

THE

saint

DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

DEC.

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Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

Raffles and the Meanest Thief

by BARRY PEROWNE

Omar of Ispahan

by SAX ROHMER

Very, Very Dark Mink

by ELIZABETH S. HOLDING

Blood on the Medicine Arrows

by HAYDEN HOWARD

Grandma Cutcheon, Detective

by CLARENCE B. KELLAND

THE BUNCO ARTISTS

A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

W. W. PUBLICATION

IT SEEMS TO BE AN accepted principle today that the beloved heroes of fiction should not be allowed to come to an end of their adventures merely because their creators are no longer around to invent them. The exuberant mills of radio and television have conditioned most people to a flood of exploits of such personages as Sherlock Holmes and Tarzan which Arthur Conan Doyle or Edgar Rice Burroughs never dreamed of — and which, I sometimes think, may well keep such authors revolving like immortal turbines in their tombs.



But to the best of my knowledge, the man who launched this modern practice was my great good friend the distinguished English editor Monty Haydon, who about a quarter-century ago was seized with the inspiration that he would like to revive Raffles, the dean of delightful thieves, and beguiled from the estate of the late E. W. Hornung permission to do it. He then offered me the job, which I turned down because I was too busy building up my own Saint; but a talented young writer named Barry Perowne took it on, and has since parlayed the assignment into more volumes (I think) than even Mr. Hornung wrote about his "amateur cracksman." RAFFLES AND THE ANNIVERSARY THIEF is a sample of this new series, and we are submitting it interestedly for your judgment.

Talking of thieves, no one should be qualified to speak of them with more authority than George Dillon, who was robbed of his few pawnable possessions while in college during the Depression, and after a spell of study on an empty stomach burglarized a restaurant. "My haul was all I could eat at the moment, about \$20, and a pistol. I was in business, and this new life seemed not only profitable but exciting. . . . Now, after years and years in such institutions of lower learning as Indiana Reformatory, Canyon City, and Alcatraz, I've lost my taste for crime, criminals—and detectives."

Well, editorially speaking, we haven't, and we feel rather excited about introducing Mr. Dillon's first venture in crime-fiction, LOVE MAKES MEN FREE—straight from another state institution in Texas, where he is currently doing a little post-graduate work.

Continuing this month's off-beat trend, I think Hayden Howard's BLOOD ON THE MEDICINE ARROWS is one of the most unusual themes we've ever covered. Without all this competition, we'd have more to say about new stories by Elizabeth Sanxay Holding and William Campbell Gault, and might even think of new adjectives for Clarence Budington Kelland. Another brand-new opus, of course, is THE BUNCO ARTISTS, by a guy who favors rationing authors to two names, such as

Leslie Charteris

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THE **saint**
DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

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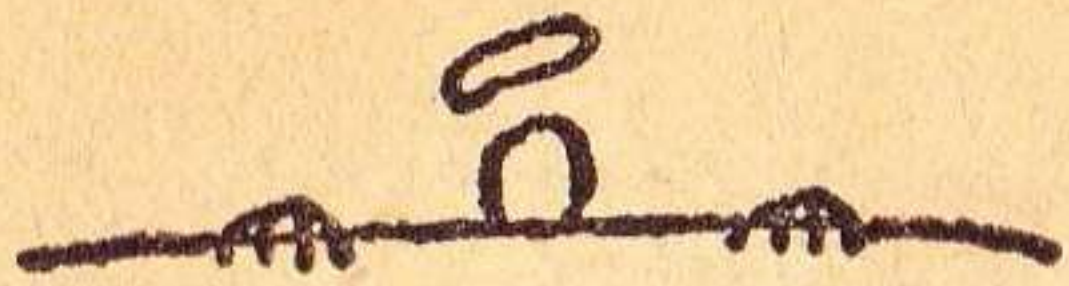
H. L. Herbert
Publisher

Hans Stefan
Santesson
Editorial Director

Leslie Charteris
Supervising Editor

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the bunco artists

by . . . Leslie Charteris

Mr. Coplestone Eade
could scent a sucker
a mile up-wind. . . .

AT THIS POINT it may be worth reviewing just once more a field of felony in which Simon Templar won quite a few interesting tourneys in his early years, and in which he exploited most effectively the gift of assuming a pose of fabulous and even fatuous innocence (when a situation called for such a disguise) which was once partly responsible for getting him nicknamed "The Saint."

I make my excuses to anyone to whom these routines are already old stuff; but the Saint never lost a connoisseur's and collector's appreciation of them, and the recapitulation I have in mind may not be entirely dull.

In the simplest basic version of the "confidence" game, the sucker or mark sees a stranger drop a wallet, and naturally picks it up and restores it to its owner. The owner thanks him, and keeps on talking to reveal that he is burdened with the job of distributing a huge charitable fund, or some similar sinecure

The Saint never lost a connoisseur's and collector's appreciation of those routines whose charm, to the initiate, lie in the perfection with which they are acted out. There are many men who will tell you that there is a certain gross vulgarity to most murders, but that the "confidence" game, in its subtler phases—and it was the subtler phases that naturally interested the Saint—demands an artistry and an understanding of people seldom given the average man. Simon Templar had some of those gifts, too. . . .

involving the handling of large sums of money: his problem is to find an absolutely trustworthy assistant, and by a happy coincidence the boob who returned the wallet has just given unsolicited proof of unusual honesty. However, the operator has associates who will demand more substantial evidence that the dupe is a man of means who can be trusted with the virtually blank checks they will be handing him; so it is suggested that he bring to a meeting the largest amount of cash he can raise, to exhibit to them to win their confidence—from which theme the racket derives its name. The fool does so, his money is examined and returned to him, his candidacy is unanimously approved with handshakes, and the session rapidly adjourns on promises that formal agreements will be signed with him in a few days. It is not until after the crooks had departed that the victim discovers that the wad of currency which he got back contains only one bill of large denomination, on the outside, while the bulk of it has been dextrously transformed into single dollars or even rectangles of blank paper of the same size.

In one of the commonest variations of this plot, the con men pretend to be making fast fortunes from inside information on horse racing or the stock market. They allow the dimwit to

join in their gambles, and before long he has won, on paper, a small fortune. But when settling time comes, another member of the gang, masquerading as a bookie or a broker, refuses to pay off until the mark shows proof that he could have met his losses if the results had gone the opposite way. Again the fathead digs up all the cash he can raise, with the identical consequence.

Although these tricks have been exposed innumerable times in articles and stories, it is a staggering fact that practitioners of such hoary devices, or closely related mutations of them, are extracting pay dirt with them to this very day.

Often erroneously referred to as forms of the confidence racket, but actually only its kissing cousins, are what the professionals call bunco jobs. In these, the ultimate larceny is hardly less barefaced, but the technical difference is that the "confidence" gimmick is not employed. Nevertheless, they also have one distinguishing trait in common, which is the psychology behind the manipulation of the bait which hooks and lands the poor fish who provides the the sharper with his dinner.

Simon pointed this out to Mrs. Sophie Yarmouth with privileged severity.

"If only respectable people like you weren't so fundamentally dishonest," he said, "most of

these swindlers would be starved into trying to earn an honest living themselves. But when you're offered an outrageous bargain, you're too greedy to stop and think that anything that looks so much like what you'd lightly call a steal is most probably exactly that. You're so excited by the idea of making a fast buck that you don't care if the deal involves you in something that's frankly a little shady. That only makes you feel extra clever; and you're so fascinated by your own newly discovered business genius that you don't even have time for the rudimentary precautions that a schoolgirl would take before lending a pal the price of an ice cream cone."

"That isn't true," Mrs. Yarmouth sniffed. "I was only thinking of Howard, and how much it might do for him. And if he hadn't gone off to play some ridiculous cowboy part on location in Wyoming, and left me alone in Palm Springs, I wouldn't have been exposed to these crooks and made to suffer for only trying to help his career."

Howard Mayne heroically stifled the temptation to take issue with this gem of feminine logic. He could not really help looking heroic about it, for he was blessed with all the facial qualifications of the rugged type of movie star, and his only trouble was that no Hollywood pro-

ducer had yet been persuaded to give him a leading rôle.

"Don't argue with the man, Aunt Sophie," he said. "Tell him the whole story, and he may be able to tell you what you can do about it."

Mr. Coppystone Eade (to give him only one of a variety of fine-sounding names which he used) had made Mrs. Yarmouth's acquaintance without difficulty beside a Palm Springs hotel swimming pool, and cemented it with a few chats in the lobby, a casual cocktail, an after-dinner coffee and Benedictine in a restaurant where they had found each other eating alone, and one no less apparently spontaneous lunch together beside the same pool where they had met. It was more than enough for Mr. Eade to learn that she had a nephew who was a hopeful but not yet very successful actor, and for him to establish that he had been an executive at a couple of major studios and was now embarking on the independent production of films for television.

Mr. Eade was then in his fifties, with a fairly well-preserved figure, gray hair which he wore just enough beyond ordinary length to seem vaguely artistic without being arty, and the kind of strongly lined face that suggests a man of force and experience, either in business or boudoir, or perhaps both. But there

was no hint of romance in his approach, for that was not one of Mr. Eade's habitual methods, and besides he had an extremely jealous wife who had too much on him to take chances with.

Mrs. Yarmouth brightly mentioned that he could do worse than consider her nephew for an important part in his projected series, and Mr. Eade said courteously but very noncommittally that he would be happy to interview him. He had already ascertained that it would be at least two weeks before Howard Mayne would be through with the small part for which he had suddenly been sent off to Wyoming, while Mrs. Yarmouth, who was only a visitor from Vermont, had still never seen the inside of a movie studio, and would be returned to Hollywood within a week; so that when Mr. Eade, before he left the next Monday, insisted that she must call him directly she got in town and have lunch at the studio and let him show her how movies were made, it was with a comfortable certainty that she would take him up on it, and that he had a few invaluable days ahead in which to arrange the scenery and props which would be essential to the dénouement of the tabloid drama that he had just nursed through a neat and fertile first act.

The studio which Mr. Eade used for a setting was entirely

legitimate, being merely an incorporated agglomeration of real estate and architecture which was in business solely to rent space and facilities to all comers, without interest in their projects or product, so long as they had the requisite credit rating or better still the cash. Mr. Copplestone Eade's credit might have evoked no raves from Dun & Bradstreet, but he always had a working reserve of cash, since bunco is one of the most capitalistic kinds of crime; and his requirements were relatively modest, consisting at this point mainly of office space in an enclave where movies were in fact busily and evidently being made.

With this entrée he was able to guide Mrs. Yarmouth authoritatively around the lot, dispensing interesting lore about the processes which brought a cinematographic masterpiece from the script to the screen—much of which, thanks to some far-off days when he had worked as an extra, was reasonably authentic. He was able to take her on a stage where scenes were being shot, introduce her to a director with whom he had previously scraped an acquaintance with talk of a possible job, present her to a famous star who did not know him from Adam but gave a friendly performance from force of habit, and show her an elaborate set under construction on another stage which he said

was being built for his own forthcoming series, all with such casual aplomb that by the end of the tour it would not even have entered her head to doubt that he was exactly what he had said he was.

But when they made what he called a courtesy stop at his office, to see if there had been any vital messages while he was entertaining her, before they went on to lunch, there was an abrupt change in this placid tempo. His secretary met him with a long face.

"I'm afraid this is going to be a nasty shock for you, Mr. Eade," she said. "I tried to call Mr. Traustein about the meeting this afternoon, and it seems he had a heart attack in the shower this morning, and he died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital."

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Eade, and collapsed into a chair as if his legs had been cut from under him.

Mrs. Yarmouth felt instinctively obliged to say she was sorry.

"No, it isn't that," said Mr. Eade, removing his hands from a face which he hoped looked convincingly haggard. "He was a fine man, I understand, but I hardly knew him at all in a personal way. Our relationship was purely business. Mr. Traustein was a very rich man who privately financed movie ventures,

which people like myself, on the creative side, seldom have enough capital to do. He had promised to put up the money for the series that I was expecting to start, and the papers were to be signed this afternoon."

"And you can't go ahead without him?" Mrs. Yarmouth prompted—quite superfluously.

"Frankly, no," said Mr. Eade heavily. "Not that I couldn't get any amount of other financing, of course. That isn't any problem, with a property and a distribution deal like mine. But to get the right terms, you have to have time to negotiate. You've no idea how ruthless the vultures in this town can be. When they know you've got to have money in a hurry, and haven't got time to haggle, they make you pay through the nose. And it's their business to know everything that's going on in the Industry—you can't bluff them. The minute I start talking to them, they'll know they can put me through the wringer."

"What shall I tell the studio, Mr. Eade?" asked the secretary, who had been standing patiently by.

She was a rather homely woman of primly efficient aspect, in the neighborhood of forty, so radically different from the popular conception of a Hollywood producer's secretary that Mrs. Yarmouth had approved of her on sight and had thereby been

subtly strengthened in her respect for Mr. Eade.

"Please don't tell them anything," he said urgently. "Don't talk to anybody. Perhaps I can still think of something before the whole town knows I'm over a barrel."

"Very well, Mr. Eade."

"You'd better get some lunch—we'll have a lot to do this afternoon. But before you go, would you bring me that last letter from Herbert and Shapiro?"

He let Mrs. Yarmouth read the missive herself. On a genuine sheet of letterhead pilfered from an advertising agency so famous that jokes about it were good for a laugh even from unsophisticated audiences, it said in part:

This will confirm that the StarSuds Corporation have authorized us to pay you the agreed price of \$30,000 for each episode of your series DON JUAN JONES in full upon delivery of each half-hour's film ready for projection, commencing on May 12 and weekly thereafter.

However, we feel obliged to remind you that time is of the essence of your contract, and that failure to deliver the first film on or before May 12 will be grounds for cancellation of the entire series, as it would cause us ourselves to forfeit the time

commitment which we have from the network.

"You see," Mr. Eade elucidated, "as far as a sponsor's concerned, having a good TV show is only half the battle. Getting a good network time to put it on the air is the other half. StarSuds happens to have a perfect time spot booked for this series. But if I don't deliver, they'll lose it, and besides cancelling my contract they could probably sue me for damages."

"I should think it'd be more sensible if they lent you the money to make the pictures," said Mrs. Yarmouth.

"You don't understand," said Mr. Eade patiently. "Things just aren't done that way in this business. StarSuds is packed in boxes, but the soap makers don't make the boxes. Their attitude is that they're in the soap business, not the box business. Or, to take it a step further, the motion-picture business. They expect to buy television pictures, not make them. As it is, they're as close to subsidizing this series as they'll ever come. Think of it." He tapped the letter. "They'll pay for the first film on May the twelfth. That's in just over two weeks. And from then on, they pay for each film on delivery. They'll cost me less than twenty thousand each to make—I can show you the budget. That's ten thousand dollars a week clear profit.

But, between now and the twelfth, I must shoot at least two pictures to keep my schedule here at the studio."

"That means an investment of forty thousand," said Mrs. Yarmouth brightly. "And then you get back thirty—"

"But, of course, right then I have to start another picture which means an investment of another twenty thousand—"

"So then you're only down thirty thousand, and you get all that back the following week—"

"Precisely," said Mr. Eade, unwilling to be outclassed in arithmetic. "In other words, in two more weeks I'd be even—"

"And after that, you'd actually be working with their money," Mrs. Yarmouth calculated triumphantly.

Mr. Eade gracefully conceded the mathematical honors.

"But we're only talking about might-have-beens," he reminded her lugubriously. "It *would* have been a very nice deal, but now I'm afraid it's another story." He straightened his bowed shoulders with simple dignity, and assembled his features into a heartrendingly brave smile. "But I don't want to bore you with my troubles, and we certainly mustn't let them spoil your lunch."

He sustained a valorous lightness and charm for about half an hour, and then allowed the first slackening of the inevitably

forced conversation to develop into a silence in which Mrs. Yarmouth's thoughts could not humanly fail to go back over the details of his predicament.

"I hope I'm not being too inquisitive," she said, "but if you only had to borrow forty thousand dollars—"

"Twenty thousand," he corrected her quickly. "I'm putting up half the money myself, in any case, and I'm only sorry that's all the cash I have available."

He had already assayed her expertly as being worth a \$20,000 touch at the maximum, but he had discovered the psychological wheeze that a mark was much more easily induced to put up an amount which seemed to be only matching Mr. Eade's own investment than the same sum if it were represented as the entire capitalization of the venture.

"Well, twenty thousand," she said. "But how much were you going to have to give Mr. Traustein for that?"

"Thirty per cent of the profits."

"That sounds like an awful lot."

"I assure you, for television financing, it was very reasonable. Forty per cent is quite normal. Some people have had to pay fifty per cent. And in my situation, I'll be stuck for at least sixty—perhaps even seventy. In fact, if someone offered me

twenty thousand dollars for only half the profits, right now, I'd think of them as a fairy god-mother. But I don't think anyone's likely to."

Mrs. Yarmouth performed another mental computation which left her goggle-eyed.

"That'd give them five thousand dollars a week," she said in an awed tone.

"For thirteen weeks, anyway," corroborated Mr. Eade matter-of-factly. "Longer, of course, if StarSuds renews the contract." He smiled again, wanly. "You see how true the saying is that Money can always make money."

Mrs. Yarmouth went on thinking, visibly and intensely, but Mr. Eade appeared to be temporarily mired in his own despondent reflections and did not interrupt her.

It was another refinement of his technique that he hardly ever propositioned any of his victims, having found that they were much more effectively and firmly hooked if he let them suggest a participation themselves and believe that it was their very own idea. He was sure that Mrs. Yarmouth would not disappoint him, and she didn't.

"Do you suppose," she said timidly, "that if I put up ten thousand dollars, it would help?"

Mr. Eade was not crude enough to leap up and dance a jig, but after he had satisfied

himself that \$10,000 was the most cash that she could raise quickly, by selling some Government bonds and emptying her savings account, he permitted himself to develop some controlled enthusiasm.

"I could always raise about five thousand dollars in loans from personal friends," he mused. "I should be able to get twenty-five hundred on my Cadillac. And if I cashed in my insurance policy . . . You know, with your ten thousand, I almost think we could swing it."

"Would that entitle me to a quarter of the profits?" she asked.

"You could name your own terms."

"You said you'd be glad to give up half the profits for twice that amount, but I don't want to be greedy."

"I can only think of you as a very generous lady," Mr. Eade said huskily.

"And what would you think about considering my nephew for the leading man?"

Mr. Eade was not shocked—in fact, he had been expecting this even sooner.

"As a partner—and a very important partner—you'd certainly have a voice in the casting. Of course, we do have an option on quite a big name for the part, as you know, but I haven't signed his contract yet, and if you insisted . . . I'm sure

Howard Mayne could do the job—I made some inquiries about him after you mentioned his name. But he'll be away on location for at least another week, you said. That makes it more difficult. But we could shoot around him . . . Yes, if you want that very badly, I won't argue with you. It's settled," said Mr. Eade, settling his argument with himself.

He gave her his hand on it, gravely, and then permitted himself to revert with a frown of partial apology to more crassly financial problems. "But do you fully understand that what it said in that letter—'Time is of the essence'—is literally true? This is Thursday. I must have this money in my bank before they close tomorrow, because most of our costs have to be put up in advance first thing on Monday morning, or else the studio and the guilds and unions won't let us even start shooting."

"I'll send a wire to my bank in Middlebury this afternoon," she said, "and tell them to wire me the money, and I ought to get it tomorrow morning."

From then on everything was so automatic that it would be tedious to recount it in detail.

She was back before noon the next day with a cashier's check, and only realized when she laid it on Mr. Eade's desk that she had not consulted a lawyer and

indeed did not know one in that city. Mr. Eade thought she should not take just any lawyer, but should wait until her nephew could recommend one. He produced an impressive document which actually was most conscientiously worded, for he had paid a genuine if somewhat shabby attorney \$50 to draw it up.

"This is the agreement that poor Mr. Traustein was going to sign. I've simply had my secretary substitute your name for his, and alter the amount of the investment and your percentage." He pointed out the changes. "Suppose I sign it, but you don't. Then I'm completely committed; but if you want any changes, after you've talked to an attorney next week, you can insist on having them made before you sign. In that way, you'll still be in the driver's seat."

Mrs. Yarmouth found this thought very comforting over the weekend, until Monday brought her an alarmed telegram from Howard Mayne in answer to the long excited letter she had written him. Then when she tried to call Mr. Eade at the studio, she was told that he had given up his office on Saturday and they had no idea where he had moved.

"You see?" said the Saint. "If you hadn't been in such a hurry to cash in on the poor man's misfortune, on a scale of usury

that would make Shylock look like a drunken sailor—”

“It was a very fair rate, in the circumstances,” she protested huffily. “He told me so himself.”

“*He* told you so. But didn’t anything tell you that with a contract with people as big as Herbert & Shapiro and StarSuds, he shouldn’t have to cut anybody in for twenty-five hundred a week in exchange for a month’s loan of ten grand?”

“Why didn’t you go to the police at once, Aunt Sophie?” Mayne put in.

“Because I’m not quite as stupid as you think. If I’d done that, it would’ve been sure to get in the papers, especially if Mr. Eade was caught, and you don’t think I want everyone in Middlebury laughing at what a fool I’ve made of myself, do you?” she said paradoxically.

“That’s another thing that helps these bunco artists,” said the Saint. “Half the time the cops don’t even have a chance to do anything, because the sucker is too ashamed to let the whole story come out.”

“I wish you would stop calling me that,” said Mrs. Yarmouth. “All I want to know, since Howard has persuaded me to take you into my confidence, is whether you think you can do anything about it.”

Simon rubbed his chin.

“The toughest thing about that is the needle-and-haystack

part,” he murmured. “I have a couple of ideas where he might go from here, but I can only promise to keep my eyes peeled. It’s lucky that snapshot you took of him in Palm Springs turned out so well.”

Mr. Eade’s movements were not completely unpredictable, for like many of his ilk he was somewhat a creature of habit. Each year, like many more respectable salesmen, he covered roughly the same circuit, which corresponded with the equally predictable migrations of human pigeons. In summer, during the tourist season, he worked the Transatlantic liners and airplanes, with intermittent sojourns in London, Paris, and the Riviera. In the autumn, he might shuttle between New York and Bermuda. At the turn of the year his base would be in Miami Beach, perhaps interrupted by excursions around the Caribbean, until about Easter he jumped to Southern California for the pickings of the desert season there. Then sometimes he would kill a little time in San Francisco, or cross over to Nevada, before the round started all over again.

At the Persepolis in Las Vegas, his wife reported spotting a top-grade mark. To the uninitiated, this might sound far more providential than finding a needle in a haystack, considering the ant-like swarms of vari-

egated citizenry which seethe continuously through such casinos; but in fact, to the fully transistorized veteran of sucker prospecting, it is hardly even an effort to winnow through the densest strata of insolvent chaff and geiger in on any lode of naive nuggets that may be present.

"He's carrying a bale of bills that would choke a horse, but he never gambles more than a few bucks—that's not what he's here for," she said. "He's waiting for a divorce in about another week, and then he's going to marry some Hollywood starlet. He's a used-car dealer from Tucson, and he thinks he's pretty sharp. I listened to him telling a bartender all about himself."

She was the same homely and efficient woman who had played the part of his secretary in the television build-up; but now, in readiness for an entirely different rôle, she was loudly dressed, excessively rouged and powdered, and conspicuously encrusted with jewels, to add up to the instantly recognizable prototype of a graceless and probably obnoxious vulgarian who had somehow succeeded in picking up much bullion and little breeding.

"Point him out to me, my dear," said Mr. Eade.

The next time Simon Templar sat at a bar with a vacant stool beside him, she moved into it,

expanding herself arrogantly to crowd him, and demanding the instant attention of the bartender he was talking to without even allowing him to reach the end of a sentence. It would have been impossible for him not to notice her, but she seemed superbly oblivious to the disgusted stare with which he raked her from her hennaed hair down to her pink brocade shoes.

"Don't be afraid to give me a full shot," she said, as the bartender was pouring. "I'm paying for it, and the house can afford it."

The bartender let the jigger run over till it stood in a little puddle on the counter, moved the glass of ice cubes and the soda water towards her, rang up the ticket and placed it in front of her, and silently went away.

"The insolence of these people!" she muttered. "Chisel you out of every drop and every nickel they can get away with, and can't even be bothered to do it with a smile."

Simon said nothing, watching her with cold detachment while she put the ingredients of her highball together and swallowed it greedily, toying nervously between gulps with the glittering necklace ending in a large emerald pendant which she wore around her thick but wrinkled neck.

She looked at the tab, slapped a dollar bill on it, and said in a

penetrating rasp: "Keep the change, boy."

Simon studiously averted his eyes, until a sequence of rustlings and clinkings and a finally violent flouncing assured him that she had emptied her glass and left. He suffered no anxiety, for he knew that his reaction was intended to be basically emotional, and that the plot would proceed whether he entered it vocally at that stage or not.

He had time for one peaceful sip of his Peter Dawson before Mr. Copplestone Eade moved in.

Mr. Eade introduced himself from somewhere near the level of the floor, by brushing against the Saint's leg, and Simon glanced down to see him straightening up with something sparkling in his hand which he appeared to have retrieved from under the Saint's feet.

"Pardon me," said Mr. Eade, "but I think the lady who was with you dropped this."

"She wasn't with me," said the Saint, gallantly forbearing to quibble over whether she should be called a lady. He looked more closely at the green bauble dangling at the end of the chain of stones, and recognized it at once from the way she had drawn attention to it with her fidgeting. "But I'm pretty sure that's hers."

Mr. Eade held the item up to admire it more carefully.

"A magnificent stone," he re-

marked. "Not in the necklace itself—those are real diamonds, quite nicely mounted, but very small and not very good. Notice how the settings make them look about three times their actual size. But the emerald . . ." He whipped out a loupe from an inner pocket, screwed it into his eye, and peered through it at the pendant. "Yes, undoubtedly genuine. A rather shabby antique setting, but a stone that would be worth at least thirty thousand dollars in today's wholesale market."

He handed Simon the necklace, and removed his magnifying monocle with an apologetically awkward laugh.

"Excuse me being so professional," he said. "But I'm in the wholesale jewelry business myself, and I never seem to be able to get away from it. Everyone who hears that I'm in it has something they want to ask me about."

He produced a card which confirmed, with all the authority of tasteful engraving, that he was indeed a wholesale jeweler, with an address in New York City which not even a native of Manhattan could have stated positively, without going back to look, was an impossible location for premises of that kind.

"Maybe you'd enjoy meeting the dame who lost this," Simon said. "I don't know her from Eve, except that Eve must have

been a lot more attractive, or Adam would never have goofed off. But a ruin well plastered with fancy rocks."

Mr. Eade pursed his lips sympathetically.

"That type, was she?"

"Definitely. And fortissimo."

"That's the way it goes," said Mr. Eade, as one philosopher to another. "At the Taj Mahal, where I'm staying, I had the misfortune to run into some good customers of mine who really should go back to the Indians—East or West Indians, whichever would accept them first. They buy jewels psychopathically, like an alcoholic always wants one more drink, or a hillbilly comedian who just made the big time doesn't only want a Cadillac, he's got to have three. Of course, they're wonderful clients to have, but sometimes I think—"

What Mr. Eade thought, aside from the necessity of naming a hotel where he could be reached, and skilfully impressing it on his interlocutor with a mnemonic twist which only an outright cretin could have forgotten, was cheated of utterance by the abrupt return of the dowager they had been discussing, who came blundering through the crowd with her eyes on the ground and a haughty disregard for the people she jostled, casting to one side and the other like a bird dog, until she appear-

ed to scent the necklace which Simon was still holding, and plunged towards it with a shrill yip worthier of a coon hound than a pointer.

"Thank you *very* much," she said, snatching it from his hand. "I suppose you were wondering if you'd have more chance of getting a reward if you turned it over to the management or if you tried to find me personally."

