. He was a salesman. Now what was the idea, Mr. Curran?"

The young man sighed. "Yes, yes, I'm Curran," he said.

"I know that. I asked you—"

"I know what you asked me," Curran interrupted sharply, "I can't tell you."

(Please turn to page 82)

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At the End of the Alley Was a Door

(Continued from page 81)

"You mean you won't?"

"Same thing."

Corcoran was not amazed. He even
smiled a little, drily. "Do I have to
remind you that you're being held in
connection with a murder case?"

"I know all about that. But there's
no law that says I have to answer
your questions."

Corcoran leaned forward. "Mr.
Curran, one of my men made a com-
plete tour of that apartment house a
little before noon. I have his report
before me. He went to every tenant
in the place. First he asked, 'Do you
know a man named Browning?' Then,
'Do you know a man named Curran?'"
Corcoran leaned back, his lips pursed,
his high forehead wrinkled. "Do you
know Mrs. Freed?"

Curran started, slapping his palms
to the arms of the chair.

Corcoran said negligently, "Sure you
do. She was the only one in the apart-
ment house who got mixed up when
my man questioned her. Now what
about it, Curran? We haven't pinched
her, but if you insist on stalling, we'll
have to pinch her."

"Oh, no—for God's sake, don't do that!"

"Then what?"

CURRAN stood up and gripped the
edge of the desk. His voice was low,
clogged: "I didn't want to drag her
into it. That's the level truth. I—you
may think I'm a rat, sir—but—well,
it's hard for you to understand. Please
don't repeat this—please! Look—I
love her. She loves me but—well, you
know, she's married. To a guy she
doesn't love—a guy that takes socks
at her just for fun. I—I was in her
apartment last night. He was out. I
was just about to leave when the shots
rang out, down the hall."

"The same corridor of the Dermody
apartment?"

"Yes. I was standing in Edith's door-
way. I said good-bye quick and slammed
the door and ran. I knew if there
were shots there would be police and
I didn't want to be there and answer
questions."

"You ran past Dermody's door?"

"Yes."

"After the shots?"

"Oh, yes. The shots went off while
I was standing in Edith's doorway. I
guess I didn't start for a minute. Then
I shoved Edith back in, slammed the
door and ran. I heard a thump as I
went past the Dermody door, though
of course at the time I didn't know
where the shooting had taken place.
When I got to the head of the stair-
case I looked back, just for an instant."

"Did you see anyone come out?"

"No."

"Inspector Rockford's theory is that
the killer left by the fireproof inner
stairway—its door would then be down
the hall past Mrs. Freed's. You say
you heard a thump?"

"Yes."

"Like a body falling?"

"No. More like some heavy object."

Corcoran said, "Mr. Curran, would
you by any chance be trying to shield
a woman merely for the romantic ele-
ment involved?"

Curran stared at him, licked his lips.
He looked confused.

"Mrs. Powers, I mean," Corcoran
said, eying him shrewdly.

"No-no. He laughed. 'I'd be silly.'"

"Yes. The only thing wrong with the
inner fireproof stairway theory is that
the building superintendent was at the
bottom of that stairway, putting out
milk bottles, when the shots rang out.
He started up. He met no one."

Curran stared. "That is curious,
isn't it?"

"Very. You will wait outside, Mr.
Curran."

Elinor Powers and her husband were
ushered in together. Corcoran, stand-
ing, dipped his head and said pleas-
antly, "Sit down, Mrs. Powers, Mr.
Powers." And when they had sat down:
"Come now, when were you two
estranged?"

Powers blew out an exasperated
breath, rose and strode angrily around
the office. His wife followed his move-
ments with apprehensive eyes. Cor-
coran leaned back in his chair.

Powers stopped, exploded: "That's
our business!"

His wife gestured to Corcoran, say-
ing in a quick, panicky little voice,
"Please—he goes off the handle easily
but at heart he's—". She broke off to
say to her husband, "Peter, please sit
down, Peter."

He grumbled and sat down.

Elinor Powers said to Corcoran,
"About a week ago—Peter left and
went to live alone."

"Why?" Corcoran asked.

"He—he didn't want me to go out
nights working."

"And you went out nights working?"

Corcoran nodded.

"Yes," she said.

"Why, Mr. Powers," Corcoran said,
"did you object to your wife going out
working at night?"

"Wouldn't you," demanded Powers,
"get sore if your wife went out every
night working? Am I a man or am I
a mouse? I make forty bucks a week
and we can live on that. Elinor's not
so strong. I argued and argued with
her and I got madder and madder."

Corcoran asked, "Did you object to
her working or did you specifically ob-
ject to her working for Dermody?"

"I objected to her working and I es-
pecially objected to her working for
Dermody. He was a dirty old chaser."

"Peter?" his wife said; and then to
Corcoran: "Mr. Dermody was a bach-
elor, and he did go out with a lot of
young girls, but business was business
with him. He was kind to me."

Corcoran looked at Powers. "Why
were you hanging around in front of
the apartment house last night?"

Powers scowled, shrugged. "I don't
know. I—I guess I was waiting for
Elinor to come out. I hadn't seen her
in a week and I guess—Nuts! That's
my business!"

"It's too bad, too bad," sighed Cor-
coran, "you haven't got an alibi."

Elinor Powers cried, "But he didn't
kill Mr. Dermody! Peter wouldn't do
a thing like that! He's hot-headed and
all that but he wouldn't kill a man!"
Corcoran said levelly, "Mrs. Powers,
you'd try to shield him, of course. I'm
afraid we're going to have to put you
through a pretty tough inquisition—"

Powers snapped, "Like hell you are!
If you guys think you can get tough
with Elinor, I'll wreck the joint!" He
jumped up, his fists knotted.

Corcoran said, "I thought you'd left
your wife. I thought you didn't love
her any more."

At the End of the Alley Was a Door

"Who said I don't love her?" Powers shouted.

"Oh, Peter, dear!" Elinor cried.

The phone on Corcoran's desk rang and he put the receiver to his ear. "Yes? . . . Oh, John—yes." He leaned forward, an intent look in his eyes. He nodded. "I see. Where? . . . Swell. Cover it from that corner and I'll meet you there in ten minutes."

THE limousine sped across town. Corcoran sat in the back, his hat on the seat beside him. Gus, the chauffeur, tooted the big car expertly through a shifting web of traffic on State Street, hit Union Circle and made a left turn around the monument into South Broad Street. He cut over to Napoli Street and down Napoli.

Corcoran said, "Stop at the next block, Gus."

The district attorney got out in front of a shop specializing in artichokes. He walked up Levitt Street, dingy even at the height of the afternoon. John Warburg, one of his assistants, was loitering on the corner of Levitt and Bone. He was a small, young, commonplace man, and he said, pointing with his chin:

"The place over there."

It was an old frame building, its front door flush with the sidewalk. It seemed to lean to one side, a three-story house, its paint peeling, its windows blank, empty. A For Rent sign was nailed beside the front door.

Warburg said, "See the alley on the right? He went in that. There's a door down at the end of the alley. I saw him knock on that and go in."

"It figures," Corcoran said grimly.

"I thought it did, too," Warburg nodded. "Should we knock?"

"No. We'll take a chance either way, so let's crash it."

"The side door?"

"No. If they hear a rumpus, they'll think he was tailed to the side door and they'll make for it. Let's crash the front door."

They walked swiftly across the street. They did not pause to listen. Corcoran nodded and both men lunged at the door with their shoulders. There was a grating, splintering sound. They hit the door again and it whipped open and Warburg fell through the doorway. He was up in an instant. Corcoran went past him, drawing a gun. They were in a hallway. The rooms on either side were bare, dusty.

Corcoran ran down the hallway, punched open a door and burst into a kitchen. He saw an oil stove, lighted, with a large pot of steaming water on top. There was a stairway leading to regions above. Corcoran took the steps three at a time, reached a corridor and saw a short, rugged old man stepping from a doorway. The man wore a coarse blue shirt. His sleeves were rolled up and he held a towel in his hands. Somewhere near at hand a door slammed.

Corcoran clipped, "Don't make a move."

Warburg was at his heels gripping a small automatic.

"Cover him, John," Corcoran said, and strode past the small man into a furnished room. There was a door beyond and Corcoran grabbed the knob. The door was locked. The district attorney (Please turn to page 84)

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At the End of the Alley Was a Door

(Continued from page 83)

ney shattered the lock with two shots, kicked the door open and planted himself athwart the threshold as Sundstrand was diving out of a doorway at the other side of the room.

"Stop, Sundstrand!"

Sundstrand, still in motion, twisted part way around. Corcoran saw the gun. Corcoran fired and Sundstrand fell against the open door, slamming it back against the wall. His gun dropped and his mouth fell open. He remained standing against the door.

"Bad break, eh?" Corcoran said.

THERE was a man, naked from the waist up, lying on an operating table. This room was an elaborate operating room. There was a red smudge on the man's bare chest and the man lay quite motionless, senseless.

"What's the matter with him?" Corcoran asked.

Sundstrand breathed, "He's under ether."

"You were just about to operate?"

"He's carrying two slugs in him."

"Is there a phone here?"

"Down—in the kitchen."

Warburg appeared with the small old man manacled.

Corcoran said, "John, go down to the phone in the kitchen and call an ambulance. Leave the little fellow here."

"You put on a swell show, Sundstrand," Corcoran said. "It's too bad I decided to have your movements covered. There was a man watching your apartment from the time we left the murder scene last night. At that time, I suspected you only a little—and for no very concrete reason. This is, isn't it, a very funny place for a swell doctor like you to have an operating room? Nothing like your excellent suite of offices on Webster Street. An operating room in an apparently empty house is very strange indeed. The unconscious fellow on the table looks a great deal like Dave Bonner, a racketeer."

Sundstrand said, "You should know." "I do know. Those movie films of Dermody's really put me on the track. They were taken about three years ago and one of them contained a lot of scenes of you and Dermody pitching horseshoes. Dermody was no good. You were excellent. Almost every time you tossed one it was a ringer. Then, on another reel, there were pictures of you and Dermody at some camp in the woods at target practise. He was excellent with a pistol. So were you. There was a close-up showing one of your targets on which you scored five times out of six in the black."

"In a check-up on Dermody I found that he was a strange bird. Anything for a story—even on his friends. Though he would always disguise names and places pretty cleverly. Among his notes I found one sheet of paper on which he'd written in long-hand, 'Notes for a book to be entitled, Dr. Samaritan.' He'd made only a few notes. One of his entries was this: 'I ought to lay the scene far away—possibly in San Francisco. The main character will be, of course a so-called society medico. He'll live among the right people, his practise will be among the very wealthy, his offices very elegant, indeed. Then I ought to place his secret office in an old abandoned warehouse near the river, where, for a stiff fee, he performs operations on, gives medical

attention to the members of the underworld.' I found that, Sundstrand. It was interesting. And I had you shadowed, on a long chance."

Sundstrand muttered in a slow, ironic voice, "Luck, luck." He added, "Last night you were sure one of those three killed him."

"I was," said Sundstrand. Nothing seemed right but we had to hold them. You made it plain that you thought Dermody had not committed suicide and so you threw out your suspicion of murder—against the others. That was very clever. But the way things have lined up, the others couldn't have done it. Because someone was on the fireproof stairway at the time of the shooting and he saw no one escaping over that route. The girl was ahead of this chap Browning on her way down the regular staircase. Browning heard a thump inside Dermody's room as he passed it. The girl couldn't have made it, because she was ahead, on her way down the stairs. And it was not the thump of a body. It was the thump of a gun falling on the floor. Dermody didn't drop it because there were no prints on it—and hence it wasn't suicide. And it wasn't Dermody's door that slammed. His door never did slam because no one, after the shots, came out of his place.

"What you did, Sundstrand, is this. You borrowed Dermody's gun. Exactly when, I don't know. He took good care of his guns. All those we found were nicely placed in plush cases. We did not, however, find the plush case for the murder weapon. When he lent you the gun, he lent you the case with it, of course. You destroyed the case. You saw Mrs. Powers leave his apartment and this was an opportune time for you to kill him, thus throwing suspicion on the woman. You aimed, shot, killed him instantly. You reached out of your window, fired from the outside of your window, in through your own window pane, thus giving the impression that one of the shots, supposed to have been fired in Dermody's apartment, had gone wild, crashed through your window, imbedded itself in your wall. Then you took careful aim—you were wearing gloves and had to be very careful—you took careful aim and tossed the gun across the court into Dermody's apartment. Your expertness pitching horseshoes served you well. But you shouldn't have murdered him, Sundstrand."

"Why not?" demanded Sundstrand angrily. "He was the only one who knew about my place here. That in itself wasn't so bad, because Dermody would never have told anyone about it out and out. But the fool had a complex. The dramatic values of the situation got the best of him—and one night last month, when he was tight, he kidded me and said he was going to write it up, fine place, that place. When he was sober next day, he denied he was going to write it. But I knew him—I knew his complex. I knew that if he wrote it people would begin to snoop around, suspect his lifelong medical friend. I—I couldn't take the risk!"

Corcoran shrugged. "So you took a greater risk—with murder." The strict attorney smiled dryly. "And in a cockeyed sort of way you brought a young estranged couple together."

Warburg said, "The ambulance is on the way."

Little Book of Strange Crimes

(Continued from page 35)

guage, impressing the victim with illusions of great wealth waiting to be plucked. Often this man doubles as the feeler.

Bookmaker—He who pretends to be an official of a racetrack betting exchange or an official of the stock exchange or a brokerage firm. He acts as seecery and frequently handles the actual transaction in an aloof and indifferant manner.

Right jug—A bank that furnishes services for the transactions without questioning or suspicion.

Blow-off—The gentle act of taking the victim's money while convincing him that it has been legitimately lost through a grievous error. This is always handled with a vast show of regret and sorrow and all of the boys always appear to have lost along with the victim.

Pay-off—Obvious from its terminology. The joyous division of the swag: fifteen per cent to the local police fixers; the remainder being divided among the gang, with forty-five per cent going to the steerer and fifty-five per cent to the feeler. There are subdivisions within these percentages.

Recent Oddities, Attitudes and Other Things

THE aged lately have shown distinct signs of youth. There is the case of an elderly gentleman, 94, of Hammoncton, N. J., who let fly with two shots at his wife, Ida, 70, not, he explained, "to kill or injure her, but to scare her." Police, who held him in \$600 bail, declared he was eminently successful in his plans. They also said that he claimed his wife, despite her three-score-and-ten years, was overly friendly with other men.

IN Two Rivers, Wis., Policeman Sol Mathies, although now a minion of the law, cannot forget that once he crooned softly in an orchestra. He loves popular songs, as witness his entry on the blotter after returning from settling a family argument:

"Make papa love mama again. All O. K."

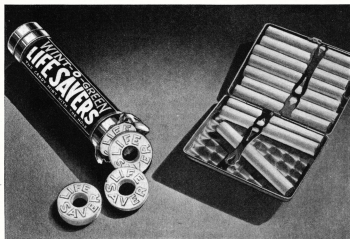
CHICAGO has reported that its public enemies are dwindling. "Liquidating" is the term the officials used. "But," adds the report, with engaging frankness, "for the most part, the liquidating was done by the Public Enemies themselves."

IN Turkey they have a new method of dope peddling. Police there have uncovered a vast system by which drugs are transported and sold, stuffed into very tasty-looking, dressed chickens.

THE New York Post carried, not long ago, an account of a strange method of determining justice in the middle ages. The King of France, on October 8, 1361, decreed that Providence should decide the guilt or innocence of a man. The man, a Chevalier of France, accused of murdering a Monseigneur, was pitted against the Monseigneur's dog in mortal combat, the dog having shown murderous

(Please turn to page 86)

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NAME _____

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Little Book of Strange Crimes

(Continued from page 85)

hatred of the Chevalier when brought into his presence. As the dog had accompanied its master on the fatal journey, this aroused the suspicions of the authorities. The dog won, and although the Chevalier was saved from its jaws, he was reserved for a more dignified, if just as sure, death.

TWO cops were held up in Chicago and robbed of \$2,800 and their pistols. The money consisted of the receipts of four municipal golf courses and a swimming pool.

SOFIA, BULGARIA, went modern, after a military *coup d'état* had established army rule, and aped the American cities. A city ordinance forbids jay-walking now and the city's jails are burdened.

BUTLER, MO., seeking money, raked over old ordinances and discovered one that promised a rich harvest in fines. It decreed that it was unlawful to operate a motor vehicle in the public square. The law was passed in 1906 and hundreds of motor cars now pass through the square. The city fathers tried, but had to abandon the matter.

A NEW JERSEY school-teacher, who, said the authorities, was too impressed by the poem "Lochinvar," is being tried by the Cliffs Park Board of Education on "charges of conduct unbecoming an instructor." Attempting to emulate the hero of his famous poem, he tried to kidnap his estranged wife, but only succeeded in sticking his finger in her eye in the ensuing struggle. The wife didn't fall in with the scheme at all.

IN Budapest a man was convicted of libel for stating that a perfectly healthy woman was consumptive. He was fined heavily.

ROLLAND BLANCHARD, of Montreal, is superstitious. He knew Friday, the thirteenth, would be unlucky for him and it was. Blanchard operates a cafe in the Canadian city and on Friday, the thirteenth, his thir-

teenth patron held him up and robbed him of the day's receipts.

THERE are 4,400,000 fingerprints on file in the Department of Justice at Washington.

POPULAR MECHANICS announced a new method of "frisking" prisoners. Weapons of steel or iron may be detected instantly in the clothing of prisoners by electrical equipment recently developed. As the prisoners march single file between a railing and a sensitized wall plate, an alarm sounds if pieces of steel or iron are concealed in their pockets. A small hand coil enables the police to detect the exact part of the clothing where the metal is hidden.

RIVERTON, N. J., has revived the pillory. It will be used for speeders. If a driver is going fifty miles an hour he must sit in his car before the public gaze in a specially marked square for fifty minutes. If his speed was sixty miles an hour he must sit for a full hour.

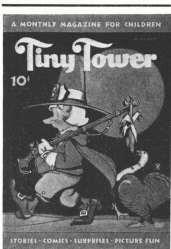
AN Havana man, hailed into court, pulled a pistol and killed one policeman, wounded another. He was enraged over being brought to court because he had been posting public notices in prohibited places.

A PITTSBURGH woman sued for, and was granted, a divorce from her husband after naming the family automobile as co-respondent. "He devoted more time to it than he did to me," she said.

IT is the practice of the Police Officials of New York each year to take space aboard some steamer and to carry out to sea all the dangerous weapons confiscated by the Police Department during the year just ended. This took place in July for the 1933-34 period and under supervision of the highest officials. These gentlemen were present, it was explained, because it was learned that a pistol supposed to have been dumped into the water in 1923 figured in an up-state murder of recent date.

Write Your Own Mystery

Do you know any actual events that have happened either to yourself or to your friends that you think constitute a real mystery problem? If so, try to solve it. MYSTERY MAGAZINE will pay \$100 apiece for the best true "unwritten mystery stories" and their solutions submitted each month. All manuscripts should be no more than 1500 words in length, no less than 500 words, preferably typewritten, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only. Each month MYSTERY MAGAZINE will print one or more real mystery problems, told by MYSTERY readers, and their solutions. And remember—it will pay \$100 for each of the best contributions published! Address your manuscript to the "I Go Sleuthing" Editor, MYSTERY MAGAZINE, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.



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Seven Meant Death

(Continued from page 43)

that Greyfield Platt was killed. Lorrimer hastened along till he came to a drug store and called up Monica Greffer. Fortunately she was at home. Her voice came back to him cool and clear.

"I want to thank you for your assistance the other night," he began. He said it awkwardly and it rang almost insincere.

"Yes?" she said. He hesitated, then with an effort managed to say:

"I would like to see you sometime—if I may. I want to talk to you—could you have lunch with me?"

She told him she couldn't but added that she was free that evening. "Could we dine somewhere? You will understand my reasons for not wishing to come to your house."

She said, "Of course," and asked him where she should meet him. On an impulse he suggested the Three-Way Club. He had a desire to see what the place he owned was like.

"It's not much of a place," he informed her, "a rowdy night club. I believe. It might interest you though, and we'd be reasonably sure of not running into anyone you know."

"I'll meet you there at eight," she agreed promptly. "Good-bye."

He hung up and wandered off to a nearby restaurant for lunch. After that he spent most of the afternoon walking around town. After his long absence it was as though he were in a foreign country. Just before five he went back to Ronald Graham's office.

"Have you been able to find out anything about the men whose names I gave you?" he asked Graham.

There was an odd look in the other's eyes.

"Did you know," Ronald Graham asked, "that all these men had at one time or another been in prison . . . like yourself?"

Warren Lorrimer nodded. "Strange," said Mr. Graham. From his desk he picked up some papers and passed them to Lorrimer. "Here are the preliminary reports," he said. "They are apparently all men of considerable means. Read them over at your leisure. By the way, I received a curious communication after you left. It was in reference to the case which I mentioned." He picked up another slip and handed it to Warren Lorrimer. It read:

"Mr. Graham: You have our assurance that Eddie Coakley will not testify against your client, Freda Hayward. We were afraid that you might consider the case hopeless and possibly be induced to let your client plead guilty to a lesser charge. This would be nothing short of a miscarriage of justice. Freda Hayward is innocent and we will see that she is acquitted.

for THE TRIBUNAL
PAUL."

WARREN LORRIMER arrived at the Three-Way Club ahead of time. He was anxious not to keep Monica waiting. It struck him that the patrons of the Three-Way Club were an odd mixture of underworld characters and perfectly respectable (Please turn to page 88)

A TRUE STORY

By A
Mother



who brings up her four
children very differently
from grandma's way

Here's a story that covers three generations. Mrs. G. R. Strong, of Clermont, New York, sends us this letter.

"In olden days," she writes, "when my mother was a girl she was a delicate child. She tells me that at nine in the morning she was given a patent medicine for biliousness; at noon she took another for chronic constipation; and at three she took a blood builder. She has often told me people didn't know much about health when she was a girl.

"I often contrast my four fine, healthy youngsters with mother. We don't fill them up with medicines the way people used to in mother's day. Thanks to my doctor's directions we just use Nujol regularly. It has not upset their stomachs, and even when they had whooping cough they only had serum and Nujol.

"I could write a book about Nujol from my fourteen years of married life. My husband's father uses it, and at seventy-four he is well and takes long walks.

"The children are Bud, age thirteen; Royal, age ten; Elaine, age nine; and Joyce, age four. All of them are bright, active, and alert. They are advanced in school, and up to standard in weight and height. They love outdoor sports—hiking, swimming, and so on. We think we're pretty lucky to have discovered such an easy way to keep in good shape.

"You can publish this—maybe it will help some other families to keep well!"

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Seven Meant Death

(Continued from page 87)

individuals to whom this noisy, gaudily decorated place represented the true night life of New York.

He stood near the cotroom where he had a view of the entrance. Presently he saw her stepping out of her car and he went to meet her. During seven years of imprisonment one is apt to forget what women are like. She seemed to him extraordinarily lovely, vivid and mysterious. Her manner was detached, yet she regarded him with some interest, an interest which she transferred to the place itself as they entered the main dining-room.

"Exciting, isn't it?" she said as she looked about.

WARREN LORRIMER inclined his head in agreement. He wondered what she would think if he told her that he actually owned the place. How did one come to own a place like this? What, for instance, would happen if he stepped up to one of those swarthy headwaiters and told him that he was fired, that he, Lorrimer, was the proprietor?

"Cocktails," he asked. He found her eyes resting on him intently. Then she smiled.

"A side-car," she said. He was concentrating on her menu, he studied her, wondering why she had come that night to the meeting place of the Tribunal. Her interest in him couldn't have been personal, not on such short acquaintance. Probably she was just sorry for him, sorry that her father was to blame for what had happened.

The waiter came and he ordered their dinner—hers with care, and his indifferently. She sipped her cocktail without saying anything, obviously waiting for him to direct the trend of the conversation. He braced himself and emptied his glass at a gulp.

"Why did you come to warn me that night?" he demanded.

"I told you," she said. "Greyfield Platt gave the secret society, which was trying to enlist you as a member, away to my father. He was afraid something would happen and wanted to save his own skin."

"Assuming, for the sake of argument," he said, "that there is such a society, why should you care whether or not I join?"

Her features grew suddenly blank, her manner became more distant.

"I knew about you," she said. "I knew that you had been convicted through the efforts of my father and had served a long sentence for a crime of which you were innocent. I had met you earlier in the evening, read the bitterness in your soul—I don't blame you for that—so that I couldn't bear the thought of your becoming involved in something else, something that would end in sending you back to the horrors from which you had just been released."

"Sorry for me, eh?" he said. "Not exactly. Not quite that," she said candidly. "I just couldn't bear the thought of it. And what if it had been just ordinary human sympathy? Is there anything so strange in that?"

"No," he said harshly, "I suppose not."

At the table to their left there sat

a group of young men and women. The young men for the most part were sorrowful faced dissipated individuals; the women were blatantly noisy. One of the men, apparently, was of more importance than the others. His air was nonchalant, arrogant, and the party hung on his words. Warren Lorrimer was aware of the fact that this particular individual had been eyeing the table at which he and Monica sat, throughout the evening. Now he saw him get up and come directly toward him. He stepped quite close to Lorrimer and there was a confident smile on his lips.

"I'm Eddie Coakley," he announced. "I thought perhaps your girl friend would like to dance." He leered at Monica Greffer and she turned away. Lorrimer felt the blood rush to his head. With difficulty he restrained himself and said icily:

"I don't think so." Eddie Coakley was unabashed. "I guess you didn't get my name," he said. He paused and ran his hand down his sleek, plastered hair. "I'm Eddie Coakley. It's not healthy to interfere with me."

Lorrimer got up. His eyes were somnolent but angry.

"Nor with me," he said distinctly.

Very likely he was precipitating an unpleasant scene, but he couldn't see what else there was to do. Some vague indefinable something was goading him on to show his courage, not to be browbeaten before this girl who was dining with him.

There was a look of contempt on Eddie Coakley's face. His henchmen weren't far away. He could make a bum out of this guy in two minutes.

"Say——" he began.

"I think," said Warren Lorrimer with a sudden inspiration, "that if you're smart you'll go and hide yourself somewhere, that is, if you expect to be at the trial of Freda Hayward."

A look of surprise came into Eddie Coakley's face. He lost for a moment his debonaire manner.

"What do you mean by that . . . mugg?" he blustered.

"It's a tip," said Warren Lorrimer shortly.

"A tip," said Eddie Coakley.

His voice was firm enough, but his manner was uncertain. He stood there for another minute irresolute. Then he gave a short laugh. . . .

"Thanks," he said. "Don't let it worry you. I can take care of myself."

Lorrimer said nothing and after a pause Eddie Coakley walked back to his table.

"Freda Hayward," Monica said, eyeing him keenly, "isn't that the girl who is about to be tried for the murder of some gangster?"

"Yes," he answered shortly.

"How do you come to be mixed up in that?"

At a loss for an adequate answer he made no immediate reply. Then he said: "I'm not and I don't intend to be."

His tone was gruff almost to the point of being rude. He ordered himself a brandy and soda and drank it while she watched him out of the corner of her eye. After a while she inquired:

"What did you want to talk to me about?"



**"I Couldn't Sit.
Couldn't Stand.
Couldn't even Lie Down!"**

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Seven Meant Death

"You've already told me what I wanted to know—the reason for your interest in me. You were afraid I'd be sent back to prison."

"Will you see me home now?"

He nodded, summoned the waiter and paid his check. Outside he instructed the doorman to get him a cab.

The doorman of the Three-Way Club was an imposing figure, an unusually tall massive person in a scarlet uniform dripping with gold braid. He was exceptionally dignified even for a doorman. Warren Lorrimer gave him only a passing glance until he discovered the man's eyes were resting on him with fixed intensity. For some reason the doorman's interest irritated Lorrimer. He looked at the man more sharply but there was nothing to read in that huge square face, the lower half of which was entirely concealed by a thick black beard.

The cab drew up. Lorrimer helped Monica in, gave the driver her address, then got in beside her. They made the first half of the trip in silence. His mind was on Eddie Kockley but it wandered and came back to the girl beside him. He felt himself strangely stirred by her proximity and the subtle perfume that she used. He wished that she weren't Norman Greffer's daughter, that his life hadn't been wrecked, that he was the Warren Lorrimer of seven years ago. The Lorrimer of those days could have made love to this girl, could have rushed her off her feet, could have broken down her reserve.

"When we get to the house," she interrupted his reverie, "will you come in and speak to my father? He couldn't help doing what he did, you know. He'd give anything to have it undone."

"Why should he?" said Lorrimer fiercely. "Why should he want it undone? He made his reputation by convicting me. He ought to be tickled to death. It's more of an achievement to convict an innocent man than a guilty man, especially if it's a man of means who has the best lawyers in town to defend him."

She drew back, momentarily shocked by his vehemence.

"I can understand your bitterness," she said, a little hopelessly. Then she did a surprising thing. She reached over and took hold of his hand. "Don't," she said, "don't get mixed up in this secret society. I know more about it than you think. I overheard most of what Greyfield Platt told Father."

Her words meant nothing to Warren Lorrimer. He scarcely heard them. He was only conscious of that cool slender hand resting in his, of her nearness and her perfume. He found his hand closing hard over hers, holding it almost desperately. He found himself facing her, drinking in every line of her face. She didn't draw back. If anything, she leaned a little nearer.

Her eyes were brilliant and the look in them cryptic. There was a little smile on her lips. They remained so for seconds, seconds that were like an eternity, during which all of Warren Lorrimer's life seemed to pass through his mind, particularly those last seven stark years. And then he realized that something was about to happen, a thing that he couldn't prevent, that was inevitable. He released her hand

(Please turn to page 90)

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Seven Meant Death

(Continued from page 89)

and threw his arm around her shoulder, leaned down and kissed her without restraint. Like something that was happening in another world, he was aware of her lips against his, soft, cool and responsive. She didn't struggle and she made no attempt to release herself. His clasp tightened, he drew her closer and felt her relax in his arms in sweet surrender. But that couldn't be. He must be mad! Why should she . . . ? He let her go. His face was white, his hand shook a little.

"I shouldn't have done that," he said. "I'm sorry. It's a long time since I've had any contact with women. . . ."

Her eyes were bright, but at his words the light left them. She moved away from him, her attitude chilling. She said:

"It wasn't me you kissed, it was just a pretty girl—so it doesn't matter."

When the cab drew up in front of her home she ran lightly up the steps without a word or a backward glance.

LYMAN BRACKER called for Lor-
rimer shortly before nine the fol-
lowing night. But by the time they
arrived at the Tribunal's headquarters,
the warehouse on Front Street below
Wall, they were late. A puncture had
delayed them some ten or fifteen min-
utes.

The aged Angelus who had admitted them on the occasion of Lorimer's first visit was still on guard and let them in. They hurried upstairs. The others were seated at the table with Paul, masked as before, in the center.

Warren Lorimer was again struck by the unreality of the scene. Yet the men who sat there, with the possible exception of Paul, seemed ordinary enough, conservative everyday business men—the thin Morris Grender, the olive-skinned Greek, Mr. Anaropolis, the heavy-set Denis O'Mara, and the studious Dr. Tolger. It was hard to think of them as conspirators.

"We were discussing the case of Freda Hayward," Paul announced, as soon as Bracker and Lorimer had seated themselves. "We are unanimous in the opinion that if she is to be saved, Eddie Coakley must not be permitted to testify."

Two heads on each side of Paul nodded gravely.

"And how is it to be prevented?" Warren Lorimer demanded quickly.

He had given the matter much thought since his meeting with Monica Greffer and had arrived at a decision. He would not participate in anything that might implicate him in Lorimer's crime. Sometimes he had wondered how much this decision had been influenced by his meeting with the girl.

"There seems to be only one way," said Paul with studied significance. "New York will be a nicer place to live in with one less Eddie Coakley."

A violent protest rose in Lorimer's lips, but before he could give utterance to it, Paul continued.

"I called on Mr. Coakley this afternoon. I did my best to persuade him to listen to reason. He laughed at me. I was afraid it would be like that. Still, it's all for the best."

Again the heads nodded solemnly. Warren Lorimer leapt to his feet, his lips tight, his body tense.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "what you are planning is murder! You can call it what you want, it is murder. I am as anxious as the rest of you to see this girl, Freda Hayward, acquitted, and I'll do anything within reason to help her—furnish her with funds, lawyers, anything—"

"When you were tried, Mr. Lorimer," Morris Grender interposed softly, "you had money, you had the best lawyers that money could get—were we acquitted?"

Warren Lorimer shook his head stubbornly.

"I can't help it," he said. "Your motives are unquestionable, but I can't be a party to the murder of even so despicable a character as this Eddie Coakley."

He looked quickly from one to the other. All eyes were on him watching him coolly, without anger and without emotion.

"If we interfere in every trial similar to this Hayward case, there will be no end . . . we can't investigate every crime committed and substitute our Tribunal for the courts of the state. . . ." Lorimer had lowered his voice, but he spoke with insistence, in a desperate final appeal to reason.

"Very true," Paul agreed evenly. "This happens to be an outstanding case and is, for our purpose, ideal."

"What do you mean by that?"

"The publicity value is enormous. When it becomes known that we have been instrumental in freeing this girl, the name of the Tribunal will strike terror into the heart of every perjured witness, every crooked policeman and every self-seeking district attorney. That way we shall accomplish more in one stroke—"

"When it becomes known! Are you mad?"

Paul shook his head.

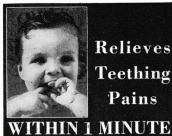
"A brief account in the newspapers, judiciously released, will not hurt us. It will mention the Tribunal but not the name of its members. . . ."

Warren Lorimer looked at the others; some were troubled but apparently had no intention of opposing Paul's plan. Was there no limit to their insane schemes—no limit to their daring? A cold chill went up and down Lorimer's spine. His tone strained, he said:

"Gentlemen, I wish to be free. I must resign from the Tribunal."

The others looked at each other, then, as they always did when an important decision was to be made, they turned to Paul. That immense figure remained silent for a time. When he spoke his voice was calm, unharmed.

"Mr. Lorimer, it requires the unanimous consent of all of the Tribunal to release one of its members. Your request to resign will be considered and voted upon. You are entitled to that. It is a matter which requires some thought. We cannot go into it tonight. I have much to do before tomorrow. The jury in the Hayward trial has already been impeached. We must act immediately. From what you have heard here, you have inferred that Eddie Coakley will be killed. I do not say that you are right nor do I say that you are wrong. Nothing will happen before tomorrow night—Eddie Coakley has been subpoenaed to appear the day before—and I promise



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PROVIDENCE

Seven Meant Death

you that you will have no hand in his death, if that eventuality should take place. And now, gentlemen, we must adjourn. I anticipate that something will occur shortly, that will require my attention the rest of the evening."

Warren Lorrimer opened his lips to speak. He wouldn't rest content with that, and yet as he gazed into those silent determined faces, he realized that for the moment he was helpless. It made no difference, he told himself, he had in effect resigned. He was no longer one of them, and he would have it definitely settled at the next meeting.

Your instructions for tomorrow night, gentlemen, will be given to you by Mr. Bracker," Paul's voice broke in on his thoughts. "You need have no fears. It will all be very simple."

At that icy pronouncement, Warren Lorrimer shivered. The others got up. Only Paul remained seated. They bade him good-night. They nodded to each other. Then, one by one, they trooped out of the room. Lyman Bracker and Lorrimer were the last to leave, save Paul. He was still sitting there when the door closed behind them.

