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MAGAZINE

NIGHT TIME IS MURDER TIME

A NOVEL OF STRANGE MYSTERY

by **BRUNO FISCHER**

BURY ME NOT —

by **CYRIL PLUNKETT**

**KEN LEWIS
DAVID CREWE
MANY OTHERS**





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Vol. 7

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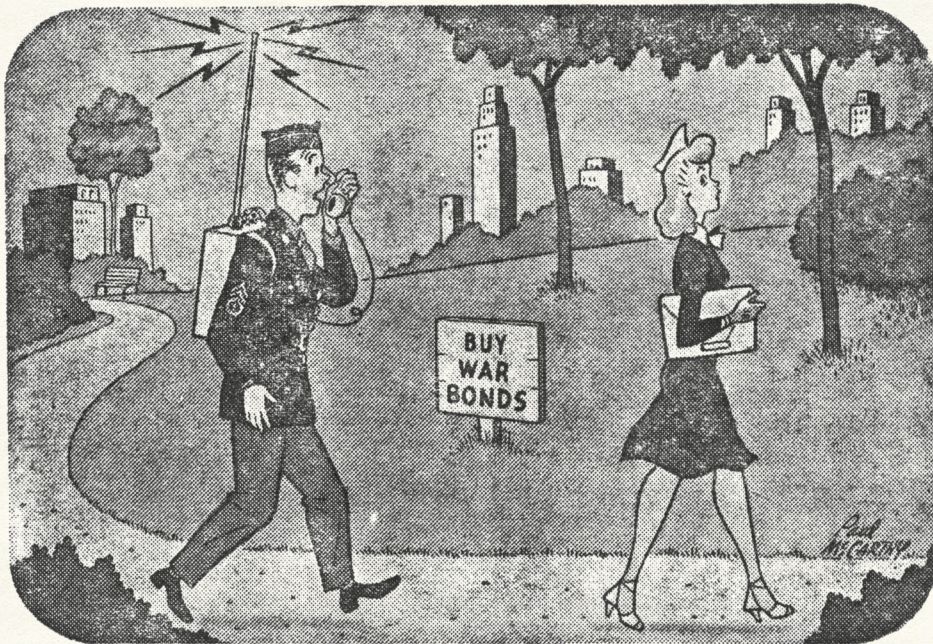
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Strange silent ladies of death.

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The WITNESS CHAIR

WHEN the neighbors of Mrs. Laura Straw of San Diego noticed the accumulation of milk bottles on the back steps that led to the kitchen door, they were not worried. They only snickered and exchanged rather cutting remarks about the old lady.

"Do you think she's gone off on a honeymoon with that last fellow?" called one woman to another, as they were walking past her veranda on Eighteenth Street.

"Wouldn't be surprised," came the laughing answer. "That woman'll never be too old."

This criticism was, oddly enough, justified. Mrs. Laura Straw, in her seventies, was extraordinarily fond of the company of young men. Only twelve months earlier she had struck up a friendship with a young man less than half her age. He didn't work. He lolled around the house, took the old lady out for rides in her car and altogether lived the life of Riley with no cares or expense.

But the second week in October, 1933, the neighbors noticed Mrs. Straw had gone away.

One of them saw the young man locking the front door.

"Where's Mrs. Straw?" she asked.

"She's gone to visit her daughter," he answered after some hesitation.

This answer caused the neighbor's eyebrows to mount.

For she had been told by Mrs. Straw herself that this daughter, the only one of the old lady's children living in San Diego, had

so resented her mother's friendship with this young man that she had refused to set foot in the house so long as he was there.

But before the neighbor could ask any more questions, the young man hurriedly walked down the front steps and went up the street. He did not return.

On Sunday morning, October 15th, four sailors about to land from the *U.S.S. Trenton* in San Diego Bay noticed a large bundle bobbing on the water. They managed to drag it into their small boat.

The bundle was wrapped in a dingy grey blanket, held snugly in place by wrappings of heavy cord. With a borrowed knife they slashed the cord, to find themselves staring at a sea bag stencilled in large black letters: "Henke, F. B., U.S.N."

With the knife one of them made a large slit in the side of the bag. And from the overstuffed bag there protruded the head of an old woman, its watery blue eyes staring unseeing back at them!

An hour later the sea bag with its gruesome contents was at the Merkley mortuary with Coroner Chester Gunn, Dr. Elliot Colby, autopsy surgeon, Chief of Police J. T. Peterson, and others ready to examine its contents.

Only half of the body was there—the torso, with head and arms. Around the neck was a string of blue beads.

Dr. Colby quickly made the preliminary examination. Heavy blows on the head had

(Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 6)

probably made the woman unconscious. Then her assailant had mutilated the body, cutting it in half. She had probably been alive during this operation, but unconscious. Death had come from internal hemorrhages.

Even while the preliminary examination was taking place, word came to police headquarters that another group of sailors had picked up a crumpled potato sack which when opened had given up two badly hacked legs.

The legs had first been wrapped in a blood-stained sheet. Crammed into the bag had been a variety of articles: half of a tablecloth, two towels and a quantity of San Diego newspapers, all of recent date.

Efforts to locate Henke, whose name appeared on the sea bag in which the torso had been found, quickly eliminated this young man. He had been given a medical discharge several weeks earlier and had returned to his home in Ohio where he still was. His sea bag, he told San Diego authorities, had been discarded before he left town. He did not know into whose hands it might have come.

Monday morning papers carried the story of the grisly find and before nightfall the corpse had been identified as that of Mrs. Laura Straw. From neighbors and friends the police soon had the history of this remarkable old lady.

MANY years earlier Mrs. Straw had been married to a man named Alvis. In 1911 she had married one Herman Helms of Tacoma. Four years later she had married Alonzo Straw, who died in 1923, leaving her a tidy estate, including several houses in San Diego.

During the last decade Mrs. Straw had become friendly with a number of young men. Gossip said she picked them up in the park. Anyway, though her acquaintance with one Frank Jewett began in this casual fashion, he later became her third husband.

For a while this union of an old lady of seventy and a man barely forty had seemed happy enough. Mrs. Straw bought a car at Jewett's suggestion and they spent several pleasant week-ends in the country.

Then something had happened that made the old lady suspicious. And one night during Jewett's absence she had gone through his bureau drawers and found them empty. Out in the garage was the car crammed with suitcases.

Evidently Jewett was planning to vanish with the new machine!

In a rage the old lady slashed all four tires.

Jewett left and shortly afterward the old lady got a divorce and resumed the name of Straw.

But even this experience had not cured Mrs. Straw of her yearning for the company of young men. About a year earlier a Tom Jones had come into her life. She had become friendly with him on one of her many trips to the plaza, where she would talk kindly to the down-and-outers sunning themselves there, listen to their stories and often help them with small loans.

Here was a case, mused Chief of Police Peterson, with almost too many suspects, as he thumbed through the report handed him by Detective Sergeant Lightner, head of the homicide squad.

Jones, the last man in the old lady's life, seemed the most likely prospect. But why should he kill the goose that laid the golden eggs?

His sudden disappearance might be due to his discovery of her violent death and fear lest he be accused.

Lightner, after communicating with Mrs. Straw's daughter, entered the frame house on Eighteenth Street.

The corpse had been clad in a cotton nightgown when found. And although clean sheets covered the bed in her bedroom, under them was a bloodstained mattress. Even the bedstead was smeared with light yellowish red stains—evidently the murderer had tried to clean up afterwards but had not done a very good job of it.

In the kitchen were found a hammer, hatchet and a saw. Though apparently clean, the blade of the hatchet gave up dried particles of blood. And the rough edge of the saw, the tool used to cut up the body, was also stained.

But there were no fingerprints on any of the three articles.

Mrs. Straw had last been seen alive on Friday evening. Then a friend, A. J. Bish of Seventh Avenue, had greeted her on the street and stopped to talk. Jones was with her. They were on their way to a mission for evening services, she had explained. Her body had been found floating in San Diego Bay two days later.

It would have been impossible for any man to lug those two heavy bags from the house on Eighteenth Street to the bay. He must have used a machine.

Mrs. Straw had none, having sold the car she bought for Jewett shortly after their break.

If the murderer had a car of his own it would be extremely difficult to trace. But if he had had to use a taxi or rent a machine, there was a chance of tracing and identifying him.

Taxi cab drivers in San Diego were questioned. Not one of them had transported those

(Continued on page 89)



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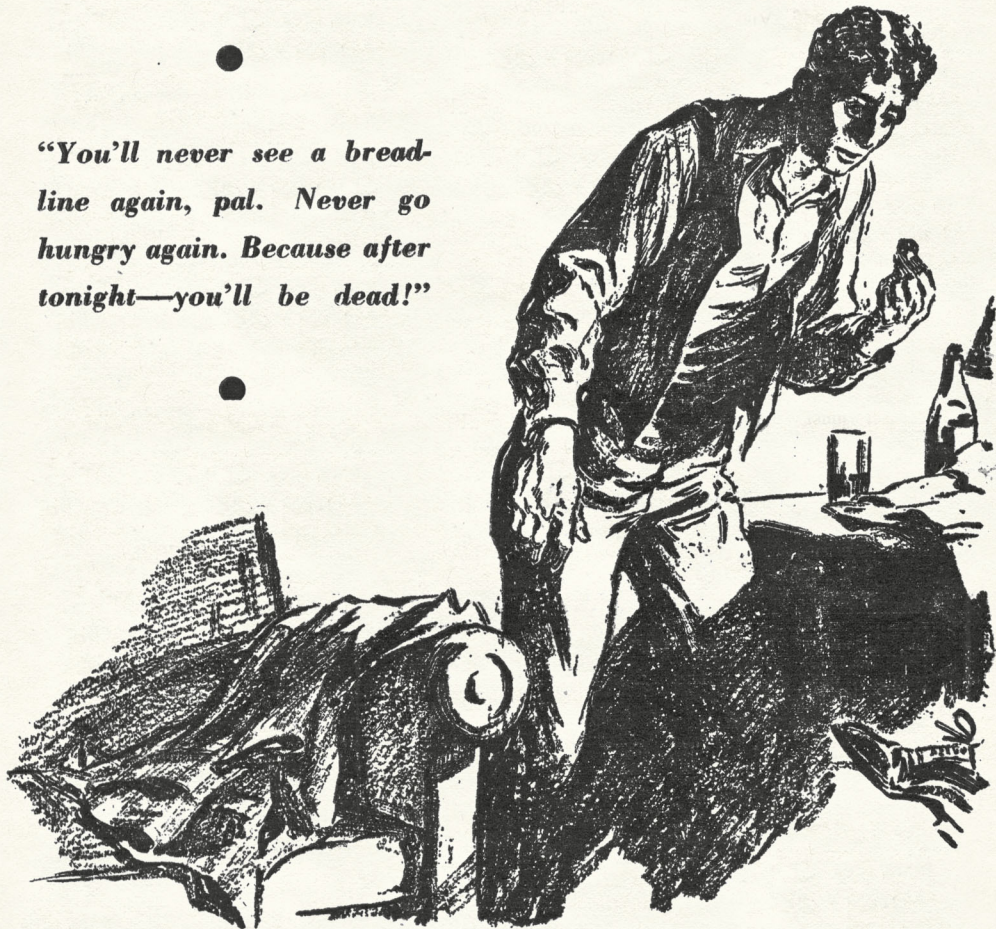
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CHAPTER ONE

I See You

THIS is the story of Deafy and Syd and Spanish Mary and Turkey Red, but it's really the story of a pair of green dice and a promise a hunky hopper made to a girl who turned him down. Or rather, it's the story of Syd Marriner, and what happened to a lot of people he knew.

Syd was going to die. In twelve hours or less they were going to walk him down that brief corridor to the little room at the end. They would strap him down and flick a switch and after a few more heartbeats he would have paid with his life for the life the state said he had taken.

It was seven o'clock. There was no reason why Turkey Red Slattery was hanging around at his desk. Even a chief inspector on homi-

"You guys can look now," I told them. "I got it—I'm the one who's gonna die. . . ."



cide keeps office hours, though he might tell you he doesn't. There was a woman with him. She was drawn with strain and her hair was mussed up and her eyes was red, but take all that away and she was beautiful.

Turkey Red sighed. His voice had a strange gentleness in it, which was unusual.

"You better get some sleep, kid," he said. "You look like hell." And then, as the woman continued to stare at him silently with her great grief-stricken eyes, "Damn it, Mary, it's all over! It's hell, but it's the law of this state. I spoke to the governor myself and he won't listen to a reprieve. We're through, baby."

The girl called Spanish Mary stared woodenly at him. Grief and horror seemed to have robbed her mind even of a sharp focus for her anguish. Somehow, the sight of fiery little Spanish Mary like that was more terrible to

Turkey Red than the horror in his own soul, so that for a time he couldn't find words.

Finally he said awkwardly, "It's like he was my own kid, Mary. You gotta know that—you and Deafy and Syd. You know the way I felt."

Mary raised her stricken eyes. "I only know one thing, copper," she said. "Syd is going to die. And I'll hate your guts as long as I draw a breath."

Turkey Red Slattery was tough, but not tough enough to meet that look and hold it. With a little despairing gesture he pointed to the sheaf of papers on his desk.

"I been reading Syd's statement," he said. "I see it in my sleep. I know every word in it. He had his chance, Mary. He could have copped a plea for second degree and got life. But he gambled all or nothing and drew

the book. He had his chance, Mary. And he lost."

The woman across the desk drew in a long shuddering breath. "He never had a chance—not with Deafy Geraghty's word against his."

Turkey Red passed a hand across his eyes. But when he would have spoken her voice knifed him into silence.

"Don't say it," she breathed. Don't say it—or I'll claw you to death with my bare hands."

The big man closed his eyes. He said, groping for the words, "We—I was good to you kids, Mary. I forgot a lot of things in the years since then. But when I walked a beat on Third Avenue, I played straight with you."

She wrung her hands together, a daft, lost gesture that somehow hurt Turkey Red like physical pain. He had come far since the Third Avenue days, but he had left things behind. Still, for the moment, the blanket of years came between them, dulling the horror in her eyes.

"I—I'll give you that," she said tonelessly. "Before you got to be a grafting big shot, you were a good copper. You—you were even a kind of hero to me then, I guess. But that day at Coney Island, the day Helen Geraghty died—"

Turkey Red's brows came together and he said harshly, "Don't, girl!" but her low, dead voice went on:

"You loved her, Turkey—like I love Syd. You'd have been a good man if she'd lived. And Deafy—wouldn't have been Deafy, if you hadn't tried to save his mother instead of him."

Turkey Red said, "I can't stand this, kid!" It came out like a groan. But the girl called Spanish Mary didn't hear.

"Three kids and a big dumb cop," she said. "Back on Third Avenue fifteen years ago. When it was a decent workingman's street. You were a good cop then, Turkey Red"—A shade of fire came back into her eyes—"But you've come a long way from Third Avenue, copper" she spat at him. "Far enough to make Deafy Geraghty, with your grafting money, into a devil who would kill his best friend. Now I'll tell you this—you'll get Syd free before morning. You'll do it. Or so help me God I'll—"

Without warning, the curtain came over her eyes, and the lights went out in her brain. The big man was just in time to catch her as she fell.

TURKEY RED pressed a buzzer. She was fragile, nice in his arms. It had been a long time since he had known what it meant to hold a girl close to him.

To the patrolman who stuck his head in the door, he said, "Take the lady home, Pat.

Get a doctor to shoot some sedatives into her, so she won't wake up until after it's—over."

Long after she had gone he sat at his silent desk, staring out into the coming night. The night that would come and go too soon, because a man was waiting to die at the end of it.

Three little kids, they had been. Dirty and hungry often, and ready for any hell that came along. Mary had been fiery, even then; Syd had been steady. Deafy—he drew a deep breath—Deafy had always been the wise one. Deafy, who was going to live while the other two died. For he knew without trying to think it out that the day they strapped Syd to the chair, Mary would follow him, somehow. She was that kind of a girl.

The sheaf of papers was on his desk. Wearily, as though he hated the thought, he picked them up again.

There was nothing that Syd could say any more. He'd had the best lawyer in town and it hadn't done any good. Re-reading his statement was just asking for more pain, for more certain knowledge of the hopelessness of hoping.

Only—that story about the death gamble—it was crazy, impossible, and yet there was something in it that stirred a dim chord in Turkey Red's memory. A chord he had to try to find, while the night lasted, or never live alone with himself again.

**SYDNEY MARRINER'S STATEMENT.
A TRANSCRIPTION FROM THE
COURT STENOGRAPHER'S RECORDS.
THIRD PRECINCT STATION, NEW
YORK, MAY 25, 1945.**

Okay, copper. You can take that light away. I told you I'd talk when you brought me in here.

Detective Sergeant F. C. Rainey: Go ahead and sing, Syd. As soon as we get this down on paper we can all go to bed.

Marriner: That's okay for you, copper. You can go home to a nice apartment in the Bronx. Maybe have a couple of quick ones at the corner on the way. Me—I got an apartment too. All furnished for two, and a month's rent paid. Mary and I were getting married next week. . . . Instead, I get—this!

Detective (first-grade) Morris Adelberg: I told you this would be a waste of time, Sarge. (To prisoner.) You're breaking our hearts, pal. Do you want that light in your eye again?

Rainey: I'll handle this, Ad. (To prisoner.) We'll treat you right, kid. But we've got to get your statement down. Lay off the sob stuff and give it to us straight. Go way back to the beginning and tell it your own way.

Marriner: Go back to the beginning! That's a laugh. I could go back so far that a lot of guys with gold shields would be pounding pavements again. Maybe one of them will, when I get through.

Adelberg: Ain't he the tough one! Punk, for two cents I'd—

Rainey: Shut up, I told you! Go ahead, Syd.

THE rest of the transcription is Sydney Marriner's statement, without subsequent interruptions:

Thanks for the beer, Rainey. After two days in that rat house, I could sure use it.

It's a funny thing, you giving me that. Because that was the way it started. With me sitting in a chair, like I am now, holding a drink in my hand.

I told you this was going back a long ways. Way back to '33, as a matter of fact. I'd been out West in a CCC camp and got kicked out for bellyaching about the food. Okay, Adelberg, laugh. You never had to eat cold beans from a tin plate with the grease from cold pork congealed on the side and coffee made out of last week's grounds. Most of the camps were okay. We just happened to have a grafting cook.

Anyway, I was on the loose again. Back at the old stand, after five years of bumming all over the world.

Third Avenue and Sixteenth Street. I was home again. Home—without a job or any chance of getting any. That was me. I wasn't very proud.

Three guys and a girl, orphans of the depression. Okay, I read that some place, but it fits. Stepchildren of a world that had forgotten them, or just didn't care. Sure, there were ten million other guys in the same boat, right here in the U. S. But we were too young and bitter to think much beyond ourselves.

I met Deafy on the corner of Eighteenth the second day after I hit town. He had a black homburg and a suit that was Harris tweed, or a good imitation. He had a shine on his shoes you could use for a mirror.

I had a hole in the sole of one shoe you could drop a half dollar through. I had a piece of newspaper wadded inside, but the paper was beginning to wear through and I had to be careful the way I walked. I had a hole in the seat of my pants and I didn't own a hat and I hadn't had a shave in two days.

I figured Deafy wouldn't know me. I hoped he wouldn't. You can't blame me for that.

But he ran out of the doorway and grabbed my arm. When he grinned I could see the expensive porcelain caps, covering the crooked teeth he used to have. It must have been a five hundred dollar job.

He said, "Syd Marriner! I thought you was dead or in jail. How goes it, kid?"

His little eyes were sharp as knives, going all over me. Not being able to hear, reading people's lips, had done that to him. I could

feel the dull flush of shame going up into my neck and face. I didn't have his handicap, and look at me. When you're twenty, able-bodied and willing to work, it seems a crime to be out of a job.

My grin must have been about as convincing as a Jap victory broadcast.

"I'm doing all right," I told him.

His little eyes were very knowing. If he had made any crack right then, I'd have socked those porcelain caps right down his throat. I was in no condition to be laughed at right then.

He said, "Yeah?" very softly.

I said, "I'm not on the bum, wise guy. In case you got any ideas—"

I pulled out the insurance check and waved it in front of his nose. One thousand bucks. The old man's insurance. It had been chasing me all over the country ever since he died. I'd picked it up that morning. Besides it, I had exactly thirty-seven cents.

Deafy said, "A grand. It could last you six months, with luck. After that—"

He shrugged, waved his hand along Third Avenue. It wasn't the kind of street any more where a man could pay premiums on a grand's worth of insurance. There were guys with apple stands—remember? On every corner. None of them were doing any business.

He said, "We're all on the bum, Syd. Don't let's kid ourselves." He must have read the same book I had, because he said, "We're the guys the world forgot. I got a few bucks in my jeans, and a new suit—that's the only difference. C'mon up and have a drink. There's some old friends of yours up in my apartment. We were just starting a party."

When I shook my head he didn't argue.

He said, "It's all right, Syd. Some other time, if you like." He tipped that twenty dollar homburg a little farther over one ear. It still didn't improve his looks. "Too bad you can't make it," he said carelessly. "Mary would have liked to see you."

I stopped dead in my tracks. It sounds pretty silly, but I'd come three thousand miles home, and hadn't known why. Not until Deafy said that. Then I knew.

"I—maybe I can come up, at that," I said, trying to sound nonchalant and failing utterly.

Shrugging, Deafy waited for me. He was staring straight ahead. There was a funny feverish light in his eyes.

I didn't know until later what that light meant. And when I did, it was too late.

That light in his eye meant murder.

And the dead man was going to be me!

I'LL take that other beer now, copper.

So then I was sitting in Deafy's duplex apartment with a silly grin on my face. I had a drink in my fist and a hole in my

pants, and my old gang around me, after all the years. After the first drink I borrowed Deafy's razor and made my face a little more human. After a couple more drinks I didn't feel ashamed any more, just glad to be back.

You know how it is, when you meet your old crowd again after a long time. At first you feel like an outsider. And then somebody starts gassing about something that happened way back when, and you remember something else that happened and mention it, and after a couple of minutes everything that's happened since is blotted away and you're back with them.

Yeah, I was back. But there was a difference.

Five years ago we were four crazy kids, ready for any kind of hell, grinning crooked grins at the world. There's no hell that can lick a kid. But five years of depression had done something worse to those grins. We were all trying to cover it up by laughing a little louder, drinking a little more—but we'd all found out we couldn't lick hell, either, and that you can't hide the fear in your eyes.

I got a little tight, very fast. And under the liquor a small corner of my brain was working double speed, sizing up the three people in that room with me.

There was Deafy, a little guy with a rat face and a million dollar front. Deafy had done all right, considering. I didn't want any part of him, but somehow I knew he'd never be anybody's punching bag again. He couldn't hear a thing, but his brains and eyes were always working overtime. It was funny, the way he could read your lips. As long as you looked at him when you spoke, he'd get the whole thing. Deafy would do all right.

There was Rannie. Quiet, steady Rannie. A lanky guy with a studious look. He was going to parley a night school diploma into a hundred grand and retire at forty. Five years ago, he was. Now he was just another hard-time Charlie, blaming Washington and Wall Street for what had happened to his dreams.

Plenty had, at that. He'd sold his nice furniture store for a song, just ahead of a bankruptcy judgment. Now he was just going through the motions, living on the last of his dough.

Rannie's eyes were the most haunted of all. You couldn't blame him.

There was—Mary.

At first I didn't know her. There was just a dark-haired doll in a slinky black dress, cut a little too low in front. She was a nice dish to look at, with the light from the window doing things to the gold glints in her hair.

She said, "Long time no see, Syd," in a husky low drawl that finished the job of sweeping out the years. That voice belonged to a skinny, long-legged hellion in skirts who could

swear like a dock hand, play a good third base and yet manage to look like a lady when she felt like it.

It was the dark lipstick that had fooled me. That, and the legs. A girl's legs change a lot between fourteen and nineteen, I guess. These were strictly showgirl, and that skirt wasn't hiding 'em any.

That was a hot one. Here I'd drifted back across the whole country to see little Spanish Mary again. Now she was right in front of me and all the things I had been going to say to her went out of my head. This wasn't the same girl.

I said, "You're doing all right, I see." My voice sounded harsh and funny in my ears.

"She's a big girl now," Deafy said, in that half sneering purr of his.

Rannie yawned. He was half canned already and there was an ugly look behind his eyes.

"Here he is, Mary," he said. "Your big moment. The guy who was coming back some day with dough in his pants and a ring in a box." He laughed.

They were all looking at me. I felt like the hole in my shoe was showing. I felt like hell, if you want to know.

I said, "Well, you see me, kid." I was trying not to look at the round curves of her, about half and half under that dress.

She finished her drink and stood up. She pulled her skirt down, very carefully. Her eyes met mine, in a long appraising stare, and I knew I had made a bad guess. They were the eyes of the kid I used to know, square and honest and hurt.

She said slowly, "Yeah. I see you."

She went out the door and her chin was very high. But her eyes were wet under the mascara.

Deafy said quickly, "She'll be back, Syd. Here's a drink in the meanwhile."

I buried my nose in a slug of Third Avenue bourbon and nodded. But it didn't take Rannie's chuckle to tell me the score.

She'd never be back. She was walking right out of my life with those million dollar legs.

That's as good a reason as I know for getting drunk. So I did.

CHAPTER TWO

Dice of Death

DID you ever really go on a tear, copper? The kind where the hours float into each other and your body goes away from your brain and life and death stand still?

It was ten A.M. when I took that first drink. The next time I looked out the window the street lights were on. Nothing had happened, except a day had gone. And yet I had

the nightmare feeling that something had changed in each of us. We looked the same and yet we didn't. I worked for an artist once, a good man. I used to watch him. Sometimes, with one stroke of the brush—maybe slant one eyebrow a hair-breath different—he'd change an ordinary face into something evil. Or an evil face to good. Something like that had happened to Deafy and Rannie. There was a kind of unholy eagerness in their eyes. Now I know why.

The trouble was, I had soaked up so much whiskey I didn't recognize that look. I was making a lot of wild talk about the lousy world we were living in. I was bitter and scared—but mostly I was still seeing Mary walk out of that room. I had ashes in my soul and a go-to-hell blackness in my heart. For five bucks I'd have cut my throat and for ten, anybody else's. I was a little crazy, I guess. The kind of craziness that you can only get when you're twenty-one.

I poured myself another drink. I was taking it almost straight now. And yet I had all my buttons. I remember watching how steady my hand was, holding the full glass.

Rannie was feeling sorry for himself in a corner. I remember thinking the guy was taking the loss of his store hard. Me, I'd never had anything to lose—except Mary.

Deafy showed those porcelain caps in a crooked grin. "The crying towel's in the kitchen."

I said, "Lay off the kid, big shot. It's easy for you to talk. You got dough and clothes and a chance. If you were like us, you couldn't take it either."

Most of it I didn't mean, really. It was a little like talking in a dream. In the dream both these guys were friends of mine—except maybe Deafy.

Deafy put down his drink. He didn't look sore, just terribly earnest, as though some idea had just hit him.

He said, "This is funny, gents."

"Like a corpse," I growled.

He looked right past me, not even hearing.

"Yeah," he said, very softly. He stood up. His hand, pointing at us, was shaking, but not from the drinks. Funny, I knew that even then, and thought nothing of it. There was something about Deafy that made him the leader. Even more than the teeth.

He said, "I got a thousand bucks to my name, Syd. So have you." He whirled. "Ran, how much dough is between you and selling apples?"

Ran shrugged, fished in his pocket, flipped a bank book across the room. Eleven hundred

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and sixty-eight dollars, the nice neat black figures said.

Deafy closed the book very carefully. His lips were working in and out. He was very pale.

"Three thousand bucks," he said softly.

I said, "Three or one. What's the difference? We'll all be in a breadline in six months."

Deafy's eyes were very bright. "Not three," he said. "A hundred grand. A guy could ride out even this kind of a depression with a hundred grand."

He said it with a kind of hungry reverence.

I said, "Okay, so we dream about a hundred grand. What the hell, we're all drunk, anyway. We'll split three ways—"

Deafy said, "*Two* ways, Syd. Fifty thousand bucks. Fifty bucks a week for life, just on the interest. You wouldn't make a hit with the Astorbilts, but you wouldn't have to worry, either."

Ran laughed harshly. "Lesh dream 'bout a million?" he said thickly. "Migh 'sh well dream about one as the other."

Deafy said, "It isn't a dream. It's here in our laps right now. If we got the guts to take it."

There was something in his face that made me feel my heart start to hammer.

Deafy said, "We can sit around here like cornered rats and wait for starvation. Or two of us can split a hundred grand."

I said, "What about the third guy, the guy who gets left out? Which one of us gives up a grand? Won't he have anything to say about this?"

Deafy shook his head. "The third guy won't know or care. He'll never see a breadline and never go hungry either. The third guy will be dead!"

WHAT DEAFY proposed was murder. He didn't call it that, of course. The way he told it, it was something stirring, almost good—a brave man's three-to-one shot for a good life.

You can sell a thing like that to a drunk, and we were drunk.

This was the idea: Here we were. Three young punks consigned to the scrap heap before we'd even begun to live. We had no jobs, no prospects—but we did have a thousand dollars apiece. Deafy's plan had a beautiful cruel simplicity and a brutal appeal. Men die for their ideals, or for the woman they love. Then, why not this?

He said we could pool the money and draw lots. Three grand would pay two years' premium on a hundred thousand dollar life insurance policy. Fifty bucks a week for life for two of us. And the third—he would have no worries, either. Dead men don't go hungry.

There was a dead silence when he finished talking. Hell, we were drunk. Ranny's mouth was hanging open stupidly, but his hands were opening and closing, handling furniture again, and the sound of his breathing was harsh in the silence. Me—I had no future, no girl, no friends. I had nothing to go back to. I had hit the bottom of the barrel. But I wanted Mary.

It was funny, in a way, like living just outside of a nightmare. A corner of my mind knew that the whole idea was insane. All of me knew this would never get me Mary—but if you've ever gambled, you know gamblers wouldn't exist without odds. The odds are what make people play. There was a queer, unholy eagerness hammering in my brain.

Deafy threw three dice down on the table. Almost detachedly I examined them, gave them to Rannie. He glanced at them, tossed them back. They were the same size, felt the same. Only—two of them were white and one was green. I knew what Deafy was going to say before he ever said it.

"We could throw 'em in a pillow case," Deafy said. "That is, if we had nerve enough. We could draw in turn. The one who came out with the green dice would take the three thousand and get insured, naming the other two as beneficiaries. It's—all there is to it."

I took a deep breath.

"I don't know about the rest of you," I said. I don't think I quite believed what was happening; still, I wanted to believe it. My voice, I remember, was steady, though it didn't sound like me. "Me—I'm ready. What are we waiting for?" There, that was it. I felt like I'd jumped out of a twenty-story building, without hurting myself a bit.

Deafy's drawn-in breath was like a sigh. He poked Rannie on the shoulder.

"That leaves you, kid," he said shakily. "We can have another drink and forget the whole thing. Or—in five minutes two of us will have a hundred grand coming to us within a year. What's the answer, Rannie?"

"Yeah," I grinned, "what's the matter, Rannie?"

You know how it is when the dentist says you have to have a tooth pulled in—say, six weeks. It's easy to make an appointment. Six weeks is a long time off. Besides, we were all tight. I could see Rannie's little eyes narrow, and from what was going on in my mind, I could tell what he was thinking. He had a two to one chance of winning—and if he lost, he could run away, go to the police. . . . There were a lot of ways a guy could pull a double-cross on a deal like this one. Time enough to worry about losing, when you stood no chance to win.

Greed and fear were naked in his eyes—I felt a little sick, knowing I felt that way my-

self. A little sick—and a little cocky because the sickness didn't show.

I turned to Deafy. "Get the pillow case before this hero faints on us."

Deafy threw the dice in a dirty pillow case. It lay there on the table. A soiled little shapeless square, open at one end, with Death inside it.

Rannie's teeth were chattering and he sat down, as though the hinges had gone out of his knees.

I said, "This was your baby, Deafy. Go ahead and draw first." And, as he hesitated, "Draw, damn you! We can't stand this too long." I knew he was more scared than I was.

I held the pillow case down, so he couldn't possibly see inside. He made a little motion like he was praying, stiffened and fumbled for the opening. His hand was shaking so that he caught his thumb on the end and had to start all over again. He closed his eyes. I could see his hand inside, groping under the cloth. It clenched and came out. He wouldn't open his fist. I forced his fingers apart. Rannie's sobbing breath was hot against my ear. I could have killed him for it, because I knew that in the next moment he was praying for my death.

Deafy had drawn a white dice. It wasn't a two-to-one shot any more. It was either Rannie or me.

I said, "You want to go, Rannie?"

Rannie put his hand on the cloth and jumped back as though he had touched a snake.

"I—I can't," he breathed. His face was like putty.

I was still seeing the loathing on Mary's face when she walked out of the room. I laughed. My throat was dry.

"Here goes nothing," I said. My hand didn't shake at all under the cloth. I touched a hard little square, remembered that I had guessed wrong for three straight years, let go the dice and found the other one. I pulled my hand out.

Deafy's lips were bloodless. I grinned crookedly.

"You can open your eyes, hero," I said to Rannie. "You won't have to draw now." Like a man in a dream I watched him slobber his thanks over the evil little thing on the table.

I had drawn the green dice.

I had something under a year to live.

I'M NO hero.

I stayed drunk for two weeks, trying to figure it out. Deep down inside me there was a shrieking cold fear that only whiskey could put to sleep. It was all right during the day. During the day it didn't seem real—I was sure it couldn't be. But three or four in the morning was bad. I used to wake up, trying to yell, my clothes sticking to me

and the pillow wet with sweat. And I'd see Deafy's eyes for some time after I awoke, staring at me. I had a bottle beside the bed and I'd push a pint down quick until my heart would stop hammering and my guts came back.

Deafy was having me watched. I knew that. So I went through the motions. Sometime that first week I went to the insurance doctor, in the meantime trying to think of a way out. I had so much bad alcohol in me that my heart should have showed it. But the old guy with the stethoscope only grinned, a little enviously.

"Nothing wrong with *that* ticker," he said. "I ought to make you sober up, but—" He sighed, scratched his head. "Not many men can afford a good drunk these days. Don't drink too much and keep your nose clean. You'll live to be a hundred."

I remembered the puzzled look on his face, hearing me laugh. It didn't sound like a hundred thousand dollar laugh, even in my own ears. And yet, in a way you might say it did.

I was certified and delivered. Deafy knew all about it. Don't ask me how, but he let me know.

It made me sore. I'd kept my word. From now on I was a dead man waiting for a funeral. All I had to do was go through the motions, until somebody decided it was time to deliver the carcass. Deafy was clever enough not to give me anything to take to the police—my death, I knew, wouldn't be simple murder.

Like I said, I'm no hero. I stayed on that bender. It was easier that way. I moved in a mist, where time and everything else vanished and there was only the whiskey and the fear. I could have left town—but suddenly I knew that wouldn't have helped. Deafy had a plan. You coppers figured in it just as much as I.

It could have been a week, it could have been two months when the landlady knocked at my door one morning and told me Deafy wanted to see me.

This was the payoff.

Somehow, I was almost glad.

THEY were sitting at the table in Deafy's living room. There a nearly full bottle between them. Their eyes had a funny half scared look. Somehow that made me feel better. At least they weren't happy about the thing.

Deafy took a long look at me and his face went a little grey. He needed a shave and his collar was open at the throat.

Rannie choked. His little weak mouth trembled, like a kid's does when he is going to cry.

He said, "Look at the guy! Damn you, I

said all along we never should have—" He started to go for the door and Deafy said, "Come back here! You're in this as much as I am."

I took a long drink out of the bottle. I didn't feel so good myself. There was a full-length mirror right across from me and when I leaned forward to put the bottle back a white-faced scarecrow with burning red eyes shot up in front of me.

I nearly dropped the bottle, until I saw that it was myself.

The drink took hold almost at once. I was so soaked in it that I could get a fine stew on in three minutes these days.

I said, "Okay, money-bags. Here's your meal ticket."

Deafy swallowed hard. His little eyes were darting around the room, as if he were trying to escape. But I could see the bulge of a shoulder holster inside his coat. I was wondering whether they were going to be crazy enough to give it to me here, in this room. I opened my mouth to say that it was too soon, anyway, but no sound came out. It was crazy, fantastic—not a thing that could happen. Yet if I knew Deafy it was going to.

Deafy lit a cigarette. He seemed to be having a hard time finding the words.

He said, "Don't move while I'm talking, Syd. It wouldn't be—healthy." He had one hand ready, near that gun. His other hand came out from inside his coat. I didn't want to look but I couldn't stop myself.

He held out a piece of folded pink paper—that was all.

Deafy said, "We tried to find you for two weeks, Syd. I just caught up with you this morning."

That was a lie, because he had been watching me right along.

It made me sore.