"Madam," said the Saint, "I assure you—"

"And that's giving you the benefit of the doubt," she said malignantly. "From the way you were looking at it, you could just as well have been trying to make up your minds whether it was worth keeping and saying nothing about it at all. Well, for your information, even though the pendant is only something I took a fancy to in a junk shop, the necklace is real, and it's insured for eight thousand dollars."

Mr. Eade gave a slight but perceptible twitch, and exchanged glances with the Saint.

"If you'll forgive me," he said with some reluctance, "I'm afraid you're very ill advised about that pendant."

"I wear it because I like it," she retorted, testing the catch and then re-fastening the coruscating collar around her neck. "And that's all that matters to me, even if I only paid twenty dollars for it."

"But as a qualified appraiser and professional jeweler," persisted Mr. Eade painfully, "it's my duty to tell you that—"

"Oh, so that's your racket. The things some people will do to drum up business," she commented, almost as if she was on the verge of accusing him of having caused her to lose the necklace in the first place. "Thanks very much, but when I've got any work of that sort I'm not likely to give it to someone I just picked up in a bar."

She dug into her purse, came out with a couple of crumpled dollar bills, and tossed them onto the counter.

"But here's a drink for you, anyway, so you can't complain that you didn't get anything for your trouble," she sneered, and was gone, ploughing like a Juggernaut through the patrons who were not quick enough to give her gangway.

Simon was the first to regain his voice.

"You see what I meant?" he murmured.

"Charming." Mr. Eade shook his head numbly and incredulously. "Never once let either of us finish what we were trying to say. And to think she may never find out what that twenty-dollar ornament is really worth."

"I suppose you couldn't have been mistaken?"

"Positively not. You have to know about emeralds, especially

with the synthetics they're making now; but that's my job. I examined it with a powerful glass. She may have found it in a junk shop, where the dealer didn't know what he'd got—you hear stories like that, though I never came this close to one before. But if she wanted to sell it, I'd pay thirty thousand dollars cash for it right now, because I know I could turn right around and sell it to those people I was telling you about for fifty thousand." He shrugged, and smoothed out the crumpled currency on the bar. "What shall we do about this?"

"Since we had to take the insults anyhow," said the Saint, "we might as well swallow the last one."

Mr. Eade signalled the barman to replenish the Saint's glass, and ordered himself a temperate St. Raphaël. They toasted each other perfunctorily, and then lapsed into one of those brooding silences which Mr. Eade was so adept at engineering.

"Why don't you go after her and try to buy that thing?" Simon asked finally.

"After the way she behaved, could you force yourself to throw that much money into her lap?"

"You could make a nice profit."

"You mean, by bidding for the necklace and letting her

throw in the pendant?" said Mr. Eade, just in case Simon had overlooked that angle. "Unfortunately, it would be most unethical for me to do that. As a professional, if I didn't offer her a fair price, and anything ever came out about it, it would finish me in my business. It wouldn't be the same as a layman doing it, who couldn't be accused of taking unfair advantage. He could always claim he was just lucky." Mr. Eade tilted his glass again meditatively. "Well, let's hope that some day she sells it for ten dollars to another junk dealer, and some more deserving person has the good luck to pick it up."

Simon lighted a cigarette and puffed at it in a jerky way that was exactly the kind of symptom Mr. Eade liked to see.

"Now suppose someone else brought it to you, in the next day or two—I mean, someone who might have heard us talking, for instance," he said clumsily. "Would you think you were obligated by those professional ethics to ask how much he paid for it?"

"In an ideal world, I suppose I might be," said Mr. Eade thoughtfully. "But being human, and not being directly involved, I'm afraid I'd feel that it's a kind of poetic justice when such an unpleasant person gets taken, and I wouldn't feel bound to ask any awkward questions."

He emptied the rest of his glass slowly, to ensure the pregnancy of the pause, and put it down, and only then permitted his eyes to twinkle.

"But you're not likely to run into her again—not if you're lucky, that is," he said, with an air of completely amiable understanding. With the interlude thus closed, he consulted his watch. "And now, according to my astrological chart, this is the most favorable hour for me to match my fate with a roulette wheel, so if you'll excuse me..."

He drifted away, intuitively certain of his histrionic triumph to a degree which would have made a stage actor's most coveted ovation seem pallid and hollow.

Simon Templar was no less satisfied with his own performance. He did not bother to go looking for the odious matron, or even worry about whether she would find him again, for he knew that his portrayal of the beatified Simple Simon infected with cupidity and dazzled by the potentialities of his own newly discovered acumen was as polished as it had ever been in the days when he used to exploit it more frequently, and he was confident that an angler like Mr. Eade could be relied on not to let such an obvious well-hooked fish escape the gaff.

He was toasting himself tran-

quilly by the pool the next morning when the woman came by. She wore a flowered romper-style play suit that looked like a badly fitting slip cover on her, but she was still jeweled as if for a night at the opera.

"Are you sitting out in this heat because you like it, or to give you an excuse to exhibit your beautiful physique in the hope that some stupid woman will fall for it?" she inquired.

He gazed back at her with scarcely veiled dislike in his cold blue eyes—because that would have been expected of him.

"I like it," he said, unsmiling. "And I can always hope."

"Don't look at me. I'm not stupid. I know all about men who are too good-looking for their own good."

Her painted face was even harder in daylight, and her voice had lost none of its cultivated acidity. She twisted and tugged at the necklace and pendant she was still wearing, in the nervously irritable automatism which had first made him notice it; and suddenly it came loose and fell through her fingers to the ground.

"You go on like that," said the Saint, without moving, "and one day you'll really lose it."

She used a short sibilant word which no lady should have in her vocabulary, and picked up the string of gems herself. She fiddled with the catch in sharp

angry movements which suggested that she only wished it had been an animate object that she could have hurt.

"I shouldn't ever wear it at all. It's jinxed, that's what it is. I've lost it before, and had it stolen once, and each time it's cost me money to get it back. Even last night, I had to buy you a drink. And while I was away from the table, my number came up twice in a row. I ought to know better. I got it from my last husband, and he was never anything but bad luck. God damn the stinking thing," she broke out, at the peak of her gradual crescendo of fury. "Now the catch is really busted. And you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to take it right downtown this afternoon and sell it—if I can find an honest jeweler anywhere in this clip town."

She glowered at him suspiciously.

"You got anything to say about that?" You think I wouldn't?"

"I didn't say a word," Simon protested.

"When I decide anything's no good for me, I junk it. Whether it's a piece of jewelry or a husband, or anything else. They can all be replaced. How do you like that?"

"It's okay with me," said the Saint. "But if you're not kidding about selling that necklace, how much would you take for it?"

"What's that to you?"

"I'm a used-car dealer. A trader. I might make you an offer."

"I don't want a used car."

"I'm getting married pretty soon, directly my divorce comes through. "My girl likes jewels, and you might give me a good buy."

"I told you last night, it's insured for eight thousand dollars."

"That means you couldn't get more than four for it at the most, if you had to sell it."

She studied him shrewdly between narrow lids.

"What did you say your name was? I wouldn't take less than five."

"Sebastian Tombs," he said equably.

"And I'll split the difference with you. Forty-five hundred. Cash."

"Show it to me," she scoffed. "If you've got it."

"I'll have to wire my bank in Tucson. But I can have it this afternoon."

She dropped the necklace into her bag and shut it with a snap that matched the saurian clamp-up of her mouth.

"I'll look for you in the lobby at four," she said. "But don't think I'll be surprised if I don't see you."

Simon freshened himself with a languid swim in the pool and went back to his room, from

which he made a call to the Taj Mahal.

"Were you serious about what you said last night, about the pendant that gruesome old witch was wearing?" he asked.

Mr. Eade chuckled with unfeigned delight.

"Don't tell me you've stolen it!"

"I think I can buy it. Would you still be in the market for it?"

"Certainly. I never joke about business."

"Can I bring it over to your hotel, say about four-thirty?"

"I have an engagement to play golf this afternoon," said Mr. Eade, glancing hastily over a summary of plane schedules. "And then with the usual drinks at the club, and I'd like to get showered and changed . . . Could you make it seven o'clock, and consider that an invitation to dinner?"

The Saint made another phone call, enjoyed a leisured lunch, and then drove downtown. But he was back and waiting in the lobby of the Persepolis punctually at four o'clock, and had to cool his heels for ten minutes before he saw the woman sailing towards him like a runaway galleon.

"All right," she said aggressively. "Have you got it all, or are you going to give me a song and dance?"

He handed her an envelope,

and she counted forty-five bills and pointedly verified that each individual one was of the correct denomination. Then she opened her purse and brought out the necklace.

"Okay, here you are."

He stared at it in dismay.

"But the pendant—"

"I didn't say that went with it. I bought that myself. And anyway, it's only junk."

"But it looked perfect with the necklace, somehow," he protested. "That's what appealed to me. I wouldn't want the necklace without it."

She leered at him with insulting cynicism.

"And I suppose you'll tell your girl it's a real emerald, too," She let him suffer for an artistic moment, and said: "Very well, you can have it. But it wasn't included in the price. It cost me twenty dollars, and that's what I want for it."

The eagerness with which he fumbled for a twenty-dollar bill imposed a severe strain on her facial self-control, but she kept her mask of misanthropic disdain intact while she exchanged the pendant for the money, although she trusted her voice to remain in character for no more than a grudging "Thank you" before she turned and stalked away as if he had once again ceased to exist for her.

In their room at the Taj Mahal, a three-minute taxi ride

away, Mr. Eade, dressed for travel, was smoking a thin cigar and turned the pages of a cheesecake magazine. Their bags, packed and ready to go, stood by the door.

"Couldn't have been easier," she said, in answer to his mildly interrogative eyebrow.

She opened her bag and counted him out twenty-three hundred-dollar bills, and he scrupulously gave her fifty dollars change.

"How long have we got, Coplestone?"

"Our plane leaves at five-forty." He checked his watch. "I think we should leave for the airport in ten minutes at the most."

"Then I've got time to take some of this war-paint off."

She disappeared into the bathroom, and was quite surprisingly transformed when she came back. Without the excess jewelry and the flamboyantly clashing scarf which she had worn like a shawl collar, she was acceptably dressed; and with only normal make-up she was neither the haridan of the Persepolis nor the prim executive secretary of the Hollywood studio, but a very ordinary middle-aged woman—a chameleon waiting to be prodded into its next coloration.

"I don't know what I'd do without you, my dear," said Mr. Eade sincerely. "We make a perfect team."

"As long as there goes on being a sucker born every minute, we'll do all right," she said. "A couple more jobs like this and that Yarmouth dame, one after another, and we ought to be able to take a nice long vacation."

There was a knock on the door, and Mr. Eade opened it almost unthinkingly, and certainly without concern.

"Mr. Eade?"

The man who stood there was unknown to him, but something about his bearing had a chillingly familiar air, which became an icy clutch around Mr. Eade's heart as the man flipped open a wallet to exhibit a gold-metal star pinned inside. While Mr. Eade sought achingly for breath, the man came on in.

"And Mrs. Eade, I presume?" he remarked politely. He turned back to the door. "Come on in, Mr. Tombs." Simon Templar followed him. "Is this the guy who gave you the pitch about the emerald?"

"That, Lieutenant," said the Saint concisely, "is him."

"What is this all about?" demanded Mr. Eade hollowly.

The lieutenant dissected him with distantly unfriendly eyes.

"You should know all about it, Cripplestone," he said with a cruelly sarcastic inflection. "Unless you've been luckier all your life than you deserve. The usual bunco rap. Mr. Tombs isn't so dumb. He figured what you

were up to, and came to see us this afternoon. I was in the lobby, and I witnessed him giving Mrs. Eade the money and her giving him the necklace. We followed her back here, and waited outside the door till I'd heard enough to wrap it up double. You want me to recite it, or are you going to say Uncle?"

"You can enjoy the technicalities on the City's time," said the Saint gently. "Having delivered the case into your lap, I'd just like my money back."

The lieutenant reached out for Mrs. Eade's purse and emptied its contents onto a table, but what he presently sorted out made his face crinkle in a comical mixture of astonishment and perplexity.

"Eleven thousand eight hundred and eighty dollars in cash and travelers' checks," he said. "But only twenty-two of those marked hundreds you gave her."

"This is rather ridiculous," Mr. Eade argued weakly. "Mr. Tombs made a deal, on his own initiative—"

"For something that was represented as a diamond necklace, alleged to be insured for eight grand." The lieutenant produced it from his pocket and flung it down. "This here is a piece of paste that you couldn't insure for eighty bucks. And that's fraud, Pappy. Have you got the rest of that dough? If you have, we'll find it."

Mr. Eade sadly extracted the other twenty-three bills from a distended wallet. Simon picked up the total, and added one more green leaf from the pile on the table.

"That's the extra twenty she squeezed out of me for the pendant," he explained. "Some of that other lettuce will be part of the ten grand they got from Mrs. Yarmouth, and no doubt Copplestone has the rest of it. I guess they kept everything split fifty-fifty—more or less. You'd better impound it, anyway. I'll call Mrs. Yarmouth right away and tell her it's safe, and have her go to the police in Los Angeles and get the extradition machinery started."

Mr. Copplestone Eade, after a long reproachful gaze at his spouse, turned with a sigh, and conjured further wads of negotiable paper from various pockets. He was above all things a practical man, and knew when to abandon a line that would obviously get him nowhere.

"Here is five thousand dollars," he said. "My wife, I'm sure, will be glad to contribute the other five. As you surmised, we split fifty-fifty—more or less. Shall we be realistic? Extradition proceedings can be tiresome. And trials can be lengthy, and embarrassing to all parties. And during all that time, the money would be tied up by the court. Don't you think that if she got

it all back at once, like you've got back yours, she could be persuaded to drop the charges?"

Simon Templar only gave an impression of pondering this.

"Well, I did only tell her I'd try to get her money back," he admitted.

"But you have to think of yourself, of course," said Mr. Eade, with increasing benignity. "I know a little about you private eyes. You're getting a good fee from Mrs. Yarmouth, naturally, but the publicity of an arrest might be even more valuable. Would—say—two thousand dollars compensate you for that?"

"Two thousand dollars," said the Saint blandly, "from each of you, might."

He collected seven thousand dollars from Mr. Eade, and seven thousand more from the pile on the table, and only then seemed to become aware of the fourth person who was now speechlessly watching the proceedings.

"This is all right with me," he said, "but I still don't know how the law feels about it. After all, I've taken up a lot of his afternoon."

"Perhaps a thousand dollars for yourself, Lieutenant?" suggested Mr. Eade, over-anxious with incipient relief.

The officer almost choked.

"Now I've heard everything," he boiled over. "First it turns

into legal blackmail, if there is such a thing, and using me for an accessory—and now you'd like to make me a partner too. Thanks, but you can keep the rest of your dirty money. You're lucky I don't get promoted for making arrests. My job is just to keep this town clean of grifters like you, who'd give it a bad name.

"But don't miss that plane, Mr. Eade, and don't let me ever run into you again, or you won't get off so easy!"

"Why on earth did you have to turn down that extra G-note?"

Simon complained later. "At least it would have paid for the special plane you had to charter to get here."

"I thought the scene was more convincing that way," Howard Mayne said. "Anyhow, I was only helping you out for Aunt Sophie's sake. I don't think I'm ready for a life of crime yet."

The Saint grinned.

"You're wasting a lot of talent," he opined. "But I hope Coplestone sees you in a movie some day when you're a star, and realizes how good you really might have been as Don Juan Jones."

HOT-HOUSE AMBASSADOR

A certain nobleman was implicated in a conspiracy against Peter the Great. The Proofs, however, not being strong enough, Peter left him unmolested, and even unconscious of being suspected.

Some time after, the Czar had an occasion to send a skilful and able politician to a court, where a great service was to be done, and he immediately fixed upon the nobleman in question.

The latter demurred, and pleaded his incapacity; upon which the Czar, smiling and tapping him on the shoulder, observed, "My dear Count, he that is capable of plotting against his own sovereign cannot surely want the ability of doing the same against his sovereign's enemies."

The Count stood for a while petrified, then accepted the commission, and succeeded, to the utmost wishes of Peter. A wit of the court, hearing of those whispered circumstances, called him a "hot-house ambassador." Being asked why, he replied, "He was forced."

FROM COURT ANECDOTES, London, 1825

grandma cutcheon, detective

by . . . Clarence
Budington Kelland

It was Grandma Cutcheon's knowledge of human nature—and of boys—that enabled her to trace the stolen money.

MARTHA SPOONER arrived at Grandma Cutcheon's, breathless. She had hurried to insure the freshness of her news, and to make certain she would be the first to impart it.

"Somebody stole three hundred dollars from Walter Shepherd," she said, before her foot touched the top step.

"I want to know!" said Grandma, laying her knitting in her lap for a moment. "Have they diskivered who done it?"

"I calc'late they got s'picious," Martha said knowingly; "but that hain't lettin' on."

"Too bad," said Grandma slowly. "Too bad. . . . Not so much fer Walter Shepherd. He kin afford to lose it. But the' hain't nobody kin afford to steal it. . . . I dread to hear who they ketch."

Grandma Cutcheon looked off across the fields, and her face was sad. The occurrence of evil in the world always saddened Grandma. Her expression changed. "There they be," she

Clarence Budington Kelland, portraitist of the last generations of us Americans—the naive as well as the less naive, the gentle as well as the less gentle—turns to a crime set against what may at first seem an unimportant background, if you do not remember what small New England villages have contributed to the mores and the history of this country. The young man who is accused of theft, the theft of an amount small by current standards—fishes, hunts and loafs. On occasion he makes a pretence at working and then THIS happens.

said, pointing with a knitting needle to a young man who shambled along with a bamboo fishing pole over his shoulder and a can of bait in his hand. Ten feet behind the young man shambled a boy, obviously copying the gait and physical mannerisms of his leader. He, too, was equipped with pole and bait.

"Follers him like a dog," said Grandma. "Allus a-foller-in' Dick Towne every step he takes."

"Wuthless coots," said Martha sharply.

"Remind me of them dogs the missionary was talkin' about t'other day. What name was it she give 'em? Prairie dogs? No. 'Twa'n't that. Pariah. That's the word. Dick's a kind of a pariah dog, and Beggy's a pariah puppy. . . . Don't understand the boy worshipping him like he 'pears to do."

Nor would Grandma have understood better the worship of Beggy Turnip—boyhood's corruption of Benjamin Turner—for Dick Towne could she have been their constant companion.

Dick Towne maintained the fiction that he worked at his trade of painting and paper-hanging, for the most lazy, the most shiftless, the most worthless of men must fortify the inner citadel to which their self-respect has fled and become invisible to the world. He lived

alone in the dilapidated unpainted shanty that had been his father's. It was one of those structures whose lines had sagged to curves, and whose curling shingles gave the effect of feathers upon the back of some squalid great bird.

He fished, he hunted, or he loafed. Upon rare occasions he made pretence of gainful occupation by picking berries or by trapping. His father had left behind him in the local savings bank a fortune of three thousand and odd dollars, which returned Dick an income of something like a hundred and fifty dollars a year. His scheme of life was based upon the preservation of the capital sum, and existence upon the interest. . . . He still had one year the advantage of thirty.

Pleasant Point accepted him, indeed, it relied upon him, as small New England hamlets are given to relying upon those local characters which give them color and conversation. Such characters are indispensable and seem never to fail. There is something in the New England moral or economic system which breeds them as inevitable consequences.

As for Beggy Turnip, he was son and sole heir to the village's premier dipsomaniac and petty criminal. In a less human and more efficient civilization Beggy

would have been taken away from his father and cared for institutionally; which might have killed him, but would have uplifted him. As it was, he throve, and there was no boy of his age in the township who dared knock from his shoulder the provocative chip. For the most part, he shifted for himself, not interfered with by the good-hearted truant officer.

Dick Towne could not arise so early but that he found Beggy waiting for him to emerge. The bright eyes of the boy would fasten themselves upon the face of the young man with a hungry, hopeful expression. His hope was that Dick would notice his presence by a word. If, as was the case nine times out of ten, the young man passed on without greeting or notice, Beggy waited until his hero was ten feet ahead, and, exhibiting no sign of disappointment or anger, would follow, as Grandma Cutcheon said, like a dog.

So now the young man and the boy crossed the fields within the range of Grandma Cutcheon's eyes, pathetically alike in pose and movement and even in wearing apparel, to pass from sight among the sumacs which crested the hill above the pond. They descended the slope and skirted the water on their way to well-known points extending through the impeding border of lily pads. At the apex of one of

these Dick Towne stationed himself, his legs dangling over the crumbling bank. Beggy, with eyes studying his companion, seated himself a dozen feet away, reflecting in every movement the motions of his elder. It was as though Dick Towne were reflected in some mirror endowed with grim, ironical humor. When Dick baited his hook, Beggy impaled an angle-worm. Beggy spat upon his bait in exact imitation of Dick's mannerism in performing that fisherman's rite. Dick cast his hook into the water and sat slouchingly drowsily, watching his bober. Beggy's sole distinguishing movement was to turn his head while he studied minutely Dick's posture and rectified any failures in his own conformity to it.

Neither spoke. The man had not signified his awareness of the boy's existence that day, and now, perhaps, he forgot Beggy utterly, while in the warm, humming, lazy air he quite gave over mental activity and surrendered himself to the bliss of ultimate irresponsibility.

But Beggy was awake, alert, dreaming as boys dream, and imagining as boys imagine. . . . The bank upon which they sat became a cliff, the shallow water at its foot black, hungry depths. The cliff's edge crumbled under Dick, and he fell down and down into those wait-

ing waters—and sank. Beggy pictured himself as leaping to his feet, poising on the brink, plunging in a beautiful, curving dive. He came to the surface and looked about for his friend, but his friend was invisible.

Well, Beggy knew what had happened! He filled his lungs and dived, and there, tangled in water vegetation was Dick, faintly struggling. Beggy tore him free, mounted with him to the surface, and swimming on his back towed the unconscious man ashore. There he worked over him, making use of every legendary method known to the lore of boyhood.

Beggy's eyes filled with actual tears as he flung himself in imagination upon Dick's unconscious body, and when the first sign of returning life told him his friend was not dead, his heart swelled and his throat hardened with the joy of it. . . .

Then Dick opened his eyes and recognized him and remembered what had happened! He shook Beggy's hand, actually shook his hand! And then—then life began, a glowing, wonderful life, for Dick took his preserver home with him and allowed him to sleep on the floor beside his bed, and forever after he permitted Beggy to go with him wherever he went, not walking ten feet behind but proudly at his side!

But even in the land of actuality, the day was a wonderful success. Presently Dick hooked a bass and landed it.

"It takes you to git 'em," said Beggy reverently.

Toward sundown they struck back across the fields, coming out upon the turnpike above Grandma Cutcheon's house. She saw them approaching and, holding her knitting in her apron, arose and went into the house to return with a big golden ginger cookie in her hand. Dick passed. Grandma walked to the steps and called:

"Beggy."

The boy stopped.

"Got a cookie for you," said Grandma.

Beggy entered the gate and shambled up the path. He took the cookie, said, "Much obleeged," and was turning away when, suddenly, he paused and faced Grandma again. "Kin I have another?" he asked.

"Calc'late so. Be you hungry?"

"Tain't for me," said Beggy. "It's for him."

He received the second cookie and ran after his companion.

"Here," he said diffidently. "It's yourn."

Dick received the gift into his fingers, looked at it, sniffed of it. "Huh," he said; but to Beggy's infinite delight he began to eat it. Beggy dropped

back to his deferential position ten paces in the rear.

Beggy followed Dick home, and then scuffled away to the rickety, fenceless, weed-grown place where he lived with his father. Mr. Turner was not there, a thing which caused Beggy no surprise, and the boy went about getting for himself such food as the larder could provide.

When he had eaten, he went out again in search of Dick, but Dick had vanished. Though Beggy hung about until ten o'clock, his patience went without reward. He could not understand it. This was twice the thing had happened, two evenings in succession that Dick Towne, the easiest of men to locate at any time, was not to be found. It worried Beggy and weighed upon him. He went home disquieted and dreamed restless dreams.

Beggy would have been more disquieted had he hunted for Dick in the village instead of waiting about the house for him to return. The village knew where Dick was. Long before it went to bed that night Pleasant Point was made aware of Dick's whereabouts, and with shakings of the head it allowed it had expected something of the kind to happen any day. . . . Dick was in the calaboose under the town hall, charged with

the theft of Walter Shepherd's three hundred dollars.

"Have they mixed that little Beggy Turnip boy into it?" was Grandma Cutcheon's first question when Miss Spooner arrived with the news.

"He hain't been mentioned—yit"

"Um. . . . Find the money?"

"Nary hide nor hair of it."

"Dick hain't owned up." It was a statement, not a question.

"Sticks to it he never done it. Bold as brass. But they got him all snarled up with circumstantial evidence."

"Don't believe he done it," said Grandma firmly. "Dick hain't got the look of a thief." She sighed, "Figgered to git my blueberries canned up, and now comes this. Boys and men is more important 'n blueberries, though. . . . Poor little feller. My heart jest bleeds for that Beggy boy."

"You hain't calc'latin to mix into this!" exclaimed Martha.

"I be," Grandma said firmly.

It is true that Beggy Turnip needed sympathy sorely. His world had splintered into ruin about him, and he stood appalled.

"What'll they do with him," he demanded tearfully again and again.

"Send him to the pen'tentiary, maybe for ten year, maybe for twenty. . . . Breakin' and en-

terin' a dwellin' in the night time."

Ten or twenty years without Dick! It was unthinkable. He could not comprehend the monstrousness of it, and, bewildered and crushed, he wandered off alone with his agony, for agony it was.

The irrepressibility of the imagination of boyhood is a marvelous gift from heaven. Even the most weighty grief cannot stay its operation, and Beggy found hours of something akin to happiness in his plans to rescue Dick and make away with him to a land so distant that the writ of no court could reach him. He saw himself the captain of a brave and desperate band of outlaws, who at a word from him would gather at the secret meeting place, and, mounted upon snorting steeds, would ride down upon the village calaboose, smash its doors from their hinges, snatch Dick from his cell, and ride away with a ringing cheer of triumph, daring the powers of the law to take the prisoner from them. . . .

Following this, Beggy was seized with a desire to do something concrete for his friend. He wanted to feel that he was working for Dick, and he searched his mind for possible service to render. At last he hit upon it. Bait! He knew well how Dick detested the labor of

digging worms. So, spade in hand, he went to the ancient barn where Dick and himself were accustomed to fill their bait cans. His intention was clear: When Dick emerged from prison Beggy would be ready for him, ready to lay at his feet angleworms enough to last for the remainder of his lifetime. He would dig a barrel of worms and bury them. It should be his career. . . . A barrel of worms! His heart glowed as he imagined the distant day when Dick, free at last, returned to Pleasant Point, and he led him to the secret spot and uncovered before Dick's astounded eyes a full barrel of bait!

He sat himself to the labor of love with enthusiasm. For an hour he delved and harvested. It was not always easy digging amid the rubbish, and many were the obstacles to his spade which he had to unearth and toss aside. One of these was a tin can such as contains ground coffee. As he tossed it aside it caught and arrested his eye. It was obviously new and shiny—yet it had been buried eighteen inches under the ground; and it was heavy; it contained something. Beggy dropped his spade and picked up the can. He hefted it. Then he removed the cover and peered inside. It was almost full of money of currency. Beggy clapped the cover

on again quickly and slunk inside the old barn, where, after peering about to make certain he was not observed, he reopened the can and dumped the bills out upon the floor.

He counted them. Two hundred and ninety dollars! It was the sum Walter Shepherd had lost; minus ten dollars; obviously, it was the stolen money. To Beggy the matter was clear. He had happened upon the spot where Dick had hidden his ill-gotten treasure!

Beggy stuffed the bills back into the can and hid them under a rotting floor board; then he sat down upon an exposed sill to think the matter through. The moral issues were so intricate and befogged that Beggy's brain, all unused to casuistry as it was, only darted here and there up blind alleys of thought. His first idea was to return the money to Walter Shepherd on condition Dick should be released. But had he a right to do that? The money was Dick's, because Dick had gone to the labor of stealing it, and was going to jail for the theft. If Dick actually went to prison, then it was clear the money was Dick's and no other's. In common with many boys Beggy believed a prison sentence gave the thief indisputable title to stolen goods.