"It's always that way," Lyman Bracker explained. "When we are gone, he takes off his mask."

ALONE, Paul took out a little book bound in red leather. He ran through the pages until he came to the last entry:

5 Taxicabs	—Profit \$1,750.00
Three-Way Club	" 25,000.00
Bank Street House	" 4,500.00

With the stub of a pencil he tapped the table the while he concentrated on another problem. Then he added another item to the list:

Warren Lorrimer \$1,000,000.00

WHEN Eddie Coakley emerged from the Three-Way Club the next night, it was nearly midnight. His face was flushed with drink, his eyes were bright, and he felt pleased with himself. He had had a pleasant evening and the night was not yet over. The platinum blonde who was clinging to his arm was very attractive and was looking up at him adoringly. They would go places and do things. It would be a night to be remembered and a fitting prelude for tomorrow, Eddie Coakley's great day.

He would appear in court to testify against Freda Hayward. All eyes would be on him, the great Eddie Coakley, the most notorious racketeer in town. There would be pictures of him in the papers and the news would be full of him, denouncing him, saying that it was an outrage that he was still at large. The thought of that gave Eddie a laugh. But he got a bigger laugh when he reflected on what he would do to Freda Hayward. She had ditched him for that louse, Mac Cracken—well—she'd get hers now and at the same time he'd show the world what happened to anyone who didn't play straight with Eddie Coakley.

He turned to the doorman, that monumental figure with the black beard, so resplendent in his scarlet uniform.

"Get me a cab. Haven't a good time, Baby!" he said to the girl who was hanging on to his arm.

She looked up at him and nodded. The doorman blew his whistle. There (Please turn to page 92)



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STA-RITE
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they
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Look for the Patented Crimp

STA-RITE HAIR PIN CO. SHELBYVILLE, ILL.

Seven Meant Death

(Continued from page 91)

were five cabs in that line and it was strange that although the doorman had blown his whistle many times during the course of the evening, not once had any of them moved an inch. They seemed content to allow cruising vehicles or cabs that were parked on the opposite side to sneak in ahead of them, and snatch their fares. But now it was different. Like a hawk the first car in line dashed forward, the others moving up to close the rank.

Eddie Coakley reached into his pocket for a tip.

"Here," he said. "Say—you're new here, aren't you? What happened to the other guy?"

"They fired him," said the doorman. "I've been here a couple of days."

"Well, here's somethin' to make you remember Eddie Coakley," Eddie said, pressing a five-dollar bill into the doorman's hand. "I always like to do things in a big way."

"Thank you, sir," said the doorman. A man who had been standing behind Eddie Coakley now came up to him. It was Eddie's bodyguard. A man in Eddie Coakley's racket needed a bodyguard.

"Do you want me to stick, Eddie?" the man asked.

Eddie laughed. He poked the girl at his side in the ribs.

"We don't want any chaperone, do we, Baby?"

The blonde giggled.

"That's up to you," she said coyly. "I won't need you any more tonight," said Eddie to his henchman. "Call for me at ten in the mornin'. We've got to go to court."

The man disappeared down the street.

The doorman was waiting with his hand on the open door of the cab.

Eddie looked sharply at the driver and didn't like his looks. He had nothing particularly against him, but he knew that if one took the first cab in line or the second even, sometimes strange things might happen, and Eddie Coakley had many enemies. Maybe this bird was all right and then again maybe he wasn't. Strange to say, Eddie's intuition was correct, even though he had no idea that the man who sat so stolidly behind the wheel had never driven a cab before, that he was a certain Dr. Tolger, a respected scientist and a member of the Tribunal.

"I don't like this guy," said Eddie pettily to the doorman. "Get me another."

The doorman appeared to see nothing strange in this. He banged the door shut. The car drove off, and he motioned to the next one to draw up. If Mr. Anaropulos, who sat behind the wheel of this cab, was hurt because Eddie Coakley didn't like his looks either, he gave no sign. He, too, drove off when he discovered that he wasn't wanted.

"What's the big idea?" said the girl who was with Eddie.

The third car was driven by Denis O'Mara, and the big open-faced Irishman satisfied Eddie. He nodded, pressed a second bill into the doorman's hand, helped the girl into the cab and stepped in beside her. The doorman held the door open for a further moment. At the same time he blew two short blasts on his whistle.

Warren Lorrimer who was seated in a coupe, directly across the street, leaned over, turned on the switch and started his engine.

He had agreed to act this small part in the night's proceedings, without having the faintest notion to what extent he contributed to the event about to happen. Lorrimer liked Bracker and it was Bracker who had persuaded him to cooperate this much to the proceedings. He had told Lorrimer that he might want to escape from the scene at a minute's notice and wanted to have the car running if that were necessary. It seemed a small thing to do.

HE stepped on the starter. The motor turned over, started and then began to backfire, backfiring with such a roar and such rapidity that Warren Lorrimer had a feeling that he was in the center of a battlefield. He was almost tempted to turn the engine off but didn't. His instructions had been to start it going and leave it that way.

The doorman leaned into the cab. He said something to Eddie which the latter, of course, couldn't hear due to that hellish noise. Something fell to the floor with a thud but neither the girl nor Eddie noticed.

"Sit up, Eddie," said the girl. He had lurched heavily against her. "Sit up and tell him where to go."

But Eddie made no response. Worse than that, he suddenly slumped forward and fell to the floor of the car.

"My Gawd! he's passed out!" said the girl in disgust.

Then the doorman withdrew, banged the door shut and the cab drove off.

She leaned forward, put her arms around his waist and tried to drag him back to his seat. Then she gave a little cry. Her hand was wet. She drew back and looked at it and even in the dim light she could make out what it was. There was blood on her hand! Then she shrieked and pounded fiercely on the glass to attract the driver's attention. He turned around for an instant and then tried to push the glass back while keeping his eye on the road. He managed to work the glass aside and shouted over his shoulder:

"What's the matter, lady?"

"Stop!" she screamed. "Stop! He's hurt!"

Denis O'Mara hadn't slackened the speed of his cab and he went another block before he replied.

"You say he's hurt?"

"Yes—he's hurt," she screamed again. "Stop!"

Dennis put on the brakes. The block in which they now found themselves was deserted. He got out and opened the door.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"I don't know," the girl wailed hysterically. "I don't know. Look—blood!"

"We'd better get him to a doctor," said Denis O'Mara. "I know where there's one a couple of blocks down on Bank Street."

He slammed the door shut, jumped back onto his seat and shot away. A few minutes later he drew up in front of a small frame house. He got out.

"You wait here," he said to the girl. "I'll go in and get someone to help me cart him in."

He ran up the steps, pressed the bell,

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Seven Meant Death

and the door opened immediately. The man who stood there was Morris Grender.

"Everything all right?" he demanded anxiously.

"Everything went off nicely," declared Denis O'Mara.

"Good."

Morris Grender closed the outside door, then beckoning to Denis O'Mara to follow, he led him downstairs into the rear of the house to a door that opened on the back yard. They went out together, walked toward the back fence into which a door had recently been cut and entered the next yard. Morris Grender had a key that admitted them into the second house. It was in darkness and he lit the way by means of a pocket torch until they came to the front door and eventually found themselves in the next street.

Here Morris Grender's cab was waiting. He had been the fourth in line. Morris Grender got in under the wheel, and Denis O'Mara sat in back. Then they drove off.

In the other street the girl waited and waited for the taxi driver to return with help. After a while she could stand it no longer. She leapt out of the cab, ran up the steps that led to the house into which the driver had disappeared. She rang the bell furiously without getting any response. In a sudden frenzy she pounded on the door and when that proved unavailing, ran down the steps screaming until a policeman came by.

"What's going on here?" he demanded.

"My friend—he's hurt!" she shrieked. She directed him to the cab. The officer peered into the interior. His hand came into contact with a revolver. He stuffed it into his pocket, then raised the limp form of Eddie Coakley. He felt for his pulse, bent down and listened for the beating of his heart; then having propped Eddie Coakley's body up on the seat, he turned to the girl.

"Hurt, hell," he said. "He's dead!"

TEN minutes after that Warren Lorrimer was shown into Lyman Bracker's apartment on lower Fifth Avenue. Before he could state the purpose of his visit, Lyman Bracker insisted on mixing him a drink.

"Now," he said, settling back in his chair, "what's on your mind?"

"Our car," said Lorrimer. "It's still standing in front of the 'Three-Way Club.' I started the engine, kept it going for five minutes, as you requested, then turned it off. It's so long since I've driven that I didn't dare bring it here."

"That's all right," said Bracker. "It can stay there overnight." He started to go on, but stopped and looked thoughtfully at the Scotch and soda in his hand. It was as though he were debating with himself the advisability of continuing with what he had been about to say. "I know the way you feel," he said, after a time, "but you might as well know now as later. Eddie Coakley was killed as he stepped into the cab in front of the club. I don't know whether you noticed that immense doorman. That was Paul. The five taxicabs were driven by Tolger, Anaropoulos, O'Mara, Grender, and I was the last in line. Eddie Coakley took Denis O'Mara's cab and Morris (Please turn to page 94)



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Seven Meant Death

(Continued from page 93)

Greider followed. There was nothing for me to do except go home."

An odd feeling of lethargy had fallen on Warren Lorrimer.

"How was he killed?" he asked dully. "Paul shot him when you started my car. The back-firing covered the sound. Tolger is a chemist, you know. He put something into the gas—"

Warren Lorrimer emptied his glass. Unasked he mixed himself a second drink. He got up from his chair and paced the room. Finally he came to a halt in front of Lyman Bracker. His face was drawn, grim and puzzled.

"You know how I feel about these

killings," he said. "But aside from that . . . it seems an elaborate and rather expensive way to do away with a man. Do you know this man Paul very well? Are you sure he's on the level with all of you?"

The clock on the mantel ticked away minute after minute while Lyman Bracker said nothing. He only stared at the other, his lips parted, and gradually his face grew pale. Then he, too, rose and faced Lorrimer. A look of uncertainty came into his eyes.

"What are you suggesting?" he cried hoarsely.

(To be continued)

The Terrible Williamsons

(Continued from page 37)

Mrs. Morse did, and she didn't notice the sly look of triumph exchanged between Willie and his mother. Two tens and a five-spot went into the grimy, broken-nailed hands of the woman, and in that amount Mrs. Morse gave up a week's vacation of the two she had planned all year. Accepting the money, her visitor brushed away a furtive tear, while Willie looked on in grateful embarrassment—Willie was a born actor. Dressed in that rig, he could do an appealing simper to perfection.

"And what is your name?" asked Mrs. Morse.

"Sarah Williamson," said her departing visitor. "And may you never see a day's want as long as you live, ma'am!"

Mother and son lumbered off down the hot street.

"Poor things!" murmured Mrs. Morse, feeling that she ought to have given the wretched woman the thirty dollars originally asked for that price-less heirloom. "Poor things!"

BUT if anyone was a "poor thing" at that moment, it was good-hearted Mrs. Morse herself, and if anyone had been taken advantage of, it was she, as she stood there lost in pity. For the suburban housewife had just bought a machine-made lace cover and paid three times what it was worth to one of an infamous family "gang" that has infested the United States for the last thirty-five years, selling fake laces, Oriental rugs and furs to unsuspecting people—laces and rugs to the average woman, who ordinarily doesn't know the imitation from the real, and furs to the man in the street who is always ignorant of what he is buying in that line.

What would have been Mrs. Morse's astonishment if she could have seen Sarah and Willie Williamson dart around a corner three blocks away and into a Packard sedan, where Willie's cousin Jessie sat at the wheel ready for any quick getaway in case of trouble! And what would the deceived lady have said had she seen them drive not a mile off and repeat their clever hard-up performance, this time for a young bride who ecstatically bought a duplicate of the shamrock tablecloth, as well as a bureau scarf, both made by

that same "grandmother"! And artful Willie won the bride's heart by playing with her Persian kitten and calling it "a pussee."

Right here we may as well say that this "Irish" grandmother apparently lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, in a mill, and is made of iron, with hundreds of spindles merrily clicking out miles of that "hand-made" lace in table cloths, bedspreads, luncheon sets, dollies, and collars and cuffs for personal adornment.

Some grandmother! She certainly belongs to fairy stories even if she does her knitting on the banks of the Ohio River!

However, Sarah and Willie had a very profitable day—some \$85—in that suburban town outside New York City, and drove out of it that night, returning to the home-base in the Bronx, where Alice Williamson and his wife Hughiana had temporary headquarters, and where their numerous children busied themselves "fixing up" the machine-made lace preparatory to peddling it with the various colorful and engaging lies they specialized in.

There, in a cluttered and crowded apartment, Sarah and Willie stayed the last night of six in their present sojourn, before pushing on to Philadelphia, where they were to visit James and Jane Williamson and their large family, and try their luck in German town before heading homeward for Boston, where they lived.

AS may be inferred, the Williamsons are a big and widely spread family. Two generations of them are now at work swindling the public, and a third coming along! Forty Williamsons, or more, are active in this country, all of them with dramatic ability, persuasive tongues, and a slick trick of vanishing when things get hot. Arrested repeatedly, they elude or defy the law even when "caught with the goods," for if fined, they pay the comparatively small sum for peddling without a license, and if held on bail, they manage to get the required bond and then "jump" it!

Usually, they travel in twos when out for prey, the women dressed shabbily, playing the poor dumb peasant, the men in sailor rigs to give the impression they are with a ship, to bear out their yarns of smuggled rugs and

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The Terrible Williamsons

furs. Some of the girls are so successfully forlorn (two of them are cross-eyed) that even the hard-boiled police have been sorry and soft under their skillful acting and let them off with a lecture and an order to leave town, time and time again.

Let's see the teams at work in a typical month of operations. Sarah and Willie we've seen doing Westchester County, New York. Then there's Maria and Charlotte combing through Oregon. And Mary and Janet fleeing the New Jersey coast resorts. And Jamesiana and Christine, still in their 'teens, marching through Georgia. And James and Margaret, a young married couple, tackling Michigan and Minnesota for the first time. And James D. and George and Robert and Isaac, Jr., putting on the rug-and-sailor act throughout New England. There are other teams, too, but it is bewildering to try and pin them down, for partners and names are changed at will. Similar names add to the puzzle, also. There are three Jameses and three Williams, for instance, and one of the latter (not Sarah's Willie) was recently arrested in Waltham, Mass., where he pleaded "half guilty," whatever that meant!

OF the younger women teamed up, Jean and Maggie Williamson appear to be the most active and ingenious, and the most arrested of the lot. Regularly, they turn up in city after city whether they have been caught in it or not before. From their own account (if they ever can be believed), they are sisters-in-law, and one of them has several small children who are used as "props" for sympathetic purposes if and when their elders are nabbed.

Jean and Maggie do not limit their efforts to private homes, but boldly enter hospitals, schools and places of business—in the last instance they endeavor to time their visits for the women's rest rooms during lunch hour.

They are experts in accents—Irish, Scotch or Cockney, it is all the same to them. Getting an audience of office girls, nurses, or school-teachers, they vary their tale to suit the occasion. Putting on a brogue or a burr, they spin their yarns about the dear old grandmother, with variations of misfortune. Sometimes they confide that the lovely laces were made in convents abroad and smuggled into this country, hence the ridiculously low price.

Occasionally, they tell of teaching this exquisite art of lace-making in some well-known institution. Their latest variation was that the laces were on exhibit at the Chicago Century of Progress Fair, and that they were disposing of their entire stock before going back to Dublin. So, it was an opportunity rarely, if ever, met! With one spid or another, it is not unusual for them to sell a hundred dollars' worth of cotton lace to a group of girls.

Itinerant peddlers since they were sixteen, and repeatedly arrested, Jean and Maggie find their closest call in Chicago, seven years ago, when the Chicago Better Business Bureau and the police combined forces against them. Held first on a \$1,000 bail, they failed to show up in court. Subsequently caught, the bail was set at (Please turn to page 96)

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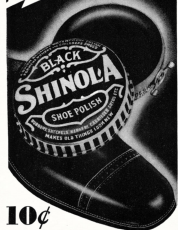
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Color of your hair.....

The Terrible Williamsons

(Continued from page 95)

\$16,000. But the evidence was not strong enough to convict, and they were released on a \$1,500 bail, which they promptly "jumped." However, at the trial they admitted, without any accent whatever, and after experts had pronounced their laces machine-made, that they bought them from a Cincinnati mill (their tireless iron-fingered "grandmother!").

At this 1927 trial in Chicago appeared the Williamsons "sailor lads," who had also been rounded up in that city on a previous date and released. They were the elder James and his son, James D., and his brothers William, young Isaac, George and Robert. Relationship to Jean and Maggie was admitted, and it was perhaps the only time on record when so many of the family were seen together by the authorities. Unfortunately, nothing to the cause of justice came of it. Eight of them in hand, but all slid through the law's fingers.

Oh, the Williamsons are wily. They pay fines and scot, they make restitution of money on sales if demanded in court, or they forfeit bond as easily as you please—and they always go on with their game. Doubtless, their gains are great enough to allow for a percentage of losses. It is their only overhead. Whether the various branches of the family have a common fund for fines and bonds is not positively known, but it is suspected by many of those who have encountered the members of the gang in the last fifteen years. Some of those who have had close experience with the Williamsons suspect that they are even in cahoots with the lace mills people. At least the latter often come to their rescue in time of trouble with the authorities.

We wonder how much money these swindlers make in a year—how much they have made in the last thirty-five years since the original Williamsons landed here? Their stock-in-trade is a shabby appearance and a "poor mouth," but they travel in expensive cars, have first-rate camping outfits, and are never at a loss for cash when fines are imposed. Karl T. Finn, the President of the National Association of Better Business Bureaus, says of the Williamsons:

"According to our understanding, the family has made a large fortune out of the peddling business and, interesting enough, according to the last report that I heard, all the money is in gold or deposited in the Bank of England." And Mr. Finn says further on the efforts to put an end to this country-wide flim-flam business: "It has been suggested that we urge the wholesalers to stop selling these people. But it is a hopeless task because the firms do a large share of their business with these peddlers, and they can rightfully take the stand that what is done with the lace after it leaves their hands is not their affair."

AS noted, the "sailors" of the Williamsons family hit their lying trail in pairs, and usually employ a Cockney accent in their acts. Dressed the part, a big sea-bag in their hands, they invade offices and shops with fake furs, picking on the men for easy victims. With a whispered yarn of

smuggling, the "seamen" can dispose of an \$80 fur coat for \$250, or sell a "genuine platinum" fur scarf for \$40 that is supposedly worth \$100, but actually worth \$8.00 and made of cheap goat skins especially treated. Frequently, the fur peddlers work from an automobile parked in a side street in a populous neighborhood, soliciting male customers with a wink and a stage-whisper of a great bargain.

Wary as they are of women in their fur gyping—because women know fur values, as a rule—the Williamsons "sailors" palm off imitation Oriental rugs on housewives without much difficulty. For example, George and Robert have rung Mrs. Arthur Shoals' bell in Brookline, and she has come to the door herself.

"Lady of the 'ouse," says George, the spokesman, "I 'ave a rare Oriental rug 'ere—"

"But I don't want one," replies Mrs. Shoals, "and if I did, I wouldn't buy one from a peddler!"

"Oh, bless your 'eart, lady, we ain't nothing of the sort," laughs George. "We are just a couple of sailor fellers that 'ave picked up a few marvelous bargains in Turkey on our last trip—it won't 'urt you to 'ave a look!"

AND the pleasant pseudo-Cockney unrolls these scatter-sized rugs and politely begging her pardon wiggles past her into the house where he spreads them on the floor. For a rug on the floor is worth two for the door, the Williamsons have discovered.

"Now ain't that a beauty?" says George, enthusiastically, pointing at the gaudiest.

"It has too much brick-red in it for me," declares Mrs. Shoals. But evidently she has become interested enough for criticism, and George considers this an encouraging sign.

"Hah, you like the blue one, I see!" he exclaims. "You 'ave good taste. We can let you 'ave it for twenty-five dollars and it's worth a 'undred."

"No, I couldn't spend that much," says Mrs. Shoals. "Besides, I don't want an Oriental rug just now."

Robert, who has followed them into the house, now speaks:

"Excuse me, Madam," he breaks in, and pulls George aside for a low-voiced conference. After which the latter says:

"My pal 'ere reminds me we got to get back to the ship by tomorrow morning at eight bells, and we can't take the bloom'n' rugs back, so—"

Here Robert cuts in again. "Take two of 'em for thirty dollars, lady!"

"What's that!" cried George in apoplectic consternation.

"It's giving 'em away, I know," says Robert in mock helplessness. "But what else can we do? Lady, two of them rugs is worth two 'undred and fifty dollars 'ole-sale!"

With a few more carefully rehearsed remarks from the seafaring and salty lads, Mrs. Shoals weakens, and buys for \$30 two rugs worth five and three dollars respectively, wholesale, at which price the brothers bought them. Hundreds of the same kind are on the floors of fooled housewives all over the United States.

Are the Williamsons a "ring" of crooks in which others of similar tech-

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The Terrible Williamsons

nique are involved? Is the name William-
son put on and off like the accent? What
relation have the Williamsons to rack-
eters in the same line who parade
under the cognomens of Riley, Rafferty,
McDonald, McCoy and other Irish and
Scotch names? No doubt the names are as
"faked" as the goods they sell. From tele-
grams found on the persons of a William
McMillan and a Peter McDonald, caught
selling these laces not long ago, it is evi-
dent that a "ring" or company of crooks is
at work on a common basis. These mes-
sages read:

"Please notify all my friends
that the two youngest children
died this morning. (Signed) Jos.
Williamson."

"Notify all travelers that John
L. Williamson passed away to-
day. (Signed) Janet L. William-
son."

"Please notify all travelers fun-
eral will be August first in Cleve-
land. (Signed) Janet L. William-
son."

Obviously, these messages are in
code, and have to do with a gathering
of the gyping tribe in Cleveland.
Similar evidence proved that the
"family," or the "ring," had a meet-
ing in Huntington, West Virginia,
prior to the Cleveland date. So, we
can deduce that the Williamsons have
their lace-rug-fur "conventions" every
now and again, whereat they exchange
news and views, possibly shape a pol-
icy for the coming season, and take
whatever action is necessary to their
successful pillaging of a thousand lean
pocketbooks and small pay envelopes.
It isn't hard to imagine their talk-
fest:

"Lay off Columbus and Cincinnati
this year."

"Spokane is bad, too."

"But Memphis is ripe again."

"These buff-uppers help the sale
of the tablecloths in the Atlantic
States—Sarah and Willie and Hugh-
ana's family sold 400 of them in six
months!"

"I see Maria and Charlotte cost us
six hundred dollars this year—they'll
have to make up for that."

"But their father, they tell me, made
two thousand at the Chicago Fair!"

And so on, in check and counter-
check, suggestions and reports.

Local authorities have copied with
this thieving gang in vain. Only the
Better Business Bureaus are feared by
them. The trouble is, town and city
ordinances are not severe enough to
quell them. Federal action seems
requisite to stop their daily depreda-
tions and protect the public. Mean-
time, Edward Greene, head of the
National Better Business Bureau, ad-
vises us:

"Hard times and unemployment
have induced a large number of peo-
ple to earn a few dollars by selling
goods from door to door. This gives a
crowd like the Williamsons a new 'in'
and they make the most of it. The
safest course for anyone is to reject
any stranger's offer to sell rare or
costly merchandise which must be
disposed of at a loss. Surely, this pre-
sent exposure of the Williamsons' rack-
et should be a lesson to everybody."

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MAPLEINE

The Line-Up

(Continued from page 15)

you to change it, as there are some people who like such stories and the others are so good, they make up for it.

My husband as well as myself cannot understand how you can publish such a magazine for the price. I told the store keeper it was the biggest value for ten cents that I had in a long time, and he said "I told you so."

Well a magazine like MYSTERY sure deserves a lot of success and I hope to have many more hours of enjoyment through MYSTERY.

Mrs. G. Porter.

Granted

CHICAGO, ILL.—Every month I rush to the magazine counter in order to be one of the first to get my copy of MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Do I like it?

Yours is the very best mystery magazine I have ever read at any price. You have only to read the LINE-UP in order to see how well every one likes it. In the face of those dozens of admiring letters, I don't see how I have the nerve to voice even a tiny complaint, but there is something I simply must get off my mind. Please, what has happened to Walter Ripperger? In my estimation he is second only to Sax Rohmer, and that is saying a good deal. His unique character, Simeon Graves, had me waiting and praying that the days would go real fast, so I could get the following issue of your magazine, and see what was going to happen next.

Every month lately I turn first to the table of contents, but his name doesn't appear listed. Please don't think that I don't enjoy the other stories in MYSTERY, because I do—every period and comma of them. But I can't help being a little disappointed at not finding Walter Ripperger among the authors.

Won't you please, Mr. Editor, take pity on me!

Gertrude Anderson.

Mystery It Is

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.—MYSTERY is my favorite magazine. It also is the first to which I have ever written a fan letter. However I have so many bouquets to hand you that I can't restrain myself. You give the public what it wants. That is, lots of stories of the kind we like by the authors who write them best. Thanks for printing so many fine stories by Ellery Queen. He is the best of all mystery writers. I also like Sax Rohmer, Stuart Palmer and Colver Harris.

Now come the brickbats: Why not have all your stories illustrated with drawings? I enjoyed "The Woman He Had to Kill" much better because of the drawn illustrations. They fit the author's descriptions in the stories far better than the photographic illustrations.

Thanks for omitting those "Mystery Masterpieces" in pictures from the September issue. In the first place, most of them were not actually mystery or detective serials. And, oh, how the poor things were hacked up! Why ruin the works of a good author?

Remember, what the public wants in a mystery magazine is—mystery.

Betty Repp.

For the Ladies!

GALVESTON, TEXAS.—Maybe we "high-school kids" don't know much about good literature, but we do know good mystery stories when we read them. And I think MYSTERY MAGAZINE is just about the best I've ever read—especially for a dime!

I think the book-length novels are swell. I liked "Murder on the Blackboard" best of all. But I like the short stories, too. And I don't see why so many people object to women detectives! They can solve a crime just as well as men any day! Much as I like MYSTERY I might be tempted to quit reading it if you took some of the advice given and didn't have Hildegarde Withers or Nurse Keate or even Edda Manby anymore!

Marjorie Allen.

What to Do?

ALIQUIPPA, PA.—I have been one of MYSTERY MAGAZINE's most steady readers for quite a long time now. For the most part I like it—but there are a few things that I am not so crazy about.

For instance—the pictures accompanying the stories. I don't think they get the idea in the story across to the reader. Another thing—there are too many short stories (complete on one page). Two such stories would be sufficient. Also (and this is the last of my criticisms!) I agree with the lady from Oklahoma who thought there should be a few less lady sleuths. Why don't you give us some nice, young men detectives? So much for the parts I don't like!

Give us more stories about Professor Baker. Also give us some of Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu stories. I read all his books I can get.

Of all your book-length novels I liked "The Two Who Smiled" the best. I didn't lay the magazine down until I had finished it.

Ruth Rainbow.

A Good Eye

OSWEGO, N. Y.—Will you please point out to Ellery Queen in regard to his story "Four Men Loved a Woman" that in the Roman Catholic Church that it is the function of a bishop and not a priest to confirm. In this story Father Anthony says that he confirmed Roger Bowen and that is incorporated.

Donald L. Holladay.

Zowie!

WASHINGTON, D. C.—I have been quite enthusiastic about MYSTERY MAGAZINE until the September issue. These several stories disappointed me—"The Man Who Hated Rats," "The Strange Affair at the Middlebrooks" and "The Riddle of the Hanging Men."

All were completely impossible while the second was a glaring example of forced writing, in the style of a professional who is wearily attempting to complete his task.

And then you had in that issue too many one-page true stories of persons murdered for insurance—"Profile" and "Late One Night" being conspicuous. The "I Go Sleuthing" department

also was quite ridiculous. The author did not go sleuthing at all. The locale was a blind one and there were no facts to warrant a supposition of suspicion, merely a gossip's conception of what a guilty man might do.

Please do better next time because I had come to bank on MYSTERY MAGAZINE as the one bright spot in an ocean of bunk.

Paul May.

Amid the Drought

TOPEKA, KANSAS.—I can't say just how long I have been reading your magazine, but it hasn't been long enough. I have purchased it in ten different states, and sent it to my sister once, but after that she bought it as soon as it came out.

During the Summer I work in my father's drug store, and I always recommend MYSTERY MAGAZINE first to all readers. I read practically every mystery magazine that is published, but yours ranks first in my estimation. My husband and I travel every Fall, Winter, and Spring and the best way we have to pass the time is for me to read your magazine to him.

When the new "batch" of magazines came in the store yesterday I took the MYSTERY the first thing, remarking it was the best mystery magazine published. My husband agreed, and my father said "I don't think so." I asked him which one he liked better, but he said he couldn't think of any!

Our favorite author is Ellery Queen, and I do enjoy the book-length novels very much. I thought "The Two Who Smiled" was very good. I didn't even notice the heat the last two days while reading it, which is saying a lot as the thermometer has been 105.

I only regret that MYSTERY isn't published once a week. Let me also say that the paper is easy on the eyes.

Mrs. Loring K. Campbell.

What-a-Fan!

CLATSKANIE, OREGON.—I have been reading MYSTERY so long I cannot remember the first number. Living at Portland at that time I could buy it there, but since coming to this town have not been able to. I have repeatedly tried to get the dealers here to get it for me without success. Have no favorites but like it from cover to cover. It seems like I cannot do without it. I have made several trips to Portland at a cost of \$2.50 round trip for the sole purpose of procuring my copy. What can you do about it? I don't want your money but I must have my mystery.

Arthur P. Prier.

Stories Plus

BRONX, N. Y.—A admire Stuart Palmer's stories and naturally my favorite detective is Hildegarde Withers. Being a school-marm myself I get a big kick out of her antics. I am glad to note that Stuart Palmer is writing a series of stories.

Everyone seems to praise the stories in MYSTERY. How about the household and beauty hints? I find them very helpful and always look for them.

Miss Ruth Finkelstein.

A New Book-length Novel
Complete in this Issue

THE
MAD
MURDER
PARTY

By
COLVER HARRIS



“Three blind mice; See how they run—”

The Mad Murder Party

"WHAT d'you think?" said my sister Patsy happily, "We've got a ghost!"

She speaks with a very slight lisp—so slight that if I were to spell it 'ghoht' it would be misleading. I shall have to ask therefore that you imagine the lisp—and remember to imagine it whenever you read Patsy's speeches. Because that little shadowy catch in her words is a most essential part of Patsy. Part of her technique of being cute—and cuteness is the keynote of her small, but very effective, personality. She is just little enough, just plump enough, just pretty enough to be called cute looking. Her accent is just affected enough, her words just smart enough, so that her remarks are always followed by a wave of indulgent smiles and murmurs. "Isn't Patsy cute?"

And, of course, Patsy is well aware of her reputation. Just how far back in her childhood she decided to adopt and cultivate that particular line, my second sister Irene and I are not quite certain—but at the age of twenty-seven (and looking a scant eighteen) Patsy has the technique so thoroughly in hand that we are quite unable to imagine her in any other attitude. And even in our more uncharitable moments, Irene and I are bound to admit that it is a highly workable code of behavior. Not Irene with all her gorgeous good looks and sophistication, nor I with my so-called efficiency and sensible intelligence, have been able to fathom our nests with one half the ability which dear Patsy accomplishes by her divinely simple formula of just being cute.

At the moment of that particular remark, Patsy was perched on the porch railing of her new summer home in Green Hill, smiling her crinkled and squinty little smile (Irene vows she must have developed that smile before a mirror) at her assembled house-guests, and being her very cute.

"What d'you think?" brightly infected. "We've got a ghost!"

The usual murmur followed.

Patsy paused to sip from a highball glass, and then went on.

"A real live ghost, you know." A small frown of childish earnestness (her only other expression) replaced the smile. "A ghost that everybody in the whole village knows about. That's why the house has been deserted for so long."

"And it was the main reason why my darling wife insisted on buying the place." Ted Elliott, Patsy's husband (and not the least of her successes) spoke cheerfully.

"But good heavens, Patsy," the protesting voice came from a corner of the porch where young Jake Lecky had sprawled his lanky form across two wicker chairs, "since when have you been interested in ghosts?"

At the sound of Jake's voice, Irene raised her perfectly waved hair from the swing where she lay and cocked an eye in his direction.

"I thought you were asleep," she said.

Jake yawned spaciouly. "I'm kept awake," he complained, "by this damn talk about spooks—and a craving for tobacco. Now if I could just reach those cigarettes—" he stretched out a long arm experimentally, and very nearly upset the chairs.

Instantly Irene was on her feet moving swiftly toward him. "Finish mine, darling, it's just lit." She leaned down to place the cigarette between Jake's lips, and receive his grateful look. "Never let it be said"—she moved lightly back to the swing—"that Irene could bear to watch a man hunger."

I watched her with a sister's eye. So that was what Irene had been up to these past four days in Green Hill. Nor did I have to look too closely into her carefully casual expression to catch the gleam of the hunter—for I knew without searching that it must be there. Any time Irene would get up to wait on someone, there could be small doubt as to the ulterior motive. I concealed a smile in my highball glass—and the next moment started so violently that the rim jarred sharply on my teeth.

For I had suddenly become aware of the look on Madeline Page's face. At best, her expression was scarcely what you would have called sweet—but at that moment it was positively savage. And the glance that flashed out from beneath her close black brows was one of the bitterest hatred. Madeline was staring at Irene.

Instinctively I looked about to see who else was watching—but apparently no one save myself had seen her expression. Ted and Patsy were occupied with a matter of ice-cubes, Jake was staring straight up at the porch roof, and Irene, composed and lovely in the swing once more, was lying back with eyes half closed upon a preoccupied smile. Another look at Madeline, and I saw that her dark face had returned to its normal set of non-committal hardness. I breathed again. The moment of unguarded hatred had passed—unseen by all save me.

"Don't tell me, Patsy, that you're going psychic on us." It was Madeline who brought us back to the topic of the ghost. Only a slight twist of sharpness in her naturally harsh voice remained as evidence of the violent emotion I had witnessed a moment before. "It's scarcely your type, my dear, to commune with spirits."

"Don't worry, Madeline," Ted answered. "As far as this ghost of Patsy's is concerned—his function is purely conversational."

I GRINNED at Ted, as I always do on the rare but encouraging occasions when a certain dryness in his tone indicates that his normal intelligence is not wholly lost in simple-minded adoration of my dear sister.

"Now Teddy, that's not fair." Patsy's childish pout ignored both the edge of Madeline's remark and her husband's somewhat sarcastic answer. "You know perfectly well we've actually heard the ghost—and the very first night we were in the house a bell began to ring—"

"Save it, darling," I interrupted her enthusiasm, "until Jonny gets back. He's the only one of your guests who's really ghost-minded—although why the scientific brain should take such a turn—"

"The scientific brain is like every other single-track intelligence," the sharp incisiveness of Madeline's voice cut me short, "it's absolutely childish about everything outside that one track. The fact that my brother Jon is making himself revilingly famous as a brilliant surgeon doesn't

The Mad Murder Party

in the least alter the fact that he hasn't an ounce of sense in any other branch of existence."