"I wasn't running away," I said thickly. "You made sure of that."

There was a funny sort of look in his eyes. He said, very quietly, "I never figured you were yellow. I never thought you'd really take a powder."

He threw the paper across the table. Like a man in a dream I picked it up. It was the check I had given him for a thousand bucks. My share of the murder dough.

And it had never been re-indorsed.

He said, almost brokenly. "We were crazy drunk that day, Syd. We thought it was funny seeing you squirm. The insurance doctor was a phoney. We were behind a screen, watching. Didn't you notice—he didn't even know how to work the blood pressure gauge. And then when we sobered up, when we saw it had gone too far, we couldn't find you to tell you. My god, kid, you look like—"

I stood up. I was still dazed. There was a

roaring in my ears like the surge of the sea. My mind jumped at what he told me—it was what I wanted to believe. I should have been happy, I guess. But my fists balled suddenly and there was a wet mist in front of my eyes, blinding me.

Deafy shrank back, almost upsetting the chair. He said in a scared voice, "The money, Syd. It's all yours. Don't—"

From a long distance, it seemed, a voice that I knew was mine was mumbling:

"A gag—why, you—you—"

I fell on my face and the lights went out.

OKAY, you guys—you asked for this. Anyway I'm not going anywhere tonight. This isn't as long-winded as it sounds.

You'll see what I mean in a minute.

I'll skip the next ten years. You know all about me during that time, anyway. That fat-necked Adelberg's got a record that shows every time I brushed my teeth, from the look on his puss.

But there's one thing that record can't show. The change in a guy who is going to die—and suddenly finds he can live.

I was sick as hell for six weeks. Flat on my back, with nothing to do but think. The cure—I took it. I had tried my damndest to kill myself with liquor and fear and no food. And then I thought what the hell! I was young and I was going to live forever and I had a thousand bucks! What else would a guy want?

I worked for fifteen bucks a week in a department store. I laid off the firewater and smoked a pack of cigarettes a week. I went to bed early. It took me six months to save enough dough to get a new suit. After that I found a little steel jobber on Third Avenue who had some ideas and no dough and I put the thousand in the business. We're still making money. I paid three thousand dollars income tax last year, in case you didn't find that out.

What I'm trying to say is, I got along. I played golf twice a week now and joined the Kiwanis Club and began to worry about my waistline. It took a year to get Mary to speak to me again and two more to make her like me, but I did it.

She's been wearing a ring of mine for quite a while. We were going to do something about it next week.

Two weeks ago last Thursday the thing happened.

It was a good day, warm without too much wind. I had been working pretty hard and figured that eighteen holes of golf would iron out some of the kinks.

I tried to get up a foursome, but it was the middle of the week, and I finally gave up and

drove out to the club alone. There was a guy hanging around the first tee waiting for a game, and I went around with him.

We had a drink in the bar first. His name was Jim Clarkson and he drank very dry martinis without the olive, in case Adelberg wants to put it down on his little pad.

Going out to the first tee he said, "What do you want to play—a dollar a hole?"

I'm no dope. This guy had shoulders like a four-handicap man and he had a set of matched clubs that must have cost three hundred bucks if they cost a nickel. I said, "Too steep for me, pal. I'll shoot you a quarter a hole if you want to."

I remembered, just as I teed up, he was looking at me kind of funny. But then I hooked my first shot into the woods and by the time I had blasted it out I forgot all about the other thing.

By the time we got to the third hole I saw I had figured this Clarkson wrong. He was long off the tee but he was wild as hell, and he took three putts on nearly every green. I was five up when he went in the club house for a repeat on those martinis. They serve a good drink up there.

We parked it over in a shady corner. He wasn't very happy about losing. You know the way some of these wise guys are—big shots until they get behind the eight ball, and then they start crying.

He suggested another drink but I had had enough. That funny look was still in his eyes, I noticed.

I got up. I wanted to take a shower before I got chilled. And then this Clarkson threw the thing at me that spoiled my day—and every day since. He said, kind of nasty, "There's something I could never figure out about guys like you. Like Rockefeller, giving dimes away. Or you shooting a quarter a hole."

That was a laugh. I was thinking, these new slacks must be as snappy as the salesman was telling me. I said, "I don't know about Rockefeller, chum. I play for a quarter a hole because I'm a lousy golfer, even if I did beat you. Also, I can't afford to play for any more. Okay?"

He probably wouldn't have said anything, but the crack about the golfing got him steamed up all over again. He ordered another drink for himself. He had had a few too many, I guess. He said, "Funny—I'd say I was the one who ought to be looking out for the pennies—not you, one of our star customers."

I must have looked surprised because this guy's face got a little puzzled. He said, "Isn't your name Marriner—Sydney Marriner, of Marriner and Johnson on Third Avenue?"

I nodded. It was all Heile Selassie to me. He buried his nose in his martini. "Well, then," he said, "a guy who can pay premiums

Behind me somebody yelled. I didn't look around. I ran. . . .



on a hundred thousand dollar, life insurance policy usually carries a little more folding money around with him—if it's any of my business. Which it isn't."

I had started to walk out the door because the words didn't seem to mean anything. Then suddenly I did a double take, and turned around. My heart was beating funny and there was a queer cold feeling in the pit of my stomach. And I was seeing Deafy's eyes again.

Clarkson looked up, surprised. "No offence," he said. "I—what's the matter? You sick or something?"

I sat down. My voice sounded thick. "Tell me a little more about that insurance policy," I said.

You know how these insurance guys are when anybody starts talking shop. He forgot all about being sore, and smacked his lips over his drink.

"Hell, there isn't anything to tell," he said. "Your policy is in my department, that's all. And I haven't enough hundred-thousand dol-

lar ones to forget the names. I thought I was going to have to write you about the last premium. It was a day late and I didn't want it to lapse. But the check came in yesterday. That's how I happened to remember the name when we were introduced. You've been paying premiums on that thing for ten years now, Marriner. How about doing some more business with us? You're getting on to thirty now. I'd say. About the time a guy has to think about his future. Any time you want to—hey, where are you going?"

I was walking out the door. The sunshine had gone away and a cold sick horror was inside me again. A feeling I hadn't had for ten long years.

"I'm going to think about my future, like you said," I told him, and went out of the locker room.

I HAD a date with Mary that night, but I didn't keep it. I didn't go back to my apartment, either. I hired a room in a midtown hotel, registered under a phony name. I had a quart of rye sent up to my room and sat on the bed, thinking.

I had a lot to think about. Like the day six months before when the plate in the piece of roof coping fell off a building on Third Street, just as I was going by, missing me by only a couple of feet. Or the time I got that bad attack of ptomaine and nearly kicked in. I was remembering what the doctor told me when I paid the bill.

"You're a lucky man," the doctor had said. "It's funny the way bad food will do things to a man. From the examination of your stomach, I could have sworn that you had taken a deadly poison."

I was thinking, too, of the way I had left my door unlocked for months at a time, so that anybody who wanted to could just walk in when I was asleep.

In short, I was scared again. This was like ten years ago. Only now it was worse. Now I had something to live for.

I was scared, plenty. But I was fighting mad, too.

There was one thing I could do, of course. I could go to the police and dump the whole thing in their laps. I could go to Turkey Red and tell him the whole story about the insurance murder gamble.

I didn't, for two reasons.

In the first place, I think the average cop is dumb as hell. Sorry, but you asked for this. You guys are hot stuff in the back room with a rubber hose and a guy who can't hit back. But when they passed around the brains a lot of you were at the end of the line.

But the real reason I didn't go to the cops was I was too sore. Sore enough to take revenge on two smart guys with murder in

their souls. The kind of revenge that would hit them where it hurt the most—their pocket-books. I doped out a plan of my own.

Here's the way I figured it out. That insurance policy had been in effect ten years now. Why hadn't they killed me in the meanwhile? I thought a lot about that one, and some of the answers weren't too tough. In the first place, Rannie wouldn't have the guts, anyway. In the second place, Deafy had been in the big dough for several years. There's some guys in this police department who could tell you how he made it, but we won't go into that. I guess you're not any more grafting than any other coppers.

Ten years. That meant that Deafy or Rannie or both of them had paid about twenty-five thousand bucks into that policy, waiting until they really needed the big dough. And at the end of the third year, that money they had paid in under my name represented a good solid cash surrender value. Anytime I wanted to go to the office and cash it in I could pick up a hell of a big check.

All I had to do was stay alive until the next morning, get down to the office and void the policy. Then they would be completely out of luck. They wouldn't even have a motive for killing me then. They would just be out twenty-five thousand dollars. Knowing Deafy for what he is, I couldn't think of a better way to hurt him.

It was a long night. I locked the door from the inside, pulled the curtains down and stayed away from the window. I ran out of cigarettes about two in the morning, but I was so jittery I couldn't bring myself to call down for a pack. Somehow the thought of footsteps coming down that hall, and then a knock at my door, was more than I could stand.

It's funny the way panic can mushroom inside a man, until it owns him completely. My nerves are as good as the next guy's, I guess, but there was a scar in my brain, a ten-year-old scar that had been rubbed raw again. And I could feel myself beginning to go to pieces. I had a crazy idea—what if, after all this time, tonight was the night I was supposed to die? I was so close to safety now. The insurance company opened up shop at nine. I could get a cab in front of the hotel and be over there in twenty minutes. I was planning to slump down in the back seat so that nobody could see my face in the window. That's how completely, unreasonably scared I was of Deafy.

It was crazy, of course. If I had had any sense I would have known that no one had recognized me when I came in and they certainly wouldn't find out anything by looking at the register. It was crazy. But it was very real, that fear—so real that I was soaked with sweat.

It was the longest night I ever spent. The slow minutes crawled by. I kept looking at my watch to see if it had stopped, because the hands didn't seem to move. Once, somewhere around four, I threw myself down on the bed and closed my eyes, but the sound of someone going down the hall brought me to my feet, my heart pounding like a trip hammer.

After that I walked up and down the room until daylight came.

No one was in the elevator but a bunch of old hens. The lobby was crowded, but I didn't see anyone I knew. Anyway, it was too late now. I took a deep breath and pushed through the people. I had a newspaper jammed up close to my face as though I were reading. I went through the swinging door, out on the sidewalk. There was a cab about half a block away. I hailed it but the driver didn't see me. I started to walk up to it.

Beside me a voice said, "Hiya, Syd. Long time no see."

It couldn't happen, but it did. I looked around. It was Rannie, all right. He had a funny crooked grin slanting across his lips. He looked kind of pleased. He looked like all those nightmares rolled into one. He looked like Death.

I didn't think. I couldn't. All the time I'd thought, I'd been sure it wouldn't be Rannie. Yet there he was. With his hands in his pockets and I thought I could see a bulge in one of them. I swung a haymaker that started from the sidewalk and finished right on his button. The shock of the impact went all the way up to my elbow. He seemed to come apart at the knees, and the next thing I knew he was all over the sidewalk.

Sprawling, there, but still dangerous. Or so it seemed to me.

Behind me somebody yelled. I didn't look around. I ran for that cab and told the driver to get the hell away from there.

And that's all I know about it, boys. You guys picked me up two hours later and said that Rannie was dead, with the back of his

head bashed in. I hit him on the chin. He didn't hit his head when he fell down, not like that. You'll have to figure the rest of it out yourself.

I didn't kill Rannie. But I wanted to. I wanted to for ten years.

Sergeant Rainey: It's a nice story, Syd. But it's no good. Your bank account shows annual withdrawals approximately the amount of the insurance premiums, for one thing.

Marriner: Damn it, I told you about playing the horses at Jamaica every spring. Surely you can't—

Rainey: Maybe I can't, but twelve men in a jury box can. I think you're going to the hot seat, kid.

(The accused was taken back to his cell at this point.)

CHAPTER THREE

All Bets Coppered

TURKEY RED stirred, opened his eyes. The office was cold. His neck muscles were cramped and stiff. The sun had gone down. He'd been mulling over that stenographic report for three hours.

Syd was guilty as hell, of course. But it was tough on Mary.

He sighed. Women hadn't changed any, he guessed. Saints or bums—they'd go through hell for one man, right down to the end of the road. It was too bad Mary had to know that hell, though.

There was one thing he could do for her. Deafy's testimony would sew this case up for the state, if he could make it stick. He'd give that smart young punk the scare of his life and see what happened. It wouldn't do Syd any good, of course. Even if Deafy were in it up to his neck, he'd be smart enough to cover his tracks.

One thing smelled to heaven, of course. Syd hadn't lied about one thing. That insurance policy *was* on the books, with Deafy



**TOPS FOR
QUALITY**



and Ran as beneficiaries. The day Syd went to the chair, Deafy stood to cop one hundred thousand dollars. The insurance company would contest, of course, on the basis of Syd's fantastic story. But they wouldn't have a leg to stand on. The very fact that nothing had happened to Syd during the ten years the policy had been in force made Syd's story ridiculous on the face of it. Those bank withdrawals clinched it.

He rubbed his red face, stared out into the darkness. Eight blocks away the tracks of the Third Avenue el glinted dully in the half light, a vast four-pronged serpent half coiled over the never-ending drama of life and death in the cobbled street below. Drab drama, for the most part. But not this time.

Turkey Red measured the years somberly. It was hard to remember those days now. The Third Avenue el in the moonlight—yes; but not other things. A guy had to shut the door on his past in this game. There wasn't time to look back.

A tarnished metal mirror stood on his desk. On a vagrant impulse he picked it up, scowled at the face which stared, half curiously back at him, florid, heavy jowled. The lips were sneering a little, at himself. The eyes, heavy-lidded, were wise, knowing of himself and other people—and a little corrupt with the things they had seen. As though the blood and the misery he had touched had left its faint mark on them.

It was a strong face but not a particularly good one, he decided. Case-hardened, stolid, with little selfish lines slanting away from the corners of the mouth. Slightly on the make, scarred with the climb up the ladder. A guy with a face like that would never go hungry. But he'd never have many friends come to his funeral.

Yeah, he'd moved away from Third Avenue. Maybe, in some ways, he'd moved too far. But he was going back there tonight. For the last time.

DEAFY opened the door a crack. His wary little eyes slitted for a second, then relaxed.

He said, tightly, "You're wasting your time, Red. I've said everything I know. But I can't stop you from coming in."

Turkey Red pushed not gently and the door flew back.

"No," he said placidly. "You can't."

The kid had always been sullen, he was thinking. Not that he could blame him. To go through all your days without ever hearing a mortal sound, never even a girl's laugh in the spring. . . .

His shrewd old eyes appraised the three-room apartment. A nice little layout. That radio was worth five hundred bucks whole-

sale. There was a rug on the floor you could sink your feet into an inch. It took a lot of moola to rig a joint like this. Too much for a guy who'd never worked in his life.

Deafy said, "Take a good look, chum. It ain't much but it's home. You can look in the drawers if you want to waste some time. But you won't even find a policy slip."

Turkey Red nodded.

"No, I guess I wouldn't," he admitted. And then, "You could give me a drink, kid. You owe me that much, I guess."

The younger man shrugged ungraciously, then laughed.

"Yeah," he said, "go ahead and spy around, fella. I'll leave you all alone." He went out into the kitchen. He didn't look back.

The big man sighed. It was too bad. But life could do that to a guy, and there wasn't any cure. He opened a closet door. Stuffed solid with suits, custom made and very good. Deafy was doing all right.

There was a highboy beside the window. He considered the idea of running through the drawers, shrugged and rejected the notion. There wouldn't be anything there. Or anywhere else. Not even—

He lurched forward noiselessly. His breath sucked in sharply. It was crazy. But he could have sworn—

His big fist closed on something on the top of the dresser, unbelieving. Closed and opened spasmodically, as though in a paroxysm of pain.

He went over by the window and stared at his opened palm. The blood was thick in his temples.

For all his bulk, Turkey Red could move with catlike silence. Drawing a deep breath, he went into the kitchen. Deafy was doing things with a decanter of bourbon and some ice cubes. He whirled around when he felt the touch on his arm. Whirled around, snarling incredulously at the manacle on his left wrist. And then the bigger man was dragging him into the living room, where the long divan was.

Deafy said, "Damn your soul. I'll—"

Until he saw what Turkey Red had in his right hand. After that he locked his lips. But the dawn of horror was in his eyes.

A green dice. A little shiny passport to death.

Turkey Red closed his eyes. His voice was husky, groping through the years. When he spoke, it was as though to himself.

"I bought it for your mom at Coney Island that day," he said slowly. "It was the last thing I ever was to do for her. A little green hat pin with a dice on top. I—" he shook his head doggedly, trying to throw the pain away. "The pavilion buckled while she was there waiting for me. When I got her out,

she was dead and you were a cripple for life."

He opened his palm. There was a smear of blood there, red against the green stone.

"You couldn't even gamble your life without cheatin'," Turkey Red said harshly. "You knew the green dice had a sharp place on it—where you had broken the pin off, close to the stone. He could forgive a lot of things, son. But—you couldn't lose. When you felt the pin prick your hand, you picked one of the other dice. Rannie or Syd was going to die—for a guy who didn't have the guts to play fair."

Deafy said hoarsely, "You can't prove a thing!"

The big man sighed.

"I don't have to," he said. "That little pinpoint will tell the whole story. That and Syd's statement. It'll send you straight to where you was sending him. Kid, I'm—"

He stopped, tensing. It wasn't Deafy's arm that was jammed against him. When he looked down he could see the blue glint of the gun on the other man's free hand.

Deafy's lips were bared in a snarling grimace that had madness in it.

He said thickly, "You know a lot, copper. Suppose you unlock this gadget. We can't do any business this way."

There was a pounding in Turkey Red's temples, but his face was mask-like as ever. He reached in his pocket, groping for the key.

He was going to die. Strangely he didn't

care too much. But it was going to be hard, crossing the line, remembering the look on Mary's face. A guy had to get it some time. A bullet was more merciful than dying in bed. But Syd's would be the worst death of all.

He said, "We can talk this over, kid. After all, I'm your—"

Deafy screamed then, lunging for the shining glint in the darkness.

The glint the key made, going out the window, into the black nothing below.

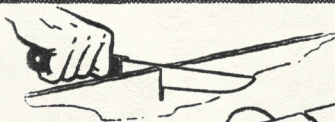
Deafy exhaled, a long shuddering sigh that was like the hiss of a cornered snake. His fingers whitened against the gun. For a sick moment Turkey Red thought the other man would blast him then and there.

And then the little man struck once, savagely and without warning. A red wave of agony shot into Turkey Red's eyes, blotting out the world. He felt himself falling. And then, for a long time, he knew no more.

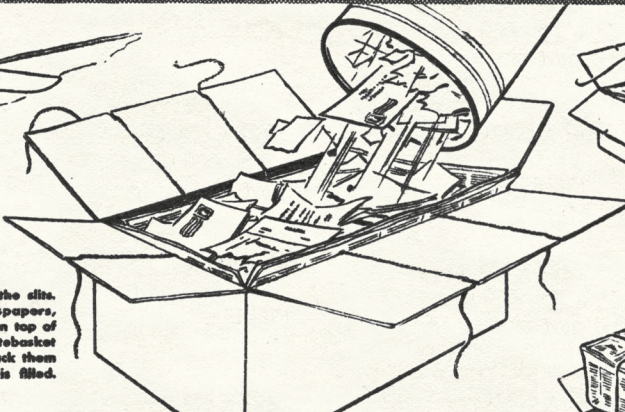
HE OPENED his eyes, groaning. For a spell nothing came into focus. There was only blackness—blackness tinged with the hurt that would not leave him. Shaking his head, he sat up. An immediate wave of white fire shot into his head, and he tried to put his hand up to the wound.

Steel bit into his wrists, bruising, tearing his muscles. The excruciating agony cleared his head and he could see again, and remember.

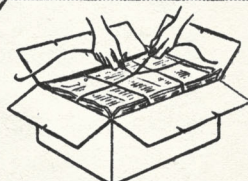
Here's an easy way to send your wastebasket paper to war!



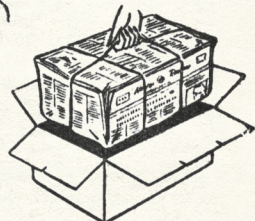
1 Cut two slits, about one inch deep, in each side flap and one slit in each end flap of a corrugated cardboard box.



2 Place three pieces of cord inside the box, with their ends through the slits. Line the box with newspapers, placing the wastebasket scraps into the box and pack them down tight until the box is filled.



3 Lay a newspaper on top of the packed-down scraps. Tie your bundle tight. Lift it out, and your box is ready to start again.



SAVE ALL YOUR PAPER AND TURN IT IN ON COLLECTION DAY!



Make a separate bundle of wrapping paper, bags, and corrugated and cardboard boxes, mashed flat.

Make a separate bundle of newspapers and another separate bundle of magazines



4 Save every scrap of paper. Save it and turn it in to help win the War. Your waste paper isn't waste paper unless you waste it!

The room was not quite pitch dark. A little light filtered in from the street. Beside him, he could dimly see Deafy—and Deafy's face was working strangely in the shadows. A cigarette hung from Deafy's lips.

"You had a chance to live," Deafy said grimly. "Until you threw that key away. Now—" He seemed to have made up his mind. And it was a good mind, Turkey Red knew. A mind good for evil.

As though studying a problem, Turkey Red husked, "You can't shoot me, kid. How you going to drag a two hundred pound corpse around with you? The only way you can get that thing off is at headquarters, boy. It's the end of the road."

Deafy nodded. The murder flame in his eyes burned brighter.

"Get up," he said. And when the big man stared, uncomprehending, "You want I should hit you some more?"

When he fought to his feet, the dizziness came in great blinding waves, so that for a moment he sagged against his captive. And then his legs held him upright.

Deafy's lips were bared in a snarl that was born of desperation and an insane urge for vengeance that he was visibly fighting to hold in check.

"Listen close, copper," he said. "I'm taking you two blocks down the street. You will walk close against me and you will not open your mouth. Because if you do, there's six bullets in this thing. Five of 'em will go into your guts and the other one in my head."

Deafy jerked him to the door. The pain in his wrist sent a stifled groan to the big man's lips. He must have broken something when he fell.

"Mary," Deafy explained coolly, "had her chance. Until she decided Syd Marriner was a better meal ticket than me. I'll get her—but my own way. You and Syd come first."

They were out on the silent street. There wasn't a soul in sight. Turkey Red stumbled beside Deafy, going south. With that hurt in his wrist, taking Deafy to headquarters was impossible, even apart from the gun.

Deafy said tightly, "Hanley's warehouse. I can get in. We'll get those cuffs off there. Then we can talk it over."

Patiently the big man started to say, "But you can't, boy. There's no way you could ever—"

And then he stopped.

There was a way, of course. Handcuff steel couldn't be cut with the strongest saw. But—he gagged a little—flesh and bones could. Deafy would have a way to separate himself from the man he hated. It wouldn't be a pretty way, but it would work.

There was something solid in his free hand. He had held it all this time, without knowing

it. The green dice, the thing that could save Syd, if it could get it down to headquarters and tell his story. The dice that would send Deafy to hell.

There was one block to do. One dark little lane to hell he would walk for the last time, and then he would walk no more, anywhere. Turkey Red's shoulders straightened. Off in the distance he could hear the rumble of a big crosstown truck, starting out for the East River Parkway. It was funny, the way things came back, now that he had perhaps ten minutes to live. This very block—he had walked it on his beat every night for twelve years. And after, going to Helen Geraghty's house, before she died. Now Helen's boy was going to kill him.

"Take care of him," Helen had said.

A hell of a way he had kept his word. But now it was too late.

Deafy walked straight along, pulling at a cuff. His head was pitched forward, in the oddly sleep-walking posture a totally deaf man acquires through long years of silence.

It was too late, but—

Turkey Red's ears stirred. The rumble of the truck was closer, coming to the corner. There wasn't much of a chance, but—

His free hand pointed straight up the street, away from the thunder. He saw Deafy's hand on the gun tighten. But the little man was too close to safety now to shoot. Deafy said, "Damn you, keep going. I told you what I'd—"

But Deafy's eyes—his eyes were following that pointing finger, trying to ferret out the possible danger.

With a little sobbing prayer, Turkey Red hurtled off the curbing after that hurrying figure . . . while the thunder at his right came down and mixed with the sky and the world. Strangely, he thought, just before the blackness came, it didn't hurt so much.

They tell that story down at headquarters now, how they dug Turkey Red out from under the wheels of a truck, so crushed against another man's body that they couldn't tell who was who. And the doctor they got barely bothered to look for a sign of life, because it was plain that both of them had to be dead in that condition. Didn't until he saw that the big man's lips were moving. Moving long enough to tell that Deafy had confessed to Ranny's murder.

And on the stenographic records, the last words have been crossed off. They were whispered so low that the police stenographer figured he had them wrong, as even a copper can do.

It sounded like, "I'm looking after him, always, Helen . . ."

But that didn't make sense.

Or did it?

BURY ME NOT

By Cyril Plunkett



Georgie stood there, bleating, "W-what's the matter, Spence?"

● *He with hate and cunning, she with love and care, each of them proved to the other all over again that he who dies last—laughs least!* ●

IT BEGAN on Wednesday morning, in March.

"Spence," she said, pointing to her garden spot, the strip of rich black loam just outside the farmhouse window. "Spence," she said, laughing in the way she had of late, "you'll be surprised this year. I'm going to raise nothing but flowers."

The garden was hers; there were acres he would put to truck use. So, essentially, he had

nothing against her raising flowers. He was mad about her, she could have had anything she wanted. Had she said, "Do you think we should raise flowers?" nothing would have happened.

It was the way she said it, and her laughter.

She was always teasing him and making jests. She liked it when his eyes would open wide. She would clap her hands and laugh just like a child about surprises. But this, of

course, was different. It was the dreamy new look, with the laughter in her deep brown eyes. It was the secret that he knew she had and was keeping from him. It was Georgie Marvin.

"Georgie suggest flowers?" he said queerly.

Georgie was the star, the boarder. The man who came to dinner. The man who could laugh long and loud at anything she said. Georgie was her distant cousin from Detroit, the fly that had got in the ointment.

"Georgie suggest flowers?" he said. And he felt the tension in him. He felt like a balloon inflating under gas. His hands began to clench, unclench, his heart to pound and his breath to quicken. Just her laughter always did that to him. Just hearing Georgie's name always did that to him.

"No," he growled, "I'm telling you. There'll be no flowers."

Wednesday that was, in March. A dry, warm day, and all day long he worked the upper sixty. All day long the tractor motor roared; yes, far into the night, Wednesday night, and into Thursday morning. Then—Thursday morning Spence Colson went to see the sheriff.

HE SAT down in the sheriff's brown little office, a broad, big man, older than his wife by ten full years. Older than his years. He was thirty-two, looked forty; he knew now why the sheriff's eyes narrowed. Because he hadn't shaved since, since Tuesday. And he hadn't slept—since Tuesday. He knew his eyes were bloodshot.

"Trouble on the farm, Spence?" Sheriff Helm asked.

The sheriff was blue-eyed, with something in his eyes that never was quite clear. Amazingly, for a man sworn to action, he had a hobby—flowers. Helm was famous for his flowers. People came for advice and seeds from far and near.

Spence Colson tried to put all this from his mind, to put his wits in order. But never swift in thought they strayed, leaped, betrayed him. There was pain still in his mind, unabated, burning like a live, new coal. He shook himself, cursed the pain, swam away from it and said then,

"Sheriff, it's Marda."

"Your wife?"

Of course Sheriff Helm knew Marda. There was last fall's minstrel, which the church had put on and wherein Marda, in black-face, had won screams of laughter. Marda, Colson would have said, always was too gay. Marda always had men fawning and guffawing, and following her like puppies.

"Yes," Spence said, "it's Marda." He drew in a deep breath, held it. It whistled from his lungs when, at last, he whispered, "Marda left me."

Helm raised fat fingers to his chin and rubbed it. Spence felt the trouble with Sheriff Helm—that you never could tell just what he was thinking. Maybe it was nothing? Maybe he was only fat and slow—slow and lazy? A clock ticked on the desk. The clock began to nag Spence Colson, and Helm still rubbed his chin.

"When, Spence?"

"Last night, I guess."

"You guess?"

"Well, she wasn't home when I got in from the field."

"What do you mean, Spence, she left?"

Did you two have a quarrel?"

Quarrel? Colson wriggled in his chair. Quarrel—when she'd been laughing? When her dark eyes had looked straight back at him and danced? But, humor could be two-edged, like a sword. Tricks could cut two ways, like a sword.

And yet—

Slowly he began, "I worked most all night, in the upper sixty, getting out my oats. I came in maybe three this morning. Tiptoed in, dog-tired, and noticed she'd set no plate for a lunch. She always sets the table. I looked around and found this note instead."

He pulled the note from his pocket. Though each word on it was already nailed fast in his mind, he read it again. "*Spence, I've gone away with Georgie—*"

The sheriff read the note too, frowned and said, "Who's Georgie?"

Georgie? Spence Olson's teeth came together with a click. Fury got into his voice and made it husky. "Her cousin from Detroit. That's where I met Marda. I thought she had no kin. But three weeks ago this Georgie Marvin showed up. He'd been in the Army and got wounded."

"And he's been visiting at your place, Spence, only three weeks?"

The pain shot through his head again and made the brown room spin. Spence Colson looked at his two fists before he said, "It was made out before—probably she'd had a letter he was coming. For two months she must have known that she'd run off, because—because she'd look at me. She'd laugh, as though she had a secret. She'd begun to sing. She never sang like that before, though. For two months she's been all excited. And then, after he was in the house—well, say I'd start work on a fence. 'Spence,' she'd call from the house, 'I'm going into town this morning. Business? No darling, it's none of *your* business! Georgie's here. He'll drive me.' The trouble was I didn't see it soon enough—"

"The note, Spence—" Helm left the words floating in mid-air. "It's her writing?"

They went out to the farm to see, to compare with other letters, records she had writ-

ten. "A thing like this was touchy," Helm said. "Suppose this Georgie Marvin wrote the note himself—huh, Spence? Yep, we got to face it. We got to look at every angle."

"Georgie Marvin own a car? He didn't? Well, then we got to check the busses and the trains. But of course Georgie *did* have friends with cars, friends he'd made in the Army."

"Well, we can't take a thing for granted," Helm said, squinting at the road, the farm, the barns, garage, the garden.

Squinting at the samples of Marda's handwriting. Yes, she'd written the note, all right. No doubt about that. And her suitcase was missing and a lot of her clothes. Some money was missing—Spence Colson swore at this discovery. But still the sheriff looked around the farm; in the house, the barnyard; in the attic and the cellar; even in the well.

"Spence, we got to face it, we don't know this Georgie Marvin," Helm said. "Like I said, we can't take a thing for granted."

But Georgie and Marda were gone. They'd disappeared. Into thin air. They'd disappeared like smoke.

HE WAS a stolid and a grim man, Spence Colson. A stubborn man, without humor. He knew when to grit his teeth, he said, and take his licking. A shabby deal, *that's* what he'd got, he said, each time the sheriff would drop in with reports, in April and in May.

"A woman and a man got picked up out in Santa Fe," the sheriff would say. "Or in Dallas, or Atlanta. Thought that we had 'em, Spence, but—"

"Spence, I see you got a right nice little

garden," the sheriff began to say, lazy like.

Spence Colson looked at the garden. It constantly surprised him, to see that it was growing. It wound him up inside; he'd swear he would destroy it. But the sheriff would walk up and down the paths; and Colson would stand by, biting at his lips, clenching both his hands, fighting this emotion.

One morning in July the garden bloomed with big red flowers.

That morning, too, sheriff Helm came again. Wore his gun on his hip, had a deputy along, a lean man who stayed in the car. They were going, Helm said, over the hill on a case. They'd just stopped to say hello, to see the flowers. He looked at the flowers.

"She'd have liked them, Spence," he said.

Spence Colson's face was wet with sweat. He searched the sheriff for doubt, suspicion. But the blue eyes remained bland and dreamy. "Still no word from Marda, Spence?"

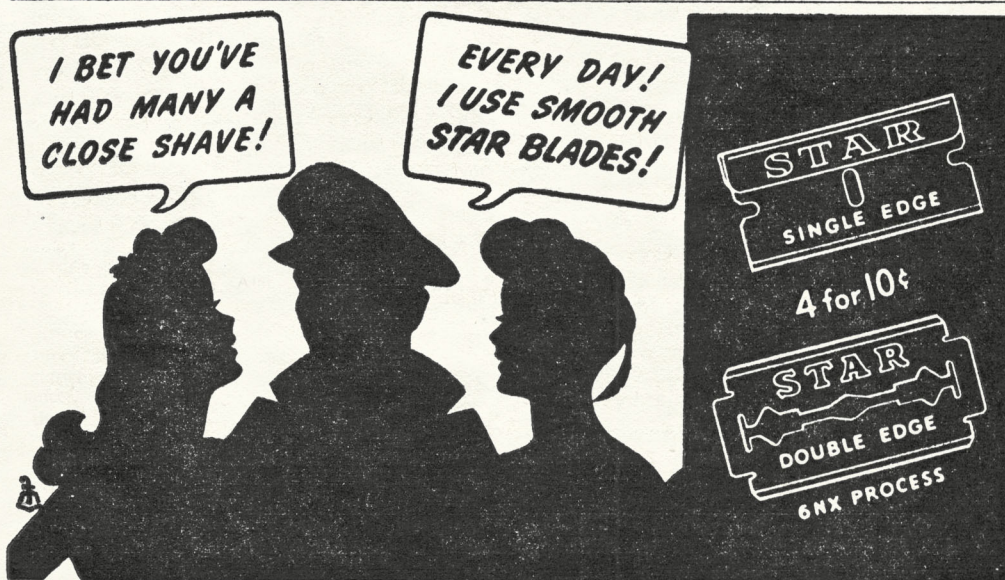
"I—" Colson cleared his throat "—I got it figured they got across the border."

"Oh, across the border, Spence?"

His mind began to plead and worry for new things to say, some new way to change the conversation. *The sun this morning—notice it was red? Nice finish on your car—* But Helm's car was red. *Where did you get that tie, Sheriff?* But the tie Helm wore was black and red. Everything he thought, that came to his tongue, ended with the same word. The color of the flowers, red.

He sighed when Helm walked back to the car. Helm got in, waved, drove on up the hill road. Topped the hill—and stopped.

Spence Colson was watching. Colson stiffened instantly. The rumble in him, fear, be-



came a roar. Helm had paused to look at *his* field, the upper sixty. He could see Helm start to get out of his car; apparently change his mind and slam the door again. He could see Helm pointing from the car window. Then the maroon sedan moved on, but only a little, to a break in the ditch. It made the turn and started down the hill again.

Spence Colson was running. He ran first for the barn, around the barn, that he shouldn't be seen. He ran through the dry cut, bent, hidden from the road. He ran for the hill, cursing the hill, the stones, the brush and the stubble. What was it Helm had seen? What could Helm have seen? Oats, tall now, waving gently in the soft wind. Nothing more—but something had stopped Helm. Then what could Helm have seen?

He fell, along the screen of woods, halfway up the hill. He rose and cursed, stumbled with the strain, was panting. And now he heard the mocking caw of crows, saw them far off, coming this way also. Helm had seen something—dead? But there was nothing in the field for Helm to see!

Spence Colson topped the hill. He stopped. His strength was like a garment, flapping without buttons. His teeth began to chatter. The sob he heard came from his own dry throat. There were red patches in the oat field, red as in the garden. Something he had never planted, in the oat field.

Tall, boisterous red flowers.

NOW, screened by the woods, he looked back. And now Helm was turning in the barnyard. Helm and the deputy were getting out of their car. Helm's right hand lay close on his hip, on the brown butt of his gun.

Colson moaned, dazed with what he saw. His mind began spinning, and queerly it wasn't summer at all in his mind, mid-July. Time spun back for him, to a Wednesday afternoon in March. Queerly, he could stand like this today, in the woods, and see himself as he'd come in from the field that Wednesday afternoon.

Yes, he'd stormed and he'd warned her; and yet there she was, in the garden, planting flowers.

He stopped. She saw him and waved. She pointed to the garden, laughing, calling, "Spence, you'll be surprised!" She pulled the trigger to the gun in him. To jealousy and mistrust that leaped all bounds in him.

And strangely, at that very minute, he heard Georgie whistle. Georgie Marvin called out from the barn, "Hey, Spence, come here a minute, will you?"

The yard spun right around for him. The barn became a black spot, as though he'd looked too long at the sun. The barn was

warped, crooked as he'd never seen it, dancing. Georgie with a wide grin on his face. Georgie who could make Marda sing. Georgie with the key to secrets that she had—

"Spence, there's a short hoe out here Marda wanted—"

He saw Georgie cock his head to one side; and Georgie's voice changed too, in the dimness of the tool shed.

"Why, what's the matter, Spence?"

The axe hung on a hook, within reach, on the wall. Georgie's white round face began to ooze and shine. Georgie's lips began to quiver, and Georgie stood there like a lamb, bleating, "W-what's the matter, Spence?"