But Dick had not been con-

victed; therefore there was a cloud on his title, and Walter Shepherd could lay claim to an equity. He, Beggy Turnip, might assert ownership, for was it not buried treasure, and was not the finding of buried treasure the most honorable of all known means of acquiring money? On the whole, he concluded, the buried treasure theory was the strongest. Finders, keepers! But an obstacle arose—he would not assert his title to Dick's impoverishment. . . . But would not Dick prefer to give up the money rather than spend ten or twenty years in the penitentiary? Of course, it was a great sum of money, and at the end of the ten or twenty years it would belong to Dick, if Beggy did not assert his superior claim to treasure trove. That made a difference. Dick might consider it worthwhile.

When you are considering the case of Beggy Turnip, remember that he was thirteen years old; bear in mind that the sum of two hundred and ninety dollars was to him inexhaustible wealth. . . . With this fact in mind, note that Beggy did not for a second think of keeping this money for himself; that whatever use he made of it must be to obtain his friend's liberty. It was as if you or I found a million dollars in some rotting chest and gave it all for the succor of a friend.

After an hour of painful reasoning, Beggy felt he could not reach a decision upon the facts in his possession. He must obtain other data.

By a circuitous route, with the subtlety of an Indian, he crept away from the old barn and made his way to the village. The lock-up was in the basement of the town hall, and Beggy made a circuit of this structure, spying out the land. Between the town hall and its only adjoining structure—a house occupied by a paperhanger—was a narrow strip of grassless earth and, giving upon this strip, were two barred windows beneath the level of the soil, drawing their light through little boxed pockets. Beggy looked up and down the street, then ducked between the buildings and threw himself at full length beside a window. He reached with neck and shoulders down into the boxed pocket and peered into the comparative darkness. The window, he found, had been removed to admit air.

"Dick," he called in a mysterious whisper. "It's me, Dick. Come over here where we kin talk."

"What you want?" said Dick gruffly.

"I just want to tell you" (here romance got the better of Beggy for a space), "that I'm

figgerin' on rescuin' you. I hain't got it all planned yet, but if the' hain't no other way I'll pass you in a file or a ax or a saw or somethin'."

"Git out of there, and lemme be," said Dick harshly.

"Say, Dick," Beggy persisted; "if you really stole that money, which would you druther—keep it where it's hid so's you'd have it when you git out of prison, or give it up and git free?"

"You git away—from there!"

"'Cause," said Beggy, "I found where it's hid, and I calc'lated on givin' it up if you was willin'. Maybe they'd let you off then. So I come to ask."

There was a pause. Dick drew nearer to the window.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"I found it, and I could fetch it down here and shove it in to you. Then you could give it back if they'd let you off."

"I hain't no thief," said Dick with sudden fury. "I didn't steal no money. They kin send me to prison for a million years—" He stopped speaking, while Beggy held his breath. Then he burst out again in sudden rage, "You leetle thief! You dum leetle thief!" he said, raising his voice. "I know what you're up to. You stole that money and you're scairt, that's what. You want to give it back, and you dassn't. You want to put it off on *me*, and have folks

pointin' to *me* and callin' *me* thief. You want me to own up to doin' it so's you kin go free. . . . I hain't no thief, and I hain't goin' to own up to bein', no matter what happens."

"I hain't . . . I didn't . . . I hain't tryin' no sich thing," Beggy stammered in bewilderment.

"You git out, you leetle thief, 'fore I call the constable."

Beggy withdrew from the window. His face was white, tears stood unshed in his eyes, and his heart was cold and painful within him. Dick hated him. Dick wasn't a thief, because Dick said he wasn't—but all the same Beggy knew he was, for there was the money in that place. "He says I'm a-tryin' to put it onto him to git out of it myself," he muttered to himself. Dick could accuse him of that! The boyish chivalry in him recoiled in horror.

Presently he found himself thinking again, and less miserable. "Dick don't want to be called a thief," he said to himself. "He'd druther go to jail."

Beggy pondered over that, adding it to the other data in his possession, and reached his decision. He removed the can of money from its place of concealment, wrapped it in an old newspaper, and set out across the fields. One thing he had to find out before he acted, and he

was going to Grandma Cutcheon for the information. Folks said Grandma knew everything, and she was always kind to boys.

He passed through her gate and walked diffidently up to the steps. Grandma nodded over her knitting at him.

"Come for 'nother cookie?" she asked.

"No'm, come to ask somethin'. If the' was somebody arrested for somethin'—stealin'—and somebody else done it, and that other feller took back the money that was stole, and give it up and confessed right out that he done it, would they let the arrested feller go?"

"'Course," said Grandma.

"Without havin' no trial nor nothin'?"

"Yes," said Grandma. "Tell me why?"

"Jest kind of thought of it," said Beggy uneasily. "And s'posin' a feller that really didn't do it was to say he did, and nobody knowed the difference?"

"Why," said Grandma, "if a man confessed a crime, I calc'late the authorities would be willin' to take his word for it."

Grandma Cutcheon was staring at him queerly, and he wanted to go away from there before she began asking questions.

"What you got there?" she asked.

Beggy shifted from one foot to the other and looked everywhere except at Grandma. "Worms for bait," he said finally in a strangled voice and, casting aside all hopes of effecting a courteous escape, he turned and took to his heels. Grandma stood up and peered after him over the steel rims of her spectacles.

Beggy ran for a couple of hundred yards, and then slowed down to a walk. A rich feeling overspread him, a gorgeous sensation. He was, indeed, about to perform a noteworthy act; but he viewed it now with the glowing eyes of his imagination, and his own nobility almost overpowered him. Dick would see, all right. He would show Dick. . . . There was one affecting part where Dick came to his untimely grave and laid a wreath upon it and uttered beautiful phrases about him.

With a certain air calculated to be appropriate to the occasion, Beggy turned into Main Street and marched to the door of the town hall. But as he stepped inside, he became a boy again.

"Well, Bub?" said Justice Hopper.

"I—I came to own up," said Beggy.

"Whatto?"

"Stealin' that money off of Walter Shepherd."

"Go 'way!" It was an exclamation of astonishment. "What's that you're a-sayin'?"

"I took that money, and now you got to let Dick Towne go, because he didn't have nothin' to do with it, and nobody else did but jest me, and I kin give the money back, but I won't ever give back a cent if you don't let Dick go and tell folks he hain't no thief."

"Wa-al, I swan to man! Turner boy, hain't you? Allus said you wouldn't never come to no good end. Like father, like son. Um . . . Still got the money, eh? Where is it? Perduce it right off, Bub, if you know what's good for you."

"Not till you let Dick Towne loose."

"Huh! If you done it, and own up to it, the' hain't no reason for keepin' Dick. Not as I know of. . . . Hey, constable!"

The constable entered leisurely, moving a certain something from cheek to cheek with practiced tongue motion.

"Knowed you was wrong about Dick Towne all the time," said the justice, "but I didn't want to say nothin' till I was ready to act. Here's the real thief!"

"That there kid!"

"Him!" said the justice. "Been a-watchin' him, and now I got around him so's I wrung a confession out of him. . . ."

You kin release Dick Towne. When you've cleared him out of his cell, you come back and put this here young miscreent into it. Calc'late it's lucky for the community he was ketched so young. No tellin' what depredations he'd a' been guilty of if he was let to grow up at large. . . . You tell where you got that money hid, Bub."

"Is Dick goin' free?"

"You heard them orders of mine."

"I got to see him let loose first."

Presently Beggy saw the amazed Dick emerge from the door of the town hall and walk up the street, evidently bewildered by his sudden freedom. Beggy would have liked one word from his hero, or even a glance, but that boon was denied him. He turned to the justice and held out his paper-wrapped can.

"Here's the money," he said. "Had it with me all the time."

In an hour this latest development in the *cause célèbre* was common property in the village. Grandma Cutcheon heard it promptly. She listened, making no comment, but went on with her knitting, clicking her steel needles in the sunlight of her front stoop. It is true that she could not have seen her needles had she tried ever so hard to do so, for there was

something in her eyes that made clear vision impossible, and she was repeating over and over to herself silently:

"Hain't the hearts of boys wonderful! . . . A body kin understand Him sayin' 'Suffer leetle children . . . !'"

When her visitor was gone Grandma laid her knitting in her lap and stared at her bent hands, studied the wrinkles and the prominent veins upon their backs.

Grandma knew three generations of Pleasant Point. She knew individuals and family histories and, because this was so, she could, with some degree of certainty, make a list of the men and women in the village who would be weak or wicked enough to perform this act.

In this instance there was not only the presence of theft, but of premeditated and deliberate theft. The man who stole Walter Shepherd's money accomplished his end only after knowledge and planning. It was not weakness, but wickedness.

Grandma threw a shawl over her shoulder and started for the village.

"Fust off," she said, "I'll buy that boy some candy and send it in to him. . . ."

She stopped in at Brokaw's store. "Mark, you kin gimme a dime's worth of that there stick candy," she said.

"Hain't got no stick candy."

"You had a full pail t' other day."

"Sold out the whole dinged pail to wunst."

Grandma looked up quickly.

"A whole pail of candy to wunst. Whoever had sich a sweet tooth as that?"

"Poot Sawyer. Come in grin'nin' and says he was goin' to have all the candy he wanted for wunst in his life—and I hain't seen him since. Guess he's makin' a business of eatin' it."

"Pay fer it, Mark?"

"Do you figger he'd' a' got it without?"

Grandma stood a moment with puckered brows, and then, without stopping to chat, as was her usual custom, she left the store and set out down the street with the determined pace of one bound for a definite destination. She passed the town hall and continued through the village until she came to the first farmhouse toward the east. She made her way around to the back door, where a man was washing his face in a tin basin on a bench.

"Afternoon, Eben," she said, placidly.

"Afternoon, Mis' Cutcheon."

"County still boardin' Poot Sawyer with you, Eben?"

"Yes, and he's a sight more trouble 'n the money we git pays fer."

"Is he anywheres about, Eben?"

"He's been layin' low fer a day or so. Dunno what he's up to. Calc'late I kin find him some'ers around the barn."

"I'll go out and call him," said Grandma.

She walked out toward the outbuildings and called. Presently there was a stir in the loft over the carriage shed, and a man appeared down the ladder. He was a sight to distress. Long greasy hair mingled with an unkempt beard; vague, lusterless eyes peered from a pasty face.

"Poot," said Grandma, "folks says you like candy."

He laughed with the glee of a six-year-old child. "Candy! Candy!" he said.

"Isn't it nice you can have all you want now?"

He ceased laughing and his face assumed a look of cunning. "Got no candy. Give Poot a penny."

"You've got a whole pail of it," Grandma said sharply.

"You can't have none. You can't have none. It's all Poot's."

"Of course it is. You don't have to give me any, Poot. But when you've et this pail what you goin' to do?"

The look of cunning returned to the half-wit's eyes and he wagged his head knowingly.

"You can't buy any more," said Grandma. She paused and

looked at him in the eye, holding his wavering attention. "Because they've found the money. . . . They found where you buried it, and Squire Hooper's got it."

The creature uttered an animal cry.

"Poot's money. Money, money, money! . . . All the candy Poot wanted!" He set off at a clumsy lope. Grandma called sharply to the man of the house. "Follow him, Eben."

Poot took across the fields, Eben in pursuit. Grandma came up with them where she expected to find them, behind the barn where Dick and Beggy were accustomed to dig bait, and there Poot was pawing in the earth with both hands, while he uttered pitiful wails of grief.

"Fetch him along to the squire's," Grandma told Eben.

Justice of the Peace Hopper was bewildered. This crime was becoming too complicated for him.

"Be you sure we got the right one now?" he demanded uneasily of Grandma.

"Hain't no mistake this time," said Grandma, with some trace of grimness, "thanks to the way the law took holt of this thing. . . . You keep Poot Sawyer right in this office till I get back. I got a errant to do—and when I come back I'm a-goin' to take that boy with me."

Grandma was fortunate. Her errand did not carry her far, for in front of Chancy Dinsmore's general store she met Dick Towne and drew him aside. For fifteen minutes she was in close conversation with the young man and then, side by side, they walked to the town hall.

"Squire Hopper," said Grandma, "Dick's goin' down to tell the boy he kin go free."

"Jest as you say, Mis' Cutcheon."

Dick Towne was not sullen as he descended the dark stairs, nor was he calm. A thing had befallen him, an unbelievable thing. It had startled him. The thought that a fellow human being could care for him so much as to confess a crime that he might go free staggered him.

He recalled the days of the spring and the summer: how Beggy had been his shadow, always present, never intrusive, and now he knew he had appreciated that companionship and doglike devotion. He became aware that Beggy's presence and attitude had been grateful to him. "The little cuss . . . the leetle cuss!" he said to himself, for he was inarticulate.

He pushed open the door.

"Hey, Beggy," he said roughly, embarrassed, "I come to git you out."

"I knowed it," said Beggy tearfully, but with rapture in his heart; "I knowed you'd git me out."

He had known no such thing, imagined no such thing. He had believed himself deserted by his hero. It was miraculous. Dick had remembered him and rescued him.

"Beggy," said Dick, still gruffly, "I never stole that money. It was Poot Sawyer."

"Oh, him!" said Beggy.

They went up the stairs, where Grandma Cutcheon met them.

"You boys better come home to supper to my house," she said.

Dick shook his head. "Me 'n' Beggy's got to go off together. We got things to do. Me 'n' Beggy can't come."

He started across the street. Beggy paused until Dick was a

dozen feet ahead and then followed. Dick stopped.

"Come up here alongside of me," he said sharply. "How kin I talk to you way back there. You'n' me's got to plan how I go to work, and you live with me, and I do what's right by you. Hain't no way out of it, seems as though."

Beggy slipped his hand into Dick's, and Dick grasped it with authority. The world became a golden haze of joy to Beggy. They walked on toward the distant pond, Beggy facing a future too beautiful even to be visualized in a dream, Dick facing responsibilities and duties, facing the loss of his old vagabondage. . . . He looked down at Beggy, and somehow what resentment for his loss remained in his heart faded away and vanished.

"I calc'late I'm satisfied," he said.



Taking us back to the days, actually not so long ago, when the mechanics of air travel were a little different, THE SAINT demonstrates the truth of that time-honored saying that—"A good crook never underestimates another."

THE EXPORT TRADE by LESLIE CHARTERIS

in the next SAINT

raffles
and
the
meanest
thief

by . . . Barry Perowne

"It's the meanest crime I ever heard of," I exclaimed, and tensed as Raffles outlined his plan.

TOWARD six o'clock on a foggy evening my hansom jingled out of Piccadilly into the courtyard before the Albany. Near the foot of the steps stood a roast-chestnut vendor's barrow. Its brazier glowed red, and I saw A. J. Raffles, in evening dress, cape and opera hat, chatting with the vendor and warming his hands.

As the hansom was reined in he came forward quickly. "That you, Bunny?" he said. "Good man! I've been waiting for you."

He gave the cabbie the address of one of the clubs to which we belonged and took his seat beside me.

"I thought we were going to dine at the Capoulade before going to the opera," I said. "What's this club nonsense?"

I spoke a bit testily. I did not like Raffles's sudden change of plan; I never knew what they might portend.

"There's a matter I feel obliged to look into, Bunny," he said. "It involves an old

One of the personalities—one of the peculiarly British personalities—who have survived these decades and our increasing interest in less polite methods of mayhem—is that eternally young Raffles, with the wicked gleam in his eye—whom E. W. Hornung first introduced to us many years ago. Barry Perowne, continued the Raffles legend, and here is another adventure of, as Leslie Charteris puts it, "the dean of delightful thieves."

friend of mine—and two remarkably pretty sisters.”

I said nothing. Raffles struck a match and dipped his Sullivan to the flame.

“Remember Bill Foster?” he said. “Young barrister just beginning to make a name.” He drew deeply on his cigarette. “Last week Bill was the victim of a robbery. It was the eve of the first anniversary of his wedding. Bill had a present for Kathy, his wife, in his pocket, a gift of love—a ruby bracelet.

“A shadow was waiting for him when he arrived home that night. A blackjack smashed down on his head. When he came to, lying in the porch, the shadow was gone. So was Kathy’s anniversary gift.”

“A nasty sort of trick,” I observed.

“It was,” Raffles said, “and I felt particularly badly about it because it happened to friends of mine. What’s more, it rang a faint bell in my mind. I’ve been combing back through newspaper files. Within the past year or so there have been a number of cases of young professional and businessmen who’ve been blackjacked and robbed while returning from their offices to their homes on the eve of the first anniversary of their marriage.”

“A system?” I asked, intrigued.

“I’m certain of it,” Raffles

said. “Weddings, with presents on display, always have been apt to attract thieves. Hence, nowadays, there’s often a plain-clothesman about at such happy functions. So this ingenious unknown has worked out, I fancy, a bright variation.

“A day or two before the anniversary of a marriage he’s selected, probably he begins to shadow the young husband, note his habits and so on. You see? He knows it’s almost a sure thing that that young husband, when he hurries home on his anniversary eve, will have a gift in his pocket—probably jewelry of some kind.

“The happy husband goes tearing home with his mind full of love and gratitude and thoughts of the happy surprise he’s got in his pocket for his young wife—and waiting for him in his porch, or some other carefully chosen corner along his road home, is this unknown man with the blackjack, the Anniversary Thief.”

“It’s the meanest crime I ever heard of,” I exclaimed.

“I agree,” said Raffles. “Are you with me in an attempt to hamstring this chap?”

“It’s rather out of our line,” I objected. The hansom was just jingling round into Pall Mall. The fog was deepening; I scarcely could see two street-lamps ahead. I was conscious of the vastness and mystery of London.

"Besides," I said, "finding this chap would be about as likely as finding a needle in a haystack."

"As to that," said Raffles, "I have a notion. In the past year or so, you and I have had invitations to quite a few weddings of the very type this Anniversary Thief seems to pick on. Does any particular wedding stick out in your mind?"

I said, "The wedding that sticks out in my mind is the only double wedding I ever atten—" I broke off. "The pretty sisters you mentioned!" I exclaimed. "Of course! The Kenyon girls!"

"Christine and Carolyn," Raffles said. "Exactly! In point of fact, Bunny, tonight is the eve of the first anniversary of that double wedding. Now, another thing. Christine married Toby Lucas. A fine, storming ruggie forward, Toby! You know his job?"

"He's in his family firm. Old-established City concern—something to do with Hudson Bay. Fur importers or something, aren't they?" I said.

"Right," Raffles said. "And Carolyn married Roy Norcott. Remember Roy's job?"

"He's the youngest of the sons," I said, "of Norcott and Sons—" Again I broke off. My scalp tingled as I began to see what he was driving at. I said:

"Diamond merchants, of Hatton Garden—"

"And there we have it," said Raffles. "Bunny, old cock, if there's one young husband whom our Anniversary Thief is likely to have noted as being apt to carry home to his wife tonight a gift worth having, surely it must be Roy Norcott—a diamond merchant!"

He flicked his cigarette-end into the fog. "Now, why we've come to this particular club is that I happen to know that on cold nights, with a longish way home before him, Roy usually looks in here for a quick one to warm him up.

"My feeling is that if we pick up Roy's trail tonight and keep close behind him, we stand a first-rate chance of collaring the meanest criminal in London."

As he spoke, the horse clip-clopped to a standstill. Raffles gave the cabbie a half-sovereign. We walked up the steps into the club.

Yielding up our outdoor things, we looked first into a room off the hall. Popular at this hour, the room was hazed with tobacco smoke and thronged with men standing about with glasses and tankards in their hands.

"We're in luck," Raffles murmured.

Sure enough, the very man we were seeking was having a

drink at the bar with a couple of men we knew slightly.

One of the men, Philip Henge, was a velvet-jacketed, bow-tied, classically handsome fellow, a fashionable photographer. The other was a gray-haired, dapper chap with an eyeglass and a look of dissipated distinction. His name was Chastayne.

Roy Norcott was in evening dress, and, as we went over to the bar, Raffles said casually: "Evening, Roy. Going to the opera?"

"Hallo, you two!" said the young diamond merchant cordially. "Don't often see you here, you poor, benighted bachelors!"

"Why this superiority?" Raffles asked. He snapped his fingers. "But of course! Time flies. Can it really be a whole year since you and Carolyn—"

"A whole year," Roy grinned. "Charles here remembered at once. Never forget an anniversary, do you, Charles? How the devil do you do it? You go to so many weddings."

"I know so many people," said Chastayne. "The perennial wedding guest but never a groom. It's the usual fate of the aging man-about-town."

"If Charles had all the money he's spent on wedding presents in his time," said Henge, "he'd be a rich man today, wouldn't you, Charles?"

Chastayne's eyeglass glittered rather coldly, and, indeed, I myself thought the remark tasteless.

Raffles, intervening in his easy way, asked: "How is Carolyn, Roy?"

"Wonderful!" replied the poor, enamoured devil. "We're celebrating tonight—with Christine and old Toby, of course. We're going to the opera. Afterwards we're having a little party, just the four of us, in one of those private supper-rooms at the Capoulade. We're all meeting in the foyer at Convent Garden."

He glanced at his watch. "Carolyn's probably on her way in, now. Nuisance if this fog gets any worse. By the way, you haven't seen Toby, have you? He's popping in here for a minute before he goes home to put on a boiled shirt and collect Christine."

As we stood talking, I noticed that once or twice Roy put a hand lightly against his breast-pocket. But for what Raffles had said in the hansom, I probably should not have noticed the trifling gesture. As it was, it seemed to me positively to shout aloud the fact that on this night of fog, this perfect night for crime, the lively young diamond merchant indeed was carrying an anniversary gift for his young wife—a gift, undoubtedly, of diamonds.

"There's Toby," Roy said. "Excuse me."

He crossed to Toby Lucas, in the doorway, a burly fellow with a battered, cheerful face rubicund from the cold outside. Toby still wore his outdoor things; he carried a valise, and he greeted Roy with a broad grin, and the brothers-in-law crossed the hall and went upstairs together.

Henge and others drifted away to their engagements, leaving Raffles, Chastayne and myself at the bar. As we talked, Raffles, I knew was keeping an eye on the staircase visible through the doorway, watching for Roy Norcott to come down. I, too, kept an unobtrusive eye on the staircase.

After a few minutes, I saw Toby Lucas come down and stride across the hall to the street door. Roy Norcott did not appear. Raffles took out his watch, glanced at it, and said: "Time we had a bit of dinner, Bunny."

We took our leave of the monocled Chastayne and, as we went upstairs, Raffles said: "Roy's probably in the dining room, but we'd better make sure."

Roy was in the dining room, sure enough. We took a table, but had not yet ordered dinner when Roy tossed down his napkin and, taking up a valise

which stood beside his chair, went out, giving us a grin and a wave as he passed.

"We'll give him a minute to get downstairs and collect his outdoor things," Raffles said. "Incidentally, did you notice he had that valise Toby brought? I wonder why."

As we went downstairs, the room with the bar was empty. There was nobody else in the hall as we collected our capes and opera hats, but as we went out on the steps we were just in time to see a hansom with Norcott in it go jingling off into the mist.

Luckily, another hansom was dropping a fare. As we took our seats, I was watchful for anyone else trailing along after the hansom ahead, but, during the whole of the journey, I saw nothing to arouse my suspicions.

A glimpse through the fog of vague figures humping sacks and carrying towers of round baskets on their heads, and a clinking of hooves on cobbles, told me that we had entered Convent Garden. Next moment, we pulled up in a crush of carriages under the misty radiance of the Opera House's innumerable gaslamps.

We hurried into the vast foyer. From the open doors to the auditorium came the bedlamite jangling of a large orchestra tuning up.

"There he is," Raffles said.

Following his glance, I felt an instant relief. Roy Norcott was in the act of depositing his hat and cape with the vestiaire. He lifted his valise to the counter.

And suddenly Raffles's fingers clamped on my arm. I looked at him quickly, and was astonished by his expression.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"We've been unforgivably dull, Bunny!" Raffles said grimly. "Our plan was to stick close to Roy Norcott because he was carrying diamonds. But, dammit, he no longer carries them. Toby Lucas has them. We've been following the wrong man!"

I gaped at him. Before I could speak, he drew me sharply to one side. I saw that Roy was coming across the foyer. I thought he was making for us, but his delighted smile was for a girl who had just come in. She was Carolyn, safely arrived from Roehampton.

"Darling!" I heard her say, as Roy squeezed her hands. "But where are Christine and Toby?"

"They'll be along," Roy said. "Fog's delayed Toby, I expect."

"Or a blackjack," Raffles muttered, as the couple moved away. "Come on, Bunny!"

From the brilliance and perfumed warmth of the foyer, we plunged out again into the gloom and chill of the fog. Raffles seized on a stationary

hansom, told the cabbie to make the best speed possible to Russell Square.

"That valise, Bunny!" he said, as the horse clattered off with us over the cobbles. "When we saw it had changed hands, we ought to have seen the whole story."

"What kind of surprise would diamonds be—to a diamond merchant's wife? None! He went to his friend and brother-in-law Toby—"

"Toby?" I said.

"The fur importer," said Raffles. "Roy went to Toby for something choice in furs for Carolyn's anniversary present. And Toby—whose everyday business is furs—would he give his wife Christine a nice fur as an anniversary surprise? Of course he wouldn't! What he did, quite obviously, was pick out from Roy's stock something choice in diamonds for Christine's anniversary present. And at the club tonight Toby gave Roy the valise with the fur in it, Roy gave Toby the diamonds."

"But, confound it," I said, "how could the Anniversary Thief, not knowing the chaps, possibly guess at this transaction between them?"

"I don't know," Raffles said. "All I know is that this criminal seems to go for jewels. Roy, who carried a fur, has reached the Opera House safe-

ly. Toby, who carried diamonds, has not turned up!"

The hatch above our heads opened. "Russwell Square, Guv," said the cabbie.

Raffles told the driver to wait and we made our way forward into the darkness. Suddenly a stentorian roar of "Cab!" stopped us both in our tracks. A door of a house standing open made a misty oblong of light, against which were silhouetted two figures standing on the porch steps.

"I wish you wouldn't," I heard a girl's voice protesting anxiously. "It's so silly to go to the opera after what's happened, Toby. You ought to be lying down. I'm sure I ought to have sent for a doctor. You've got an enormous lump on your head. You're probably concussed."

"Cab!" roared Toby. To the girl he said: "My head's been kicked repeatedly by rigger boots, Christine. It's been proved that it's impossible to concuss it. Don't worry, dear. I was knocked cold for a minute, but my head's all right, now—sound as a bell, except that I have to wear my opera hat on one side, because of the lump.

"What makes me boil is your present being pinched, prettiest thing in the whole of Roy's stock—diamond pendant, heart with an arrow through it. Ye

gods, when I think of a dirty, sneaking, porch-skulking, black-jacking footpad pinching a bloke's anniversary present for his wife . . . !

"But he's not going to spoil our party with Carolyn and Roy. . . ."

Raffles drew me away. We returned quickly to the hansom at the corner, and Raffles, paying the cabbie, freed him to answer Toby's shouts.

"Now, what?" I said. "Your Anniversary Thief is no longer just hypothetical. He's struck, he's grabbed the swag and he's vanished into the fog. There's no hope of finding him, now."

"I wonder," Raffles murmured. He lighted a cigarette, inhaled thoughtfully. "He was lying in wait for Toby. Therefore, he'd guessed somehow of the transaction between Toby and Roy.

"Bunny, I've been thinking about what you said in the hansom coming here. How did he guess—not knowing the chaps? Surely the simplest answer must be that he does know the chaps, knows them well."

"My heart jumped. "What are you driving at now?"

"Suppose," Raffles said, "he doesn't just pick his victims from the Marriage Announcement columns of the newspapers. Suppose his information about them is a great deal more personal and detailed than that.

Suppose that, in fact, he's a fellow who attends a good many weddings of chaps like Toby and Roy. You catch my drift?"