I found myself staring curiously at Madeline. Despite the fact that we had all known her for years, and that her strangely warped and soured personality was a byword among us, I never ceased marveling at the inexhaustible supply of venom which she could inject into the most harmless conversation. I supposed that a good portion of her bitterness must come from simple envy of her brother's phenomenal success in his medical career—of his superior charm and popularity, but after all there must be something else, something more fundamentally to account for an attitude as consistently nasty as Madeline's. And perhaps that same something, whatever it might be, would also account for the rare, and apparently mysterious, devotion of Dr. Jonathan Page to his unpleasant and ungrateful sister. Were it not for the fascinating Jon's blanket loyalty to Madeline, she would probably have been left to nurse her nameless grudges in solitude. Certainly she would never have been included in this party of Patsy's, for instance, had we not all been aware of Jonny's unspoken motto—"Love me—love my sister." And, correspondingly: "Invite me—invite my sister." For the hundredth time I groped helplessly in my mind for some answer to this double riddle of personalities—and I wondered suddenly how important might be that look of hatred which Madeline had flashed out in the moment of Irene's small by-play for Jake Lecky. Two years in the far West had left me pretty well out of touch with local affairs of the heart—but I was determined to grab the first chance I could to ask Ted what, if anything, had happened between Jake and Madeline. And I knew that Ted could be depended on for acute observation—provided Patsy were not around.

At the moment Ted was mildly protesting Madeline's sharp denunciation of her brother's non-professional sense.

"Well, I don't know, Mad," his tone was amiable. "I wouldn't say it was exactly dumb of Jonny to get himself engaged to the richest girl in the world—would you, Sue?" He looked at me, evidently sure of an ally.

"I hardly think he ought to be committed for it," I shook my head.

At my words, Madeline rose abruptly. "And I hardly think," her tone was icy, "that you know what you're talking about—either of you." She turned on her heel and disappeared into the house, leaving us to stare helplessly after her. Even for Madeline, that was a pretty violent reaction.

"Whew—" Ted collapsed into a chair. "Did I start that?"

"We both did," I nodded, "and we ought to have realized that she'd take Jonny's engagement that way—no matter whom he picked. And the fact that he's made such an obviously grand catch simply makes her boil worse than ever. We'll just have to keep off the sore spot, that's all."

FROM his retreat in the corner Jake spoke disconsolately. "Add one more sore spot to Madeline's original charm," he groaned, "and you've got the perfect house-guest on your hands."

"Oh dear, I know it," Patsy was frowning.

"Oh well—" Ted shrugged lightly, "everybody here knows about Madeline—so don't let it bother you. If she wants to act like a hyena with gumboils on one will blame it on us."

"Personally, I rather agree with Madeline," Irene spoke pensively, "in thinking that you don't quite realize what Jonny has let himself in for with this engagement. Snagging himself a good clean heiress would be one thing—but Evelyn Tucker—Good Lord, it must be like making love to the mint—" Irene's eyes were still half closed, so that she could not see, as we did, the approach of Jonny Page himself. Nor did Irene profit by our frantic signals for silence.

So seldom is Irene caught in an awkward situation that her technique for such occasions is not very well worked out. When, in the midst of her soliloquy about the difficulties of wooing the fabulous Tucker billions, she opened her eyes and found herself looking straight into Jonny's face, she simply stopped speaking.

There was a brief silence, during which the rest of us racked our wits for some conversational gem with which to rush in and restore the social order.

But it was Jon, as usual, who thought quickest.

"Planning your future again?" He smiled down at Irene. "Don't let me interrupt—but I've got a question for Patsy." We all rallied slightly. It was impossible to guess whether Jonny had really gathered the drift of Irene's remarks or not, but in any case he bridged the moment admirably. Trust Jon never to make a scene. It was only one of the

ways in which his personality differed exactly from that of his sister Madeline.

"Look here, Patsy," he went on quickly, "I'm going to ask a big favor of you and Ted. That telephone call was from Evelyn—" quite naturally he pronounced the name, seemingly unaware of its unfortunate effect upon our social poise, "and she's in sort of a jam. Driving through to Boston, she got stuck in Albany with car trouble—and won't be able to make the city tonight. I—we thought, if it weren't too much of an imposition—" Jon faltered slightly. Odd, to see his perfect aplomb disturbed. "Do you suppose," at last he got the question out, "that she could stop here overnight?"

Patsy stared. For once, I was in sympathy with her round-eyed expression of childish wonder.

"Do you mean, Jonny, that Evelyn Tucker wants to come here—to this house?"

"Well—yes," Jonathan nodded. "You see, hotels and so on are pretty difficult for her—" he paused, evidently expecting us to imagine the precise nature of the difficulty for ourselves. "But if it's too much trouble—"

"Of course not, Jonny," with one accord Ted and Patsy rose to the occasion. "It would be—well," Ted added without very noticeable conviction. "If—you're quite sure she wants to be really informal with us—" the doubt in Patsy's tone was even more evident.

FOR a moment Jon looked straight at them—looked as if he might say something rather sharp. Then, quite as usual, he smiled easily.

"That's darn nice of you," he turned away, "I'll ring her back at the Ten Eyck and tell her you said yes. They ought to make it comfortably by dinner time, the way Evelyn steams along."

Ted caught at the pronoun. "They?" he said.

"Oh—yes," Jon was at the door. "You see, Eve has a female with her—sort of a duenna effect—and there's always like—" he paused rather helplessly, and then seemed to gather from our blank expressions that we had still failed to grasp the situation. "Ike," Jonathan came nearer to blurring out the words than I imagined was possible for him, "Ike is Evelyn's bodyguard."

"Of course," Ted came to the rescue, "naturally—" But Jonathan had already disappeared into the house.

"Well, of all the cast-iron nerve—" Irene sat bolt upright in the swing.

"Oh damn," Patsy was pouting, "it'll simply spoil everything. Ted. Our ghost party won't be any fun at all—"

"Thank God for that," I murmured. "But look here, Pat, where can you put these creatures? Have you got room enough?"

"You and Irene," said our sister promptly, "will have to double up." A groan from Irene. "That will leave Sue's room for Evelyn. As for the duenna and the bodyguard—" Patsy made a rather effective face, "they can just go to the Inn. I'm not going to house any such hordes—"

"Hold everything, my pretty," Ted cut in firmly, "we'll have no such arrangement as that. I don't care what you do with the duenna—but if the Tucker fortune needs a bodyguard—it will damn well have a bodyguard! I will not have this precious maiden lying around loose in my house unless Ike is on the job."

"I absolutely agree, Ted," Irene nodded emphatically. "And it simply proves my point about what Jonny has let himself in for. Don't you see how upset he is by the mere fact that his fiancée is stopping here for the night? Isn't it obvious from the way we're acting that one simply can't treat a perambulating billion-heiress like a human being? I tell you—" Irene was waxing oratorical, "she's not a human being—she couldn't be after all the publicity—" she got no further.

Madeline stood at the screen door regarding us all with a look so darkly sinister that Irene's words were frozen on her lips.

"Is it true," Madeline's voice grated harshly on the lazy hum of the summer afternoon, "that Evelyn Tucker is coming here?"

"Of course it's true," Patsy's small lisp followed absurdly on the heels of her guest's tragic query. "Jon asked if we could take her in for the night and we—"

Madeline ignored Patsy, as she frequently did, and faced Ted with dramatic intensity.

"Did you give Jon permission to ask her to this house?"

"Why—yes," said Ted reasonably. "I don't see anything so dreadful about it, Madeline. After all, Jon is engaged to her—"

"Then," said Madeline stonily, "you're a fool. And you're

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all fools," her dark glance swept the rest of us, "if you stay here. Don't you know that Evelyn Tucker has been threatened day and night by kidnappers? Don't you know that she brings trouble wherever she goes? Don't you realize," with a final gesture of fatalistic warning, Madeline twitched open the door and flung one last question at us. "Don't you realize that we'll all be facing danger and death with that girl in the house?"

The screen banged shut—and each of us jumped in varying degrees, depending upon the resistance of our respective nervous systems. Even Jake flopped over, accompanied by a great creaking of his wicker chairs, and raised a ruffled blond head.

"My God, Patsy," his pale green eyes blinked absurdly, "you can lay that ghost of yours right now. This party is going to have all the thrills we can stand without any help from the supernatural."

"Oh I can't, Jake," Patsy was reduced to a wail, "because the medium is all invited—and whatever shall we do with her?"

"We all stared stupidly."

"The medium?"

"She's coming from Albany," Ted explained glumly, "to have a séance this evening. Pats thought it would be fun to see if she could make the ghost talk—"

"Oh God!" With a loud groan Jake flung himself back upon the chairs and buried his head in a chintz pillow. "But couldn't I give that ghost some pointers on what to say!"

II

THE room which, due to the impending arrival of Evelyn Tucker and her retinue, Irene and I were forced to share, was so small that Irene suggested we dress for dinner in shifts.

"And you," she observed with sisterly tact, "had better go first, since it always takes you about three times as long as any ordinary human being to get out of one dress and into another."

I admitted, to myself, that this observation was substantially correct. For all my reputation of practical efficiency, I never seem able to garb myself for the simplest occasion without untold fussing. Nor does the result of my strenuous efforts in any way justify the sheer horse-power which I put into the business of dressing.

When, at quarter of seven, Irene sauntered into our room, I was still struggling in a welter of water-wave combs, spilled powder and general confusion. The expression with which she surveyed my chaotic state indicated that she had expected as much.

"Don't hurry, my darling," she lit a cigarette and perched herself upon the broad window sill. "If you leave me ten minutes it'll be quite all right."

Her superior tone was in no way soothing to my state of mind, but I proceeded in silence with the grim, three-way struggle of adjusting my dress, calming the wild disorder of my wave, and persuading some portion of powder to remain on my extremely recalcitrant nose.

"Ghost or no ghost," Irene was gazing out upon the broad lawn beneath the window, "this is a queer place."

I muttered something from a mouth full of hairpins.

"And wouldn't you know," Irene sighed, "that Patsy would be the one to get it. Just when the depression has the rest of us by the ears, and we try to figure out new ways of breaking city leases before they break us—Patsy points out the way to frugal living by snapping up this old deserted place and installing a couple of bath-rooms. The shabbier the place is, the more it creaks and groans and sags—the more atmosphere it provides for Patsy's tales about the 'haunts.' I tell you," Irene shook her head sadly, "the gal is smart—much as it wounds me to admit it."

"Well, I tell you," I removed the hairpins in order to make myself quite clear, "that she may be smart—but she's headed for trouble with this particular party. If ever I saw three sticks of dynamite looking for a match it's the Jonny—Evelyn Tucker—Madeline combination. And heaven knows what will happen if Patsy insists on having this 'medium' creature perform tonight. One more flick on those raw nerves Madeline carries around and—on a sudden impulse I shifted the direction of my remarks.

"By the bye, darling," I made an effort to appear placid on the business of applying lipstick—"I don't think Madeline precisely approves of your attentions to Jake Lecky." A slight pause. "Nor do I think," my gaze remained concentrated upon the lipstick—"that Madeline is the girl

to accept rivalry in the spirit of good clean sport."

Another pause. Personal remarks to Irene are seldom a success, but there was something about the silence which followed my words which made me suddenly uneasy. An injunction, sharply worded, to mind my own business would not have surprised me in the least. Nor would a laugh. But this unexpected silence—I turned quickly.

Irene was staring, with an expression of thoughtful intensity, at the tip of her cigarette. She was frowning slightly, and her lower lip was caught between her teeth. In the moment when she looked up to catch my eye, Irene rose abruptly, crushed out the cigarette, and came over to where I stood.

"Here," she seized the pincushion, "for goodness sake let me fix that dress for you. It hangs like a horse-blanket."

Her remark, and the tone of good-natured exasperation in which it was delivered, were natural enough. I saw that the subject of my warning observations was closed—once and for all. But I also saw, as Irene bent her head over the problem of my shoulder straps, two sharp white marks which showed how hard she had bitten her lower lip a moment before.

Two minutes of competent pulling and hauling, and Irene had adjusted my ill-fitting dress so as best to display what few curves I possess. Another minute of practiced action with the comb was sufficient to subdue my hair into some semblance of a normal wave, but before the difficulty of a nose so wilfully glistening, even the resourceful Irene was reduced to a helpless shrug.

"But," she turned me around slowly, "you'll do." And with that extravagance of praise, I was dismissed. "Go sit in the corner," she said, "and paint your fingernails while I go into the old routine. You've only left me seven minutes—but the fireman's child can do it."

True to her boast, Irene turned away from the dressing table just as the old clock downstairs whanged out the hour—and very lovely she looked in pale flesh-colored chiffon with a purple velvet bow and purple sandals.

"There!" She snatched up a pair of amethyst earrings and adjusted them as we descended the creaky stairs. "We're prompt enough to suit even our darling Patsy."

WE were, it seemed, considerably prompter than that. The big living-room appeared to be quite empty as we entered, but at the very moment when we were about to settle ourselves upon a couple of the old chairs which looked relatively comfortable, there came a startling groan from a direction of a remote sofa in the corner.

"Good heavens—" With one accord Irene and I whirled around—only to sink back into our chairs. It was Jake, prone as usual, who had uttered the lugubrious sound. "What is the matter, Jake?"

Another prolonged groan.

"It's Evelyn Tucker—that's what it is," the voice from the sofa was muffled with distress.

"Do you mean she's here, Jake?" Irene was all interest. An affirmative wail answered her.

"And is she as bad as all that?"

"Worse."

Irene looked at me.

"Jake, be serious." She went over to the sofa and stared down at him with an odd mixture of impatient curiosity and fetching fondness. "Is there really anything so awful about the Tucker—or are you just putting on this display of agony?"

"Putting it on?" Jake sat up indignantly. "Putting it on? Listen, my darlings, just for that I'll tell you exactly how bad she is. About twenty minutes ago two cars came whirling up to our simple country retreat. I was speaking with solemn intensity. 'One of them was a Rolls—oh God and what a Rolls—and the other was a Ford—and oh God, what a Ford. That was the arrival of the Tucker caravan—heiress, maid, bodyguard, dog, and luggage.'"

"Well—" Irene frowned, "what's so terrible about that?"

"Patience, my pretty, I'm breaking it gently. The terrible part is—" Jake drew a long breath, "that the duenna creature, who looks like a meat grinder with a gray wig on, and the bodyguard Ike, whose looks are entirely beyond my powers of description, arrived in that unspeakably, immorally swell Rolls—while the Tucker wench climbed out of the measly, lousy, infested little Ford! And why, you ask? That's just what we asked—and along with many dimples and giggles we got the answer. Evelyn, the little rascal, just *adores* to drive Ike's darling old Ford instead of that awful ark of a Rolls that Daddy

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bought for her. Now do you see—" Jake's pale eyes blinked at us in comical solemnity, "how utterly, inexpressibly wet is the blanket which has descended upon us? And to think that our Jon is going to wed—" with renewed groans Jake subsided into the sofa pillows. "For once I find myself actually sympathizing with the gripings of Madeline—I don't blame her if she *does* carry out her murderous plans—"

"Jake!" Irene's voice cut in with a sharpness which made me jump. I turned abruptly to see, for the second time that evening, a look of unaccustomed intensity upon her face. The indulgent smile which she had received from Jake's absurd account of Evelyn Tucker vanished for just a fleeting instant before a look of icy warning—then, quite lightly, she finished her remark. "Don't be too silly, my pet." Irene's hand passed quickly, but winsomely, over the tousled head deep in the sofa corner. She came to sit near me, with a great show of being casual and amused. "Isn't he a crazy lamb?" Her eye very nearly met mine, which, for Irene, is an unusual display of directness. "Perfectly incoherent, of course," she indicated Jake with a gay shrug.

"Oh, of course." I joined politely in a light laugh, and was spared further insincerity by the very hurried arrival of Patsy.

"WHERE have you been?" Irene obviously welcomed a new possibility for conversation. "You, the prompt hostess—and here are your guests pining for their dinner."

"I've been busy," said Patsy, with as much grimness as her lip could allow, "pressing a little Chanel model from the Tucker wardrobe."

We stared.

"Do you mean she asked you to iron a dress for her?" I mean—Patsy reached for a cigarette and began to scratch a series of matches with furious indignation—"that she tossed out a little wisp of satin and asked me if my maid would please freshen it a bit. My 'maid' being also my cook and butler—and very near the point of desperation over the dinner—I got out the ironing board, and did it with my little hatchet."

A fresh howl arose from the sofa.

"I hope to God you scorched it," said Jake, "in the rear."

This time I echoed Irene's laugh with considerably more enthusiasm.

"Look here, Patsy," I said, "is the girl honestly as bad as you and Jake make out? If even half the unpleasantness you describe is accurate—then our Jonny must be guilty of designing intentions, and somehow, I can't quite see that."

"Well, of course we know, Sue darling," it was Irene's voice, velvety smooth, which answered me, "that Jonny is my weakness—but I should think even the eyes of love would see something a wee bit fishy about the brilliant and promising young surgeon who contracts to marry the Tucker Foundation. At least I hardly think—" she leaned over to flick an ash very delicately—"that it will exactly blight Jonny's career to be made a Director of the Foundation."

I realized, with a feeling of exasperated helplessness, that there was not the slightest use in protesting what Irene so nastily implied. Nor, indeed, was there any real reason for resenting it—since it undoubtedly represented the point of view that any logical person would take toward the Page-Tucker engagement. As for my own warped opinion—Irene had been quite right, of course. After some twenty years of being a self-appointed champion of Jonny Page, I had small grounds for setting myself up as an impartial judge of anything he might choose to do. And in the light of these facts, all too well known to my sisters, I could only ignore Irene's double thrust.

"I was," I said, "asking a question of Patsy." But it was evident that Patsy was by no means concerned with an abstract discussion of Jonny's precise intentions in the matter of Evelyn Tucker. She was far too absorbed in the immediate dilemma of her party.

"I really don't know, Sue," she brushed my query aside absently. "You'll have to judge the girl for yourself. But I wish you would tell me, you and Irene, what on earth I'd better do about this medium business. Jonny's upset, and Madeline's in a fury with her threats of danger and death to us all—and now with the Tucker girl high-hatting everybody, I'm afraid the séance will be an awful flop. But what on earth I can say to Mrs. Lynn—"

"Mrs. Lynn—?"

Patsy nodded unhappily. She really looked wretched.

"The medium," she said.

"Gods or heavens—is she here now?"

Another nod—seven more unhappy.

"She drove up with Smith Plummer," Patsy explained, "that's the young man we asked for you, Sue—and she really seems to be terribly smart and sweet. But what will happen if we start having ghosts talk, I honestly don't—" Patsy stopped short as the stairs creaked warningly.

A moment later two women appeared in the doorway, arm in arm. One was very tall and dark, and looked slightly amused. The other was a curly little blonde who gave me the immediate impression of a naturally mousy, quiet person trying desperately hard to be vivacious.

"Patsy, my dear, why didn't you tell me"—with an excess of informality the small blond one hurled herself into the living-room—"that this was going to be a spoof party? I think it's too marvelous that Mrs. Lynn is going to absolutely reveal everything. Jonny will be simply thrilled. Oh, and by the way, darling, your maid did marvels with this filthy rag of a dress—don't I look nice?" She whirled herself around with an effort at naïveté which was distinctly painful.

"Lovely," said Patsy, making no small effort herself. "I shall really have to compliment my maid."

"And are these your divine sisters, Patsy, that Jonny is always raving about?" The girl beamed at us.

"It—was coming to that," said her hostess weakly. "Evelyn Tucker, my sister Irene, and Sue." We nodded. I stole a sidewise glance at Irene and saw that her jaw was moving in a peculiar manner, from which I could only conclude that she was grinding her teeth. "And Mrs. Lynn," Patsy proceeded gallantly, "my sisters. Over there on the couch is Jake Lecky—and you mustn't mind if he doesn't get up to be introduced."

A somewhat more emphatic creaking of the stairs was followed by the entrance of Jonny and a strange, goggle-eyed gnome of a youth whom I knew, by instinct, to be Smith Plummer—the young man so generously supplied for me. After one look at him, I determined that he was well named.

By the time Patsy had completed the introductions—a business which she accomplished valiantly, despite frequent screams of coy interruptions from Evelyn—it had become evident that something was troubling Jon. As I saw his efforts to corner Patsy for a word in private, I maneuvered also—determined to overhear whatever he might say. For all my attentive eavesdropping I managed to catch only a part of his murmured speech, but from that I gathered that, quite as I might have supposed, the cause of the difficulty was Madeline.

"Best not to wait—she's feeling a bit rocky," that much of his remark I heard distinctly. There followed a rather vague explanation involving a headache, and the fact that Jonny had advised her to lie down for awhile.

I saw Patsy's expression of sympathy give way to a look of only slightly disguised relief. She was quite right, of course. It would unquestionably make dinner a great deal easier to have Madeline out of the way. But some how—for some reason which was by no means clear to me at the moment—I was uneasy and a little apprehensive at the thought of Madeline left alone upstairs to brood on heaven knew what dark thoughts.

Even the shout which arose from Jake just then: "God save us—here's Ted with the cocktails," and a generally cheerful surge of conversation which followed upon the announcement could not entirely silence the echo of two phrases.

I sipped a cocktail to the tune of Madeline's words: "danger and death—danger and death." I nibbled an anchovy in the rhythm of Jake's remark: "her murderous plans—her murderous plans." And all the time my eyes were fixed upon the small pucker of a frown which lingered in Jonny Page's face as he was drawn into the laughing group by his excessively gay fiancée.

III

ON the whole, dinner went remarkably well. My own conversational efforts were not notably successful—but that was because Patsy had placed me between Jon, who was completely absorbed in Evelyn at his other elbow, and Smith Plummer.

Smith Plummer. He was the sort of person who absolutely defeats conversational leads. Each time I tried a new one he would stop eating, peer at me with passionate

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attention from behind his spectacles, chime in, the moment I paused, with bright agreement, "Yes—yes indeed. That is so, isn't it?"—and then return to his dinner, his duty done. I had the helpless feeling that Mr. Plummer was not understanding a word I said. Perhaps, I thought wildly, he's stone deaf, and Patsy forgot to tell me—or else he knows only one phrase of English. In an effort to test this hypothesis, I cast about for some remark with which I was morally certain he would not agree—but when I had suggested that the next war would probably be fought entirely underground, and that actually I thought the narcotic traffic was an excellent thing for the country, Smith Plummer began to look at me a little oddly—and I abandoned the whole thing.

After that we fell silent, and for the life of me I could think of nothing further to offer save the sentence which Donald Ogden Stewart suggests for such difficult moments at dinner: "Hasn't the weather been warm (cool) for September (May)?" Fortunately for Mr. Plummer's opinion of my sanity the conversation became general at this point. Someone had asked Mrs. Lynn what particular type of séance she was planning for us.

"Mrs. Elliot asked me," Mrs. Lynn smiled charmingly at Patsy, "if I would try my spirit-photographs. I'd like very much to do that, providing, of course, that everyone is agreeable?" Her dark eyes traveled about the circle of faces, hesitated for an instant at Madeline's empty place, and then came back to Patsy. "Would you still like me to do the pictures, Mrs. Elliot?"

Did I imagine it, or was there a shade of extra emphasis upon the word "still"? How much, I wondered, had Mrs. Lynn already gathered of the curious cross currents of emotion which were gathered about that table? These mediums were always clever, I knew, about patching together impressions and chance information into a semblance of clairvoyance. But perhaps I was wrong in thinking that there was any particularly dire situation for Mrs. Lynn to divine—perhaps our party represented no more potential trouble than would lurk in any other group of persons casually gathered together. Except for the symbol of Madeline's empty chair, we were, I reassured myself, a normal enough dinner party.

Patsy, at least, seemed to feel no hesitation in urging Mrs. Lynn by all means to undertake her plan of communing with the spirit photographs.

JUST what is the system, Mrs. Lynn?" Evelyn Tucker was leaning forward eagerly. "It sounds absolutely too celestial. Shall we see pictures of all the people who ever lived in this marvelous old house? Or our dead ancestors? Or what?"

Mrs. Lynn's smile remained unchanged before the girl's bounding enthusiasm.

"As a rule," she said, "these photographs reveal the future rather than the past."

"Our futures?" Evelyn's eyes were very wide.

Mrs. Lynn nodded. "If," she added modestly, "the séance is successful."

"Oh, but of course it will be—Patsy says you give absolute revelations—isn't that so, Patsy?"

"Yes," said Patsy, and looked rather as if she wished it were not so.

"Are we to have this session," Jonny inquired, "directly after dinner?" I observed with relief that his genuine interest in any sort of psychic manifestations had quite banished the troubled lines about his keen gray eyes.

"God, I hope so!" Jake Lecky's tousled head was raised from his plate for his one remark during the meal. "Otherwise we won't be able to stay awake long enough to have a future."

"I'm afraid, Dr. Page," Mrs. Lynn answered Jon's question with a shake of her head, "that I can't promise immediate action. I had no time before dinner, you see, to get things ready—and it's rather a long business getting the photographic plates and the rest of apparatus in order."

"About as long," Ted suggested, "as a rubber of bridge?"

"Just about, I should say," Mrs. Lynn nodded.

As a matter of fact, it turned out to be considerably longer. We had finished a second rubber when, Irene having been persuaded to take my hand, I went upstairs to repair what was left of my make-up. It was, I remember glancing up at the hall clock, a few minutes past ten.

Patsy had suggested that I see whether Mrs. Lynn was not nearly ready—and I gathered also, from the meaningful lift of her eyebrows, that she wished me to report on the state of Madeline. I had, of course, no intention of executing either commission—but, as it happened, I was not

to be allowed the privilege of minding my own business.

For at the very moment when I mounted the last steps and turned into the dim upstairs corridor, I was aware that a door directly in front of me was being closed very quickly and quietly. It was the door of Madeline's room. There was, of course, nothing in the least remarkable about that—but as I stood quite still, for an instant undecided as to whether I should look in on her, my eye traveled downward to a small object which lay directly outside Madeline's door.

It looked, in the half-light, rather like a metal blade about six inches long. Instantly, in my imagination, it became a dagger—a stiletto. I stepped forward quickly and bent down—only to straighten abruptly and call myself a fanciful idiot. The mysterious object was an ordinary silver fork.

Had I only realized it—that innocent looking fork was actually a good deal more sinister than the dagger I had imagined it to be. It was the symbol and clue to all that took place in the house that night—and if I had only picked it up—if I had followed my half-formed intention of looking into Madeline's room—if—But of what use are "ifs"? The fact was that I turned away, in the relief of discovering that I was not viewing some mysterious weapon, and went directly into my room—firmly determined to keep my nerves and imagination under better control.

HARDLY had I snapped the light on and turned to close my door, when I was once more aware of a quick sound in the hall. I looked out in time to see the door of Madeline's room close again, with the same quiet haste I had observed before. I also saw that the silver fork was no longer on the hall floor—and it seemed to me then that there was a simple and very obvious explanation of what had happened. The fork had, of course, fallen from Madeline's dinner tray—and either she or Carrie, the maid, had returned to pick it up. I closed my door briskly, dismissed the incident, and applied myself to the business of powder and lipstick.

When I stepped out into the hall on my way downstairs, Madeline's door was still tightly shut, and from the sounds within of someone moving about, I judged that she was all right. Probably, I thought with relief, she was preparing for bed.

Patsy looked up from the bridge table as I entered the living room.

"Is Mrs. Lynn ready yet?" she asked.

"Very nearly," I lied cheerfully, "she—" The words stopped short in my throat.

Madeline Page, fully dressed, was sitting near the fireplace quietly reading a magazine.

"Why—Madeline—" my very genuine surprise gave me an excuse for abandoning the sentence about Mrs. Lynn. "How did you get down here so quickly—" Realizing, from her blank look, that this was the wrong tack, I shifted hastily. "Is your headache so much better?"

"Practically gone," Madeline smiled at me with an expression which was, for her, unexpectedly calm and pleasant. "Jonny gave me some medicine and after dinner I felt so much better that I went out for a little air. That seemed to cure it entirely."

"But I—We didn't see you," I was proceeding cautiously. "Oh, you were all deep in bridge," Madeline shrugged, "so I went along into the garden, and came in just a moment ago while you were still upstairs."

"Well—I'm glad you're so much better—" I tried to keep my tone from reflecting the racing circle of my thoughts.

"Thanks, Sue," Madeline smiled at me once more and then returned to her reading.

I stood quite still. For all the blunders and mistakes I made that evening, I did have the presence of mind at that moment to take careful stock. Who could it have been that twice opened and shut the door of Madeline's room? Who dropped the silver fork and then picked it up again? And why? Carefully, I checked the possibilities.

Ted and Patsy, Irene and Smith Plummer were at the bridge table. Jake Lecky had been prone upon the couch since dinner time. Madeline, according to her statement, had been strolling in the garden. That left Mrs. Lynn, Jonny, and Evelyn Tucker to be accounted for—and I was inclined to dismiss Mrs. Lynn as a possibility. Another moment and I had determined on a plan of immediate action.

"Oh Ted," I moved past the bridge table into the hall, "as long you're dummy could you come out here and give me a hand? There's something wrong with the light—"

"Sure thing," Sue, he followed promptly. "What seems to be the trouble?"

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Once outside, I seized his arm and held it nervously. "Ted, there is something wrong—but not with the light fixture," I was whispering rapidly into his ear. "Someone's in Madeline's room—I could hear them moving, and the door—" I described what I had seen upstairs.

Ted turned to stare at me. "Well, good Lord, Sue—it's probably Carrie turning down the bed or something—"

"Maybe so," I nodded hastily, "but please go look, Ted. I'm a little scared."

"Another way."

"You—scared?"

"Please, Ted." I tugged urgently at his arm. "After the way Madeline has been acting—I'm afraid she might—with a good deal of effort I came to the actual point of my fear. 'Jonny,' I said, 'isn't anywhere around—and Evelyn—'" I paused.

"My God," Ted whispered, "you don't think—" It was evident from his expression that my nameless, unspoken apprehension had communicated itself to him.

"I—don't know what to think," I said, "but I am scared."

This time Ted did not hesitate. "Come along," he motioned me quickly toward the stairs, "we'll have a look."

It seemed, at first, that there was nothing in particular to look at. The door of Madeline's room stood slightly ajar, and there was no light within. Ted turned to me.

"Whoever it was," I still spoke in a whisper, "is gone." Ted nodded soberly. "But we might well—he stopped into the room and snapped on a light—see if anything is wrong."

Carefully we looked about. The room showed not the slightest evidence of any disturbance. Ted even opened the closet door, and bent down to peer under the bed.

"Well—" his face relaxed into a grin, "I guess we're just a couple of nervous wrecks, Sue. There's certainly nothing fishy here."

But I was not entirely reassured. "Nothing," I said, "except that the bed is not turned down—so it couldn't have been Carrie I heard."

Ted refused to be alarmed again. "Probably Patsy's ghost," he suggested lightly. "He prowls, you know."

"And turns on lights, no doubt," I observed, "and plays hide and seek with silver forks—" I stopped suddenly, aware of a noise behind me in the hall.

With one accord Ted and I turned to see Mrs. Lynn just outside the door. How long she had been standing there, looking directly at us—how much of our conversation she had overheard, it was impossible to guess from her expression.

"Oh Mr. Elliot," she addressed Ted without the slightest indication that there was anything odd about our snooping or her watching. "I was just on my way downstairs to ask you to give a lift with my things. I'm so sorry to have been slow about getting ready, but I—" for just a split second she hesitated, "I—mislaid some of my plates, and that delayed me."

Ted crossed the hall after Mrs. Lynn to help her fetch the apparatus.

"You might," he spoke to me over his shoulder, "go on down, Sue, and round up everybody. Tell them Mrs. Lynn is ready."

IV

AT the foot of the steps Jonny Page was standing, looking into the living-room in a pensive sort of way. "Hello Sue," he turned toward me with a little half smile. "When's the ghost party going to get under way?"

"Right now," I said. "Ted sent me to get you—but I didn't know exactly where to look."

"You could have found me any time," Jonny's gray eyes looked straight into mine, "wandering around Patsy's excellent garden—with Evelyn."

No doubt it was my imagination again—this time taking a sentimental turn—but something about the way he spoke those last two words touched me. The old instinct to champion Jonny came to the fore.

"Jonny," I put my hand on his arm for a moment, "I think Evelyn is—sweet."

I had expected, of course, that my words would please him—would make him think that at least one of his old friends really approved of his engagement. But I was in no way prepared for the warmth of grateful pleasure which surged into Jonny's smile. Odd to see his face, usu-

ally so cool and competent, flooded with eager pleasure at my simple statement.

"Thanks, Sue," his voice was low, "I knew you would." "What is going on out there with Jonny and Sue muttering at each other and looking intense?" Patsy leaned back from the bridge table to peer curiously at us. "And what have you done with Ted, Sue? We've played Slap-jack for hours waiting for him."

"He's helping Mrs. Lynn bring her things down," I explained, "and I'm supposed to round you all up for the fatal session."

"Excellent!" Patsy jumped up at once. "Will you be an angel and fold up the table, Schmitzy?"

"Yes—yes, indeed," Smith Plummer attacked the table with such obedient vigor that I fully expected him to wrench one of the legs off.

Under cover of the general bustle, Irene came over to me.

"The next time," she spoke between her teeth, "you leave me stranded with that Plummer as a partner I'll wring your neck. Of all the primeval bidders—" she was interrupted by a plea from Patsy.

"You wake up Jake, will you, Irene? We'll need the sofa to sit on."

"I'll try, darling," Irene forgot her irritation promptly. "Now then—are we all here?" Patsy beamed at us. "Oh—where's Evelyn?" she looked at Jon, but before he could answer there came a playful shriek from the hall.

"There you are, Jonny Page!" Evelyn swooped down the stairs to catch his arm. "I waited absolute *cons* outside after you simply vanished. Do you think swains ought to act that way, Sue?" Very wide-eyed, she appealed to me. "Jonny steered me around in that divine moonlight and then, just when I was all steamed up with the sheerest romance, turned around and left me flat—with *nothing* to console myself with except holding Isaac's paw!"

"Isaac?" I said, wondering whether by some remote possibility she meant that Ike, the body-guard, had been a party to the moonlight stroll.

"Isaac Newton," Evelyn explained happily. "My dog. Patsy was a darling and let him stay here with me—don't you think it's a lovely name? And it just suits him."

"I think it's just too whimsical for words—" Irene spoke unexpectedly from behind me. Her infection came dangerously near to a parody of Evelyn's gushing style. "And tell me, my dear, which is your favorite author, Barrie or Milne?"

WITH sisterly firmness I steered Irene away from Evelyn's bewildered stare—and the sudden hurt look that clouded Jonny's eyes.

"You keep a civil tongue in your head," I hissed at Irene when we were safely out of earshot, "or I'll wring your neck."

"My dear, you aren't defending that creature?" Irene looked incredulous.

"I'm just reminding you that she's Jonny's fiancée."

"Well, if your precious Jonny waltz go fortune-hunting," Irene shrugged, "he's got to expect a few dirty cracks." As Ted and Mrs. Lynn appeared, laden down with various objects mysteriously shrouded in white wrappings, we settled ourselves on the sofa—Irene being careful to get the place next to Jake Lecky. "At any rate," she whispered one last remark to me, "there is one consolation about Evelyn Tucker. She's so damned coy she puts our Patsy completely in the shade."