Yes, what's the matter, Spence?

For suddenly he was surprised to see the gush, the rush of blood. Of course the axe was new and sharp and his arm was thick with muscle. But even so, he was surprised, shocked then at the awful stillness. It seemed Georgie had stopped bleating. It seemed Georgie lay dead on the floor. It seemed the wind around the eaves, the birds up in the rafters—all had stopped their screaming. Now nothing moved or sounded, until—

"Spence?"

Marda, calling from the garden.

"Spence!" she called. And then life that Wednesday afternoon in March began picking up dropped threads. The chickens in the yard were scared, began to cackle. He heard her feet, frantic on the loose stone of the driveway. "Spence—" She was sobbing as she ran, and nearer with each second, but he couldn't move until—

Her brown eyes stretched like nothing he had ever seen. Like her lids were made of rubber. "Spence—"

Her mouth stayed open, but for once she didn't laugh. It was he who laughed, who tried to taunt her from the vortex of his mind, to whip out words and jeer. No laughter from her? But he heard her moan. He saw her body tremble; and the words, at last, she did drop on this moment were a croak.

"Oh Spence, on your hand—"

On his hand? The blood? Georgie's blood, where it had run down from the axe? On his hand—*her* blood, where it was to run down from the axe?

Yes, their blood was on his hands, and now Helm knew; and Helm was coming for him.

THEY found Spence Colson in the woods, that night. In a thicket, eyes glaring in the flashray, like a wolf's. He screamed and tried to break away. There were two quick shots, and Colson fell headlong then and lay there.

"My flowers bloomed this morning," Sheriff Helm said a little later, "and that was the
(Continued on page 91)



Garrack stood swaying, with the white handkerchief covering his gun.

SEE THE SCARLET SNOW

**By Rex
Whitechurch**

WITH his chin buried inside his trench coat collar, Dr. Bill Burkeholder crammed himself into the doorway of the Ballanger Building. The place was narrow, totally dark and out of the wind. He felt considerably safer here. The gun in his pocket was like a team of straining mules. In his left hand was his satchel of surgical instruments. Water trickled from the brim of his hat.

He stood there at least ten minutes. The young coroner of Mason County was in no hurry. He had certain heavy problems on his mind. From his pocket he carefully removed the .25 automatic and flicked the safety off. The wind whipped his coat. He crouched back suddenly, deeper in his shelter. His long, slim legs were solidly supporting his six-two frame,

Many a message has been written in the snow—but none more sinister than the story told by Paul Garrack's bloody epitaph.

and his feet were firmly planted on the cold iron piece at the bottom of the stairs.

The storm unleashed its fury. He had felt it coming as he trudged up Edmond Street from the morgue. Apparently it had reached its peak now. The scimitar moon was like a woman's half-closed eye coquettishly beaming

through a mourning veil. A vicious wind whipped through the narrow thoroughfare, pushing snow and sleet into drifts that piled above the curb. Bill looked like a thin Santa Claus tinkling a little bell at an iron kettle.

The Empire Bank clock chimed the hour. The snowstorm made the night seem more sinister. He knew the night wasn't going to be anything less than satanic, although it was freezing instead of burning like hell. Maybe it was true, he thought, that the extreme cold killed germs in the air, but that was the only good point it had.

A man was standing beside the open tonneau-door of a black sedan—standing unsolid and weaving. He wore no hat, and his coat sagged open. The snow whitened his slicked-down black hair. He held the car door with one hand. His other hand was covered by a fluttering handkerchief. Bill knew this camouflaged a gun.

The man at the sedan was Paul Garrack, a young criminal lawyer. It was generally known that Garrack hated the law and all that it stood for. It was also generally known that his father had spent twenty years in prison for murder, and he'd helped his son acquire knowledge of how to keep others from sharing his fate.

Dr. Bill Burkeholder knew what was impending. Only that day, Bill knew, his testimony had caused Garrack to lose a case that would've made him nationally famous. Besides, he was gunning for Bill because a girl he loved had chosen Bill in preference to him. Garrack had put away more than his share of whiskey and there had been a scene. Bill recalled that he'd been forced to knock the lawyer down—and Garrack, aroused to the pitch of murder, had followed him to get even—with a gun.

Stepping from the darkened doorway, Bill faced the lawyer. "Take it easy, Garrack," he said. "You can't gain anything—"

Paul Garrack didn't answer. He stood swaying a little, the white handkerchief still fluttering in his hand.

Bill frowned, waited. It was damned funny the way that guy was acting. Bill was sorry now, that he hadn't tried to avoid Garrack and gone on home. But he had important business in his office and he didn't want to be ambushed in the dark. He might as well settle it now and get it over with.

It was far from his intentions to kill Garrack, but he meant to protect himself. The other's intentions weren't so refined. He now showed his evil aim by lifting the handkerchief-covered hand. Less than eight feet separated them, and the wind was blowing furiously. Ice pellets stung like almost-invisible bullets. Then both guns roared—and Paul Garrack sprawled face-down in the snow.

When he opened the handsome young lawyer's overcoat and unbuttoned his vest, the coroner didn't need to work his exploratory fingers to determine that Garrack was dead, although he'd shot at his left shoulder.

The whole front of the dead man's white shirt was a mess of sticky scarlet. In the dreamy, pearl street-lamps the man's features stiffened. He let the wind rush out of his mouth in one awful effort, as if he were spewing out something he couldn't swallow. The hand Bill clutched, with skilled fingers clamped to where the pulse would've been, flailed a trifle and then dropped like a hunk of wood.

At first Bill's mind was in a confused state. But now everything began to clear up, and, although he bitterly regretted the action he'd been forced to take, he stopped thinking back. His mind skewed, faced the future. He guessed that he was going to have to do a lot of figuring before he extricated himself from this mess.

Besides, it occurred to Bill Burkeholder right then that by shooting Paul Garrack he had lost the woman he loved—as completely as if he'd killed her instead of the lawyer.

They'd been firm rivals. But never would Montecello accept a man who'd come to her with the blood of his opponent on his hands.

Heartsick, Bill turned and clumped up the wooden steps to his office suite. Never had fate played such a trick on him.

He unlocked the hall door, stepped into the reception room. This was on the fourth floor of the Ballanger Building. He crossed heavily to the phone near the switchboard. He removed the handset, heard his heart thudding on his ribs. It was bound to be tough, with Inspector Greg Nolan pounding questions at him.

Suddenly, decisively, he slammed down the handset. "I'll be damned if I'll risk everything by taking the blame for the shooting," he snapped. "I'll let them find out. . . ."

In his own mind he knew Greg Nolan would find out. Greg was one of the best homicide men in the State. Quickly, Bill Burkeholder left the building. He stamped down the back stairs, and went to an alley door. He walked out through the areaway in the storm, shoving his chin down inside his collar. For some vague reason he felt he was doing exactly the right thing.

THE night club was full of shadows and cigarette mist. He moved through the wisping nicotine, to the rattle of bottles and scrape of glass on fine glass. Champagne scintillated in goblets—voices strummed like tight fiddle-strings—and some of those voices came from people who were tight. It was eight o'clock. Paul Garrack's dead body hadn't been discovered yet. At least Bill hadn't been notified. Bill was making himself con-

spicuous; and Montecello, without knowing, was ring-mastering the show.

All the local lions were roaring. Even Foxx Medford, the jeweler, was getting drunk again. Every night, since the death of his wife five years ago Medford had taken on more booze than he could handle. But he was dark and skinny and it didn't show on him. His brother, Jason, owned the club, so he could run his bills as high as he wished.

Foxx Medford invited Bill Burkeholder to the bar. Bill crossed the cocktail lounge and had two whiskeys. He knew he needed another, but declined to take it.

"If they ever call you to go to my shop, Doc," Medford said, fixing his sad eyes on Bill's blond face, "don't hurry. Saint Peter will be checking me in!"

"Swell job, being coroner," Bill complained to Montecello.

She was gold and cream and sparkles. Her eyes were like dots of jade. Tonight she looked old-fashioned, reminded Bill of a sunbonnet-and-gingham girl standing at a flower-covered picket gate waiting for her dreams to come true. He thought she wasn't meant to sing in aromas of expensive liquors, with drunks applauding. He'd never seen the difference between a refined drunk and a roughneck. They all were crazy.

They went to her dressing-room. She had precious little to say. He didn't look around, sat in a deep chair in front of a long mirror and watched her powder her face. The music reached them as if it were coming from heaven and being strained by the silver stars. She was nervous. The red and white gown crinkled around her shapely shoulders as if she were perspiring too freely. They walked back to the cocktail lounge. She had a number to do. Under the weird blue lamps she was like a very delectable little ghost.

And then it happened. The headwaiter came toward him with a stack of gold-embroidered menus under one arm, a blue slip in the other hand. He led Bill to a phone. Inspector Greg

Nolan's rasping voice reached him over the wire.

"Got an autopsy, Bill," Nolan said. "A stiff picked up in front of the Ballanger Building. He's been there quite some time—was covered with snow. I tried a dozen places before I found you. Then I happened to think of Montecello Patterson. You know who the guy is that's dead?"

"No," Bill said, "how would I know?" He felt a cold numbness of the brain.

"Duty's grim sometimes." The inspector's voice became gentle, out of respect for the dead. "Paul Garrack! Shot down. Slug's somewhere in his chest."

"Where are you?" Bill felt that his voice was sufficiently shocked, adequately astonished.

"Morgue!"

"I'll be right over!" Bill said.

BILL stamped down the iron steps to the basement lab, passing through the cavernous storage room where all the crypts were somber, metal-handled doors in the walls. Paul Garrack's slim form was covered by a canvass shroud. They hadn't put him on the rolling table yet. Bill entered the lab, got ready.

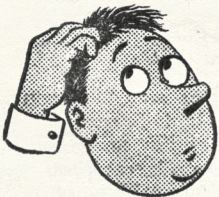
A big lamp hung low, and it was hot. The glare brought the sweat to Bill's brow, but it was a cold, clammy moisture that wouldn't run. His hands were sweaty, too, inside the rubber gloves. Shadows hovered on the glass door. He wondered why nobody came in. Then they brought the corpse on the wheel-table. The body was unsheeted and the attendants withdrew.

Bill heard cold water running in the stone gutters. The dead man's face was glistening, white. Bill sauntered to his overcoat, removed the gun and stuck it in his right pants pocket where his white coat concealed it. Then he went to work, extracting the slug which had lodged near the base of the sternum. He was so nervous the long tweezers shook.

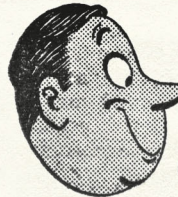
He kept thinking, "I killed him. . . I killed

Scratch your head*
and if you find . . .

You've got dandruff
on your mind . . .



*THE FAMOUS
FINGER-NAIL
(F-N) TEST



contains
LANOLIN

GET **WILDROOT**
CREAM-OIL

GROOMS THE HAIR - RELIEVES DRYNESS
REMOVES LOOSE DANDRUFF

this man. . . . Only a short time ago he was alive and happy and hopeful. . . . Now he's dead and beyond hope. . . . "Something stabbed relentlessly at his conscience. His thin mouth was a sardonic line when he peered in the big mirror above the porcelain table.

Bill brought the points of the tweezers to the dark dot inside the incision in Garrack's chest—the incision he'd made. He bit the sharp jaws together on the metal object. He pulled gently, brought his hand away. Stuck in the tweezers' trap was a pellet of lead, battered, grooved. The sweat streamed from his face. His shirt was wringing wet and plastered to his back.

For a moment he stood there, gaping. Then he drew a swinging microscope to him and dropped the bullet on a pad. He stared through the lens, straightened then, with a little exclamation. This wasn't a slug from his .25 automatic!

Consternation seized him, wrapped him in a net of bewilderment. He struggled weakly against the invisible cords of knotted rope. He thought, "Damn it, this is a .32!"

He stamped across the tile floor after sewing up the incision and studying the wound, which was puffed like a little, obstinate mouth. He reached for the doorknob, paused, then stamped back on the white tile to the porcelain table. This was a hell of a mess. The perspiration soaked his collar down to a crumpled rag and streaked his green tie. He could hear his heart hammering in his ears. He wanted to cry out, "Oh, God!" and then, "What's all this about?"

There came an authoritative knocking on the pebbled pane.

Bill moved along the cold corridor, past the spacious storeroom and the silent crypts. He was thinking, "Somebody stood behind me—fired the fatal bullet over my head. He stood high on the steps and his intention was to commit murder. And to frame me. I didn't aim at Garrack's chest. I fired at his shoulder, and missed because of my reluctance to hit him. . . . But isn't it crazy? He knew I'd perform the post mortem, would know the bullet hadn't come from my own gun. . . . Perhaps he's planning to strike at me, to tighten the circumstances around me—yet!"

Just then a shadow skittered across the iron steps. Bill saw a white face framed in yellow satin hair.

"Oh, Bill," she cried, "I'm so glad I've found you! I heard about it and came here to see Paul!"

Yes, no doubt it was already in the newspapers—maybe an extra. Montecello Patterson was sprinkled with snow. She was distraught, so nervous Bill was alarmed. He shook her, started her back up the steps.

"You go on back," he ordered brusquely.

"No. I'm going to see Paul. They'll let me see him."

"You go on back," he reiterated.

"No."

"This is a police case," Bill insisted. "You don't want to get involved. Hike! Beat it! This place will be swarming with cops. I'll be right over to the Spinning Wheel."

Reluctantly, she entered a cab. He stood in the snow and watched the red tail-lamps turn black.

Ten minutes later he was in his office. He had not been there long when he heard a furtive sound in the hall. Snapping on the lights, he said, "Come in."

The door opened. A tall, skinny man flicked snow from his hat and unbuttoned his overcoat. His dark, glowing eyes were intent on Bill's lean face. The lines in the other's masked features were like quaint designs in hand-carved leather. He skewed around, shut the door, and then approached Bill's desk.

"Doc, I'm Jason Medford. My brother's a drunken fool. Tonight he came here to see you and he said you wasn't in. I told him he'd have to stay away from the Spinning Wheel. He's not a good advertisement for my business. He's a jeweler, not a night club owner like I am. See?"

Jason Medford was an exact duplicate of his brother except for his eyes, which were gray. Foxx Medford had light brown eyes. But Bill thought there was more difference between them than that. Jason Medford was unscrupulous. But the jeweler, so far as Bill knew, was honest and had never been in trouble.

"You mean Foxx had snakes and you sent him here to see if I'd give him a shot in the arm?" Bill nodded, shook himself. "It appears to me, Jason, that you're cutting rather a fancy figure. Just what is your reason for calling on me tonight?"

"Well!" Jason Medford cleared his throat, looked all around him. "I heard somebody had bumped Paul Garrack. He was my lawyer. I thought I'd come over here and give you a tip, just to help you along. You might return it. I—"

"Go on," Bill said slowly, trying to read the skinny man's expression. "Get it off your chest."

"You might not like it so well." Jason Medford swung his long, black-clad arms. His face paled. "I guess it's absolutely necessary, however. Early this evening Garrack came to see me. He was in a hurry. He wanted to cash a check. Due to the storm I was later than usual getting from home to the club. Garrack talked to Montecello Patterson. There must've been trouble between them. Somebody heard a gun fired. Garrack staggered out of the girl's dressing-room and lurched

away. I was told about this, stepped into the dressing-room to see what had happened there and—found this.”

He drew a handkerchief-wrapped gun from his pocket, spread the white folds and held the weapon out so Bill could see it. The nickel-plated revolver was a .32, the caliber of the gun with which Paul Garrack had been shot.

Bill reached for it. But Jason Medford drew it quickly back and held it behind him.

“I’ll make you a trade,” he said slowly. “This gun for a few ounces of morphine for one of my wealthy patrons. If it’s a deal, my absolute silence goes with the gun!”

But Garrack hadn’t been shot in Montecello’s dressing-room. Bill knew he’d extracted the only bullet that was in Garrack’s body—a slug from a .32, fired into him when he’d fired at Bill from beside the black sedan.

This then, placed a bogus stamp on Jason Medford’s explanation. No doubt he’d been standing higher up in the black staircase, on the steps, and had shot Garrack on the sidewalk. Only Bill hadn’t heard another shot.

Now Jason Medford was preying on Bill’s love for the girl, was trying to press him into violating the law by shielding her. Coldly, now, he faced the necessity of making a decision. He didn’t know what to do.

“No,” he said emphatically, “I’ll not enter into any stinking, rotten deal with you. I’m coroner of Mason County. What you’ve just told me will go into the records. It’s a bare-faced lie. It couldn’t be so in a million years—for two reasons. Garrack was shot while standing out in front of this building and not in Montecello’s dressing-room at the Spinning Wheel. The second reason is that Montecello Patterson had no motive for liquidating Garrack and would not have done if it she’d had a thousand reasons. Now—you get the hell out of here!”

“You’ll be damned sorry,” Medford rasped. “Listen, Doc—men have lived longer than that after being shot in the chest. It was no trick for him to get down there in front of this building, being it’s only three blocks from the Spinning Wheel. He just fell dead out there on the walk. Maybe he told her he was going to kill you, or something. Maybe she shot him to keep him from killing you and he didn’t die till he got over here. Anyhow I’ve changed my mind. You can keep this damned gun!”

He dropped it on a chair beside Bill’s desk. Seeing it gleaming there, Bill Burkeholder stabbed out a hand to grasp it. He lowered his gaze. Then he felt something hit him. It struck his neck and exploded a bushel of fire-crackers in his face. He knew he was pitching out of the chair—but that’s all he did know!

BILL’S constitution achieved a miracle. It pulled him out of the black pit and in twenty minutes he was himself again, bundled up in his trench-coat and phoning Montecello.

“I don’t want you to come over here,” she said. “In fact I don’t ever want to see you again. They’re already telling how you had it in for Paul Garrack and shot him over me. I’ve my career to think about.”

Bill slammed down the phone, and went right out.

He found Montecello in her dressing-room. For a long time they stood there gazing at each other. They didn’t go into each other’s arms. Something cold and aloof fell between them. Bill could feel it encompassing him.

“I’ve got to put a lot of memories out of my mind,” she told him. “We’ve had some nice times together. You’ve been swell to me.” It seemed she was trying to keep from crying. Her voice was wet with the tears in her throat. She was close to breaking now. “It took Paul’s death to decide me, Bill. He was the one. I tried to make myself believe it was you. There’s something about you that Paul didn’t have. But you fought him and you shot it out with him in front of the building that houses your office, and I shudder now when I think you killed the man I love.”

He summed it all up. Somehow she’d learned of the gunfight, the shooting in front of the Ballanger Building, and she believed he’d killed Paul Garrack. It seemed so crazy. But how had she found out about the gunfight? Someone had to be present, to know about it—to have told her.

Yes, he was doubly certain now—certain that the real killer had stood behind him in the dark stairway and had fired over him as he crouched down to shoot it out with his rival. Paul Garrack, Bill realized, had always been jealous of him and this was set off the very moment Garrack’s case in court was ruined by Bill’s professional testimony.

“You tried to ruin Paul in court, Bill,” she went on. “You did it because you were afraid I loved him. Then you knocked him down here in the club and you believed him when he said he was going to get even. You just let him kid you into killing him. He wouldn’t have hurt you. You saw him in front of the Ballanger Building and you shot him down. His body was found in scarlet snow. All he was going to do was to have a talk with you.”

But Bill knew better. He remembered how Paul Garrack had berserk in the snow and had lifted his gun to fire at him.

Bill turned and stamped from the room, leaving the woman he loved alone with her grief.

JASON MEDFORD had his skinny back turned to Bill as he sat in his violet-walled office. But he swung around when he heard Bill's admonishing voice.

Medford's gray eyes looked startled, afraid. He placed his corpselike hands on his desk and they lay there inertly—thin, bloodless things that seemed to be detached from his body.

His gray eyes clamped again on Bill's sweating face. He mumbled something and just sat there. Then his voice tore at Bill, in a moment of sudden, violent emotion.

"You're crazy with the heat. I never saw you in your office. I don't know a damned thing of what you're saying. Maybe my brother pulled a stunt on you. Everybody's talking about the gunfight in front of the Ballanger Building you had with Paul Garrack. Maybe you're the one that's crazy and trying to patch up your mistakes."

Was it possible, Bill wondered, that he'd been fooled by Foxx Medford? In strong light he might've made a mistake in the color of his caller's eyes. And Bill remembered he'd turned the lamps full on when he heard the knock on his office door.

"Let's go see Foxx," Bill grated. "Somehow you've found out something not known to the authorities—about a gunfight I had with Paul Garrack in front of the Ballanger Building."

Jason Medford stretched his tall frame upward. "Maybe we'd better go over to Foxx's store. This is one hell of a mess if you ask me. I haven't been out of this office since eight o'clock. They served my food in here. I'm figuring my income tax. But I don't get it all. The best thing is to go see the Fox. I don't like the smell of this thing."

Bill was stymied. How the hell was he to know he hadn't accused the wrong man? Well, he'd find out. It wouldn't take long. But he was shocked—shocked to think the lonely jeweler, who'd grieved over his wife's death, had committed a murder. It didn't add up, there was no motive. What reason did Foxx Medford have for wanting to get rid of Paul Garrack?

Walking with Jason Medford stamping beside him, Bill headed down the chromium staircase. They cut through the gilded foyer. Jason Medford didn't say anything now.

The snow fell in a silent hush around them, tinted various hues by the blinking neons. There was no snow drifted against the jeweler's shop door. A faint yellow light beamed through a square transom.

"You first, Medford," Bill said cryptically.

"See here," Medford blurted, huddling against the door, "Foxx is just drunk enough to start shooting. Can't you see? Call the cops. I'm damned tired of covering up for him."

Bill opened the door, shoved the other man inside. There was no sound—only the ticking of numerous clocks. The orange neon's reflections fell through the plate glass upon the glittering, jewel-ornamented showcases. Bill headed for the backroom.

But the hidden, crouching figure in the office had spotted him, and had sprung up, like the long blade of a jackknife popping from the handle. Bill groped for his gun. But Foxx Medford didn't shoot. He stood there, leering through the mantle of gloom. The single, high light bulb gleamed on the barrel of his pistol.

"Drop your gun, Foxx," Bill shouted. "You haven't a chance! The cops are coming and you couldn't make it, even if you killed me!"

Bill saw Jason Medford sliding toward the door. Again he saw gun metal flash in the single, high bulb. He heard Jason crying out a warning. The night club owner fumbled with the lock. Bill lunged at the gun in Foxx Medford's hand.

Foxx Medford was slammed back against the wall. Bill knew he'd landed a hard blow to the other's head. Blood stained the skinny jeweler's lips. He'd knocked a chair over. A bottle of red ink upset, was rivering off the desk like blood gushing from a fatal wound.

But Jason Medford was coming back from the door now. Bill had his brother's pistol. He shoved it in his pocket and hurled Foxx Medford hard into a rolling chair. The force of the collision sent the chair skittering on its castors, carrying the dazed and bleeding jeweler.

"I WASN'T going to hurt you," Foxx Medford said, daubing at his mouth with a handkerchief. "I was going to bump myself. I had it in mind when I told you early this evening at the Spinning Wheel that if you were ever called to my shop to take your time—I'd be checking in with Saint Peter. I wasn't sure then I'd win on the slim chance I had left."

Sweat streamed from Bill's face, and his heart was crammed with a pulsating ache, like a throbbing boil about ready to burst. Waves of darkness passed before his eyes. Exhaustion was taking its grim toll.

Foxx Medford was talking again.

"I first wanted to frame Montecello Patterson in your eyes for Paul Garrack's murder—but you didn't fall for it. I thought he'd been hit fatally, but not in the heart, and might've walked the distance from the Spinning Wheel to the Ballanger Building. He was hiding in my car at the curb and he saw you and stepped out. I had the gun, and I stood right behind you on the staircase and shot Garrack because I knew you wouldn't try to kill him. I

wanted to make sure he died. I didn't give a damn, because I figured I could make you believe Montecello committed the murder. But I must've hit closer to his heart than I figured."

"Why?" Bill's voice whipped out. "Why? What did you have against Garrack? And why the hell did you want to frame me for this?"

The skinny jeweler heaved a great sigh. "I overheard Garrack tell Montecello he was going to your office to get you. I simply beat him to the Ballanger Building because I drove and he walked. I hid in the stairway. Then you came along. He was waiting because he was going to get you and he wanted to do it in the street. You saw the car and crowded into the doorway, guessing who was hidden in it.

"But it's a cinch that if you'd caught me, I would have stalled you out of the idea that I was bent on murder. I wanted to get rid of both you guys, and only tried to frame you later."

"Why?" Bill repeated huskily. "Just why in hell—"

"I went out to his body after you left him lying in the snow. The snow was scarlet and sparkled in the lamps. I—" Foxx Medford rolled his brown eyes which seemed almost gray, like his brother's, now. "You see, Bill, Montecello played me for a sucker."

"Played you for—" Bill choked on the words.

"I gave her a lot of diamonds," the jeweler continued. "She planned to go away with me. I've had my eyes on her ever since my wife died five years ago. That explains why I was

always hanging around the Spinning Wheel, getting pickled. I wanted to be close to her. But—she played all three of us for suckers right along!"

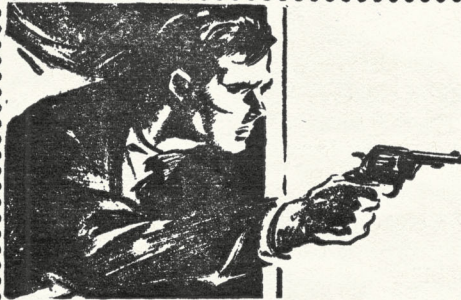
Bill Burkeholder stabbed down, grabbed his skinny shoulders and shook hell out of Medford.

With his hair falling into his face, the jeweler went on: "I slugged you when you wouldn't string along with me in believing Montecello shot Garrack and he'd walked from the club. I figured you'd shield her and I'd have it on you. I could force you out of the picture. Then I hit you with a blackjack, not to kill you, but merely to knock you out so the cops would find you with the gun I planted in your office. They wouldn't believe your story after you'd had a fight with Garrack. They'd reason you'd knocked yourself out to keep from having to take the rap for the murder.

"But when I went back there to see her, she wouldn't listen. I accused you of killing Garrack. I got wise to her. She'd hooked me good and proper. But—"

Bill was reaching for the phone. He wasn't hurt. He shut his eyes. He was greatly relieved. He had police headquarters now, knowing if it hadn't turned out this way he wouldn't have escaped turning himself in to the law. His mind—

Foxx Medford was still talking. "You see, I didn't know she wasn't serious when she married me the other night and I gave her those rocks, Bill. She was in love with you. As much as she could be in love. She's just a double-crossing little rat, even if she is my wife!"



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"Let me introduce you to one of those big shots you never see..."

ODDS ON DEATH

By
Lawrence DeFoy

I CROSSED the ill-lighted street to the doorway where the young Negro had disappeared. Dimly seen, a long flight of stairs led up into the blackness. I hesitated a moment.

Past the corner, in a blaze of arc lights, ran Fulton Street. The town's carnival midway was always wide open, jumping. Around the corner came a swivel-hipped female, ambling toward me. I took a deep breath and entered the doorway, climbing the creaking stairs.

The air smelled musty, dead. The farther I climbed the darker it got. At the top I took an extra step; my heart jolted.

I groped my way blindly along the pitch-black hall until I came to a sharp turn. Thin lines of yellow light showed under two doors. I eased toward them, listening.

I heard Max's familiar voice behind the second. I straightened and knocked lightly. All sound ceased instantly.

"Yeah? Who is it?" Gunn's voice was tense.

A cop, a lawyer, a gambler—and a killer—none of them had anything to win in that deadly game where the wheel of fortune could only turn up—Murder!

"Vin Hartley, Max. Better let me in."

The door was unlocked. I entered, blinking. The colored boy in the laborer's clothes and the sloppy felt hat was back of the door. Max stood beside a mussed and rickety bed, hand on the butt of a large automatic in his waistband. He held a half-chewed sandwich in his other hand. The lunch box the Negro had been carrying was open on the bed.

"Well, I'll be damned!" Max said. "What're you doing here?"

Gunn was far from looking his familiar snappily dressed self. He needed a shave, bad. His trousers were wrinkled and his shirt was grimy. He wore no shoes and his socks had holes in the toes. In short he looked like what he was—a fugitive.

"Strictly business," I said. "I'm investigating a compensation claim for MacAnarney."

Max laughed shortly. "God, you guys never rest, do you?" He looked at the Negro. "Thought you said you weren't tailed, Rudy."

The colored boy was as thin as a pencil. His eyeballs glistened as he rolled them toward Max. "I sweah, boss, I dunno how he did it."

"Half intuition," I said. "I knew you'd never move without keeping a line into the Hollander. This elevator boy seemed the best bet. I was sure when he told one of the cooks he'd got a night shift war job and wanted a lunch pail."

Max nodded. "Just like I told you, Rudy. When you're on the run you got to think of everything. Vin, if I thought you were double crossing me I'd kill you. What's this compensation business?"

He sat down again, eating.

RUDY poured coffee out of the thermos into the cap for him.

An evening paper lay half under the bed. The headlines glared up at me:

COP-SLAYER STILL AT LARGE

In the upper righthand corner a two-column banked subhead went on:

**LOCAL GAMBLER HIDING OUT
IN CITY, SAY POLICE; BIGGEST
MANHUNT EVER ORGANIZED
IS PLANNED TO GET GUNN**

"You're in a spot, Max," I said. "Did you know MacAnarney was a cop when you killed him?"

Gunn shrugged. "I guessed it. The Syndicate's been using some of the vice squad dicks for collectors."

"But he didn't tell you he was a cop, or try to arrest you?"

The gambler looked at me narrowly. "Didn't

I just say he was collecting? Why would he tell me he was a cop?"

I took out my notebook. "That's what I came to find out. The insurance company got the idea MacAnarney wasn't killed in line of duty. Probably because the police had no charge against you and no warrant out. Of course, they say now MacAnarney was sent to bring you in for questioning on gambling activities."

"Who says? I haven't gambled since the Syndicate put me thirty grand in the sweat box."

I made a few notes, leaning against the warped highboy. All the light in the room came from a foggy 40-watt bulb over a rust-streaked washbowl. "I suspect the vice boys gave it out, Max. Look—how come this cop was pressing you? You got a reputation for paying your losses."

Gunn was peeling a tangerine. He popped entire sections into his mouth as they broke away from the skin. "Well, I always have paid up. This time I was taken. The Syndicate had a fix on a roulette wheel down at their Terrace Club. After I got suspicious, I eased around the table and found a wire going under the carpet. The wheel was jimmied to collect on the Double O when the game got hot."

"So you squawked?"

Max looked across at me. "For all the good it did. While I was in Werner's office they re-rigged the place. Slick bunch. Turned back the carpet and showed me that the cord I had stepped on went to a floor lamp."

"Well?"

"Well, it might have gone over with a sucker. But I'd already tried to light that lamp. I told Werner he could whistle for his money. Tonight MacAnarney come up to collect and got nasty and started to shove me around. I up and slugged him."

I made more notes. "I'm sorry you're in this mess, Max. If there's anything I can do—"

The gambler ran a hand through his tousled hair. His dark face was composed but I, who had known Gunn since we wore three-cornered pants, knew he was tense. A tiny pulse in the corner of one eye beat heavily.

"Guess there's nothing you or anyone can do, Vin. I'm in a spot, all right. The Syndicate holds a mortgage on this town and they'll use this as an excuse to shut my mouth for keeps. I've been talking too much to please them lately—"

"Shut your mouth? You mean murder you?"

Max leaned back against the footrail of the bed. A half-smile bristled the stubble on his cheeks. "I get it," he said. "You've got to have sworn testimony, eh? I guess you're out of luck—you and that insurance company you

work for. I'll never live to make the stand."

The Negro's eyes rolled fearfully.

"Look at it like this. If I was to be given a trial, the whole set-up would come out in court. The Syndicate does better than two million a year in this town. Do you think they're going to let me talk, start shake-ups in the police department, get the Grand Jury investigating? No indeedy."

"But—my God, Max, they can't just knock you off!"

"Why not? I'm on the run, ain't I? If the cops get me I'll be shot for resisting arrest. If the Syndicate gets me—well, I'll just disappear, then. Tough luck, Vin. You had all this for nothing."

I put away my notebook, thinking. "No, Max. It's just a few of the cops that're tied up with the Syndicate."

Max spread his hands. Sure. But the others don't like me, either. You know how they are about one of them getting fogged." He got up, standing a little shorter in his stocking feet, but still tall. "I'd like to smash that chiseling mob!"

"Why not let me get you a lawyer? One like old Bert Isherwood? Surely the D.A. isn't one of the mob."

He began to pace restlessly. "You mean, surrender me?" His black brows were joined broodingly.

"That's it. You can get your statement in his hands, and Isherwood might be able to get a change of venue, perhaps."

Gunn stopped by the two cracked shades at the front of the room. He drew one aside and peered out. The eye-searing blue of a neon sign came up from below to light his face. Somewhere a loudspeaker was blaring a jump tune with plenty of trumpet. Max dropped the curtain and came back, still silent.

"Well, why not?" he decided at last. "Get this Isherwood and bring him here. I'm not yellow, understand. I'd play out the game no matter what the odds—if I didn't want to break the Syndicate's hold on this burg."

I held out my hand. "I know, Max. You can trust me. I'll get Isherwood and be back in an hour. In the meantime keep holed up. The streets're black with cops."

"Yeah. And the alleys with Werner's gunmen—I know." He shook my hand, then dropped his own to caress the butt of the .45 pistol. "Don't worry. Betsy'll stand guard."

I looked over my shoulder, waiting for Rudy to unlock and open the door. "Better get rid of that cannon. Hasn't it gotten you into enough trouble?"

Max Gunn scowled. "What do you mean? Rudy just got it for me this morning!"

"What? But—what did you hit MacAnarney with, then?" The door was opening. The Negro lad was standing aside.

"My fist," Max answered. "What else?"

FOR a moment everything stopped. The room was a scene in a stage play, the cracked plaster, the shabby furniture, the gloomy light. Nothing moved, nothing sounded. Then my brain clicked into action again. The loudspeaker began to blare *Rum and Coca Cola*.

"Max, you couldn't have killed that cop, then!"

"No? Why not? He went back against the wall hard enough when I hit him."

I reached into my inside pocket, took out a folded paper. "Read that," I said. "That's a copy of the autopsy report for the coroner."

Rudy clicked shut the door again while Max held the paper up to the light. "H'mm. Depressed fracture. Direct blow from a blunt instrument. Well, I'll be damned. And all the time I thought—"

I said, "I doubt if even your fist could make a neat dent about the size of a pistol butt. Even if you hit him at the base of the skull instead of, I presume, the jaw."

Gunn's face, which had sagged at first, now began to harden and tighten. Tiny threads of red filtered into his eyeballs. So that's it, is it? Now they're getting so good at rigging they can even fix a murder! Why, the dirty, finagling hype artists . . ."

"Who?" I asked.

"Who? The Syndicate. I don't know who did the actual job, but I'm beginning to think of a way to find out." Max rubbed his beard with a sound like sandpaper. He went toward the washbasin and turned the tap. A trickle of water responded.

"What good will that do you? The murder was committed in your apartment, and you were seen leaving. Whether you did it or not, it still looks bad for you, Max."

He didn't answer. His eyes were going from the slowly filling basin to the light fixture above it.

"Max, I said—"

"I heard you. Vin, I think I've got it. All I need is a disguise of some sort." He picked up a tube of shaving cream, squeezed a little on his palms and rubbed it into the hair over his temples. "Vin, there's no chance to make a gambler talk. No matter what the odds against him, he'll keep playing the game. That's why he's a gambler."

"Oh, for . . . Max, what's all that got to do with—"

"You'll hear. Vin, none of the Syndicate boys are real gamblers. They want things all their own way before they'll even stake a white chip. Show them that the odds are against them, and they'll blow." He seized a comb and ran it along the sides of his head. The thick white shaving preparation spread,

thinned and blended, magically advancing Max Gunn's age ten to fifteen years.

Rudy shuffled nervously behind me. "Wheah you goin', boss?"

"Vin, I know you'll help me. With your clothes and a pair of specs from the dime store down the street, I'm a middle-aged broker. Rudy, how can I get into the Hollander without the cops seeing me?"

The colored boy and I both gaped. "Max," I said, "tell me what you want and I'll bring it here. Don't go out on the streets, you fool!"

Max grinned wolfishly. "Rudy, if you're worrying about them seeing me, forget it. That's why I'm going back there. I want them to see me!"

IT was well past midnight when Max finally called. I awoke Isherwood, got a cab and twenty minutes later was rapping at Room 1019, the New Hollander Hotel. Isherwood panted, his enormously stout body collapsed against the door frame. He was a veteran courtroom battler who had grown both gray and poor in the defense of underdogs.