I stared at him under the wan nimbus of the street-lamp. I recalled the conversation in the club this evening. I felt a sudden, tingling excitement.

"I know what's in your mind," I said. "And it is possible—"

"Possible enough," he said, "to make a call on the chap. I know where he lives. Come on, we can walk it quicker than find a cab now. It's not far. He lives just off Bond Street—Oxford Street end. He has a flat."

It took us the best part of thirty minutes in the fog before we were standing on the pavement of a turning off Bond Street, peering up at a set of first-floor windows.

Raffles led the way into the entrance hall of the flats, and up tiled stairs to a tiled landing with a palm and gas-jet. Along to the left, where a second flight of stairs led upward, was a door with a polished nameplate and letter-slot, and a coir mat outside it.

"That's his place," Raffles said. He reached up, turned out the gas-jet. I felt him drop on one knee on the mat, to push up the letter-slot and peer through it.

"All dark in there," he whispered, straightening up. "It's

worth having a prowl around."

As he spoke, he was working on the door with the picklock he always carried. I heard scarcely a sound, yet in a few seconds he had the door open. He drew me quickly inside, closed the door, relocked it with the picklock. Only then did he strike a match and hold it up.

I saw that we were in a small, well-furnished hall.

Before us, a door stood open. Raffles moved forward to it, holding up the match. Over his shoulder, I saw that the room was a large, comfortable sitting-room. Moving forward, Raffles touched the last flicker of the match to one of a pair of gas-globes above the mantelpiece. The mantle popped alight.

Raffles moved quickly from picture to picture, lifting each slightly to glance behind it. He found no safe. He paused, looked keenly about the room, then crossed to a tall bookcase to the left of the fireplace. The lower part of it had sliding wooden doors. Raffles dropped on one knee, slid the doors open, chuckled quietly. "Here we are, Bunny."

Looking over his shoulder, I saw a squat, square safe. But suddenly he slid the doors shut and rose smoothly, putting a finger to his lips. We listened. Someone was coming up the tiled stairs—at the run.

Raffles reached up, turned out the gas. Then he thrust me behind the window-curtains and followed me.

A key sounded in the lock of the hall door. I heard the door open, slam shut. Footsteps came into the room, a match scraped, a gas-mantle popped.

Light showed through the gap at the edge of the curtains. I could see Raffles, on my left and nearer the gap, peering side-long through it. I could see part of the bookcase to the left of the fireplace. I did not breathe. I heard the doors which concealed the safe slide open with a bang, and I knew our man must be opening the safe.

Stealthily, Raffles reached upward with both hands. He took a double grip on the red chenille curtain. He waited, peering sideways through the gap at the curtain-edge. Suddenly he gave a violent downward yank, ripping the curtain from its rings. He launched himself obliquely forward, falling, curtain and all, on top of the man kneeling at the safe.

Shrouded by the curtain, the man could not see us. Pinned by Raffles's weight, he struggled violently, but the folds of the curtain hampered him and muffled his shouts.

Raffles nodded me urgently towards the other curtain. He did not speak for fear that the man might recognize his voice.

I divined Raffles's intention and, whipping up a dagger letter-knife from the top of the bookcase, I plunged the knife into the curtain still hanging before the window.

Thankful for the fog shrouding the panes, I ripped the curtain downwards, sawed off a strip. I made a slipknot in it, nosed it over the man's flailing ankles, jerked it tight.

I slashed two more strips from the curtain. Raffles slid them under the man, knotted them to pinion his arms. In a minute or so, he was thoroughly wrapped up and trussed in the curtain. He went on struggling, rolling, squirming about on the carpet as Raffles rose and picked something from the floor, held it up for me to see. His gray eyes danced. The object that dangled by a slender chain from his finger was a heart-shaped diamond pendant transfixed by an arrow.

The door of the safe stood open. Squatting beside it Raffles transferred a number of things to the pocket of his cape. He held up one of them for me to see. Rubies flashed hotly from a little gold bracelet—almost certainly Bill Foster's anniversary gift to his wife Kathy.

Raffles rose. He took a sheet of notepaper from a letter-stand on the bookcase. With a pencil he scrawled a few words in capitals on the paper, held it

up for me to see: FROM A FRIEND. He tucked it with the diamond pendant into an envelope, flipped the gummed edge along his tongue-tip, addressed the envelope to MR. TOBY LUCAS, thrust it into his pocket.

Taking another sheet of note-paper, he scrawled again in capitals.

YOU HAVE 24 HOURS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. AT MIDNIGHT TOMORROW SCOTLAND YARD WILL BE INFORMED OF THE IDENTITY OF THE ANNIVERSARY THIEF — WITH EVIDENCE.

He put the paper into the empty safe. He winked at me, jerked his head at the door. We crossed to it, paused for a moment to look back at the trussed-up monstrosity which was grunting, writhing, knocking over chairs and occasional tables in its indefatigable contortions. Raffles closed the door on the strange spectacle.

He broke our prudent silence as we emerged into the fog and turned left towards Bond Street.

Chuckling, he said: "Getting himself untangled should keep him busy for half an hour or so, I think. Tomorrow we'll post Bill Foster's bracelet, with another 'From a Friend' note. Toby's pendant we'll deal with right away. The other items from the safe we shall have to

think about a our leisure. Not much can be done tonight."

"Now, the opera must be pretty well over. We'll get along to the Capoulade. This sounds like a hansom jingling up, now. Don't let the cabbie see your face, Bunny."

I understood this when, arriving at Henrietta Street, Raffles stopped the hansom at the corner, tipped the cabbie liberally, gave him the envelope addressed to Toby, and asked him to drop it at the Capoulade.

The fog was dense along Henrietta Street and, as the hansom rolled off, we followed, walking quickly, keeping it in sight. A hundred yards along the street, it pulled up before the Capoulade.

The cabbie climbed down from his perch, stumped into the restaurant, reappeared, climbed to his perch again, and drove off.

"That's that," said Raffles. "Now for a well-earned supper."

Despite the fog, the Capoulade, was crowded but we were lucky enough to get a table. I felt lighthearted and, having missed my dinner, quite ravenous. Munching with gusto, I looked around at the animated scene—and a sudden rigour as of lockjaw seized upon me.

Across the room, I had caught the glitter of a monocle.

"What's the matter?"

I swallowed my mouthful with an effort.

"Chastayne!" I said.

Raffles glanced across at the man-about-town, who was supping with a very pretty woman.

"What about him?"

"*What about him?*" I said.

"That conversation at the club! About his being 'the perennial wedding guest, never the groom,' and about his being a rich man today if he had back all the money he's spent on wedding presents in his time! I thought—"

"You thought Chastayne was the man we left trussed up?" Raffles said. He looked at me curiously. "We knew that the method of the Anniversary Thief was to get ahead of his man and lie in wait for him.

"When I said he might well be a man who attended a lot of weddings, and who knew Roy and Toby intimately, I certainly thought it possible that he was someone who belonged to the club, and was with us there tonight.

"But obviously he had to be someone who saw Toby arrive with the valise, saw him go upstairs with Roy, guessed what was going on between them and therefore left the club before Toby did, so as to be lying in wait for him in his own porch.

"That couldn't possibly have been Chastayne, who stayed talking at the bar with us long

after Toby had left. My dear old chap, the man who left the club at the right time to lie in wait for Toby, and who certainly attends far more weddings than Chastayne, is Philip Henge, of course—the bow-tied, velvet-jacketed, fashionable photographer with a flat over his shop just off Bond Street."

I finished my supper in a dream. I could not get over my curious misconception. But, towards one o'clock, a rather rewarding thing happened. Up on the gallery landing of the restaurant the door of one of the private supper rooms opened. The four people who came out were the two pretty, dark-haired, blue-eyed sisters, Christine and Carolyn, and their husbands, Roy and Toby.

All four—including Toby, despite a visible lump on his head—seemed gay and excited. And I noticed that Carolyn, the young diamond merchant's wife, wore a beautiful fur, while there sparkled at the throat of Christine, the young furrier's wife, an exquisite diamond pendant in the shape of a heart transfixed by an arrow.

From the landing, the four caught sight of us. They waved happily. Raffles rose to his feet, and I followed his example. Together, we raised our glasses to the radiant girls above us.

"Happy Anniversary!" called A. J. Raffles.

very,
very
dark
mink

by . . . Elizabeth
Sanxay Holding

Mink can be expensive—in
fact extremely expensive, as
one man was to find out. . . .

PENNINGTON sat in the Company's office, smoking a pipe, because Captain Gregg might come in, and he despised cigarettes. "Just dropped in . . .," he said, to Larkin, and hoped he sounded, and looked, very nonchalant.

Larkin was working on a ledger. "Yeah," he said.

"I was just wondering . . .," said Pennington. "Surveyors still working on the old *Dos Santos*?"

"Finished," said Larkin. "She's in fine shape. She'll make her next run the fifteenth."

God! If old Gregg would just put in a word for me with the company—let me get back in *Dos Santos* . . . I'm so damn sick of this Liverpool run.

"Lady for you on the telephone, Mr. Pennington," said the receptionist.

"*Couldn't* be," said Pennington, astounded. "There's nobody who'd know about getting me here."

"Well, one lady anyhow, Mr. Pennington," said the receptionist, archly. "She's called you up two or three times before."

Cynthia couldn't betray John—he'd been so kind, so good, so wonderful to her. Pennington could understand this, after a fashion, understand and still resent it, and yet come to her aid immediately when a blackmailer threatened her—because of him. Who was the man who knew Albert Pennington's secret? WHO?

"I'll see . . . ," he said, and rose, tall, slim, neat, boyish-looking for his thirty years. He sat down on the edge of the receptionist's desk and took up the telephone. He was sure it was a mistake, but it was rather gratifying that the receptionist and Larkin and another fellow working in a corner were obviously interested. "Pennington speaking," he said.

"Albert . . . ?"

He slipped off the desk and nearly fell; he hopped on one foot for a moment to get back.

"It's—you . . ."

"I've been trying for days to get you. Albert, I *must* see you, at once."

"Why, certainly!"

"Where?"

"You say."

"At the Charleroy, on East 55th."

"Sure. Certainly. Right away."

He hung up, but he didn't get the instrument straight, and it fell off, dragging the base to the floor with a crash and the delicate tinkle of the bell. It frightened him, that little bell; it was like a ghostly signal.

"Oh . . . I'm sorry . . . ," he said, and picked it up. "I'm *very* sorry. If you'll tell Captain Gregg I just stopped by. Same address—over in Staten Island."

"Yes, we have it," the receptionist assured him.

"Thank you," he said. "I'm *very* sorry."

He went out, into the narrow downtown street, where the autumn wind jumped at his throat; he set off for the subway station with his long, limber stride, and in his heart there was a sense of anger, and a great dread. It had taken him so long to get over Cynthia, and now, when he had at last stopped thinking of her, she had come back, like this. He could have endured it, he thought, if he had happened to see her somewhere, on a street, perhaps; he could, he thought, have felt only anger. But the sound of her voice, sweet, high, and clear, had so shaken him that he felt a sort of tremor; when he got his fare out of his pocket, his hand was unsteady.

"I'm terribly sorry, Albert," she had said, with tears raining down her face. "But I *can't* be treacherous to John. How could I, when he's always been so kind and good to me?"

"You don't love him," Albert had said. "And he's nothing but a damn stuffed shirt."

"I won't listen to that," she had said, sternly.

"And he doesn't love you. He couldn't love anybody. He married you because you were well-bred, and pretty, and one of the Vanderdorfs. Business asset for him."

"I *won't* listen!" she had cried.

And that had been the end.

She had gone up to her room in the Royal Castle, that enchanting hotel on the top of a hill in the West Indies island of Conchita. His ship was sailing at ten, and he had been in the lobby by eight, thinking, feeling sure she would come, if only for a moment, to say good-bye. But she had not come.

There'll be a letter in Trinidad when I get there, he thought. And when there was not, all right, he thought, there'll be one in New York, sure to be. But there had never been a letter, or a telephone call; nothing, no word for over two years. Her husband, John Harrowby, was the President of the steamship company, and once in a while Pennington saw him, going into his office, or coming out of it, a big, handsome, heavy man with gray hair and a scornful curl to his nostrils, a man old enough to be Cynthia's father. A very much disliked man, because of his arrogance, his bad humor, his lack of any consideration, or even justice toward his employees. He would nod at Pennington, but without speaking; he scarcely knew him. One of our officers, that was all.

"I hate him," Miss Allen, his secretary had once said to Pennington. "Here it is, Friday afternoon, and he tells me he wants me *all day* tomorrow. When I had such a beautiful date, too. I don't know why I

stand him—except that I'm saving up for my trousseau. And I don't see why his wife stands him. She's a sweet thing, and *very* pretty. Well, if she knew as much about him as I do . . ."

The buzzer had rung for her then, and she had gone, and he hadn't had a chance to talk to her since then. I wouldn't have asked her any questions, anyhow. You don't do that, about a man you're working for. And anyhow, it wouldn't matter. I wouldn't go running to Cynthia with any tales I'd heard about her husband. It's all up to her. If she'd wanted to see me, I'd have come. Any time.

And what did I do, anyhow, that was so—unforgivable? I misunderstood her—and when she told me, I told her how sorry I was. But, my God! Almost any man would have misunderstood.

They had met on board the *Dos Santos*, on the South American run. He was Second Officer, and she was a passenger of the utmost importance, the owner's wife; she had the best cabin, she sat at the Captain's table. The first night out, she had spoken to him on the promenade deck, asked him some questions; she had seemed to want to go on talking, and he was willing enough. He thought she was lovely.

It was she who had sought him out. She had asked him when he was off duty. Come and

talk to me then, she had said, and she would be waiting for him, with a wide smile at the sight of him. Her husband had flown down to Rio but she didn't like flying; she was taking the ship to Conchita where he was coming in a day or two for some business reason, and then they would fly back to New York.

"But if you don't like flying—" Pennington had said.

John's always thinking he can get me to like it," she had answered. "He's sure I will. He's going to buy a plane of his own, after we get home."

He found out that this was the first trip she had ever made. Except to Florida, for our honeymoon, she said. He had found out a good deal about her from their talks; she was the only child of a widowed mother, who had brought her up in what Pennington thought a preposterous and dangerous way. She had gone to a private school, and later to a Junior College; she had had plenty of girl friends, but she had never gone out with a boy.

"Mother didn't want me to," she had told Pennington. "She said that any boy I liked was welcome to come and see me at home, and after two or three times she'd know if he was all right to go out with. But I hardly ever met a boy. If one of the girls asked me to a party, Mother said she'd have to meet

the girl's mother, and—well, that was sort of embarrassing. I felt I'd rather stay home than tell that to any of my friends."

So she had stayed home; she had had no fun, no gaiety, no beaux. "But I loved school," she had told him. "I loved being in the plays we gave, and things like that. And Mother took me to lots of matinees and concerts. She played the piano herself, wonderfully, and often she'd read out loud. She's a wonderful reader."

"I bet . . . !" Pennington said. It was plain that she hadn't been unhappy; she was not unhappy now. But she likes me, all right, he had thought. Once he had taken her hand, her dear little hand, and it was a few moments before she drew it away.

"How did you meet—Mr. Harrowby?" he had asked her.

"Oh, he's a friend of Uncle's, in Richmond," she had answered. "He'd been coming to our apartment for ages—over a year—before I ever dreamed how he felt. And then . . . He was so kind and nice to Mother and me . . . Mother's gone down to Richmond, but he sends her a check every month, and she comes to visit us, quite often."

She didn't love Harrowby; Pennington was sure of that. She admired him, and she had been taught to believe that wives love their husbands, automatically. She doesn't know what it

means to be in love, Pennington thought. But she likes me, all right. And he liked her. It was more than liking; he was charmed by her, by her beauty, her gentleness, her courtesy, by her strange lack of worldly knowledge. I used to lie awake at night, and call her "the Sleeping Beauty." I hoped I'd be the one to wake her up.

Then the Captain had got a radio to stop overnight at Conchita, to wait for a belated cargo for inland.

"The old man's as sore as hell about it," Pennington had told her. "It's generally only a three-hour stop, and this throws out his whole schedule. Me, I like it fine. It's one of the prettiest islands, and there's a little hotel there I stopped at before. Run by a French couple. Wonderful food, wonderful view." He had gone on and on, talking about the Royal Castle Hotel, because it was growing harder and harder to talk to her, when this was the end.

"Where are you staying?" he had asked.

"Oh, some friends of John's have invited me there," she had answered. "The Governor's A.D.C. and his wife."

It was late afternoon when they came into the harbor at Conchita; the sea was deep blue and quiet; behind the pretty little town there were low hills, green, and almost treeless.

"The rainy season's just over," he had said. "In another month or so, you'd find everything parched and yellow."

"Couldn't you take me to your wonderful hotel?" she had asked.

He had been too much astounded to answer for a moment.

"But—the A.D.C.'s sure to come down to the dock and meet you," he had said. "It—I don't see—"

"I'll say I'm staying on board tonight to finish my packing," she had said. "Then, after he's gone, I'll come to your hotel. I'll certainly be there in time for dinner."

"Well . . .," he had said. "Fine! Fine!"

But he hadn't known what to make of it. She doesn't know what a risk she's taking, he thought. In these little islands, everything gets around.

He had been on a hotel terrace waiting for her, and, after it had grown dark, a taxi had stopped, and out she had got. With a suitcase.

"I'll register as Miss Birch," she had said. "I've taken off my ring."

She had been excited, as he had never before seen her, or imagined her. She had been wonderful at dinner; she had not seemed naive but sparkling and joyous.

"I told the stewardess that I

didn't feel very well and didn't want any dinner," she had said. "I told her I just wanted to rest, and not be disturbed until tomorrow morning. As soon as it was dark, I came ashore. I don't *think* anyone noticed me."

"Look here!" he had said. "Look here! I mean—why did you do this?"

"I wanted — only this one night . . .," she had said.

All right; what would any man understand by that? He had been almost stunned by delight; as they strolled down the hill together, he could not speak for a time. Then he said, haltingly.

"You're so—very generous. You're — so wonderful — and beautiful—and darling."

"I'm not. I'm so glad you told me about this heavenly place. It's even better than you said."

He had put his arms around her, and she had permitted that, but when he had drawn her closer to him, she had pushed him away.

"Please, Albert, no!"

"Let's go back now," he said. "Your room's on the floor below mine. Shall I come—in an hour?"

"To my room?" she had said.

"I'll take care that nobody sees me. You can trust me, darling girl."

"To my room!" she had repeated, stopping on the driveway. "Did you think I meant—*that?*"

He had taken his arm from around her waist.

"Yes," he had said. "That's what I thought."

Then had come the tears, and all the rest of it. I'm terribly sorry, Albert . . . I *won't* listen. And that was the end. Not a note, not a word from her. I don't want to see her now, he told himself. I don't know what the hell she wants, after all this time, but I don't want to go. She treated me as if I were a heel, a wolf, a cad. She . . . He could not find quite the words for it, but it had been as if she had pushed him off a steep cliff, after leading him to the brink with her sweetest allurements. Then she had gone off, without a word, not caring what hurt he might be suffering. A hurt to his pride as a man, to the tenderness and honest devotion he had felt for her, a shock and a loss from which he had tried his best to recover, by not thinking of her, by forgetting her.

Only, he hadn't forgotten. Not any of it. When he came out of the subway, the wind leaped at him again, strong, very cold for October. Next month we'll be getting those damn North Atlantic gales, he thought. All right! I don't want to see her. A prude, that's what she is. A stupid, heartless little prude.

Has she changed, he thought. No; not in two years. She was—I thought she was lovely. Gen-

tle, and kind. I thought she cared for me. A little anyhow. Well, she didn't care, and she wasn't what I imagined. The Sleeping Beauty. God, what a fool I was!

The Charleroy was a nice-looking place, with a striped awning over the porte-cochere; the room inside was somewhat dim, lit by rose-shaded lamps on all the tables; he did not see her until she raised a white-gloved hand. He crossed to her table in a corner.

"Well!" he said. "How are you?"

"Fine, thanks. And you?"

She was changed. She was thinner; there were faint hollows under her cheekbones; that dewy look had gone, that sweet freshness. Her dress was more sophisticated, a black dress with a high neck, a small black hat with a high loop of velvet on each side; over the back of her chair was draped a fur coat. She had a new poise, too; she seemed entirely at ease. He hated her for that, for being so unmoved at seeing him.

"I'm sorry to bother you," she said. "But there's something—"

"Suppose we have a cocktail first?" he suggested, and she agreed. "Cigarette?" he asked, and she accepted that, too. "You didn't use to smoke, or drink cocktails," he said.

"No . . .," she said. "Albert, I want to tell you this *now*. I

want to get it over with. It's—difficult."

Why come to me with your troubles? he thought. You've got a rich husband; you must have friends. Why me?

"Something gone wrong?" he asked, without even pretending too much interest.

"It's blackmail," she said. "And this time I can't pay."

"Too bad. It's always a mistake to start that."

"I asked you to meet me, because, you see, you're involved, too."

"*What!*"

"It was about a year ago. He said he had a note to deliver to me, personally, so I went to the door. He was very shabby, and I thought it was some scheme for begging. But he went away before I'd even opened it. Here it is."

From her black crocodile handbag she brought out an envelope, addressed in printing to Mrs. John Harrowby. The note he took out was printed, too.

I guess you would not like your husband to know you spent the night with Pennington at the Royal Castle Hotel. If you wanna keep this quiet, come to Staten Island ferry house at eleven tomorrow morning, and bring one hundred dollars in cash. A boy will come up and ask you have you got the ticket; and you give him the envelope. If you got anyone with you or

watching you sure will be sorry.

"You paid this?" Pennington asked.

"Yes. There's been another one, every month, but I burned them up. This one's enough, isn't it?"

"It's plenty," said Pennington. "How much have you paid?"

"It's kept on getting more and more," she said. "I've paid twenty-six hundred dollars. He—or she—wants five hundred tomorrow. And I haven't got it. I can't ask John for it without making him suspicious, because he pays two hundred and fifty a month into my account, and he knows I haven't bought anything for a long time. And if I sold my rings, or my fur coat or anything, he'd notice that. But I can't pay it tomorrow."

"Certainly not. Don't ever pay another cent. What harm do you think your blackmailer could do you? He could tell your husband, but I'll take it for granted your husband will believe you when you tell him the truth. He might say you'd been a bit indiscreet, but—"

"But what about *you*?" she cried. "Don't you realize what it could do to *you*? You'd lose your berth, of course, and I don't think you'd ever get another with any other company, after they knew. And they would know, you can be sure of that."

Her poise was not so good,

after all. Her hands gave her away; they were trembling! but her voice was steady, and she looked at him steadily.

"And what about next month, and the month after, and forever and forever?"

"A great-aunt died a little while ago, and left me three thousand dollars. The lawyer says he can get at least half of it advanced to me, but not till next month. John won't have to know. Then I'll hire a private detective, and he'll end this. And I'll pay you back then."

"I see! You want me to pay this blackmailer five hundred dollars cash tomorrow."

"He's got to be kept quiet till next month."

The same thing, in a way. Make use of him, make a fool of him. Then good-bye. She knew what a Second Officer's pay was, and what five hundred dollars would mean to him. He was not extravagant, and that was simply because he didn't want extravagant things. He was a very moderate drinker, he had no use for gambling; he was bored by hectic parties; he didn't spend money on women, because he ardently disliked women who wanted to get money from him.

But, on the other hand, he was not thrifty. He got what he wanted, and it had to be good. His uniforms and his shore-going clothes were custom-made; his shoes, hats, shirts, everything

he bought was of the best. He had a room on Staten Island with a retired tugboat captain and his wife, and he always brought home some present for the old lady at the end of every trip. He had a little niece, and he brought her presents; guava jelly, or a coral necklace, or something of the sort for his Mother's former colored maid, who did his laundry when he was ashore; he would lend money to a friend; he would help out someone in trouble. He bought and he spent what he wanted, and put the rest in the bank, without caring much about it. Why not? All he really wanted was some day to be master of a ship. There was no one dependent upon him, and he never gave thought to growing old or ill. But he resented this demand upon him, after what she had done to him, after these two black years.

"Damn convenient for the old lady to pop off just now," he said. "What would you have done, if she hadn't?"

"I don't know . . .," she said. "I tried to think of ways, but I couldn't."

Her voice was not steady now, and her long, slim hands were tightly clasped.

"If you don't do it tomorrow," she said, "you'll be ruined."

"All right!" he said. "I'll pay it—to save my job."

The same thing, in a way. He had thought at first that she needed his help, but she wouldn't have it so. It's all for your sake, Albert.

She ordered shrimp salad and a cup of coffee, and he had the same. He didn't care.

"I suppose I'll have to give you the cash," he said. "I couldn't take it to the ferry myself."

"I'm afraid you will. I'll meet you wherever you say."

"You'd better choose the trysting place," he said, and saw the color rise in her thin, lovely face.

She understood that, anyhow, he thought. She suggested the lobby of a department store on Forty-second Street, at half-past ten. She rose, and he helped her on with her fur coat.

He went back to his room then. Mrs. Logan wanted him to eat with them, but he thanked her and said he had a date, because he didn't feel like talking. He went to a nearby diner, and on the way home, he bought a paper book and a couple of magazines. I'll go to bed, and read myself to sleep, he thought.

But he could not read. He opened one of the magazines, and then it came down upon him, like a stifling dark cloud, all the pain and the loss and the unbearable remorse. What would you have done, if the old lady hadn't popped off? he had

asked her, and she had answered, I don't know. I tried to think of a way.

For a year she had endured this dread, this strain; the mark of it was plain. And she was thinking about me, he thought. Worrying about me, more than about herself. I love her. I love her, he thought. If I could only help her. The money's nothing. But maybe her legacy won't come in time. And if it does, she wouldn't know how to pick out a private detective. She might get hold of a crook, might get in a hell of a lot more trouble. If I could help her . . . Find out who's doing the blackmailing. The stewardess? One of the crew? The taxi driver who took her to the Royal Castle? It could be any one of a dozen, a score of people. She didn't know; she hadn't any idea of the risk she was taking. Or how I was going to see it. How I'd feel. It was my fault, the whole thing. I ought to have known she wasn't that sort.

He got up early and had breakfast in the kitchen with Mrs. Logan; then he went to his bank in New York. He got there too early, and he waited in the street for it to open. The wild, cold wind was still blowing. The sky was growing darker. Wind's shifting, he thought. In four days, I'll be off—to Liverpool, and maybe this is the last time. . . .

The bank opened, and he drew out a thousand dollars which was almost all he had, and asked for an envelope; then he took a taxi uptown to Forty-second Street. He was early for their appointment, but she was there before him, lovely and elegant in her fur coat and that winged black hat. But so pale, too fragile. . . .

"Albert . . . ?" she said, as if it were a question.

"Look," he said, standing close to her and speaking in a low tone. "I brought a thousand, so that you wouldn't worry in case you didn't get your legacy in time."

He handed her the envelope, and she bent her head, to put it in her handbag; when she looked up, her dark lashes were wet, her dark eyes were shining with tears.

"I'll be back, the end of next month," he said. He waited, but she said nothing. "Can we have lunch together, then?" He waited again.

"Can I—ever see you again?" he asked, curtly.

"I—can't," she said. "I'm afraid."

"Of more blackmailing?"

"No!" she said, with a flash of her old spirit. "I can't—I mustn't see you again. That's why you never heard from me. I knew then, that night—I knew I mustn't see you again."

"You don't mean . . . ? Look

here, Cynthia . . . ! You don't mean . . ."

"Yes, I do," she said. "I knew then. I knew—it *wasn't* a happy marriage. John's always been kind and generous to me, but . . . I haven't been a good wife to him. I wasn't . . . I couldn't pretend . . ."

"Yes . . .," said Pennington. "It was—you mean—it was me?"

"It can't be," she said. "John's my husband. I gave him—my promise—to be faithful—for better or for worse."

"Where do I come in?" Pennington asked.