Annoyed as I was with Irene at that moment, I had to agree with what she said. It was rather satisfying to see Patsy defeated at her own game of child-like innocence. But even as I reflected on this, I was aware of a new question which formed with disturbing persistence in the back of my mind. Evelyn had accused Jonny of deserting her in the garden—and Jonny had looked straight at me and said with a curious level emphasis, "You could have found me any time outside—with Evelyn." Could it mean that Jonny had come into the house earlier and gone, for some reason, to Madeline's room? But suppose he had—was there anything so sinister in that? Once and for all, I made a determined effort to banish my foolish fearfulness. Jonny was safe, and Evelyn was safe, and Madeline, having apparently recovered from her violent sulk, seemed pleasantly calm. She did not even look displeased when she turned to see Irene deep in fond conversation with Jake. I took a deep breath and concentrated resolutely upon the business of the séance.

Mrs. Lynn had ordered all the lights to be extinguished, and in the darkness her deep voice sounded solemnly im-

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pressive to our somewhat apprehensive ears. "The first thing," she said, "is to have perfect quiet—and attention. Whatever happens, I must ask you not to speak. Now on this table before me, I have my spirit camera." As our eyes became gradually accustomed to the dimness we could see her hands moving quickly and silently to arrange the apparatus. "If you will all move forward, we can look down through the lens and see the pictures actually form themselves."

There was a muffled scraping of chairs as we obeyed. Shoulders touching, we were grouped in a close circle gazing downward at what seemed to be an oval of blackness. Mrs. Lynn's hands began to move slowly across the dark surface.

"If anyone is not prepared," she said, "will they speak now?"

Complete silence followed her words. For some moments we remained thus—the hush broken only by the sound of our soft breathing. In the stillness we were aware of an occasional creak of boards—almost as if the old house were coming to life—as if Patsy's ghost were really there, moving with slow, stealthy steps across the ancient complaining floors. From very far off came the eerie whistle of a train, the sound filtered through the still night air. As if that distant sound had been a signal, Mrs. Lynn broke the long silence.

"We are ready," her voice was very low.

WHATEVER the tricks and fakes of the performance might be, there was an almost magical effect in the atmosphere of dark quiet. Sceptical as I was of all things spiritualistic, I found myself staring downward as though hypnotized. At first there was nothing—our eyes strained into the empty blackness of a deep dark well. Then Mrs. Lynn spoke again.

"We are ready," this time her voice was like a drone.

"Far, far down—as if at the bottom of an endless tunnel—flashed a tiny point of light—disappeared—then flashed again."

"That is the signal." The slow circling movement of Mrs. Lynn's hands ceased. She reached out, and I felt her fingers grope toward mine, clasp my hand in a firm, cold grip. "I have a mortal here in communication—is there a message?" the question was whispered, low and intense. I gasped. I watched the point of light. It wavered uncertainly—passed.

"I have a mortal here in communication—is there a message? I have a mortal here—" Over and over the toneless words were spoken. Then gradually, almost imperceptibly, the light grew and diffused itself into a dim glow which lighted the circle and cast a weird reflection upon our bent faces. My hand clasped in the motionless grip of the medium was darkly silhouetted against the increasing glow. After a time the monotonous repetition of the question stopped and we waited silently.

"There is a message," Mrs. Lynn spoke more clearly. "There is a message forming for this mortal."

In vain I searched the luminous circle, but not for some moments did anything appear in the milky, translucent depths. Then slowly a shadow spread itself across the disc, seeming to work upward toward the surface in a network of confused lines.

"Focus—focus the message," Mrs. Lynn bent forward sharply. Her hand tightened on mine.

The vague criss-cross of shadows wavered suddenly, then fused into an outline, at first vague, of a human figure surrounded by various indistinct symbols.

"You are looking into the future," said Mrs. Lynn, "a future which is filled with striving, with ambition. The star of your success"—her free hand indicated a bright patch of light toward which the head of the figure was turned—"the star is still distant from you—but you are moving nearer. Behind you, all around you, is the shadow of work—of sacrifice. You have abandoned love." The hand paused briefly over a small blurred circle in the background. "The ring, symbol of love, is already fading as you pass by on your steady course. Yours is a hard fate—but a very clear one. All these lines point directly to your goal and star, and a year from this time you will have passed every obstacle which lies between you and the bright light of achievement toward which your spirit strives." The low voice stopped, my hand was loosed, and the image of my future faded and was lost in shadows.

Another moment and we were staring once again into the deep and empty blackness. Only the pin-point of light remained to indicate that the line of communication was still unbroken. In the silence that followed, I felt, rather

than saw, the hand of Mrs. Lynn as it clasped another hand.

"I have a mortal here in communication—is there a message?" Again the droning formula began, and was followed by precisely the same flood of clear light, the slow focusing of a figure surrounded by the symbols of the future.

I cannot, of course, set down here the several futures which were revealed in the hour which followed. Since in the darkness it was impossible to see whose hand the medium clasped, I could only guess at the subjects of the various prophecies. The central figure, which in each case indicated the subject of the spirit photographs, did not supply any clue in the way of resemblance—nor, in most cases, could I guess from the nature of the predictions whose particular future was being revealed.

There must have been four or five of these photographs before the appearance of two images which, to my dying day, I shall never be able to forget. The first of them took gradual shape exactly as had all the spirit pictures, and in the beginning there seemed to be nothing distinctly different or alarming about it. There was the now familiar central figure—distinguished from the others we had seen only by the fact that it appeared in a horizontal position rather than upright as the others had been. As the image became focused, however, two things became suddenly apparent. First, that there were no symbols in the clear, radiant light of the background—and second, that the figure had a recognizable face. Without any question I realized that we were looking at a likeness of Madeline Page—crudely outlined, but unmistakable.

For several moments Mrs. Lynn did not speak. Then, as we slowly gathered the significance of the image before us, the medium pronounced just one sentence.

"There is peace for this mortal, perfect peace—and—" her voice quavered ever so slightly, "perfect happiness."

The subject's hand was loosed, and at once the picture darkened into obscurity—but before it was lost we had grasped quite clearly its dreadful meaning. The figure of Madeline Page, eyes closed, arms crossed, was plainly the image of a shrouded corpse, set off from the radiant background by the outline of a coffin.

"I have a mortal here in communication—is there a message?" At once the steady voice of Mrs. Lynn signaled that she had contacted another hand—and the difficult moment was passed.

Passed, indeed, so quickly that I, for one, could scarcely be certain that I had actually seen the gruesome prediction. Evidently the others were also confused—for no one made any sound, until the next image took form before us.

It was that final picture which brought, along with its own horrible meaning, the true significance of Madeline's shrouded fate. There was a figure, this time upright, poised upon a gallows—and above the head was suspended a hangman's noose. Across the background of light was scrawled one crudely printed word—MURDERER. Again there was no mistaking the resemblance of the image. The head beneath the dangling noose was that of Jonathan Page.

This time Mrs. Lynn did not attempt to speak. For one fateful moment we stared in silence—all thought, all emotion suspended before the shock of what we saw. Then a long shriek curdled the dark stillness of the room. I never knew who uttered it. The next moment we were looking downward into complete blackness.

"Turn on the lights," the voice of Mrs. Lynn was barely a whisper. "Turn on the lights—quickly."

V

THERE was a confusing interlude during which someone rose from the circle and groped toward a light. At last the switch was found—and in the blinding flood of sudden illumination we stared into one another's stricken faces.

Mrs. Lynn, pale as death, stood before us. Irene, next to me, was trembling violently. Of the others, I got no clear impression—save for the fact that Evelyn's head was hidden against Jonny's shoulder—and that Jonny, even as his arms circled the cowering girl protectively, was looking across Evelyn's curiously held straight into the eyes of his sister Madeline.

Curiously enough, it was Madeline who seemed least shaken by the horror of what we had witnessed. Her lips curled in a scornful sneer as she observed our stricken expressions.

"Well, come, come—" her sharp voice was unpleasantly amused, "we don't all believe in spooks, do we? I thought

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only Jon and Patsy were silly enough to swallow the hocus-pecus of a fake medium."

No one answered her directly, but her icy sarcasm was not without effect. Gradually the tension lessened. In the sameness of light—of familiar faces—of reality, the horrid vividness of those two images began to fade. Someone, I think it was Jake, laughed weakly.

"I guess—we are taking it a little hard," Ted managed a fairly natural tone. "You don't, think—do you, Mrs. Lynn, that we ought to be alarmed?"

With an obvious effort Mrs. Lynn rallied herself to speak. It had been impossible to judge, from her pale, set face, whether she had even heard Madeline's scornful rudeness—but Ted's question seemed to focus her far-off attention.

"There is something in this house," she said slowly, "something—I do not understand. It seems almost as though some spirit were trying to warn us—trying to frighten us off by a diabolical joke—" a shudder ran through her low voice. "I believe there is an influence here—a secret force quite outside ourselves that resented our intrusion into the spirit world—" she paused for a moment, then her wandering glance returned to Ted. "You are quite right, Mr. Elliott," the words were suddenly matter of fact, "there is no reason for alarm. We must forget what has happened—and only be warned not to pry further into the secret of this house. Will you—help me take these things away?"

"Of course," Ted stepped forward quickly. Between them, he and Mrs. Lynn lifted the white wrapped apparatus. At the door Mrs. Lynn paused for one more remark.

"Believe me," she said simply, "I am very sorry for what happened. I had no control over the images we saw."

There was a silence when they had gone—a silence broken only by the sound of their retreating footsteps on the creaking stairs. We all stood perfectly still, staring at each other in a foolish tableau. And then—quite suddenly—the spell was broken.

"Well—of all the rot—" with a curious little gasping laugh, Irene collapsed into a chair. "And to think we actually fell for it—"

"Hook, line and sinker," Jake Lecky agreed with a groan. "Good God—just look at me. It's past midnight and here I am as wakeful as a bride. Patsy, my sweet, couldn't you get me just a little drink to carry me off?" He curled up in a corner of the sofa and blinked appealingly at his hostess.

"Poor Jake," Irene consoled him. "He's never been up this late before."

Patsy smiled uncertainly. "Maybe a drink would help us all—" she hesitated, biting her lip, then turned suddenly to Jonny Page with the question no one had dared ask. "Jonny—before we forget this silly business—you don't really think it was—serious, do you?"

JONNY did not answer at once. Very gently he disengaged himself from Evelyn's clinging arms, reached for a cigarette and lit it. The match in his hand was perfectly steady. He blew out the flame with a sharp breath of smoke, and then said quietly, "I do not, Patsy."

"Oh I'm so glad—" Patsy breathed the relief which was shared.

"I think," Jonny went on evenly, "that the spooky atmosphere of your house was a little too much for Mrs. Lynn. These mediums are always jumpy, you know—terribly sensitive to any sort of strain or mystery in the air. Evidently the lurking nervousness in our minds, planted there by Patsy's ghost stories, communicated itself to Mrs. Lynn and upset her usual routine. Fortunately, Madeline and I have good nerves and an excellent supply of hard-shelled scepticism—isn't that right, Madeline?" He smiled easily at his sister.

"Quite right, my dear," Madeline's unflinching poise was astonishing. That she, whose violent moods were usually set off by the smallest provocation, should have remained so coolly detached in the face of the grim warning image of death, was one of the most amazing features of that whole amazing night. Her calmness and Jonny's were, however, soothing to us all—and by the time Patsy returned with the drink our conversation had come back to something like a normal state.

Not until after one o'clock, when someone mentioned the possibility of bed, did the subject of the double spirit warning loom again. And then it was only mentioned indirectly.

Patsy, obviously reluctant to return to the topic of our

fears, suggested that Madeline might like to change places with me for the night by sharing Irene's room. This would, of course, have meant that I was to occupy Madeline's room in solitary grandeur—a possibility which I viewed with distinct disfavor. Before I could protest, however, Madeline settled the question with characteristic abruptness.

"If you're harking back to that absurd séance," she said, "you can save your breath. I shall sleep in my own room—looks or no spooks."

Jonny gave her an approving look.

"I'll tell you what," Evelyn spoke suddenly, "I'll lend you Isaac Newton. He's a perfectly marvelous watch-dog, Madeline—Daddy had him trained for my silly old pearls—but I've got like in the room right next to me, and I don't need—" she got no further.

Madeline, already at the foot of the stairs, turned on Evelyn with one withering look of amused scorn.

"If I were you, Evelyn," she said carefully, "I'd keep all Daddy's watch-dogs for myself. Some things are a good deal harder to escape from than trumped-up spirit photographs." Halfway up the stairs, Madeline turned back and delivered her parting shot. "I might say to all of you," her smile was curiously barbed, "that I am going to join my door. So—if anything happens to me—which no doubt some of you hope will be the case—you can be absolutely certain that the ghost did it."

VI

WHEN Madeline had disappeared, Patsy turned anxiously to Ted.

"Do you think she'll be all right?" she asked.

"Of course she'll be all right," it was Jonny who answered briskly. "With her door locked—what could possibly happen? And besides, you girls," indicating Irene and me, "are in the room right next to her—and if she should have nightmares about the ghost, just call me."

"Well—" The concern on Patsy's face struggled with a vast yawn. "If Jonny thinks she's safe, I suppose we might as well get some sleep." She started slowly up the stairs.

The rest of us followed, likewise suppressing signs of weariness. We were, I suppose, too sleepy to do anything but gratefully accept Jonny's reassurance. At the head of the stairs we separated with muttered good-nights strangled by further yawns.

Once in our room, Irene and I undressed in silence. Not even the events of the evening, the strain of unspoken fears and unanswered questions that had so troubled me earlier could mar the relief with which I tumbled into bed and surrendered my weary nerves to the comforting blur of sleep.

How long I slept, I have never been quite certain. Nor can I be sure whether the first of the ghastly sounds which awakened me were sufficient to penetrate my drugged consciousness. But I do remember, all too vividly, the slow chill of sheer terror which spread through me as I struggled up from the depths of dreamless sleep. Even before I was fully awake, that dull, monotonous, thumping sound had all but frozen the blood in my veins.

At first it seemed to come from within the room. Wide-eyed, staring into the darkness, I lay quite still. For all the mildness of the soft summer night, I shivered uncontrollably—chilled to the marrow by the rhythm of that slow, muffled pounding. *Thump—thump—thump*. A hundred fearful images flashed through my mind. The ghost—the warning of death. And through it all I seemed to see, outlined against the blackness before my eyes, the shrouded figure of a woman lying, arms crossed, within a coffin. But this time the cold, still features were not those of Madeline Page. It was my own dead face looking down upon me from the darkness.

I screamed—and it was as if the sound of my voice brought me at last to full waking consciousness. The nightmare vision above my bed vanished, and I found myself, sitting bolt upright, struggling to force my sadly shaken wits into some sort of reasonable thought. At least one thing was clear. The sounds which had roused me were no part of my panicky imagination. There, almost beside me, the dreadful noise went on. *Thump—thump—thump*.

All at once, I knew what it was. The wall beside my bed was the partition which divided our room from Madeline's—and her bed was on the opposite side of the wall. Unquestionably the sounds came from her room—from her bed. My brain, numb with terror of that hollow pounding in the silent house, would go no further. From a throat

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which seemed filled with ashes, I forced one word: "Irene!" "Irene—!" Surely—from my feverish confusion one thought emerged—surely she must have heard me scream—must now be awake to hear the ghastly beating on the wall.

No sound came from Irene.

"Irene!" Fresh panic gave me strength to leap from my bed, supported my wavering knees as I stumbled toward a light. "Why don't you answer me, Irene!" Still no sound from the other bed. At last my groping fingers closed upon a lamp cord. With what seemed my last ounce of strength I pulled the switch—and stood staring and blinking in the flood of light.

Irene's bed was empty.

JUST how I got out of the room, I do not know. The next thing I was aware of was my own voice—this time pitched to a feverish scream.

"Jonny—Jonny—where are you?"

And between my cries, delivered into the darkness of the hall, I could still hear the muffled pounding—weaker now, but drumming as relentlessly as the thudding of my own pulse in my ears. *Thump—thump—thump.*

Then—after what seemed an age—doors began to open all along the corridor. Someone snapped on the hall light, and I saw Ted's face, then Pat's and Smith Plummer's—all blinking and terrified. But not once did I stop screaming until Jonny Page stood before me.

"Sue"—his hand was blessedly steady on my arm—"Sue—what is it?"

At first it seemed to me that the silence which followed his words was complete. Then, as the violence of my own cries faded—I heard once more the slow weird sound. *Thump—thump—thump.*

"Jonny"—I clutched the hand on my arm. "Jonny—that pounding noise—do you hear it? It—it's from there—" I pointed one shaking finger at the door of Madeline's room, still tightly shut. "Jonny—something horrible is happening in there. It woke me up—" Scarcely conscious of what I was saying, I heard my words, babbling and incoherent, hurrying on and on.

"Steady, Sue." Jonny's clear grave eyes brought back my wandering senses. "Steady." He turned away as my voice trailed off into one last quivering breath. I leaned back, braced against the wall, as Jonny moved quickly to the door. Vaguely I was aware that Ted stood near me—that several of the others had gathered in a silent, fearful circle. But my whole mind was centered on Jonny's hand as he slowly turned the knob of the closed door. It did not open.

"Madeline—" Jonny's voice was very low. "Madeline—are you there?"

The muffled sound of thumping paused for a moment—leaving a silence which seemed to roar in our straining ears. Then slowly, relentlessly, it began again.

Jonny straightened and turned to face us. Except that he was deathly pale, he gave no sign of the terror which bound the rest of us like an invisible coil.

"The door is locked," he said quietly. "How else can we get into the room?"

"Through the window—" a clear voice spoke suddenly from behind us. Turning, I saw Evelyn Tucker—a long satin robe clutched tightly about her. "The window in Jake Lecky's room," she hurried on. "That door right there—" her finger pointed steadily. "You can get out onto the roof and in through Madeline's window."

Without a word Jonny advanced toward the closed door she indicated. The knob turned easily, and he disappeared.

"Here—let me—" Ted sprang to follow him.

It seemed hours later that the door of Madeline's room was opened to reveal Ted's ashy face.

"Sue—" he motioned to me. "Sue—Jon wants you."

With the slow, weighted steps of a nightmare I walked into the room and advanced toward the bed over which Jonny was bending. Madeline lay, her long dark hair streaming over the pillow, her head rolled back—eyes closed. The white sheet covered her like a shroud. Her still face, drained of color, might have been the very mask of death—save for a single sign that she yet lived. One hand, limp-wristed and as bloodless as her face, was raised against the wall. As if with a will independent of the inert body, it rose and fell—rose and fell—striking the wall each time with ghastly regularity. *Thump—thump—thump.* I felt the floor sinking beneath me, the brightly lighted room seemed to grow dim—to vanish, as the shrouded image of Madeline had vanished earlier that evening. Then Jonny's voice recalled me.

"Steady, Sue." Without looking up from Madeline's face, he seemed to sense my weakness. "I need your help."

The blind whirling ceased within my brain. I think those words from Jonny would have brought me back from death itself.

"Yes, Jonny." My numb lips felt like cold wax as I tried to frame the words. "I'm—here."

I was only partly aware of the quick motion of Jonny's hands as he worked—but I could have cried out in relief when, a moment later, he reached for Madeline's arm and laid it gently at her side. At last the terrible thudding which had beaten itself into my brain stopped.

"Jonny—what is it?" I bent closer. "Is she—has someone—" The question faltered in my throat.

Jonny did not look up.

"I don't know—" his low voice was still steady, "but I need a stimulant—quickly, Sue."

"Yes, Jonny."

"Get my bag—in my room—on the chair next to the bed."

"Yes, Jonny." I turned and left the room, scarcely aware of the white, frightened faces in the doorway, scarcely aware of anything as I made my way through the hall and into Jonny's empty room. My fingers closed stiffly upon the handle of a small black bag.

VII

WHEN I came back to Madeline's room, Jonny was still bending over the bed where his sister lay white and motionless. I thrust the bag into his outstretched hand. Quickly he opened it and a moment later turned to me with a hypodermic syringe in his hand. "Sue, can you sterilize this needle for me?"

I dared not falter before the desperate look in his gray eyes.

"Yes, Jonny."

"Then—hurry." He handed me the syringe and a pad of sterile gauze. "I don't dare leave her—for a minute."

Stethoscope in hand, he bent over the bed once more. Whatever nervousness I might have felt at making my way alone through the dark rooms downstairs was lost in the frantic urgency of my errand. Even when, having waited a small eternity for the saucer of water to boil, I fished out the needle and looked up to see a strange man standing at the kitchen door—I was too intent upon the importance of my business to do more than stare at him for one blankly startled instant.

The man, clad only in vivid striped pajamas, stood blocking the exit from the kitchen, and returned my stare with an impassive, heavy-lidded glance. Who he might be, how he had come there, why he should be observing me so intently—I had not the faintest notion. Nor did these questions give me, in the stress of the moment, any particular concern. It did not even occur to me to be frightened when, as I approached the door—the needle carefully poised upon the gauze in my hand—he did not move aside to let me pass.

"Let me by, please—I must hurry." I remember how calm and matter-of-fact my voice sounded in the still kitchen.

He stepped back at once, and I hurried through the pantry, the dining-room, the long hall—and finally the endless treadmill of the stairs. Then, with a gasp of relief, I put the needle into Jonny's waiting hand.

"It's the one hope," I heard him murmur. "She's very low—"

The syringe sucked up a clear liquid from the small vial he held. Another moment, and he had swabbed Madeline's limp arm with a bit of cotton—the needle jabbed into white flesh—then was drawn out. A second quick swab with the cotton—and Jonny laid the syringe aside, reached for the stethoscope and placed it over Madeline's heart. One finger on her pulse, his eyes upon the chalk-white face, he bent motionless—waiting—waiting.

From a little distance back we watched. I was aware of Ted standing close beside me—of Pat's, Evelyn and Smith Plummer—and finally of Mrs. Lynn. All of us stood still as statues, waiting—waiting.

Then suddenly Jonny moved—said something under his breath—and I craned forward anxiously. Madeline's face, a moment before as white as marble, was flushed with faint color. Her eyelids fluttered—almost opened—then rested once more quietly closed.

"Oh—she's alive—" The long, quivering breath came from Pat's.

I turned to echo her words, to see Ted's comforting hand upon hers, to hear Smith Plummer's incoherent words of relief. Only Evelyn Tucker and Mrs. Lynn remained silent

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—still tensely motionless, their expressions mask-like.

"Ted—" over his shoulder, Jonny spoke abruptly. "Is there a doctor in the village here?"

"I—why, yes," Ted's answer indicated his surprise.

"Then call him—right away." Replacing the ear-piece of the stethoscope, Jonny returned his attention to his patient.

I saw the look of puzzled confusion which passed between Ted and Patsy.

"You—want me to call a doctor?" Ted repeated blankly.

Jonny rebuked him with one sharp glance.

"Yes—" his tone was crisp, "and be quick about it."

Without further hesitation, Ted left the room.

"What on earth?" when he had gone, Patsy moved closer and murmured in my ear. "When Madeline is coming around all right—why in the world should Jonny drag in the village doctor?"

My only answer was a helpless shrug.

As if he had heard her whispering words, Jonny straightened slowly and faced Patsy with a grave look.

"I THINK—I hope," he spoke deliberately, "that Madeline's all right. She will be if—" a frightening hesitation, "if her heart will stand it. But I can't take the responsibility alone—" again the weighted pause, "if anything goes wrong. That's why," he finished quietly, "I want your doctor."

"Yes, Jonny—" Patsy sounded abashed. "I—understand, of course."

In the pause which followed her words, I ventured a question.

"Jonny—do you know what—" I hesitated, "what happened to Madeline?"

For a moment Jonny looked straight at me. Then he sighed—a long, heavy sigh.

"I can only guess," he said slowly, "that she must have had a shock of some sort—a terrific shock. What it could have been—" his hand passed across his eyes in a gesture of utter weariness—"I cannot imagine."

"But she is better— isn't she?" I looked again at Madeline's face. The ghastly pallor was quite gone, and she seemed now to be quietly sleeping.

"Yes—" Jonny's tone was strangely heavy as he answered my hopeful question. "She's better—I think—" his voice trailed away into silence.

Slowly he turned, surveyed the patient for a moment, then began, with methodical care, to collect the drugs and instruments which lay on the bed and table—and to replace them neatly in the black case. He seemed, in the pre-occupation of the task, to have quite forgotten the five of us who still stood anxiously within the small room.

Even when Ted returned, after many shouted explanations into the telephone, to announce that the local doctor was on his way—Jonny barely nodded without looking up.

Gradually—rather awkwardly—we began to disperse. Since there appeared to be nothing special for us to do at the moment, we gathered in the hall outside, feeling suddenly aimless after the confusion and strain of the past half-hour.

In subdued and fragmentary whispers we discussed Madeline's frightful attack—asked ourselves futile questions as to what could possibly have occurred to shock her almost literally to death.

Suddenly, in the midst of some wandering suggestion from Smith Plummer, Patsy clutched my arm.

"Good heavens, Sue," she said, "where is Irene?"

Irene. In a flash I remembered the empty bed in our room—realized that through all the excitement and noise she had not appeared.

"I—I don't know," I faced Patsy blankly. "Her bed was empty when that terrible pounding noise awakened me—and—" I stared helplessly around, "she simply isn't here."

"But—Good God, Sue—" Ted faced me in obvious alarm. "Why didn't you say something before?"

"I—simply forgot it. With all the shock of that horrible noise, and then finding Madeline, and trying to help—" I spoke in all honesty, but it was evident from the faces before me that my words carried little conviction.

"I don't see how—" Ted began angrily, but Patsy cut him short.

"Never mind what you don't see, Ted. The thing to do now is to find Irene. Goodness knows what might have happened to her." Patsy's tone indicated the renewed apprehension which all us shared. No one of us voiced our precise fears, but in each of our minds was the memory of Madeline's death-like coma—and the horrible suspicion that whatever fiendish mischief had so frightened her

might also be responsible for Irene's disappearance.

"What shall we do, Ted?" Instinctively I turned to him. "She—must be in the house somewhere." I sensed the difficulty with which he attempted to keep his voice calm.

"So the sensible thing is to go through each room. You can start with the rooms up here," he addressed Smith Plummer, "and I'll go downstairs. You girls can either wait here or trail along if you'd rather."

"We'll help, of course," Mrs. Lynn, silent until that moment, spoke quietly.

"Of course we will—" Evelyn Tucker's voice was only a shadow of her usual gushing enthusiasm. No one had paid any particular attention to her, but I realized that for all her quietness she must have been badly upset by the dreadful events of the night. No doubt she had never, in all her sheltered Tucker life, been involved in anything like this nightmare of mystery and fear. But, for that matter—I checked sudden sympathy, abruptly—neither had any of the rest of us.

As the others divided into two groups to begin the search, I hesitated.

"I think I ought," I said, "to stay here, in case Jonny should need me for anything."

No one paused to answer me.

"There's Jake Lecky," Patsy was speaking to Ted as they started downstairs, "he's not around either."

He's asleep, from half-way down the steps I heard Ted's prompt answer. "When Jonny and I went through his room to get out on the porch roof he never even stirred."

Left alone, I stood for a moment waiting. Save for the quick, quiet steps of the searchers moving from room to room, the house was still. Once I heard Evelyn's voice call sharply: "Irene—" then a pause, and Smith Plummer said, "She's not here."

Suddenly the tension seemed unbearable—the back of my neck ached with the stiffness of taut nerves as I waited, hoping for a sign, yet fearing the moment when someone would say, "Here she is." I simply could not face the thought of what they might find. Abruptly I turned and started into Madeline's room.

VIII

IN the doorway I hesitated briefly, uncertain for the moment whether to trouble Jon by mentioning our latest apprehension over Irene's disappearance. But when Jonny turned from the bed to see me standing in the doorway, my doubts were settled by one glance at his troubled face. Every thought of Irene was swept from my mind by a wave of pity for Jon.

"Why hello, Sue," the voice was as weary as his white face looked. "I—didn't know you were there."

"I thought you might want me, Jonny," I struggled to keep my tone casual. "How is Madeline now?"

"Just the same." Jonny shook his head soberly. "Her reaction to the stimulant was good—but her heart—" he sighed, "I'm not sure yet, Sue."

"You don't mean," I fearfully formed the question, "that this—this shock may be fatal?"

"I mean," the tired gray eyes met mine steadily, "that I'm frightened, Sue. That's why I had Ted send for the other doctor."

"But Jonny—what could have happened to give her such a terrible shock?" My eyes searched Jonny's face—implored an answer. Some explanation which would end my creeping fear that some nameless, disembodied horror was stalking the old house. Madeline's last words, as she had mounted the stairs to go to her room, came back to me with awful clarity. "If anything happens to me—which no doubt some of you hope will be the case—you can be absolutely certain that the ghost did it." Had Madeline really feared a fulfillment of the shrouded death pictured for her—or were those final words simply a defiance of the ghosts in which she did not believe? Did she suspect some danger from one of us, perhaps—someone who had tried to frighten her by faking the dreadful prophecy? And, in either case, why had she insisted on going to her room alone? Was it again defiance of ghost and mortal alike—or was it some weird perversity by which she hoped to bring heaven knew what trouble upon us all?

Out of the confusion of these questions my mind groped for some clue of reason—some answer. But Jonny's reply gave me none.

"I—don't know, Sue," the words were spoken with a quiet finality. "I don't know—anything."

For a minute we stood together by the bed. Madeline

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lay exactly as before, her eyes closed, her breath coming lightly from between parted lips. She seemed as if asleep—as if a touch, a sound, would rouse her to consciousness once more. And yet she did not stir when Jonny lifted her wrist to take the pulse.

"Oh, if she would only wake up—" on a sudden impulse I spoke, "if she could only tell us—" I stopped abruptly before the look which Jonny turned on me.

It seemed as if my words had touched off some hidden spring of emotion in him—some raw nerve which lay just beneath the calm surface of his manner. For the look in his gray eyes that halted my speech was one of desperate, unmistakable fear. It flashed for only a second, then was lost.

"Yes," said Jonny in a perfectly natural tone, "if she could only tell us."

He turned back to Madeline, and I was left—not for the first time that night—in helpless doubt. Left to wonder what that look could have meant—to wonder if, indeed, I had really seen, or only imagined the momentary flash of fear.

Presently Jonny looked past me into the hall.

"Where are the others?" he asked.

I realized with a guilty pang that I had, for the second time, quite forgotten the mysterious disappearance of Irene. Hastily I began to explain to Jonny—but before I had spoken half a dozen words, a sudden burst of sound from the hall broke in upon us.

"What's that?" Jonny demanded sharply.

"It must be—" I was already at the door, "it must be Irene—they've found her—" the words were frozen on my lips as I looked down the long hall toward an open door at the far end. No person was in sight, but from the lighted room came the sound of excited voices. A woman's voice, high-pitched and shrill, rang through the corridor.

"My God—she's dead!"

Somehow, in the quivering silence which followed that cry, I forced myself on trembling knees down the length of hall which stretched between me and the lighted doorway. No one moved, no one spoke as I advanced into the room. It seemed to me that the shrill words, uttered a few moments earlier, had robbed me of all power to think. As if my head were an empty, echoing space, I could hear the cry over and over again. "My God—she's dead! My God—she's dead!"

Then slowly, as if from very far away, a small, irrelevant thought began to worm its way into the blankness of my mind. Before me in the room, three people were bending over a woman's body lying prone and lifeless on the floor. And the body was covered with a cotton nightgown. A cotton gown. It was the sight of that gown which finally roused me from the nightmarish certainty that Irene was dead. It couldn't be Irene who lay there in a cotton gown—Irene would be wearing silk, pink silk. Irene wasn't dead.

But someone was. My sudden relief was checked by the fact of the still figure in the cotton gown. I advanced a step and leaned down to peer at the head. Nothing could be seen save a swirl of tangled gray hair which covered the face and heavy shoulders. Who could it be? My eyes traveled upward to the others who, like myself, were gathered around the figure. Smith Plummer, Mrs. Lynn and Evelyn Tucker. It was the face of Evelyn Tucker that held me. She was crying—great silent tears which coursed over her smooth round cheeks and splashed upon her satin robe.

"Evelyn"—I laid my hand gently on her shoulder—"who is it?"

"It should be—me." With startling suddenness the words burst from the sobbing girl. "Oh—Minna darling—it should have been me."

"Steady, Evelyn—" from the doorway behind us came the quiet voice of Jonny Page.

"Oh—Jonny!" With a final sob, Evelyn turned and flung herself into his arms. "Jonny, they've killed Minna instead of me."

Over the blond head bent against his shoulder I saw Jonny's grave eyes rest upon the prostrate figure.

"It's Minna," he said slowly, "Evelyn's maid. Does anyone know what happened?"

"We found her—just like this, Dr. Page," it was Mrs. Lynn who answered, "when we came in here to look for Mrs. Elliot's sister Irene."

"Was the door locked?" Jonny's eyes did not lift from the figure at our feet.

"No," said Mrs. Lynn.

"Did the room have any light in it?"

"No. I stepped in to find the switch—and stumbled over her." For the first time Mrs. Lynn's voice faltered. "I—I'm afraid she's dead, Doctor."

For a moment Jonny did not speak, then at last he raised his eyes and nodded slowly.

"You afraid she is," he said gravely.

At that a fresh cry rose from Evelyn Tucker.

"And it was me they meant to kill, Jonny," she said wildly, "it was me they were after—"

"Stop it, Evelyn—" Jonny's voice cut sharply through her words. "She—she's hysterical, of course." His explanation, delivered to us over Evelyn's head, was curiously curt. "See here, Mrs. Lynn, will you take Evelyn into another room—and have her lie down a while? The shock—has been too much."

"Certainly, Dr. Page." Mrs. Lynn stepped forward at once, and between them she and Jonny led Evelyn from the room.

When Jonny came back he knelt beside the prone figure, and with a swift gesture swept the gray hair away from Minna's face. For one awful moment, before I looked away, I was aware of the staring eyes—the contorted face of death.

"You were right," Jonny straightened abruptly, "she's dead. Will you give me a hand?" He motioned to Smith Plummer. "We'll have to put her on the bed." Suddenly he seemed aware that I was still within the room. "Sue—go outside and wait in the hall—and close the door."

I obeyed at once—but if Jonny had hoped to spare me a further shock by ordering me from the room, his plan went sadly amiss. For it was as if I swung the door back from the wall to close it behind me that I found myself looking straight down into the white still face of my sister Irene where she lay, crumpled in an unconscious heap behind the bedroom door.

"Oh—Jonny—" I remember how far away my voice sounded as I stood pointing weakly down at the huddled figure.

Then I can recall nothing save that someone took hold of my shoulders, and guided my faltering steps to a chair where I sank down—eyes closed, and struggled with the whirling waves of black dizziness which seemed to rise up and drown me.

IX

"SUE—Irene is all right. She has only fainted. Sue—Irene is all right. She has only fainted."

Long before I had the strength to open my eyes, I could hear an earnest voice repeating those words with the monotony of a phonograph record caught in one groove. Gradually the words ceased to be only a meaningless sing-song, and I realized, for the second time that night, that Irene was not dead. I realized further that I was stretched out on a bed—that I too must have fainted. I opened my eyes, and found myself staring upward into the blinking, owl-like face of Smith Plummer. Somehow it struck me as an absurd anti-climax. I uttered a strangled sort of sound, intended to be a laugh.

The effect of my unexpected reaction upon Smith Plummer was plainly one of alarm. He started back, his pale eyes blinking even more rapidly, and then, as if remembering instructions, he took up the diligent refrain once more. "Sue—Irene is all right. She has only—"

With an effort I smothered the rising hysteria of that impulse to laugh, and managed a small gesture to indicate that I had understood.

"It—it's all right," I said weakly. "You needn't say that any more."

My effort at rationality seemed only to nonplus Smith Plummer further.