Max opened the door. He was in his shirt-sleeves, my vest stretched tautly over his broad chest. "Come in, Vin. You made good time. This Isherwood?"

We entered and I introduced the lawyer to his new client. "Mr. Hartley's a determined young man," Isherwood grumbled. "I'm far from desiring a larger practice—at this hour of the morning. However—"

The gambler led us through a night-lighted living room, where comfortable, masculine furniture threw squatty shadows against book-case-lined walls—like many night-owls when they stay at home, Max liked to read until dawn—and toward the bedroom beyond, from which stronger light streamed.

"Anybody spot you in the lobby?" he asked.

"A plainclothesman is roosting down there," I said. "He gave us the eye, but when we headed for the elevator without stopping at the desk, I guess he figured we belonged here."

Max led the way toward a tiled bath, opened wider the door and motioned us to precede him.

But both the fat old lawyer and myself halted abruptly. Taking in the incredible scene, neither of us could speak for a moment. Our quick gasps made the only sound.

The bathroom was fairly large, containing both a tub and a stall shower. In the tub, in water to his calves, stood a partly bald, tuxedo-clad man. Or should I say, leaned; his hands were tied behind him and drawn up tight to a towel rack. He raised his head to look at us out of diamond-hard and glittering eyes.

"Good lord! What goes on here, Max? Who's that?"



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"Let me introduce you to Marty Werner," Max said. "One of those powers behind the throne you hear about but never see. He 'manages' the Terrace Club to give him a visible means of support; actually he owns the Terrace Club—and nearly all of the Syndicate as well."

"But—what's he doing here?" I asked.

"He came up to visit me, when one of his planted stooges called him to say that I had been so foolish as to come back here all by myself." Max jerked his head toward the stall shower. From it protruded two pair of trussed and stocky legs.

"You mean—that's why you came back here? To lure Werner up here?"

"Werner or whoever else was behind this thimble-rig."

"But why? Why?"

Max looked at the man in the bathtub. "For a little game," he said, a deadly purpose in his monotone. "Roulette—for the highest stakes this human louse ever played."

Moving forward a trifle I caught sight of the wheel on a card table just inside the bathroom door. It was the 20-inch size used by sporting amateurs, gleaming with a high polish and complete in detail. From under it came two wires. Frowning, I followed them up and over a small shaving light, then down behind Werner's bowed head. They were affixed to each side of the man's neck with strips of adhesive tape. I gasped, getting it!

"Max, what is this? An electrocution?"

My gambling friend shrugged. "Maybe. I hope so. But it depends on Marty." He reached up and shoved the dangling plug into the outlet under the light.

Werner's head lifted. His crack of a mouth opened only slightly as he spoke in a rasping jeer. "Don't tell funny stories, Gunn. You can't kill a person with house current!"

"No?" Max's very indifference was chilling. "You might talk to Vin. How many claims a year do you get for deaths caused by one hundred and ten volt current in bathtubs, Vin? Tell Marty."

Werner's eyes slid to me, still hard but narrowing.

"Maybe I'll be able to prove it," Max went on, "but I can't say for sure. Because you're going to have a fairer chance than the Syndicate ever gives. Look at this wheel here."

We all looked as Max lifted the rotor out of the bowl. "See, burglar? No camelback, no brakes, no gimmicks! Nothing but a harmless little circuit-breaker at the pin." There was a faint trace of sardonic amusement in Gunn's voice; he enjoyed displaying his talents as a lecturer.

"Now look at the rotor," he went on. We looked. "You'll notice there's a channel bored down through the wood from the Double Zero

pocket. Something like a ball-return on a pool table, isn't it?"

"Max," I said, "what do you expect—"

"Quiet, Vin," the gambler said, not looking at me. "I'm not done yet." He set the rotor back into the bowl and took a ball-bearing a little larger than a buckshot size from his vest—my vest—pocket. He held it between his thumb and forefinger.

"Instead of the ivory ball, Werner, I'm using this metal one. But that's absolutely all the changes I've made. Now we'll play. And since there's only going to be one stake—your life—" Max's casualness was more menacing than many another's raging threats—"we won't need the marked-off laydown, will we?"

I had been conscious of Isherwood's loud breathing beside me, but his voice made me jump when it sounded.

"GUNN, if I understand you correctly, you intend to use this hellish set-up to obtain some sort of a confession?"

Max shrugged again. "That, too, is up to Werner. If he wishes to terminate our little game at any time, no doubt there are things he could tell us to distract our attention."

I said, "Max, you can't be so cold-blooded—"

"If you are threatening this man with death to obtain that confession," rumbled Isherwood, cutting me off sharply, "it is my duty to warn you that unsupported confessions have no legal standing. Furthermore, that we should be required to witness such torture is unreasonable. I for one refuse here and now!"

I said, "Max, of all the insane—"

Max turned, the gun steady in his fist. His face was as granite, but the tiny nerve jumped at the corner of his eye. If Max ever bluffed, he never allowed his bluff to be called.

"Get on into the bathroom! You'll be my witnesses and like it. Unless either of you try to butt in."

I stiffened, then shrugged and gave in. Isherwood following, I entered the tiled bath and walked to the wall space at the end farthest from the tub. I could see into the shower stall, the two men bound and gagged half-lying in the cubicle, one with dazed eyes and dried blood crusting one side of his face.

"I don't know what you expect from this silly scheme," I heard Werner say to Max. "Even if this contraption does kill me, how will you be any better off? Dead, I wouldn't be of any help to you at all. Alive, I might make things a little easier for you."

Max was unmoved. "I'm a square gambler, Marty. I like to play against chance, Fate, or what have you? I'm still doing it, understand? If you turn out to be as tough as you think you are—and I'm half hoping you will—there's a chance you'll win. But I'm betting

you taste electric salt in your mouth before I do for MacAnarney's death. If you do, I won't mind hiking the last mile."

The man in the tub had his neck craned like a turtle's, and he was studying Max with glinting eyes. He won't talk, I thought.

The rotor whirled and the silvery ball flashed around the inside of the mahogany bowl. Werner followed it with his eyes. His thin lips moved slightly, then clamped in an even thinner line. No—the ingenious third degree was hopeless.

"Twenty-two," Max said, when the ball came to rest. "Second, black and even. You win, Marty, but don't go away. We'll try again." He seized the spinner. "Around and around it goes, where it stops nobody knows."

Again the roulette wheel whirled and rattled. I cleared my throat. "Max—" I started. I stopped. It was obvious Max was no longer listening to any sound beyond the clatter of the gambling device.

"Five," he said. "You win again, Marty. According to the law of diminishing returns, the odds against the number at the start were thirty-seven to one. With each turn, they should lessen. How many times would you say we'll spin it before Owl Eyes shows, Marty?" Max's voice was smoothly cruel.

Werner opened his trapdoor of a mouth once more. "You probably got it fixed so it won't stop there until I'm ready to talk. And if you think I'm going to talk—"

Max Gunn stiffened and scowled. "I told you I'm a real gambler. Something you wouldn't understand. I don't have to depend on marked cards or loaded dice to show a profit, because I'm not in this to make millions, like you 'business men' of the Syndicate."

The wheel spun again. I stirred restlessly. In the reflecting gleam of the dark wood, I could see the deeper blackness of the bottomless compartment, like a toothless gap in a turning face. I wondered. It seemed incredible, but I had no doubts whatever about the stakes in the game I was witnessing.

Neither, it seemed, had Isherwood. "The man's a lunatic, Vincent. Can't we rush him—take his weapon away? We can't just stand here, waiting."

"Thirty-six," Max droned, unhearing—or unheeding. "Place your bets, Marty. The odds are getting even."

"We can't do a thing," I muttered over my shoulder to the lawyer. I noticed a light sheen on Werner's bald spot. "We can only hope Max knows what he's doing, and there's something for Werner to confess—in case he chooses to confess."

I COULD not take my fascinated eye from the wheel long enough to look at my watch. Time went by, leaving the echo of Max's sardonic drone to vibrate in the increasing tension of the crowded, white-tiled bathroom. My neck began to ache. Isherwood was breathing more rapidly and noisily beside me. The wing collar on Werner's craning neck had wilted into limpness long since.

Only Max seemed perfectly at ease, imperturbable. I got the impression he was counting his spins of the wheel, that he didn't *want* the Double Zero to show until its proper place in some pre-calculated mathematical sequence.

Suddenly the spell was broken. From far off came the sound of knocking at the door. Hammering, rather—urgent, official pounding. Marty Werner's eyes rolled and his mouth unlatched to call. Max reached over and clamped his well-kept hand over the lower part of the other's face.

"Keep quiet!" he snarled at us. "That plainclothes dick you saw in the lobby finally traced you here."

For almost five minutes we remained silent, waiting. The pounding died away long before we moved at the sound of Max's voice. He took his hand from Werner's mouth.

"All right. He's probably gone down to get the manager and a master key. We'll resume our game, Marty, in the time we have left. This may be our last opportunity—yours

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and mine. I'm betting the Double Ring shows in the next three spins. What do you think?"

It was evident what Werner thought. His bright eyes were glazed with apprehension now; in spite of Max's words, the Syndicate man still figured the small wheel was fixed, fixed like so many of his own.

"Wait, Gunn," he said. He appeared to be talking against time. "Wait! Let's talk this over, now. Let's—"

"What's there to talk over?" Max wanted to know. He spun the rotor casually, the metal ball clacking over the slots, then humming up to swing crazily around the bowl. "Maybe the number won't come up, after all."

"Stop that wheel!" Marty Werner rasped hoarsely. "I won't talk unless you stop it!"

Max shook his head. "If I did, the ball might hit Double O then. We've got to keep the game honest, haven't we?"

Werner was breathing shallowly, almost panting. His eyes were staring, following the slowing ball. "Grab the ball," he choked. "I'll talk. I'll tell—I killed MacAnarney!"

Max didn't even look up at our combined gasps, Isherwood's and mine.

The gambler watched the ball circle the mahogany bowl. "Yeah?" he asked skeptically. "Can you prove it?"

I stared. Not only was Max getting the confession, he was putting the burden of the proof on Werner. I could feel Isherwood straining forward to hear.

"It was a croupier's rake, Gunn! I swung it like a hammer—the edge got him. I was sore—I lost my temper when he reported how you had knocked him out and left him in your apartment. When I realized he was dead, I thought I could frame you. We brought him back here—Gunn, stop that ball! Quick!"

The last was almost a scream. Werner's nerves were uncovered now, raw and quivering. Max merely waited, watching the dying ball lob into a slot, bounce out, then trickle over two more. My nails dug into my palms as I saw it drop into the compartment—next to the blank, bottomless hole under the green 0-0!

"You win, again. I judge we have time for just one more whirl," said Gunn calmly, his hand on the spinner. "Where's that croupier's rake now, Marty?"

Max smiled slightly and spun the roulette wheel.

"No! I'll tell you—it's still in my office!" I heard through the devilish looping clatter of the ball. I looked at Bert Isherwood. His chin hung down over his old-fashioned string tie. "Stop it! Stop that wheel!" Werner begged, straining against the towel rack. The ball began to clack more slowly over the slots as Max turned to us. Again that pulse was beating in one eye-corner.

"Is that enough?" he asked Isherwood. "If we have the weapon to show the police laboratory—to test for MacAnarney's hair and blood and Werner's fingerprints—"

"Yes, yes," Isherwood said huskily. "You've won. For God's sake, stop this brutal—"

"Max!" I choked. "The ball..."

All eyes went to the gambling wheel. Nowhere in its concavity could be seen the silvery ball. Double Zero had been made at last!

WERNER groaned. His body stiffened, then slumped forward. It was checked by the bound wrists and swung sideways to thud into the wall. The baldish head lolled brokenly.

"We don't need verbatim evidence, do we?" Max was asking the lawyer. "I tried to think of a way to get stenographic notes, but no dice." His back was to Werner's body.

"Nothing, nothing," gurgled Isherwood. "You're innocent on one murder—but now you're guilty of another!"

Max frowned. "Another?"

"Werner," I bit out. "You've electrocuted him!"

The gambler's face cleared as he looked around at the slumped form. Then, using both hands, he picked the roulette wheel off the table. The unattached ends of the wires, released, snaked over the edge to the floor.

"If there'd been a connection, it would have blown the fuse—the lights would have gone out. No, it's just Marty's conscience catching up with him. Splash a little water in his face, Isherwood; he'll come out of his swoon. By the way, Vin, mind going down and getting that dick? Here's his murderer."

"The detective?" I said. "But he'll be back."

"No, Vin. Remember what I said about these boys blowing up when the odds are against them? I figured Marty would crack when he'd been sufficiently primed—that he wouldn't hold up when there was a bare chance he'd lose. So I had Rudy, the colored boy, bang on the floor at the psychological moment. Marty could play when there was no hope. But when he thought he was due to be rescued in a few more minutes, he lost his head and tried to stall me any way he could. He was so desperate he'd even tell the truth—anything to keep the wheel from turning for what he was afraid was the last time. No, Marty Werner isn't a gambler. He won't play the odds—unless he *knows* they're in his favor!"

I started for the door. Then I thought of something.

"But, Max—supposing the ball had dropped into the Double O before you had Werner primed, as you call it? Weren't you taking an awful long chance there?"

Gunn shrugged, smiling faintly. "I'm a gambler, Vin. The longer the chance—the better I like it."



WEEP AT MY MURDER

I T WAS one of those days when you don't care whether school keeps or not. Dust motes swam lazily in the shaft of noon-hour sunlight crossing my office desk. On the street below an elfin breeze was tossing the shop girls' skirts above their knees and giving the boys on the corner something to grin about. In Mill Creek Canyon twenty miles north the birds were singing, the trees were greening and the bass and perch were biting at nothing at all.

Down in the city jail a jumpy little man with nervous eyes was sweating and flinching and giving out, piece by piece, the inmost secrets of the men whose trust had made him; and over at the courthouse the D. A. and his boys were signing warrants, collecting subpoenas and getting ready to pop the lid on the biggest criminal-political cleanup this town has ever seen.

But I preferred not to think about that. My

The day Millie's past caught up with us I became a murderer—and only another killer could save me from the chair!

By Ken Lewis

part in that very ticklish business was over.

Instead I thought about Milly and Little Bill and our cabin in Mill Creek Canyon. *You don't really learn to appreciate your family till they've been away for a month*, I told myself.

It was at that point in my reverie that Edmund R. Delancey walked through my office door.

I knew who he was from the card he handed me. That is, I knew his name. In addition, I knew that he was suave, dapper and probably somewhere in his fifties, judging from the contrast of pure white wavy hair and clipped black brows and mustache. That he had a fresh gardenia in his immaculate lapel, wore pearl-grey spats which offset his twinkling eyes, twirled a malacca cane in slender well-groomed fingers, and looked, all in all, like a show girl's dream of heavy sugar personified.

Other than that I knew nothing. I'd never seen or heard of him before.

He sat down on the chair opposite me, crossed one spat-clad ankle over the other, placed the walking stick upright between his knees, and said:

"I've come to you, Barber, because I have been assured that you are the one man best qualified to handle the matter I have in mind. Naturally, I'm prepared to make it well worth your time, provided you give it your immediate attention."

He said it gravely, solemnly, but with no special inflection, no hesitation, like a man reciting something he'd learned well by heart. I blinked the day dreams out of my eyes and grinned at him.

"It'll have to be worth a hell of a lot, mister," I said, "to take up more than four hours of my time this afternoon. Because at exactly four-forty-eight—if the Chicago train's on time—I'm going to pick up my wife and kid at the station and we're going to drive straight to a cabin I've got down in the canyon and spend one entire, gorgeous, uninterrupted week there."

He frowned slightly, peeled back a tailored cuff to glance at the sleek white Waltham on his wrist. Then he nodded.

"This may take a bit longer than that," he said. "But not much. And it'll be worth five hundred dollars. I'll write the check now."

My brows arched. I'm not above admitting that I don't pick up fees that size every day—or even every two months. I waited till he'd affixed the proper name, amount and signature to a check from a book in his pocket, then asked the sixty-four dollar question:

"How do I earn it?"

He frowned again and studied the silver knob at the top of his walking stick a moment. Then he said, "This morning the police picked up a man named Irving Boerner, for questioning. Boerner possesses certain information

about someone very—important—to me. It's my belief that he has not yet imparted this information to the police.

"Now, then, all I want you to do is to use your influence with the district attorney in order to gain a private interview with Boerner—and give him this."

I LOOKED at the small white capsule he held out, and my eyes narrowed. "I should have known it was too good to be true," I breathed. "Don't kid, me, mister. I'm just a poor shamus trying to make a living for the wife and kiddy. I wouldn't touch that thing with a ten-foot pole."

The black brows knitted. "You recognize it, then?"

"Sure—coke. Bugs Boerner was hopped to the gills with it when they picked him up, they tell me."

He sighed. "So I understand. I want to keep him that way for one more night."

I thought about that and shook my head. "That wouldn't buy you anything. As soon as the new load wore off, he'd go right on spilling his guts."

He studied the top of his walking stick some more and nodded. "I intend merely a delaying action. The added twelve hours or so of grace will give my—interest—time to settle his affairs here and get out of town until this investigation dies down. Naturally, you won't be implicated. No one would ever suspect you of trafficking in narcotics. And even if they did, there'd be no proof, nothing they could do about it, once Boerner swallowed the capsule."

I stood up. I made confetti of the little man's check and strewed it across my desk top.

I said thickly, "Nothing except cancel my license and starve my family while they kept me from getting any more jobs. Look, buddy—I don't know who sent you. Whether it was Gayle or Ruko or Tompkins or even Big Jim himself. Gayle probably, since Boerner was his man and would hold out about him the longest. . . . But I do know you've wasted a trip from whatever theatrical boarding house they found you in. Because none of those boys pays off except on results. Now get out of here before I lose my temper. And take that damned pill with you!"

I didn't get the reaction I'd expected. In fact, I didn't get much reaction out of him at all. I never did, out of Edmund R. Delancey—except just that one time, later on. He neither cringed nor blustered, just frowned the little frown again and said coolly, "Very well, Barber. I shan't try to coerce you. But if you should change your mind there'll be a check twice that size waiting for you at Three-Two-Two-O Gramerney Park Road. . . . Meanwhile, I hope nothing occurs to spoil your little outing in the country."

After he'd pirouetted out, swinging the cane, I glowered impotently at the empty doorway. I knew I should have held him for the cops—along with the capsule. But that would have meant hours of delay, making statements, answering questions. And if one of the big controls or take guys I'd helped turn up for the D. A. during the past month was really behind his visit, then my place was with Milly and Little Bill.

And the sooner the better, the way I figured it.

I decided to be at the depot plenty early. Whatever else the little man with the cane had done or failed to do, he'd certainly played hell with my idyllic mood of the moments before.

WAITING for train time at the station, I picked up a street edition of the *Evening Trib.* And what I found in Mal Everts' column on Page 1, Section II didn't help to improve my disposition. Sub-titled "Irony Story," it was one of those rotten little items which a gossip columnist uses to build up his own reputation by tearing down someone else's.

And it concerned me.

While a certain private eye around town has been tearing his hair out, trying to locate a local badboy wanted by the D.A.'s office for questioning, the dick's wife has quietly been making said badboy ver-ry comfy at a snug little hideaway not many miles from the main stem.

Seems the gal and the badboy were that way before the dick stepped into the pix, and now wifey feels that in trying to frame her ex—(?) —boyfriend, hubby is motivated less by civic virtue than a desire to smear his one-time (?) rival. . .

As usual in such cases, the shamus himself will be the last to find out. He thinks wifey's been spending her time with a sister in Chicago. Developments are expected—but fast—and you'll keep in mind who told you. . .

My gorge tightened and red flecks began to dance before my eyes. What made it so bad was that there were plenty of people around town who'd believe that slimy little squib. Milly had been part of a double-act at the Orpheum—songs and dances—when I met her. The other half of the act was Larry Gayle's sister Rae, and Milly had been engaged to Larry at the time.

After I convinced her that being the wife of a private detective had certain compensations which a stage career lacks, her blonde partner, Rae, had gone on, solo, to achieve fame and fortune both publicly and in private—and Rae's brother Larry had been able to settle down and give his undivided attention to taking over some four or five swank gambling pitches around town.

But Milly still had a secret soft spot in her heart for the cheap little collar-ad gambler, even I suspected, because somehow he'd managed to convince her that it was her break-off with him which had sent him the rest of the way down the racket-road he'd gone. And if I could believe this little regret in Milly, plenty of people would believe these poisoned-pen paragraphs.

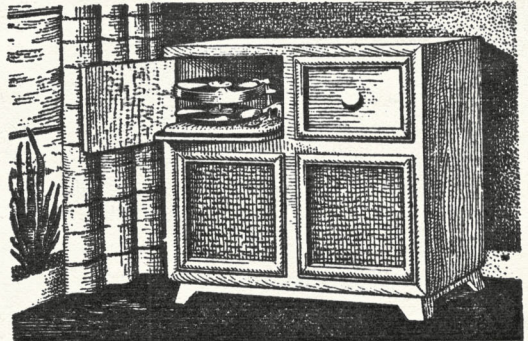
Not Sam Barber! Not Sam Barber, I told myself savagely, as I scanned the last of the crowd coming up the ramp from the Chicago train, and realized sickly that Milly and Little Bill hadn't been anywhere among them.

My shoulders slumped and I stumbled numbly toward the street again, with that hollow all-gone feeling in the pit of my stomach which a let-down like that sometimes gives you. I'd just sighted a familiar figure to my left, and was wondering vaguely if it was merely a coincidence that Maurice Ruko, head of the town's string of horse-book parlors, should be in the same exit-bound crowd as myself, when the public address speaker overhead began to intone my name.

"Calling Samuel Barber . . . calling Samuel Barber . . ." the dispatcher's voice droned metallicly. "An important telephone call has

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just come for you at the main information desk. Hurry, please—your party is waiting. . . . Calling Samuel J. Barber. . . .”

My shoulders came up again and I had to grin idiotically at myself. That would be Milly now, calling to explain the last-minute delay which had made her and the kid miss the train! I shoved through the crowd like Stan Lomax's pet halfback ripping through the scrubs.

But it wasn't Milly's voice that came over the phone the reception girl handed me. It was Little Bill's.

“Hello, daddy,” his four-year-old treble quavered. “Why did you send that man to take us off the train? Why don't you come and get us?”

My knuckles whitened as my fingers tried to crush the receiver. “What man, son?” I bellowed hoarsely. “What did he look like? Where are you?”

My answer was the soft click of the circuit breaking at the far end of the line. I pummeled the hook, bawled frantically for the operator. “Police business!” I snapped. “I want the call traced that just came in over this phone!”

I could hear her rustling papers for a moment. Then, “I'm sorry, sir. We have no record of a long-distance call to that number during the past half hour. Your call must have been made locally, on a dial phone here in the city. We have no way of tracing such calls.”

I wasn't aware of moving, but the receiver banged hollowly into its cradle. No way of tracing. . . .

No way?

At the D. A.'s suggestion—because the D. A. knew my one vulnerable point—I'd quietly hustled my family out of town before the fireworks started a month ago. But now, with Bugs Boerner caged and beginning to sing, I'd thought it was safe to bring them back again, that the local rats would be too busy hunting their holes to try to fight back any more. So I'd wired Milly accordingly.

But I'd mentioned their return to only one person—only one person who knew about it in time to shill them off the train at some stop up the line, put the snatch on them.

A little man with a cane. . . .

I TURNED blindly and began to push toward the revolving doors at the lobby's far end. I was in such a hurry to get to my jalopy outside that I guess I was a little careless. I must have been—to let Maurice Ruko and his two hoods get that close to me, without putting up a guard of some kind.

Before I knew what was happening, I was plunging floorward as someone stuck a foot between my legs. Shooting stars of pain rocketed through my noggin as it connected with the marble floor, propelled by an unexpected force behind me. And as I rolled over

to get up again, someone, making like he'd been thrown off balance by my lunge, swung a pointed shoe-toe against my chin as he stepped across me.

I shook the black specks out of my eyes and recognized the pasty-faced little creep who'd given me the business. He was bending over me solicitously now, fumbling for a hold as if to help me to my feet. I struggled up and tried to shake him off, and his pal took over.

His pal was bigger, with thick ring-battered features and a broken front tooth. He sidled up and pinioned my arms from behind while I was still trying to wrestle away from the first one.

“Relax, brother,” he said loudly. “He didn't mean nuthin' by it, I'm sure. You tripped an' he fell over you. It was just a accident.” His breath was as sour as his voice.

Ruko himself stepped from the fringe of the grinning crowd around us. He was a tall, sleek pretty-boy of the liveried chauffeur type, with blue-black hair and eyes and a background he claimed to be Russian. He spoke reprovingly to pasty-face.

“What are you trying to do, Alfred? Make Sam the Barber mad at us? Don't you know he's an important man around town, a close personal friend of the D. A.'s? That's for being so clumsy!”

He flat-handed one against the little hood's cheek, which turned from putty-grey to apple-red for a minute.

I let my arms go limp in snaggle-tooth's grasp. Normally I might have welcomed a little rough-house right then, to let some of the knotted tension drain out of me. But right now I had much more important things to worry about.

“That's one I owe you, buddy,” I told Alfred. “And when the time comes it won't be a love-pat like your boss just handed you, either.”

He stuck his tongue in his cheek and murmured things like, “Tsk-tsk, Pardon me,” and finally gave with, “Oh, I'm so scared!”

Snaggle-tooth took his paws off me and said, “You all right, Mr. Barber? You want I should call an ambulance for you?”

Ruko said, “If you want to prefer charges against Alfred, Sam, I'll be your witness.”

And I said, “Sorry I can't play with you right now, boys—I haven't got the time,” and walked off.

I could still feel them winking and grinning at each other behind my back, as I drove out of the station parking lot.

THREE-TWO-TWO-O Gramercy Park Road was the sixth house in a block of identical brown-shingle bungalows set in one of those quiet middle-class residential subdivisions which had been all the rage

twenty years ago. I beached my '34 sedan at the curb, moved up an uneven brick walk to a sagging front porch, and felt in my right coat pocket for the flat little .32 I always keep there. And it wasn't until then that I caught my first inkling of the possible significance of that horseplay back at the station.

The gun was gone.

I wondered whether the whole rumpus had been staged merely to relieve me of it in anticipation of this visit, or whether Alfred had lifted it just as a precautionary measure, when he bent to "help me up" and "discovered" who it was he had tripped.

Either way, there wasn't time now to go back to the office and rummage up another one. I pummeled the front door, felt it swing in at my knock, and stepped left from a short shadowy hall into a broad front room that had once been somebody's parlor.

It was still a parlor—but of a different kind. Sunlight sifting through closed venetian blinds showed me a long writing bench along one wall. It was littered with clipboards, scratch sheets and telephone headsets, and fronted by a low square desk and swivel chair.

I recognized the dapper little man behind the desk. His hair was still as white and wavy, and his brows and mustache were still as clipped and black. He stood up as I entered and extended a slender hand.

"I'm glad to see that you change your mind, Barber," he said, smiling suavely. "My informants assured me that you were a reasonable man."

I ignored the second closed door across the room, and whoever might be waiting behind it. "There's only one way to reason with your kind, Delancey," I said. "And this is it. . . . Now, then, where are they?"

My fist spoiled his smile, sent him ricocheting off the swivel chair to sprawl on his back on the carpet behind it. He sat up, dabbed blood from his lips with a pocket handkerchief, and asked softly, "Where are who, Barber?"

"You know who! My wife and kid." I vaulted the desk, aimed a kick at his middle.

But my foot never landed. When it was halfway to contact he twisted sharply, swept something from the rug beside the desk, and smashed it into my shin.

The something was heavy. It was the big silver knob at the end of his malacca walking stick. He knew how to use it.

My leg went out from under me as though it weren't there any more, and I floundered on the rug, wondering just how badly off I was. If the bone were shattered, it could be serious. . . .

He had scrambled to his feet now. He was standing over me, meaningfully swinging the cane to discourage any further activity on my part.

"Come, come, Barber," he chided. "We're wasting time—the right kind of blow to your larynx with this thing would kill you instantly. And believe me, I know how to strike such a blow if you force me. But I'm sure neither of us desires that."

He waited. Then, "You desire the return of your wife and child, and my desires are still the same as they were when I visited your office this afternoon. Carry out your part of the bargain I suggested, and I promise that your family will be waiting for you, unharmed, when you return."

I rubbed my leg some more and eyed the heavy knob on his cane. He held it just out of reach, but ready for instant action—and there didn't seem to be much I could do about it at the moment.

"Here? You've got them here?" I stalled.

His smile was as small as his frowns had been earlier. "So you could inform the police to have this place surrounded, as soon as I released you? That would be rather foolish, wouldn't it? No, they aren't here, of course. But you'll be directed where to find them, and all three of you will be guaranteed safe conduct from then on—unless you attempt to cross us, of course. In that event, I can't vouch for the actions of my—associates."

I tried to swallow. "Proof? Will you give me a guarantee?" I said thickly.

He shook his head. "I'm afraid you'll just have to take my word for it this time, old man. But naturally neither I nor those I—represent—have any reason whatever for wishing to bring unhappiness to you or those you love. It's just that this delay your mission will afford us is so damnably important, and detaining your family was the only way we could think of to assure your cooperation."

In the next thirty seconds I must have thought of a dozen ways to put the quietus on his little scheme, once I got out of there. And just as fast, I rejected them all. Maybe I never really was more than a half-smart guy, anyway—and maybe it was just that no man can think very straight with the lives of his wife and kid at stake. Anyway, I found myself clinging more and more to the forlorn hope that maybe he really was leveling, after all.

His plan listened okay, when you stopped to analyze it. Boerner had been doped to the eyes when the D. A.'s boys picked him up, and he was probably still riding the crest of the snowstorm. If so, he'd have enough false moxie in him to hold out anything important so far. And with Delancey's courage pill to give him another boost, he'd probably continue to hold out for another twelve or fifteen hours—plenty of time for Delancey's pals to wind up their affairs in town and blow with whatever boodle they could salvage from the crumbling racket regime.

I was in a nasty mess, anyway you looked at it—but I was darned if I could think of any way to wriggle out of it now, and still expect to see Milly and Little Bill alive again.

In the end I stood up numbly, took the pill he handed me and limped out alone into the twilight.

GETTING in to see Boerner privately was no trick, once I'd driven the five miles downtown to the jail. The little hop-head was gnawing his nails in his cell between grill-room sessions, and when I told Dad Fuller that the D. A. had sent me to check something privately with his prize prisoner, the old chief jailer escorted me to the cell himself, then waited discreetly down the corridor.

The jumpy-eyed ex-torpedo wasn't exactly overjoyed to see me when I first walked in on him. But a glimpse of the capsule from my pocket changed all that.

"Hell, Sam, he breathed, gulping it shakily, "I didn't know you was on our side!"

I gave him a sour grin. "A guy's gotta take his shekels where and when he finds them," I said.

He grinned. "I guess you got sump'n there, pal. And you can tell the boss everything's copasetic. I ain't said a thing, and I ain't gonna. Oh, stuff about Ruko and Tompkins and Big Jim, maybe—just to make the dicks happy, and even a couple old scores. But Larry Gayle's one guy I never heard of before in my life. And it's gonna be that way, till he springs me."

I nodded, feeling a little sick at my stomach, and made myself stroll casually out of the cell block.

The streets outside were snarled with six o'clock traffic, and it took me the better part of an hour just to shake the sedan loose from the business district alone. At its outskirts, I snapped on the car radio to quiet my pinging nerves—and ran smack into a flash news bulletin.

It was, you'll agree, a honey.

The body of Irving 'Bugs' Boerner, alleged triggerman for a local gambling syndicate, has just been found in a cell at city jail, where he was lodged this morning for questioning. He was apparently the victim of cyanide poison, taken internally.

Sought for complicity in the death is Sam ("The") Barber, private investigator who visited the prisoner alone shortly before the body was discovered.

Boerner's testimony had been counted upon heavily as the key link in a widespread drive against graft and corruption launched today by the district attorney's office. The private detective had ostensibly been aiding the D.A.'s crusade and thus was able to gain access to the dead man's cell. . . .

My fingers started to pulverize the steering wheel, and the street ahead fogged for a minute, as the full impact of the words hit me. Delancey had conned me into securing a delay for whomever he fronted for, all right. A permanent delay—by walking me straight into the middle of an iron-bound murder frame! I didn't worry about Bugs Boerner then, but about myself. My friendship with the D. A. wouldn't help me any now—the thought of Milly and Little Bill would have canceled it, even if it wouldn't have been automatically dissolved with the discovery of Boerner's body.

I kicked the throttle, sent the old sedan roaring through the suburbs. There was only one chance now—one chance to clear myself and maybe locate Milly and Little Bill alive. That was to reach the brown-shingled bungalow before Delancey had a chance to pull out. I thanked God that the gelatin sheathing on the murder capsule had given me time to get safely away from headquarters, before it melted and let the poison inside seep into Boerner's stomach lining.

But even before I reached the delapidated bookie-blind on the town's outskirts, I think I knew it would be dark, deserted, that the little man with the cane would never have waited around long enough to let the cops or me find him there.

Frozenly, I left the sedan in the alley out back, moved through the dusk-bound shadows of the rear yard. There might still be some careless notation, some forgotten scrap of evidence inside, which would lead me to my family. I remembered that the call to the depot had been local, indicating that they were somewhere in the city.

And then I remembered the half dozen phones inside the cottage, and realized that it would have been easy enough for the actual snatcher to call Delancey long distance on one of them, have him make a local call to the depot on another, then hold the receiver of the first to the mouthpiece of the second during the few brief seconds I'd been allowed to talk to my son.

It had been done.

So even that vague lead was meaningless.

The back door was bolted, but I found an unlocked window, eased it open, and slipped into a dusty and dimly-lit kitchen. I was just stooping to examine the contents of a wastebasket shoved under the sink, when a pantry door creaked behind me and I whirled to stare into the muzzle of a heavy .45 automatic.

THE lad behind the gun was trim and wiry, in his tailored slacks and sports jacket. He had curly blond hair, care-less blue eyes and a handsome tight-lipped face that had haunted my nightmares—though in

another connection—for the past five years.

"Hello, Sam," he said softly. "I understand you just cooled a pal of mine, down at City Jail." He seemed quite amused about it.

I nodded woodenly. "Don't thank me yet, Gayle," I said. "You can push a family man just so far in the name of his wife and kid. Then comes a time when the worm is bound to turn—and this is it!"

I scooped up the metal wastebasket and flung it in his face. The gun jerked, went off through its bottom, scattering papers, then clattered to the linoleum as the basket's rim hit his wrist. I dived for it, but before my scrabbling fingers could pick it up someone hunched out of the pantry and took me with a flying scissors that bowled me end over end.

"Go easy, Hoke," a third voice called from the hall doorway to the left. "We don't want too many bruises on him."

I twisted around and recognized the burly boy clamping the scissors on me. He was the same snaggle-toothed peacemaker who had held my arms down at the depot.

Maurice Ruko came in from the hall, followed in order by the little man with the cane and the ferret-faced creep called Alfred. I noticed that Alfred held my own .32 in his fist. Then I stared at Ruko.

"So you and Gayle got together at last," I murmured. "Jealous as you've always been of each other—you of his back-room casino trade and he of your horse-book take—the rats decided to band together against the common enemy—justice. What I don't get is where he fits in." I jabbed a thumb at Delancey.

Gayle clucked apologetically. "Tsk, ts— I'm afraid I've been a poor host. Sam, meet Pops, little Rae's chip-heavy fiancé from Chicago. When I wrote sis that I needed an outside front guy to help me escape from the toils of the law, Pops here was glad to come

down and oblige. Great gal, Rae—for her some gees will do anything."

I glared at Delancey. He was studying the top of his walking stick again.

"I'm afraid Pops doesn't go much for the strong-arm stuff, Sam. You aren't much of a rod man, are you, Pops? But just the same, we owe him a lot. For instance, if he hadn't let it drop that you were expecting Milly and the kid back from Chi this P. M., I wouldn't have known enough to drive up to Carterville and talk them into getting off the train with me there. And then we wouldn't've been able to make you take care of Buggsy for us. So now we're going to keep Pops' promise to you, Sam. We're going to take you out and let you join your family."

Something about the way he said it made my skin crawl.

He laughed. "They're all right, Sam," he soothed. "Perfectly all right—so far. Tied up a little, maybe—but that won't show later, the way we did it. It's you I'm worried about, Sam. You're mad—crazy jealous. You read Mal Everts' column in the *Trib* this afternoon, and you blew your top. You went up and made Bugs Boerner tell you where Milly was hiding me, and then you gave him the Black Bottle powder so he couldn't tell anybody else, till you'd had a chance to take care of the situation personally.