"Nowhere," she said, with a smothered sob. "I can't betray John, when he's always been so good—never done anything . . . I can't ruin Mother's life for my own happiness."

"What about my happiness?" he asked.

"You're young, and you're very attractive. You'll find someone else."

"Cynthia! Look here! I—"

She laid her hand on his arm.

"Albert, I've *got* to go, or I'll be late. Albert, my dear, my dear, dear Albert . . ." She gave him a kiss on the cheek, so light, she moved away so quickly that she was in the street before he recovered himself. Again he helped her into a taxi, and again she was gone.

He walked all the way downtown to William Street, and

strolled into his company's office.

"Miss Allen busy?" he asked the receptionist.

"The Boss-Man isn't here, but maybe she has a lot of work."

Miss Allen came out of the private office, cheerful and pretty.

"How's about lunch?" Pennington asked.

"Fine!" she said. "The tycoon won't be back till half-past two, so I've got a little time, for a change."

He had taken her out to lunch before; she liked him, and she was glad to go, but she had no illusions about the invitation. Probably he liked her company; most people did, but she was well aware that his chief reason was to hear about the office doings. Plenty of the other officers did that, and she knew exactly which ones she could talk to freely, and which ones were not to be trusted. They went to a restaurant where they had gone before, a nice little place.

"No, thanks," she said. "No cocktail, when I'm going back to work. But I can always eat."

"How's the trousseau coming along?" he asked.

"Too good to be true," she answered. "Mother and Dad are simply outdoing themselves, and a lot of old great-aunts, and uncles, and cousins that I hardly remember are creeping out from under rocks and giving me things. And we've got an apart-

ment promised for the first of December. It is a horrid, dark little place and I know it has cockroaches. And it's in Jamaica—if you ever heard of that.”

“Certainly. Know it intimately. It's the place where you change trains.”

“We're glad enough to get it, though,” she said. “I told you the *Dos Santos* is going out on the fifteenth of November, didn't I? I know you're interested; you were always so crazy about her.”

“You get that way,” said Pennington.

He realized that she was telling him what she thought he wanted to know, but this time the smart kid was wrong. He had remembered what she had said before. “If she”—Cynthia, she meant—“knew what I know about him,” and he had come with the hope that he would find out something that would completely discredit Harrowby. If Cynthia found he had another woman, she'd change, she'd feel damn differently. Because she's like that. Prudish, maybe. Or maybe it's just honorable. Just good.

“They haven't decided yet about the personnel,” she went on.

“Except that Captain Decker's going to be in command, and he wants to choose his own officers. The board won't allow that, they say it leads to ‘favor-

itism’, and Harrowby wants to choose his own pets.”

“That's the way things go,” said Pennington.

“He has to watch his step now,” she said. “Business hasn't been so good the last two years. But of course you know that. There's the new line competing with us, new ships, and better rates. And then there was that trouble with the union. The board didn't like the way he handled that. He *couldn't* negotiate. He just wants to rule everything and everybody. Now they're talking about a ten percent cut in salaries, and, boy! Will that hit him! He gets a big salary, but he's a terrific spender. A penthouse, and a French couple to look after them, and a new car that's out of this world. He plays the races, too.”

“And his girl-friend . . . ?”

“I didn't say he had a girl-friend.”

“That's what I understood you to say, yesterday. But I thought . . .”

“Well, yes, he has,” she said. “It's not much of a secret, anyhow. People have seen them around together. She's got a bit part in a Broadway show. I went to see it, out of curiosity, and she's certainly good-looking—if you like that type. One of those haughty blondes. *You* know. And what a name she's dreamed up for herself! Angela Verity, no less. She's got him roped and

tied, all right, and he's plenty scared."

"Scared of her?"

"Yes. For one thing, he's got to keep respectable, or the board wouldn't stand for it, even if he is the President. They could vote him out, you know. And then she takes him for plenty, and he knows she wouldn't bother with an old stuffed shirt like him if he didn't give."

"How do *you* know what he gives her?"

"I guess I don't know the half of it," she admitted, and Pennington was pleased to see the color in her cheeks, the fiery look she had. Her anger and her scorn for Harrowby were, he thought, leading her to say more than she would like to remember later on. "But I can't help noticing things, can I? I have to get papers out of his desk, and twice I saw boxes from a jeweler. All right! I opened them. I know I shouldn't have but, after all, I'm human. One was a pin, a good one, too, and the other was a platinum cigarette case, with A. V. engraved on it."

Pennington didn't need to hear any more. This Angela Verity would be easy enough to find; he could ask questions, do a little bribing of elevator boys, maids, and he might be able to find a girl who hated her, and would talk. I could do that before I sail, he thought, and if

Cynthia had the facts, if she knew for sure he'd been cheating on her . . . Only, of course, she wouldn't say that. She'd say "unfaithful," and I don't think she could take it. She'd never be unfaithful, to anyone. And she looks at marriage as an absolutely loyal partnership.

He wanted to get away now, and start his investigation, but Miss Allen had more to say.

"And that mink coat . . . !" she said. "You can see what a spot he's in, when a man in his position has to buy her a mink coat on the installment plan. I suppose she saw his wife wearing one, and told him she wanted one exactly like it. Well, she's got it, but how! When the first bill came from the furrier's, I thought it was just an ad, but I always open everything, just to be sure. When I saw it was a bill for a monthly installment on a mink coat, well! Three hundred dollars. *And* overdue! You could have knocked me down with a feather. The coat had a number, and one lunch time I went into the furrier's. Of course he'd have to pay something down on it, and carrying charges, but even I didn't know he's been getting these bills for almost a year. He told me not to open any others, so I haven't. But you can see what he'll do for his gorgeous blonde."

"Yes," said Pennington.

When at last he could get away from her, he started walking uptown, not going anywhere, just thinking. He went into a movie and sat through two shows, and he couldn't have told anyone much about them. He came out at seven o'clock, and he had made up his mind. He was going to take a chance, and he was staking everything in the world he valued on it. If he was wrong, if he failed, he would be disgraced, his career, that was his chosen life, would be broken and ruined, and Cynthia would be horrified, disgusted, lost for good and all. But I'm going to try it, he said to himself. I think I'm right.

He looked in the telephone book and called Harrowby's apartment. Harrowby himself answered, which is what uneasy men do.

"Pennington speaking, sir. Second Officer in the *Beresford*. I'd like to see you for a moment, sir."

"*What?*" said Harrowby. "See me in the office."

"It's a personal matter, sir."

"I don't see my employees here at home," said Harrowby. "Speak to me in the office, Pennington."

"Sorry, sir, but it's not a business matter. It's personal. It's—" He paused a moment. "It's about a mink coat, sir." There was a moment's silence.

"Very well!" said Harrowby.

"Wait downstairs, and I'll see you in the lobby."

"I'd rather come up, sir."

"Well, you can't," said Harrowby, and hung up.

Pennington went directly to the apartment, got into an elevator at once, and when he rang the bell, Harrowby himself opened the door, the very image of dignity and prestige.

"Now, see here!" he said. "I'll have none of this. If you want to see me, go to the office."

"This isn't an office matter, sir," said Pennington. "Of course, if you'd rather I got the police—"

"The p—" said Harrowby. "Come in." He shut the door after Pennington. "What are you talking about?"

"I'd like Mrs. Harrowby to be here, sir," said Pennington, still with his polite Second Officer's manner.

"Well, she's not going to be," said Harrowby. But she was there already, in the long living-room approached by a short flight of stairs. She looked like a school-girl, in a black skirt and a plain white blouse; she was white as paper, and wide-eyed with fear.

"I have a friend who's a detective," Pennington said, not looking at her. "And he tells me he's seen Mrs. Harrowby—or his agents have seen—go down to South Ferry for several months, and give a sealed en-

velope to someone who approached her, and asked for 'the tickets'. This detective is sure it's blackmail."

She leaned back against the wall; none of them sat down.

"Blackmail," said Pennington, "is one of the dirtiest, lowest rackets there are. And anyone who's ever met Mrs. Harrowby would know that she's—beyond reproach. If she paid blackmail, it was only to spare someone else."

"She didn't," said Harrowby. "She— One moment."

He went out of the room, and came back with a bottle of Scotch and two glasses.

"Drink?" he asked Pennington.

"No, thank you, sir," said Pennington. "I also learned that a Miss Angela Verity has a fur coat—mink, dark mink, I believe, that's being paid for in installments. By the blackmailer."

Harrowby poured himself half a tumbler of Scotch, and gulped it down, neat.

"And—so what's your idea?" he asked.

"It's this, sir," said Pennington, still polite and quiet. "I think you've been blackmailing your wife, to pay for Miss Verity's mink coat."

Harrowby sat down, almost fell down, into a chair, and poured himself another big drink.

"You haven't any proof . . .," he said.

"I think I have, sir. Even for the police. You've given Miss Verity expensive presents. You've been seen around with her. You—"

Then he glanced at Cynthia, saw her still leaning against the wall. And his correct, polite manner vanished.

"You're a damn skunk," he said. "Getting money out of your wife, tormenting her, blackmailing her, to get money for your other woman."

Harrowby started on his other drink. He had faced angry union men; he had fought his own board. He knew when he could win, and he knew when he was licked.

"All right," he said. "What's the pay-off? How much d'you want?"

"I want you to give your wife a divorce."

"All right," said Harrowby, without hesitation. "Is that what you want, Cynthia?"

He looked at her; her lips parted a little, but she did not speak. She could not. For a moment Pennington could see, and understand, what this meant to her, what he himself had done to her. She had given up her own happiness; she had resolved to spend all her life in a loveless and wretched marriage, because to her marriage was a promise, and she kept her promises. For a

moment, he had the illusion that she was transfixed to the wall, the faithful, the innocent, the honorable, knowing herself most brutally exploited and betrayed. But I'll make it up to her, Pennington told himself. I'll make her happy.

"Well?" Harrowby asked. "Is that what you want?"

"Is it—what you want?" she asked. "Do you want—to marry—this other woman?"

"Well, to be frank, I do," he said. "I think she's going to be a famous actress, before long. She can entertain people. She—"

He stopped. But what he meant was obvious. She's everything that you're not.

"Then—you . . .," she said.

"All right!" said Harrowby, turning to Pennington. "Are you satisfied?"

"I want to be appointed Chief Officer on the *Dos Santos* when she sails."

"Chief . . .?"

"That's what I said. I've got my master's ticket. My record's absolutely clear."

"Well . . . And what else?"

"Nothing else."

"Then get out," said Harrowby.

Pennington looked at Cynthia.

"The Charleroy—at one, tomorrow?" he asked.

She raised her hand in a gesture he felt was assent.

"Now get out, you dirty blackmailer!" said Harrowby, and slammed the door after Pennington.

Blackmailer? Pennington said to himself, waiting for the elevator. Me? All right. I've got her out of this.

In Next Month's Issue—

PORT OF INTRIGUE, by F. Van Wyck Mason

ONE EYED ENGINEER, by George Fielding Eliot

THE CRIME IN NOBODY'S ROOM, by Carter Dickson

DEATH IN THE VALLEY, by Clifford Knight

MURDER TO MUSIC, a short novel by Fredric Brown

selected for you who read **THE SAINT DETECTIVE**

MAGAZINE.

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by . . . Sax Rohmer

Abu Tabah was at once a deeply spiritual man—and also one known to have dealings with strange forces and things living in the shadows of Secret Egypt. . . .

"I HEAR that the Harem Suite is occupied," said Sir Bert-ram Collis, bustling up to me as I sat smoking in the gardens of a certain Cairo hotel, which I shall not name because of the matters that befell there. "Daphne is full of curiosity respecting the romantic occupant."

"Don't let Lady Collis be too sure," put in Chundermeyer, "that there is anything romantic about the occupant."

"Your definition of romance, Chundermeyer," I interrupted, "would probably be 'a diamond the size of a Spanish onion.'"

Chundermeyer smiled, but it was a smile in which his dark eyes, twinkling through the pebbles of horn-rimmed spectacles, played no part. I must confess that the society of this unctuous partner in the well-known Madras firm of Isaacs and Chundermeyer palled some-

Sax Rohmer has undoubtedly contributed more to the folklore of our times than any other living writer in this field. This may seem a broad statement, but think about it for a while and you will have to admit that we are right. This has, however, meant that many, especially in these more impatient decades, do not realize that Sax Rohmer is also the author of a number of extraordinary novels dealing with aspects of Egyptian and Near Eastern life that Colonel Nasser's generation dismisses as unimportant—when talking to Americans. His TALES OF SECRET EGYPT, reports on, among other things, the doings of a Muslim learned man with somewhat unorthodox habits, and how, on this occasion, he attempted to complicate life for Omar of Ispahân. . .

what at times. He, on the other hand, was eternally dropping into a chair beside me, and proffering huge and costly cigars from a huge and costly case. This sort of parvenu persecution is one of the penalties of being recognized by Debrett.

"As a matter of fact," I continued, "the occupant of the Harem Suite is no less romantic a personage than the daughter of the Mudîr (Governor) of the Fayum."

"Really!" said Chundermeyer, with that sudden interest which mention of a title always aroused in him. "Surely it is most unusual for so highly placed a Moslem lady to reside at a hotel?"

"Most unusual," I replied. "Of course such a thing would be inconceivable in India; but the management of this establishment, who cater almost exclusively to tourists, find, I am told, that a 'harem suite' is quite a good advertisement. The reason for the presence of this lady in the hotel is a diplomatic one. She is visiting Cairo in order to witness the procession of *Asbura*, peculiarly sacred to Egyptian women, and it appears that, having no blood relations here, she could not accept the hospitality of any one of the big families without alienating the others."

"By Jove!" said Sir Bertram, "I must tell Daphne this yarn.

She'll be delighted! Come along, Kernaby; if we're to have tea at Mena House, it is high time we were off."

I left Chundermeyer to his opulent cigar without regret. That he was an astute man of affairs and an expert lapidary I did not doubt, for he had offered to buy my Hatshepsu scarab ring at a price exactly ten per cent below its trade value; but to my mind there is something almost as unnatural about a Hindu-Hebrew as about a Graeco-Welshman or a griffin.

Of course, Daphne Collis was not ready; and, Sir Bertram going up to their apartments to induce her to hurry, I strolled out again into the gardens for a quiet cigarette and a cocktail. As I approached a suitable seat in a sort of charming little arbor festooned with purple blossom, a man who had been waiting there rose to greet me.

With a certain quickening of the pulse, I recognized Abu Tabâh, arrayed, as was his custom, in black, only relieved by a small snowy turban, which served to enhance the ascetic beauty of his face and the mystery of the wonderful, liquid eyes.

He inclined his head in that gesture of gentle dignity which I knew; and: "I have been awaiting an opportunity of speech with you, Kernaby Pasha," he said, in his flawless,

musical English, "upon a matter in which I hope you will consent to aid me."

Since this mysterious man, variously known as the *imám* and "the Magician," but whom I knew to be some kind of secret agent of the Egyptian Government, had recently saved me from assassination, to decline to aid him was out of the question. We seated ourselves in the arbor.

"I should welcome an opportunity of serving you, my friend," I assured him, "since your services to me can never be repaid."

His lips moved slightly in the curiously tender smile which a poor physiognomist might have mistaken for evidence of effeminacy, bending towards me with a cautious glance about.

"You are staying at this hotel throughout this Christmas festivities?" he asked.

"Yes; I have temporarily deserted Shephard's in order to accept the hospitality of Sir Bertram Collis, a very old friend. I shall probably return on the Tuesday following Christmas Day."

"There is to be a carnival and masquerade ball here tomorrow. You shall be present?"

"I hope so," I replied in surprise. "To what does all this tend?"

Abu Tabâh bent yet closer.

"Many of your friends and

acquaintances possess valuable jewels?"

"They do."

"Then warn them—individually, in order to occasion no general alarm—to guard these with the utmost care."

My surprise increased. "You alarm me," I said. "Are there rogues in our midst?"

"No," answered the *imám*, fixing his melancholy gaze upon my face; "so far as my knowledge bears me, there is but one, yet that one is worse than a host of others."

"Do you mean that he is here—in the hotel?"

Abu Tabâh shrugged his slim shoulders.

"If I knew his exact whereabouts," he replied, "there would be no occasion to fear him. All that I know is that he is in Cairo; and since many richly attired women of Europe and America will be here tomorrow night, of a surety Omar Ali Khan will also be here. Of this I am certain."

I shook my head in perplexity.

"Omar Ali Khan?"—I began.

"Ah," continued Abu Tabâh, "to you that name conveys nothing, but to me it signifies Omar of Ispahân, 'the Father of Thieves.' Do you remember," fixing his strange eyes hypnotically upon me, "the theft of the sacred *burko* of Nefîseh?"

"Quite well," I replied hast-

ily; since the incident represented an unpleasant memory.

"It was Omar of Ispahân who stole it from the shrine. It was Omar of Ispahân who stole the blue diamond of the Rajah of Bagore from the treasure-room at Jullapore, and Omar of Ispahân"—lowering his voice almost to a whisper—"who stole the Holy Carpet ere it reached Mecca!"

"What!" I cried. "When did that happen? I never heard of such an episode!"

Abu Tabâh raised his long, slim hand warningly.

"Be cautious!" he whispered; "the flowers of the garden, the palms in the grove, the very sands of the desert have ears! The lightest word spoken in the *harêm* of the Khedive, or breathed from a minaret of the Citadel, is heard by Omar of Ispahân! The holy covering for the Kaaba was restored, on payment of a ruinous ransom by the Sherîff of Mecca, and none save the few ever knew of its loss."

For a time I was silent; words failed me; for the veil of the Kaaba, miscalled "the Carpet," is about the size of a bowling-green; then—

"In what manner does this affair concern you, Abu Tabâh?" I asked.

"In this way: the daughter of the Mudîr el-Fáyum is here, in order that she may be pres-

ent on the Night of Ashura in the Muski. For a Moslem lady to stay in such a place as this"—there was a faint note of contempt in the speaker's voice—"is without precedent, but the circumstances are peculiar. The *khân* near the Mosque of Hosein is full, and it is not seemly that the Mudîr's daughter should live at any lesser establishment. Therefore, as she brings her two servants, it has been possible for her to remain here. But"—his voice sank again—"her ornaments are famed throughout Islâm."

I nodded comprehendingly.

"To me," Abu Tabâh whispered, "has been entrusted the task of guarding them; to you, I entrust that of guarding the possessions of the other guests!"

I started.

"But, my friend," I said, "this is a dreadful responsibility which you impose upon me."

"Other precautions are being taken," he replied calmly; "but you, observing great circumspection, can speak to the guests, and, being forewarned of his presence, can even watch for the coming of Omar of Ispahân."

II

THE EFFECT of my news upon Lady Collis was truly dramatic.

"Oh," she cried, "my rope of pearls. Mr. Chundermeyer

only told me last week that it was worth at least two hundred pounds more than I gave for it."

Mr. Chundermeyer had made himself popular with many of the ladies in the hotel by similar diplomatic means, but I think that if he had been compelled to purchase at his own flattering valuations Messrs. Isaacs and Chundermeyer would have been ruined.

"You need not wear it, my dear," said her husband tactlessly.

"Don't be so ridiculous!" she retorted. "You know I have brought my Queen of Sheba costume for tomorrow night."

That, of course, settled the matter, so that beyond making one pretty woman extremely nervous, my campaign against the dreaded Omar of Ispahân had opened—blankly. Later in the day I circulated my warning right and left, and everywhere sowed consternation without reaping any appreciable result.

"One naturally expects thieves on these occasions," said a little Chicago millionairess, "and if I only wore my diamonds when no rogues were about, I might as well have none. There are crooks in America I'd back against your Persian thief any day."

On the whole, I think, the best audience for my dramatic recitation was provided by Mr.

Chundermeyer, whom I found in the American bar, just before the dinner hour. His yellow skin perceptibly blanched at my first mention of Omar Ali Khân, and one hand clutched at a bulging breast pocket of the dinner-jacket he wore.

"Good heavens, Mr. Kerna-by," he said, "you alarm me—you alarm me, sir!"

"The reputation of Omar is not unknown to you?"

"By no means unknown to me," he responded in his thick, unctuous voice. "It was this man who stole the pair of blue diamonds from the Rajah of Bagore."

"So I am told."

"But have you been told that it was my firm who brought those diamonds for the Rajah?"

"No; that is news to me."

"It was my firm, Mr. Kerna-by, who negotiated the sale of the blue diamonds to the Rajah; therefore the particulars of their loss, under most extraordinary circumstances, are well known to me. You have made me very nervous. Who is your informant?"

"A member of the native police with whom I am acquainted."

Mr. Chundermeyer shook his head lugubriously.

"I am conveying a parcel of rough stones to Amsterdam," he confessed, glancing warily about him over the rims of his spec-

tacles, "and I feel very much disposed to ask for more reliable protection than is offered by your Egyptian friend."

"Why not lodge the stones in a bank, or in the manager's safe?"

He shook his head again, and proffered an enormous cigar.

"I distrust all safes but my own," he replied. "I prefer to carry such valuables upon my person, foolish though the plan may seem to you. But do you observe that squarely built, military looking person standing at the bar, in conversation with M. Balabas, the manager?"

"Yes; an officer, I should judge."

"Precisely; a *police* officer. That is Chief Inspector Carlisle of New Scotland Yard."

"But he is a guest here."

"Certainly. The management sustained a severe loss last Christmas during the progress of a ball at which all Cairo was present, and as the inspector chanced to be on his way home from India, where official business had taken him, M. Balabas induced him to break his journey and remain until after the carnival."

"Wait a moment," I said; "I will bring him over."

Crossing to the bar, I greeted Balabas, with whom I was acquainted, and—

"Mr. Chundermeyer and I have been discussing the noto-

rious Omar of Ispahân, who is said to be in Cairo," I remarked.

Inspector Carlisle, being introduced, smiled broadly.

"Mr. Balabas is very nervous about this Omar man," he replied, with a slight Scottish accent; "but, considering that everybody has been warned, I don't see myself that he can do much damage."

"Perhaps you would be good enough to reassure Mr. Chundermeyer," I suggested, "who is carrying valuables."

Chief Inspector Carlisle walked over to the table at which Chundermeyer was seated.

"I have met your partner, sir," he said, "and I gathered that you were on your way to Amsterdam with a parcel of rough stones; in fact, I supposed that you had arrived there by now."

"I am fond of Cairo during the Christmas season," explained the other, "and I broke my journey. But now I sincerely wish I were elsewhere."

"Oh, I shouldn't worry!" said the detective cheerily. "There are enough of us on the lookout."

But Mr. Chundermeyer remained palpably uneasy.

III

THE GARDENS of the hotel on the following night presented a

fairy-like spectacle. Lights concealed among the flower-beds, the bloom-covered arbors, and the feathery leafage of the acacias, suffused a sort of weird glow, suggesting the presence of a million fire-flies. Up beneath the crowns of the lofty palms little colored electric lamps were set, producing an illusion of supernatural fruit, whilst the fountain had been magically converted into a cascade of fire.

In the ballroom, where the orchestra played, and a hundred mosque lamps bathed the apartment in soft illumination, a cosmopolitan throng danced around a giant Christmas tree, their costumes a clash of color to have filled a theatrical producer with horror, outraging history and linking the ages in startling fashion. Thus, St. Antony of the Thebaid danced with Salome, the luresome daughter of Herodias; Nero's arm was about the waist of Good Queen Bess; Charles II cantered through a two-step with a red-haired Vestal Virgin; and the Queen of Sheba (Daphne Collis) had no less appropriate a partner than Sherlock Holmes.

Doubtless it was all very amusing, but, personally, I stand by my commonplace dress-suit, having, perhaps, rather a ridiculous sense of dignity. Inspector Carlisle also was soberly arrayed, and we had several chats during the evening; he

struck me as being a man of considerable culture and great shrewdness.

For Abu Tabâh I looked in vain. Following our conversation on the previous afternoon, he had vanished like a figment of a dream. I several times saw Chundermeyer, who had elected to disguise himself as Al-Mokanna, the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan. He seemed to be an enthusiastic dancer, and there was no lack of partners.

But of these mandarins, pierrots, Dutch girls, monks, and court ladies I speedily tired, and sought refuge in the gardens, whose enchanted aspect was completed by that wondrous inverted bowl, jewel-studded, which is the nightly glory of Egypt. In the floral, dim-lighted arbors many romantic couples shrank from the peeping moon; but quiet and a hushful sense of peace ruled there beneath the stars more in harmony with my mood.

One corner of the gardens, in particular, seemed to be quite deserted, and it was the most picturesque spot of all. For here a graceful palm upstood before an outjutting *mushra-bîyeh* window, dimly lighted, over which trailed a wealth of bougainvillia blossom, whilst beneath it lay a floral carpet, sharply bisected by the shadow of the palm trunk. It was like

some gorgeous illustration to a poem by Hafiz, only lacking the figure at the window.

And as I stood, enchanted, before the picture, the central panels of the window were thrown open, and, as if conjured up by my imagination, a woman appeared, looking out into the gardens—an Oriental woman, robed in shimmering, moon-kissed white, and wearing a white *yashmak*. Her arms and fingers were laden with glittering jewels.

I almost held my breath, drawing back into the sheltering shadow, for I had not hitherto suspected myself of being a sorcerer. For perhaps a minute, or less, she stood looking out, then the window closed, and the white phantom disappeared. I recovered myself, recognizing that I stood before the isolated wing of the hotel known as the Harêm Suite, and that Fate had granted me a glimpse of the daughter of the Mudîr of the Fáyum.

Recollecting, in the nick of time, an engagement to dance with Lady Collis, I hurried back to the ballroom. On its very threshold I encountered Chundermeyer. I could see his spectacles glittering through the veil of his ridiculous costume, and even before he spoke I detected about him an aura of tragedy.

"Mr. Kernaby," he gasped,

"for Heaven's sake help me to find Inspector Carlisle! I have been robbed!"

"What?"

"My diamonds!"

"You don't mean—"

"Find the inspector, and come to my rooms. I am nearly mad!"

Daphne Collis, who had seen me enter, joined us at this moment, and, overhearing the latter part of Chundermeyer's speech:

"Oh, whatever is the matter?" she whispered.

As for Chundermeyer the effect upon him of her sudden appearance was positively magical.

He stared through his veil as though her charming figure had been that of some hideous phantom. Then slowly, as if he dreaded to find her intangible, he extended one hand and touched her rope of pearls.

"Ah, heavens!" he gasped. "I am really going mad, or is there a magician amongst us?"

Daphne Collis's blue eyes opened very widely, and the color slowly faded from her cheeks.

"Mr. Chundermeyer," she began. "But—"

"Let us go into this little recess, where there is a good light," mumbled Chundermeyer shakily, "and I will make sure."

The three of us entered the palm-screened alcove, Chunder-

meyer leading. He stood immediately under a lamp suspended by brass chains from the roof.

"Permit me to examine your pearls for one moment," he said.

Her hands trembling, Daphne Collis took off the costly ornament and placed it in the hands of the greatly perturbed expert. Chundermeyer ran the pearls through his fingers, then lifted the largest of the set towards the light and scrutinized it closely. Suddenly he dropped his arms, and extended the necklace upon one open palm.

"Look for yourself," he said slowly. "It does not require the eyes of an expert."

Daphne Collis snatched the pearls and stared at them dazedly.

Her pretty face was now quite colorless.

"This is not my rope of pearls," she said, in a monotonous voice; "it is a very poor imitation!"

Ere I could frame any kind of speech—

"Look at this," groaned Chundermeyer, "as you talk of a poor imitation!"

He was holding out a leather-covered box, plush lined, and bearing within the words, "Isaacs and Chundermeyer, Madras."

Nestling grotesquely amid the blue velvet were six small pieces of coal!

Chundermeyer sank upon the cushions of the settee, tossing the casket upon a little coffee table.

"I am afraid I feel unwell," he said feebly. "Mr. Kernaby, I wonder if you would be so kind as to find Inspector Carlisle, and ask a waiter to bring me some cognac."

"Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do?" whispered poor Daphne Collis.