"Oh—" he said, and paused. After a moment he added, "Dr. Page told me to keep saying that until you woke up." Then he fell silent again. It was evident that Jonny's instructions had not proceeded beyond this point, and that Smith Plummer had not the vaguest idea what to do next.

For a long moment we faced each other in silence. Then, rather awkwardly, Smith Plummer leaned toward me.

"Are you—feeling better?" His tone was touchingly uncertain.

"Oh, yes," I struggled to make my words firm and reassuring—and then repented the effort. But after another interval of embarrassed silence I began to be certain of returning strength.

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"What's going on," I opened my eyes again and nodded toward the hall, "out there?"

"I don't know," Smith Plummer shook his head uneasily. "They—they've sent for the police, of course."

The police—of course, I lay back wearily and wondered what further horrors we would be put through that night. Madeline Page near death from some mysteriously frightful shock—the gray-haired Minna lying dead in a cotton nightgown—Irene huddled unconscious behind a bedroom door. And now—I drew one long quivering sigh—the police. I felt prophetically certain, at that moment, that their lumbering questions and suspicions would be quite helpless before the nameless horror which had invaded the old house—horror beginning with Madeline's hysterical words on the porch that afternoon: "danger and death". Horror that had stalked us relentlessly through the strange and terrible warning of Mrs. Lynn's spirit camera—and then had overtaken us while the household slept. *Danger and death.*

FROM the hall outside my room where I lay I could hear subdued voices, ceaseless footsteps passing back and forth—voices and footsteps which sounded an accompaniment of reality to my fantastic reflections. At length the necessity of joining the bustling activity in the hall was borne in upon me. I might be needed to help. Nor was sheer altruism responsible for the effort with which I struggled to sit up. I was no less impelled by curiosity. A score of questions circled in my mind. Had Irene recovered consciousness? Was Madeline now roused sufficiently to speak? How and why had Minna died? And what had Evelyn Tucker meant by her insistent words: "They meant to kill me."

Reluctant and fearful as I was to learn more of the sinister force which had intruded itself into our party—still it was the strange, fascinating power of those unanswered questions which brought me the strength to rise—to shake off Smith Plummer's timidly helpful arm. "I'm all right," I answered his murmured deprecation impatiently, and started for the door. Rather to my surprise, I found that I could walk steadily enough.

In the hall I came face to face with Patsy. A pale and shaken Patsy.

"Oh Sue," she paused for a moment beside me, "are you better now?" At a nod from me, she hurried on, "Then do go in and see if you can quiet Irene. She's saying the wildest things and—" Patsy's voice dropped sharply, "the police are coming here. She mustn't go on talking that way."

Even in the stress of the moment I can distinctly remember making a mental note to tell Irene later that Patsy, for once in her life, was completely shaken loose from her cunning accent—and that she quite forgot to hiss.

"Where is Irene?" I asked.

"Down there," Patsy indicated an open door, "in Smith Plummer's room."

"I'll go," I nodded. Then, as Patsy turned away, I held her for one question, "How is Madeline?"

"Just the same, I think," Patsy shook her head. "She hasn't spoken yet?"

"No."

Patsy hurried on her way, and I turned down the hall toward the room where Irene lay. If Madeline had not spoken, certainly Irene had. I could hear her voice, rapid and feverish, even before I entered the room, and the sight of her—sitting bolt upright on the rumpled bed, gesturing wildly—was a distinct shock. As I approached, she clutched my arm and fixed me with abnormally glittering eyes.

"Sue—you'll believe me—won't you? I tell you I didn't dream all this—it really happened—"

Above her head—a strangely disheveled head, almost unrecognizable as that of the sleek Irene—my eyes met Ted's. He shook his head slowly in answer to my look.

Irene was babbling on and on—her hoarse voice never pausing. "Listen, Sue—you must listen. You must believe me—"

"Of course I'll listen," I sat down at her side and stroked the feverish hand which still gripped my arm. "Now tell me exactly what happened."

Suddenly Irene was silent. She turned to Ted and stared resentfully for a moment, then back to me.

"Make him go, then," she said. "He won't listen."

At a signal from me, Ted turned with a weary shrug and left the room, closing the door behind him.

"Now then," I faced Irene again, "what is all this?" My matter-of-fact tone seemed to quiet her somewhat, and

she began to speak with more of her usual coherence. "Sue," she said, "there's something terrible going on in this house."

"That," I observed drily, "is fairly obvious, I should think. But begin at the beginning. Why did you leave our room after I was asleep? Did something waken you?"

She nodded—solemn and wide-eyed.

"What was it?"

"I—I don't know. All I remember is being suddenly awake—and I seemed to be listening for something. At first everything was quiet, but after a minute—or maybe longer—I began to hear the strangest sound."

I leaned forward quickly.

"Was it a sort of—thumping?" I asked.

"No," Irene shook her head positively, "it was more like something being dragged—something heavy. You know how the floor creaks—"

I nodded hastily.

"Well—it sounded just as if some heavy weight were being pulled along the floor. There would be a sort of muffled dragging, and the creak of the boards—then it would stop for a moment, and start again."

"Where did the sound seem to come from?"

"The hall," said Irene, "at first just outside our door, and then, as I listened, it grew fainter as if the—the thing were moving away. I got up and opened the door—"

"Without calling me?"

"I—I did speak to you, Sue, but you didn't answer. So I thought I wouldn't disturb you until I had seen what it was."

I T must have been obvious from my expression that I doubted that point. But I made no spoken protest. After all, Irene knew as well as I that I am not in the least a heavy sleeper. I simply waited in silence for her to go on—and after a moment she did, her feverishly bright eyes never leaving my face.

"Besides," she said, as if in answer to my unspoken doubt, "I didn't want to make any noise."

Still I said nothing. A little defensively, she hurried on.

"I opened the door—very quietly—and looked up and down the hall. At first there seemed to be nothing there—it was dark, of course—but after a minute I heard the sound again, and something caught my eye—something white that seemed to be moving along the floor." Irene's hand on my arm gripped me convulsively as she shuddered. "It—it was horrible, Sue."

"No doubt," I said, without noticeable sympathy. "But you still called no one?"

"No."

"And you didn't turn on the light switch just outside our door?"

"I tell you, Sue," Irene's tone was peevish, "I didn't want to make any disturbance. I was afraid it might start trouble."

"And obviously," I observed, "we've succeeded in avoiding all trouble in this house tonight. But go on—what did you do?"

"I waited—Irene seemed unaware of my sarcasm—"for maybe a minute while the white thing dragged itself along toward the end of the hall—"

"Which end?" I asked suddenly. "The one where Madeline's room is?"

"No," said Irene, "it was the other way—down beyond the stairs."

I made no further comment. The room at the opposite end of the hall from Madeline's was, of course, the one where Minna had been found dead—and Irene huddled unconscious behind the door.

"Then," Irene went on, "while I waited I saw the white thing disappear into the end room—and I followed—"

"Hold everything—" I broke in again. "How did this thing manage to open the door if it was creeping along on the floor?"

"I don't know, Sue. The door just seemed to open itself, and the white thing moved inside—"

"Look here, Irene," My patience was wearing thin. "Will you please stop calling it a white thing. After all, if you really saw it move—it must have been a person."

"But it wasn't, Sue. Honestly it wasn't." Irene shook her head stubbornly. "It was much too small to be a person."

"Well—what was it then?"

"I tell you—I don't know. It—it was just a thing."

For a moment I stared helplessly. I knew that Irene did not believe in ghosts any more than I did, and yet I realized the utter uselessness of trying to reason with her.

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"Very well." I bit my lip and was resigned. "You followed the thing into the end room—what then?"

"Then," said Irene, "I heard the most awful sounds—not loud but terrible, Sue—and right near me. Sort of choking and gasping noises—" Again I felt a shudder run through her body. "I couldn't see anything at all—it was even darker than the hall—but I could feel something right beside me making these frightful struggling sounds—"

"And was it the thing again?" I tried to keep my tone from sounding too openly sceptical.

"It must have been, Sue. After all—I followed it into the room."

"Yes," I said, "but there was someone else in the room too. Had you thought of that?"

"Wh—what do you mean?" For the first time Irene's fixed stare faltered slightly.

"Why, simply that someone was sleeping in the room. You must know that it was—" I checked myself, suddenly doubtful whether Irene did know what had happened to Minna in that end room. "Never mind that," I finished hastily. "Go on with your story."

"Well—" rather more shakily, Irene proceeded, "I was desperately frightened by that time. I—my one idea then was to run out of the room and call for help. But when I moved—I think in my haste I must have made some sound—something reached out of the dark and grabbed me. Grabbed me so tightly, Sue—Irene's grip on my arm illustrated her point—"that I couldn't move—and before I could make a sound something soft was pushed over my face, almost smothering me. I reached up to fight off the gag and I felt a hand—a man's hand, Sue—pushing the thing tighter and tighter against my face. Then I felt my breath going—and everything went black." With a long quivering breath, Irene stopped speaking.

"What happened then?" For the life of me I could not believe that her fantastic story was true, and yet she told it with a realistic terror that held me fascinated.

"That—" was all, her voice dropped to a dull whisper. "The next thing I knew I was here in this room—and neither Patsy nor Ted would believe me when I told them what happened. But you believe me, don't you, Sue? You must know I'm telling the truth—" Irene's eyes, wide and intense, searched my face appealingly.

I took a long breath. "No," I said steadily, "I don't. And furthermore—" I displayed the hot clutch of her hand, and rose—"I don't think anyone else will believe that your story is the truth—the whole truth."

"Why—Sue—" Irene shrank back against the pillows. "I'm sorry," I went on firmly, "but I might as well be honest in warning you. The police have been sent for, and you'll have to explain to them how you came to be unconscious in the room where Evelyn Tucker's maid was found dead. I needn't tell you that no policeman in his right mind is going to swallow a story as full of holes as the one you just told me. And so," I turned abruptly away from the sight of Irene's white face, "I'll leave you to think it over—and think fast."

I was half way to the door before Irene delivered her parting shot.

"All right, Sue Belmont—if you won't believe me, then ask Jonny if I'm not telling the truth."

The savage thrust of her sudden words stopped me short. "What do you mean by that?" I whirled about to see Irene crouching forward on the bed. Her eyes were narrowed into glittering slits.

"I mean," she said, "that it was Jonny Page who pounced on me in the darkness and half smothered me. Now will you listen—you and your precious police?"

"Irene!" I made for the bed and seized her hunched shoulders. "Irene—you're out of your mind. You can't possibly know who it was that attacked you in the dark—"

"Oh—can't I?" she flung the words at me defiantly. "Well—listen to this. When I reached up to fight off that smothering grip I felt a man's hand—and on the hand was a twisted metal ring. I hardly need to tell you—" Irene's voice rose hysterically, "that Jonny Page has worn that ring on the little finger of his left hand for the past ten years."

X

"WELL—" Out of the long silence Irene spoke at last. "Do you still advise me to tell the police the truth—the whole truth?"

"I—oh, I don't know," I wavered uncertainly. Irene's last charge had shaken me badly. How much of her story was true—how much fantastically invented or

imagined—I still could not guess, but I knew that if she accused Jonny outright of half strangling her in the dark bedroom, it would get the police to hounding him. And—desperately as I tried to fight off the thought—it was impossible not to see that certain other things pointed an ugly suspicion at Jonny Page. The spirit photograph of a hangman's gallows, and Jonny labeled MURDERER, the faint flicker of fear in his eyes when I suggested that Madeline might tell us what had happened to her—and now this wild accusation of Irene's, in a hasty and menacing sequence these things flashed through my mind.

I straightened abruptly. The old instinct to champion Jonny was challenged as never before.

"I'm going," I said with sudden resolution, "to talk to Jonny—now." At the door I paused with one more thought. "Irene, have you told anyone else about—the ring?"

She shook her head.

"Then don't," I said, "for another ten minutes," And without waiting for her reply, I closed the door.

Jonny was in Madeline's room when I entered. A glance at the bed told me that the patient was still in a coma.

"Jonny," I said, "I've got to talk to you a minute—very seriously."

"Yes!" His tone was grave and quiet as before.

"I want to warn you. I—must warn you before the police come." Briefly I told him what Irene had said of the attack in the dark—of the man's hand and the twisted metal ring. Jonny watched me impassively. When I stopped speaking he said nothing. "I—don't know what it means," I continued slowly, "any of it. But I wanted you to know—and be warned."

"Thanks, Sue." After a long interval Jonny nodded. "I—" he hesitated. "You trust me—don't you, Sue?"

"Of course."

"Then—go on trusting me," his voice was very low.

"That's all I can say." He turned away.

IF I had hoped for his confidence—for some explanation to prop up my wavering faith in him—I saw then that I was not to get it. Plainly he had no intention of saying more.

"But Jonny—" I made one final attempt to reason with him, trusting isn't enough. What will happen when the police begin asking questions? How will you answer Irene when she accuses you of smothering her into unconsciousness in the room where a woman died mysteriously—"

"It's even worse than that, Sue," over his shoulder Jonny spoke gravely. "The woman didn't only die mysteriously—she was murdered."

"Oh—Jonny!" I drew back. "How—who—?"

"I don't know who did it, Sue, nor why," the quiet voice cut short my fumbling questions. "But she was killed about an hour before we found her—stabbed just below the ear with a—" he hesitated briefly, "a long thin blade which penetrated the base of her brain."

"Stabbed—" My mind flew back to the image of Minna sprawled upon the bedroom floor, her gray hair covering the head and shoulders. "But—Jonny, there wasn't any blood."

"No," Jonny shook his head slowly, "there wasn't. Because—the weapon was not withdrawn, you see."

Sickeningly—I did see. I swallowed with an effort.

"Jonny," my tone was as level as I could make it, "what was the weapon?"

Out of a long silence the answer came dully. "A surgical knife," said Jonny.

"Was it—yours?"

"Yes," again the words were dull—utterly expressionless. "It must have been taken from my bag sometime before the murder."

"Jonny—" What reserve I had managed to maintain up to this point was shattered suddenly. "Jonny, don't you see how dreadful your position is—how awful these things look for you—" I paused abruptly as he turned to face me.

"Of course I see it, Sue," the words were sharp. "Do you think I'm an idiot—and a blind one at that? But after all," his voice dropped back into the old dull hopelessness, "what can I do?"

It was on the tip of my tongue to say, "You could tell the truth," but something in the weary set of Jonny's white face withheld me. And I had said, a moment before, that I trusted him. When I spoke, it was to return to the subject of Irene's charge.

"If she sticks to that story," I said, "about the ring—you'll have to answer it somehow."

Jonny thrust out his hands for me to see. "I'll answer it," he said, "by that."

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I stared. The fifth finger of his left hand, where for almost as long as I could remember he had worn the ring made of three twisted strands of gold, was bare. Blankly, I lifted my eyes to his face.

"It's gone," he said.

"Do you mean?" I was frankly incredulous, "that someone took your ring?"

"It's gone," he repeated stubbornly. "That's all I know."

"But Jonny—you never take it off, do you? Even at night?"

Before he could answer, there was a knock at the door.

"Excuse me—" Ted entered quickly. "Dr. Jenks is here."

JONNY'S hands, still outstretched before me, dropped to his sides. He squared his shoulders and advanced to meet the small, fussy-looking man who followed Ted—and I marveled to see how effectively he was transformed from the weary hopeless Jonny who had faced me a moment before into the competent and assured Dr. Jonathan Page.

"Dr. Jenks," said Ted, "this is Dr. Page."

"How do you do, Doctor?" The small man raised his beetling eyebrows and peered at Jonny. "Seem to be having trouble here?"

"I'm afraid so," Jonny nodded gravely.

"Indeed?" The eyebrows bristled in a frown. "Well, now, let's see." With bustling efficiency the little man approached Madeline's bed, bent to take her pulse, and said: "Hmph." He lifted one closed eyelid and peered, said "Hmph," again—and straightened abruptly. "Come," he announced.

"Yes," said Jonny, "I—"

"Suppose you tell me, Doctor," the older physician cut in, "just what you've done."

"Dr. Jenks," Ted spoke suddenly. "I'm not sure you understood me. This is Dr. Jonathan Page."

Under any other circumstances the effect of Ted's announcement would have been even more comical. The little man's officiousness popped like a balloon. The bushy eyebrows flew upward once more and remained poised like two large question marks.

"Dr. Page—the surgeon?"

"Yes," said Ted.

"Well now, sir—" the stubby paw of Dr. Jenks was thrust out to shake hands all over again—as if he meant it this time. "This is a pleasure, Doctor, a great pleasure. I may say an honor, sir."

"Thank you, Doctor," Jonny smiled faintly. "Now about my sister—"

"Your sister?"

"The patient," Jonny nodded.

"Ah—yes indeed. Most unfortunate—" Dr. Jenks shook his head sadly. "Now—what is your opinion, Doctor?"

"She suffered an attack," Jonny said. "As nearly as I can make out, it must have been a shock of some sort—a bad one. We have no way of knowing what it was—or how long she lay here before she could rouse anyone. But shortly after three o'clock this morning, Miss Belmont heard my sister signaling for help." Rapidly Jonny proceeded with the account of my alarm, of our finding Madeline, of the locked door. "She was extremely low, Doctor, when I got to her. The pulse was faint and irregular, blood-pressure less than seventy. In fact, it would barely register. I saw that the only hope of reviving her was a powerful stimulant."

"Of course," Dr. Jenks nodded sagely.

"So I gave a hypodermic of strychnine—even though, with her heart condition, it was something of a risk."

"Heart condition?"

"Dilation," Jonny nodded. "Chronic mitral regurgitation. Naturally, I was aware of the weakness—but under the circumstances," he shook his head, "there was nothing to do but risk strychnine. She reacted, as you see, quite satisfactorily so far as the stimulant is concerned. But her heart—"

"Jonny sighed, "is making hard work of it. Whether it will stand the double load of the preliminary shock—plus the injection?—Well, that's why I wanted your opinion—and advice."

"Hm—quite so, Doctor," the older physician looked heavily reflective. "You were right of course, in risking the stimulant, but with a heart like that—" he shrugged. "I don't know." For a moment the two men stared down in silence at the still figure.

Behind the medical backs Ted and I exchanged a look. We dared not speak, but it was evident that both of us were struck by the same thought. Certainly we had not known that Madeline suffered from any sort of heart

trouble. Perhaps—a possible answer to a long unsolved riddle flashed through my mind—perhaps that was why Jonny had always been so devoted to Madeline—had for years never been separated from her. But I had no chance to pursue the reflection further.

Dr. Jenks was speaking. "How long has the patient been like this?"

"Going on two hours." Jonny glanced at the clock.

"And there's been no change?"

Jonny sighed. "No change. The stimulant has just kept her alive—but the heart hasn't rallied—yet."

"Hm—" the older man shook his head, considering.

"We might try further stimulants, of course," Jonny's tone was doubtful, "but I'd like you to listen first, if you will, Doctor."

"Ah—certainly, certainly." From his coat pocket Dr. Jenks produced a weatherbeaten stethoscope. "Now then—" he bent over Madeline, "let's just see—"

Ted nudged me presently. "I don't think we need to stay," he whispered.

Nor did I. Neither doctor appeared to notice our quiet exit from the room.

In the hall Ted turned to me.

"Good God, Sue," his face was very sober, "does all that mean that Madeline is going to die?"

"I—don't know, Ted," I answered slowly. "Poor Jonny."

"For a moment Ted stared curiously at me. Then he shook his head.

"Yes," he said, "it looks—pretty bad for Jon."

"I didn't mean that—" in spite of myself I answered sharply. "I meant—in case Madeline should die—"

Once more Ted watched me with an odd expression.

"Of course," his tone was mild, "that's what I meant too. What else, after all, could I have meant?"

"Nothing." I turned away abruptly to see Patsy hurrying up the stairs, her small face puckered with distress.

"Oh Ted, there you are." She clutched her husband's arm. "The police are here—downstairs, and they want to search everything and question us all. They say—" her eyes were wide, "they say it must have been an inside job—but, Ted, it couldn't have been one of us—could it?" Desperately she searched his grave face for some reassurance—and found none.

"Oh Ted—" her voice broke in a sob, "it's all so—so horrible."

"Take it easy, Pat," he stroked her shoulder gently. "We've just got to face it. I guess. One murder, and now—" he checked himself suddenly, but I saw his nervous glance at the door of Madeline's room. "Well, there's no use borrowing trouble—God knows we've got enough. I'll take the cops in hand, Patsy, while you and Sue round up the others and tell them all to come downstairs."

With a final pathetic sniff Patsy nodded obediently.

"Come on, Sue," she said.

And I observed that she had recovered sufficiently to remember her lisp again.

XI

IT was after five o'clock when we began to straggle into the living-room where the police were waiting with their questions. The early summer sunlight, pale and slanting, made our sleepless faces look more haggard as, in various degrees of hasty dress, we gathered in a subdued and shivering circle. A wood fire and some hot coffee, provided by Patsy's bewildered maid, improved our morale somewhat—but still no one had the heart to speak in more than gloomy monosyllables.

"Well—" The tall, scrawny and ancient constable, who, with two uncommunicative State troopers, constituted the delegation of local police, surveyed us sternly and cleared his throat. "Is everybody here, Mr. Elliot?"

"Yes, Chief," said Ted. "That is, all except Dr. Page. He's upstairs with Dr. Jenks taking care of Miss Page who is—very ill. They can't be disturbed, of course. The rest of us—are ready."

"But we aren't all here, Ted," from a corner of the sofa, Evelyn Tucker spoke unexpectedly. "There's Ike—"

Ike, Evelyn's bodyguard, of course.

"Where is Ike?"

"Here," said a curiously deep voice from the dining-room door behind us.

We all turned to see a smallish man, of indeterminate age, dressed in dark trousers and a collarless shirt. He stood quite still, apparently absorbed in a minute examination of his fingernails.

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"That's Ike," said Evelyn Tucker, somewhat relieved. Ted launched into an explanation of Ike's identity for the Chief's enlightenment. At the word "bodyguard" the constable frowned ominously.

"Bodyguard eh? So you were expectin' trouble?" "You see, Chief, Miss Tucker is—due to her—her position, always protected very carefully—" With considerable difficulty Ted managed to explain the necessity of guarding the heiress to the Tucker billions, while the Chief, still frowning heavily, alternated his suspicious glances between Evelyn and Ike. It was evident that he was going to make the most of this first clue.

FOR my own part, I concentrated on Ike. It had suddenly dawned upon me that this was the man whom I had encountered in the kitchen, when, during the night, Jonny had sent me to prepare the hypodermic needle. Now that I had time to reflect, it struck me as very odd—that curious incident of the man in striped pajamas who had appeared in the kitchen doorway to watch me in silence, and then, when I had left him to complete my hurried errand, had vanished—at least from my mind—until this moment. Why had he been prowling about the house? How could he have preceded very much without being observed by all of us who had been, more or less constantly since three o'clock that morning, patrolling the upstairs hall? The longer I stared at Ike, still preoccupied with his fingernails, the odder the whole thing seemed. Especially considering that it was Minna who—My train of thought was interrupted by a sharp question from the Chief.

"Where," he demanded of Ike, "were you when all this trouble was goin' on?"

Ike did not look up from his fingernails.

"In my room," he said.

"Yeah? And which is your room?"

"The one next to Miss Tucker's."

"Ike means," said Evelyn, "that he was next to the room that was supposed to be mine. As a matter of fact, I traded rooms with poor Minna—"

"Oh, you did, eh?" The Chief's baleful stare shifted to Evelyn. "And why was that?"

"It—it was because—" Evelyn bit her lip as if to steady her voice, and then went on bravely. "It was because Minna thought I would be—safer—in her room."

"Safer?" With obvious relish the constable seized upon this second indication that the life of Evelyn Tucker had been in danger. "Safer from what?"

"I—I don't know exactly," the girl spoke slowly. "But when I went upstairs to bed, Minna was waiting in my room. She wouldn't explain anything, but she told me that it would be better if no one knew where I was sleeping—and so after everyone else had gone to bed, she put me in her room—and she went back to mine."

"So—" the Chief looked greatly enlightened, "the room where this Minna dame—excuse me—where this lady was killed was the one you were supposed to be sleepin' in? It that right?"

"Yes—Evelyn nodded miserably, "that's right. It's what I—tried to say earlier—when they found Minna—but Jonny wouldn't let me. Don't you see? It was me that they were trying to kill—and—p-poor Minna died because she knew—" the girl's voice broke in a choking sob.

"Sure—" said the Chief, "sure I see it." He paused for a moment to gnaw his mustache thoughtfully. Then, with abrupt suspicion, he advanced on Ike. "Looka here," he said, "you're supposed to be this little lady's bodyguard, eh?"

"Yep," said Ike.

"And you was sleepin' in the room next to where this Minna was killed?"

"Yep."

"Well—" said the Chief, "you're a hot bodyguard. For all you knew, Miss Tucker was bumped off in the night—and you say you stayed right on in your room."

Still not looking up, Ike shifted his weight from one large foot to the other.

"I'm Miss Tucker's bodyguard," he spoke with complete indifference, "not Minna's."

"Say—what'dya mean?" The Chief's glare took on a baffled look.

"Maybe," Ike's drawl remained unmoved, "I'm a hotter bodyguard than you think."

"Looka here, you," the constable's chin shot out beligerently, "quit stallin' and say what you mean. Did you know which one of the ladies was sleepin' in the room next to yours, or didn't you?"

"Yep," said Ike with unaccustomed brevity.

The direct answer did not appear to improve the Chief's temper in the slightest.

"Well—how did you know?" he demanded. "Did this Minna dame tell you? Or Miss Tucker here?"

"Nope," said Ike.

"Then how in thunder—" the Chief's voice rose to a bellow, "did you know?"

"The dog," said Ike.

"He means—" from between her subsiding sobs, Evelyn gulped an explanation. "He means Isaac Newton. Don't you, Ike?"

"Yep."

"Say—" the Chief swung his lowering glance from Ike to Evelyn and back again, "will you two start talkin' English? Who is this Newton bird?"

"Isaac Newton isn't a bird," Evelyn sniffed. "He's my dog, and Ike means that he always sleeps outside my door. Isaac, I mean."

"Is that right?" the Chief demanded of Ike.

"Yep," said Ike, with perfect unconcern.

"You claim to of seen this dog outside Miss Tucker's door—and that's how you knew which room she was really sleepin' in?"

"Yep."

"Is this here Newton dog supposed to be a watch-dog?" "He's not supposed to be," Evelyn put in indignantly, "he is."

"Yeah?" said the Chief. "Well, what was he doin' when Minna got killed, then? And what were you doin'?" He glared at Ike with renewed emphasis. "Here's this Minna with a bodyguard sleepin' in the room on one side of her—and a watch-dog sleepin' in front of the door on the other side—and she gets killed without so much as a peep out of either one of 'em! What kind of guardin' and watchin' do you call that?" The Chief thrust his final question at Ike.

FOR a long moment it seemed doubtful that Ike was going to answer at all. Then, shifting his weight carefully back to the other foot, the odd young man raised his eyes for the first time, and gazed at the hard-breathing Chief with an air of magnificent detachment.

"My job," he said, "is to look after Miss Tucker. And the dog's job is the same. As long as nothing happens to her—we're supposed to mind our own business. And we do."

"Well, for Gosh sakes!" The Chief's eyes bulged. "Do you mean to stand there and tell me you heard a woman get murdered—and you didn't do anything about it because it wasn't your business?"

"I didn't say," said Ike, "that I heard anybody getting murdered."

"But in the room right next to you—" the Chief's rage was degenerating into a helpless splutter. "You *must* have heard something."

There was another pause while Ike studied the angry face before him as if he were looking at a stuffed bird in a museum.

"I don't hear anything," he said at last, "that isn't my business."

"Well," said the Chief, "I'll be—he checked himself abruptly, evidently deciding to abandon the futile topic of what Ike might have heard, lest he succumb to actual apoplexy. With a final glare for Ike, he turned to Evelyn again. "You were in the room on the other side of Minna," he managed a tone of relative calm. "What did you hear?"

"I—nothing—" Evelyn shook her head emphatically. "Oh—I would have done *anything* to save poor Minna if I could have—but honestly, I never heard a sound until Sue's screaming woke us all up."

"Sue?" said the Chief. "Who's Sue?"

I spoke up, and it was my turn to be glared at.

"And what were you screaming for?" the Chief demanded.

"I was awakened," I said, "by strange sounds from the room next to mine—and I was alarmed—"

"Well," said the Chief, "thank God somebody in this house heard something! Now then, where were these noises comin' from? Minna's room?"

"Oh no—" I shook my head. "I was sleeping at the opposite end of the hall." Rather wearily I launched into the story of my awakening, of the sounds from Madeline's room, of my calls for help which roused the sleeping household. I had not the slightest faith that my evidence, nor the testimony of the others which followed mine, would provide the baffled Chief with any real clue to what had

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happened in the house that night. But there was, after all, nothing to do but to answer his questions, and I had to admit that his investigation, while hardly brilliant, was at least persistent. By the time he had finished with us, he had extracted a pretty thorough account of the night's events, as set down earlier in this chronicle.

But of new evidence there was none. Mrs. Lynn, when questioned about the possible meaning of the spirit photographs which had foreshadowed at least a part of the night's dreadful events, simply shook her head and insisted that the pictures were quite beyond either her control or explanation. And Irene, in giving her account of how she came to be unconscious in the murdered woman's room, stuck stubbornly to the incredible story which she had earlier given me. As for the others, Patsy and Ted, Smith Plummer, and Jake Lecky, they all disclaimed any knowledge whatever of what had taken place—simply stating that they had been in their rooms and peacefully asleep until the moment when my screams for Jonny had awakened them. (The only variation in this account being Jake's statement that he had not awakened at all until Ted had roused him for the business of police questioning.)

It was plain that the Chief was by no means inclined to believe all that we told him. But it was equally plain that he had not formed any constructive hypothesis of the crime from either the truth or the falsehood of our various testimonies. When he had completed the group questioning, the Chief stood for a long moment, gnawing furiously at his ragged mustache. Then, with a last look of dark suspicion at the completely indifferent Ike, he delivered himself of his single conclusive statement.

"Well—" he said, "one thing's sure. It wasn't ghosts that done murder. And if it wasn't ghosts, it must'a been a person—and a person leaves tracks." He turned on his heel and started for the door. "You folks stay here," he said, "while I go have a look for the tracks. There's no use tryin' to settle anythin' with talk anyhow. Especially—" with a final glare which included us all, "when folks talk too much. Maybe this Dr. Page and his sister will say somethin' sensible—but if they do they'll be the first—" the grumbling speech got no further.

"Just a moment, please—" from the hall beyond came a new voice.

Another member and the Chief stood face to face with Jonny Page. A very quiet and controlled Jonny—but so pale and haggard that I barely restrained myself from a cry of sympathy.

"Are you—the officer in charge here?" in a voice as expressionless as his set face, Jonny addressed the Chief. "Yes."

"I'm Jonathan Page. If you want to question me—I'm quite ready. But for my sister—you are too late." Still the words were tonelessly mechanical. "My sister is dead," said Jonny.

XII

"DEAD—?" echoed the Chief.

Jonny nodded dully. "Dr. Jenks is—with her upstairs. He will explain anything you need to know."

Within the living-room we faced each other in stunned silence. Only Ted and I, who had heard the two doctors' discussion of Madeline's condition, were in any way prepared for this latest blow. But even to us it came as a terrific shock. Madeline Page dead—and nothing to account for it save Jonny's explanation that she must have suffered from some dreadful and mysterious experience which had literally frightened her to death.

"Oh, but Ted," Patsy whispered brokenly, "I can't believe it. What—what could have—killed her?"

Ted only shook his head—echoing the blank wonder which confronted us all.

At the door, the Chief was asking the same question. "But what could'a killed her, Doctor? Was it another murder?"

"We don't know what it was," Jonny's wearily mechanical voice answered, "except that she must have had some terrific shock. I—suppose it might be murder—if we find out that the shock was delivered intentionally. If indeed—I saw Jonny's hand pass across his eyes—" we ever find out now what—really happened to Madeline."

"Hmph," a snort from the Chief. "I guess we can figure that out all right—providin' it really was some scare that put an end to her—which I'm not sayin' I do believe."

"It—wasn't only the scare, Chief," Jonny explained slowly. "My sister had a bad heart—too bad to stand any

severe shock. Dr. Jenks, as I said before, will give you the details."

"Oh—ho," said the Chief. He seemed to be having one of his moments of enlightenment. "So Miss Page had a weak heart, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well—" Re-entering the living-room, the Chief planted himself in the center of our circle and surveyed us with new interest. "Well—" he said again, "so the lady had a weak heart." He was obviously trying to work up an air of suspense. I thought, not for the first time, that the Chief must have acquired his doubtful technique as an investigator from observing the methods of movie police. This meaningful pause, while he inspected each of our faces in turn, was evidently his notion of a third degree. "I suppose," he said at last, "that you folks knew about the heart—seein' as you're all friends of Miss Page—some of you, anyway—"

There was another pause—no one of us made any answer to the general question.

"How about—" suddenly the Chief's finger was pointed directly at my nose. "How about you, for instance?"

In spite of myself, I jumped.

"I didn't know anything about it," I said with perfect truth, "until Dr. Page mentioned about an hour ago that his sister had a chronic heart condition."

"Well—" said the Chief. "So you didn't, eh? And how long is it you've known Miss Page?"

"Since we were children," I admitted, "but nothing was ever said—"

"Yeah?" the Chief's drawled question cut me short. "And what about you—young fella?" The finger shifted suddenly to Smith Plummer.

"I—I never saw Miss Page," the owl-like eyes blinked indignantly, "until yesterday afternoon."

"And you?" The finger focused next on Evelyn Tucker. "I never did, either," she said.

THE prompt denial was obviously a surprise to the Chief—and, I think, to a good many of us also. Certainly I had not realized that Madeline and Evelyn were meeting for the first time the evening before.

"Say—" said the Chief, "I thought you said you were engaged to Dr. Page here?"

"I—I nodded—" but I just hadn't happened to meet his sister until I came to this house last night—and if I'd known—" she stopped abruptly and bit her lip.

"Yeah?" said the Chief. "If you'd known what?"

"I—nothing," Evelyn subsided with a little pout.

"Say—" Very much to my surprise, the Chief turned on Jonny who still stood in the doorway. "Why don't you butt out and let folks finish what they're sayin'?"

"I—don't know what you mean," said Jonny quietly. But it was plain from the look on Evelyn's face that the Chief had hit it correctly. Jonny had in some way signaled her to stop speaking in the midst of her impulsive sentence, "if I had known—"; and the Chief, with a hitherto unsuspected subtlety, had detected the signal even though it was delivered behind his back.

The first hint that the perceptions of the local constable were perhaps somewhat sharper than his face and manner would indicate was surprising and at the same time disturbing to me. If he should actually prove to be a sleuth of any ability whatever, then it was inevitable that he would discover, sooner or later, the several arrows of suspicion which pointed straight at Jonny Page. And my earlier conversation with Jonny had not left me with the slightest assurance that he could or would offer any adequate defense or explanation for those curiously incriminating circumstances. But I was relieved to see that, for the moment at least, the Chief did not intend to linger on the matter of Jonny's interruption of Evelyn's testimony.

Doggedly he returned to the question of who had known the condition of Madeline's heart. Mrs. Lynn, of course, disclaimed all knowledge of it, and Patsy was in the midst of an appealingly lapsing denial when Ted broke in impatiently.