"And now you're going up to your lonely little cabin in Mill Creek Canyon, where Bugs told you we'd be. And you know what you're going to do up there? You're going to kill your wife and kid in a jealous rage, and then commit suicide!"

My eyes swelled incredulously.

He waved a hand to quiet the interruption. "At least that's what the cops'll think when they finally find the bodies. Because they'll also find that all three of you died within a



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few minutes of each other, and from slugs from the same gun. Your gun—that Freddie glommed off you this afternoon. They'll find plenty of powder burns and prints, of course—also yours. And they'll find a lot of my clothes hanging in the closet, to show I really was staying up there, all right, but just happened to be away when you showed up. . . . All right, Hoke—take him out to his sedan. Freddie'll pick up our car and follow.”

Snaggle-tooth eyed me unhappily. “He don't play fair,” he complained. “He keeps gougin' me and things. If you won't lemme bruise him, at least lemme tie him up.”

“Just his hands, then. We don't want to have to carry him. And use those rags there in the corner. We don't want any rope burns found on him, either.”

HOKE drove, with Delancey in the front seat beside him, while Ruko and Gayle kept guns in my ribs from their flanking positions in the back. Now and then in the rear view mirror I caught headlight reflections from the car Freddie was driving.

Nobody said much except Gayle, who gave driving directions to Hoke. You could feel the kill-tension that stopped their tongues mounting in the old sedan till I almost wondered how the roof managed to stay on.

During the half-hour drive to the canyon I kept thinking about the spot Milly and the kid and I were in—and I kept getting sicker and sicker. The rags Hoke had used to tie my hands behind me were old and dirty, but there were plenty of them and they were far from rotten. Besides, there was Gayle and Ruka and their two guns, even if my hands had been free.

I could see the whole thing now, of course. It had been easy enough to plant that squib in Everts' column just before press time, after Delancey had visited my office and spilled the setup to Gayle. Guys like Everts don't have to worry about whether the stories they print are true or not—just whether they're juicy enough. By using no actual names—just filthy insinuations—they're fairly well protected from the danger of libel.

And the rest of Gayle's scheme would probably work out just as well. It was too early in the season to expect any of the other handful of cabins in the canyon to be occupied. Nobody'd see us arrive, or hear the shots, or see them leave again. And they'd have plenty of time to cover up any traces of their own presence up there, afterwards. There'd be nobody to hurry or interrupt them.

And when it was all over, Gayle and Ruko would keep right on running their fat gambling pitches, with the two key witnesses against them eliminated. The D.A. would have to drop his campaign or see it die a

natural death, and business would go on as usual.

Except that Milly and I and Little Bill wouldn't be around to know it. Except that our bodies would be rotting up there in the cabin, waiting for someone to stumble across them sometime and report just another domestic tragedy that had ended the violent way—in a double killing and suicide. . . .

There were stars and a big round April moon hanging over the canyon, when Hoke finally scuffed the sedan to a stop in front of the darkened cabin. I took my last look at the sky and wondered if Milly and Little Bill could see it too, through a window from inside there somewhere, where they were tied up. I hoped so. I didn't like to think of them going out in the dark—completely in the dark—after all the warmth and light they'd brought me during the few brief years they were mine.

Gayle got out of our car first and went over to give Freddie instructions. Ruko prodded me out, and Hoke unlimbered from the front and stepped around to grab my arms and keep me from trying a break for it. Delancey followed him, standing uncertainly by the running board, twiddling his absurd walking stick, with its silver knob glinting under the moon.

Gayle and Freddie came over to join us, with Freddie dropping a little behind. And just as they reached us Ruko stepped back and covered us all with his gun and said, “Now, Alfred!”

My little gun jumped up in Freddie's hand, prodding the small of Gayle's back. “Drop it, Punk!” Freddie snarled.

Gayle's eyes widened as though he was just coming out of a particularly horrible dream. “Hey! What's got into you guys?” he brayed. His voice was like the peculiar wheezing sound a sick horse makes.

OVER to the left, Ruko smiled evilly. “There's been a slight change in your plan, Gayle,” he said silkily. “We thought it was a good plan, so far as it went. But it didn't go quite far enough. You'll have to admit that the whole thing would be much more convincing if Sam found you here, too, instead of just your clothes. You two had a fight—and he killed you.” Ruko chuckled, a short, savage sound.

The glazed bewilderment had left Gayle's eyes now, and another look had taken its place. A savage, cornered look. He threw himself headlong at the ground, triggering the .45 as he fell.

Ruko lifted his gun, let it sag again, clutched at his middle and toppled backward as though he had tripped on something hidden in the grass—though there was nothing in the grass for him to trip on.

From the tail of my eye I caught the dull

flash of silver to my right, heard a hollow sucking sound like a cleaver chopped into an over-ripe melon. I realized abruptly that Hoke's grip was gone from my shoulders, that I still owed Freddie something from that afternoon.

I gave it to him in the kidneys, with my head, while he was still emptying my gun into the back of Gayle's skull down there on the ground at his feet.

My lunge knocked him looping like a tackling dummy, the gun flying arcwise from his fingers; and I followed through. I think it must have been the sudden cessation of sound when he passed out and stopped screaming that finally snapped me out of it; let me realize that my right leg was tired, my ankle stiff and swollen.

I turned and saw Delancey standing over Hoke's crumpled body in the moonlight, the small end of the cane still gripped in his hand like a bludgeon. His face was drawn and white as his wavy hair, his little grey eyes uncertain and unhappy.

"I hope he died easily," he murmured. "I don't like killing. I told them that when I learned about Boerner's death, after I'd sent you away with the capsule which I thought contained only narcotics—after it was too late to call you back."

I grinned at him. "The loss of rats like Boerner and Hoke is the people's gain," I said. "Don't worry about them. . . . You sure make a weapon out of that cane, mister."

He nodded absently. "A man in my position has to learn how to defend himself somehow," he said. "I can't have a bodyguard with me always."

My grin broadened. "From what I've seen, you're wasting your money to bother with one at all," I told him.

WE FOUND Milly and Little Bill tied up with blankets on the bed inside the cabin. They hadn't really worried much, she said, till they heard the shots outside. It had never occurred to them that they might be held prisoner more than a few hours, that they might actually be in any danger.

"You don't have to tell me why you came here with him in the first place," I said, after we'd tangled each other in our arms for five minutes. "It's enough just having you back, knowing you're safe."

Her eyes widened. "But Sam, why shouldn't I tell you? He stepped onto the train when it stopped at Carterville, and said he'd learned that Ruko and his men were planning to kidnap us when we reached home; that they'd already decoyed you away, and meant to use us as hostages to keep you from testifying against them.

"He said he couldn't stand by and let us walk into a trap like that, even though I had refused to see or talk to him since we broke off and I married you. That our wisest move would be to leave the train there at Carterville and let him drive us here to the cabin to stay until he could get in touch with you and tell you about it—of course, I knew he was lying when he tied me up after we'd got here, and made Little Bill talk to you over the phone—"

Delancey was fidgeting and fiddling with his cane just inside the door. I called him over and introduced him.

"Oh, I know you," Milly said. "You're the millionaire investment banker who's engaged to marry Rae Gayle. I read about it in the papers. I guess that's why you were trying to help Larry out—because Rae asked you to."

He nodded glumly. "I'm afraid I've let her down rather badly," he said. "She'll probably never speak to me again. I could have struck that man holding the gun on her brother, first. . . . But Gayle had misrepresented the true state of affairs to her. She thought he was merely the victim of unwarranted political persecution when she asked me to help.

"But when I found out what he was really like—well—I couldn't help feeling that she and the rest of the world would be better off without him. I guess that's why I let him die—" he broke off miserably.

I grinned again. "I wouldn't worry too much about that, either," I said. "Nobody but you and I needs to know exactly who killed who, and in what order, up here. You may have to stand a light indictment for your part in jobbing the poison pill which killed Boerner. But the D.A.'s a friend of mine—or will be again, when he learns the truth. And with the lawyers you'll have to represent you, it probably won't go too hard.

"But for gosh sakes don't forget your cane, when you go to the inquest. The jury's bound to feel that anybody who'd carry a thing like that around in this day and age must be a little wacky—but perfectly harmless."

YOUR COPY MAY BE LATE

Because of the exigencies of war-time transportation, your magazine may be late sometimes in reaching you. If it does not arrive on time, please do not write complaining of the delay. This delay occurs after it leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.

STRANGE TRAILS



The CASE of the AVENGING WIND

EARLY IN 1927 EVA DUGAN, 40-YEAR-OLD TRAINED NURSE AND HOUSEKEEPER FOR A.J. MATHIS ON HIS LONELY RANCH OUTSIDE TUCSON, ARIZ., INFORMED NEIGHBORS HER AGED AND TESTY EMPLOYER HAD SUDDENLY MOVED TO CALIFORNIA. SHE THEN SOLD THE RANCHER'S STOCK AND DEPARTED IN HIS CAR.

SUSPICIOUS WHEN HE LEARNED FROM MATHIS' DOCTOR THAT THE OLD MAN HAD COMPLAINED HIS HOUSEKEEPER WAS TRYING TO POISON HIM, SHERIFF JIM McDONALD EXAMINED THE EMPTY HOUSE BUT COULD FIND NO SIGN OF VIOLENCE.



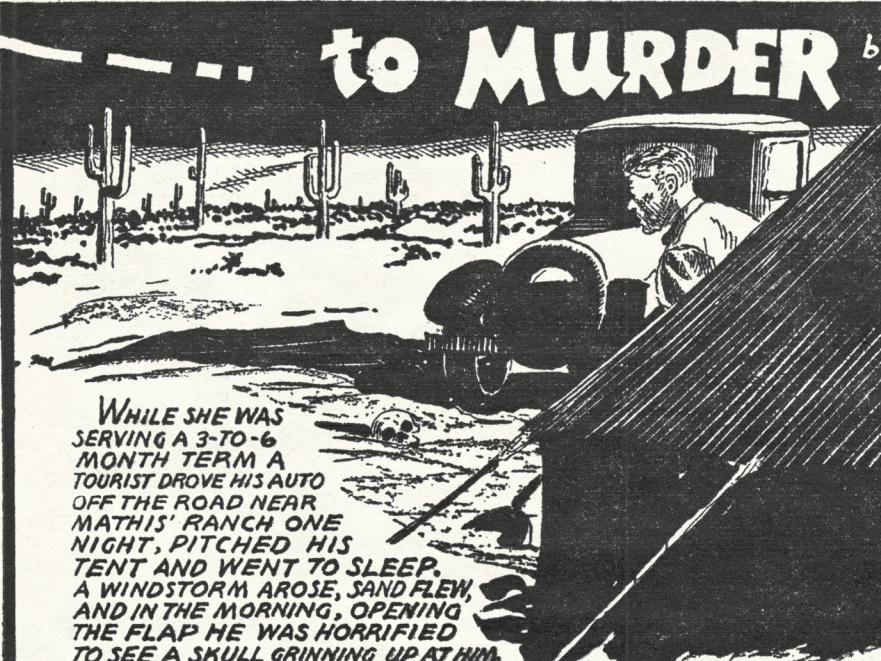
ON A HUNCH HE CONSULTED MATHIS' TUCSON BANKERS WHO SAID THE RANCHER HAD CASHED NO CHECKS FOR TRAVELING OR LIVING EXPENSES. THE ONLY PLACE ONE COULD LIVE WITHOUT EXPENSES, HE FIGURED, WAS IN HIS GRAVE.

THE LOCAL POSTMASTER'S MEMORY YIELDED ADDRESSES TO WHICH EVA DUGAN HAD WRITTEN AND, WHILE 1,000 VOLUNTEERS FINE-COMBED THE DESERT FOR A NEWLY-TURNED GRAVE, McDONALD TRACED HER THROUGH A SERIES OF POST CARDS TO A HOSPITAL IN WHITE PLAINS, N.Y.

SHE STUCK TO HER STORY AND DEFIED THE SHERIFF TO EXTRADITE HER WITHOUT A CORPUS DELICTI. McDONALD COUNTERED BY CONVICTING HER OF STEALING HER EMPLOYER'S CAR.



... to MURDER ^{by LEE}

A black and white illustration of a man with a beard driving a car in a desert. The car is a vintage model with a spare tire mounted on the side. The landscape is arid with several saguaro cacti in the background. The scene is viewed from a low angle, looking up at the car.

WHILE SHE WAS SERVING A 3-TO-6 MONTH TERM A TOURIST DROVE HIS AUTO OFF THE ROAD NEAR MATHIS' RANCH ONE NIGHT, PITCHED HIS TENT AND WENT TO SLEEP. A WINDSTORM AROSE, SAND FLEW, AND IN THE MORNING, OPENING THE FLAP HE WAS HORRIFIED TO SEE A SKULL GRINNING UP AT HIM.

A black and white illustration of a gallows in a prison. The gallows is a wooden structure with a platform and a hanging mechanism. Several people are standing around the gallows, including a man in a suit and a woman in a dress. The background shows the interior of a prison with barred windows and doors.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANY SKELETON-- FLESH, CARTILAGE AND HAIR EATEN AWAY BY QUICKLIME-- EXCEPT THAT A DENTIST IDENTIFIED ITS FALSE TEETH AS A SET HE HAD MADE FOR A. J. MATHIS.

NURSE DUGAN EXPLAINED THAT HER EMPLOYER DROPPED DEAD AFTER "JACK," A MYSTERIOUS BOY FRIEND, STRUCK HIM DURING A QUARREL. TERRIFIED, SHE SAID, THEY BURIED HIM IN QUICKLIME AND "JACK" LEFT FOR AUSTRALIA.

EVA DUGAN WAS TRIED, CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO BE THE FIRST WOMAN TO HANG FOR MURDER IN ARIZONA-- ALL BECAUSE AN ILL WIND UNEXPECTEDLY BALANCED THE SCALES OF JUSTICE.

NIGHT TIME IS MURDER TIME

She beat Jenkins over the head with a rock — then told me, "Hurry, this is your chance."



"Make a run for it, pal. There's nothing I'd like better than to see you make a break for it—with my bullet in the back of your head!"

CHAPTER ONE

The Passenger

ALL at once the road vanished, and the dashboard and even the windshield. The car hurtled into a maw of blackness.

It had been doing sixty at the moment the headlights went dead, and only the fact that I was on one of the few straight stretches of road saved me. I held the wheel straight as I braked, but even so, half the sedan mounted the shoulder of the road before it came to a skidding stop.

I cursed aloud with bitter frustration. There I was, marooned in darkness, with still a mile to go to Will Groff's gas station. The sky was overcast. No moon, no stars—only blackness through which I couldn't drive a dozen feet without headlights.

Five minutes ago Will Groff had phoned me at my house. In a hoarse, scared tone he had told me that Judy Hutton had been hurt in an accident and had been carried into his gas station.

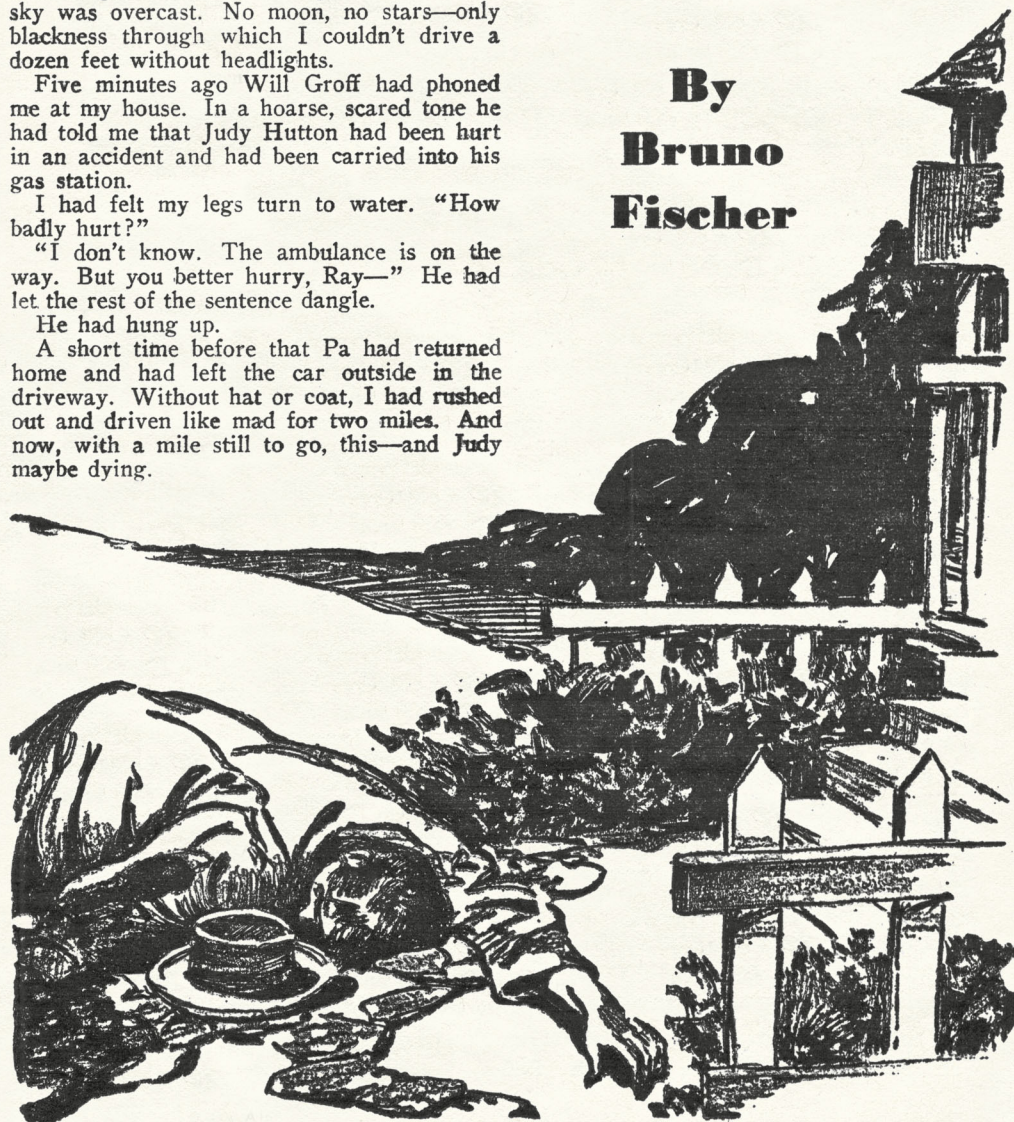
I had felt my legs turn to water. "How badly hurt?"

"I don't know. The ambulance is on the way. But you better hurry, Ray—" He had let the rest of the sentence dangle.

He had hung up.

A short time before that Pa had returned home and had left the car outside in the driveway. Without hat or coat, I had rushed out and driven like mad for two miles. And now, with a mile still to go, this—and Judy maybe dying.

**By
Bruno
Fischer**



In total darkness I pressed the horn. Its deep blare shattered the silence, which meant that the battery was all right. The trouble was with the lighting system. Maybe it was only the fuse.

I opened the glove compartment, reached inside for the flashlight. I felt maps, several books of matches, a pencil, a screwdriver—but no flashlight.

That would be my luck. I did not remember a time when a flashlight hadn't been in the car. Pa was the kind of man who was always prepared for minor emergencies; he considered a flashlight as essential to a car as a spare tire. Yet now it wasn't there.

I groped under the dashboard and pulled out the fuse. I struck a match. The flat silver wire in the tiny glass tube was broken. Chances were that a new fuse would give me at least a couple minutes of light I needed.

The box of fuses wasn't in the glove compartment, either.

That was the second thing wrong, but it didn't have any larger meaning to me then. I had noticed the fuses this morning while driving to have lunch at Judy's house. I had been out of matches and knew that Pa kept extra books in the glove compartment and I had pulled out a box of fuses instead. By the light of matches I searched.

No fuses.

It was ridiculous. Judy was very badly hurt, and I couldn't get to her because of a fuse worth a few cents.

Maybe I could get a lift, but not many cars came along Ammen Road at this hour; besides, drivers would be reluctant to stop at night for a lone man. I would have to start walking, and that would be maddeningly slow in darkness so intense that I couldn't see my hand in front of my face.

I had the door open and one foot out of the car when it occurred to me that the flashlight might be on the shelf below the rear window. I knelt on the seat and struck a match.

Then the match fell from my fingers, flickered out. Darkness closed in again, opaque and terrifying and, trembling, I realized slowly I was no longer alone.

THE matchbook shook in my hand as I struck another light.

Paul Talbot's face leaped up at me, no longer sleekly handsome. It had been made hideous by deep gashes in the cheeks, gashes which seemed to crawl in the moving flame. There were other wounds in the chest. He had not died at once. He had bled to death here in the car and his blood was over everything.

The match burned my fingers. I let the darkness close in and blanket my shock, and tried to think. Paul Talbot had been my friend

since childhood. He hadn't made the war, but when I'd come home last week, with a medical discharge after having seen two years of action aboard a cruiser, Paul had been one of those I'd wanted most to see. And now—

For a long time I sat numbed, then a thought forced itself through—Pa had used the car ten or fifteen minutes before I had. It couldn't mean anything—it simply couldn't—but there it was, nevertheless.

I sat there thinking it over and over, and finally I knew there had to be something else.

There was.

I struck a match and leaned far over the seat. Then I saw the jackknife. Its open blade was thick with blood, and on the bone handle were engraved the initials "R.G."—for Raymond Greene—for me. A kid knife, one my Aunt Minnie had given me many years ago for a birthday present. Before I'd gone away, I'd put it in my junk chest in the garage.

I sat down again and let the darkness come. I put my face in my hands and tried to think it out. Judy's accident, the lights going dead, no flashlight, no fuses, and Paul murdered, as passenger in the car Pa had used only a short while ago. My knife—I don't know how long I sat.

Headlights approached. I gripped the door handle to get out and flag the car, but I made no move beyond that. I felt suddenly that I had to think some more. The evidence made no sense to me, but it would to someone else.

It would to the police. Besides Judy, I now had Pa to worry about. And myself.

I remained rigid while the headlights swept past me. When the car disappeared around a curve, I drew air into my lungs. For a little while, I realized, I hadn't been breathing.

Then, for the first time, I knew what I had to do, even before I tried to reach Judy. I had to get rid of Paul's body.

I got out and stood on the road, shivering in the biting wind. I had left the house without a coat, but this cold was deep inside me. I felt my way around the hood and struck a match. The wind killed it at once. The next one I sheltered with my hunched body, and in the second of light I saw that the front of the car, which had left the road, was pointed toward trees only ten feet away.

It took me a small eternity to drive the car in there. I rolled it as slowly as it could go until the bumper nudged a tree; then I got out and lit matches and found another opening between two elms. I inched the car through. When the bumper hit anything, I backed up and tried again. Finally the car slipped between the elms. I let it roll on until it was brought to a final stop smack against a tree trunk.

What now? I didn't dare to move Paul until I had the light to get away from the

spot. And I had to get to Judy no matter what else happened.

I got out and groped to the rear of the car and moved on toward the road when I heard a car coming, and I stayed where I was.

The headlights approached very slowly. When they were almost even with me, I saw that the car was going no more than ten miles an hour. The dashlight shone up into the faces of the two men in the coupe.

Sheriff George Babcock and his deputy, Tom Jenkins!

The sheriff's wizened face was turned directly toward me, peering, and for a breathless second I was sure that he saw me. Then the coupe was past, still moving as slowly as if the men in it were looking for something.

My feet found the hard tar surface of the road. All I remember of that walk through that sightless world was hurrying, losing the road on the turns, finding it again, stumbling.

Eventually the lights of Will Groff's gas station appeared. I huddled my frozen body deeper into my jacket and uttered a wordless prayer for Judy. There were no cars outside, no people, which meant that Judy must already been taken to the hospital.

Will would drive me there.

HE WAS seated in front of a potbelly stove, listening to a radio comedian and chuckling softly to himself. I felt anger sweep over me as I opened the door. Of course he wasn't in love with Judy, as I was, but he had known her as long as I had and should at least be worried.

"Hi, Ray," he said cheerfully. "Didn't hear you drive up."

I began to sweat in the sudden heat. "What about Judy?"

"Nice kid," he said. "What about her?"

"Didn't you phone me a while ago?"

"Me?"

I stared at him. He was a few years older than I, but we used to pal around together—Paul and Will and I.

"Don't you feel well, Ray?" Will asked.

"You sure you didn't call me tonight?"

"Sure I'm sure. Say, Ray, you ought to wear a coat on a night like this. Maybe you aren't all better from your wound."

I turned to the wall phone and dialed Judy's number. She answered.

The fist that had been constricting my heart loosened, but not all the way.

"I was just about to go to bed early for a change," Judy was saying.

I groped for words to make conversation. "How'd you like a movie tomorrow?"

"I'd love to, Ray, but I have a date with Paul."

I felt a twinge of jealousy before I remembered. Paul Talbot wouldn't keep that date with her.

"Enjoy yourself," I said.

"Ray, you're not jealous?"

"Should I be jealous?"

"Of course not. But while you were away, Paul was very nice to me and he's such a sweet boy."

"I understand," I said tonelessly. "Sleep tight." I hung up.

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Will had turned off the radio, although the program wasn't over. "What's the matter, Ray?" he said. "Having trouble with Judy? I guess you're sore because of all the guys she went out with while you were on the high seas. In fact, I took her to the movies a couple of times myself."

"I didn't expect her to sit at home for two years," I said. The clock on Will's desk said a few minutes before ten-thirty. "I thought you close at ten, Will."

"Sure, but I wanted to listen to this program and my car radio is on the bum."

"Did anybody phone me from here a little before ten?"

"Say—what is this?" He studied me "You know, Babcock was looking for you. He and Tom Jenkins stopped off here about ten minutes ago. It wouldn't be official, would it?"

I tried to sound casual. "What did he want?"

"He didn't say. Just, did you stop off here or did I see your car pass this way?"

I shrugged. "I asked him about a job. Maybe he's heard of one."

"That so?" Will kept his gaze on me. "Now that I think back on it, he sounded pretty excited."

I said: "Look, Will, the light fuse on my car blew. I'd like a box of fuses and a flashlight and a roll of tape."

Will said nothing while he got the things, but all the while he was sending me somber glances out of the corners of his eyes. He spoke when I had my hand on the door.

"Where's your car, Ray?"

I stopped, knowing what was coming. "A little way down the road."

"I'll drive you over."

"Thanks, but I'd rather walk."

"It's no trouble. I'm leaving anyway."

"I want to take a walk," I said testily and went out.

When I reached the two gas pumps, I looked back. Will Groff was at the door staring after me.

CHAPTER TWO

Breaking the Frame

BY THE light of the flashlight I had bought from Will Groff, I walked back to my car. I knew now that all the apparently unrelated things that had happened since that phone call had brought me out of the house were part of a cleverly laid plan. Or thought I did.

It sounded crazy, but I tried to fit the pieces together anyway.

Pa was out of it, of that I was sure.

Pa had been upstairs in his room when I

had received that phony call about Judy. Besides, it was inconceivable that he would frame me for murder—even more inconceivable than that someone else would.

A car approached. I doused my flashlight and stepped off the road. It was Babcock and his deputy again, still rolling slowly in the coupe—still looking for me, I knew now. Because that, too, was part of the pattern.

When I reached the hidden car, I went directly to the front of it and raised the hood. There was a chance I would have to go over the entire wiring system to find the break, but I didn't think so. The killer had probably done the job on the most available wire. Almost at once I found the trouble. Where the light wire came out of the dashboard and passed close to the cylinder head, it had been loosened and a small section of the insulation cut away. Any bump the car went over would swing the bare wire against the iron cylinder head and blow the fuse.

Within a minute I had the light working, but that was the first step, and a minor one. Simply getting rid of the body wouldn't free me of the frame. Tire marks in the dirt could be traced, and there was the devil only knew how much other evidence against me. But I had solved one of the mental processes of the killer, and that gave me hope.

I forced myself to drive half a mile. Then I put out the lights and stepped once more into darkness and opened the right back door. Paul had been hunched against it—I'd forgotten and I jumped as his head fell out and brushed my knees. But after that it wasn't too bad. I had seen too many dead men in the last couple of years to be very squeamish. Crouching in the biting wind, I snapped on my flashlight, just to make sure.

There was very little blood on Paul's yellow hair. The blow had knocked him out, but it was the knife that had killed him.

I pulled the body out of the car and rolled it into a ditch at the side of the road. Then I was driving hell-bent away from there.

But I wasn't through yet. There was the knife to be got rid of and there was all that blood on the inside of the car. For the killer had overlooked nothing. As I pictured it, he had got Paul to meet him outside my house. There Paul had been knocked out and shoved into the back seat of the car. The killer had my jackknife; he must have stolen it beforehand out of my tool chest in the garage. He had slashed Paul's unconscious body so that blood would spurt and spread all over the car. Then, finally, the mercy thrust—he had killed Paul. After that he had opened the hood, laid bare the wire, stolen the flashlight and spare fuses.

Roughly, that was the sketch....

The whole thing was a matter of a few

minutes. It doesn't take long to spill blood, to kill. I'd seen sickening things that took less than a minute.

Any way you looked at it, the frame fitted thoroughly and effectively. All possible mis-carriages had been allowed and accounted for. I could use no alibi, even if I could think of one.

The lights of the Ammen River Bridge appeared. I stopped in the middle of the bridge and tossed the jackknife over the wooden guardrail. That attended to that. But the car had to disappear, also.

There was too much blood to be washed off. It had soaked into everything—the back seat, the floor mat, the floor boards, the back part of the front seat, even the lining on the inside of the door. The killer had made sure that Paul's blood would be too plentiful to be cleaned off.

No other car was in sight. I backed up to the beginning of the bridge, then moved forward again. With the car running in second, I got out on the running-board, guiding the wheel with one hand, and pulled the hand-throttle all the way out. The car would be doing fifty before it was halfway across the bridge. I twisted the wheel sharply to the right and jumped.

I hit hard and rolled, the rear wheels barely missing me. Half stunned, I heard the sound of ripping wood. The splash followed almost at once. I lay there pulling myself together, and then I heard the hum of a distant motor.

Headlights wound down the road to the bridge, before they were hidden by a curve. I was full of aches and contusions, but my senses were extraordinary clear. I hadn't been seen yet, but I would be in a couple of seconds. I had to make it better than this. I had to make it perfect.

I rolled. At the shattered rail I hesitated, took a deep breath, kicked out into black space.

The river closed over me with startling lack of shock. The water was warm, friendly. . . .

On the bridge a woman was saying something in a voice so strident that it sounded like a staccato series of shrieks. The car I had heard approach had stopped at the broken rail—I saw two people peering into the water. They probably couldn't see me, so I shouted.

"You hear that?" the man cried. "Somebody got out of the car."

"I'm swimming to the east shore!" I yelled.

After that I saved my breath and swam along the bridge. Once I looked up. More cars had reached the bridge and stopped.

I was very tired when I felt ground under my feet. I staggered out, reeling, shivering under the cold, under the wet, intolerable weight of the clothes I still wore. The wind caught my dripping body and gripped it in an icy vise.

I reeled along.

THE sun was bright and warm in my room when I woke up. The clock on the dresser said it was after two.

Mrs. MacLean came in. She was a gaunt woman with a face like a buzz-saw and a heart of gold. She had been housekeeper since my mother had died ten years ago.

"I was beginning to worry why you didn't get up," she said. "I'll bring you tea and toast."

"What I need is a steak," I said, sitting up in bed. I felt a little weak, but I didn't seem even to have a cold. "Where's Pa?"

"The judge went out a little while ago," Mrs. MacLean turned when she reached the door. "The judge says you shouldn't talk to anybody till he gets back," she said and went out.

She hadn't told me that my best friend had been murdered. Surely by this time his body must have been found. The first person who had driven along Ammen Road after dawn would have seen it. Did she think I was too ill to take the news? Or was there another reason?



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FLASHLIGHT
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The doorbell rang. I heard voices downstairs and then Mrs. MacLean said sharply: "He's still in bed." But evidently her protest had no effect, because heavy feet came up the stairs.

I lay back in bed and felt my stomach twist. I was afraid.

Sheriff George Babcock and Tom Jenkins, his deputy, entered.

"How are you, Ray?" Babcock said, coming to the side of my bed. He was a small, wizened man whom I had known most of my life.

I forced myself to grin up at him. "I've gone through a lot worse in the Navy. This bed's too good to leave."

"I'll bet," Babcock said gravely. He sat down on the chair and glumly studied the inside of his hat. He was a friend of Pa's, but he hadn't come for a social visit.

Tom Jenkins stood just inside the door. He had got his job recently and I'd never seen him before a couple of days ago, when I'd met him at Will Groff's gas station. He was one of those leans, sharp-eyed, rugged-face lads who look plenty tough, and usually are. He worried me a lot more than Babcock did.

"Paul Talbot was murdered last night," Babcock told me softly.

"What!" I hoped I got enough shock into my voice and face. "Who would want to kill Paul?"

"We figured you might be able to tell us, Ray. You and he were pals."

I pulled the cover up to my chin and lay in cold sweat. "I've been away for two years. I wouldn't know what he's done or whom he knew in that time."

"But you knew," Jenkins said dryly, "that he's been hanging around a certain Judy Hutton."

I got sore, and that part of it wasn't an act. Last night I'd been seared; now I was sore. "Am I being accused of the murder?"

Babcock answered only the second question. "Tom and I found his body last night on Ammen Road. He'd been hit over the head and slashed something awful with a knife. But it wasn't done there. He bled a lot, but there was no blood on the ground."

"Wait a minute," I said. "You have a crazy notion that I was jealous of Paul. Then when you find him murdered, you think you have two and two put together."

"We have two and two, all right," Jenkins said grimly. "We know the body was dumped where it was found on Ammen Road, probably from a car. Last night a car went over the bridge, crashed into the river. I didn't see your car as I came in. That wouldn't be your car in the river, would it?"

"If it is, I didn't put it, there."

Babcock said gently, "You were using your car last night. At ten-thirty you were in Will

Groff's gas station and told him you had trouble with your lights."

"Is that a crime?"

"It places you near where Talbot's body was found. That wouldn't mean much, except that Talbot was dumped from a car. His blood might be on the car. You had a motive, opportunity, and your car is missing. Maybe somebody else is guilty—right now I'm trying to find out. Where is your car?"

"None of your business. Maybe I lent it to a friend."

I thought that would chase him, but it didn't. He sighed. "At around a quarter to ten somebody saw you carry a body into your car."

I had been waiting for that, I realized, knowing that in some such way the killer had brought out the sheriff. I said, "Who?"

"I was in the office when the call came," Jenkins replied. "It was a man's voice. He didn't give his name. He said he was walking along the road and saw you drag somebody into the back of your car. Then he hung up. Probably a friend of yours, who doesn't want to appear against you."

"Some pal!" I said, and Babcock flushed. Then I said, "Can't you trace the call?"

Babcock shook his head. "We're trying, but I don't expect we will. Most of the phones around here are dial. The fact is, Ray, somebody says he saw you drag a body into your car and then we find a body not two miles away."

"It was pitch-black. How did he see me?"

"The lights were on in your house. They shine as far as the driveway."

"But how did he know I was the one?" I persisted. "Did he say he saw my face?"

Babcock scowled and looked at his deputy. "A smart boy," Jenkins said angrily. "You told Will Groff you had your car at ten-thirty, remember?"

"Did I say I was in my car? I said my lights were dead. I could have been using somebody else's car." I was going to get just as tough with Jenkins as he was with me.

He knew it and he didn't ask me if I had been using anybody else's car. Instead he growled, "We got something else. A few minutes before a quarter to ten, Paul Talbot got a phone call from somebody he called Ray. We checked with his mother. Then he went out of the house. A couple of minutes would bring him here. A couple of minutes to kill him—and at a quarter to ten somebody saw you loading what looked like a stiff into your car."

"And that somebody is my friend," I told them. "You told me so."

The killer had thought of everything, but I had managed to dispose of evidence against me. What was left wasn't worth anything in a court of law. Even if it could be shown that

I had phoned Paul, it wouldn't be proof against me. The phone call that I had been seen dragging a body into my car was legally even less substantial unless the maker of the call could be found. And he wouldn't be found if he could help it because he was the murderer.

I said: "Isn't it clear that somebody tried to frame me?"

Jenkins snorted. "We haven't even got started yet," he snapped and strode out of the room.

Babcock rose slowly from the chair. He looked at me and compressed his lips and, without another word, followed his deputy.

CHAPTER THREE

Suspicion!

PA CAME home a little while later. I heard him speaking downstairs to Mrs. MacLean and then come up to my room.

The sight of him was a shock. Though he had been a member of the state legislature for ten years and a judge for another ten, he was still in his middle forties and looked younger. People often said that he could pass for my older brother. But not today. He had aged since I had seen him last night.

"Feeling better, son?" he asked in a dead voice.

I nodded and watched him as he slowly loaded his pipe. This was going to be tough, I knew.

"The sheriff was here," I said.