"Just remain here," I said soothingly, "with Mr. Chundermeyer." And I induced her to sit in a big cane rest-chair. "I will return in a moment with Bertram and the inspector."

Desiring to avoid a panic, I walked quietly into the ballroom and took stock of the dancers, for a waltz was in progress. The inspector I could not see, but Sir Bertram I observed at the further end of the floor, dancing with Mrs. Van Heysten, the Chicago lady whom I had warned to keep a close watch upon her diamonds.

I managed to attract Bertram's attention, and the pair, quitting the floor, joined me where I stood. A few words sufficed in which to inform them of the catastrophe, and, pointing out the alcove wherein I had left Chundermeyer and Lady Collis, I set off in search of Inspector Carlisle.

Ten minutes later, having visited every likely spot, I came

to the conclusion that he was not in the hotel, and with M. Balabas I returned to the alcove adjoining the ballroom. Dancing was in full swing, and I thought as we passed along the edge of the floor how easily I could have checked the festivities by announcing that Omar of Ispahân was present.

The first sight to greet me upon entering the little palm-shaded alcove was that of Mrs. Van Heysten in tears.

She had discovered herself to be wearing a very indifferent duplicate of her famous diamond tiara.

I think it was my action of soothingly patting her upon the shoulder that drew Chundermeyer's attention to my Hatshepsu scarab.

"Mr. Kernaby!" he cried—"Mr. Kernaby!" And pointed to my finger.

I had had the scarab set in a revolving bezel, and habitually wore it with the beetle uppermost and the cartouche concealed. As I glanced down at the ring, Chundermeyer stretched out his hand and detached it from my finger. Approaching the light, he turned the bezel.

The flat part of the scarab was quite blank, bearing no inscription whatever. Like Lady Collis's rope of pearls, Mrs. Van Heysten's tiara, and Chundermeyer's diamonds, it was a

worthless and very indifferent duplicate!

IV

NEVER can I forget the scene in that crowded little room—poor M. Balabas all anxiety respecting the reputation of his establishment, and vainly endeavoring to reason with the victims of the amazing Omar Khân. Finally—

"I will search for Inspector Carlisle myself," said Mr. Chundermeyer; "and if I cannot find him, I shall be compelled to communicate with the local police authorities."

M. Balabas still volubly protesting, the unfortunate Veiled Prophet made his way from the alcove. I cannot say if the inspiration came as the result of a sort of auto-hypnosis induced by staring at the worthless ring in my hand—the stone was not even real lapis-lazuli—but a theory regarding the manner in which these ingenious substitutions had been effected suddenly entered my mind.

Three minutes later I was knocking at the door of Chundermeyer's room. I received no invitation to enter, and the door was locked. I sought M. Balabas; and, without confiding to him the theory upon which I was acting, I urged the desirability of gaining access to the

apartment. As a result, a master key was procured, and we entered.

At the first glance the room seemed to be empty, though it showed evidence of having recently been occupied, for it was in the utmost disorder. Perhaps we should have quitted it unenlightened, if I had not detected the sound of a faint groan proceeding from the closed wardrobe. Stepping across the room, I opened the double doors, and out into my arms fell a limp figure, bound hand and foot, and having a bath-towel secured tightly around the head to act as a gag. It was Mr. Chundermeyer!

I think, as I helped to unfasten him, I was the most surprised man in the land of Egypt. He was arrayed only in a bathrobe and slippers, and his bare wrists and ankles were cruelly galled by the cords which had bound him. For some minutes he was unable to utter a word, and when at last he achieved speech, his first utterance constituted a verbal thunderbolt.

"I have been robbed!" he cried huskily. "I was sand-bagged as I came from my bath, and look—everyone of my cases is gone!"

It was M. Balabas who answered him.

"As you returned from your bath, Mr. Chundermeyer?" he said. "At what time was that?"

"About a quarter-past seven," was the amazing reply.

"But, good Heaven!" cried M. Balabas, "I was speaking to you less than ten minutes ago!"

"You are mad!" groaned Chundermeyer, rubbing his bruised wrists. "Have I not been locked in the wardrobe all night!"

"Ah, merciful saints," cried M. Balabas, dramatically raising his clenched fists to heaven, "I see it all! You understand, Mr. Kernaby. It is *not* Mr. Chundermeyer with whom we have been conversing, in whose hands you have been placing your valuables, it is that devil incarnate who three years ago impersonated the Emîr al-Hadj, in order to steal the Holy Carpet; who can impersonate anyone; who, it is said, can transform himself at will into an old woman, a camel, or a fig tree; it is the conjuror, the wizard—Omar of Ispahân!"

My own ideas were almost equally chaotic; for although, as I now recalled, I had never throughout the evening obtained a thoroughly good view of the features of the veiled Prophet, I could have sworn to the voice, to the carriage, to the manner of Mr. Chundermeyer.

The puzzling absence of Chief Inspector Carlisle now engaged everybody's attention; and, acting upon the precedent afforded by the finding of Mr.

Chundermeyer, we paid a visit to the detective's room.

Inspector Carlisle, fully dressed, and still wearing a soft felt hat, as though he had but just come in, lay on the floor, unconscious, with the greater part of a cigar, which examination showed to be drugged, close beside him.

As I entered my room that night and switched on the light, in through the open window from the balcony stepped Abu Tabâh.

His frequent and mysterious appearances in my private apartments did not surprise me in the least, and I had even ceased to wonder how he accomplished them; but—

"You are too late, my friend," I said. "Omar of Ispahân has outwitted you."

"Omar of Ispahân has outwitted men wiser than I," he replied gravely; "but covetousness is a treacherous master, and I am not without hope that we may yet circumvent the father of thieves."

"You are surely jesting," I replied. "In all probability he is now far from Cairo."

"I, on the contrary, have reason to believe," replied Abu Tabâh calmly, "that he is neither far from Cairo, far from the hotel, nor far from this very apartment."

His manner was strange and

I discovered excitement to be growing within me.

"Accompany me on the balcony," he said; "but first extinguish the light."

A moment later I stood looking down upon the moon-bathed gardens and Abu Tabâh, beside me, stretched out his hand.

"You see the projecting portion of the building yonder?"

"Yes," I replied; "the Harêm Suite."

"Immediately before the window there is a palm tree."

"I have observed it."

"And upon the opposite side of the path there is an acacia."

"Yes; I see it."

"The moon is high, and whilst all the side of the hotel is in shadow the acacia is in the moonlight. Its branches would afford concealment, however; and one watching there could see what would be hidden from one on this balcony. I request you, Kernaby Pasha, to approach that *lebbekh* tree from the further side of the fountain, in order to remain invisible from the hotel. Climb to one of the lower branches, and closely watch four windows."

I stared at him in the darkness.

"Which are the four windows that I am to watch?"

"They are—one, that immediately below your own; two,

that to the right of it; three, the window above the Harêm Suite; and, four, the extreme east window of this wing, on the first floor."

Now, my state of mystification grew even denser. For the windows specified were, in the order of mention, that of Inspector Carlisle, who had not yet recovered consciousness; of Mr. Chundermeyer; of Major Redpath, a retired Anglo-Indian who had been confined to his room for some time with an attack of malaria; and of M. Balabas, the manager.

"For what," I inquired, "am I to watch?"

"For a man to descend."

"And then?"

"You will hold your open watch case where it is clearly visible from this spot. Instant upon the man's appearance you will cover it up, and then uncover it, either once, twice, thrice, or four times."

"After which?"

"Remain scrupulously concealed. Have the collar of your dinner jacket turned up in order to betray as little whiteness as possible."

"Do not interfere with the man who descends; but if he enters the Harêm Suite, see that he does not come out again! There is no time for further explanation, Kernaby Pasha; it is Omar of Ispahân with whom we have to deal!"

V

PERCHED up amid the foliage of the acacia, I commenced that singular guard imposed upon me by Abu Tabâh. Did he suspect one of these four persons of being the notorious Omar? Or had his mysterious instructions some other significance? The problem defied me; and, recognizing that I was hopelessly at sea, I abandoned useless conjecture and merely watched.

Nor was my vigil a long one. I doubt if I had been at my post for ten minutes ere a vague figure appeared upon the shadow-veiled balcony of one of the suspected windows—that of Major Redpath, above the Harêm Suite!

Scarcely daring to credit my eyes, I saw the figure throw down on to the projecting top of the *mushrabîyeh* window below a slender rope ladder. I covered the gleaming gold of my watch-case with my hand, and gave the signal—three.

The spirit of phantasy embraced me; and, unmoved to further surprise, I watched the unknown swarm down the ladder with the agility of an ape. He seemed to wear a robe, surely that of the Veiled Prophet! He silently manipulated one of the side-panels of the window, opened it, and vanished within the Harêm Suite.

Raising my eyes, I beheld a

second figure—that of Abu Tabâh—descending a similar ladder to the balcony of Inspector Carlisle's room. He gained the balcony and entered the room. Four seconds elapsed; he reappeared, unfurled a greater length of ladder, and came down to the flower-beds. Lithely as a cat he came to the projecting *mushrabîyeh*, swung himself aloft, and as I watched breathlessly, expecting him to enter in pursuit of the intruder, climbed to the top and began to mount the ladder descending from Major Redpath's room!

He had just reached the major's balcony, and was stepping through the open window, when a most alarming din arose in the Harêm Suite; evidently a fierce struggle was proceeding in the apartments of the Mudîr's daughter!

I scrambled down from the acacia and ran to the spot immediately below the window, arriving at the very moment that the central lattice was thrown open, and a white-veiled figure appeared there and prepared to spring down! Perceiving my approach:

"Oh, help me, in the name of Allah!" cried the woman, in a voice shrill with fear. "Quick—catch me!"

Ere I could frame any reply, she clutched at the palm tree and dropped down right into my extended arms, as a crashing

of overturned furniture came from the room above.

"Help them!" she entreated. "You are armed, and my women are being murdered."

"Help, Kernaby Pasha!" now reached my ears, in the unmistakable voice of Abu Tabâh, from somewhere within. "See that he does not escape from the window!"

"Coming!" I cried.

And, by means of the palm trunk, I began to mount towards the open lattice.

Gaining my objective, I stumbled into a room which presented a scene of the wildest disorder. It was a large apartment, well but sparsely furnished in the Eastern manner, and lighted by three hanging lamps. Directly under one of these, beside an overturned cabinet of richly carven wood inlaid with mother-o'-pearl, lay a Nubian, insensible, and arrayed only in shirt and trousers. There was no one else in the room, and, not pausing to explore those which opened out of it, I ran and unbolted the heavy door upon which Abu Tabâh was clamoring for admittance.

The *imâm* leaped into the room, rebolted the door, and glanced to the right and left; then he ran into the adjoining apartments, and finally, observing the insensible Nubian upon the floor, he stared into my face,

and I read anger in the eyes that were wont to be so gentle.

"Did I not enjoin you to prevent his escape from the window?" he cried.

"No one escaped from the window, my friend," I retorted, "except the lady who was occupying the suite."

Abu Tabâh fixed his weird eyes upon me in a hypnotic stare of such uncanny power that I was angrily conscious of much difficulty in sustaining it; but gradually the quelling look grew less harsh, and finally his whole expression softened, and that sweet smile, which could so transform his face, disturbed the severity of the set lips.

"No man is infallible," he said. "And wiser than you or I have shown themselves the veriest fools in contest with Omar Ali Khân. But know, O Kernaby Pasha, that the lady who occupied this suite secretly left it at sunset tonight, bearing her jewels with her, and he"—pointing to the insensible Nubian on the floor—"took her place and wore her raiment—"

"Then the Mudîr's daughter—"

"Is my sister Ayesha!"

I looked at him reproachfully, but he met my gaze with calm pride.

"Subterfuge was permitted by the Prophet, (on whom be peace)," he continued; "but not

lying! My sister is the daughter of the Mudîr el-Fáyum."

It was a rebuke, perhaps a merited one; and I accepted it in silence. Although, from the moment that I had first set eyes on him, I had never doubted Abu Tabâh to be a man of good family, this modest avowal was something of a revelation.

"Her presence here, which was permitted by my father," he said, "was a trap; for it is well known throughout the Moslem world that she is the possessor of costly ornaments. The trap succeeded. Omar of Ispahân, at great risk of discovery, remained to steal her jewels, although he had already amassed a choice collection."

Someone had begun to bang upon the bolted door, and there was an excited crowd beneath the window.

"You supposed, no doubt," the *imâm* resumed calmly, "that I suspected Major Redpath and M. Balabas, as well as Mr. Chundermeyer and the English detective? It was not so. But I regarded the room of M. Balabas as excellently situated for Omar's purpose, and I knew that M. Balabas rarely retired earlier than one o'clock. Even more suitable was that of Major Redpath, whose illness I believe to have been due to some secret art of Omar's."

"But he is down with chronic malaria!"

"It may even be so; yet I believe the attack to have been induced by Omar of Ispahân."

"But why?"

"Because, as I learned tonight, Major Redpath is the only person in Cairo who has ever met Mr. Chundermeyer! I will confess that until less than an hour ago I did not know if Inspector Carlisle was *really* an inspector! Oh, it is a seeming absurdity; but Omar of Ispahân is a wizard! Therefore I entered the inspector's room, and found him to be still unconscious. Major Redpath was in deep slumber, and Omar had entered and quit-
ted his room without disturbing him. I did likewise, and visited Mr. Chundermeyer's—on my way downstairs."

"But, with my own eyes I beheld Mr. Chundermeyer gagged and bound in his wardrobe! I saw his bruised wrists!"

"He gagged, bound, and bruised himself!" replied Abu Tabâh calmly. "With my own eyes I once beheld a blind mendicant hanging by the neck from a fig tree, a bloody froth upon his lips. I cut him down and left him for dead. Yet was he neither dead nor a blind mendicant; he was Omar Ali Khân. Oblige me by opening the door, Kernaby Pasha."

I obeyed, and an excited throng burst in, headed by M. Balabas and Inspector Carlisle, the latter pale and haggard!

"Where is the man posing as Chundermeyer?" began the detective hoarsely. "By sheer slight-of-hand, and under ye're very noses"—excitement rendered him weirdly Caledonian—"he has robbed ye! I cabled Madras today, and the real Chundermeyer arrived at Amsterdam last Friday! As I returned with the reply cable in my pocket tonight I became so dizzy I was just able to get to my room. He'd doctored every smoke in my case! Where is he?"

"I assisted him to escape, disguised as a woman, some ten minutes ago," I replied feebly. "I should be sincerely indebted to you if you would kick me."

"Escaped!" roared Inspector Carlisle. "Then what are ye doing here? Are ye all mad?"

"We should be," said Abu Tabâh, "to attempt pursuit. As well pursue the shadow of a cloud, the first spear of sunrise, or the phantom heifer of Pepi-Ankh, as pursue Omar of Ispahân! He is gone—but empty-handed. Behold what I recovered from his room."

From beneath his black *gibbeh* he took out a leather bag, opened it, and displayed to our startled eyes the tiara of Mrs. Van Heysten, the rope of pearls, and—my Hatshepsu scarab!

Ere anyone could utter a word, Abu Tabâh inclined his head in salutation, turned, and walked from the room.

a
better
mantrap

by . . . Day Keene

There were times when she would have cheerfully cut her husband into little pieces — small little pieces—and there were times. . . .

DESPITE the ready smile she felt more or less obligated to display in public, if May Bedell had known one hour of absolute, unalloyed happiness during her nine years of married life she could not recall it. She knew she had made a mistake before her marriage was two days old. But there seemed to be nothing at the time, or since then, that she could do about it.

A big, hale, well-met man, Mort Bedell had been wanted by half the women in Downsport. May wished they had gotten him.

In fact, had there been any way she could have done so without unpleasant legal repercussions, after living with him nine years, she would have cheerfully cut Mort Bedell into little pieces and parcelled him out among them.

Not that he ever abused her physically. He was too clever for that. He was content to bruise her spirit, at the same time wearing her in public as his most prized possession.

That hurt her most of all. In public it was, "Pet said this" and

Day Keene, author of more novels than we have room to report on here, makes a first appearance in these pages with a story of a woman who finally found a fool-proof way of getting rid of her husband. He was such a big, hale and hearty man—and so impossible to live with. It couldn't go on. And it didn't.

"Pet said that" and "Just the other night Pet told me . . ."

She listened as enraptured as the others to the opinions attributed to her. It was the only time she ever heard them. She didn't claim to be a mental giant, but in her nine years of marriage she couldn't recall making one remark, whether it concerned the house, the weather, or something she had read in the paper, without having her intelligence quotient questioned.

It couldn't go on. It really couldn't. But it did.

There had been a brief period, not too long ago, when she had hoped things might right themselves. Somewhere she had read the seventh year of marriage was the danger period, that during that time a man grew restless, sought new pastures. She had waited hopefully all year for Mort to tire of her. But he hadn't. She had, it would seem, become a habit with him.

Glancing at him in the mirror as she combed and braided her hair for the night she was forced to admit he wasn't a bad-looking man. At thirty-five he still had all his hair. There was only a slight bulge where a concave stomach had been. He looked little different than he had at twenty-six. She consulted her mirror. She hadn't done so well. Twenty-nine found her fading fast. This really couldn't go on.

She had to do something drastic—and soon.

Looking up from the book he was reading in bed, Mort wanted to know if she was going to comb her hair all night, adding that statistics proved that women spent one-fourth of their lives in caring for their hair and skin and bodies.

Securing her braid with a ribbon, she turned on the bench to say that was interesting, only to find he'd resumed reading—*The Atomic Age; Or What Atomic War Would Mean to the Tanning Industry*. Herself, she preferred a good love story or a murder mystery. That was, undoubtedly, because she was a moron. She fished a true crime magazine from the bottom compartment of the night table and settled herself on her side of the bed, hoping that Mort would retain his interest in the Atomic Age.

He didn't. Glancing at her magazine, he said, "That tripe. Why don't you read something worth while?"

Time was when she would have asked, "What for example?" She knew better now. She merely snuggled deeper into her pillow, remarking it was escape reading.

He wanted to know, "Escape from what? What have you to escape from?"

She would have liked to tell him—with an ax. She con-

sidered pretending she hadn't heard him. But if she didn't answer he would say that she was sullen. She made her answer general, "Oh, things."

"Things. Humph," he sniffed. Then he began the old routine. "You're a very lucky woman, May," he told her. "How many women do you know who have as nice a home as you have?"

There were several good answers to that, but May decided they wouldn't be polite. "I'm not complaining," she said instead.

"Gad about. Bridge. Shows. Clothes. That's all you women think of."

She couldn't resist pointing out there was a law about appearing naked on the street and he told her not to be obscene. She re-read the first paragraph of her story doggedly. It was a particularly lurid tale with an intriguing first line:

"It was seven-thirty on a cold winter morning when Officer Jones, making his icy rounds, stumbled upon the bloody corpse of a semi-nude woman, her face battered beyond recognition . . ."

Mort closed his book and pointed out it was very rude for anyone to read while someone else was talking to them. She closed her magazine, resigned. "All right. What do you want to talk about?"

He said he didn't want to talk about anything in general, but as long as she had brought up the subject didn't she think the grocery bill was particularly high that week. She didn't remember bringing up the subject, but before she could answer, he said, "I do. I think you should be more careful in your buying, May. The way you spend money you'd think we were millionaires."

Still wondering who the semi-nude woman was, and how you could be semi-nude—you were either nude or you weren't—she reminded him that they had entertained twice the last week, both times business associates of his.

He said he had taken that into consideration before he had spoken, but the bill, in his opinion, was still high. She said she was sorry and would try to do better, but it was difficult to set a decent table with prices what they were.

"I could do it," he said smugly. "The trouble with you, May, is you are careless in your buying. If instead of phoning in your order like you do, you would shop around a bit, you—"

Enough was enough. She interrupted him to say she'd only phoned her order in the one time, and that because it was raining so hard she couldn't get to the store.

He said that was beside the

point. He was speaking in generalities. He spoke in them for some length while she lay staring at the ceiling. Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue. Life with father, or romance in a three-room furnished flat. Finally running down, Morton cleared his throat and turned off the light and took her in his arms, leaving her still wondering about the semi-nude woman. . . .

Late night noises were interesting. You could make almost anything of them. Sitting at the kitchen table, her magazine open in front of her, May listened to the sounds outside the window. Someone was playing a radio softly. Someone was having a party; she could hear a faint clink of glasses and an occasional burst of subdued laughter. To laugh again. Such a simple little thing to ask.

She stared at the closed bedroom door. Even the one phase of married life that might have made it tolerable had been denied her. That dated back nine years ago. Introduced to a subject that was, to say the least, new to her, Morton had accused her of coldness. Later, when she had tried to overcome this obvious flaw of character, he had called her immodest and lascivious. It would seem she couldn't win with Morton. At least she never had.

It couldn't go on. Really it couldn't. She should have married George. Poor George, still waiting patiently as he had told her he would, still unmarried. True he had grown a bit bald, but of late she had been reading some interesting facts concerning baldness in one of the more virile men's magazines. George would have talked to her, not at her. He didn't think she was a moron. George would have been good to her. He still would. If only there was no Morton.

Sighing, she turned the pages of the true crime magazine to the section that listed wanted fugitives. She never failed to read it. There were only four of them this month, but they were all wanted for murder and, outside of any reward that might be offered by the authorities, the magazine would pay one hundred dollars for information leading to their apprehension. It was almost as good as a TV quiz show program. All you had to do was see a fugitive and wire the magazine. She had never seen one to date, but she was still hopeful.

One hundred dollars of her own. Ten jars of strawberry face cream. Fifty pairs of nylons. Good Lord, how long had it been she had seen one hundred dollars? Not that she hadn't a right to see it. It had been her money, left her by her father, that had started Morton in busi-

ness. But by now it had all been so cleverly re-invested and she had signed so many legal papers beginning, "For One Dollar and Other Valuable Considerations . . ." that the lawyer whom she had consulted had advised her, "Outside of the community property, which doesn't seem to be much, the only way I see for you to recover your original investment is for Mr. Bedell to die. Until then you will have to be content with what he gives you."

That was next to nothing. May got a bottle of milk from the refrigerator and a box of crackers from the cabinet, hoping she wasn't being too extravagant. Truffles and duck she'd been promised. Feathers she had gotten. She could make up her mind to one fact. If she walked out on Morton he wouldn't give her one dime. It was one of the things that had held her. It didn't seem fair. The money had been her father's. He'd wanted her to have it.

One of the wanted-men listed, James Ramon, had the additional charge of Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution against him. That, May thought, was silly. What did the police expect him to do? Stand in one spot waiting to be captured?

As she ate her milk and crackers she read James Ramon, alias Thomas Kelly, alias Jim Balek's description. He wasn't a bad-

looking man, which only went to prove you couldn't tell a book by its cover. Look at Morton, for example.

Ramon was forty-two. He was five feet ten inches tall. He weighed one hundred and sixty pounds. His complexion was medium dark. He was a gambler by occupation and, according to the F.B.I., was certain to be armed. He was known to wear two revolvers in shoulder holsters. He considered himself a lady's man and had killed three men with little or no provocation. If he was seen one was asked to notify J. Edgar Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D. C. However, extreme caution was advised as Ramon had sworn not to be taken alive.

An obviously nasty man. Tiring of Gentleman James' description, peccadillos and habits, May fingered idly through the pages of the magazine. What fools people were. It had been the semi-nude woman's husband who had killed her. They never get away with it for long. Thank God, despite her own unhappiness, she had never considered such a thing.

Or had she?

She got to her feet, looking for the package of cigarettes she thought she had left on top of the refrigerator. Then she remembered. Morton had filled his case from the package. Tiptoe-

ing into the bedroom she slipped the case from his coat pocket and returned to the kitchen.

The building was quieter now. The radio had stopped playing. The party was breaking up. She opened the case and took out a cigarette and lit it. All she could do was go on. No one had dragged her to the altar. She had said, "I do," of her own free will. She had promised to love, honor and cherish, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse. But no one in her right mind could imagine it would be this bad.

Trying to close the case, and being unable to, she poked at the top layer of cigarettes and realized it wasn't a cigarette that was keeping the case from closing. It was the end of a folded slip of paper lying flat under the cigarettes.

Curious, she slipped the note from under the cigarettes and read it. It was from some girl named Grace thanking Mort for a check for one hundred dollars and giving him a new phone number where he could reach his "snookums" any time after six.

The small veins in May's temples began to throb. And he had browbeat her about a sixteen-dollar grocery bill. If there was a "snookums" there was certain to be a Marge and a Clara and a Sue. It would seem that greener pastures were no cure for her

problem. Mort had, undoubtedly, been wallowing in them for some time. But they merely whetted his appetite.

Suddenly furious and shamed, she walked into the living room and snatching Mort's small-calibered revolver from its drawer continued on to the bedroom, only to come to her senses in time.

Shooting Mort would get her nowhere but in jail and the pages of a true crime magazine.

"It was two-thirty on a warm summer morning when Officer Brown, making his peaceful rounds, was startled by the sound of six shots coming from inside the Morton Bedell apartment. . . ."

May replaced the gun and returning to the kitchen slipped the note back under the cigarettes. But from now on things would be different. The note had made anything fair. What was sauce for the gander, et cetera. Only it wasn't sauce she wanted.

She wanted to be free of Morton. Cradling her face in her arms, she put her arms on the table and cried. Of one thing and one thing only, she was certain. If Mort called her "Pet" just once more, she'd scream. . . .

There had been nothing wrong with the breakfast but the

eggs, the toast and the coffee. "And for heaven's sake use your head, May. Find another butcher. That steak we had for supper was impossible. I didn't sleep a wink all night. You know how delicate my stomach is."

Delicate? A man who could stomach a "snookums" could eat a hippopotamus, hide, hoofs and all, and not even have to have recourse to bicarbonate of soda.

Alone, May washed her lips before renewing her lipstick. All the rest she had taken. But not this. True, she had prayed for a Grace to come into Mort's life. But that had been when she had foolishly thought it would be the means to an end and not a partnership.

She was doing the breakfast dishes when she heard a clink of bottles in the hall. She dried her hands and got her purse and opened the hall door to pay the milkman. He was talking to the new tenant across the hall, the man instructing him to leave a quart of milk every morning and a dozen eggs every other day.

Finished giving his order to the milkman, the new tenant, a middle-aged blond man, looked at her boldly, his eyes tightening the already snug fit of her old rayon housecoat that had shrunk almost to the point of immodesty the time it had gotten in with the laundry by mistake. For a moment she was afraid he was

going to speak. He didn't. Instead with a last wistful look he closed his door and locked it.

The fresh thing. The nasty old fresh thing. What did he think she was, a "snookums"?

May realized with a start that the milkman was talking to her. "That's seven dollars and forty cents, Mrs. Bedell," he said in the toneless voice of a man grown accustomed to seeing dozens of buxom young housewives in too-snug housecoats during the course of his day. "And that's counting the two pounds of butter. You want some nice fresh eggs? I can put them on next month's bill."

She took a dozen eggs, but paid for them. As he counted her change into her hand, she asked without conscious volition, "What's that new tenant's name?"

"Smith," the milkman told her. "William Smith."

She closed the door and put the milk and eggs in the refrigerator, then studied her reflection in the full-length mirror on the bathroom door. She was still nice to look at. At twenty-nine she still had a piquant charm that Morton's mauling and patronizing hadn't been able to extinguish. If she wanted to she could "snookums" him with any tenant in the building, including the new one across the hall.

Smith. William Smith. The plainness of the name intrigued

her. It was almost like an alibi. She felt a little faint as his face returned to her. The man's face didn't match his hair. Dark-complexioned men were seldom blond. It had something to do with the pigments. She clutched at the wash bowl for support as still another thought occurred to her. It couldn't be. She was being foolish. Such people didn't come to Downsport. Or did they? There was no law against it.

The more she thought about it, the more certain she was she was right. It was then she evolved the plan. If she was wrong, her life with Mort couldn't be any more difficult than it was. If she was right—well, if she was right, that would open many possibilities.