"Look here, Chief," he said, "there's no use going on with this individual questioning. You're simply wasting time. I can tell you positively that none of us had any notion that there was anything the matter with Miss Page's heart. It's true that some of us had known her for years—but no one except her brother was aware—" he stopped suddenly—obviously realizing the implication of his words. "I mean," the sentence ended lamely, "that questioning on the point won't get us anywhere."

It was evident at once, from the glance which he turned

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on Jonny, that the Chief had not been deceived by Ted's attempt to cover the unfortunate remark.

"Well, now, Mr. Elliot," his drawl was mild, "I don't know as I'd say it didn't get us anywhere to know that Dr. Page here was the only one that knew about the lady's heart."

"But look here, I didn't mean—" Ted protested quickly. "Naturally Madeline's own brother, and a doctor besides, would know."

"Sure—" the Chief cut him short with an amiable wave of the hand. "Sure it's natural, Mr. Elliot. I was just gettin' things straight, that's all." He paused to regard Jonny with a thoughtful air.

I FOLLOWED his glance, and observed with some relief that Jonny met the look squarely. He seemed, indeed, completely undisturbed by the Chief's reaction to Ted's blundering statement.

"I think," out of the long silence Jonny spoke levelly, "that Dr. Jenks is waiting to talk to you, Chief. He will explain more fully about my—my sister's condition."

"Yeah—" the Chief did not alter the expression of deep contemplation with which he studied Jonny's face. "You mentioned that already a couple of times."

"Naturally," said Jonny a little stiffly, "I'm anxious to get this business over as soon as possible. You seem to forget that it's my sister, after all, who—" His voice faltered and stopped. "It hasn't been," he added slowly, "exactly—easy for me."

"No," said the Chief, "I reckon it hasn't. And I'm not forgettin' it was your sister." He gave the mustache a final vigorous chew and swung away abruptly. "Come along, Doctor," he directed, "if you want to get it over with."

As the two men stepped out into the hall, Irene rose suddenly and followed them.

"Oh Chief—" She caught him at the door. "I wanted to ask you if the rest of us might go to our rooms for awhile. You see, we've had practically no sleep all night—and it's been a terrific strain. I think we'd all be more helpful later on if we could rest a bit—until you need us—" she paused, head on one side, and gave him a fetching smile. "You sure can, little lady," the answer was unexpectedly gracious.

"Oh thank you so much." Irene started past him toward the hall—and was detained by a grip on her arm.

"When," the Chief added firmly, "from his plumed archin' the rooms. For now, little lady, you'll wait right here—with the rest of 'em."

"Oh—" Irene drew back in quick indignation. "But that's perfectly ridiculous. You can't go around searching rooms in a civilized house—"

"No," said the Chief, "and I don't, either. But people don't get murdered in a civilized house. You can just think that over while you're waitin'."

When the Chief had gone Irene returned to her place on the sofa, still spluttering angrily.

"The old fool," she said, "rummaging around and thinking he's a great detective. I don't believe he has any right to search our rooms without a—warrant or something—"

"Calmly, old girl, calmly." From his plumed beside her, Jake Lecky reached over to pat Irene's head. "Remember murder's been done and we're all in one hell of a jam. Besides," he yawned enormously, "I don't think the old sleuth's so awful. He may even find out something—if he doesn't bite off his mustache first. Why should you worry about a little harmless prowling? If you're innocent, my sweet, you have nothing to fear—and if you're guilty—" he paused for another jaw-breaking yawn, "you'll simply learn that crime doesn't pay—"

"Be quiet, Jake," Irene shook off his hand impatiently. "Can't you see that this is no time for your stupid nonsense?"

I looked at her in no little surprise. It was not like Irene to speak sharply—least of all to Jake. But it wasn't strange, after all, that her nerves should be pretty ragged after what she had gone through that night. I wondered, indeed, that any of us could sit there so outwardly calm in the face of the ugly situation that confronted us. Murder—perhaps two murders—already done—and the murderer somewhere among us. I glanced about the circle of serious, tired faces, and tried—for the hundredth time—to realize the actual truth of that thought. *A murderer among us.*

"I tell you," Irene went on presently, "there's no knowing what that old idiot of a sheriff, or whatever he is, might find up there—that would get us into all sorts of trouble."

Honestly, Ted, I think you ought to send for a real detective—or the city police—"

"Oh for heaven's sake, shut up, Irene!" It was my turn to be irritable. "We're all in this mess together—and we won't get anywhere by griping over the deficiencies of the local police."

"But Sue, you don't realize," Irene persisted stubbornly, "what that man might take into his head if he finds some silly business he thinks is a clue. After all, we may as well face the fact that our party wasn't exactly one big happy family when we gathered here last night. And if the old snooper finds out that a couple of us were more or less at swords' points—especially after Ev—" she checked her words at a warning kick from me. "Well, anyway," she finished, "there were some pretty pointed differences of opinion represented in this house last night—and I think you all know what I mean."

Before anyone of us could think up a suitably soothing remark, Evelyn Tucker answered for herself.

"Yes, we do know what you mean, Irene." Her small chin was lifted defiantly. "You mean me." As someone started to protest, she hurried on. "You all mean me—you think I started the whole trouble by coming here—just because Madeline didn't want Jonny to marry me. But she isn't the only one who hated me—you all hate me, and you think it is—it is marrying me my fault—but I couldn't money. Well—I don't care what you think. Do you hear me? I don't care—" The look which she flashed at us was still defiant but her lips were trembling dangerously. "And you wouldn't dare talk that way, Irene Belmont, if Jonny were here—" with the final thrust at Irene, Evelyn's outburst ended. Another moment and her small blond head was buried in her arms.

"Evelyn—" I leaned over to put my arms around the girl's heaving shoulders. "Evelyn—you mustn't take it that way. Irene didn't mean that you were to blame."

"Oh, yes, she did," between her sobs the words came brokenly. "She meant that if it weren't for me—none of these awful things would have happened. And—the worst of it is—it's true. It was my fault—but I couldn't help it—I couldn't help it—" Over and over she said it. "It was my fault—it was—"

Nothing we could say or do would stop the hysterical words.

And, to be quite truthful, our efforts to comfort the girl were pretty half-hearted. Sorry as we all felt, I think, for her misery at that moment, we could not work up much conviction in denying that she had been the cause of our troubles. For in our hearts we all believed that whatever had actually happened in the house that night had sprung somehow from the hatred and jealousy of Madeline Page for her brother's fiancée.

Even as I continued to stroke Evelyn's blond curls, I was remembering Madeline's face when she heard that the girl was coming to the house. And between my murmured words of comfort, I could hear the echo of Madeline's voice when she had said: "Don't you know that Evelyn Tucker will bring danger and death to us all?"

XIII

BY the time Evelyn's fit of hysterical weeping had worn itself out, I had made up my mind to one thing. I was going to manage somehow to have a talk with her—alone. Whether there was any basis of truth in the girl's wild insistence that she was to blame for the night's double tragedy, I did not know—but I was convinced that she knew more than she had yet told us, and it seemed to me that my one remaining hope of helping Jonny lay in winning Evelyn's confidence. And when finally her sobs had subsided into a whimpering echo of her former violence, I leaned down and took her hand in mine.

"Evelyn," I said, "don't you want to come out to the kitchen and bathe your face?"

She raised her tear-stained eyes to blink at me. "I—" she gulped a little, "I'm all right now."

"Yes, dear, but you don't want Jonny to see that you've been crying—and a little cold water will help." I pressed her hand a bit more firmly.

"Oh no," she shook her head at that, "Jonny mustn't know—"

"Then come along," I said, "quickly, before he gets back."

"Yes, Sue." With unexpected meekness, Evelyn rose and trotted after me.

"We won't be long," I called to the others, "if anyone

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should want us." No one answered me. They were, I imagine, glad enough to have me take Evelyn in charge—and get her out of hearing so that they could discuss her recent outburst. Only Ike, still standing in pensive silence near the dining-room door, paid any direct attention to our departure. I saw him glance at Evelyn as we passed him, and then at me with slightly lifted eyebrows. It was the nearest thing to a change of expression that I had yet observed upon his impassive features. He did not, however, make any move to follow us, and when I looked back from the kitchen door, I saw that he had resumed his apparently endless and engrossing study of his fingernails. I made a mental note that, for one thing, I would take this chance to ask Evelyn something about her completely enigmatic bodyguard.

When she had doused her face with cold water, and smoothed her curls, Evelyn looked a great deal better. "There now," I dabbed her round, childish features carefully with a kitchen towel. "Isn't that better?" "Much," she nodded bravely.

I WAS surprised, and not altogether pleased to see how very young Evelyn Tucker seemed when she dropped the manner of forced enthusiasm and gushing which she had exhibited the night before. Quite as I had guessed then, her silly chatterbox conversation had been part of a deliberate pose, intended to cover up the mousy simplicity of her naturally naive personality. Which was all very well—and no doubt Jonny loved her (if he did at all) for this timid child-like little self that I saw now—but the idea of talking seriously with her seemed quite preposterous. It would be, I thought, utterly impossible to convey to this child my involved state of mind toward the problem of Jonny Page—my essential faith in him which struggled with a growing conviction that he was entangled in the circumstances of Minna's murder and Madeline's death in some way which he could not or would not explain. I was, indeed, on the very point of abandoning my plan to confide in Evelyn, when a question from the girl surprised me.

"Sue—" she was watching me with shy intensity, "you—wanted to talk to me—didn't you?"

I hesitated only a moment before answering. After all, I might as well learn what I could from the girl without disguising my own complicated suspicions.

"Yes," I said, "as a matter of fact I did." I paused then, not quite certain where to begin, and another question from her startled me by its unexpected directness.

"Was it," she asked, "about Jonny?"

I nodded. "You're worried about him, aren't you, Sue?"

"Maybe," I admitted cautiously, "a little."

"Well," said Evelyn, "I'm not. He didn't have anything to do with what happened, you know."

"Oh, I'm sure he didn't," I agreed hastily. Evelyn looked straight at me.

"I don't think," she said steadily, "that you are—quite sure. Not, anyway, as sure as I am. You see, Sue, I know."

In spite of my resolve to be cagey, I grasped eagerly at the certainty of her words.

"What do you mean by that?" I demanded. "How can you know—for sure?"

"Because," said Evelyn with simple conviction, "Ike told me."

"Ike told you what?"

"That Jonny was in his room right up to the time you began to call for help. So, you see, he couldn't have done anything to—poor Minna—or to Madeline, either."

"But, Evelyn," I said, "as I wanted to believe the truth of what she said, I could not accept her implicit faith in the omniscience of the cryptic Ike. 'How could Ike be so sure of that, when he was in his own room?'"

"He knows everything, Sue," the girl insisted, "absolutely everything. He always does. And he told me—"

"Look here, Evelyn," I broke in impatiently, "you must see that you're talking nonsense. Unless your Ike was actually on guard in the hall all night, then he can't possibly know whether Jonny left his room or not. And if he was on guard—and really does know everything—then he must know who did go into Minna's room and kill her."

"I think," she nodded with placid conviction, "he does."

"You think he knows who the murderer is?"

"Probably," said Evelyn calmly.

"Well—for heaven's sake, why doesn't he say so then?"

I checked myself short, the sudden realization of the absurdity of my question. "Of course he doesn't know," I said shortly, "any more than the rest of us do."

Evelyn did not appear to be disturbed by my scepticism. "You just don't know Ike," she said. "He never says anything about anything—but he always knows—"

"Yes, yes," I put in bitterly, "he always knows everything."

"Well," said Evelyn, "he does."

I closed my lips firmly. For the life of me I could not decide whether the girl was actually as simple as her words would indicate, or whether she was playing some sort of a deliberate game with me. But at any rate I was determined to end this idiotic conversation about the accomplishments of Ike.

"Look here, Evelyn," I tried a fresh tack, "a few minutes ago you started to tell the Chief that you would never have come to this house last night if you had known that Madeline was to be here. Isn't that what you were going to say when Jonny signaled you to stop?"

She nodded. "And yet, I went on, 'you told him that you had never seen Madeline until you got here. Was that true?'"

Another nod.

"Then why would you deliberately avoid meeting your future sister-in-law?" When the girl did not answer at once I tried a somewhat bolder question. "Was it," I asked, "because Jonny had told you that Madeline might not be very friendly?"

"Oh no," she reacted to that quickly enough. "Jonny didn't know anything about it."

"About what, Evelyn?"

"About—" the girl looked uncomfortable, "Madeline not—wanting Jonny to be engaged to me."

"But, my dear, if you had never seen Madeline, how could you have known?"

"Well, you see," again she spoke with obvious reluctance, "I'd been getting letters—sort of threatening me about marrying Jonny—"

"Evelyn—" I started. "Are you saying that Madeline Page dared to threaten you?"

"Oh yes," she nodded solemnly, "and she wrote to Father too—warning him that unless I broke my engagement to Jonny that I'd be kidnapped, or maybe—she hesitated, "maybe worse."

IN a flash I remembered Madeline's words the afternoon before. "Don't you know," she had said, "that Evelyn is under constant threat of kidnapping?" Still I stared blankly at the girl. The whole thing was too preposterous. For all Madeline's strange and violent dislikes, I could not believe that she would actually dare to threaten Evelyn Tucker. Suddenly another possibility struck me. "How could you be sure," I demanded, "that it was Madeline who sent these letters? Surely she wasn't foolish enough to sign them?"

"No," said the girl, "she didn't sign anything. But Father had a lot of detectives working on it—and we only found out a few days ago where the letters were coming from."

"Do you mean, Evelyn, that your father had the police on Madeline's trail?"

"Oh no," again she shook her head, "it was all done privately. You see, Father never wants any publicity about anything. That's why he wouldn't let me tell anyone—not even Jonny—"

"But good heavens," I protested, "he couldn't keep it a secret forever. If the detectives were really sure that Madeline had been threatening you—what did your father plan to do about it?"

"I—" the girl's eyes faltered suddenly, "I don't know—exactly. But he always does these things very quietly."

"So I should judge," I observed drily.

"Father just told me that everything would be all right as long as Ike was with me."

Ike again. I sighed.

"What," I inquired with as much patience as I could manage, "has Ike got to do with it?"

"Why," said Evelyn, "he's the detective that found out about Madeline. And father said that we could trust him to work things out his own way."

"Ike is a—detective?" I echoed helplessly.

"Oh yes, indeed. Father says he's the best one in the whole country. That's why father got him for this case."

"But, my dear child—you've let us think that he was simply your regular bodyguard. And the Chief—didn't you think he ought to be told about all this?"

"Oh, I wouldn't dare tell him," the blue eyes widened emphatically. "Father said that no matter what happened I wasn't to let anyone know about the letters. I don't think—" she looked apologetic, "that I ought to have told

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even you, Sue. But I know you won't let anyone else know. You see, now that Madeline is—well, dead—there won't be any more trouble, and there's no reason why anyone should ever know anything about it.

"Well, of all the self-deception!" I began indignantly, and then stopped. Plainly there was no use in being angry at the girl for her calm assumption that since her own troubles were ended there was nothing further to worry about. "Listen, Evelyn," I spoke quietly, "it isn't quite so simple as you seem to think. Madeline Page has died mysteriously in this house, and Ma, you know, Minna, has been murdered. Whether the deaths had anything to do with this plot of Madeline's that you've told me about—I have no idea. But until those two mysteries are settled, we're all under police suspicion—you just as much as the rest of us—and it's up to you to tell the Chief all that you know about what might have happened."

"But, Sue—" the girl was obviously distressed by my attitude, "I don't know anything except what I've told you—"

"Perhaps not," I said, "but you certainly ought to tell the Chief that much. You owe it," I added pointedly, "to Jonny."

"Jonny didn't have anything to do with what happened." The girl faced me angrily. "I've told you that I know that."

"Quite so," I snapped, "but let me remind you that you're the only one who *does* know it—you and your silent Ike. And unless you want to see Jonny get into one terrible mess you'll speak up and speak quickly!"

This time my words hit the mark. I saw her expression waver into uncertainty and then genuine concern.

"Sue—" Evelyn's voice dropped to a frightened whisper, "you don't really think that they—they suspect Jonny?"

I "If they don't," I said firmly, "they will before long. Didn't you see the Chief look at him when Ted said that Jonny was the only one who knew about Madeline's weak heart? Didn't you hear Irene's story about reaching up to catch the man's hand in the dark and feeling Jonny's ring? And maybe you don't know this—but Minna was stabbed and killed with a surgical instrument that came from Jonny's case! Now will you believe me when I say that you ought to tell the Chief that Jonny didn't know anything about this situation between you and Madeline?"

A moment later I was almost regretting that I had spoken so brutally. The girl's face went dead white before my eyes.

"Oh—" she drew one long quivering breath, and then clutched my arm with an imploring gesture. "Oh, Sue—I didn't know—honestly I didn't. I'll tell—I'll tell *anything*—do anything—if it will only help Jonny. I'll swear he didn't do it—I'll make Ike swear it—"

"Easy, Evelyn, easy," I quieted her frantic words as best I could. "It won't help Jonny a bit to have you fly off the handle like this. We've got to go at this thing just right—you and I."

"All right, Sue," she faced me bravely. "I'll do just what you say."

"Good girl," I nodded approvingly. "Now then—the first thing will be to figure out some way to make the Chief believe you when you tell him about Madeline's plot against you."

"Why, Sue—" the blue eyes opened wonderingly, "of course he'll believe me when I tell the truth."

"I wouldn't count on that, Evelyn," I shook my head. "In an investigation of this sort, the police are not very much inclined to accept any statement just because one witness claims it's true."

"But," said Evelyn, "it isn't just one person. I say so, and Ike will say so too."

"And that," I shook my head more firmly, "is not going to be of the slightest help. You must realize, Evelyn, that after the way Ike deliberately confused the Chief a while ago—nothing Ike says will be received with any particular faith."

"Not even if we tell the Chief that Ike is a detective?"

"No," I said with decision, "not even then. I have a creeping hunch, in fact, that to tell the Chief that would only make things worse—" I considered briefly. "If only we had some proof—" I frowned.

"Oh," Evelyn brightened at that. "But we have proof—that is, Ike has."

"What do you mean?"

"Madeline's letters," she said. "Ike has all of them—" "Evelyn!" I grasped her arm eagerly. "Are you sure of that?"

"Oh, yes. Father turned them all over to Ike as soon as they came. That's how he found out who sent them, you see—"

"Yes I was suddenly hopeful, "yes, of course I see—" "Well, then," Evelyn stared abruptly for the door, "shall I tell the Chief now?"

"No—wait—" On a sudden impulse I detained her again. "I think before you say anything—you and I had better have a talk with Ike. If—" I paused doubtfully, "you can make Ike really talk."

"Of course I can, Sue," The girl seemed surprised at my scepticism. "Ike is really a perfect lamb, you know."

"Oh, I haven't a doubt of that," I smiled brightly. "Not a doubt."

"Shall I call him now?"

"For heaven's sake—no." Once more I restrained her impulsive move toward the door. "We've got," I said seriously, "to work this carefully, Evelyn. No one must know that we're planning anything—particularly not now."

"Well," Evelyn looked disappointed, "what am I supposed to do?"

"You must keep perfectly quiet about this whole thing," I tried to look at her in a way which would be impressive, "until we manage to slip away from the others for a few minutes and talk to Ike. If you get a chance to speak to him in the meantime—tell him we want to see him, but for goodness' sake don't let anyone hear you. Now—" I fixed her with a stern eye, "do you understand?"

"You can trust me, Sue," she nodded earnestly.

"I'm sure I can," I tried to sound more convinced than I actually felt. The girl was certainly not so stupid as I had thought earlier, but I was by no means sure that she could be counted on not to blurt out the wrong thing in one of her sudden fits of naive simplicity.

"Now then," I motioned her toward the door. "Skip. And if anyone asks where we've been, say you felt faint, and I came out here to get you a drink of water. And don't forget—" as we passed into the dining-room, I whispered one last injunction, "to get word to Ike that we want to see him."

"I won't," she gave my arm a reassuring squeeze.

But I needn't have worried about letting Ike know. As we stepped into the living-room I saw that he was still standing, precisely as we had left him some minutes before except for the fact that his hands were clasped behind his back. And as I passed by he made one gesture, so quick that I was aware of nothing save the fact that when it was over my hand was clasped upon a folded bit of paper. In blank amazement I stared down at my hand, then up at him—but he had not so much as turned his head toward me.

Seeing that Evelyn had gone on into the living-room where the others still sat in gloomy silence, I murmured something about my handkerchief and went back into the kitchen.

Another moment and I was staring at the bit of paper—and for one overwhelming instant I almost believed, as Evelyn had said, that Ike knew *everything*. For the bit of paper was a note.

"After the others go upstairs," it said, "come to the kitchen again. I'll bring Evelyn."

XIV

WHEN, having carefully disposed of Ike's astounding message by means of a kitchen match, I returned through the dining-room for the second time, I found myself waylaid again. This time by Patsy.

"Sue, I want to speak to you a minute." She had her most determined expression on.

"What about?"

"About Irene again. Sue—what is the matter with her?"

"You mean that story of hers?" I inquired. "About following the white thing into Minna's room and being smothered by Jonny?"

Patsy nodded. "You don't believe it, do you, Sue?"

"Not all of it, certainly. But, after all, she was in Minna's room, and she was unconscious—so she must have gotten there somehow."

"That's just it," said Patsy. "She must have gone for some reason—and if she lies about it—" she paused with an expressive shrug.

"You don't think," I said sharply, "that her reason had anything to do with—what happened to Minna?"

"Well—if she lies about it, what else can we think?"

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"Patsy, that's perfect nonsense—and you know it. How on earth could Irene have been mixed up with Evelyn Tucker's maid?"

"I don't know—" she shrugged again. "But there's something funny about it. And another thing, Sue—she's as nervous as a cat because the Chief said he was going to search the bedrooms. You must have noticed that."

"Yes," I admitted with some reluctance, "I did see that she was pretty jumpy about it."

"And she's been getting worse every minute," Patsy declared. "Fuming at Ted about notifying the city police and snapping poor Jake's head off every time he tries to calm her down a bit. I tell you, Sue, Irene is hiding something."

"But Patsy—that's absurd. What could it be, after all? I think she's simply on edge after all she's been through—"

"All right, then," Patsy turned away impatiently, "if you don't want to see what's as plain as the nose on your face—go on and be blind. But mark my words, Sue Belmont, you'll find out before long that Irene is up to some mischief—and you may find out too late."

"Hold everything, Pat." In spite of myself I was impressed by the conviction of her words. "What are you driving at?"

Patsy turned back to give me a long look. Then she shrugged. "If I tell you," she said, "you'll only laugh. You and Irene always laugh at my ideas."

"Rats," I said, "I won't laugh if you've really got something to say. But for heaven's sake stop hinting around—and say it. We can't stay out here whispering forever."

"Well—" Patsy took a long breath, "I honestly think, Sue, that Jake Lecky was mixed up somehow in what happened last night—and that Irene is trying to cover it up by lying."

"Oh—Pat!" I could not restrain a grin of relief. "For a minute I thought you were really serious—"

"There—" Patsy pouted. "I knew you'd only laugh."

"I'm not laughing at you, Pat—but, good lord, Jake Lecky of all people. You know perfectly well he slept like a log through the whole trouble—and anyway he's as mild as a mouse—"

"Yes," said Patsy, "and you're as blind as a mouse. But if you won't listen to me—I know someone else who will." Once more she turned away impatiently.

"Pat—" I called after her in sudden alarm. "Pat, what are you going to do?"

"But this time she would not be detained. 'I'm going,' she said with dignity, 'to speak to the Chief.'"

And before I could protest again she was gone—and I was left with one more vexing problem. What on earth could Patsy mean by her nonsense about Irene protecting Jake Lecky—and what could she possibly hope to accomplish by tattling her absurd suspicions to the Chief? But what, after all, could I do about it?

WITH a resigned and weary sigh I followed my sister into the living-room. As I joined the silent circle once more, Patsy looked up from her place next to Ted and treated me to a huffy glare—which I could only interpret as meaning that she was still determined to carry out her silly theory of speaking to the Chief. I ignored the look as best I could, and glanced about to take stock of the others.

Evelyn Tucker, I was relieved to note, appeared rather more composed since our recent talk. She sat in a big armchair, her chin resting on one hand, and stared thoughtfully into the fire. Next to her, in a corner of the sofa, was Irene—looking anything but composed as she sat, bolt upright, her hands twisting and twining in her lap. From time to time she would glance at the hall door—as if expecting to see the Chief return—and after each unrewarded glance she flounced impatiently. But if, as Patsy suspected, the secret of Irene's obvious nervousness lay in some anxiety about Jake—Jake himself certainly did not appear to share it. He slouched, in a disconsolate heap, at Irene's side—his tousled blond head nodding drowsily. Apparently he had given up trying to join Irene, for, beyond an occasional injured blink when one of her jerks disturbed his doze, he seemed not to notice her at all.

Mrs. Lynn, Smith Plummer and Ted all appeared to be bearing up well enough. They sat quietly in their respective places, staring, like Evelyn, into the fire. Aside from a tendency to bite his nails on the part of Smith Plummer, no one except Irene gave any sign of nervousness.

Yet at the moment when the Chief at last came slowly

down the stairs and strode into the midst of our group, every one of us straightened a bit—every eye was fastened on the weatherbeaten face, the ragged mustache. If a few hours before the Chief would have seemed to us nothing more than an amusing village character—there was no trace of mockery in our faces now. He might be a bumpkin in the loose-fitting clothes of a musical comedy "Sheriff"—but he was also the Law, and at that particular moment there was not one of us who could afford to be amused by the Law.

"Well, Chief," after a pause Ted spoke a little hesitantly, "did you—discover anything? I mean, he hurried to add, 'what could have been responsible for Miss Page's death?'"

The Chief took his time about answering—and I saw him glance about the circle of faces before he spoke.

"Yes," he said at length, "and no." He paused again, obviously enjoying the effect of his deliberation upon our taut nerves. "That is," he cleared his throat, "I did—and I didn't, so to speak. One thing, anyways, I did make sure of."

"Yes?" Ted's tone reflected the anxiety which we all felt. "Yes," said the Chief, "She may of died of fright, like the doctor claims—but if she did, it wasn't any ghost that did the frightening."

We relaxed slightly at that. After all, it was scarcely a surprise to discover that the Chief shared our scepticism concerning the supernatural angle of the past night's events.

"No," he repeated slowly, "it wasn't any regular ghost—that's sure. At least the regular ghosts I've always heard about don't have to dress up in sheets—like the one that was walkin' around this house last night."

"What do you mean, Chief?" Ted's question was tense.

"I mean," the Chief's drawl was punctuated by vigorous gnawings at his mustache, "I mean that somebody in this house was playin' ghost—and they left a bunch of sheets stuffed under their bed. That's what I mean."

INSTANTLY I looked at Irene, remembering her insistent account of following the mysterious "white thing" through the dark corridor. I was startled to see her perched forward upon the sofa, her eyes fixed upon the Chief's face with a stare of frozen fear. A moment later she spoke.

"You mean," her voice scudded curiously strangled, "you found those things under my bed—don't you?"

The Chief eyed her long and thoughtfully. "Well, little lady," his tone was dangerously mild, "I reckon maybe I do. You ought to know."

The rest of us were watching Irene in blank astonishment. So that, I thought, was the reason for her nervousness about the search. But the idea of Irene masquerading as a ghost in sheets and pillowcases was too absurd.

"I—I haven't the least idea how they happened to be put there," Irene faltered miserably before the Chief's steady gaze. "I—wasn't in my room, you know, for a good part of the night. And anyone who wished to— to hide the things could have put them under my bed when neither my sister nor I was there to see—"

"Sure—" the Chief's heavy drawl broke into her feverish word. "Sure—anyone could have done just what you said, little lady. But if I did, I was to know, is how you happened to know about the things bein' there."

"Well, I—I—" For a moment Irene struggled to say something more, then all at once she sank back upon the sofa and her eyes closed wearily. "Oh—what's the use?" Her tightly clenched fingers relaxed suddenly in a gesture of utter hopelessness. "I might as well tell you the truth."

"Yeah," the Chief was matter-of-fact, "you might as well."

"I had those sheets and things in my room," Irene opened her eyes and spoke with a sort of desperate calm. "because I thought—very foolishly indeed—that it would be rather a good joke on my sister Patsy to dress up as a ghost and startle her a bit. You see, she insisted that this house was haunted—and kept telling us about a ghost who prowled about the halls at night. I didn't believe her, of course, but I thought it would be a good trick to call her bluff and see what she would do if I really barged in on her, dressed up in sheets. The whole thing was a silly idea, but goodness knows I meant it innocently enough. None of us had any thought, of course, of the dreadful things which were actually taking place last night—"

"Oh—" the Chief's bushy eyebrows rose suddenly, "so you didn't think up this little joke alone, eh?"

"Why—" Irene looked startled, "why—yes, I did."

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"So—?" The eyebrows remained elevated. "Well, now that's a funny thing."

Irene opened her mouth and closed it again without speaking.

"Yeah," the Chief nodded slowly, "a funny thing all right."

"This time Irene did manage an answer. 'I'm sorry,' she said stiffly, 'but I don't see anything very funny. I simply had this idea for a joke—more or less on the spur of the moment—and I said nothing to anyone about it.'"

"Well," the Chief agreed amiably enough, "there ain't anything so funny about that part of it. The funny part is how you managed to get the sheets without disturbin' Mr. Lecky."

"I—simply don't know what you mean," Irene's protest carried not, the lightest conviction.

"I mean," said the Chief, "that them two sheets came off of Mr. Lecky's bed. A while back you folks told me that the young man was a sound sleeper—but I don't know as anyone could sleep so deep that he wouldn't wake up when somebody came in and pulled his bed to pieces. Even supposin' that a proper young lady like you, Miss," he bowed slightly in Irene's direction, "would bust into a man's room in the middle of the night."

For a long moment Irene stared straight into the Chief's impassive face. Then she turned on Jake Lecky with a look of utter scorn.

"Oh—" she said bitterly, "you—you fool!"

XV

"WELL," the Chief's drawing voice was addressed equally to the two people before him, "which of you is gonna talk?"

Still they stared at each other, Irene's features set in angry scorn, Jake blinking back at her with his habitual expression of drowsy surprise.

"I think," Irene spoke from between clenched teeth, "that he can talk now. I've done my best—but I might have known better than to try to help him."

"Yeah," the Chief nodded, "if could's told you that much."

"And so," said Jake, "could I. In fact," he yawned, "I did tell her, Chief—but she wouldn't listen to me."

"Well, she's listenin' now, and so am I—so start talkin'."

"I suppose," Jake eyed him with sleepy indifference, "you mean about the sheets?"

"I do."

"It's a funny thing," said Jake, "but I don't know how they happened to be under Irene's bed, either."

"Never mind about that. How did they get offa your bed? That's what I want to know."

"Oh—" Jake paused to reflect a moment. "Well, I took them off myself, as a matter of fact."

"Yeah, I didn't think they got up and walked away alone." The Chief wagged his head impatiently. "But I want to know what you was doin' with 'em. Playin' sheik?"

"No," said Jake, "I was pretending to be a ghost."

"What for?"

"Just for a joke." Jake looked a trifle sheepish. "What Miss Belmont told you about our wanting to scare her sister was true—except that I was the one who was to do the scaring."

"Oh—then it was the two of you that cooked up this cute little idea?"

"Yes, but Miss Belmont didn't have anything to do with actually carrying it out."

"No? Then what was she so anxious to take all the blame for a minute ago?"

"Well, you see," Jake frowned, "the trick didn't turn out quite as we expected it would."

"Why not?"

"Because," said Jake solemnly, "I had no more than stepped out of my room into the hall when I—met the real ghost."

"Say—" the Chief bent forward indignantly, "what are you givin' me?"

"I know it sounds crazy," Jake nodded wearily, "but I swear it's the truth. It was about half way down the hall toward Mrs. Elliott's room when I heard a queer noise—sort of a dragging sound—somewhere behind me. I undid the sheets so I could look to see what it was, and sure enough, there was something white coming along the floor—right toward me."

I was watching Jake suspiciously as he gave this account, but for all my natural scepticism concerning the actual existence of the mysterious dragging "white thing," I

could detect nothing in his manner to suggest that he was inventing it. For once in his life, Jake Lecky appeared to be completely in earnest.

The Chief looked as if he were, like me, torn between a constitutional doubt of ghost stories, and a conviction that his witness was telling the truth.

"Well—" he was gnawing furiously at the mustache, "what did you do then?"

"Well," Jake seemed surprised by the question, "what would I do? I got back to my room as fast as I damn well could and got into bed. That's what I did."

"And left the sheets behind you, eh?"

"I guess I must have," Jake admitted. "You see," he looked rather apologetic, "I—was in kind of a hurry."

"Yeah," the Chief observed drily, "I see that all right. But what I don't see is why you didn't call somebody and try to find out what was draggin' itself around the halls in the dead of night."

"I did intend to," said Jake, "but at first I was too scared—and by the time I'd calmed down some I—" again he looked apologetic, "I—sort of feel asleep."

"Oh—" said the Chief, "so you sort of fell asleep? Well, now, I call that real sensible, Mr. Lecky. One minute you're scared to call for help—and the next minute you sort of fell asleep."

"I think," said Jake, "that I'm a little funny that way."

"I think," said the Chief, "you're damn funny. But just for the sake of argument—I'll let your story stand—for now. And I'll ask Miss Belmont here," he shifted to Irene, "to take up where you left off."

Irene did not look up.

"And this time," the Chief added, "I'd be obliged if you'd tell me the truth."

"I told the truth the first time," in spite of the angry flush which mounted to Irene's cheeks, she spoke quietly, "except for the fact that it was Jake and not I who

dressed up to play ghost—and for the second fact that it was he who rescued the sheets from the hall where he dropped them and hid them under my bed. My reasons for lying in those two instances must be obvious."

"I reckon you mean," the Chief tugged thoughtfully at his mustache, "that you figured it would be better for you to take the blame than Mr. Lecky here. Is that it?"

"Yes," said Irene, "that was it. Frankly I thought his story about being frightened and from the drumming off to sleep was too absurd for anyone to believe—anyone, that is, who didn't know Jake. Actually, of course, what he says is true. Jake always goes to sleep—no matter what happens."

The Chief declined to commit himself on this point.

"Keep talkin'," he said. "You woke up and heard a noise in the hall—what then?"

"I LOOKED out," Irene went on quietly, "just as I said I did, and I saw this queer thing moving along the floor."

At first, of course, I thought it was Jake—playing ghost as we had planned—and I followed along to see the fun. That's why," Irene turned to me, "I didn't call you, Sue, before I left the room. Well—I hadn't gone more than a few feet down the hall before I saw the white sheets

—on the floor where Jake had dropped them, and right away I knew what had happened—or at least I thought I knew. That thing creeping along on the floor was not Jake at all—but that time my eyes were accustomed enough to the darkness so that I could see that it couldn't be a person—it was much too small and it moved in the weirdest way—I shuddered slightly. But I still believed that it was only a part of Jake's trick."

"Just how," the Chief put in curiously, "did you figure that?"

"Well—" Irene hesitated, "it sounds terribly silly now, but at the time I thought it must be Evelyn's dog. I knew the dog had been sleeping in the hall—and it simply flashed over me in a moment that the dog had decided to make a ghost out of him by tying him up in a pillow-case."

"Well, I like that—" Evelyn sat up indignantly. "Isaac Newton tied up in a pillow-case!"