"Mrs. MacLean told me." He was very busy with a match. "What did you tell him?"

"I didn't tell him anything. He told me." I forced a laugh. "He has the cockeyed notion that I killed Paul."

Pa didn't say anything until he was satisfied with the draw on his pipe. Then he spoke vaguely: "Judy was wholeheartedly devoted to you while you were away. And very lonely. One day Paul asked her to go to a dance with him. She wasn't sure she should; she asked my advice. I told her to see all the men she wanted. If she kept on caring for you, it wouldn't make any difference. If seeing other men made her stop caring for you, it meant you weren't for each other."

"I know," I said. "She wrote me and I wrote back just about what you said. She's all right, Pa."

His gaze was far away. "Paul was just a friend of hers, the way he was your friend. I knew Paul almost as well as I know you. He was a fine boy."

"Pa!" I got up on one elbow and found myself tremble. "Are you saying that I was jealous of Paul and that I murdered him?"

Pa went to the window. His voice was strangely thin. "A few minutes after I got

home last night I happened to look out of the window of my room. I saw Paul coming to the house from the road. Then he passed around the corner and I didn't see him, but I heard voices. He was speaking to you."

"I was in the house reading," I said, "until a phone call came for me ten minutes or so later."

"I heard you answer the phone. It seemed to me that you came in from outside to answer it. Then I heard you slam out of the house and go off in the car. I assumed that Paul was with you. But—"

His voice trailed off. He stood immobile at the window, his back to me.

Pa was the only man I had ever known who lived wholly by the truth. If I told him what had really happened, he would insist I go to the sheriff with the story. He wouldn't be able to see that the frame would again close around me and that I wouldn't be able to break out of it a second time. He believed so firmly in law and justice that he would stick to it, even if it destroyed both of us.

I said, "Pa, have I ever lied to you?"

He turned. "No, son."

"I'm not lying now. I didn't murder Paul. The murderer tried to frame me for it."

He stepped eagerly to the bed. "Tell me what happened?"

"I don't know. That phone call was to get me out of the house, just as the one to Paul had been to bring me here. The voice told me Judy was hurt in an accident beyond Ammen River Bridge. I guess I drove too fast. That's why the car went off the bridge." I told him about the "accident."

It was no good, as I knew it wouldn't be. I'd never lied to him before and I couldn't do it convincingly now.

"You're not telling the truth, son," he said quietly.

I lay back and closed my eyes. There was a long silence. When I opened my eyes, Pa was gone. I heard the front door open and close.

Mrs. MacLean came in with food. As she pulled the small table to the side of the bed, I asked, "Was Judy here while I was asleep?"

"No."

"Didn't she even phone?"

"No." Mrs. MacLean sounded angry. "She's home," Mrs. MacLean said savagely. "Who would have thought she would act like all the others?" Tears came into her eyes. "Ray, I don't believe the horrible things they're saying." She flung out of the room.

The food choked me. Pa didn't believe that I was innocent and Judy had let me down. I forced myself to eat.

Will Groff arrived as I was finishing the tea.

Will said cheerfully. "You never looked better in your life."

Carefully I listened to his voice. Was that the voice I had heard on the phone last night? That one had been hoarse with excitement, and I had assumed it belonged to Will because it had said it did. Listening to Will speak now, I couldn't be sure.

"Well, at least you don't object to visiting a murderer," I said bitterly.

Will's chubby face turned grave. "There's one thing I have to tell you, Ray. Judy never two-timed you with anybody. You know how it is in town—a bunch of fellows and girls in the crowd, always going places together. We didn't think it was right that Judy should stay home alone every night. We figured you'd want us to take her along. It wasn't only Paul. I took her and Tom Jenkins and Sig Everett and others. Mostly, I guess, it was Paul, but it was strictly hands off with all of us."

"I never thought it was anything else," I said.

"Sure." Solemnly Will looked down at me. "I didn't tell the sheriff that you didn't want me to drive you to your car last night."

"Why the hell didn't you?" My nerves were beginning to fray. "I've nothing to hide."

"Sure, Ray," he said placatingly. He set fire to a cigarette and looked at the wall. "They're going to pull that car out of the river."

Under the cover my body stiffened. I didn't hear most of the rest he said. After a while he left.

I lay listening to him go down the stairs and then to his car drive off. My body was shaking and sweating. The water wouldn't have washed away all of Paul's blood in the car.

After a while I got out of bed and dressed.

There was a short cut across the meadows and over a hill. When I reached the bridge, half the town was there, lining the bridge on one side. The shattered rail had not yet been repaired.

Everybody looked at me. Nobody spoke to me. They'd all talked to each other. They knew whose car was coming up.

The dredge was under the bridge. Four chains ran up from the water to the crane. A diver's head broke the surface.

On the shore a few people were standing. I saw pa with the district attorney, and a little closer were Judy and Tom Jenkins.

I walked back to the east end and down the footpath to the shore. Judy saw me and gripped Jenkins' arm.

She was wearing a gay flowered shawl over her loose hair and a little white jacket and a checked skirt which whipped about her fine legs. That was the picture of Judy I had carried in my mind and heart through two years of boredom and hell, and that was what

I had always dreamed I would come home to.

Now I was home, but her eyes did not soften as they watched me climb down to her. Her face was as static as the rocks behind her.

Jenkins threw me a crooked grin and nodded toward the dredge. "It won't be long now before we have the evidence we need."

I ignored him. "Judy, I want to speak to you," I said. "Alone."

She hesitated, then without change of expression stepped away from Jenkins. She did not walk at my side, but moved ahead, letting me follow, as if she couldn't endure me too close to her. Under the bridge, away from the prying eyes above, she stopped and turned to me.

Her beauty caught me in the throat. It was easy to understand why all the fellows had been so anxious to take her out, even if it hadn't meant more than calling for her and taking her home. I'd been lucky—until last night.

"Judy, do you really think I could murder Paul, or anybody?"

A shadow of doubt crossed her eyes and was gone. She said stiffly, "Last night you phoned me and I told you that I had a date with Paul. I told you there was no reason to be jealous, but you didn't believe me. You—you—"

Her voice broke. She put her face in her hands.

In the river the crane was beginning to lift. I could see Sheriff Babcock on the dredge.

"Listen," I said urgently. "In a little while it will look even worse for me. But I didn't do it—I was framed. Last night I thought I could break out of the frame, but the killer did too good a job. My only chance is to find out who murdered Paul and to prove it."

Judy kept her face in her hands and was very still. I wasn't sure that she had heard me.

"I've been away for so long," I said. "I don't know the things I have to know to save myself." Urgently I put a hand on her shoulder. "I think you can help me by telling me—"

With a thin cry, she knocked my hand off her shoulder. As if, I thought, Paul's blood was on my hand. That hurt more than anything that had happened to me since last night.

I said dully, "Okay, if that's the way it is," and started up the path to the road.

When I was halfway up, I turned. Tom Jenkins was moving toward Judy who was still out of sight under the bridge. A little farther up the shore Pa and the district attorney were staring intently into the water.

A mutter swept the bridge. I looked back again. The car was breaking through the water.

I continued up to the road. I didn't know where I was going and I didn't care.

TOWARD evening I started back home. I had gone only five miles and then had sat under a tree with my mind empty. I had done all I could to save myself and it hadn't been enough. And I would rather hang than be a fugitive for life.

It was deep twilight when I passed Will Groff's gas station on my way home. The shack was bright with light and doubtless warm, and I was cold and very tired. Between the lights above each of the two gas pumps, I hesitated, then decided to stop off for a rest.

Will was hanging up the receiver of the wall phone when I pushed the door in. He grinned quickly, as if it were expected of him, but his eyes didn't seem able to focus on me.

"That was a customer on the phone," he explained—as if it were any of my business. "He isn't satisfied with the transmission job I did on his car last week."

I went to the warmth of the potbelly stove. "Anything new turn up on the murder?"

Will shrugged elaborately. He didn't want to speak.

"Well, I'll be going," I said.

Something like panic came into Will's eyes. "Hang around a little while and I'll drive you home. It's warm here."

"I'll walk," I said, and started toward the door.

Against the background of the twilight, I could see the reflection of Will's round body in the door window. He snatched a wrench off the shelf and rushed up behind me with the wrench raised. I spun and jabbed my fist into his soft, plump belly. He grunted and backed away. I cocked my other fist.

"Don't, Ray!" he whimpered. "Look, I'm dropping it." The wrench fell from his hand.

I was bigger and stronger than he, but he'd had the wrench and might have got me with it. The thing was, he had never had any fight in him, even as a kid, and he hadn't any now.

I said bitterly, "You're a wonderful pal. When you saw me coming, you phoned the sheriff."

"I didn't, Ray."

"And when you couldn't keep me here till he came, you tried to sock me with the wrench."

His plump face twisted; he seemed on the verge of tears. "I was scared. A couple of hours ago your father was here with the sheriff. They asked me lots of questions—as if they thought I'd killed Paul."

"Did you?" I asked softly.

"My God, Ray, I don't know anything about it! Your father wanted to know how much I cared for Judy. I told him. Everybody knows. I'd give my right arm if she'd marry me, and I asked her once while you were away. She said it was all you, Ray. And I've been helping you all along. I never said a word that you didn't want me to drive you to your car last night. And didn't I tell you they were raising the car?"

"You phoned the sheriff when you saw me come," I reminded him.

Will straightened up and a little character came back into his face. "I was willing to give you the breaks, Ray, when there was any doubt. But when they raised your car from the river, they found blood soaked into it. You killed Paul. He was my friend. So were you, but you're not now. If you killed him, you have to pay for it."

"I didn't," I muttered.

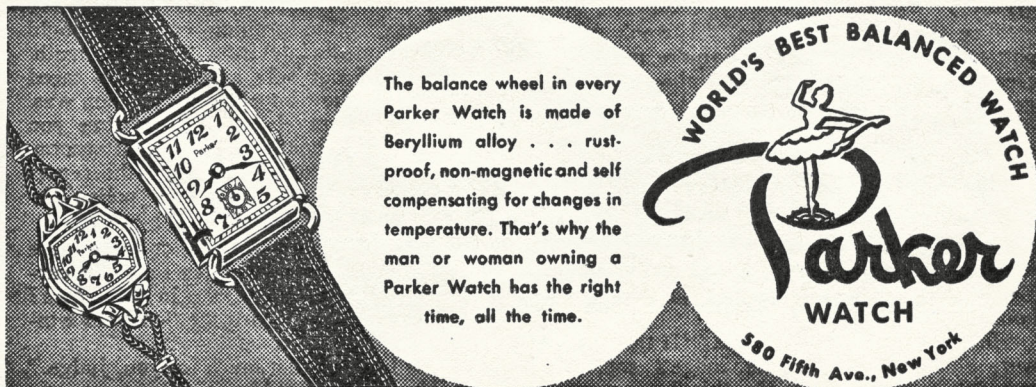
There was a silence. I stood looking out, waiting for the sheriff.

Will stepped to my side. "Ray, I can't stop you from running away." I didn't answer. He said in a puzzled tone: "So you're going to see it through?"

"Yes."

He studied my face. "Then maybe that means you didn't do it after all. Because if you were guilty, you'd—"

THE sheriff's coupe charged up and came to a jolting halt. George Babcock and Tom Jenkins came out stiff-legged, their guns swinging on their belts, their faces grim.



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Babcock opened the door and said solemnly, "You're under arrest, Ray."

"Look, sheriff," Will said. "Ray knew you were coming and didn't run away. A guilty man would run, wouldn't he?"

Jenkins laughed. "He's not the first murderer to give himself up." He took out a pair of handcuffs.

"I don't think those are necessary, Tom," Babcock said.

"He's a killer, isn't he?" Jenkins argued. "He ran away this afternoon when he saw us pull his car out of the river."

Babcock scowled, but he let the deputy clamp the handcuffs around my wrists. As we went through the door, Will said contritely, "I'm sorry, Ray."

I kept my mouth shut. I got into the coupe between Jenkins, who was driving, and Babcock.

When Jenkins had the car on the road, Babcock said, "Drive to Judge Greene's house, Tom. I promised him I'd stop off there with Ray if I picked him up."

"His old man can see him in the cell," Jenkins protested. "What's this—politics? Just because a killer's father is a judge—"

"I'm sheriff," Babcock snapped. "Don't forget you take orders from me."

Jenkins muttered under his breath, but he obeyed. There was no talk during the brief trip. Babcock kept his wizened face fixed on the road. He wasn't liking this one bit. He and Pa had been friends for more years than I could remember.

The twilight had turned into black night when the coupe pulled into my driveway. Most of the downstairs windows showed light.

Babcock said, "Stay out here with him, Tom, I till I send for you, then bring him into the house." He slammed the car door and walked around to the porch.

Jenkins set fire to a cigarette without offering me one. I shifted away from him and glanced down at the gun in his holster. He followed the direction of my eyes and chuckled grimly.

"Try it," he mocked me. "I won't mind putting a bullet in you while you're trying to escape. Judy used to tell me about you. I got the idea you were some kind of tin god. Then you come back and turn out to be the rottenest killer I've ever come across."

Somebody approached from the back door of the house. In the dim glow spreading out to us from the lighted house windows, I saw the gaunt black shape of Mrs. MacLean. She went to Jenkins' door and said tonelessly, "Mr. Babcock wants you to bring Ray into the house."

"Politics!" Jenkins growled. "If this killer were somebody beside the judge's son, we wouldn't be treating him like this."

He got out and, with his hand on his gun, started around the coupe to open the door on my side. The instant his back was turned to Mrs. MacLean, her right hand lifted above his head and descended viciously. Without a sound, Jenkins crumpled to the ground and lay still.

I stared at her in a daze as she threw a rock from her hand and then hurried around the coupe to yank the door open. "Hurry," she whispered. "Mr. Babcock will be out any minute."

"Was this Pa's idea?" I asked listlessly.

"It's my own. Now don't just sit there gawking."

"Pa would have more sense. And you might have killed Jenkins."

"You're handcuffed," she said with a worried frown. "Has Jenkins the key?"

"I think so. But what's the use? I can't—"

Mrs. MacLean was already in motion. She bent over the motionless form of the deputy, fumbled in his clothes, came back to me. "He's not badly hurt," she said. "It was really a small rock." Her hands were surprisingly steady as she unlocked the handcuffs.

Then she was half-dragging me out of the car. "Don't be an idiot, Ray," she said tensely. "If you don't care what happens to you, think of the judge. He'll just about die if they hang you."

Meekly I went with her. I didn't seem to have a will of my own left. She was dominating me as, in a way, she had always dominated me and Pa. Generally it had been about wearing rubbers and getting to bed early. Now it was something vastly bigger.

We walked along the side of the house. I heard Pa's voice come through one of the living room windows. I stopped.

"I told you this afternoon, George, that there was a reasonable explanation for the blood being in the car," Pa was saying. "Last week I brought a freshly killed shoat from my sister Minnie's farm. I was careless and the shoat's blood dripped in the car."

Even at that moment I felt shock at Pa lying. I had thought that nothing on earth could ever make him deviate from the strict truth. His lie showed not only how much he cared for me, but also how hopeless my position was.

Babcock said gravely: "The first time you told me about a shoat's blood this afternoon, I almost believed you, Judge. But the report came in a while ago from the state police laboratory. It's human blood."

For the space of a dozen heart-beats there was no sound in the house. Then Pa said wearily, "May I see my boy alone in this room? You and Jenkins can guard the door and window."

"I guess I can do that much for you, Judge."

Mrs. MacLean tugged frantically at my arm.

"What's the matter with you, Ray? He'll be out in a moment now."

"I won't get far," he said.

"You leave it to me."

I MOVED on with her toward the rear of the house. A car turned in from the driveway and rolled almost to the front porch. "Who's that?" Babcock called from the porch. He was already on his way out to fetch me.

My heart leaped at the sound of the voice that replied. "I'm Judy Hutton. Is that you, sheriff? I came to talk to Judge Greene, but I'd like you to hear what I say."

Mrs. MacLean was tugging at me again. I whispered, "Wait. I want to know why Judy came."

"I'll tell you later. Ray, use your head."

I shook her loose and slid back to the living room window. Protesting in hoarse whispers, Mrs. MacLean tagged after me.

Judy and Babcock must have just entered the living room when I reached the window. I heard pa say excitedly, "What's this, Judy? You say that you have proof that Ray is innocent?"

Hardly breathing, I straightened against the wall beneath the window.

"I've been thinking," Judy said. "I've gone nearly crazy trying to think. I suppose the news of Paul's death and that the police were convinced Ray had killed him was such a terrible shock that I couldn't get my thoughts straight. I was horrible to Ray this afternoon. I wouldn't even listen to him. Then Tom Jenkins told me that Ray had murdered Paul between ten minutes to ten and ten o'clock. But he had called me up at ten-thirty."

Pa blurted, "Who—Paul?"

"No, Ray phoned me. He asked me to go to the movies tonight and I told him I had a date with Paul. That was what confused me. All morning I'd had the terrible idea that when Ray heard I had a date with Paul he had lost his head and killed Paul. But Paul

was dead at least half an hour by then, so Ray couldn't have done it."

At my side Mrs. MacLean emitted a sigh of despair.

"I'm afraid that's not evidence," Babcock said regretfully. "Will Groff told us that Ray phoned you at ten-thirty. There is no reason why he couldn't have called you after he murdered Paul Talbot."

"There's every reason," Judy insisted. "Would Ray have permitted himself to speak to me right after he had killed Paul? Would he have been so calm? Would he have asked for a date? Don't you see?"

They couldn't see because there was nothing to see. I straightened up at the side of the window. My hopes had been raised and then crushed—yet something had happened to take the bitterness out of me. Judy had faith in me. Judy loved me. In a way, that meant more to me than being able to prove my innocence.

"Ray isn't a murderer," Judy was pleading. "I realized that when my thoughts cleared. He couldn't murder anybody, especially Paul. Those two thought the world of each other. Paul loved me—I'm sure he did—but he never told me because he couldn't betray his best friend. In the same way, Ray would have gone through hell for Paul."

"The law only understands concrete evidence," Babcock told her. "And all the evidence is against Ray."

Judy's sobs drifted out to me. I had to look through the window then, and I saw Judy standing with her head bowed and Babcock uneasily running his fingers over his hat and pa striding across the room to her.

Judy," pa said urgently. "If you believe in Ray, go outside and tell him. The boy needs something to hold onto."

Judy's head lifted. "Is Ray outside?"

"Didn't you see him?" Babcock said. "He's in my car with Tom Jenkins."

"I saw your car, but there was nobody in it."



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"You sure?" Babcock cried.

"My headlights were right on the windshield. The car was empty."

Mrs. MacLean and I glanced toward the motionless shape beside the coupe. Jenkins had been out of Judy's line of vision.

Mrs. MacLean was again pulling my arm. I hesitated. Where could I escape to? Within minutes the police of the entire state would be hunting me.

But I had no will to resist her.

CHAPTER FOUR

Murder for Keeps

THE cellar stairs led down from the kitchen pantry. As we descended them, I heard a cry outside. Babcock had found his deputy.

Mrs. MacLean led me to the coalbin. "Lie down, Ray. I'll cover you with coal. It will be only till the sheriff leaves the house."

I stretched out on the coal with my face in my arms. By the time I was completely covered, I heard the others return into the house. Mrs. MacLean left me.

The living room was directly above the coalbin and the voices were audible. Jenkins must have just recovered consciousness. His voice was thick, furry, still somewhat dazed as he accused Mrs. MacLean of having knocked him out.

"That's a serious charge, young man," I heard Mrs. MacLean retort sharply. "Your own carelessness was responsible. Ray slipped out of your car and snatched up a rock and hit you."

Babcock and Jenkins threw angry questions at her, but they couldn't shake her. She hadn't been able to warn Jenkins, she said, because I had acted too quickly, then she had tried to talk me into giving myself up. She said that finally I had run up the road.

We were all becoming accomplished liars in the household, I reflected. But if Mrs. MacLean's idea was to get the sheriff and the deputy to rush out of the house after me and give me a chance to get out of the bin, they were smarter than that. They searched the house first.

I followed their process from room to room by the sound of feet and voices—and by imagination, when there was no sound. Their last stop was the cellar. Judy must have been with them, for I hadn't heard her drive off, but she did not say a word. Coal rolled at the base of the pile as somebody came into the bin, but I lay there without much feeling of tension, not caring whether or not I was discovered.

"Let's go, Tom," Babcock said. "Ray won't get far."

Jenkins said savagely, "Mrs. MacLean—I'm not through with you."

"Don't be silly," she replied placidly.

They all went upstairs and a minute later a car left. I knew it was the sheriff's because Pa was talking to Judy again in the living room. Their voices were so low that I could distinguish only a word here and there. Pa was telling her that it would turn out all right, but he didn't seem to be convincing her.

I stood up, shedding coal. I had to see Judy. But when I was going up the cellar stairs, I heard the front door close, and she drove away. I stopped in the hall, feeling weights pile on my shoulders. Pa and Mrs. MacLean were in the living room. I shambled in and leaned for support on the door jamb.

Although Mrs. MacLean evidently hadn't yet had a chance to tell him, Pa wasn't greatly surprised to see me. He gave her an annoyed look.

"I suppose you thought you were doing the right thing," he told her. "But how long will we be able to hide him?"

"Never mind that now," she said. "Ray, you go upstairs and take a hot bath. I'll have food ready for you."

She knew what I needed—as I lay in the water, I felt myself become clean inside and outside. I stayed in the tub a long time. Then I shaved and dressed in fresh clothes and went down to the kitchen.

Mrs. MacLean served me steaming soup and a couple of lamb chops and coffee. I could feel strength flow back into me, and hopelessness gave way to anger.

"Well, where do I go from here?" I asked her.

"It's up to the Judge. He's trying to make up his mind."

Pa came in while I was drinking coffee and sat down opposite me. Every time I'd seen him today, he had aged ten years more. He said grimly, "I ought to have as much faith in your innocence as Judy has. But I don't know. Did you kill Paul?"

"If I say I did, what will you do?"

Pa mashed a bread crumb between his fingers. "Try to get you out of the country. If you say you're innocent, you'll give yourself up and we'll fight with everything we have."

"I was framed," I told him. And I told him everything that had happened last night.

Pa's shoulders sagged as I got on with the story. Mrs. MacLean's buzz-saw face got graver and graver.

"I believe you, son," he said then. "But how will we make a jury believe—"

"I'm not giving myself up, Pa. I was ready to, a little while ago, but I've thought of a thing or two since then. I'm going after the killer."

Pa's eyes widened. "You know who he is?"

"I think so. But I haven't proof. Maybe I'll find a way to make the killer confess."

Pa stood up and wet his lips. "It's up to you, son. Though I don't see how you can do much while you're in hiding. Whom do you suspect?"

I had a moment of doubt. How much would an unsubstantiated charge mean, even to Pa?

That was when we heard a car arrive. Both of us stiffened. Mrs. MacLean sent me a frightened look and rushed out of the kitchen. In a matter of seconds she was back.

"It's Sheriff Babcock," she said breathlessly. "You keep him busy, Judge, while I hide Ray."

So she and I again went down to the cellar. "Maybe he won't come down here," I said. "He searched once."

Mrs. MacLean nodded. Babcock had entered the hall. We stood listening to them.

"He's innocent," Pa said.

"I'm ready to give him every chance in the world. But it has to be in court. Maybe Judy Hutton has something to help him. She called my office a few minutes ago that she had new proof Ray is innocent."

Mrs. MacLean's fingers dug into my arm. I waited tensely.

"Then what are we waiting for?" Pa exclaimed. "Let's go over there."

"We'll know soon enough," Babcock said. "It may be only what she thinks is proof, like when she told us that in her mind, Ray was innocent because he called her up right after the murder. But I said we're giving Ray every chance. I sent Tom Jenkins over in his own car to hear what Judy has to say."

All of me went suddenly empty.

"But show sense, Judge," Babcock urged. "Hiding out your boy will only—"

I heard no more. I was running across the cellar.

"Ray!" Mrs. MacLean whispered. "Where are you going?"

I took the cellar stairs two at a time. Mrs. MacLean panted after me. "Ray, wait!"

In the kitchen, I started toward the front door, reversed myself, rushed out through the back. The sheriff's coupe was parked in the driveway. I got into it. As I swung onto the road, I heard him yell.

I gunned the motor.

ONLY a single downstairs window showed dim light; the rest of the house was dead silent. Was I too late?

I was out of the sheriff's coupe almost before it stopped rolling. I ran up the walk, plunged through the unlocked front door, turned aside in the hall, into the room which bore the light. Judy stood at the far side of the room.

My cry of relief at the sight of her died in my throat. The floor lamp, which was all the light in the house, made shadowy planes of her face. Her eyes were like death.

"Ray!" she moaned. "Oh, God, Ray!"

I was halfway across the room, and only then I realized what my lack of caution had done to both of us. I whirled. Tom Jenkins stood at the side of the door. A shotgun was in the crook of his right arm and his finger on the trigger; his service revolver was in his left hand.

The silence was so intense that I could hear

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CARL
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UNITED STATES MARITIME SERVICE

the thumping of my heart. I recognized that shotgun. It was Judy's father's custom-made autoloader.

"Perfect," the deputy sheriff said. His rugged face was strained; sweat beaded his brow. "I couldn't have planned it better."

I asked Judy, "Where are your parents?"

"They'll be back any moment." Her voice hardly came past her constricted throat.

Jenkins shook his head. "Don't kid me, Judy. I keep track. They went out for the evening. I don't have to hurry."

Judy moved stiffly forward, to be closer to me. "He came here to kill me, Ray. He would have killed me at once, but he has been asking me questions. He said he loved me, but now he wants to kill me."

"Loved you?" Jenkins' laughter was not quite sane. "You'll never know how much I loved you. But that's over." The shotgun moved to cover Judy, but he looked at me. "What brought you here?"

Time was on my side and Judy's, but how much time would Jenkins allow us?

I said desperately, "There was only one answer if I wasn't guilty. Somebody wanted to get rid of Paul and me at one time—and the only thing we had in common was friendship and that we both loved Judy. That had to be it, then. Almost anybody might have killed Paul, but you had the best chance to from me and make it stick. Also you deliberately let me escape while the car was being raised this afternoon. Babcock was on the dredge—it was up to you to keep your eye on me if you were so sure the car would prove me guilty. You acted out of character for a smart, alert deputy. But in character for the killer who had framed me and who wanted me to incriminate myself further by running away."

"You call that proof?" Jenkins said.

"No," I admitted. "But when I heard that you had come here to see Judy who said she had proof and realized what you would do if you were the killer—" I looked at Judy, and she drew a little closer.

Jenkins asked, "What's your proof, Judy?"

"Bill Able met you on the road near your house last night, right after the murder. That was nothing by itself, but you'd made a stupid mistake. You'd told the sheriff that you'd been in the office for an hour when the call came that Ray had been seen carrying a body into your car."

"That's enough," Jenkins cut in. His eyes sharpened, turned crafty. He had let us talk because he had to know how much we knew. He had his answer now and was ready for action.

"You're through, Jenkins," I said, trying to keep the talk going.

"You're the one who's through," he told

me. "You and Judy. You're the hunted killer. You came here and grabbed the shotgun off the wall and killed Judy with it because you were crazy jealous over her. I was just coming in when I heard the blast. I shot you down while you were trying to escape."

So that was the way it would be—the shotgun for Judy, the revolver for me.

Judy cried sharply, "Tom, if you say you love me—"

"Love you?" he echoed, and his face became terrible as he looked at her. "Yes, I loved you. But I love my own hide, too." His voice went shrill. He was cracking as he drove himself to murder. "It's your fault, Judy. If you'd care for me one-tenth as much as I—"

THEY made too much noise arriving, though I couldn't blame them—I'd been in the same frenzied, reckless hurry. Their car pulled up to the front of the house like a charging tank.

Jenkins spun toward the door and then toward the window. For an instant his guard was down, and I sailed into him. I grabbed at the wrist that held the revolver and twisted.

Judy's voice filled the room, but somehow it sounded distant, as if heard from another world. My eyes were inches from that sweating, straining, rugged face as we stood swaying. Jenkins tried to bring the muzzle of the shotgun in his other hand against me. But I was too close.

Then he knew that he had run out his time, that those who had come in the car were already halfway to the house. He yanked the shotgun toward Judy.

Love and hate, jealousy and murder—they all became one in Jenkin's mind. They were all in his face as I butted him. He stumbled across the room. He righted himself and again sought Judy with the shotgun.

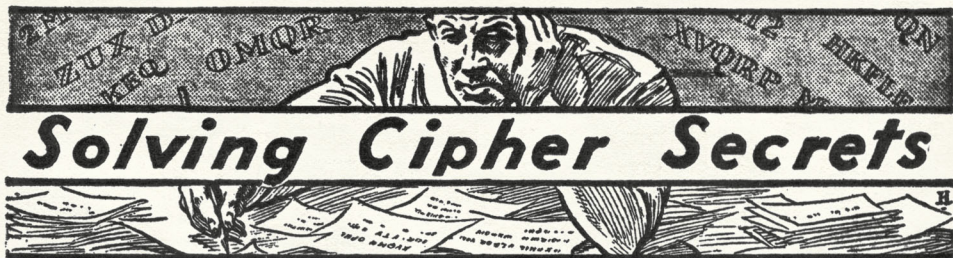
He never pressed that trigger. Sheriff Babcock shot first. Jenkins took two staggering steps, looked with surprise beyond me. Then he sank slowly to the floor.

I turned. Babcock's wizened figure advanced from the doorway, and a vague spiral of smoke rose from his gun. Pa appeared behind him and sighed with infinite relief at what he saw.

"I thought you'd never get here," I said weakly.

Babcock snorted. "It would have served you right if you'd got your fool head blown off. First we didn't know where you'd run off to, till Mrs. MacLean insisted you were like a madman when you heard me say I'd sent Tom Jenkins to see Judy. Then we had to go next door to borrow a car."

Pa was saying something then, but I didn't hear him. I had Judy in my arms. She was sobbing against my chest, but it was a good kind of sobbing.



By M. E. Ohaver

A CIPHER is a secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Helpful hints appear in this department each month. Study them carefully.

CRYPTOGRAMS

No. 67—Tinted to Suit. By †Acahti. Guess the one-letter word O, and short words PWH, PWHR, SWHR, and HOLW. Continue with PY, SYYCHR, and WYCH.

WARP PY DHTARARH LUNXPYDORM: SWHR THREARK O SYYCHR
TOPHUAOC YD TORN LYCYUM, QMH O MPUORE YD HOLW LYCYU
AR NYQU EOURARK RHHECH. PWHR BQMP PUN PY DARE PWH
EOURHE WYCH!

No. 68—Say It Fast ! By Scheherazade. Pattern word FEPF, noting P, will start you, with FEA, PRG, FEAR, and LEA coming next. Thus to SFFAOAG and LEOSRV.

"LEA SFFAOAG P LEPOT LEOKUU LEOKAV, PRG FEAR LEOSRV BODY
FEA LEOKNAUAG BDOY FEPF LUSYZAOAG KR FEA LEODSG."—DUG-
FKYA FDRXSA-FHKLFAO.

No. 69—Bids for Business. By Elmer. The apostrophe is the clue to the final—'A. Using this letter, proceed with NA, NK'A, KONA, and NK, checking with ONK.

ADGT ANPFA: DF XZLTBM KBEVL, "ONK GT TZAM, N'G SEHH DS
CNTA"; DF YNFUDY-XHNFU AZHTAGZF'A ZEKD, "Z XHNFU
GZF NA UBNRNFP KONA VZB"; DF RZBNTKM AKDBT UDDB, "NS
NK'A KD XT OZU, YT 'OZU' NK!"

No. 70—Stellar Conquests. By †Paleos. Compare RP with endings -RPU and -YRLPY. Take the three-letter words next, noting YAKE*Y. Asterisks indicate capitalized words.

"FRANCE KNNCUCQNS BLPYHNACQ KYAELNLUCEY VCDLEC WKJRP
QCBRYRLPY, ICEFKIY AFCECVS YCCJRP INKBC, PLA RP YHP, VHA
KWLPU YAKE*, DLE FRY ICLINC.

No. 71—Foremost and Final. By Londoner. THE, following the comma, and the phrase VH AND, will supply most of the letters for *BHVADE *GATADG.

*RSA. *DEZVH *U. *TTTD (AYVROD "T") FTPD KVYGA VH AND
TORNTUDAVXDE OVGA LK *BHVADE *GATADG GLOEVDYG VH
*ZLYOE *ZTY *V, THE *FLYR. *TOKYDE *T. *XXDRRDHKDOEA
(ELBUOD "X") FTPD OTGA!

No. 72—Snappy Headlines. By †Amoroj. Tentative assumptions for XEAB, noting frequencies 2-12-9-4, may be checked by substitution in OEDBAE. Next, DTEOZ, XTLE, etc.

YABLYTN DQYDEVOH XEAB NAYTN HYTRGTN YANSBR: "OSER
TPASO LH XTLE VNTU!"—"DTEOZ OEDBAE EAYCH OAFR!"—
"PSEHOLRK ZUGETRO HVETUH SRFTEU GAK!"

No. 73—Hard Cash. By °Chemystic. Observe UNO, used between quoted groups. Try your guesses for this word by substituting in ARWNOUYOY, noting UY. Follow with AYFURTONY.

JUNAECYFS TAKORYAEROT YZERO BAOWOY UNO YZAFF CZAFAGOT
IS *SUB AYFURTONY UY OPWMURDO KOTACK. KEROZUNS JUFCO
ARWNOUYOY HAZM YAGO EX "WEAR." BONYERY HAZMECZ "NEWLY"
UNO "YZERS INELO"!

No. 74—Unexpected Outcome. By °Ty Roe. Pattern word VKVDVYA, with thrice-used V, affords entry, providing all but last letter in YDAYKS.

OAYBC OEDFGH, RGJEKT YDAYKS OGYLN, YSSYBCD CEKT,
YAAGPEKT AGDD GU CKETFS, SPG HYPKD, OVS SYCEKT
GHHGDEKT AYNX, UEKEDFEKT OGVS. VKVDVYA TYROES!

No. 75—Extraordinary Experience. By †Ready Money. Initial symbol L, in this alliterative message, also occurs several times as final. Try for patterns LNONNVKL and LVKPVL.

LNRYVVKGZE LRPRZN LAXGTGNL LOBBVK. LANGLF LVKPRZN
LVKPVL LFRKH, LFKGYB, LTRXXABL, LCOGU. LNOBVDGVU LTFAXRK
LYVXXL, LGEFL, LOTTOYSL; LOSLVCOVZNXQ LNONNVKL: "L-L-LAYV
L-L-LVRDAAU!"

No. 76—Came the Dawn! By °Ekh-Do-Tin. There are some unusual words in this final cipher, but all are well keyed. Find your own clues, fans!

VXLAUXHLYN UUFR KRBYO HLTUEYGX, VORXUHYSODN,
ARBYOPRXLGA, UOPRX AUTEORXE; NYORX KXRH HXYBUT,
PDHXY, SPLARXY, RZRT RRXLRX ADOPLSYN SUTSRVOE

A SECRET number provides the key for manipulating the mechanism of Scorpio's No. X-6, a special cipher in the so-called Gronsfield system. When this system is used for private correspondence, the secret key is agreed upon by the communicating parties; and with it a given message may be translated into cipher, or conversely a cryptogram may readily be resolved into plaintext. When the key is unknown, however, as in decrypting an intercepted message, or in solving Scorpio's No. X-6, special processes of analysis must be employed, and numerous ingenious methods have been devised to this end. Details of the Gronsfield system, however, and some suggestions for its solution will follow the cryptogram itself.

No. X-6. Capital Punishment. By Scorpio.

VT "LWBA CSL VVETYMW" CC
CSKNFRV UMSBPVD: LWBK
EZTUSMV YW JYIEZBNPR
RQIHF; LCSO GVX PTB YJPN
IMFE; HKXMRC SYJT, FOH
DZZS FRVWINMW DJNTSI JNA
JZIU; GMMFEF, FVI EMXNLJ
CSFD QSUS HTCW QETYA.

To illustrate the system, the message "Find the key." is here enciphered with the numerical key 8945. In translating into cipher, the digits of the key are written successively under the letters of the message, being repeated as many times as the length of the message requires. Next, each letter is converted into cipher by counting forward in the alphabet the number of places indicated by its individual key-digit. Thus, the letter "f," counting forward 8 places in the alphabet, becomes N in cipher; similarly "i," counting 9 ahead, becomes R; etc. In this forward count, letter A is assumed to come next after Z. Special devices may be used in preparing the numerical key. The illustrative key 8945 is derived from HIDE used as key-word, H being the 8th letter of the alphabet, I the 9th, etc. Incidentally, the key to No. Z-6 has been formed by this same procedure.