After writing and mailing the letter, she spent the day much as always. She dry-mopped the bedroom and the living room, conscious that Smith was watching her as she shook out her oil mop on the fire escape. Let him look. That was what women were for, to be looked at and admired. She was tired of being a convenient piece of furniture for Mort. George would never take her for granted. He might not put her on a pedestal and worship her, but he would treat her like a human being with a mind of her own and possessed of a normal woman's reflexes and reactions. He wouldn't treat

her like a moron without an iota of brains. More, he, too, liked detective stories and he didn't need to read a book to find out what an atomic war would do to his prosperous real estate business. George, bless his dear bald head, had been an infantry line officer.

At two o'clock she left to do her regular daily shopping. Smith must have been waiting at his door. He opened it a crack and she could feel his eyes follow her down the hall. Even though she knew she was being admired it wasn't a pleasant sensation.

Olson, the building superintendent, was mopping the tile in the front hall. May said, "I see you have rented 4B."

"Yeah. He came in last night," Olson told her. "A man by the name of Smith." He shook his head. "One of those fellows who wants a lot of service. 'Tell the milkman to stop and see me. Can you recommend a grocery and package store that deliver? Tell the paper boy I'll want both a morning and an evening paper.' You know. Too lazy to leave his apartment. He hasn't set foot outside since he moved in last night."

May asked if he was alone in the apartment.

Olson resumed his mopping. "He says his wife is arriving with their luggage in a few days.

Not that it matters to me. I got three months rent in advance just like the owner said I should."

May apologized for walking across the clean tile and continued to the store.

"Nice woman, young Mrs. Bedell," Olson told his wife when she came up from the basement to tell him the ash men were there. "But him I don't think so much of. He cheats on her all the time. I know. He offered me five bucks a month to take his phone calls for him. You know, from dames. But I wouldn't."

With a slight feeling of guilt, May called George's real estate office from the drug store on the corner but she was informed by his secretary that he was showing a client a farm some miles out of town and she doubted if he would be back until evening. "It's nothing important," May said. "Just tell him that May Bedell called."

"Yes, Mrs. Bedell," the girl said.

There was a traffic policeman marking the tires of the over-parked cars on the street and May's sense of guilt grew stronger. She salved her conscience by telling herself it was none of his affair. After all, he was in the traffic department.

The clerks in the super market knew and liked her. She wasn't snooty like some. She al-

ways had time for a smile and a friendly word. A shame she was married to a stuffed shirt like Bedell. On the infrequent occasions when he did shop with her, he even let her carry the groceries.

"You'd better give me some good buys today, Harry," she told the clerk who checked her out. "I got hob from the mister last night. He said I was spending too much on groceries."

"For you, Mrs. Bedell," the clerk told her, "I'll make a special price on everything."

The listed prices being arbitrarily fixed by the downtown office, both of them laughed. But Harry remembered the remark and repeated it, later, to Inspector Shamlin as further proof, as if proof was needed, of poor young Mrs. Bedell's eagerness to please her husband.

Her purchases already tabulated, May did something she seldom did. She added a bottle of port wine to her order and, carrying her purchases in two shopping bags, walked back to the apartment slowly, stopping from time to time to chat with friends and neighbors whom she met.

The postman was putting the late afternoon mail in the box but her hands being full she continued on to the elevator. Again Smith heard her coming down the hall and stood in his open doorway while she put down her

shopping bags to search her purse for her key.

"So you're my new neighbor, huh?" he asked.

May chased her key through her purse. "So it would seem."

"I just moved in last night," he informed her. "My name is Smith. Bill Smith."

She said she was Mrs. Bedell and added the superintendent had told her that Mrs. Smith was arriving in a few days.

Smith grinned at her crookedly. "Maybe she will. Maybe not. You don't want to believe everything you hear, honey. But this is straight from the shoulder. When I first saw you this morning I says to myself, now there is a fine-looking woman."

May found her key and inserted it in the lock pondering the colossal egotism of most men.

"You — er — drink?" Smith wanted to know. "I just had the package store send over some bonded bourbon."

Painfully conscious of the neck of the bottle of port protruding from the top of one of the shopping bags, she said she didn't drink.

Smith was disappointed but refused to be rebuffed. He seemed to want to talk to someone. "No hard feelings? No harm in asking, was there?"

"No," May admitted. She hesitated, asked, "That isn't your car is it? That gray one parked in the loading zone?"

His eyes turned cold. "No. I have no car. Why?"

"I just wondered," she told him, wondering why God didn't strike her dead on the spot for telling such a lie. "There was a squad car stopped beside it. And you being new to the city and our traffic regulations, I didn't want you to get into trouble."

"No," the man across the hall repeated. "I have no car." He glanced furtively down the hall, then closed and locked his door.

Inside her own apartment, May sat on the first chair she came to, tiny drops of perspiration forcing their way through the foundation cream and powder on her cheeks. She was certain now—and frightened. When she found strength she tore the white wrappings from around the bottle of port and sipped a thimble full. She hadn't lied to Smith. It was the first drink she'd had in years. She didn't like the stuff. It made her woozy.

It was, however, essential to her purpose. She sipped a second thimbleful. It left her light-headed but with strength enough to put away the groceries she'd just purchased.

The hiding of the bottle took more time. She decided, finally, on the open space between the refrigerator and the stove. She hoped Mort wouldn't be late.

He wasn't. He came home at his usual hour, threw the small handful of mail he'd collected from the box in the foyer on the table and announced he wanted to eat promptly as he had a business engagement for the evening. He smelled the port as soon as he kissed her. "You've been drinking," he accused.

"I had a wine this afternoon," May admitted. "With one of the neighbors."

Mort was patient with her. "You don't have a wine. You have a glass of wine. With which one of the neighbors were you drinking?"

She was very vague about it. "Oh, one of the neighbors."

"You're lying to me, May."

She glanced at the crack between the stove and the refrigerator and his eyes following hers immediately saw the bottle. He retrieved it and stood looking at her, hurt. A good half of the wine was gone, poured down the sink. "To think you would do such a thing to me, May. And then lie about it."

She put the browned chops on a platter saying she was only human and got tired of being criticized all the time.

He protested he never criticized, that anything he said was meant to help her.

"I'm tired of that, too," she told him. She set the platter of chops on the table and dished string beans into a bowl.

Bedell was deeply hurt. "I don't know what has gotten into you, May. The kindest thing I can think of is that you are intoxicated."

He took his place at the table as she got the salads from the refrigerator, stacking the mail he'd taken from the box in a small pile beside his plate. "We'll discuss this later," he promised. "And at length."

She shrugged, started to sit down, then walked into the living room instead as the phone rang.

Bedell restacked the circulars and bills in one pile, then opened an envelope addressed to Mr. Morton Bedell in a feminine, slanting, backhand. His forehead knitted in a frown as he read the enclosure.

May continued to speak over the phone, her voice so low he could barely hear what she was saying.

"No," she was telling the party on the other end of the conversation. "It wasn't anything important. I was just sort of blue, that's all, and thought I'd call you."

She lowered her voice still more. "But I can't talk now. Mort's home and waiting for his dinner."

She took her place at the table in a silence so thick she could feel it and offered a bowl to Mort. "You want some of this dressing with your chops?"

Studying his face she wondered why she'd never realized before how thin his lips were. "I had to cook it separately."

"No. I don't want a thing except some information." He tapped the letter he was holding in one hand on the palm of the other. "You accidentally blurted out the truth before you thought, didn't you? Now tell me again. What neighbor were you drinking with this afternoon?"

May told him the truth. "I lied. I wasn't drinking with any neighbor. I had several wines, glasses of wine," she corrected herself, "all by myself."

"I'll bet you did. And who was that you were talking to on the phone just now?"

May continued to be truthful. "George Harris."

"I'll bet it was," Mort repeated. He looked down his nose at her. "You, of all people, to make such a fool of yourself. I never would have believed it of you, May."

She ate a forkful of string beans. "You wouldn't have believed what?"

"You don't know?"

"No."

Bedell's lips grew even thinner. "Just look at the innocence of her. She's fairly dripping. And how long has this been going on?"

"How long has what been going on?"

"This affair you've been carry-

ing on with this man Ramon." He sniffed. "Ramon. He sounds like a long-haired unwashed gigolo, and probably is. I asked you a question, May."

She told the truth. "I haven't been carrying on an affair with anyone. Can you say as much?"

"I can," he lied. "Emphatically. Have you no respect for the sanctity of marriage?"

If she had any qualms of conscience left, his last remark dispelled them. He was nothing but a filthy, lying, cheating intellectual snob who had held heaven-knew-how-many women in his arms and then come home to her.

It was her money that had put the chops and the dressing and the string beans and the salad on their table. For all his big talk he was a failure, a financial adventurer who had deliberately chosen her for control of the small amount of money her father had left her and then hadn't even had the decency to be faithful to her. He had used and bruised and abused her. And she didn't care what happened to him.

"If I hadn't respected the sanctity of marriage," she said quietly, "I wouldn't have stayed with you as long as I have, Mort."

"And you swear you've been faithful?"

"I do."

He handed her the letter.

"Then just how do you explain this?"

She read the letter slowly. It was a typical anonymous letter of the type usually written by a "well-meaning" busybody accusing her of carrying on a clandestine affair with one William Smith whose address was given as 4B of the same building, but whose real name the disguised handwriting stated as not William Smith but James Ramon, an unemployed dancing school instructor.

She looked up from the letter saying, "I won't attempt to explain it. You can't explain such things. But I swear to you on my word of honor and by the love I once thought we had for each other that there isn't one word of truth to this. And if you didn't have such a guilty conscience, you'd believe me."

His handsome face florid with anger, Mort reached across the table and slapped her. "Don't you dare talk to me like that. Why, you little tramp! Right across the hall."

He pushed back his chair, disappeared into the living room and reappeared with the .32 caliber revolver.

"What are you going to do?" May asked him.

"I'm going across the hall," he told her, "and beat the truth out of this fellow Ramon. Then I'm coming back and beat you."

May said, "I guess in the back of my mind I've always known it would come to this. But I wouldn't go across the hall if I were you, Mort."

He slapped her again, harder this time, then leaving their door open he crossed the hall and beat on the door of 4B with the butt of his gun.

"Open this door. Open it immediately or I'll break it down."

There was some difference of opinion as to just what happened next, but Mr. and Mrs. Glendale, the occupants of apartment 4A, who swore they saw it all, said that Mr. Bedell had scarcely ceased the shouting that had drawn them from their dinner table when the door of 4B opened and the occupant had appeared in the doorway screaming, "Come and take me, copper."

Then the hall had erupted with gunfire. His left hand pressed to his chest, Bedell had staggered back against the wall. A second burst of shots had sent him to the floor. Then he had raised his right hand and there was a diminutive *pop*, the sound, Mr. Glendale said, that a child's toy gun might make.

More in surprise than anger, the occupant of 4B remarked that he would be damned. Then, a small red spot on his chest spreading rapidly, he had lifted his fist as if to knock on an invisible door and fallen flat on his face in the doorway over the

legs of the man who, in dying, had killed him.

"The fool. The utter fool," Inspector Shamlin swore, speaking of Bedell. But that was some time later, after May had shown him the true crime magazine containing the picture of bleach-haired James Ramon, alias Thomas Kelly, alias Jim Balek, alias William Smith, where it lay on Bedell's night table beside the formidable *The Atomic Age; Or What An Atomic War Would Mean To The Tanning Industry*.

Inspector Shamlin reconstructed the tragedy. "He saw the picture last night when he was reading in bed. Then he spots Ramon in the hall when he comes home for supper. Ramon looks familiar, but Bedell can't place him. He sits down and starts to eat his supper." Shamlin snapped his fingers. "Then—

Bingo. It comes to him. He knows why the lad with the bleached hair looked familiar. The fool," the inspector repeated. "Instead of trying to be a hero, he should have called us."

Nor, under the circumstances, did Inspector Shamlin see why the bereaved young widow shouldn't claim the reward.

May intended to. She had no false compunctions, no regrets, no fear. Now she had burned the anonymous letter she had written to Mort and flushed the ashes down the drain there was nothing to connect her with the case.

More, she intended to claim the reward even before she phoned George. She knew just what she intended to do with the one hundred dollars. She would buy a nice blanket of roses for Morton.

She felt he had it coming.



In this month's FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, our companion magazine, WISH UPON A STAR, a short novel by ROBERT F. YOUNG; GODS OF THE NORTH, a newly discovered story by ROBERT E. HOWARD and short stories, the best in today's Science Fiction and Fantasy, by EVELYN E. SMITH, WALT SHELDON, KENNETH BULMER, and WILLIAM C. GAULT.

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blood
on
the
medicine
arrows

by . . . Hayden Howard

Death had come to the Cheyenne warrior. At first they thought he had been clubbed by a brave Pawnee. But then . . .

THE FIRST snow had fallen before all the far-wandering bands of the Cheyenne were assembled near the Republican River. The trails were long, but ~~the~~ people were glad to come. The four-day ceremony of renewing the medicine arrows would spread good influences to everyone in the immense camp. It would heal the bad sign against the tribe that had appeared on the stone points of the medicine arrows.

This bad sign was specks of blood.

Earlier in the season, while night was painting the leaves, a man had been killed behind his own lodge. At first, his band thought Big Neck Calf had been clubbed by a brave Pawnee.

These enemies dwelled in earth lodges further down the Republican River and trespassed on the plains of the Cheyenne to hunt buffalo. At that moment, nine young men who had gone with Elk Road to steal horses from these Pawnees were beginning to be wailed

Hayden Howard, who needs no introduction to these pages, describes the time when specks of blood had appeared on the stone points of the medicine arrows. Earlier in the season, while night was painting the leaves, Big Neck Calf had been killed behind his own lodge. At first they'd blamed the Pawnee, but now it looked as if he had been slain by another Cheyenne. It was a very bad thing.

over. They had been gone a long time.

Big Neck Calf's scalp had not been taken. The people believed this was because the lone Pawnee had been startled away by Mad Wolf.

But when the keeper of the medicine arrows, who was a member of this band and whose name was Watching-the-Sun, discovered specks of blood on the four stone points, the people began to think Big Neck Calf had been slain by another Cheyenne. A very bad thing.

All this happened in the old days, long before 1830 when we Cheyennes lost our medicine arrows to the Skidi Pawnees during a great battle along the South Loup River in what is now Nebraska. If we had not lost our medicine arrows, perhaps the Yellow Eyes, the white-men, would not have been able to drive us from our plains?

It has been told that the man who stumbled upon Big Neck Calf's body was called Mad Wolf. He was Big Neck Calf's hunting partner, and a fierce fighter. The seams of his leggings were black with the hair of his enemies. He was so eager to count coups that even the young men preferred to follow Elk Road when they went to steal horses.

Mad Wolf came out of his lodge to investigate a strange sound. He had not been asleep

for reasons that will be told. He shouted the alarm. Everyone thought the Pawnees had attacked.

When the sky grew lighter and order was restored, Watching-the-Sun and the other old men stood in a circle around the body. They said Big Neck Calf must have grappled with the Pawnee before his spirit departed because there was blue and yellow paint smeared across his arm and chest. Only Watching-the-Sun said nothing.

Big Neck Calf's three wives were wailing and gashing their legs.

Watching-the-Sun was staring directly at the emerging sun, and finally he said: "I see both bad and good this day. I see Elk Road's war-party returning with many Pawnee horses."

Actually, when the sun was high, Elk Road's party did return driving many, many horses before them. And the reason Mad Wolf had been awake during the night was that Elk Road had sent ahead a young man to creep into camp. Although he had followed Elk Road, this young man was Mad Wolf's half-brother, and he crept into this lodge to ask for black paint and many feathers. Mad Wolf may have felt he was being secretly taunted, but of course he gave his younger brother these things. As was the custom, Elk Road's party wanted to ride into

camp freshly painted for their triumph.

They galloped among the lodges, shaking two scalps in the faces of the young men who had not followed Elk Road. This leader ran on foot to the lodge of Watching-the-Sun. He ran unsteadily as if concealing a wound. He looked very tired, very earnest.

Before all the people, Elk Road wrapped a fine robe about the medicine arrows. While his party crept afoot through Pawnee country he had made a prayer that if none of his men were killed he would do this thing.

Then he tied a fine gray horse in front of the arrow keeper's lodge.

He stood humbly before Watching-the-Sun.

"Because your prayers for our safety made the Pawnee medicine man blind and deaf, I want you to have this." He handed Watching-the-Sun a Pawnee medicine rattle adorned with disks of pink shell from the Big Water that lies far south of the Arkansas River; this gave Watching-the-Sun much pleasure.

Elk Road's party had surprised the Pawnee medicine man and a young boy performing a ceremony in a dry buffalo wallow. Elk Road counted first coup on this important man, Spotted Foal counted second coup on

him, and Young Bear killed him and removed the scalps.

Perhaps the Pawnee medicine man was singing songs that would have caused the buffalo to leave the plains of the Cheyenne and then congregate around the earth lodges of the Pawnees?

"The two scalps should be given to the widows of Big Neck Calf," one of the old men said, and this is how Elk Road's party learned that a Cheyenne had been killed.

Elk Road was a short man yet a great warrior, and his horse herd looked as many as the buffalo. Several years later when he no longer owned those fine horses, he was selected as one of the chiefs of the Fox Soldier Society, which is a reversal of the usual order of things. But then he had a name of even stronger medicine.

Mad Wolf looked at the fine gray Pawnee horse Elk Road had tied in front of the arrow-keeper's lodge, and he laughed so some people could hear him: "Enemy horses, I think they follow Elk Road as though he were a white mule, and that should be his name."

Elk Road was very ugly from being ridden down by a Crow chief. This was on his first war-party. The Crow counted coup on young Elk Road with his whip-handle, and his horse's hoofs must have struck Elk

Road's face. When Elk Road awoke, his Elk Helper Spirit was standing over his body. It must have led the Crow away, so far that the Crow could not return to take his scalp.

Elk Road was a very religious man. He fasted much and saw many visions of his Elk Helper Spirit. It told him what to do when he was troubled. It first came to him when, as a small boy, he went up on a hilltop to fast and pray for such a helper. After that he wore elk tail hairs in his scalp-lock, and he was called Elk Road. He had great success in war and hunting. He gave much meat to old people. Often he gave fine war ponies to poor boys who owned none fit for the warpath.

Yet Elk Road had only one wife. To her relations he gave more horses than had ever before been given in that band. That shows how beautiful she was. Her name was Beautiful Fawn.

Yet when he came back from his victory over the Pawnees, he returned her to her father's lodge.

While the people were celebrating Elk Road's victory over the Pawnees, and the relatives of Big Neck Calf were wailing and cutting off their finger joints, Watching-the-Sun left the camp. He went on foot to a high place where wolves sit. Clad only in his breechclout, he

waited through the cold night.

Although his ribs showed like an old wolf's, inside his fire was strong. His hair was black as a young man's. His eyes were large, and after he had watched the sun lift up, he stared, unwinking, at the far-away camp of his band, at the young men dancing, at the fine war horses rolling their backs in the dust.

Across the river, on the bluff sat a stone or a wolf or a Pawnee. Watching-the-Sun knew it was Elk Road. Perhaps the Sun told him?

When Elk Road returned to the camp, Watching-the-Sun's expression was troubled, but his step was firm as he went back to his lodge. He did not take meat. He unwrapped the medicine arrows.

"There are specks of blood on the medicine arrows," he cried.

Thus it was that Watching-the-Sun called all the bands of the Cheyenne to assemble. It took until the first snowfall for some of them to reach the Republican River. But all must be in one camp before the four medicine arrows could be renewed.

During the four days, the ancient stone points, which had been carried by the Cheyennes from the Black Hills and by their fathers from the villages on the Missouri River and by

their ancestors through the dim years before the horse from the country of many lakes where Sweet Medicine came out of a great lodge within a hill to give them the four arrows, insuring abundance and victory, these his stone points were wrapped to the shafts with fresh sinew. Fresh feathers were attached to the shafts. The medicine of the arrows was renewed, and the people could walk with hopeful eyes.

Four old chiefs walked to the arrow-keeper's lodge. They walked four abreast. The people knew why blood had appeared on the arrows; because Big Neck Calf had been killed by another Cheyenne. There seemed no other explanation. But they did not know who this Cheyenne was or whether it had been an accident. An accident seemed unlikely, but the Cheyennes do not like to believe evil of each other. The four old chiefs asked Watching-the-Sun to call down a mighty spirit to tell them which Cheyenne had killed Big Neck Calf and whether it was an accident.

Watching-the-Sun accepted the pipe. This meant he had agreed to their request.

That night in the big lodge the chiefs tied Watching-the-Sun with a bowstring. They tied his hands together. They tied his feet together. Yet he did not look foolish. He looked very

thin, very determined, and very strong medicine.

He was the man who danced with the medicine arrows before the enemy. He was the man who needed neither food nor rest and could watch the sun like an eagle, and saw happenings there. And his father, Medicine Twins, had been keeper of the medicine arrows before him, and his grandfather before that.

His name was not Wide Eyes. That had been his little-boy name when he walked alone. His name was not Medicine Lance. That had been his name when he went to war with a protective hoop lance, a young man who counted many coups. Such a lance did not kill, but when it touched an enemy it took away his medicine. It led the attack and covered the retreat.

Now he was Watching-the-Sun who could call down the spirits.

The chiefs put him in a tiny lodge that had been set up in the center of the big lodge. It looked like a child's play lodge, but it was painted with powerful symbols.

All the important men sat, crowded together, around the small lodge. The people who could not get into the big lodge were crowded outside, listening.

What would be told in the big lodge must be true, for the

medicine arrows were hanging there, listening also.

Near the inner edge of the circle of important men lay a bone whistle.

When all were sitting in silence, the fire was put out. Soon in the darkness the bone whistle sounded.

When the whistle stopped sounding, a spirit was called down through the smoke hole by the voice of Watching-the-Sun. He called the spirit Sun Dog. It spoke from where the lodge-poles are tied together. In a great, hollow voice unlike any man's, it said it was coming down. When it touched the ground the earth shook, and the chief who had given Watching-the-Sun the pipe and was now standing alone asked the spirit to take pity on them.

"We do not want to go about in fear of each other, each fearing that the other will strike him down in the night behind his lodge." The chief asked Sun Dog which Cheyenne had killed Big Neck Calf and whether it was an accident.

The spirit replied in a voice louder than any man's.

"The Cheyenne was killed by Elk Road."

After a moment it spoke again. "This thing was an accident and yet not an accident."

They all heard it go into the small lodge. They heard the dry buffalo hides scrape. Sun Dog

spoke in a strange tongue with Watching-the-Sun.

Sun Dog must have untied Watching-the-Sun, for he came out of the small lodge unaided. He called for the fire to be rekindled.

In his hand was an ugly stick, much charred. It had one big flattened end like a horn spoon. This was due to a sunken knot.

Elk Road sat like a lost hunter who is found in the time of opening buds, when the snow melts. His eyes were open. The men knew he was looking at a strong dream. Perhaps his Elk Helper?

Finally Mad Wolf, who was not a religious man, said: "I recall that ugly stick. It was lying near Big Neck Calf's body."

Elk Road blinked. He signed for the pipe. He stroked it reverently while he spoke. With the pipe in his hands, he could not lie, and of course the medicine arrows were listening from the wall of the lodge as well. There is no doubt Elk Road was telling what was in his heart.

"We had taken so many Pawnee horses," he said, "and there was such a bad spirit in them that we made a slow trail. I prayed to my Elk Helper Spirit to lead the Pawnees on a false trail, and he shook his horns and leaped away. When daylight came, there was no dust of pursuit on the horizon.

"All day we drove the herd

and through the next night. The following day when we let them run into a deep coulee where there was a little water but very little grass, my Elk Helper returned and stood over me. He said he had led the Pawnees on a false road toward the Platte River, then circled back to our lodges. He said already there was some wailing among the women because we were overdue. But Beautiful Fawn, my woman, her eyes were smiling.

"I smiled also, replying: 'Oh, my Elk Spirit, this is because Beautiful Fawn knows you protect me, that you lead my enemies on false roads. She knows I cannot be killed while you stand over me.'

"With night we traveled, and when I closed my eyes I could not see my Elk Helper. I grew afraid the Pawnees were circling ahead to ambush us. Light brought strong winds, and dust-devils scattered the Pawnee horses like leaves, and we must gallop our tired mounts this way and that, herding them.

"I prayed to my Elk Helper to stop the wind, but he was not in that country, and I concluded to let the horses recruit in a valley of much late grass. When I lay down there, my Elk Helper returned. He said: 'I heard you, but I was far away at the lodges. You had better not stay here long. Big Neck

Calf has spoken to your woman beside the watering place.'

"I did not reply to this, but I thought: My Helper makes much over nothing. Perhaps he is becoming an old woman who would rather gossip at the lodges than run beside my horse as he should?

"This was an ungrateful thought, and my Elk Helper understood it. Suddenly all I could see of him was his white tail flag, and then nothing. While he was gone, a gray bear appeared in the valley. Before we could do anything, the horses smelled him. They stampeded into the dusk. We searched for them in the darkness, and in the morning we went on with those we had found. My men were very tired. They said this is how turtles return from war.

"We wanted to push on as fast as we could because there had been two bad signs against us, the dust-devils and then the bear. Pretty soon the Pawnees would catch us. But the horses were in bad condition and would not be driven fast. There was a gray mare the other horses liked. They followed her. Now she went lame, and the others kept trying to run back to her. I knew something evil was causing this; something did not want me to return to the lodges.

"Asking the medicine arrows to give my arm strength, prom-

ising to tie a fine war pony in front of the arrow-keeper's lodge, I rode back. I killed that gray mare with one arrow. At once, the wind began to shift. It carried the scent of water to the herd, leading them swiftly toward our own country.

"There were elk tracks leading the herd down to the river. My Elk Helper Spirit stood beside me when I got off my horse, and I thanked him as I lay down. He did not speak. With his split hoof, he signed for a pipe. He smoked a while. Then he said: 'Big Neck Calf has entered your lodge. This happened last night while the bear was in the valley. I waited until the moon rose. Big Neck Calf was still in your lodge when I started back to you. Here, take my horns, leap on my back. With my horns you can kill him.'

" 'No,' I cried. 'This is a terrible thing. No matter what he did with my wife, I will not kill him. To do so would bring evil on the tribe.'

In the dim lodge, thick with the scent of the warriors pressed close together, Elk Road looked from face to face until he recognized a man named Young Bear, who had accompanied him.

Elk Road said: "The young men heard me cry this."

Mad Wolf, who had been badly brought up because his

mother was a captured Pawnee, was the only warrior who turned his head to look at Young Bear. By looking, Mad Wolf indicated he was looking for confirmation, that to him Elk Road's words needed confirmation even though Elk Road spoke to the medicine arrows.

Young Bear nodded at the medicine arrows. He answered: "I have heard. Elk Road cried out in his sleep. He did this again at our last sleep. This first time, some of the young men leaped up. They thought the Pawnees were coming."

"I told them they had better drive the herd up-water," Elk Road continued, "now that they were a little rested. Perhaps we should have buried our trail in the river at once, without resting, but my eyes had been narrow, my thoughts had been narrow from lack of sleep. Now we did so, and kept traveling after it grew dark.

"When we reached a certain pasture surrounded by willows as thickly as a palisade, I knew we were not far below the lodges. This was a good place to rest the horses and spread our buffalo robes. We were tired and weak, but the young men were laughing. We had lost many horses, but many still remained. And we had taken two Pawnee scalps without the loss of a Cheyenne.

"I sent the youngest warrior

to creep into the camp to get feathers and black paint. We wanted to prepare ourselves for a proper triumph. But I wanted to go to my lodge at once. Yet I should stay with my men. I told them to make prayers of thanksgiving before they slept; and when it was my turn to rest, I thanked the medicine arrows and my Elk Helper.

"My Elk Helper stood over me. He told me what Big Neck Calf was doing at that very moment with my wife. I groaned with rage. I chewed my robe with hatred. My Elk Helper said: 'Here is my hoof. Take it. One small blow from my medicine hoof will split his bones to sharp needles. His life will run out.'