"That's really all there is to my story," Irene ignored the interruption, "except that I went on following the white thing until it disappeared into Minna's room. After I got in there and heard those awful choking sounds—I was desperately frightened for the first time, but before I could speak the man's hand smothered me—as I told you earlier—and that's as much as I know."

"Whoa—" as Irene finished her rapid recital, the Chief cut in quickly, "not so fast there—not so fast. You ain't

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to tell you know while you're still forgettin' them sheets. Last I heard about 'em you tripped over 'em in the hall. And if you followed after this draggin' dog or whatever it was, how did the sheets get back into your room under the bed?"

"Oh—" said Irene, and paused for a moment. "I forgot to say that I picked them up when I found them and stepped back into my room to—to hide them under the bed."

"You did that before you followed the draggin' thing?"

"Yes," she lifted her chin defiantly, "I did."

"And just what was the idea of doin' that?"

"Oh—" Irene made a gesture of weary impatience. "What does it matter what my idea was? I tell you it was all part of the joke that Jake and I had planned. Can't you see how idiotic it is to attach so much importance to a silly prank? I swear I had no idea at the time I did all this that anything really serious was happening—and now you're insisting that every foolish move I made had some sinister connection with—the murder." She paused a moment, evidently to gain control, and then spoke with a quiet finality. "I knew, of course," she said, "that this would happen. I knew that if you found out about our joke you'd try to work it into the murder somehow. And that's why I lied in the first place, and why I tried to keep Jake out of it. Surely," her level glance was aimed straight at the Chief, "surely you must see that my whole motive in this thing was to keep you from jumping at some horrible conclusion about Jake and me just because we were guilty of planning a practical joke. Once and for all I tell you that what we did had nothing to do with anything that happened, and this time I'm telling the truth."

For a long time the Chief simply stared at Irene in silence. When at last he spoke, his tone was as quiet as hers had been.

"I'm sorry, little lady," he shook his head sadly, "but it just won't do."

"What won't do?" Irene bristled.

"Your story," said the Chief, and shook his head again. "You know, I'm kind of disappointed in you." He eyed Irene thoughtfully. "I sort of thought you'd come clean when I gave you another chance—but you didn't."

"Will you kindly say what you mean?" For all the iciness of Irene's voice there was an edge of nervousness. "I've told you the exact truth about what I did last night, and if you still don't believe me then it's simply because you're too utterly stupid—"

"That's just the trouble, little lady," the Chief interrupted her protest, "just the trouble exactly. I ain't quite so stupid as you seem to think."

"Will you please come to the point?" Irene ground her teeth. "And will you please for heaven's sake not call me a little lady again unless you want me to scream."

The Chief received the rebuke calmly enough. "Sure," he said amiably, "I'll come to the point all right. And I wouldn't want to make you scream. All I'm tryin' to say is that the sheets under your bed wasn't the only thing I found upstairs." He paused to enjoy the effect of suspense. "And one of the other things," he went on slowly, "was a marriage certificate. Even a hick cop like me knows what that is—and in this case it happens to be the reason why this Miss Page got killed, poor little lady—and it happens to be the same reason why I know you're still lyin' to me." This with a final nod of triumph.

"I—why, I simply have no idea what you mean," Irene's blank astonishment was reflected in all our faces.

"No?" said the Chief. "Well, then I'll tell you. I mean that the little lady you call Miss Page wasn't a Miss at all. Right up in her bureau drawer," he pronounced it "boorow" "was this little paper"—the Chief drew a folded slip from an inner pocket and flourished it dramatically—"that shows Miss Page got married in New York City last December—to a guy named Jacob Lecky. Now do you see what I mean?" The Chief thrust out his chin and glared at our gaping faces. Before anyone could speak he hurried on. "Considerin' that," he said, "and rememberin' that these two young folks here is pretty dern stuck on each other,—he pointed to Irene and Jake with a gesture which clearly indicated his opinion of so immoral a situation—"I guess it ain't hard to figure out why the little lady was done in last night. You dressed up in sheets all right, Mr. Lecky, and I reckon Miss Irene helped you think up the idea like she just said—but you wasn't plannin' to play no joke on nobody. You was plannin' to sneak into Miss Page's room and scare her to death—and

that's just what you done!" Under the stress of emotion the Chief's grammar became increasingly uncertain. "Yes sir," he glared into Jake's foolishly dismayed face, "that's just what you done. You must'a known about that weak heart business—and you made good and sure you'd scare Miss Page by fixin' up them spirit photos or whatever they was—and then you dolled up in sheets and scared the poor girl to death. And what's more," the Chief wound up his speech in a bellowing *forte*, "you went and tried to frame young Dr. Page for the murder by fixin' a photo of him like he was the murderer and then cookin' up the story about feelin' his ring in the dark—and the Lord only knows what more devilishness. And then you've got the consarned nerve to call me dumb because I don't swallow your cock-and-bull lies about practical jokes!"

Neither Irene nor Jake had made a move during the long tirade, and now, in the awful silence that followed the furious accusation, they remained as still as two wax figures. At last Jake Lecky seemed to come to life.

"There's an explanation," he said, "for everything that happened. But—" his eyes closed wearily, "it's a long story—and I'm too damned tired to tell it."

"Yeah!" said the Chief. "Well, you'd better rest up then. 'Cause you're gonna have to talk pretty soon, Mr. Jacob Lecky, and talk fast."

XVI

WHEN he recovered from the shock of the Chief's amazing hypothesis of Madeline's death, and the still more amazing discovery which had prompted his theory, we all began to speak at once. Each one of us had some particular question to ask—or some objection with which to refute the idea of Jake Lecky as a deliberate murderer.

Irene's question came first.

"Jake," her voice was tragic, "is it—true? About you and Madeline?"

"Sure it's true." The Chief waved the marriage certificate before her eyes. "And don't you start actin' like you didn't know about it, neither."

"You shut up," said Irene succinctly, and turned back to Jake. "Please answer me," her tone was desperate, "and say it isn't true that Madeline was your—that she—" the words faltered miserably. "Oh, Jake, you weren't married to her—were you?"

"Yes," said Jake, "I was. But I wasn't—oh God," he heaved a great sigh, "what's the use of trying to explain it?"

Irene drew back to stare at him with growing fury. "Either you were her husband," she said, "or you weren't. Now which was it?"

"Well, I wasn't—Jake began, "but I—"

"Say—" the Chief cut in again, "you ain't tryin' to deny this?" He brandished the precious bit of paper.

"Oh God," Jake groaned, "what a single-track mind!" Then, as the Chief continued to glare, he shook his head dismally. "I'm not denying anything," he said, "but I tell you there's an explanation for all this—"

"Then for heaven's sake—explain!" Irene commanded.

"Look here, Irene," Ted interrupted reasonably, "this is no time for a scene with Jake." He faced the Chief. "I'd like to ask you, sir, how you account for the murder of Minna in this—theory of yours? Doesn't that pretty well rule out your idea of pinning the blame on Jake? Even if he was secretly married to Miss Page—why should a perfectly strange woman be involved?"

"I ain't worked out that angle just yet," the Chief met the objection blandly, "but it'll fit in some way—when Mr. Lecky here decides to talk."

"And I should like to inquire," said Mrs. Lynn with great dignity, "just what you mean by your reference to the spirit photographs? If you were implying that I was a party to any 'faking' of the pictures, I can assure you—"

"I don't know who was a party to what," the Chief cut short her explanation with rude emphasis, "but them pictures was faked all right."

"Indeed?" Mrs. Lynn's eyebrows rose. "And may I ask just where you acquired this expert knowledge of spiritualistic matters?"

"Spiritualistic rats," the Chief snorted. "I reckon I know how plain ordinary lantern slides is worked. My wife makes 'em for the church fairs, only she don't pretend to be no fortune teller, which she does it."

Before Mrs. Lynn could marshal her outraged feelings

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into a fitting answer, Smith Plummer put in his contribution to the discussion.

"What I fail to see," his owl eyes blinked earnestly at the Chief, "is how you account for the fact that Miss Irene says she found the sheets in the hall. If the purpose of the—ghost disguise was to frighten Miss Page—then why should the—the draperies be left outside Miss Page's locked room?"

"Miss Irene," the Chief disposed of this point sourly, "has lied a couple of times already—so there ain't any reason I can see to think she ain't lyin' again."

"I tell you," Irene blazed out angrily, "those sheets were part of the joke. And marriage certificate or no marriage certificate, the joke was to be on Patsy—and not Madeline."

Patsy bestowed one freezing glance upon Irene, and then addressed the Chief.

"I don't see," she said plaintively, "that all this silly argument is getting us anywhere."

"Perhaps," Ted rose, "we might all profit, Chief, by hearing more about your theory of the lantern slides. If you think those spirit pictures we saw last night were really faked—then I'd say they ought to provide a pretty good clue."

"Well," said the Chief, "they ain't signed, if that's what you mean. But come along, we might well take a look." As the others rose to follow the Chief and Ted, I stood for a moment undecided. Much as I wanted to inspect the evidence of the faked spirit photographs, still I was reluctant to forego my scheduled conference with Evelyn and Ike. Eventually I decided to obey Ike's summons to the kitchen—but to make the interview as brief as possible. All I actually expected to accomplish anyway, was to get Ike's corroboration of Evelyn's surprising evidence concerning Madeline as a potential kidnaper.

Murmuring something vague about another cup of coffee, I left the others as they trooped upstairs, and made my way—I hoped quite unobserved—to our rendezvous in the kitchen.

Evelyn and Ike were already there when I arrived. "You see," Evelyn named, "I didn't forget about our talk, and I just knew Ike would fix it up all right."

"Yes, I see—" I paused a bit uncertainly. Ike, absorbed as usual in the endless scrutiny of his fingernails, made no move whatever—and I was suddenly at a loss as to how to begin the conversation. I cleared my throat. "Evelyn told me that there was some plot about kidnapping her, and that you believed Ike was involved in it."

"Check," said Ike, not very helpfully.

"She also said that you were a—detective."

"Oh, he is, Sue—and simply marvelous," Evelyn broke in with her usual enthusiasm.

"Well—" I cleared my throat again, "you—are a detective then?"

Ike considered for a long moment. "I've got eyes," he said at last, "if that's what you mean."

This was scarcely an adequate statement of what I meant, but I struggled on. "What I want most to know," I said, "is whether you are really convinced that Madeline Page sent the threatening letters to Evelyn and her father. Because if you are sure—and have some sort of proof for it—then I think by all means the Chief ought to be told."

For the first time Ike favored me with a direct look. "Why?" he asked.

"Because," I said, "it's practically sure to have some bearing on what happened to Miss Page last night."

"Oh," said Ike.

"Well—ain't it?" I insisted.

"Maybe," said Ike. "I don't know that there's any use in going into what happened to Miss Page."

"Well, if you don't," I snapped, "the Chief certainly does—and unless somebody puts him on the right track he's liable to cook up some theory of his own and pin the murder on the wrong person. Right now, for instance, he's got a pretty good case against Jake Lecky and my sister Irene. And if you're not interested in helping to clear them, I am."

"Oh, I wouldn't mind giving the Lecky guy a hand myself," Ike admitted generously, "but that sister of yours," he shook his head, "she's a terrible liar."

"I have no intention," I said with dignity, "of discussing my sister's character with you. She may have told the truth—or she may have lied, for a good reason. But in either case she ought to be cleared of suspicion in the matter of Madeline's death. And you can clear her by telling the Chief about this kidnapping plot."

"Sure," said Ike, "I can clear her all right. But I thought you were more interested in keeping Dr. Page out of it."

"Dr. Page has nothing to do with this. Evelyn said you told her that he didn't leave his room until I woke everyone up by calling for help."

"Yep," said Ike, "that's right."

"Well, then—couldn't you clear Dr. Page, too, if you told the Chief that?"

"Yep," said Ike, "I probably could."

"Well, for heaven's sake—why don't you, then?"

"Because," said Ike, "I've got orders."

"Orders for what?"

"To mind my own business. And murders that don't concern Miss Tucker aren't part of the business."

"Listen, Ike," with no small difficulty I managed to keep my patience, "I think you're wrong about this. In the first place, Miss Tucker is under suspicion just as much as the rest of us are until last night's mystery is cleared up. And in the second place, Dr. Page is under rather more than a general suspicion—"

"Now look," I went on earnestly. "Just look at the situation. Miss Tucker is here in this house as a guest. On the night of her arrival her maid is murdered, and another girl, the sister of her fiancé, dies mysteriously. If the mystery is cleared up quickly and quietly, we can probably hush up the whole thing. If not—then it will be a sensational case, and I don't need to tell you that Evelyn Tucker's name will be the chief angle of publicity. Now if you're a detective, and can help settle the case—I can't see how you can fail to consider that as part of your business of protecting Miss Tucker. At the very least you could clear Dr. Page—and that certainly would be a help."

I paused again.

"Evelyn," in desperation I appealed to the girl, "don't you think I'm right about this? Don't you think that your father would consider it part of Ike's business to keep both you and Jonny out of any possible complication and scandal?"

"Well—" Evelyn's forehead was puckered in a frown. "I—don't quite know, Sue. Of course no one wants to see Jonny cleared more than I do—but—"

Her glance wavered doubtfully from my face to Ike's expression of rock-bound indifference. "I think Ike is probably right, Sue, no matter what he says. You see, I promised Father I'd do exactly as Ike said."

"Very well, then," I turned away from the hesitating girl impatiently. "It's up to you, Ike. Now will you, or will you not, tell the Chief what you know?"

"I won't tell all I know," he said, "but I will get Dr. Page out of the mess—if that's what's on your mind."

"Oh, Ike," Evelyn beamed, "that's simply sweet of you. And I'm sure Father wouldn't object."

My own reaction was scarcely one of such simple pleasure. Why Ike should have qualified his intentions so cursorily, I was by no means sure, nor was I as thoroughly convinced of his miraculous powers as Evelyn appeared to be. Certainly nothing that he had done so far led me to expect with any degree of confidence that he had only to speak in order to free Jonny of all suspicion. But at any rate, I thought, it was better to have Ike with us than against us. Making mind or no master mind—he had at least promised to help Jonny, and I left the kitchen with the feeling that my puzzling half hour with Mr. Tucker's henchman had not been wholly in vain.

XVII

WHEN we reached the upstairs hall, the sound of voices in great confusion indicated that the Chief and his assorted suspects were gathered in Mrs. Lynn's room. Before we joined the group, I turned for one last word with Ike.

"How," I inquired, "do you intend to work this? Do you want me to tell the Chief that you have some important information about Madeline, or will you tackle him yourself?"

"Leave it to me," said Ike. "And don't get worried if I don't seem to whip into action all at once. The old duck has got to be handled just right if we're really going to put this thing over."

"Well—what are you going to do then?"

"Just drop a couple of red-hot clues," said Ike, "and let old Sherlock think he's figuring out the mystery for himself."

"Very well," I turned away with a shrug, "do whatever

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you see fit. And you can count on me not to interfere." "And me too," Evelyn chimed in warmly. As we started into Mrs. Lynn's room the girl took my arm. "You mustn't mind, Sue," she whispered confidingly, "if like seems sort of—mysterious. He's always that way, but he's promised to help Jonny—and he simply never falls down on a promise."

"I hope," I said without any particular conviction, "that he won't pick this time to break his perfect record." "Oh, he won't," Evelyn squeezed my arm, "you just watch and see."

The Chief looked up as we entered the room.

"Where have you been?" he demanded sourly.

"Just getting another cup of coffee."

"Yeah?" The Chief eyed us for a doubtful moment. Then, evidently deciding that our absence was of no importance anyway, he returned to the business in hand.

He was, it seemed, about to demonstrate the mechanics of the spirit camera, a proceeding which, judging from Mrs. Lynn's flushed face and blazing eyes, would probably reveal some rather shoddy tricks of the medium's trade.

"You see," said the Chief, "the consarned gadget ain't nothin' more than a regular stereoscopic machine—the kind your granddaddies used to keep in the back parlor to entertain the young folks of a Sunday night. The only difference here is that you look down into the thing—and the slides go in at the bottom, just above this light jigger."

WE all pressed forward to watch the Chief's demonstration of the curiously constructed device; all of us, that is, save Mrs. Lynn who remained haughtily aloof in a chair near the window. I observed that Jonny, standing opposite me, was watching the procedure intently.

"The slides," the Chief continued, "go in this box underneath and get pushed, one at a time, into focus over the light. The whole thing works by a couple switches here—one to work the light bulb and one to push the slides. Like this—" He pressed a small button and a dim light glowed beneath the empty lens into which we peered. "And this—" A sort of lever was moved, and we found ourselves staring downward at one of the spirit photographs. In the daylight, with the simple mechanism so obviously explained, the whole business of the séance looked absurdly childish—and yet I remembered how impressive those images had seemed the night before.

"There—" the Chief straightened to face us proudly.

"That's all there is to the dern thing."

"All there is to the mechanism—yes," Ted nodded. "But what about the—the pictures themselves? After all, that's the only part that has any special significance."

"Yeah—and I got that figured out too," the Chief wagged his head sagely. "They ain't nothin' but a bunch of fancy signs drawn on a plain gelatin plate. Looka here—" From a small black case on the desk he produced a blank slide. "Now with somethin' to scratch with—" He fumbled in his vest pocket, extracted a penknife, and drew a circle and a cross on the gelatine surface. Another moment and the Chief had substituted his slide for the one beneath the lens, and there, surely enough, were the circle and the cross outlined against the clear white background of the plate. "There 'y' are!" The Chief nodded triumphantly once more. "That's the way them spirits work."

"Well—" Patsy drew back indignantly, "do you mean to say that Mrs. Lynn made all those silly pictures just to frighten us?"

"I certainly did nothing of the sort," Mrs. Lynn's voice cut in angrily. "I told you last night that the images of Miss Page and her brother were entirely beyond my control—and I told you the truth. Someone tampered with my things and substituted those two plates for the two I had—had prepared. Oh yes—" in answer to our looks of surprise, Mrs. Lynn raised her chin defiantly, "I might as well admit that my own slides were drawn, just as the Chief has so cleverly revealed, but I tell you I had nothing to do with those last two pictures we saw. Someone must have sneaked into my room last night when I had everything ready—and for some diabolical reason slipped the two plates in with my own pictures."

"But, Mrs. Lynn," Patsy was wide-eyed, "whoever could have done such a thing? Why, none of us have seen one of these camera things before—and how could anyone have gotten the blank plates?"

"Or, for that matter," Ted put in, "how could this—this person you accuse have gotten into your room to make the substitution? Weren't you in here yourself from the

time we left the dinner table to the moment when you called me to come and help you carry the things downstairs?"

"Well, I—yes—" Mrs. Lynn looked suddenly confused. "That is, I was here quite—steadily during that time. But someone—someone must have managed to sneak in—"

"Whoo—" said the Chief. "Let's just get this straight now." He faced Mrs. Lynn sternly. "See here, lady, I'm givin' you a break. You know that, don't you?"

"It depends," said Mrs. Lynn coldly, "just what you mean by a break. If you refer to your crude and unnecessary intrusion into my—my profession, then I scarcely think you could be called over-considerate."

"I mean," said the Chief, "that I'm givin' you a break in not blamin' you outright for them pictures of Dr. Page and his sister that you showed the folks last night. You say somebody sneaked into your room and left those plates—and you don't know who it was nor why they did it. Well—" the Chief drew in his chin and regarded Mrs. Lynn with thoughtful severity, "it's a pretty lousy alibi—but I'll give you a chance to prove it if you'll come clean. And I don't want no more stallin' like you give Mr. Elliott a minute ago. Either you was in this room after dinner or you wasn't. Now which was it?"

"I came to my room," Mrs. Lynn said, "directly after dinner, as Mr. Elliott has just said. Up to that time no one could possibly have tampered with my things, since the camera and slides were locked in a suitcase and I had the key in my handbag. I set about at once preparing the plates—in much the way the Chief has explained to you—and when they were finished I stepped out into the hall with the intention of going downstairs to ask one of the gentlemen to help me carry the apparatus. At the moment when I reached the head of the stairs, the door of Miss Page's room opened, and Miss Page stepped out and beckoned to me. I was not particularly surprised, because I knew that she had not been well during the dinner hour, and I thought she might want me to do something for her. I went down to where she stood and asked her what she wanted. She said that her headache was worse and that she had no aspirin, and asked me to fetch her some from the medicine chest in the bathroom. I was a bit puzzled by the request because she was fully dressed at the time, and appeared quite well enough to make the trip down the hall herself—but of course I consented to go as she asked. When I got to the chest, however, there was no aspirin to be found, and after looking about a bit, I went back to my room, intending to take her a headache remedy which I had in my suitcase."

When I got to my door I was astonished to find it locked—apparently from the inside. I knocked, of course, and called out to ask who was there—but no one answered. Just when I was on the point of summoning one of the men from downstairs to find out who was in my room, Miss Page's door opened again, and she asked me what was the matter. I started down the hall toward her room, explaining as I went about the mysterious locked door, and when I finished speaking she smiled and said that the door was probably only stuck. She told me that Mrs. Elliott had said that a good many of the old latches did stick—and she offered to try to open it herself. We both went back then, and Miss Page fumbled with a knob for a moment, and the door opened easily." Mrs. Lynn paused to draw a deep breath.

THE point," she said very quietly, "is that I believe there *was* someone in my room, and that the door *was* locked. I think Miss Page deliberately sent me to the bathroom for aspirin in order to let that someone get into my room and substitute the two fake plates for the ones I had prepared. You see, if there had been aspirin in the medicine chest, then I would have returned with it to Miss Page's room—and would not have discovered the locked room. But even as it happened, the person in my room was able to escape without being seen by me—and Miss Page's clever excuse about the latch sticking took me in."

"Whoo there—" the Chief objected. "How are you figurin' anyone could get out of that room with you standin' right there in the hall?"

"You forget," said Mrs. Lynn, "that when Miss Page called me the second time I went down the hall toward her room—and my back was turned toward my door. It wouldn't have been very difficult for the person, whoever it was, to slip out of my room and into one of the other bedrooms during those few moments while I walked down the hall."

"Hm'ph—" the Chief's snort was accompanied by a

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prodigious frown—evidently half of amazement, and half of disbelief. "Well—" he tugged at the mustache, "I must say it ain't such a bad idea at that—but say—" his eyes narrowed suddenly, "have you got any idea who it could've been, prowlin' around in cahoots with Miss Page?"

Mrs. Lynn's eyes dropped quickly before the question. There was a long pause before she spoke.

"Yes—" her tone was startlingly abrupt. "Yes, I have—an idea."

"Who—?"
"I believe," said Mrs. Lynn clearly, "that it was Dr. Page who entered my room and locked the door while he substituted those two slides for mine."

All of us turned in astonishment to stare at Jonny—but if he was startled or frightened by the accusation, there was no flicker on his calm face to show it.

"Say—" suddenly the Chief burst out, "what are you givin' me anyway?" He turned indignantly on Mrs. Lynn. "Don't you know that what you say is crazy? Why in blazes would Dr. Page here fix up a picture of his sister done up in a shroud, and another one callin' himself a murderer? No sir," the Chief shook his head emphatically, "there ain't nobody crazy enough to be that crazy!"

"I admit," said Mrs. Lynn, "that it sounds illogical." She seemed completely undisturbed by the Chief's reaction. "But nevertheless, I believe that Dr. Page did make the substitution—"

"Yeah? And on what grounds? I suppose one of them spirits of yours musta whispered in your ear—eh?"
"Not at all," Mrs. Lynn's tone was icy. "Unless you believe that spirits go about dropping cigarette lighters—like cotton favors."

"Like what?" the Chief demanded suspiciously.
"Oh, never mind that," said Mrs. Lynn, "but look—" She bent quickly over the chintz-covered armchair, from which she had lately risen, and drew a small silver lighter from beneath the cushion. "This," she extended the clue for the Chief's inspection, "is what I mean. If you look you will see the initial P—and no one in this house could own the lighter except Dr. Page or Smith Plummer. Mr. Plummer, as anyone will tell you, was downstairs playing bridge at the time my room was entered last night."

"Well now—" the Chief wagged his head in wonder, "I'll be goin'-dermed if that don't sound like sense. But say—" sudden suspicion overcame him, "why didn't you mention this before?"

"Because," said Mrs. Lynn simply, "I found it just a few minutes ago while I sat in the chair during your demonstration of my camera. And not until just now when you asked me if I had any idea who could have been in my room, did it occur to me that the initial P could mean Dr. Page and Dr. Page alone."

Once more we all turned to stare at Jonny—and once more he returned our looks impassively. I saw that he was not looking at Mrs. Lynn, nor at the Chief, nor at any of us—but at someone apart from the group. I turned to follow his glance and saw that Ike was standing directly behind the chair from which Mrs. Lynn had taken the lighter—and as, a moment later, he caught my eye, Ike winked.

XVIII

IT was not until nearly half an hour later that I got a chance to ask Ike what he meant by that wink. The Chief had gone off with Dr. Jenks to supervise the gruesome business of removing the two bodies, and the rest of the household had been given permission to go to their rooms for much-needed naps. Since the discovery of the cigarette lighter in Mrs. Lynn's room, and her strange theory of Jonny's invasion of her room, the Chief seemed pretty well stymied on his case against Irene and Jake Leary. It was, after all, impossible to maintain that either Jake or Irene had been guilty of substituting the plates in Mrs. Lynn's room, when all of us testified that they had both been downstairs in the living-room from dinner time until the hour of the séance the evening before.

With some difficulty I managed to corner Ike in the hall for a word alone.

"Ike," I said, "did you put that lighter in the armchair where you knew Mrs. Lynn would find it?"
"I thought," he said, "that you promised me a while back you wouldn't interfere with me."

"Is it too much," I inquired with forced politeness, "to ask what you're driving at?"

"Nope," said Ike generously, "I'll tell you. That lighter doesn't belong to Dr. Page at all. It was his sister's."

"Madeline's?"

"Yep."

"Well, but—why didn't Jonny say so then?"

"Because," said Ike, "he's smart."

"I'm sorry to be stupid," I shook my head, "but I don't see yet what you're trying to do."

"No?" said Ike. "Well, you see, Miss Belmont, if I'm going to get Dr. Page out of this mess, like I promised I would, I've got to frame someone else."

"Frame someone?"

"Sure," Ike nodded. "And it looked to me like the best one to frame would be a dead one. So—that's what I'm doing. At least, that's my intention. Understand?"

A sudden and not very illuminating light dawned on me. "You can't mean," I said, "that you're trying to build up a case against Madeline?"

IKE watched me impassively.

"Why not?" he said.

"Why not?" I exclaimed, and then paused helplessly. It was like trying to argue with a madman. "Look here," I said, "don't you see anything the least bit fantastic in suspecting a person of their own murder? I'll admit that Madeline was a pretty weird girl—but when it comes to proving that she killed herself by frightening herself to death—well," I shook my head, "you can't do that even if you are the wonder-man that Evelyn believes you to be." "Can't I?" said Ike—and almost smiled. "Just watch me!" He turned abruptly away as the Chief appeared in the doorway of Madeline's room.

"Say—" the Chief regarded me with obvious disfavor, "what's the idea of you sneakin' around out here when all the ladies is supposed to be in their rooms gettin' their beauty sleep?"

"I was just going." I made my escape as rapidly as possible.

I found Irene sitting on the edge of her bed in our room. "Oh Sue—" she looked up as I entered, "where have you been? I've simply got to talk to you."

"What's the use, Irene?" I sank down wearily on my bed and closed my eyes. "What good will it do us to talk about anything in this hopeless mess?"

"I tell you, Sue," Irene's voice was feverishly anxious, "we've got to help Jake. He—he couldn't have done it, you know."

"No, I suppose not," I sighed. "But after all, what's the use of trying to interfere? You saw how much good it did when you lied to protect Jake. The only thing we can do is to let the damn thing work itself out."

"Oh, is that so?" Irene straightened indignantly. "Well, I notice that where your precious Jonny is concerned you're willing to do plenty."

"What do you mean?" I opened one eye to peer at her. "I mean," Irene's tone was sharp, "that you go growling around with that Evelyn creature, plotting all sorts of things. If it hadn't been for you I'll bet the Chief would have believed my whole story about how I happened to faint in Minna's room—and Jake would never have been suspected at all."

"Irene—" on a sudden impulse I rolled over and faced her, "how did you happen to be there—honestly?"

For a moment I thought she was going to answer me, then she turned away impatiently.

"Why should I tell you anything," she said, "when you'd only use it to help Jonny?"

"From now on," I said fervently, "I'm through trying to help anyone. If I promise you that—will you tell me?"

"Well—" she hesitated.

"Please," I said, "if you know anything about what really happened in Minna's room—for God's sake, why keep up this awful mystery?"

"All right," said Irene, "I will tell you. To begin with—I was in Jake's room when the trouble started."

I sat bolt upright.

"You were in Jake's room?"

"Yes, I was," Irene's chin was lifted defiantly. "And you needn't be shocked, either. Besides—there wasn't any harm in it—we were only planning the joke, you know, on Patsy."

"Well—" I lay back once more. "I'd rather say the joke was on Madeline. If she was really married to Jake, as the Chief claims."

"Oh Sue," Irene shrugged impatiently, "you don't believe that nonsense, do you?"

"I hardly think," I said, "that you can dismiss a marriage certificate as sheer nonsense."

"But you heard Jake say he could explain everything."

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"Why doesn't he, then?" I demanded reasonably. "Simply because," Irene dismissed my logic airily, "he has reasons. But of course I can't expect you to understand."

"No," I agreed drily, "I'm afraid you can't. But get on with your story—and leave out the amatory details. You were in Jake's room—when what happened?"

"Well," said Irene, "it was all very queer, Sue."

"No doubt."

"We were—just talking—about the joke on Patsy, and planning how Jake would dress up and pretend to be the ghost—when all of a sudden someone knocked on Jake's door."

"What time was this, Irene?"

"Oh—I don't know exactly, but it must have been about an hour after everyone had gotten to bed."

"About three o'clock, then?"

"I suppose so." Irene seemed to consider the hour an irrelevant detail. "And of course when this person knocked at the door, I was—well, sort of startled."

"I can imagine that," I nodded.

"Neither of us had any idea who it could be, but of course I didn't want to be discovered in Jake's room by anyone who might—misunderstand."

"I can imagine that, too."

"So I—I hid in the closet while Jake went to the door." I propped myself up on one elbow to watch Irene curiously. "Who was it?"

"Well," Irene took a long breath, "it was Madeline."

"Madeline?"

Irene nodded solemnly. "But—how did you know, Irene, if you were hiding?" "Jake told me later—and anyway I could hear her voice plainly."

"What did she say?"

"She said, 'I think you might have waited one more night.' Of course Jake asked her what on earth she meant, and then she said, 'I mean that I'll be out of your way before tomorrow morning.' I heard Jake say, 'You're not well, Madeline, I'd better call Jonny,' and she answered him with a sort of a laugh. 'No,' she said, 'you mustn't call Jonny—because he'll only try to keep me from doing what I'm going to do.' Jake asked her, 'What are you going to do?' and she laughed again—the queerest sort of a laugh, Sue." Irene's eyes were wide. "It—made me shiver just to hear her. But she only said, 'I'm going back to bed—that's what I'm going to do,' and Jake told me that he saw her turn and go into her room and lock the door."

"What then?"

"Well, when she had gone I came out from the closet, and of course I asked Jake what Madeline had meant by all that nonsense. He said he didn't think she meant anything much except that she must have heard me in his room and was sort of—upset and jealous. I thought we ought to call Jonny, in spite of what Madeline had said, but Jake wouldn't let me. He sent me back to my room, and said that everything would be all right and that Madeline would simply sleep it off. Just before I left I said to Jake, 'I suppose our joke on Patsy is off?' And he answered, 'Yes—because someone else has beaten us to it with a much better joke.'"

"What did he mean by that?"

"I—DON'T quite know." For the first time Irene sounded uncertain. "He wouldn't say any more, Sue—and so I sneaked back into our room and got in bed. Not more than ten minutes after that—I was still awake, of course—I began to hear the queer noises in the hall—the dragging sounds, you know, that I told about before. I got up and went into the hall and I did see the awful white thing going along the floor toward Minna's room. For a moment I really thought, as I told the Chief, that Jake—or someone else, had tied up Evelyn's dog in a sheet—and I started to follow it. Then, just as the door of Minna's room was opened—I saw what the thing was."

"Irene—what was it?"

"It was something wrapped in a sheet, Sue," Irene spoke solemnly. "It might have been a bundle of laundry—except that it seemed too heavy for that, the way it dragged along the floor, you know—"

"Well—what was it?"

"It was Minna," said Irene.

"Minna?"

"Yes."

"Was she—dead, Irene?"

"I think she must have been—but I didn't know it then."

"But good heavens, Irene—it doesn't make sense. A dead woman dragging herself along the hall done up in a sheet—"

"That's just it, Sue—" Irene leaned forward and spoke in a low, urgent voice. "She wasn't dragging herself—that's why I've had to lie about all this. She—she was being dragged by someone." Irene shuddered. "Sue, it was—"

"Who—?"

"Jake," said Irene.

"But—why hadn't you seen him before? Why did you think the white bundle was moving itself?"

"Because," said Irene, "Jake was wearing black pajamas—and in the darkness of the hall the only thing I could see was the white thing on the floor. It wasn't until the door of Minna's room opened that I could see his figure silhouetted against a window beyond. I—recognized him easily enough, Sue, by the outline of his head—you know the way his hair stands up in that tousled way?"

I nodded hastily.

"Go on," I said.

"WELL—I didn't know what to do when I realized Jake was there, Sue. I think I must have made some sound—probably I was going to scream or something—when Jake turned and saw me standing there. He came over to me and told me not to make any noise—and I asked him what in the world he was doing. He didn't answer that, and I said, 'I thought you weren't going to play any joke after all.' Jake grabbed my arm then—terribly tight—and he said, 'This joke is on me, Irene, and you'll have to help me get out of it.' I could see that he was desperately serious—so I whispered back that I'd do whatever he told me to. He went back to the—bundle then, and I saw him pull back the sheets and lift something out—then he handed the sheets to me and he said, 'Hide these, Irene, and for God's sake don't ask any questions—or answer any.'"

"And you—obeyed?"

"Well—yes," she spoke a little defensively. "Wouldn't you have done the same for Jonny?"

"Oh—no doubt," I sighed. "But I'm not sure that makes it right—or even sensible."

"Maybe not, but I did it anyway. I took the sheets and came back to our room and stuffed them under my bed—it was the only place I could hide them without waking you and then I—went back into the hall. You see, Sue, I figured I ought to see Jake out of the mess—whatever it was—if I possibly could—" she looked at me again, as if for approval.

"Of course," I nodded.

"And when I got out there no one was in sight. The door of Minna's room was still open—so I went down the hall and listened for a minute. I could hear someone moving inside the room—of course I thought it was Jake—or I should never have gone in—" Irene paused again.

"Well—"

"Well," she said shortly, "it wasn't Jake."

"Who was it, then?"

"I don't know. Before I could speak—or see anything—someone grabbed me from behind the door—and gagged me, just as I told the Chief."

"Irene—" I faced her seriously. "Was it true about the ring—Jonny's ring?"

She nodded. "Yes—it was true. This time I've told you the whole truth, Sue—but when I came to, later, and they told me about Minna being murdered—I couldn't tell about Jake dragging Minna's body back to her room—until I'd talked to him. And so I made up the best story I could—and nearly all of it was true. You—don't blame me, do you, Sue?"

"Never mind about that," I said. "What I want to know is what Jake said when you did talk to him."