Message: Find the key
Key: 8945 894 589
Cipher: NRRI BQI PMH

No. X-6 may be solved in various ways. Key-length or "period" may be found by factoring intervals between recurrent groups, permitting separation and identification of alphabets. Thus, repeated LWB (interval 30) and repeated FRV (interval 72), both having factors 2, 3, and 6, show a key of 2, 3, or 6 digits; etc. Or a word may be tentatively identified by limiting each symbol to its nine possible letters. For instance, GVX tried as "art" would give the key-sequence 644, which could be checked by trial in the key-word and by application to other parts of the cryptogram. Full explanation of No. X-6 will appear in the next issue!

No. X-5. Yanks find Nazi murder factory inside Germany. Victims haunt dripping bat-filled dungeons. Drunken executioners deal macabre death midst ghoulish feasting, drink from human skulls.

abc defgh i jkl mnopqrs tuv wxyz
WHO ENTER HERE ABANDON ALL HOPE
Message: *Yanks find *Nazi murder
Cipher: *PWBRN THBE *BWEH ALOENO

The translation, key, and specimen example of H. L. Kruger's key-phrase cipher, No. X-5 in the last issue, are given herewith.

No. 77—Cryptic Division. By Vedette. The 10-letter key-word is numbered 0123456789. To start, L - L = D shows value of D. D x D = U will then give U.

D E A D) C L U B B E D) C D W
U L D N L
D U E C E
L N H U U
W U U H D
N W L A E
E C W N

ANSWERS FOR LAST ISSUE

56—"Just what is a committee, father?" asked inquisitive Alexander. "Any small-sized group of persons which keeps minutes and wastes hours," replied the boy's fond parent.

57—"Give all U can to USO; then your conscience won't hurt U so. It's just a debt which all of us O; so don't be a piker, U so and so!"

58—Helium, compared with hydrogen, shows double density, yet ninety-two per cent gross lifting power of this lightest gas! How come?

59—In Great Coal Age forests, four-inch roaches swarmed over fallen logs and sunned on swaying branches, while twenty-nine-inch dragonflies swept through the air. World's giant insects!

60—Auroral and zodiacal radiations allegedly supply about five-sixths of natural sky illumination on moonless nights. Stars yield only one-sixth.

61—Patriotic housewives salvage waste fats, tin cans, used newspapers, buy war bonds, attend Red Cross stations. All out for victory!

62—Zeke, jealous, watched abbreviate-clad forms diving through surf. Changed clothes quickly. Relaxed 'neath palms. (Gained better view!)

63—Formidable neuropaths escape asylum. Doughty journalist undertakes capture. Taking disguise, joins underworld. Locates outlaws, informs law. Obtains reward. Story!

64—Callous crypto-fan creates colossal caricature, causes concentration, cackination, cerebral collapse. Climax: coadjutor comprehends cipher, circumvents catastrophe. Congratulations!

65—Naive prince gave subtle archduke ample income. Fulsome noble spoke humble gratitude, swore true alliance. Outcome: false knave broke fake promise, stole throne. Vile ingrate!

66—Key:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
C O A L S T R I K E

All answers to current ciphers will be duly credited in our *Cipher Solvers' Club*. Address: M. E. Ohaver, *New Detective Magazine*, Fictioneers, Inc., 205 E. 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

THE LAST RIDE

Through the night the
dead man came. . . .



*Ghostly, lost, it
came out of the
silent night — the
voice of a dead
man, returned one
last grim time to
wreak strange ven-
geance on his mur-
derer!*

**By Ray P.
Shotwell**

BELLAMY had found out. Galvin sensed it when the door of his office opened, knew it when he saw the queer, determined look on the office manager's face, and the care with which he clicked the latch behind him. And something like bloodlust flamed once in his lack-luster eyes and quickly died, as he swung around to face the younger man.

"H'areya," Galvin said, and waved carelessly. But his eyes were not at all careless.

Outside, the squat rectangular pillboxes

that were the Cockerell Mills stood black and spare against the night. An hour ago lights had glared from a thousand windows. An hour hence, lights would glare again, when the owner, Cocky Cockerell, made his tour of inspection. But now it was six-thirty, the day shift had gone off at five-thirty, and the Cockerell Mills were silent and dark.

Bellamy ignored the wave, stood in front of Galvin's desk.

"I saw Lindstrom today," he said slowly.

"Drunk, of course," Galvin said, smiling.

"No." Bellamy didn't return the smile. "I took him to lunch. The beggar was half ~~starved~~ served."

Galvin's eyes slid down to a stack of correspondence on his desk.

"If it's a sob story," he drawled, "save it. I have a slew of work to do."

"It's a sob story, old man, but the wrong guy's doing the sobbing. It's the real story about the so-called Galvin formula."

Galvin nodded grimly.

"Said I stole it from him. Sure. I get it all the time. Every guy I fire turns out to be an Edison who got a bum deal. Why—"

"This is different. Today he was sober enough to talk straight. I didn't know until today that Lindstrom, not you, discovered that solvent, Galvin. A million-dollar formula. It's going to put *trienpraloladime* on the shelf forever as a stabilizer. It's worth a million bucks, and you stole it, kicked the man out into the street without a nickel!"

The hands on the desk stopped shuffling the letters, began to crumple them into a ball.

"You can prove all this, I suppose?" he said tightly.

Bellamy nodded. "That's the odd part of it. I can. I won't go into that now. But I learned enough today to put you behind bars, Galvin. I hope I won't have to do it. I'll give you an hour to make up your mind."

The ball of paper in Galvin's hand was a twisted shred, but his thin smile was steady. He said, "Finish it—I said I had work to do before Cocky comes."

Bellamy looked at him. "Right. I'll finish it. It's six-thirty. In an hour Cocky will get here for the board meeting. I'll give you that hour to think it over. Before seven-thirty I want to see you in my office."

"Bellamy, for God's sake—you don't believe this line of Lindstrom's—"

"I want you to come to me and say you'll go to the meeting ready to give that man what he's entitled. I want you to tell Cocky that you didn't discover that formula. That you took Lindstrom's experiments, robbed him of the credit and fired him unjustly. Cocky's hard, but he's fair. Do that, and I'll see you get every break."

Galvin's smile had gone. "Get the hell outa here!"

"I'm going," Bellamy said. "But if you don't come up to see me before seven-thirty, I'll break you, so help me. Lindstrom's here now to help me do it."

"What?" Galvin got up and walked around the room. "Where is he, the lousy, lying—"

"He's downstairs. He wanted to kill you. By God, I think he can do it, too. But I told him to wait and see Cocky. The money's worth more to him than your hide. I made him see that, finally. But he's a little biased. Keep

out of his way." He moved to the door. "Remember, Galvin. One hour. If you want to take it the easy way, come up and see me before seven-thirty."

Bellamy closed the door, and Galvin stared out into the blackness and the ruin of the stolen fortune which he had just seen turn to ashes under his fingers.

What a triple distilled fool he had been to underrate Lindstrom. No, not a fool. The fellow was an inebriate, half-mad genius, too dumb to know his own rights, too sodden with liquor to care. Somebody had wised Lindstrom, somebody who was vitally interested in ousting him, Galvin, from Cocky's favor. It all spelled Bellamy. Bellamy had been jealous of him for months.

GALVIN stared out the window. A week ago, even, things could have happened to Eric Lindstrom. But that was a week ago. Now—Bellamy had found out. Now it was too late.

He could picture Lindstrom downstairs. A shabby, bleary-eyed giant, drooling at what he was going to do to the boss who had fired him. For a minute Galvin had a crazy impulse to kill the fool and take the grief. But the notion didn't last. He could see too clearly in his mind's eye the knotted muscles of Lindstrom's hairy arms, feel the iron fingers squeezing his own throat . . . God, no, he'd stay away from that guy.

Well, he had an hour. An hour more of power. Then—he brushed aside the thought, stared out the window, his little eyes feral and evil in the half light. A dull gleam came from above, and he knew that Bellamy was up in his office. The glow from above made a silver line sway in the night, where the steel cable of the office letter conveyor stretched across the mill yard and dipped sharply downward in the night, to Cocky's office in the opposite building, where the directors met. Just like that, his doom would go: from Bellamy's office to Cocky's bear den. And then—he shivered, visualizing the end of that hour.

Funny, he had figured Lindstrom for about anything but this. The day he had been fired, Lindstrom had from all reports got tearfully and thoroughly drunk, had stayed that way for a week. When he had sobered up enough to realize vaguely that he had been robbed, he had scrawled a threatening note to Galvin. The very contents of the note were a tacit admission that he had no real comeback except physical violence. Galvin fished the note from an inner pocket. It had been addressed to him, but it was headed: TO THE ROBBERS OF THE COCKERELL MILLS. He read it over:

SOMEDAY I'M COMING BACK AND

TOSS THAT THIEVING TRICK OF YOURS RIGHT BACK IN YOUR LAPS.

The note was boldly signed; it needed no expert to tell that the signature was genuine. Eric Lindstrom had written it.

Galvin pursed his thin lips. Right back in your laps, Eric had boasted. And now it had come, right back in his lap. Like the wire letter conveyor in Bellamy's window—right down into Cocky's lap. And in an hour. Unless—

Something writhing, monstrous was born in his tortured thoughts. Bellamy—Bellamy could die. And Lindstrom could hang for the killing. The idea of blind murder was not new to Galvin. Murder had seethed with him ever since Bellamy's ultimatum. But this was different. Ugly, repellent, fascinating, beautiful. This was not blind. It was murder, true, but murder which was safe, daring. Murder which would leave him where he belonged, at the top of Cocky's salary list.

Still-born at first, the idea sprang to life, and the apparent perfection of it made him gasp suspiciously.

The advantage of it quickened his pulse; the danger of it made his flabby face twitch. It seemed too good to be true. He used twenty precious minutes checking it from a dozen angles. And when he had finished, he wiped grisly sweat from his bald pate as if he were already a killer. He wasn't, but he had been through a far worse crisis. He had learned that his plan had a fighting chance of success.

His movements were swift, decisive now. In the cupboard at the corner of his office he found a coil of clothesline rope, a bottle, a length of lead pipe and a pair of gloves. He then hurried downstairs to the side door, skipped across the yard to the empty director's office, dialed Bellamy on the interoffice phone. When he heard the voice answer, he said, "I'm on my way up, Bellamy— Wait, will you hold the line a minute?"

The voice at the other end went on talking, but Galvin didn't stop to listen. He jammed a wad of gum under the hook and hung it down, so that it gave the appearance of being disconnected, whereas the line was still open.

Then, gripping the lead pipe, he mounted the stairs toward the man who was to die.

BELLAMY had been leaning over his desk; when Galvin came into his office he laid aside the telephone and looked up.

"So you came," he said slowly. "Somehow, I didn't think you had it in you, Ralph. Believe me, I'm glad."

Galvin smiled wryly. "There's no chance, I suppose, of a deal?"

"Absolutely out," the younger man gritted. He had half arisen as if to shake the chemist's hand, but at the last words he slumped resignedly back in his chair, and swung curtly around to the Ediphone. "I'll do my talking downstairs," he flung over his shoulder.

"Yes," Galvin whispered, "downstairs, you'll talk—" and he crushed Bellamy's temple like an eggshell.

Beside the desk stood a tin waste basket. Galvin propped the body in the chair, letting the head and shoulders fall so that they dangled between the knees. Then he thrust the head callously into the basket.

From the watchman's clock on the wall, Galvin noted that the latter had just checked in; he was not due for an hour.

The first step in his fight for a million dollars had been taken. Now in successive steps would come the establishment of a perfect alibi, the placing of the crime on Lindstrom's shoulders. In order to do this, Bellamy must rise from the dead. Rise and talk to Cocky Cockerell, the man who had made him a little tin god.

He put the lead pipe in the basket, drew the rope from his pocket, lashed it over the head and under the chin of the corpse and dragged it over to the window. Flinging up the bottom pane, he held the body upright, wedging it against the wall by the pressure of his own bulk.

By the sill, about a yard off the floor, began the steel cable which carried messages from Bellamy's office down to Cocky Cockerell across the yard. The office manager was located on the fourth floor; Cocky's office, where the directors would meet, was on the ground level. Out from the window a shining thread swooped down into the night, like the start of a pigmy roller coaster. A pigmy slide, from Bellamy's office, right down to Bellamy's lap.

In a lower pane of Bellamy's window, where the cable passed through, a circular ventilator arrangement had been fashioned, when the window was raised, the corner pane containing the aperture stayed down, like a piece from a jig saw puzzle. A similar aperture took care of the passage of the cable into Cocky's office, except that there the cable passed through an upper pane.

The device was outmoded, a relic of earlier days.

It resembled the change conveyors used by department stores—a small carrier, released by a spring catch, and running on rollers geared to the greased cable. A year ago a drunken loom worker had been discharged for hanging on a carrier and sliding across the yard into the open window of Cocky's office.

Galvin had witnessed the loom man's insane prank. Tonight he was going to dupli-

cate it, with the help of the man he had murdered.

Raising the window, he pressed the lever which released a carrier through the wall aperture. As soon as it cleared the window he stopped it, mooring it with a piece of rope to a shutter hook on the outside of the building. He lashed another strand of rope under Bellamy's arms and fastened it to the carrier, and cast the body out the window.

Bellamy dangled straight downward, suspended by the rope under his arms from the carrier. On the greased cable, and with a sheer drop of four stories, the dead man was ready for a limp, horrible slide across the mill yard.

He released a spring which held the carrier, and now nothing held Bellamy from sliding down but the rope that moored him to the hook in the brick wall.

He took the bottle which he had brought upstairs, and saturated the rope which moored the carrier to the brick wall of the building with the corrosive acid. In a half hour or more it would eat through the strands, and then—Galvin smiled. "I'm coming back some day, and toss that trick right back in your laps," Lindstrom had written.

It was seven-twenty. In ten minutes, approximately, the directors would sit around and listen to the bosses explain their stewardships. Galvin laughed. Bellamy would speak his piece, too.

Galvin next went over to the dictating machine in back of Bellamy's desk. He noted with satisfaction that Bellamy had just finished dictating some routine letters on it.

Just to be sure they were business letters, he started the machine, listened. And tonelessly the metallic voice droned out its stilted messages of commerce.

"It is the fixed policy of this house . . . terms 2% 30, net 90 days, F.O.B. Chester."

Galvin shut off the machine. His gnarled hand shook a little. The voice of a dead man! It seemed sepulchral, unclean.

This would do the trick. Anybody would

know that it was Bellamy's voice. Now, if the last letter on the record was good—he listened again.

"Ethel," said the voice, "take a letter to Cobb and Cobb. Gentlemen: Mr. Hiram Cockerell has asked me to bring to your attention some details . . ."

It was just the kind of a letter he wanted. He glanced at his watch and started. Seven-thirty! Cocky was a stickler for punctuality; if he didn't hurry the old fossil would be stamping in the door, wondering what was tying up the meeting. But this had to be done. Skipping the bulk of the letter, he switched the needle to the end, just to make sure. ". . . trusting that we may hear from you in the immediate future," said the voice, "we remain . . ."

Perfect. The letter had been completed. Now Galvin flashed hurriedly back to the preceding letter. Just the firm name. Akins Associates. He must remember the name—it was the cue.

Everything was ready. In five minutes, or ten or so—he didn't know just how long it took a record to run through, but it was at least that—Bellamy would speak to the boys. Galvin took the mouthpiece of the French phone and draped it over the desk, close to the Ediphone. The line was open, connected with Cocky's office, the receiver held open down there by the wad of gum. Placing the mouthpiece of the dictating machine so it touched the telephone mouthpiece, he started the record.

Everything else he left. The pipe, the bottle, the bloody basket. There were no prints, thanks to the gloves. It was an integral part of the plan that everyone should know that the killing had taken place here. The watchman's check of incoming persons would show that Lindstrom was in the building, had come in with Bellamy. Later on, that bit of evidence was going to figure highly in a murder trial.

Cutting back through yard, avoiding the hall where Lindstrom sat waiting, he sprinted

(Continued on page 84)

Many Never Suspect Cause of Backaches

This Old Treatment Often Brings Happy Relief

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up

nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

COME DIE WITH ME!

The deadly little Tycoon of Tyrol, whose victims died with a smile.

THE day comes when even the most astute and lucky criminal overplays his hand. Georges Sarret, established in Marseilles as a respectable lawyer, because of his position was able to get away with at least a half-dozen murders. Although the police had become suspicious of him, they could not gather enough proof even to justify an accusation until the day his luck ran dry.

Opportunity first came knocking at Sarret's door when two young women came to consult him on a minor legal matter. As a matter of course he questioned them; and when he learned their story, he knew he had acquired two accomplices for certain schemes which had long been simmering in the back of his head.

The sisters Schmidt—Catherine and Philomene—had come from Germany to France in the decade before the first World War and had secured positions as governesses in well-to-do French families. All had gone well with them until, with the coming of war, they became enemy aliens. Both were good looking blondes, and had somehow managed to evade the dragnet that brought under observation those of German birth.

They fled to Marseilles and set themselves up in a business of their own. They were industrious and hard-working. By 1923, they were getting on nicely when they appeared in Georges Sarret's office.

Georges Sarret, like themselves, was not French. He had been born in the Far East, and had settled and been educated in France.

Knowing the truth about the Schmidt sisters, Sarret had a club over them. The business that had brought them to his office was quickly settled, but a year or so later, Sarret sent for both young women, to tell them the police were curious about their affairs. There were rumors that they had migrated to Paris before the war to establish themselves as German spies. Although these suspicions might never be verified, there was a possibility that they might be deported from the country, he concluded.

Frightened at the prospect, and reluctant to give up their thriving business, the sisters asked Sarret for advice.

"Marry Frenchmen," he told them. "That will give you citizenship here."

He would arrange matters for them, the lawyer assured the sisters. He would provide

the husbands. First, of course, they would have to hand over their dowries to him.

In another three months the arrangements were completed. Philomene was married to an elderly roué, Villette, while Catherine's spouse bore the name of Detreuil. Both husbands, as agreed upon, left their wives right after the ceremony had made them French women. Whatever returns the two men got came from the dowries paid out to George Sarret.

But the wily lawyer was looking forward to more reward for his cooperation. He had learned the secrets of others anxious to keep out of the clutches of the French authorities.

HE HAD a nephew in Nice in the insurance business. Before the two marriages he had had both Villette and Detreuil insured, without their knowledge. Two younger men, both in excellent health, had been persuaded to impersonate them, make the usual applications, and take the health examinations in their stead. When both passed and the papers were drawn up, Sarret was ready to put through the marriages.

Two months later Villette died. The man was safely buried before Sarret, representing the widow, put forth the usual claim for the insurance money.

The insurance company had no reason to be suspicious. Sarret's reputation was still above par. And he had been cautious enough to have one of the best medical practitioners in Marseilles attend the dying man and give a death certificate which would stand up. The insurance company paid up.

A less cautious man might have rushed the death of the second husband. But Sarret waited until April, 1925, before venturing on his next move.

Detreuil, who had weighed over two hundred pounds at the time of his marriage, had lost almost one hundred pounds. Then suddenly came the collapse, with a first-class physician in attendance. The man safely buried, Sarret put in the widow's claim for the one hundred thousand francs due her via the insurance route.

The insurance companies, although suspicious, were unable to find a flaw in the papers. Again, they paid up, though no doubt regretfully, and Sarret, very much pleased with himself, pocketed a handsome sum.

By Zeta Rothschild

Then followed the most
gruesome crime in French
criminal history. . . .



But now he knew the insurance companies were watching him. It would not do to try and put anything over on them again, not for a while, anyway.

In another two years Sarret had worked out another scheme which, however, did not involve the insurance companies. To his office had come a man named Chambon, a priest with influential connections. Among these was elderly Madame Alphonsine Ballandreau, the widow of a wealthy industrialist from the north of France.

With Chambon's connivance, as her lawyer, Sarret managed to get the widow to sign over her property to himself. Soon he had over two hundred thousand francs of securities and bonds in his possession. Now he decided on his next step.

Catherine Villette was ordered by Sarret to rent a villa on the outskirts of Aix, a short distance from Marseilles.

Chambon had begun demanding his share of the widow's bonds and securities. Sarret agreed to hand them over. He invited Chambon to Catherine's villa for the final accounting.

Before Chambon's arrival, Sarret went shopping. These purchases were, to say the least, not in line with the usual kind made by an amiable host. He bought a bathtub at a second hand store and ten liters of sulphuric acid from a chemist. The acid, he told the chemist, was to be used for experimental work in his garden.

While the sisters were out in the garden, Sarret coolly shot Chambon in an upstairs room and covered the corpse with a sheet. Then Catherine was ordered to drive to Marseilles, pick up Madame Ballandreau, and bring her out to the villa. Quite unsuspecting, the gullible woman accompanied Catherine back to Aix and, alone with Sarret, met the same fate as had her priest.

Then followed the most gruesome scene in French criminal history. The bathtub had been set in in what the former owners of the villa had called the dining room. It had no water inlet or drain outlet. Into the tub Sarret emptied the sulphuric acid. Then he compelled the Schmidt sisters to help him carry both bodies downstairs and dumped the corpses into the acid-filled tub. Several hours later the three emptied the tub by ladling its gelatinous contents into jars, pitchers and the like. These were emptied in turn in the garden.

Within the week the villa was closed and the three moved back to Marseilles. A few months later, the lease having expired, the keys were returned to the owner.

There were few persons who were interested in the fate of either Chambon or Madame Ballandreau. Sarret closed up their respective apartments, paid off tradesmen's

bills, and to all inquiries gave the same explanation.

"He has gone to India," he would say. Or, "I do not know when she will return to Marseilles."

By now the Schmidt sisters had learned to be afraid of their lawyer friend. But Sarret had the whiphand over them. He told them bluntly that if they talked they would be accused of the deaths of the missing pair. And to remind them of his power, he would frequently take out Chambon's watch, which he now carried, and wave it before them. The women, thoroughly cowed, kept silent.

Another two years passed. By now the fortune of Madame Ballandreau had been dissipated and Sarret was looking around for another short cut to riches.

Surely the insurance companies had forgotten their suspicions of him by now, he decided.

HIS new scheme again included the sisters Schmidt. Despite their protests he made them cooperate. This time it was Catherine Schmidt who was to be insured. Again with the help of his nephew, he had the young woman, in the best of health, insured for one million, seven hundred thousand francs in five different companies.

He could afford to take his time before taking the final move.

Until 1929, Catherine Schmidt ran her dressmaking business with Sister Philomene. Then suddenly Sarret got busy. Catherine was given a lump sum of money and sent off to take a vacation. She might go anywhere she pleased so long as she stayed far from Marseilles.

Philomene, in the meantime, had her task to carry out. She was to visit the local hospitals to look in the wards for a woman, preferably an orphan.

But what was most important, Sarret emphasised, was that this woman must be ill. Death must be just around the corner for her.

Eventually Philomene located just the woman Sarret needed for his scheme. In the Marseilles Conception Hospital Philomene found twenty-four-year-old Magali Herbin, for some time suffering from consumption.

When Sarret okayed her find, Philomene invited the young woman to come live with her, telling the Sisters she wanted to brighten the young girl's last days in this world.

In order to have this last chapter out of sight and hearing of curious neighbors who knew the Schmidt sisters, Sarret rented a villa on the outskirts of Marseilles. There Magali Herbin was taken, put to bed, and fed the best of food. For three months the poor girl lived in the most comfortable home she had ever known.

But in March came a change. The girl became suddenly worse, sank rapidly, and on the 29th died.

By now Magali was out of touch with the Sisters in the hospital and there was no one else to inquire for her. To the physician who attended her, she had been introduced as Catherine Schmidt, and on her death the certificate was made out in that name without any hesitation.

The obsequies over, Philomene made herself up as an old lady and, posing as the fictitious dead Catherine's mother, appeared at the offices of the various insurance companies involved and presented the papers that named her as beneficiary.

Sarrett kept in the background. And the insurance companies, with many a sigh, paid over the money to the weeping mother.

But all was not well. Catherine, floating about Europe, should have been enjoying her holiday. But she was not one to enjoy leisure. Even a holiday can grow tiresome to a lone-some person. Finally refusing to play the game any longer, she returned to Marseilles and her former home for a visit. Though Sarret finally persuaded her, with threats, to leave, it was not soon enough.

Neighbors, whose eyes are ever watchful, had seen her. Gossip followed. None of them knew of the Magali Herbin episode; they were only curious as to the disappearance of Catherine and her return.

The gossip reached the ears of the insurance companies and they began their own private investigation. Without letting their suspicions be known, they began trailing Philomene and learned of Sarret's connection with her.

In a year's time they had enough evidence to warrant action, and on March 29th, 1931, precisely one year after Magali Herbin had breathed her last, Philomene was arrested for impersonation.

Catherine Schmidt, always buying the Marseilles newspapers, wherever she might be, soon learned of her sister's arrest. It brought her back to Marseilles post-haste.

Perhaps her guardian angel was on the job. For instead of going to Sarret, which would have probably been her last move on this earth, the distraught Catherine went straight to the police station and with little reluctance told the whole story of the insurance fraud.

What was more to the point, both she and Philomene, under tactful and kindly questioning, soon told the stories of the Chambon-Ballandreaux affair as well as the histories of their two brief marriages with Villette and Detreuil.

The arrest of Sarret followed.

Sarret attempted to deny the accusations. Then he tried to shift the blame to the two

sisters. But the facts were lining up against him. The villa at Aix had been rented by him. It was he who had bought the sulphuric acid and the bathtub, testified the men from whom he had made the purchases.

The two husbands had long been his friends. Their insurance policies had been made out by him.

Magali Herbin's body was disinterred, an autopsy performed. The coroner reported that she had not died of consumption, which had evidently been too slow a death for the impatient Sarret, but of two grams, seventy-five centigrams of zinc salts, enough to kill eleven persons.

Through legal delays arranged by Sarret, the trial was postponed until October, 1933. But if Sarret had hoped the state and the insurance companies would lose interest in him in that time, he was mistaken. The companies handed over their data to the Advocate General.

On October 31st, 1933, after three hours of deliberation, the jury brought in a guilty verdict for Sarret and his girl friends, but with a slight difference. Sarret got the guillotine—the girls only ten years at hard labor for their cooperation.

In April, 1934, Sarret took that early morning walk that ended at the guillotine.

The Sisters Schmidt, after serving their sentences, disappeared from the scene.

As for the insurance companies in Europe, they wrote a large *finis* to the Sarret account.

ANOTHER notable killer lost out in the end through misplaced faith in a trusty world.

Henri de Tourville, although he dropped his French title when he took British citizenship, let everyone know that he once had tasted the rank and privileges of aristocracy. To the innkeeper at Trafoi, the village in the Austrian Tyrol to which he took his wife while on their honeymoon, de Tourville dropped many a hint of the respect due him. He was there, he said, to show his wife the beauties of this region.

A few days after their arrival he ordered a carriage to drive them to Ferdinandhohe, a village high up in the Alps from which they could get a panorama of the beautiful scene.

There would be no room for Madame de Tourville's maid, the count said. Besides, he wanted to have his wife alone for this trip, he told the infatuated lady with a smile. Wasn't that natural for a devoted bridegroom?

Madame de Tourville agreed. And shortly after the noon day meal the carriage with the two started off.

Hardly had they been driving for an hour when de Tourville put his head out of the window and called to the coachman. He and

the lady preferred to proceed on foot, he said. The coachman could return to the inn.

The coachman, assured he would be paid as much for this short journey as he would have made for the entire trip, made no objections. He saw the "English Milord" and his bride start off, arm in arm, up the path, then turned his horses.

Supper had been ordered for eight o'clock. But at that hour the de Tourvilles had not yet returned. Another hour and the landlord was beginning to worry. Had they lost their way? Perhaps it might be wise to send men out with lanterns.

But then came Henri de Tourville, breathless, disheveled, his clothing torn and muddy.

"My wife," and he burst into sobs. At last, composed, he broke the news that Madame de Tourville, venturing too near the edge of a precipice, had slipped and fallen off into the deep ravine below.

Several men, headed by Sergeant Magnus Fritz, volunteered to accompany de Tourville back to the precipice. It was too much to ask the unhappy husband to clamber down its steep side. So while de Tourville remained on the top, the others, more accustomed, made the dangerous trip down to the ravine.

Less than a half hour later the red face of one of the villagers appeared over the side of the precipice. Using his elbows for a lever he inched his body over the top. Then on his feet, he stood quietly in silent sympathy close to de Tourville.

"We found her," he said softly. "She's dead."

De Tourville burst into tears.

He wanted the men to bring his wife up to the level place where he waited. But Sergeant Fritz refused. "We must wait until the police come," he explained.

Two men would stay on guard through the night with the body. The rest of the party might just as well return to the inn.

There would have to be an inquiry, de Tourville was told the next day. Lest he leave, he was asked to give up his passport.

Not all the villagers seemed to accept his story of an accident. But what did their opinion matter? De Tourville stayed in his room until the inquiry presided over by District Judge Pult.

The finding of the body, its condition, did not seem to interest the judge at all. Only one question did he find important.

"Was your mistress on good terms with her husband?" he asked Sarah Clappinson, Madame de Tourville's maid. "Did they ever quarrel?"

Sarah shook her head emphatically. "They were very much in love," she answered promptly. "They were devoted to each other."

That ended the inquiry. His passport re-

turned, de Tourville made arrangements for the burial of his wife in the local cemetery and left the village without even waiting for the funeral. He wanted to break the news to her family, he told the innkeeper.

But he did not return to London for several weeks, spending the interim in Vienna, Paris and other gay cities.

On arriving in London, de Tourville had two important calls to make. One on his wife's best friend, a Miss Georgina Scott, the other on Mr. Thomas Wilding, executor of his wife's estate. With the latter he had to arrange for the £40,000 his wife had left him in the will made on their wedding day.

To Miss Cross he told a different story of the fatal tragedy than the one he had given out at the village in the Tyrol. He said his wife had fallen over the cliff and that he had returned to the inn for the carriage and brought her back. The doctor had told him his wife would not recover from her injuries.

"She was suffering from an internal disease that made death inevitable," he told Miss Cross.

To the executor de Tourville told still another story. Madame de Tourville had committed suicide.

"She was suffering from an incurable disease," he explained. But that was only one reason. Madame de Tourville was about to be involved in a scandal, a divorce, being named by a wife as the cause of her husband's unfaithfulness. Rather than face this disgrace, she had preferred death.

Mr. Wilding, very much shocked, had nevertheless accepted this story. He even agreed to take the necessary steps to hand over to de Tourville his legacy.

But not all the friends of the dead lady were satisfied with his story. Some of them, banding together, went so far as to engage a Viennese detective by the name of Hoffer to go to the Tyrolean village to make a thorough investigation.

Madame de Tourville had met her death in July. It was the following October when Inspector Clarke of Scotland Yard appeared one evening just as de Tourville was about to leave his home for a dinner engagement.

He had a warrant, explained the inspector, for the count's arrest. The Austrian Government had decided to re-open the case and had asked the English authorities to return de Tourville to their jurisdiction.

De Tourville, despite his protests, was lodged in jail. Montagu Williams, one of the legal lights of his day, argued that such a charge against a British subject by a foreign power should be dismissed. But the court, remarking that an extradition treaty existed with Austria, held such a dismissal was beyond its powers.

After the subsequent hearing, where depositions from a number of Tyrolean witnesses were read into the records, it was decided that Henri de Tourville would have to face charges in the Tyrol for the wilful murder of his wife.

Not until the following June did his trial open. It was the cause celebre of the year. Seats were reserved for lords and ladies, even a couple of grand dukes, who traveled to the small Tyrolean village of Botzen. Newspaper correspondents came from England and other important European cities. And it was arranged for special telegrams to be sent daily to Emperor Franz Joseph in Vienna.

But all the inconveniences of living in overcrowded Botzen were amply rewarded by the disclosures that followed.

European courts, unlike ours, believe that the past of the prisoner has a bearing on the act for which he now stands accused—he may expect to have his past count against him.

The Vienna detective employed by Madame de Tourville's English friends had done a good job. He had a dossier crammed with authenticated data.

MANY years earlier Henri de Tourville, known as Henri Perreau, had been a waiter in a Paris cafe. He had been a good one, attentive, pleasant and had taken such good care of an English traveler that the latter invited the waiter to give up his job and become his companion.

They had arrived, in time, at Constantinople. Henri and his Englishman had gone out together one night to enjoy the night life. They had never returned to the hotel. The Constantinople police had made the usual search for them but with no luck. Presumably they had been attacked, their bodies thrown into the ocean, it was decided.

Two months later, at Scarborough, a fashionable English seaside resort, Count Henri de Tourville, handsome and dashing, had become a favorite with the ladies.

His money inevitably dwindled away and de Tourville, deciding that marriage with an heiress was his next best step, chose a Miss Henrietta Bingham.

Marriageable men are always scarce. Mrs. Bingham, mother of the young lady, impressed by de Tourville's title and manners, made no objections—but to his dismay de Tourville soon found that his mother-in-law, who held the purse strings, was willing to give the couple only enough to let them live comfortably, not extravagantly.

De Tourville was not resigned. One day he went to call on his mother-in-law. While he was alone with her the lady was accidentally fatally shot.

De Tourville explained to the police that Mrs. Bingham, afraid of burglars, had asked

him to bring her a revolver. While he was trying to show her how to use it it had accidentally gone off.

The doctor called in accepted this story. So did the coroner's jury. And Mrs. Bingham's daughter inherited over £30,000.

All was not well, however. Anonymous letters to Scotland Yard brought about the visit to Scarborough of Inspector Druscovitch. To him de Tourville repeated his story—and, it was to come out later, gave a handsome check.

Druscovitch, many years later, was to be convicted, along with three other Scotland Yard inspectors, of having accepted bribes over a number of years from swindlers whose loot totaled over a million pounds.

Druscovitch returned to Scotland Yard and told his superiors there was no case against de Tourville. There, the matter had been dropped.

Mrs. Bingham's daughter held just as tight a rein on the purse strings as had her mother, and before the year was up the poor woman had died an agonizing death.

The same doctor who had been called in after the shooting of Mrs. Bingham signed the daughter's certificate. She had died of natural causes, it read.

Again Henri de Tourville was to face disappointment. A son had been born and the mother, after bequeathing only a small legacy to her husband, left her estate to the infant.

When de Tourville failed to persuade the executors to make him trustee of the estate, he became desperate. First he took out heavy insurance on his house. Then one evening he took the infant from its nursery on the second floor to a room in the rear of the third.

That night a fire broke out and the house was destroyed. Had not a fireman risked his life to get the baby, the infant would have been burned to death.

The insurance companies refused to pay. A relative offered to adopt the baby. Henri, making the best of it, left Scarborough for London, where, in time, he met a wealthy widow, Mrs. Madeleine Miller, and persuaded her to marry him. This was the lady who on her honeymoon had taken that fatal walk along the precipice.

THE English authorities sent over to Botzen many documents as proof of the sudden deaths of Mrs. Bingham and her daughter, de Tourville's first wife, and even included the skull of the mother-in-law. This gruesome bit of evidence showed beyond all doubt that the fatal bullet which de Tourville claimed was an accidental shot had entered the woman's skull from behind.

Then more damning evidence began to come forth regarding the second Mrs. Tourville's death. Sergeant Fritz testified that the lady's

bonnet had been found atop the precipice. Now, if she had fallen so suddenly over its brink, how had her bonnet been loosened from its strings and hatpins before she fell? One would have expected to find it at the bottom of the ravine with the body.

Then, too, among the bushes at the top of the precipice were found two pieces of her jewelry, a watch and a brooch. The only explanation for their presence was that they had been wrenched loose in a struggle.

The body had been found on a flat ledge below in the ravine, not on the edge, but about fifty feet back from it. And from the edge to this spot a trail of broken bushes indicated that the body had been dragged there.

Most surprising was the discovery that except for a few bruises the only injuries were on the poor woman's head. There were several deep indentations which, said the autopsy report, had caused death.

The theory presented by the prosecution was that de Tourville had attacked his wife atop the precipice. Here she had lost her bonnet and jewelry. He had succeeded in pushing her over the precipice. Then finding she was still alive, he had clambered down the side and this time had hit her repeatedly over the head until she was dead.

A letter received by Miss Cross from Madame de Tourville strengthened this suspicion.

"I shall never commit suicide," she wrote from the Tyrol. "If you hear of my death, you may be sure I have been killed."

Alone in the mountains, de Tourville had had the opportunity to bring about his wife's death, argued the prosecution.

The trial lasted a month and a day, but it took the jury less than an hour to bring in a verdict of guilty, upon which the judge passed the death sentence.

But an appeal brought a commutation and Henri de Tourville got off with life imprisonment.

The deaths of four persons were credited to him; murder to him had been an easy and profitable profession. But success had made him underrate the intelligence of others and he earned the fate his kind so richly deserves.

WOMEN, too, have been known to play this mad, revolting game of murder. Sometimes, beautiful and outwardly charming women.