"He told me," said Irene slowly, "to stick to my story—unless I wanted to see him hung."

"Is that all he said?"

"He told me that only Madeline or Jonny could give him away—he meant about his moving Minna's body—and that neither of them would dare—because he had enough on them to hang them both. That was before Madeline died, of course."

"Do you know," I was watching Irene intently, "what Jake meant by that?"

She shook her head slowly.

"Do you, Sue?"

"I think maybe—" I stared at the ceiling for a moment, "Maybe I do."

"You—aren't going to do anything about it, are you?"

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Irene's tone had suddenly become pretty anxious.

"I'm much too sleepy," I said, "to do anything about anything right now. And besides," I rolled over with a yawn and buried my face in the pillow. "I don't think there's anything to be done."

"Honestly," Sue! Irene sounded relieved.

"Honestly."

"I don't want to make any rash promises—but I have a pretty good hunch that we're going to find that everything's been settled by a damned smart detective."

"Smart detective!" I could hear the amazement in Irene's voice. "Are you by any chance referring to that old fossil of a Sheriff?"

"Maybe—" I smiled into the pillow. "You wait and see. And in the meantime—good-night."

XIX

"YES, sir," from a mouth rather too full of caviar sandwich, the Chief spoke thickly. "Yes, sir—I got it all figured out."

"Well, then," from his place at Patsy's side Ted spoke, "did you call us here to—tell us?"

Another nod from the Chief. "I aim to," he said, "when everybody gets here."

The screen door opened and Irene, looking cool and fresh in a pale blue frock, stepped out onto the porch.

"Why—" she stopped short and looked at our group with surprise, "it's a regular party."

For an uneasy moment no one answered her, then Jake scrambled up from the swing and came nobly to the rescue by offering the plate of sandwiches.

"It's a sort of a combination," he said. "Patsy's supplied enough food for a banquet—and Ted's working up our courage with drinks. But the real purpose of the party is to hear the Chief unravel our mystery."

"Oh—" Irene's hand, outstretched toward a sandwich, paused in midair. "Does that mean it's all settled then?" I saw her look quickly from Jake to the Chief and then to me.

Again no one answered immediately.

"Well—" Irene took an uncertain bite from her sandwich, and walked over to the swing where she could sit next to Jake. "I must say, you all seem very calm about it." She surveyed us critically. "It might almost be yesterday afternoon—except—" her glance rested on the Chief once more, and she fell silent.

"Yeah—" the Chief followed her glance across the broad sunlit lawn, and back to our sociable group. "I see what you mean, all right. Here, lemme have another of them sandwiches, will you?"

Smith Plummer leaped up to pass the plate.

"You know," the Chief took an appreciatively large mouthful. "I'd never have believed it, but them fish eggs is real good."

When, a moment later, the door swung open again and Jonny appeared, the Chief's expression did not alter. Jonny was immaculately groomed, as always, in white linen, and save for the drawn lines of weariness in his face, he too might have been just another casual guest at our afternoon tea. I noted with relief that his manner, as he accepted a drink and a sandwich and took his place on one of the wicker chairs, was controlled and quiet.

"Well—" the Chief rose from his corner, brushed a few remaining crumbs from his loose-fitting coat, smoothed his mustache fondly, and took the center of the group. "I reckon I might as well begin."

"I told Mr. Elliott here a minute ago," said the Chief, "that I'd got this whole thing figured out—and now I'm gonna tell you folks just what happened last night. I don't know as you'd call it exactly a simple case—but I got the thing pretty well in hand, owing to a natural ability for arithmetic. That is—I can see when two and two make four."

Everyone sat up a little straighter as the Chief paused. His cryptic introduction had not made us feel any easier, but a moment later he cleared his throat and got down to business.

"In the first place," he said, "everybody in this house ain't friendly with everybody else—that is, they wasn't last night. I saw that right off—and I saw the main reason for trouble was the fact that Dr. Page here had got himself engaged to Miss Tucker. Now, I ain't any expert on romance and that sort of stuff, but I guess I can figure out how a woman gets jealous. That's what I figure was wrong with this party, beggin' your pardon, Mrs. Elliott."

"Now, it ain't natural," the Chief continued without any visible embarrassment, "for a man's sister to get jealous when he makes up his mind to get married. But then," he stroked the mustache with an air of profound thought, "it ain't natural to murder folks, neither. Anyways, I can see that Miss Page didn't like her brother gettin' engaged to Miss Tucker here. And the reason I know that is because I got some letters here that show plainly how she felt."

Once more we all straightened with fresh tension as the Chief drew several folded papers from an inner pocket.

"Right here I got enough to prove that Miss Page was doin' all she could to scare off Miss Tucker from marryin' Dr. Page."

I could barely suppress an exclamation of relief as I saw the Chief ponderously unfold his evidence. So Madeline had really been plotting against Evelyn.

"She wasn't only tryin' to put a stop to the thing," the Chief went on, "but she went at it underhanded—and tried to scare off Miss Tucker by threatenin' to kidnap her."

"Just a moment, Chief," Jonny spoke without looking up. "I—can scarcely allow you to make these statements about my sister without some sort of proof."

"Proof," the Chief snorted. "I got proof enough. Just have a look at these letters here that I found hid away in Minna's room—"

"Quite so," Jonny barely glanced at the papers which were thrust beneath his nose before he waved them away wearily. "I have no doubt that the letters threaten Miss Tucker in the way you describe—but I cannot see by what authority you claim that my sister was the author of them."

"No!" said the Chief. "Well—I'm comin' to that. The fact is that Miss Page wrote one letter too many—" and from another pocket he extracted a new bit of evidence. "And this," he unfolded the paper with a dramatic flourish, "is it."

There was a silence while the Chief fumbled for a pair of ancient spectacles and adjusted them upon his nose.

"With your permission, Doctor," he eyed Jonny over the gold rims. "I'll read this letter." When Jonny gave no sign of an answer, the Chief began.

"Miss Tucker:

I have given you, in the past month, fair warning that you must end your engagement to Jonathan Page. You have not only defied my command, but you have also set an investigator to discover my identity. I am aware that since yesterday afternoon, when I left New York, you have known that it was I who warned you, and that although you do not know—and perhaps never will know—the reason which lies behind my efforts to prevent your marriage to Dr. Page, you are nevertheless determined to put a stop to these efforts.

Do not think that I am deceived concerning your real motive in coming to this house. I know that it was your intention to have your two guardians apprehend me as the author of the warning letters which you have received. Whether it was your plan to do this by means of a public arrest—or by some method of private vengeance—I do not know. But in either case your plan will fail.

For you will never live to read this last letter.

You have been warned—and you have chosen to defy me. In so doing you leave me no choice. I shall kill you—at the price of my own life—for the happiness of Jonathan Page means more to me than either your life or mine—and I shall leave this letter in your dead hand in order to absolve all other persons from any blame in connection with your death and my own."

The Chief stopped reading, removed his spectacles, and faced us solemnly. "There," he said, "is about all the proof anybody'd need what happened in this house."

"But—Chief—" out of the silence which gripped us all, Ted finally spoke. "Is that letter—signed?"

"No," said the Chief, "but it might as well be. It matches these other warnings like peas from the same pod. Even the paper and the pen they was written with is the same."

"Yes—but—" Evelyn's voice faltered and broke. "Oh—it's all too horrible. Why should Madeline want to kill me—just for marryin' Jonny—oh why—?"

"That," said the Chief, "I don't know—and I reckon none of us ever will know. But it's my experience that murders is generally done without any good reason. The fact is that Miss Page went to your room, Miss Tucker, not knowin', of course, that you'd changed places with

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Minna, and that she went there in the dark and stabbed the wrong person."

"But—what killed Madeline, then?" Patsy ventured the question which had been forming in my own mind.

"That," said the Chief, "is an interestin' point. I don't mind sayin'," he tugged thoughtfully at his mustache, "that it give me good deal of worry—just at first. Now, the Doctor here," indicating Jonny, "told us that Miss Page died of the effect of shock on her weak heart. And Dr. Jenks says there ain't any doubt but that's what happened. Well—for a while there we was all thinkin' that the shock must'a meant somebody scared Miss Page—scared her so bad that she died of it. But after I got to lookin' at this last letter she wrote—I began to think different. You notice she says here," he fumbled for the letter and adjusted the spectacles once more, "She says: 'I shall kill you—at the price of my own life.' And she spoke the truth."

"Yes—" said Patsy, "but what killed her?"
"Don't you see it?" the Chief peered over his glasses at her. "Why, it's just like the doctors said. Shock killed her." Then, as evident light began to dawn on his listeners, he went on, "When we was figurin' on who might've frightened Miss Page to death, we knew it must be somebody who had the information about her weak heart—and accordin' to you folks nobody knew about that except her brother, Dr. Page. But we was forgettin' one thing—Miss Page knew about it herself. She knew she couldn't stand much of a shock—and she knew that murderin' somebody was goin' to be too much for her. Accordin' to Dr. Jenks, the fright that killed Miss Page could have come from inside just as well as outside—and that's exactly what happened. When she worked herself up to the point of murderin' the woman she thought was Miss Tucker—Miss Page just as good as committed suicide. She shocked herself to death."

There was a long silence when the Chief finished his amazing recital.

"Well—" the Chief himself broke the lengthy pause. "I guess that just about closed the business. Of course, there are a few little things to be cleared up—"

"One of them," Smith Plummer spoke with a suddenness that made us all jump, "is about the letter."

"What letter?" the Chief turned to stare at him.

"Why, the—the one that Miss Page wrote last. The—"

confession, you might call it."

"Well—what about the confession?"

"Why—nothin'." Smith Plummer's sudden courage seemed to fail before the Chief's challenging question.

"Only that it said that we would find the letter in the—the victim's hand."

"Yes—and that's where I did find it."

"I—I didn't remember seeing any letter—"

"Well, now," the Chief looked a trifle, non-plussed.

"That's a real interestin' point, Mr. Plummer." He paused for a moment, then swung about to address Jonny. "And how about you, Doctor? You helped move the remains—didn't you?"

"Yes, I did," Jonny answered quietly.

"And—do you recall seein' anything in the dead woman's hand?"

THERE was a pause. Jonny stared down at his empty glass. Then, for the first time since the Chief had begun his revelations, Jonny looked up—looked straight into the Chief's narrowed eyes—and said:

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I do remember seeing—something clasped in Minna's hand. I didn't examine it, of course, since I knew that everything must be left undisturbed until the—police arrived."

The Chief took a long breath, threw back his shoulders, and surveyed us triumphantly.

"Well—" he said, "that's more like it. As a matter of fact," he looked slightly apologetic, "I didn't notice that there was anything in Minna's hand myself—until we came to move the body. You see," he exhibited the much-creased letter, "this was folded up so tight that it didn't show much. But when we started to lift the remains—I seen that her hand was folded tight on somethin'—and when I opened it to have a look—there was the letter, sure enough!"

In the moment which followed I saw Smith Plummer start forward in his chair—open his mouth—and then close it again. I saw the look of relief that swept across Evelyn Tucker's face as she leaned back and closed her eyes. And I saw the glance that passed between Irene and Jake Lecky. But no one spoke.

Jonny, his gray eyes clear and untroubled, continued to look straight at the Chief.

And like, on the porch railing, remained intent upon the twirling blade of grass between his fingers.

XX

"NOW that we got that point cleared up," said the Chief blandly, "there ain't but one thing left, and that's this business about the spirit photos."

Everyone looked expectant.
"Do you know who did that, too?" Mrs. Lynn sat forward—apparently ready to turn her indignation upon the guilty person.

"Now, take it easy, lady." The Chief seemed amused by Mrs. Lynn's bristling anger. "Because you're not gonna get a chance to tell this person what you think of 'em."

"And why not?"
"She's dead," said the Chief, and took an extra large bite of his sandwich.

"For cat's sake, Chief," Ted protested impulsively, "you aren't going to pin that on poor Madeline too, are you?"

"No, I'm not," the Chief looked nettled. "I ain't pinnin' anything on anybody, young man. I'm just tellin' you what's as plain as the nose on your face—and if you don't like what I figure out—you can just wait and see if the coroner's jury don't believe me."

"Oh—but I do believe you, Chief," Ted was instantly apologetic. "I—I think your solution of all this has been—truly remarkable."

"And so do I, Chief," Patsy chimed in earnestly. "Please go on."

"Well, I will," the Chief looked somewhat mollified, "if you'll quit interruptin' and give me a chance. What I was gonna say was that I got good proof that this Minna dame was the one that drew them fake plates and slipped 'em in with the other slides."

"Minna—" Evelyn leaned forward.

"Yeah, Minna," the Chief nodded. "And the proof I've got is this." From his coat pocket he produced a small package, wrapped in a rather bedraggled handkerchief.

"Now what I got here—" he was unwrapping the small package carefully, "is a fork."

A fork. Suddenly I sprang forward to stare at it.

"A fork?" I demanded. "A silver fork?"

"Say—" the Chief paused to regard me in amazement.

"What's eatin' you all of a sudden?"

"Why—nothing—" I sank back upon my chair, much as Smith Plummer had done a few minutes earlier.

"Nothing, only—" I struggled for a plausible excuse. "A—a fork is such an odd sort of clue."

This, fortunately, appeared to strike a responsive chord in the Chief.

"Yeah," he nodded sagely, "you said it, little lady. I thought it was kinda odd myself—and I don't mind sayin' it took me a while to figure it out—but I got it finally." He displayed his trophy with pride. "Y'see," said the Chief, "the thing you got to notice is the stuff on the prongs here—" He thrust the fork toward me, and I observed a whitish substance which clung to the silver tines.
"Do you see that?" he demanded.

I nodded. "But—what is it?"

"Gelatine."

"Gelatine?"

"Yeah—the same stuff that's on those lantern slides."

"Oh."

"Y'see," the Chief explained, "it was this fork here that was used to draw the two fake pictures."

"And you believe that it was Minna who drew them?"

"I sure do." The Chief wrapped his treasure up once more and returned it carefully to his pocket.

"But—why Minna?" For the life of me I could not resist the question, as I recalled seeing the fork—I was morally certain that it was the same fork—on the floor of the hall outside Madeline's room.

"Why Minna?" the Chief echoed my question thoughtfully. "Well—I'll tell you why Minna. For one thing—I found the fork hid away in her room—and for another thing I had me a little talk with the hired girl."
"Carrie?" Patsy sat up in sudden interest. "What did Carrie have to do with it?"

"Just this," said the Chief. "She told me that two trays was sent upstairs last night for dinner. One went to Miss Page, who wasn't feelin' good, and the other was for Minna. When the trays come down again the girl says she noticed that there was a fork missin' from one of

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"em—and that one was Minna's. Now do you get it?"

"But the lighter—" Mrs. Lynn objected. "The lighter with the initial P that was found in my room. How do you account for that, Chief?"

"It was nothin' but a plant," said the Chief firmly. "I seen that right from the start. In the first place, it didn't belong to Dr. Page, like you said. It was his sister's. And there's two ways of accountin' for how it got into your room. Either Minna planted it there—hopin' to make either Miss Page or the Doctor get the blame for changin' the slides, or else Miss Page dropped it there herself when she went into your room and found out that somebody'd been foolin' with the spirit photos."

"But either way," Mrs. Lynn shook her head, "it really doesn't make sense."

"No," the Chief sighed, "I know it don't. But as far as I can see there ain't much sense in any of this case. Anyways, I've done my best—and at least I found out who done the murderin'. I guess the jury'll be glad enough to leave it go at that." With a final nod, the Chief strode across the porch, took up his battered hat, and clamped it firmly on his head.

"You—you're not going?" Ted rose uncertainly.

The Chief eyed him grimly. "Sure, I'm goin'. There's nothin' more for me to do."

"But—are we all quite free, then?"

"Well—you've gotta be at the inquest—just as a matter of form, y'know. So mind you all stick around. But in the meantime," he lifted his hat and bowed, "I'm biddin' you folks good-day."

Not until the Chief, accompanied by his two troopers, was well on the way down the gravel drive did any of us rally from the surprise of his abrupt departure.

Only once, in the confused and excited babble of talk that followed, did anyone voice the doubt that loomed in all our minds. It was Smith Plummer who expressed it.

"Look here," he was very earnest, "I don't want to be a wet blanket—but he told the Chief he was goin' away with that explanation of his? He's leaving too much out. What about Miss Page's secret marriage—and the white thing that Miss Irene saw moving in the hall—and the person who jumped at her in Minna's room and smothered her? What," he blinked his owl eyes solemnly, "about all those things?"

It was Jonny himself who broke the tense silence that followed Smith Plummer's protest.

"I think," said Jonny steadily, "that we've all been under a pretty bad strain—and we've imagined a lot of things that aren't quite—accurate. It seems to me that the best thing we can do now is to accept the Chief's solution of the case and say no more about it—at least until the time of the inquest. If the Coroner's jury decides then that the case is—closed—" Jonny's voice shook ever so slightly, then he rallied, "I think we ought also to consider it—closed. Does that sound sensible?" His gray eyes rested upon each of us in turn.

"Is there—any objection?" Jonny's voice was quiet. "No objections, Jon." Ted put out his hand impulsively. "Your motion is carried—and the case is closed."

I saw Jonny grip Ted's hand—a grip so tight that his knuckles showed white. I saw Evelyn Tucker take Jonny's other hand. I saw Irene and Jake beaming foolishly at each other. I saw Smith Plummer blink once behind his glasses—and then look content. I saw Mrs. Lynn nod. I saw Patsy's smile. I saw Ike twirling his blade of grass. "Here's to the Chief," Jake raised his glass, "the only one of us who has the sense God gave a mouse."

With that toast the case was informally closed.

• • • • •

Three days later the Coroner's jury confirmed our judgment, and the Chief's ability to slush, by officially accepting his solution of the wilful and premeditated murder of Minna Briggs—and of the subsequent death from heart failure of Madeline Page, the murderess. And that, incredibly enough, was that.

XXI

IF Mr. Tucker had not been so lavish with the champagne at his daughter Evelyn's wedding, I doubt if I should ever have discovered the truth about what happened that night at Patsy's house party. But champagne there was—and very good it was—and by the time we had drunk everyone's health, I found it necessary to

retreat to the conservatory in order that I might indulge myself in a good old-fashioned cry. Nor was the champagne the sole cause of my melancholy fit. After all, Jonny made a very handsome groom, and seeing him so radiantly happy made me feel excessively maternal, romantic, and generally sentimental.

But I had no sooner settled myself behind a sheltering rubber plant, produced my quite inadequate handkerchief, and screwed up my face for the first luxurious sniff, than a voice at my elbow addressed me with startling suddenness.

"I guess this is kind of tough on you, isn't it?"

I choked back the sniff, and turned to find myself looking into the face of Ike.

"Oh," I said, "it's you, Ike."

"Yep," he said, "it's me."

For some moments we sat in silence. Then I sighed.

"It was a lovely wedding."

"Yep," Ike's sigh echoed mine. "It makes me feel kind of sad, though."

"Why sad, Ike?"

"WELL—" he shook his head. "I just get to thinking, sometimes. You know, Miss Belmont," he hitched his chair closer to me and waxed suddenly confidential, "if it wasn't for you and me—there wouldn't have been any wedding."

"I mean," said Ike, "there wouldn't have been any groom."

I stared. "No—Jonny?"

"No Jonny," said Ike.

"You mean, Ike," slowly my fuzzy wits began to function, "about the—murder and all?"

"Sure," said Ike. "If it hadn't been for you and me—" he shrugged, "well, I guess the great Dr. Jonathan Page would be cooped up in a cell wearing a striped suit—instead of marching up a church aisle in striped pants."

"Ike," I said, "you know how I feel about Jonny—well—" I plucked up courage, "will you tell me—the truth, then?"

"Don't you know the truth?"

"I—I've never been sure, Ike."

"There's not so much to know," Ike shook his head. "She was a pretty bad egg."

"You mean—Madeline?"

"Yep."

"Ike—" I summoned all my strength. "Ike—did Jonny—kill her?"

Ike took one long breath.

"No," he said.

I closed my eyes.

"Thank God for that."

When I opened my eyes again Ike was looking straight at me.

"I'm sorry," he said. His expressionless voice was curiously softened. "I guess I really should have told you sooner."

"Oh—that's all right." I made a feeble gesture of reassurance. "I should have known, really, that Jonny couldn't have done a thing like that. But—it was all so strange—I couldn't help being afraid—"

"Sure," Ike nodded, then looked away again.

After a moment I ventured one more question.

"Ike—who was it?"

Very deliberately, Ike reached over my shoulder and plucked a leaf from the big rubber plant which sheltered me. He twirled the leaf between his fingers, and I saw that his hand was not quite steady.

"Ike—" I bent forward, "do you know?"

He nodded.

"Who was it, then?"

For an answer Ike merely spread his hands and looked down at them in silence. I followed his glance, and as I watched I saw the lean brown fingers tighten and curl.

"I'm drunk," said Ike at last, "or I wouldn't tell you this. But I guess, at that, you've got a right to know." Suddenly he faced me. "I killed her."

For some long, incredulous minute I stared straight into his eyes, then slowly my gaze traveled downward, and I saw that the leaf was crushed between Ike's clenched fingers.

"You killed Madeline Page?"

Ike did not speak.

"You're not just saying that—to protect Jonny?"

Ike made a sudden sound. Something between a snort and a laugh.

"I'll go you one better than that," he said. "I killed a woman to protect him."

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My mind raced back over the events of that far-off summer night in vain effort to understand the cryptic words. But I could not see the meaning.

"I don't understand," I shook my head. "Why should you kill Madeline to protect Jonny? Why?"

"Because," said Ike, "if I hadn't done it—Dr. Page was going to kill her himself."

"Oh, no—" I protested, "that can't be true, Ike. Jonny was devoted to Madeline—you must be wrong. Why in heaven's name should he want to kill his sister?"

"That's just it," said Ike. "He was devoted to her—that's why he thought he had to kill her—and I knew he'd do it, too, even though it would have cost him his career and his marriage and everything that mattered to him. I knew he'd go through with it no matter what it cost him—because he thought he ought to, and that's the kind of a guy he is."

"But Ike—" I spread my hands helplessly, "what you're saying just doesn't make any sense."

"NO," said Ike slowly. "I suppose it doesn't." He drew a long, weary breath. "Listen." He drew his chair closer to mine. "Listen—and I'll tell you the whole damn thing. You said a minute ago that Dr. Page was devoted to his sister—you know that he always insisted on being near her—"

I nodded.

"Well—there was a reason for that, and the same reason made him think he had to murder her."

"What reason, Ike? Do you know that too?"

Ike countered with a sudden question. "How much," he asked, "do you know about the Page family?"

"Why—not very much. Jonny's mother was dead before I knew them at all. Jon and Madeline used to live with their father—and now he's dead too."

"They never told you, then, that Madeline was only a half sister to the doctor?"

"No—" I drew back in amazement.

"I thought not. They kept it pretty quiet, I guess. You see, Dr. Page's own mother was dead—but his father's first wife, the woman who was Madeline's mother, lived until a couple of years ago."

"But where—?"

"In an asylum," said Ike.

"Oh—"

"And that," Ike went on, "was why Dr. Page never allowed Madeline to be away from him—and why he had her secret marriage to Jake Lecky annulled—and why he finally came to believe that he must kill her."

Slowly the full meaning of Ike's words dawned on me.

"Then you are saying that Madeline Page was insane?"

"Not actually," said Ike, "until the last few days of her life. But she was never absolutely normal, and Dr. Page had known for years that some day she would go—just like her mother did. When he found out about the threats she'd been making against Evelyn, Doctor knew that it was the beginning of the end. . . ."

"Jonny knew about Madeline's plot to kidnap Evelyn?"

Ike nodded.

"But how—?"

"I told him," said Ike calmly, "that evening when we got to your sister's house."

"But why didn't you do something then? Why couldn't you have prevented her from killing Minna?"

"We did our best," Ike sighed. "And don't think we didn't try. But our first job was to protect Evelyn—and that's how Minna lost her life."

"I'm afraid I still don't understand." I shook my head.

"No? Well—I'll tell you. You see, Dr. Page and I had the whole thing out that night after dinner. I told him that his sister had been threatening Evelyn—and that something would have to be done about it right away. He agreed, of course, but he asked me to give him one more night. After that, he promised, everything would be all right. 'All you have to do,' he said, 'is to make sure that Evelyn will be safe—just for tonight.' I asked him to let me take care of Madeline—but he said, 'No, that's my job. I've always known I'd have to do it—and I'll do it—tonight.'"

"And you believe," as Ike stopped speaking, I leaned forward breathlessly, "you believe that Jonny meant he was going to—kill Madeline?"

"I know that's what he meant," Ike spoke with quiet conviction.

"Did Jonny actually tell you?"

Ike looked at me for a long time in silence.

"Yes," he said at last, "he told me. He said it was

his job—and I believed him. You see, Miss Belmont, he told me what it had been like—those years when Madeline's mother was in the asylum. He knew Madeline was headed for the same thing—and he believed that his way was the better way."

"Did you agree with him, Ike? Did you think it right—to murder a woman?"

"I—don't know," said Ike slowly. It was the first time I had heard him speak without conviction. "I don't know—since I thought. But, you see, it wasn't my business to decide what was right or wrong. The point was that Dr. Page was absolutely convinced that it was his duty to end his sister's life peacefully, rather than have her live for years as her mother had. And he was ready to do it—openly and honestly—even though he knew that the consequences would finish his career and his marriage. That was the way the proposition was put up to me that night. It didn't matter what I believed was right—it was a question of letting Dr. Page sacrifice everything, or of doing the job myself. After all, Ike's thin lips twisted in a curious smile. "I had little enough to lose—compared to the Doctor. And besides, it was my job to look out for Evelyn, and I figured it was part of my job to keep Dr. Page from committing murder. So I did."

There was not a trace of the heroic in Ike's quiet speech, but suddenly I found my eyes full of tears.

"That was very brave of you, Ike," I said.

"Maybe," Ike sounded unimpressed. "Or maybe just crazy—I don't know. But when you look after a girl from the time she's just a kid, like I did Evelyn, and see her get one lousy break after another out of life—you don't just sit back and let her one big chance get crabbled if you can help it. Anyway," his tone was suddenly brisk, "I did it."

"Ike," did Jonny know what you were doing?"

Ike shook his head.

"He may have suspected after it was done," he said, "but he certainly didn't know it at the time."

"You're sure of that?"

"Dendrone. Otherwise he'd never have given her that hypodermic."

"Hypodermic?" I stared.

"Yep," said Ike calmly. "That's how I did it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Ike, "that when Dr. Page thought he was giving his sister a dose of strychnine to bring her around after she was found unconscious, he was really giving her a double shot of adrenalin. And that amount of adrenalin, as the Doctor knew, was absolutely sure to be fatal to a person with a heart like Madeline's."

"Oh—" I drew back sharply, "then you mean that the hypodermic that we all watched Jonny give to Madeline was—was actually what killed her?"

"I do," said Ike, "but remember—Dr. Page thought he was giving her strychnine—which probably would have brought her around all right. It wasn't until after she'd had the dose—and her heart began to fail—that he was really alarmed. What he thought then, I don't know. I don't suppose we'll ever know. But nothing could have saved her then."

"I still don't understand," I said, "how Jonny could ever have made such a mistake without knowing it."

"THAT," said Ike, "is where I came in. You see, I simply exchanged the two stimulants that were in Dr. Page's kit. The little glass ampoules aren't labeled—and it was a simple matter to put the one containing adrenalin into the box labeled strychnine."

"And yet—" I found one more objection, "the other doctor—Dr. Jenks—must have realized that Madeline had been given the wrong stimulant. And you remember he testified at the inquest. . . ."

"Sure, I remember. But the old codger was so taken in by the great Dr. Page that he never thought to doubt the treatment Madeline had been given. The reactions of strychnine and adrenalin are very much alike—and he hadn't the slightest reason to suspect Dr. Page. So he simply testified, honestly enough, that Dr. Page had done everything possible to revive his sister—but that the original shock had been too great for her weak heart. And that," Ike's tone was just as expressionless as ever, "was that."

"Are you sorry you did it, Ike?"

"What do you think I am?" he asked. "It was a rotten thing to have to do—but it was me or the Doctor—and if I had to choose again—I wouldn't change my mind."

"Even at the price of Minna's life?"

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"Some things," said Ike, "cost a lot—and Minna's life was the price of this wedding."

"But how—how utterly unnecessary," I protested suddenly. "You knew that Madeline was insane—you must have known that Minna was risking her life when she slept in Evelyn's room that night. In heaven's name, why couldn't you have warned her at least to lock her door . . . ?"

"Oh—?" said Ike, "but Minna wasn't killed in her room."

"She wasn't?"

"No."

"But—the letter from Madeline—"

"I planted that letter," said Ike calmly. "Smith Plummer was right when he said that there was nothing in Minna's hand when he lifted her onto the bed. I slipped it in her fist right under the Chief's eye—the big cluck."

"Where did you find the letter then?"

Ike tapped his forehead.

"Here," he said.

"You—*forged* it?" I leaned forward in sheer amazement. "Why—it was *exactly* like those other letters from Madeline—the jury never had a single doubt but what she wrote it—"

"Well—" Ike waved aside my excitement with a modest gesture, "you see, Miss Belmont, a long while ago I had some practice in that line."

"Then you planted the whole case against Madeline?"

"Sure, I did," despite his customary indifference, a note of pride crept into Ike's voice. "I had to—or else," he shrugged.

"And Madeline didn't really intend to kill Evelyn?"

"No," said Ike, "Madeline Page killed the wrong person when she stabbed Minna in the dark—but she didn't think it was Evelyn."

"Then who . . . ?"

"She thought," said Ike, "that she was killing your sister—Miss Irene."

"Oh—oh, but why should Madeline want to kill Irene?"

"Because your sister and Jake Lecky were planning to get married. You see, Miss Belmont, Madeline Page never got over the fact that her brother had her marriage to Lecky annulled. Of course, knowing her history, Dr. Page had to do it—but I guess that was the spark that finally unbalanced Madeline's mind. When she understood that she could never marry Madeline, she took an insane resolution that *no one else should marry, either*. That's why, of course, she tried so hard to break up the engagement of Dr. Page and Evelyn. And above all things she was determined that Jake Lecky and your sister should never marry. Do you see what I mean, Miss Belmont?"

"I—think," I nodded slowly, "that I'm beginning to see. But why—*how* could Madeline have mistaken Minna for Irene?"

"Because," said Ike, "she found Minna in Jake Lecky's room."

"Minna—in Jake Lecky's room?"

Ike nodded.

"That's where Minna was killed," he said.

"YOU see," Ike went on calmly. "I'd posted Minna in the linen closet just outside of Madeline's room, where she could keep a watch on the door. Knowing that Madeline was pretty well off her trolley—and liable to get violent, Dr. Page and I agreed that Minna would have to stand guard that night. Minna, of course, was used to that sort of thing—she and I have had to guard Evelyn more than once—and she was directed to lock Madeline in her room in case the girl started any monkey business. Evidently there was some sort of trouble—although I've never known exactly what happened. . . ."

"I think I know," I put in hastily. "Madeline heard Irene in Jake's room—and evidently that was what set her off. Irene told me that Madeline came to the door and said some rather queer things."

"Oh, so that was it," Ike nodded. "I might have known that sister of yours would be at the bottom of the trouble. Well, anyway, I guess Minna must have locked Madeline in after she went back to her room—but the girl was too smart to let that stop her. After your sister had left, Madeline came into Lecky's room *through the window*—with the knife she had swiped from her brother's surgical kit in her hand—and God knows what murder in her insane mind. Minna, in the hall outside, must have heard her arguing with Lecky—probably insisting that your sister was still hidden there—and when Minna stepped into the cry, Miss Page turned on her, in the dark, of course, and struck out with that ungodly sharp knife. One blow was enough—it caught Minna just below the ear . . ."

"And you believe," I asked faintly, "that Madeline thought she was killing Irene?"

"I do," Ike nodded, "because Jake Lecky told me what she said—just as she struck."

"What—did she say?" I scarcely breathed the question.

"She said, 'If I can't have Jake—you'll never have him, either.' And then—" Ike sighed heavily, "Madeline Page fainted dead away."

"What—did he do?"

"As a matter of fact," said Ike, "he got out of it pretty well. Somehow he managed to get Madeline back to her own room, through the window again, and put her in bed. But even with his strength, Lecky couldn't have carried Minna—so he took the sheets from his bed and dragged her down the hall. Then he went back to bed—and pretended to sleep through the excitement that broke out later when Madeline came halfway out of her faint and began to pound on the wall."

"And Irene—?"

"THAT was bad," Ike shook his head. "You see, she came out of her room just when Lecky was taking Minna's body down the hall. It must have given Jake a mean turn, but he had the presence of mind to ask Irene to hide the sheets—and that gave him enough time to drag Minna into her room and leave her there. If your sister had only stayed in her own room then, nothing would have happened to her—but of course she had to come snooping down the hall again—and she got to Minna's room just when Dr. Page was there."

"Then it really was Jonny who—smothered her?"

"He had to," said Ike. "It was either that—or being discovered in the room with Minna's body, because your sister was sure to raise a row."

"And—is that all?" I asked faintly.

"That's all," said Ike.

For sometime we sat quite still—I in a dazed and wondering silence, Ike impassive as always. From the rooms beyond us came sounds of gaiety as the wedding party waxed increasingly hilarious.

"You might call it," I said at last, "the prelude to a wedding."

"Yep," said Ike, "you might. And I guess, if we only knew it, there are plenty of weddings with more behind 'em than lace and orange-blossoms. As a matter of fact, this whole business didn't turn out so badly after all. Madeline Page is better off now than she would ever have been alive—and Evelyn and the Doctor are happy. Everybody's happy, I guess, except you and me—and maybe Minna."

"I'm happy," I managed a small smile, "and terribly grateful to you, Ike, for saving Jonny."

"Oh—that's all right," said Ike. "He deserved a break. He must have had a tough time. Come to think of it, I guess I'll be happy too—once I get it over with."

As he spoke, Ike rose and turned to go. But something about his eyes made me reach for his arm in sudden fear. "Ike—tell me, what do you mean—once you get it over with?"

He paused to look down at me for a long moment, then he looked away.

"You didn't think," he said quietly, "that I could let things stand—the way they are?"

"You mean," I asked slowly, "that you're going to—confess what you did?"

"I mean," said Ike, "that I've got a letter here," he tapped his pocket, "for the police. And I'm going to mail it tonight—as soon as Evelyn and the Doctor start on their honeymoon."

"Oh—like," I in spite of myself I could not help protesting. "Surely you're not going to give yourself up?"

"Not quite that," Ike smiled a little. "I said I was going to mail the letter."

"But what will you do then?"

"Disappear," said Ike.

"They'll find you, Ike—they surely will."

"Maybe," said Ike, "and maybe not. They never have before. But anyway, don't worry about me." He took my hand which still lay on his arm, and shook it warmly.

"I've done my job," said Ike. "So long."

As he reached the door he turned around to look at me.

"What about you?" he asked.

"Don't worry about me," I fumbled hastily for my handkerchief. "I'm only going to have my cry. I—I always cry at a wedding."

"I know how it is, sister," said Ike. "Sometimes I feel that way myself."



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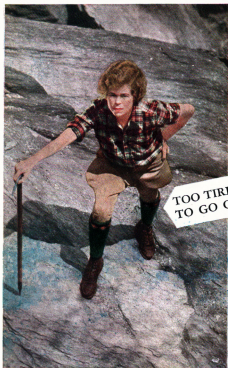
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