It was quite a shock to attractive Madame Marie Therese Joniaux when the young insurance agent representing the Gresham Company, an English house, bluntly told her his company would not pay the one hundred thousand francs due her as the beneficiary of her brother's policy.

"This policy was taken out less than two

months ago," the young man reminded her. "Only one premium has been paid. Under usual circumstances we would not hesitate, but we feel the conditions leading up to your brother's sudden death are extraordinary."

Vainly did Madame Joniaux use her charm. Her blue eyes filled with tears. Her hand trembled. She smiled; she cajoled. The young man could not be moved. Worse still, he hinted he thought the authorities should be told of the sudden passing of Alfred Ablay, in his thirties, in the best of health until that sudden illness that brought death in less than twenty-four hours.

The young man was as good as his threats. The same day he sent a memorandum to the public prosecutor of Antwerp.

The prosecutor did not act quickly. One could not bring such an accusation against the wife of a high official in the government service who was also the daughter of a general, himself once the aide-de-camp to King Leopold. One had to move cautiously against a member of the highest social circles in Belgium.

But the insurance agent's story undoubtedly did justify an investigation. The police of Belgium began delving into the past of the very attractive Madame Joniaux.

As Marie Therese Ablay she had been the outstanding belle of her generation. Young, unusually beautiful, dowered with a charming personality, she had been the object of admiration and attention from men and envy from women.

To uphold her position as the fascinating Mademoiselle Ablay she had become woefully extravagant. The most fashionable and expensive dressmakers were glad to dress her for the prestige it gave their houses. Caterers let her run up huge bills for entertainment for the honor of the association.

The pampered darling of her father, he met as many of these bills as he was able, but his private fortune was limited. And the bills mounted higher and higher despite his remonstrances.

Then came the day of reckoning. The general died and the creditors swooped down on the fashionable Mademoiselle Ablay.

The practical young woman met their threats with promises.

"Give me time to make a rich marriage and I will pay all I owe," she told them.

They waited. It was their only hope of getting their money, as she well knew. But instead of choosing one of her many wealthy suitors, within the year Marie Therese Ablay married a Monsieur Faber, a distinguished historian. Although he was first-class, intellectually and socially, his income was very small. However, Madame Faber managed to soothe her creditors with the money coming

to her on her brilliant marriage as a dowry.

But instead of beginning her new life by living within her means, Marie Therese Faber continued in her old spendthrift fashion.

Again the debts mounted. More scenes with creditors followed. Madame Faber began borrowing from friends of her father. It was during this period that she began gambling. At Monte Carlo her tactics were so crooked that the authorities of the Casino invited her to leave and told her she would no longer be admitted.

Then Monsieur Faber died, and with the money she inherited from him, Marie Therese paid off her most pressing debts. But even now she did not curb her extravagances, and again marriage seemed the only way out. This time she married one Henri Joniaux, several years her junior and very handsome, but unfortunately, with only his salary as a government official.

Her debts now totaled over two hundred thousand francs. In Antwerp, where she had moved with her husband, business houses, unaware of her obligations in Brussels, willingly gave her credit. But they soon became insistent with their demands for payment, threatening to bring suit.

Harassed Marie Therese had an idea. She wrote to her sister Julie in Brussels, suggesting that the latter let her take out insurance on her in behalf of her daughter, Louise Faber. It would be helpful when the time came to find a husband for her child, she wrote.

The sister, devoted to her, consented. Marie Therese took out two policies, one for thirty thousand francs, the other for forty, with two different companies. All was well.

Then she invited sister Julie to visit her in Antwerp. One evening, shortly after her arrival, Julie became violently ill, and died within twenty-four hours. The insurance companies, accepting the death certificate which gave a heart attack as the cause of death, paid over the seventy thousand francs without hesitation.

Some of this money quieted Marie Therese's creditors. But soon there were new debts.

MADAME JONIAUX had a brother much younger than herself. Alfred Ablay, like her, was given to running up debts and borrowing money, so much so that he had been forced to leave the Army. Now his sister urged him to make his home with her. And Alfred Ablay, with practically no income at all, accepted this haven gratefully.

There was a purpose back of this hospitality. Marie Therese asked him to let her insure him for one hundred thousand francs. She would pay the premiums. Anxious to continue to live with her, the brother consented.

Hesitating to approach either of the companies through which she had taken out insurance on her sister, Marie Therese Joniaux turned to the English Gresham Company.

Then, like his sister, Alfred Ablay passed away suddenly with no previous illness.

Marie Therese, taking for granted that the Gresham Company would hand over the hundred thousand francs with no more doubt or delay than had the other insurance companies, immediately sent them word of his death.

Not only did their agent refuse to do so; he even insinuated that there was something unnatural about Alfred Ablay's death.

The prosecutor, when he read this long record assembled by the investigators, agreed. Forthwith he had a warrant made out for the arrest of Marie Therese Ablay Joniaux.

An order was made for the exhumation of the bodies of sister, uncle and brother. A bevy of inspectors descended on Marie Therese's home to go through her belongings.

The autopsies were not wholly successful. Morphine was found in the body of Alfred Ablay. The others showed no sign of this drug or any other. Nevertheless, the authorities were convinced that Marie Therese had brought about these deaths by a drug which had since disappeared from the corpses. Morphine and other poisons were found in the possession of Marie Joniaux.

For nine months the investigation continued. Then in January, 1897, Madame Joniaux went on trial in Antwerp before the largest and most aristocratic crowd the court had ever seen. In that galaxy was the Prince of Ligne, and other nobles, as well as members of the British, French and German embassies, many of them former friends of Marie Therese Joniaux.

The trial lasted a week. A jury retired to consider the evidence at one A. M. of a Sunday morning. In two hours the bell rang, announcing to the hungry and sleepy crowd in the courtroom that the verdict had been arrived at. The verdict was guilty.

A quarter of an hour later Marie Therese heard herself sentenced to death, but the death sentence was automatically commuted to life imprisonment.

As she was led from the courtroom to the carriage for the journey to the prison, the crowds that had stayed up all night for the verdict hissed.

To murder those of her own blood for money was a crime with no extenuating circumstances. Cold and callous Marie Therese, who had so blithely and successfully brought about the deaths of sister and brother seemed surprised at this resentment.

"What do they mean by such bad manners?" she demanded of her guards. "Don't they know who I am?"

(Continued from page 75)

across the silent mill yard. Above him, melting into the shadows, something swung silently in the air, pressing a horrible limp embrace against the moldy bricks.

COCKY COCKERELL was fifty-nine and looked forty-five, and felt thirty. He was thin and ugly and a cut-throat, bullying slave driver, and every man Jack in the mills would cut your heart out for saying so. But Cocky would probably give you a job if you did, and like it of you, and work you to an early grave, if you produced results.

At seven-thirty Cocky looked at his watch. "Agatha," he bellowed, "get out of that confounded draft. It's going to rain."

"Thank you. Yes, I—I will." Agatha Prince, a lean, sallow spinster, who had inherited some hundred shares of the Mill Stock and went to Europe twice a year, moved submissively near to the director's table.

"Where's our lions for the slaughter?" Forrest Clark, the other stockholder, giggled. Forrest's aunt on the maternal side had married a Cockerell, and Forrest was a playboy with the wherewithal with which to play, thanks to the alliance.

Cocky glanced at his watch again. "Seven-thirty-two. By Godfrey, when I was a boy I was on time to every confounded—"

Cocky snorted. "Ah, Galvin," he remarked, "I figured you was maybe takin' a pleasure trip. And Bellamy, too."

Galvin swung into the room with a confident, smiling air. "Sorry I'm late. I'll call Bellamy right away, sir."

Stepping across the room, he dialed the phone. That is, he twirled the dial aimlessly a couple of times. At the same time, turning his back on the trio, he picked out the wedge of gum. Holding the receiver to his ears, he could hear the voice of the dead man, confident, sure in its inflection, droning on. "In your last note, we feel . . ."

Galvin said, "Bellamy, this is Galvin. Mr. Cockerell and the other directors are here. Can you come down now?" He was stalling for the cue—"Akins Associates."

"Can you, be damned," Cocky bellowed, so that Miss Agatha turned a shade yellower. "Tell him now!" Cocky, his face red and his chin thrust out, was comparing watches with Miss Agatha, who didn't say anything.

"I remain, very truly yours," said the voice to Galvin.

"Mr. Cockerell wants you right away, Bill," Galvin said smoothly into the phone. He was listening intently to the dead man's voice. Now it had started the letter to the Akins Associates, Inc. In a minute now—"Yes, surely I'll tell him," he said into the phone, and, turning to the General Manager, "Mr. Cocker-

ell, Bellamy wants your opinion on this letter he's written to Cobb and Cobb. Says you are interested in the proposition."

"Oh, he does, does he?" Cocky grunted wrathfully, and his lower jaw stuck another inch.

"Well, gimme." He waddled across the room, breaking a thick cigar in his long teeth.

Galvin kept the receiver. This was devilishly important. "Just a minute," he smiled, and pretended to have some difficulty in untangling the cord. Through the wire, he could hear the voice saying,—"the address is 2358 Wilson Avenue, Wash—"

"Here you are, sir," he said, giving up the mouthpiece, and, "Go ahead, Bellamy," he said into the phone.

Cocky took the phone in a grim silence, a silence that seemed to shout in the soul of Galvin. Covertly he watched the expression on the older man's face. If he should detect the rasp of the needle, wonder at the thin tinkle of the bell—And, as if the very heavens were on his side, came the deep rumble of distant thunder.

But if Cocky heard any of those things, he gave no sign of it. And the letter was apparently of interest to him. He bit his cigar and said, "Augh," then he listened again. Finally the letter came to an end, judging from Cocky's expression: the record was now whirling on a blank disk. Cocky spat on the floor and said flatly: "It should do the trick, Bellamy. Now, blast you, come down here—"

Galvin took the receiver with an apologetic gesture. "Don't forget the Appleton report, Bill," he said into the phone and hung up, smiling.

But Cocky didn't smile back. "It's been raining," he bellowed, and Miss Agatha jumped nervously. "Keep out of drafts, Aggie, and stop taking confounded pills, and you'll have to live to be within ten years of me. Damn that Bellamy. And late again. I'll wring his blasted . . ."

It *had* been raining hard, although it had now stopped. Galvin saw the trickle against the shadow of the closed window. How would the moisture affect the acid? Damn it, the body *had* to come down. But even if it didn't, the alibi was secure, and he was secure, forever. Cocky had talked to Bellamy, with him—Galvin, in the room, and he was going to stay with Cocky until the body was found. Nobody could suspect him. He pulled a letter from his pocket.

"While we're waiting, sir," he said, "I wish you'd read this. Just a crank note from a man I had to discharge, but he's made some threats around town, and—"

Cocky snorted, took the letter. Galvin expected an explosion, but none was forthcoming. "Right back in your laps," Cocky grunted,

"Augh. Well, is this justified?" His little sharp eyes swept across Galvin's face.

Galvin managed a smirk. "You're joking, of course," he said. Then Miss Agatha jumped up from her chair, and Galvin knew that the hateful period of temporizing had run its tense course.

The spinster was a shade yellower as she grasped Cocky's arm. She was pointing wordlessly out where the steel cable had suddenly begun to writhe and scream in the dark. It was coming! Galvin steeled his white face to the right degree of startled concern, forced himself to watch. He felt Cocky's fingers dig into the flesh of his arm.

"Look!"

Through the night, Bellamy came, the man who was dead, swooping down the greased cable. As he soared, the screech of a tormented thing whined from the overlaid wire. At first they could only see the white blotch of his face. Then the arched body, a hideous, devil-sculptured figurehead from the prow of some demon galleon.

Down, down. Then he was suddenly upon them, so that they shrank back against the side wall. They could see his garments belly out with the wind of his ghostly passage.

The window crashed into fragments, a rubber leg flecking the polished table, two rubber arms waving in horrid, unclean abandon above their heads in the room. Then—*thop*. The thing which had danced upon the air thudded and rebounded against the far wall.

"My God!" exclaimed Cocky loudly. Then—"My God," whispered Cocky, very soberly, and turned quickly away from the smear that had been a head.

Bellamy had taken his last ride, and it was Galvin's turn to act.

"The murderer!" he shouted. "He must be in Bellamy's office. I'll try to cut him off." And he bolted out the door, ran across the yard.

Panting, spent, Galvin put Bellamy's receiver back on the hook, pulled the plugged wedge of paper from the lever on the dictating machine, hung the mouthpiece on the hook.

It was done. No need for haste, nothing to do but act the part. For good, it was done. No one could ever tell on him now. The formula was his, and the bonus for discovering it, and the royalties. The world could go to hell. It had been a gamble, but it had worked, and it had been worth the risk.

The others were still downstairs. Galvin walked to the door, which was open. He heard Cocky's bellow, and a surprised, startled yelp from a voice he recognized as Lindstrom's, and then all the voices seemed to swirl into a cacophony of shouts, and the sound of many footsteps came up the stairs.

Galvin met them at the door.

"He got away," he said disappointedly, as Cocky came in the door. "I—oh, I see you caught him." He stared at the shambling, dazed figure of Eric Lindstrom, who shuffled slowly into the room. Behind him Cocky appeared, prodding a very serviceable automatic into his ribs.

"Cover this guy!" Cocky handed the gun to Clark, walked over to the crimson basket.

"Here's where it happened," Galvin said excitedly. "He killed Bill from behind at the desk, dragged him over to the window, tied him to a letter carrier, and—" he brushed his eyes in the manner of a man contemplating a picture which has become too terrible. "Like his note said—right down in our laps."

AS GALVIN had pointed out the details of the murder scene, Cocky had listened intently. The basket, desk; his slitted eyes studied them.

Then he went over to the window and looked down to the carrier. After a minute he walked back to the desk. Lindstrom's glassy eyes, uncomprehending, too, Galvin watched—but alert, prepared for any eventuality.

The minutes stretched into an eternity of waiting.

Cocky whirled around. "Agatha, you'll catch your death, running out in the rain."

Damned pompous fool! Galvin mouthed a malediction on the lot. And Miss Agatha piped with surprising spirit: "No, it isn't, Hiram, it's stopped, stopped before—" she gulped.

"Bless me!" Cocky looked admiringly at the yellowed maiden, and grew almost mild in his thoughtful abstraction. "Bless me, if you're not right." He turned to Galvin.

"Galvin," he said. "I heard Bellamy's voice over the phone. It was his voice. I'd know it in a million. But it might have been second hand. The killer might have used a record of his voice. I didn't hear him speak, except—I didn't hear him in ordinary conversation, talk to him. You were doing all the direct talking. Were you talking to Bellamy, Galvin? Could you swear it was him? This is damned important, you know. If you are sure it was Bellamy's voice, if he answered your questions, if you can swear it was Bellamy, it'll solve something that's bothered me."

Galvin felt like laughing. The puttering dumb old ass! "Sure, it was Bellamy," he said. "I'm ready to swear it in any court there is, a hundred times."

"That settles it," said Cocky energetically. "Galvin, if I could prove you were lying on this point—this tricky little point—I'd know you murdered Bellamy yourself. You've been jealous of him ever since I got him down here. And you know what I think?"—he jabbed his cigar shrewdly at the chemist, "you know, Galvin, I think you *are* lying."

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New Detective Magazine

Galvin shrugged his shoulders easily, but a thousand devils were dancing in his brain. The old bat had some cockeyed hunch, was working a screwy brainstorm, trying a wild bluff.

"I'll make you eat the words," he said. "I won't take that kind of talk. This is going to cost you money, Cockerell." And all the time the devils of doubt and panic hammered against the hardness that was his soul.

"Fair enough," said Cocky. "Aggie, damn you, get away from that open window, you with your asthma. I say you're lying, Galvin, when you try to tell me that Bellamy read me that letter."

With the cocksure arrogance that was his being, he went to the dictating machine, listened to the record. Galvin, knotting his tight gnarled muscles against the instinctive blind frenzy of panic, watched him. Finally Cocky grunted, stopped the record.

"Thought so," he chortled. "I'm never wrong. Aggie knows it and she's rich. You didn't know it and they're going to hang you. Listen to this." He started the record, handed the tube to Galvin.

Galvin laughed as he took it. "Fifty thousand," he said, "you're going to pay me after we settle this libel suit. Fifty thousand, and I'm taking my formula with me."

He listened to the record, heard the voice from the dead droning what he had expected to hear.

"This is to Cobb and Cobb," the voice squawked tinnily, "the address is 2358 Wilson Avenue, Wash—" Galvin let his mind wander. The old buzzard had found the record, was throwing a bluff because of it, and all the time he couldn't prove a damn thing. Bellamy had read the record over the phone to him, he'd say to Cocky.

With a bored smile he continued to listen to the disembodied voice which rang from the glass tube . . . "As you know," said the dead man, "the situation . . . is critical. Now, darling—"

Galvin gulped and pressed the glass closer to his ear.

"Darling," said the dead man, "don't put this in the letter. I won't be in tomorrow morning. But I know you'll get this message when you transcribe this mess. Listen, dear—Cocky'll want you to do some work for him tomorrow afternoon. The pig-headed old bluff is on the warpath. Give him any excuse—tell him you've got to go to the dentist or something. I've got a heavy date at Ziro's with a certain swell little stenographer, and no ornery old coot is going to break it up. Okay? See you at two, then, in the usual place. Here goes

(Continued on page 88)

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New Detective Magazine

(Continued from page 86)

for the rest of this letter. Trusting that we may hear from you in the immediate future. . . ."

"I don't understand," Galvin muttered thickly.

"I didn't either," said Cocky. "But I'm beginning to. Thought it was a business letter, didn't you, that letter you picked out for Bellamy to read—as if he'd spout to me—hem—slush like that." He cleared his throat mightily. "Even a pig-headed old bluff could see something queer in that."

Galvin's yell had pure hysteria in it. "What of it?" he shouted. "Don't ask me why he read it to you. Maybe he forgot, let you hear the record when you came to the line. By God, I was downstairs with you when he talked to me. I was there when his body came down. Explain that away!"

Cocky laughed mirthlessly.

"Sure," he said, "I will, thanks to Agatha. While you were phoning downstairs, Galvin, it started to rain. It hadn't rained before. And it stopped in a minute. Just a quick shower. Before the body slid down that wire, it had stopped raining. As a matter of fact, it had stopped before you had finished talking to the man you swear was Bellamy. Yet," Cocky's eyes were gimlet sharp—"the first thing I noticed when the body crashed into the office was that it was sopping wet."

"Remember," said Cocky, "it was raining when you said you were talking to Bellamy. If you look out the window there, under the steel cable, you'll see—well, stick your head out."

Galvin forced his will to obey the rasping command. Uncertainly, pulse throbbing like hammers in his temples, he leaned out the window—and sprang back, white-lipped. That one quick glance had shown him a picture no alibi could explain, no plan could foresee. It was a silhouette of a man's body, outlined in dry brick, against the glistening rain-drenched wall, where his victim had hung. It was all there, the sagging arms, the dangling feet of a dead man. The shape of the hanging thing, the thing which was going to hang him.

For no reason at all, Lindstrom laughed very loudly, poked Cocky on the shoulder.

"He wants to tell you," said Cocky, "that that acid you used on the rope was another formula you stole from him. He says—"

"Button your lips—you—fat-headed old coot," Galvin mocked wryly, "and give me a cigar. Don't I know when I get—something—right back in my lap?"

Galvin was a hard man, hard enough to know when he had hit against the steel of his destiny.

The Witness Chair

(Continued from page 8)

heavy bags to the waters' edge, nor was there any report of a car being stolen over this period.

A search of used car depots, however, had better success. After making a survey of such places, detectives found that the establishment run by one Jerry Rodgers at the corner of Eleventh Avenue and Broadway had rented a machine at 6:15 on Saturday evening, for only three quarters of an hour.

The description of the man who had taken the car might have fitted a half-dozen of Mrs. Straw's friends, including Tom Jones.

"He was tall, slim and not bad-looking," said Rodgers. "That's all I can tell you."

EVERY effort was being made to locate Tom Jones. The chances were he had left town, decided the chief of police. Detectives F. E. Lightner and Edwin Dieckman covered the railroad stations and the bus depots, but no one at either place could recall a lanky man in his forties buying a ticket or boarding a train or bus.

The frame house on Eighteenth Street had been carefully gone over for fingerprints. But the killer had been very careful to go over the murder weapons with a cloth.

One object, however, had caught the eye of the detectives. This was a pad of writing paper. On the top sheet was the imprint of writing. Someone had written a note on its top sheet and torn it off—and on the next sheet were the indentations of this writing.

After a conference with his colleagues, Chief of Police Peterson decided not to give the information obtained from it to the reporters. Better to let the writer think this note had provided no help to the police.

But Peterson sent a telegram to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, asking if they had any data on one Tully McQuate. A fingerprint taken from the pad would follow by mail, he added.

The answer was encouraging. According to federal files Tully McQuate, known also as William S. Grant, Robert Clark, and Tom Jones, had served two terms for liquor law violations in an Ohio prison. He had also left a trail of prison sentences for minor offenses in other states.

Peterson now got in touch with the Ohio authorities, who shortly sent him facts from their dossier on Tully McQuate. Along with a photograph of the man they sent a facsimile reproduction of his signature. He had served two sentences there, in 1925 and '27, both under the name of McQuate. And they also forwarded a detailed description of him.

He had chestnut hair, slightly greying; grey eyes. His height was about five feet, eight

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New Detective Magazine

inches, he weighed about 154 pounds. On his right wrist he had a scar; on his chin was a small birthmark. At the time of his arrests in Ohio he always wore a watch charm, a white horse carved from ivory or bone.

The photograph shown to those who had known Tom Jones brought instant recognition. Tully McQuate and Tom Jones were the same person.

And it took handwriting experts little time to identify the indentations on the note on the pad as from the same hand as the signature.

All that Peterson could now do was to contact other cities asking them to get in touch with him if Jones-McQuate turned up there. The teletype broadcast a description of the man throughout California and circulars, with his photograph, soon followed. A "Wanted For Murder" bulletin was posted in every California police station, as well as in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Ohio, his former homes.

Several months passed. A half-dozen men were picked up and questioned. But though they may have resembled the wanted Jones-McQuate, their fingerprints cleared them.

It was the end of May when Chief of Detectives Peterson was told Los Angeles wanted him on the phone.

The day before the police had made a roundup of tramps. Among their prisoners was a man whose description tallied with that of Jones-McQuate. He had the scar on the chin, the cut on the wrist, and was wearing a watch charm, a horse carved from some white substance.

Challenged, this man had suddenly and sullenly collapsed.

"You've got me," he admitted. "I'm the fellow you want."

Detectives Lightner and Dieckman left immediately for Los Angeles to escort Jones-McQuate back to San Diego.

And without any hesitation, he told of the murder of Mrs. Straw.

Jones-McQuate had no regrets for his crime. "It was as easy as shaving," he told the police of his dismembering the body.

Only one mistake he admitted—the note he had written to a friend just before leaving.

For the message deciphered from the impression on the pad had read: "Write me general delivery L.A. My name will be Tully McQuate."

Ever since a San Diego detective had been stationed at the general delivery window of the Los Angeles post office. But though McQuate had never called, the note had supplied his handwriting and information that he had used this second alias.

(Continued on page 92)

Bury Me Not

(Continued from page 28)

time for the test. You see, Mrs. Colson and her cousin, George Marvin, were over to see me just the day before that Wednesday, in March. For flower seeds she especially wanted. She was laughing all over as she told me about the surprise garden she'd planned.

"So when Spence came to report his wife's disappearance, I knew blamed well it was murder. But the note he had," Helm went on, "was real. One probably she'd left for him another day, one day when she'd gone to town with Georgie. Why, I couldn't even hold him on suspicion, with that note—and no bodies."

"Well, sir," Helm said, "the likeliest spot for burial was where the graves wouldn't show, in that field that he'd just plowed and sowed with oats. But a man would be plumb crazy, both Colson and I figured, to dig six feet down in sixty acres, looking for two bodies."

Someone said that Helm had guessed, perhaps, she'd had the seeds in her clothes? That the seeds were accidentally spilled and scattered by the wind when Colson brought Marda's body to the oats field for burial—?

Helm's blue eyes were twinkling. "That's one explanation. But I *knew*. The garden was

(Continued on page 93)

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SAYMAN LINIMENT

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New Detective Magazine

(Continued from page 90)

When Tully McQuate—his right name—went on trial in June, with Judge L. N. Turrentine presiding, there was only one issue to be considered—if McQuate had been led to murder by a quart of beer he had imbibed, as argued his counsel, J. A. Donnelly, he was entitled to a life sentence.

But District Attorney Thomas Whelan was prepared for this defense. He placed on the witness stand a taxi driver who testified that two days before the murder McQuate had engaged him to drive along the bay where he later disposed of the two sacks, and had questioned him as to whether the tides would carry objects out to sea!

The jury listened to the evidence for two days. And it took that body only a few more minutes to decide that the murder had been, not the result of an impulse promoted by alcohol as the defense claimed, but one of plain, matter-of-fact premeditation.

And Tully McQuate, twirling that charm of white bone still dangling from his watch-chain, heard the jury bring in a verdict of guilty of murder in the first degree and a little later listened to a sentence of death.

* * * * *

ALTHOUGH one would expect young, inexperienced young girls to be the most likely prey of baleful men, it is, on the contrary, older women who prove to be their easiest and most numerous victims.

A truck driver rumbling along a New Jersey road before dawn on the morning of the 23rd of February, 1929, noticed to his right a pyramid of smoke arising. All the more puzzling was this strange sight because only a half hour earlier a light fall of snow had started.

The driver jumped from his cab and started toward the smoking pile.

What he saw made him feel faint and nauseated. For in that smouldering mass, lay the body of a woman, her features already obliterated by the flames.

It was about 5:30 when word of the gruesome find was relayed to Chief of Police James Hennessey of Cranford, New Jersey.

After the flames were out and the snow brushed off, Hennessey got his first good look at the corpse. It was that of a robust, middle-aged woman. What was left of her clothing showed they were well cut and made but not expensive.

There was little to be learned at the scene. The snow had completely covered all footprints. An ambulance summoned brought the body to Cranford and long before noon Dr.

(Continued on page 94)

Bury Me Not

(Continued from page 91)

going to be a surprise. She wasn't going to let Spence see the seeds. She was going to carry them on her person always, until she planted them. Without a wrapper, in her pocket, so if they fell out, Spence wouldn't know their name, wouldn't know they were special. And you know what women's pockets are.

"I planted the same seeds in my own garden. When they bloomed, I came to look at Spence's field and found her."

He stopped.

They looked at him, the deputies, the skeptics. They shook their heads and grinned. On second thought, they said, even though Marda Colson had planned a garden, it certainly didn't follow she wouldn't have skipped with her cousin. . . .

"No, sir," Helm said slowly, "she just wouldn't have left Colson. She told me *why* she wanted the garden. She was going to bear Colson a child. That was her secret, the reason she'd been singing for two months. And wasn't it just like her, her surprise, the kind of flowers that she wanted to plant and grow for him?"

Helm, walking toward the house now, looked over at the garden. Added with a wry smile, "Poppy."



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New Detective Magazine

(Continued from page 92)

George Horre had begun the post mortem.

The remains of the clothing were immediately turned over to Police Chief Hennessey. There wasn't much to learn from them. Good material but worn, evidently chosen by a woman of small means. The undergarments were not of silk. The label had been cut from the lining of the coat.

But one thing the murderer had overlooked—the shoes. One shoe had been partially destroyed by the flames, but the other, twisted under the body, had escaped. And on the lining of this shoe was the trademark of a well-known manufacturer. Also it had recently been resoled. And the shoemaker had taken the trouble to reinforce the juncture between heel and arch by inserting a metal clamp.

Some day Chief Hennessey hoped he would be able to locate that patient and conscientious shoemaker.

A telephone call from Dr. Horre brought word that the autopsy report was ready. But before going to the morgue Chief Hennessey dictated a letter to the shoe manufacturers asking for a list of their retail outlets in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The autopsy report cleared up one point. The woman had been dead before the fire started. She had been shot through the head. The bullet had entered the crown of her head, gone downward through the neck and on until it was checked by the sixth rib on the left side.

The slug, turned over to Hennessey, was of .32 caliber.

New York and New Jersey newspapers had front-paged the story of the flaming corpse. At Chief Hennessey's request they had invited any one who thought he could identify the corpse to come to Cranford.

Before the corpse was put on view, an expert built up the face over the framework of bone left intact. A few hairs found on the clothing led to a dark wig, with a scattering of grey hair to top it. The meagre scraps of garments were pieced together. And the body of the unknown woman was placed on view in the local mortuary.

Although a few hundred persons came to Cranford during the following week, and several thought they recognized the corpse, it was still unidentified ten days after the crime.

But Chief Hennessey was only getting his first wind.

An answer from the Shelby Shoe Company had not been very encouraging. Hundreds of stores in the three states carried its merchandise. Alas, there was no way of telling from which one of them that particular pair of shoes had come. It was of a make so popular

The Witness Chair

that it had been one of their best-selling styles for several years.

But the company did send along a list of the stores that carried its shoes.

The next move was to circularize these shoe dealers. And shortly a circular describing the shoes, headed by a photograph of them, was sent to every name on that long list.

At last came a letter that for the first time gave Chief Hennessey a glimmer of hope.

"I think I know to whom I sold that pair of shoes," wrote a retail dealer in Greenville, Pennsylvania.

He recognized the clamp, for he had sent the shoes to a shoemaker for resoling. Their owner was Mildred Mowry, a widow of ten years, who had eked out a small income left her by doing practical nursing.

The first train to western Pennsylvania had Chief Hennessey aboard. And after paying his respects at the local police station, he was taken to the rooming house of Mrs. H. G. Dodds, where this Mrs. Mowry had lived.

Briefly the landlady told of the widow's romance with a mail-order bridegroom.

Tired of the work she had taken up so late in life, Mrs. Mowry had contacted a matrimonial agency in Pittsburgh and had them list her as a widow with \$4000 looking for a respectable man of her own age, object matrimony.

Letters had poured in. Mrs. Mowry had picked one from Washington, D. C.—a physician, who said he owned a sanatorium.

For three months the correspondence flourished. Then she left quietly for Washington, met the man and returned to Greenville, proud and happy.

A little later had come a second trip, this time to Philadelphia. A week later Mrs. Mowry was back, sporting a wedding ring, and admitted coyly that she and her doctor had been married at Elkton, Maryland.

"Somehow I think this doctor got a lot of money from Mrs. Mowry," said Mrs. Dobbs. "For though she hadn't worked for almost a year, now she phoned to physicians here in Greenville and told them she'd like a few cases."

The doctor's name was Richard M. Campbell, added Mrs. Dobbs.

Inquiry at the local bank where Mrs. Mowry had her account brought further enlightenment—shortly before leaving on her first trip, she had drawn out her entire savings.

HENNESSEY now decided to go to Baltimore. But before he left, he was given an opportunity to go over the rooms formerly occupied by Mrs. Mowry. And in a bureau drawer he had the good luck to find

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New Detective Magazine

a bundle of letters, postmarked Washington, Baltimore and New York, tied with pink ribbon.

The first ones were signed austere, "Yours sincerely, Richard M. Campbell." Gradually the letters had become more affectionate. It was easy enough to trace the development of the romance from them and, what was more important, just how Campbell had worked his little game.

On that first trip the wily suitor had evidently not mentioned money, only stating he was tied up with bills for the new annex to his sanatorium.

On the second trip, Mrs. Mowry had been persuaded to open a joint account with him at the New Jersey National Bank at Brunswick.

Then had come the trip to Philadelphia, the marriage at Elkton and the now happy bride had turned over her remaining cash, \$2000, to her new husband.

This time an urgent call from the Mayo Clinic had taken him off while Mrs. Mowry returned to Greenville again.

Came a long silence, then, after a month another letter, this time giving an address in New York City. It was that of an office building on West 42nd Street. In it the doctor wrote he had been ill, was broke and asked her to send him whatever jewelry she had.

Instead of sending her jewelry, the lady had packed her bag and left for New York and this new address. . . .

The trail now led to Elkton, Maryland, to the marriage bureau and a look at the marriage records.

A license had been issued to Mildred Mowry and one Henry Colin Campbell, who gave his address as Yosemite Street, Baltimore.

Back to Baltimore hurried Hennessey. He was not exactly surprised to find the Yosemite Street address was that of a vacant lot. He decided to look up the city records and see if the owner of the lot knew a physician or any man with the name of Campbell.

To his great delight, the name of the owner of the lot was Henry Colin Campbell, his home, Westfield, New Jersey!

And Westfield was next door to Cranford, where the woman had met her death.

Back at Cranford, Hennessey did some telephoning. There was a Henry Colin Campbell living in Westfield. But the local police had only the best to say of him. He was deep in his fifties, married to a woman much younger than himself and they led a happy life there with their four younger children for several years.

This report surprised Hennessey. Was someone using this Campbell's name and trading on his reputation?

The Witness Chair

Now Hennessey hurried to Westfield. A telephone call found Campbell at home and on some casual excuse, he was induced to come to police headquarters.

Hennessey eyed the elderly man who faced him. No gay Lothario, this, he thought. But there was something furtive about the man's eyes. With little ado, Hennessey laid the bundle of love letters on the desk between them. Campbell's face blanched.

"You can save a lot of trouble by talking, Campbell," began Hennessey. "We won't have any trouble proving these letters were written by you. And that you married Mrs. Mowry at Elkton, that you took her for a ride the night of the 22nd and left her dead in the field opposite the Cranford Golf Club."

For the first time Campbell learned that the body had been identified. And also that he was tied up with the murder.

The news broke him. "I couldn't get rid of her any other way," he began his story.

He had got in all four thousand from Mrs. Mowry and then hoped to drop her. But she had suddenly arrived at the 42nd Street office when he, unfortunately, had walked in expecting to find the answer to his last letter.

No story he could devise could smother her suspicions now. She had clung to him, refusing to be shaken off. So he had taken her to dinner in New Jersey and after that he had driven aimlessly around, trying to make up his mind what to do with her.

It was about four in the morning when he decided the only way out was to kill her.

Mrs. Mowry was dozing, said Campbell, as they drove on the road toward Cranford. He stopped the car, took out the gun he always carried with him and deliberately shot her.

Then, certain she was dead, he had carried the body into the field, siphoned some gas from the tank of the car, applied a match, and, waiting only to see the blaze get a good start, had driven hurriedly off.

Cranford was stunned and shocked when the news that Henry Campbell, one of its most respected citizens, not only was accused but had already confessed to the most brutal murder in its history.

Henry Colin Campbell did not attempt to deny the murder of Mrs. Mowry. The best his attorney could do was to plead lack of premeditation.

But the jury held otherwise and Campbell, convicted, was given the death sentence.

When the day of his execution arrived, Campbell collapsed. He refused to open his eyes, or to walk to the chair. He had to be carried to it, and strapped in. But there was little sympathy, if any, for Campbell the morning of April 17, 1930, as he took his last breath.



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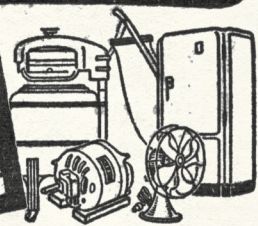
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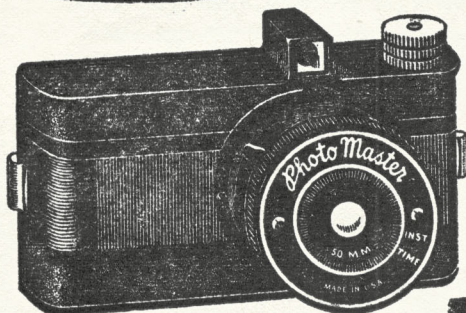
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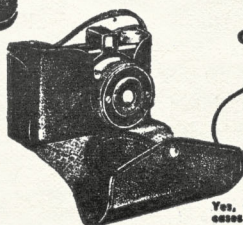


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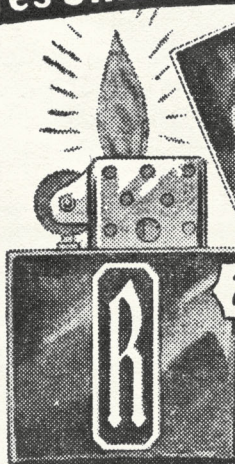
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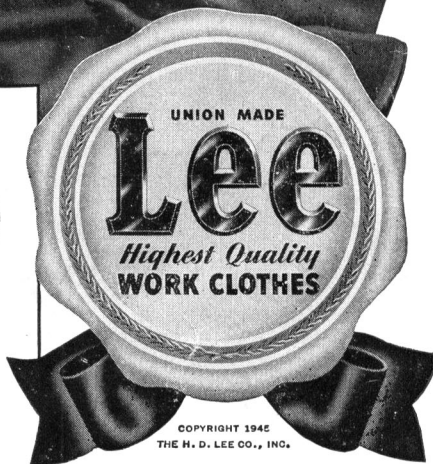
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