"'No,' I cried. 'I must not kill another Cheyenne.'

"When I sank into sleep, my Elk Helper returned also. He said: 'The two of them are laughing what an ugly little man you are. Here, take my tooth. Slash his face with it. Then no woman will look at him.'

"I wanted to do this. But something held me to my robe. I knew if I slashed his face, I would do the same to his throat. My Elk Helper twitched his big ears. He said: 'Are you a coward? At least take one of my ears. When you strike him with that, if he is evil, if what I told you is true, he will go away

from the band and never rob good husbands again.'

"I knew his ear was soft. It would not kill a man. I rode on his back, swift as the wind, the willows whipping my flesh. I saw Big Neck Calf walking behind the lodges, from mine toward his own. He could not see me. I struck him with the elk ear. He fell down. My Elk Helper told me to listen to his chest. If his heart was quiet, if his drum had stopped, he was going away.

"Then my Elk Helper carried me back through the willows to the pasture. The birds waked me. My flesh had been whipped and cut by the willows. When I looked at my flesh, I knew the dream had been very strong medicine; yet I was unsure whether anything had really happened behind the lodges.

"And when I looked down at his body, I was surprised. He had been struck by a war club. Some said a Pawnee war club. I thought I might have killed him in the spirit world. But I could not remember killing him in this world. My hands did not remember a hard, stinging blow. I felt badly for his relatives. I did not know what to do.

"In my lodge, I sat watching Beautiful Fawn without speaking. There must have been talk in the camp. She thought that someone had told me. She told me, angrily, to my face. I could

not hate her. I sent her back to her parents. Then I went up on the river bluff to fast.

"Sometimes my Elk Helper told me to say one thing. Sometimes he told me to forget. I did not know what should be done. It was too much medicine for me. I did nothing, and when Watching-the-Sun discovered blood on the medicine arrows I was not afraid. Now I am glad. I do not have to decide."

There was quiet. Then Mad Wolf cleared his throat. It was not his place to speak. His voice was angry and laughing. "That ugly stick, the end of it, I think it looks like an elk's ear. The ear of Elk Road's helper spirit. I wonder if there is blood on that ugly stick?"

Watching-the-Sun replied that if Mad Wolf had had eyes in the morning that they stood around the body, he would have seen the blood on the stick.

The chiefs did not know what to do. They asked Watching-the-Sun what the spirit, Sun Dog, had told him should be done. Watching-the-Sun accepted the pipe.

"The spirit told me that the burned stick crushed Big Neck Calf's head. This I already knew. But now the spirit placed this stick in my hand. It told me about Beautiful Fawn and Big Neck Calf. It told me that Elk Road's helper spirit had

been watching them and had returned to Elk Road to tell him. And it reminded me that the blue and yellow paints on Big Neck Calf's chest were the colors with which Elk Road had painted his face when he set out against the Pawnees.

"It told me that Elk Road's helper spirit had led him on the wrong road, that this was not a clear river to be easily looked into. It told all of you that Elk Road killed, that this was an accident and yet not an accident."

Watching-the-Sun blew the smoke four times. "Arrows may be renewed; our wounds may be healed. The spirit said this, that Elk Road is to pay Big Neck Calf's relatives four hundred horses. I whispered that even Elk Road did not own that many. The spirit replied that the horses Elk Road gave to Beautiful Fawn's relatives must be included in this payment. They must be returned to him. He must also give his weapons, his clothing, everything he owns except one robe to Big Neck Calf's relatives.

"Further, Elk Road must now move with another band of Cheyennes. He is a great warrior. He will take more horses. Perhaps he will find another woman there."

Angrily, Mad Wolf spoke out of turn, laughing angrily: "This killer of my friend should no

longer be called Elk Road. While he lives, he will be known as Elk Ear."

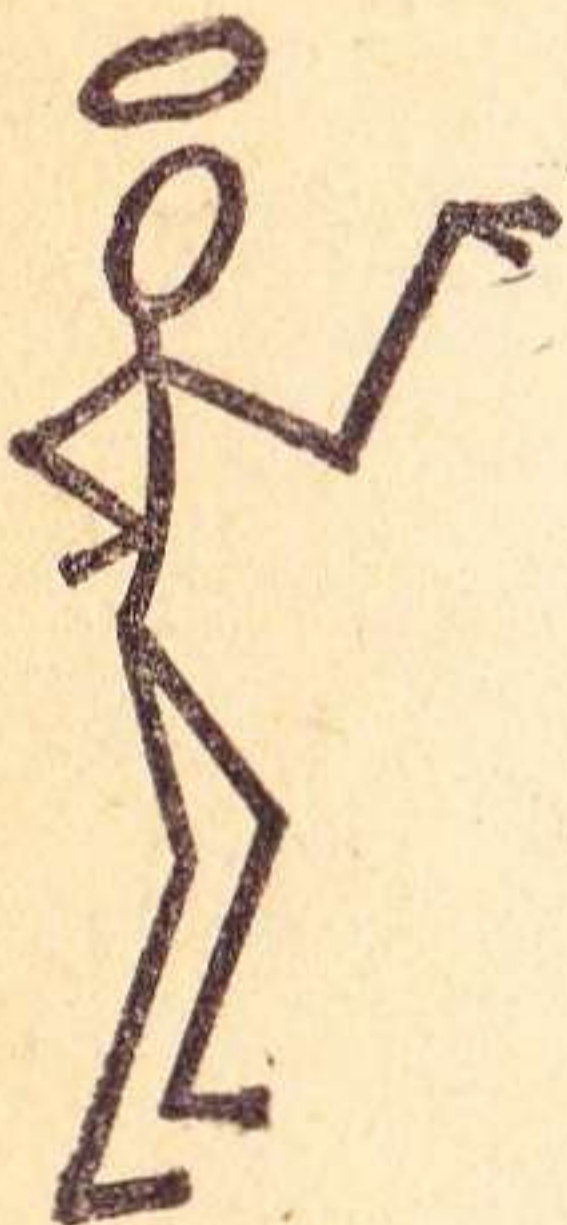
"Not so," replied Watching-the-Sun. "This Elk must leave the Cheyennes. This man must walk alone as if he were an untried boy searching for a helper spirit. He must fast and pray

on a mountain top until his Elk Helper Spirit has starved to death or run away.

"Another spirit will come to him. If he is still alive, he will come down from the mountain. He will still be a Cheyenne. After this, he will be called Man Twice Born."

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SD 612

love
makes
men
free

by . . . George Dillon

Killer Mike Garvin knew that through that iron door would walk his ticket to freedom. . . .

MIKE GARVIN was wound up tight—plenty tight. But he had a right to be. He was going on trial tomorrow morning at nine o'clock for a murder rap he didn't have a chance in a million of beating. He'd plugged a cop. There ain't nothin' makes the gendarmes any hotter.

He showed no tension, but sat back now, like he had every Sunday and every Wednesday for six months, and indifferently watched the solid iron door which opened into the barred-off corridor that ran along the side of this cage he was locked. Nobody but me knew how counterfeit his indifference was, for he had reason to hope that, in the next few minutes, through that iron door would walk his ticket to freedom.

Mike was over six feet tall, thick blond hair and gray eyes, and every line of his ruggedly handsome face and body shouted strength, and virility, and male magnetism. Uncontrolled brutality could be seen there too by those who looked closely, but

George Dillon, author of "Harem Slave," a historical novel scheduled for early 1957 publication by Shasta, Chicago, turns to crime fiction in this ironical little story of ruggedly handsome Mike Garvin who told the girl to bring him something that would make him free. . . . Mr. Dillon, who took part in "the Battle of Alcatraz," wrote most of "Harem Slave," and a second novel, about the noted General William Walker, while a prisoner at Leavenworth.

that merely added to the charm he held for women. They all seemed to go nuts about him. He was fully aware of the effect he had on them and played upon it unmercifully.

Like, for instance, he had done with this little church gal. She was one of these Holy Joes that came to preach to us every Wednesday and Sunday. The screws would open the iron door, and these people would file into the barred-off corridor with that subdued, solemn rustle which always makes you know it's church whether held in a jail tank or a cathedral. Then the screws would shut the iron door and leave us until the service was over.

You was always a little surprised to see this girl—her name was Esther—with these people. I don't know why. I guess her warm, fresh young beauty just looked out of place in that austere setting. Her clothes were dull and forbidding, but her live, ripe womanhood pushed them out just the right amount in just the right places. She would have looked good in anything from a G-string to a wedding gown, and somehow, even guys like us would have preferred the wedding gown. There was a wholesome pureness about her that made you know she was good clear through; but still, she was very much a woman, and

anybody could obviously see that.

Mike saw it, and did what he could about it—which was plenty. The first few times they came, after he was there, he sat through the ceremony with bored, detached indifference. Toward the close of the service they always asked everyone who wanted to be prayed for to raise his hand. Everyone would raise his hand, even me—what the heck, it didn't cost anything, and always made these Joes feel good. But not Mike. Mike would stare stonily at them or ignore them completely.

It's a funny thing, but these religious people get as eager, and trembly, and excited about saving a soul as a square does about an inside tip on a three-horse parley. After the services, the guys in the clink would go up to the bars to return song-books, and bat the breeze a little—usually telling the Joes the bum rap they're getting. But not Mike.

Well, Esther would look at Mike with an interested, puzzled expression on her pretty pan. I guess he was the first gink she'd ever seen—especially in his fix—who didn't give a damn whether he was prayed for or not. Then maybe her womanhood just couldn't stand seeing such a vital hunk of man going to waste.

Whatever her reasons, she began asking me questions

about him, and then got me to bring him up to talk to her. She drew him out skilfully, tossing in a chunk of religion now and then, but about the second time she talked to him, I noticed unmistakable signs that his old magnetism and charm had her hooked. She seemed to find breathing difficult when he was near.

Mike saw it too, and began giving her the works. Even girls who had been around plenty couldn't stand up against that. At first it was just a game to him, then he saw how he could use her. Mike kind of went for her too, but he never overlooked a chance to do himself some good.

"Doc," he says to me, "I'm gonna give this doll the razzle dazzle. When I get through, she'll be begging to bring me an opener for this little old can."

It wouldn't a done me no good to protest.

After the meeting the following week, they stood very close there by the bars. "I've never thought of you like that," I heard her say.

"Well, think of me like that," he said. "Isn't there warm, red blood in your veins? Think of me tonight when you go to bed. Think of me holding you so tight you can hardly breathe; think of my hands carressing you; think of my lips kissing

your eyes, your mouth, your breasts—"

"Don't!" she said, trembling.

"Think of me!" he said hotly.

Then the church people all filed out of the corridor.

She thought of him that night, all right. She thought of him a lot of nights. She couldn't have helped herself. But I'll give him credit, he played his hand smart. With his trial date crowding toward him, he took his time. When he could delay no longer, he put the pressure on her.

One whole week she didn't come with the rest of them. They told us she was in bed with a high fever. What a battle she must have fought with herself! But the following Wednesday, there she was with the fierce love that was in her showing through her pallor.

Mike was rough with her. He beat her with his voice, but the tones came out soft, and a person three feet away wouldn't have known what he was doing. But he knew it, and she knew it, and like lots of women, it only seemed to make her love him more. She was anxious to save him. She agreed to bring him something that would help free him the following Sunday.

That was today, and there Mike sat, looking as if he didn't have a care in the world—but burning inside. I could tell by

the over-deliberate way he rolled a cigarette.

"What do you think?" I asked anxiously.

"She'll come through," Mike said. "That old Garvin charm never fails."

A key sounded in the lock and the iron door swung open. The church folks were here. There was that hushed, rustling entry. She was with them! She carried a large Bible in her hand—larger than usual—and there was an almost holy light in her eyes.

We sat impatiently through the service; even Mike's calm showed signs of cracking. Carefully we sauntered up after the ceremony.

"Let's have it, baby."

She passed the Bible through the bars to him. It was a fine Bible.

"Is everything okay?" he asked. "Is it here?"

"Everything is okay, now," she said. "You'll find there what it takes to set you free."

Mike let out a big breath. Then he said some soothing, appreciative things to her, but they carried no real sincerity. He was impatient for her—all of them—to be gone. He wanted to look at the saws, hold them in his hand. At last, they said good-bye, and there was a strange look in her face as their handclasp was broken and she headed toward the door.

Mike hurried back to the open-fronted toilet to look at the hacksaw blades. I went along to cover for him. He opened the book. There was something written on the fly-leaf. He read it impatiently, and then began shaking the Bible down for his hacksaw blades. He opened it and looked under the back. There was nothing. His hands trembled with suppressed excitement. He riffled the pages, felt the lining—nothing. Frantically, he twisted the covers this way and that searching for the metal.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "She pull a sandy on you?"

"Shut up," he said savagely.

He ripped the covers from the book, and tore anything which might hide a saw to tiny bits. There was nothing—absolutely nothing! A look of stunned unbelief deadened his face.

He slammed what was left of the Bible on the floor viciously, walked over to a bench, slumped upon it, and let his head fall hopelessly into his hands. I looked at him a long moment, then bent and retrieved the fly-leaf, and began to read.

Oh, my beloved Mike.

Search carefully in this book and you will find that which shall make you free—

Everlastingly yours,

Esther

what's
new
in
crime

by . . . Hans Stefan
Santesson

Recent essays in the less gentle
arts. . . .

THERE is a temptation to remember at times, with some nostalgia, the bygone days when novels in this field were not so often essays—and not always literate essays—in the pathology of the abnormal, those “days of the blithe, light hearted irreverent comedy of crime,” as our friend Anthony Boucher puts it in a recent column in *The New York Times*, “when a corpse or two served simply as entrance token to the delightful Cloudeuckooland” created by writers now considerably sedater.

This writer feels that essays in the pathology of frustrations and of clinically described sex-cum-sadism urges, are NOT to be confused with those novels which justify the feeling that the mystery novel has become, more than we sometimes realize, the social documentary portrait of our times. For, if future researchers should, some day, wish to study life and *mores* in a Southern town, they will be able to turn to novels like Louise Crump's *THE FACE OF FEAR* (1954, Longman Green); if they are interested in the meth-

Some years ago, while still editor of the UNICORN MYSTERY BOOK CLUB, this column spoke at the annual dinner of a neighboring state's librarians Association. The topic—it should be remembered that this was in the days of the less exhausting novels—was “Murder can be relaxing.” This month we comment on this idea that clinical detailedness isn't actually realism. . . .

odology of detection at Scotland Yard, there is J. J. Marrick's excellent *GIDEON'S DAY* (1955, Harper's); or if they are interested in a portrait of a New England village, a softly etched but beautiful portrait, there is Ellery Queen's better than excellent *THE GLASS VILLAGE* (1954, Little Brown). And there are twenty more titles that can be cited, writers you know and respect, whose work will be remembered long after others are forgotten.

But to our reviews.

Dorothy Gardiner, author of *WHAT CRIME IS IT?* (Doubleday, \$2.75), is Executive Secretary of the Mystery Writers of America. There are people who refuse to believe that there ever was a time when this wasn't so; there are, on the other hand, MWA members who shudder at the thought that this may not always *be* so . . . Be that as it may, it is understandable that novelist and mystery writer Dorothy Gardiner hasn't had too much time, these last years, to add, as *WHAT CRIME IS IT?* does, to that very relaxed feeling, to that nostalgic feeling, as she now does.

You have the feeling that Dorothy Gardiner enjoyed writing *WHAT CRIME IS IT?* (The title fascinates me. It has so little to do with the story.) This feeling that she enjoyed writing it is important,—not on-

ly because there are times, as suggested above, when this is obviously not the case,—but because the enjoyment creeps in, time after time, in her report on Sheriff Moss Magill's determination to trap a killer.

Moss Magill, Sheriff of Notlaw County, is a law enforcement officer we hope we'll run into again. Notlaw, Colorado, altitude 8,997 feet, population 407, is the finest town on earth, and also safe and law-abiding, not like New York where even traffic cops were said to wear guns. Moss Magill hadn't carried a gun in the twenty years he'd been Sheriff of Notlaw County, and he didn't need one—even at the end. Definitely recommended to those of you who still know how to relax . . .

THROUGHOUT the last quarter of a century, the team of Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee, perhaps better known as Ellery Queen, has become one of *the* names associated with this field. Ellery Queen has won four annual "Edgars"—the national Mystery Writers of America awards similar to Hollywood's "Oscars"—and both silver and gold "Gertrudes" have been awarded by Pocket Books for sales in their editions of over one million copies for a single title and for more than five million copies collectively. These are impressive figures, and justify An-

thony Boucher's remark that "Ellery Queen is the American detective story."

A new Ellery Queen is therefore something of an event. A new Queen novel, about Ellery's father rather than Ellery himself, and issued under the Inner Sanctum imprint, makes it still more of an event. **INSPECTOR QUEEN'S OWN CASE** (Simon and Schuster, \$3.00) is more than the story of the murder of a child and the elimination of those whose continued existence threaten the murderer; it is the sensitive story of Ellery's father, Inspector Queen, and of his friends, mandatorily retired at sixty-three, the doors suddenly shut on everything that had been a part of every waking hour of their lives. **INSPECTOR QUEEN'S OWN CASE** may make a number of you think, not about what happens to Richard Queen at a time when he suddenly feels very, very lost, but about what we do for and with men like Inspector Queen who have given the best years of their lives to our protection and to our service. Recommended.

LUDOVIC TRAVERS, that polite and very civilized representative of the British upper-middle-classes returns in Christopher Bush's **THE CASE OF THE AMATEUR ACTOR** (Macmillan, \$2.75). George Prosfort, a well-known but not exactly well

loved literary agent, comes to a rather violent end in an extremely inappropriate London hotel. Richard Alton, a young teacher and amateur actor, disappears soon afterwards and there are people who suspect—in a restrained sort of way—that he may have taken refuge behind the Iron Curtain. Alton's disappearance proves to be murder, murder linked to the Prosfort case. Recommended to the patient.

AFTER forty years of practice in India—dedicated years of practice as a missionary doctor—Dr. Olive Clayton retires to England, hoping to find peace. Josephine Bell's interesting **DEATH IN RETIREMENT** (Macmillan, \$2.75), describes her search for peace, and what interfered with it.

PAT and Jean Abbott were a part of those less psycho-analytical years, touched on above, when there seemed to be no need for that rather adolescent leer that distinguishes some latter-day contributions to this field. A somewhat sedater Pat Abbott, still capable of a gleam in his eye when he sees a pretty girl though, traps a murderer—an unexpected murderer—in Frances Crane's deft **HORROR ON THE RUBY X** (Random House, \$2.75). This is murder down in an urbaner Rio Grande country than you may know.

whittled
saint,
whittled
devil

by . . . A. Finnegan

It seemed to her there was nothing else quite so beautiful as the moment just before dawn. How was she to know that dawn could also mean unhappiness?

IT SEEMED to Annette that there was nothing else quite so beautiful as the moment just before dawn. From the hillside where Papa LeBrun's farm stood, she could look across the valley and up the other side where the pink horizon warned that the sun was ready to break. She smiled to herself, then turned and continued along the path which led to the Ballou farm. She shivered just a little as her ankles caught the dew from the timothy which ran along the sides of the narrow path.

The cocks at the Ballou place had been crowing for almost half an hour now. Ballou would have had time to get back with the eggs, and Annette would get them still coated in the warmth of the nest. And Ballou would have a steaming bowl of coffee ready for her. It was not very good coffee, but Annette always gave in to the ruse of a lonely old man for a few minutes of companionship. Besides, the eggs would keep warm until she got them back to Papa LeBrun and her own breakfast.

A Finnegan—who is not A. Finnegan but is editor-in-chief with a New York publisher—tells the story of "Pierre-fou," the mute who, though far from bright, perhaps wasn't half the fool many made him out to be. The problem was whether this young man could be capable of murder—senseless, brutal, needless murder—and what would happen to the one who caught up with the murderer.

Something moved in the bushes beside the side gate, and a pair of chipmunks skittered away into the mist. From behind the bushes came a thin, raspy breathing sound, a sound so close to sobbing that Annette had always been moved to pity by it.

"Pierre? Is that you?" Annette peered into the bushes. "Pierre? This is Annette."

The boy came out from behind the bush, his eyes wide and staring. He continued to make the thin crying sound.

Annette smiled. "Good morning, Pierre. I'm glad to see that someone else is up enjoying the sunrise too." Annette had always called him Pierre, and she deplored the "*Pierre-fou*" which so many of the old people called the boy. He was a mute but not altogether deaf, and though he was far from bright, Annette felt he was not half the fool that many made him out to be. For shelter and food, the fourteen-year-old boy depended on those few villagers who, like Annette, pitied him. Except for a step-uncle who had disowned him, Pierre had no family. Annette and her friends had, in a sense, adopted the boy, though he still kept chiefly to himself.

Sometimes Annette met him while she was berrying, and he would follow her about slavishly while she sang songs about birds and brooks. He would carry her

load of berries back to Papa Le-Brun's and then wait for his reward of hot berry pie. In the winter, he sometimes chopped wood for her. Annette had noticed that Pierre was indolent only when he was with those who insisted that an imbecile had to be indolent.

Mme. Faivre, wife of the town constable, had summed up the general attitude toward Pierre. "Every village is supposed to have an idiot," she had said many times, "and we've certainly got ours in that good-for-nothing *Pierre-fou*. Good for whittling, maybe, but not for anything else. Image of his step-uncle, 'cept that he at least can talk like an ordinary body." She shook her head and clucked. "Yes, we've certainly got our idiot, and it's nobody's pleasure." Once she had said the same thing when Pierre was standing right beside her, and he had only flushed deeply and scuffed the dust with his big toe.

Now Annette smiled again. "Are you coming to get eggs from Ballou, too? Come, we'll have coffee with him."

She held out her hand, but instead of taking it as he had always done before, Pierre whirled and fled down the front path toward the road into the village. Annette looked after him curiously. Perhaps he had not recognized her in the early twilight. Then again, she reflected, per-

haps he was after one of Ballou's chickens. It had happened before, though Pierre's guilt had never been proved.

She brushed back a raven black curl and rattled the latch on the kitchen door. "Open the door, my handsome friend," she laughed. "All the women are coming to seek your hand, and I want to be the first one in line." She waited for the door to open and for Ballou's usual joking answer, but when her own echo faded away, there was no sound left save the intermittent screech of the cock.

Annette rattled the latch again, and then pushed the door open a crack. "If you are late again with the eggs, I'll scramble them on top of your white old head," she said.

No answer.

Annette pushed the door open a little further, and saw the pot of coffee boiling over on the stove. She started to run to the stove when suddenly on the far side of the room she saw Ballou, sprawled half on the breakfast table, half on the knotty oak chair. For an instant she thought he must be sick, and she rushed over to him. In the next split second, Annette knew that he was not sick, but that he was dead.

Annette never knew how long she had stood there, gazing down at old Ballou. Through her tears she saw the wisp of a

smile on the cracked old lips, and she was grateful for what she supposed was a swift and painless stroke.

Then she found herself on the path again, running as fast as she could back to Papa LeBrun's. She was nearly blinded by her tears, and twice she felt the sting of mulberry branches rasping across her cheeks. Exhausted and breathless, she stumbled into the kitchen and fell into Papa LeBrun's arms, sobbing violently.

It was almost noon when she awoke, and for a moment Annette could not imagine how she had come to oversleep so late. Then, in a flash, the incidents of the morning came back to her, and she felt the tears beginning to press at her eyes again. Vaguely she remembered falling into the kitchen, and supposed she must have fainted as Papa reached to catch her. She sat on the edge of the bed, thinking of old Ballou, of his warm eggs and watery coffee, of the joking romance they had carried on since she'd been old enough to walk.

As she came slowly down the stairs, she heard men's voices in the sitting room. It seemed an odd time of day for Papa to be having callers, when everybody was usually out working in the fields.

"I don't like the idea of involving Annette in this thing," one voice said. Annette dismiss-

ed the words themselves for the moment, for she recognized the voice and it set her to some quick primping before she came into sight. Although she and Paul Anders were not yet actually engaged, it was as official as an unofficial engagement can get to be. Only idly did she wonder about the reference just made to herself.

She turned at the bottom of the stairs and stepped into the sitting room. "Good morning," she said quietly, smiling fleetingly at Paul. The men murmured in reply, and Paul jumped up to ease Annette into a seat.

Papa LeBrun looked at her in concern. "Are you sure you feel well enough to be up, Annette?"

"Yes, Papa. I'm fine now. I guess it was just the shock."

Constable Faivre toyed with his hat. "You feel up to describing what happened?"

"Describing what happened?" Annette was bewildered. "Why, nothing. I just went there and found him."

Papa cleared his throat. "What Constable Faivre means, Annette, is that—well—"

Paul and Faivre and Faivre's deputy stared at the floor. Annette sensed that they were all uncomfortable.

"But what is it? What is the matter with you all?" Annette wanted to know.

Paul took a deep breath. "Annette, I hate having to tell you

this, but Ballou did not die naturally." He looked back at the floor.

Did not die naturally? How did one die unnatur—good heavens! Her hand flew to her mouth. "Paul, it's—not true, is it? You don't mean that he was—that somebody killed him?" The sound of her own words horrified her.

Faivre whirled his hat on his index finger. "I'm afraid that's what happened. And you're the only one we know of who can help us."

Annette began to feel the tears again. "I don't understand," she said. "Who would want to do that? And why?"

Papa shrugged. "That's what they do not know yet. That is what makes it so hard."

"There was the money," Faivre reminded them. "My wife says he had a good deal hidden in the house, all in cash."

Annette recalled the rumors. She had never given them much thought, because Mme. Faivre was always gossiping about something or other, and Annette was certain that the sharp-tongued old woman only knew half of what she claimed to know.

Faivre flushed a little as he went on. "I realize that isn't much to go on, that there was no proof, but my wife—ah, sometimes has a way of coming up with a grain of truth."

Annette's voice was little more than a whisper. "I don't know about the money, but I don't know of any other reason for harming such a fine old man, either. Unless—it could have been a tramp, couldn't it? Just a tramp wandering through the village, somebody who stopped for food at Ballou's?" Suddenly she was hopeful. She did not want the murderer to be someone they all knew, someone they all looked to as a friend.

Paul dashed her hopes. "I'm afraid that's pretty improbable. Tramps don't do their traveling at four o'clock in the morning. Besides, a tramp would have no motive for killing old Ballou, since a tramp would have no way of knowing about the money—if there *was* any money to begin with."

Annette had known it was a useless idea. She knew that eventually she'd have to tell them about Pierre, that no amount of speculation about wandering tramps and hidden cash could keep Pierre's name out of the matter. Yet she was afraid to mention him, for she knew that Faivre would instantly conclude that Pierre was guilty. Mme. Faivre would spread the word, and within hours the whole county would be in an uproar. And it would not take long to convict a man who was helpless to defend himself.

Suddenly, it occurred to her for the first time that Pierre *could* be guilty, and she found herself as astonished as if they'd told her that Paul or Papa had committed the crime. There was something, Annette felt, so genuine and true and—well, spiritual, about Pierre, that his guilt was unthinkable. This was different from simple garden burglary, and Annette was certain that Pierre, too, knew the difference. Still . . .

She told them about Pierre. She told them about every detail from the time she'd stopped to admire the sunrise until she fainted in her own kitchen. She had paused a little before revealing Pierre's identity.

"So!" Paul jumped up. "I might have known. I always knew something like this would happen."

"Please, Paul, do not shout. And do not speak so certainly until you know more of the truth."

"More of the truth! Is there any doubt in your mind about that madman's guilt? Good heavens, Annette, don't you understand that the boy hasn't any brain at all, that he can't think, that we're lucky to get him before he murders every one of us?"

Faivre tapped his chin with his hat. "I can hear my wife now. 'I told you so all along, didn't I? I've been telling every-

body for years that that maniac would come to no good.' And there won't be any denying her. As I have said, she does come up with the truth now and then. It is a pity, this whole thing. Yet," and he shrugged as if there were no more to talk about, "better it be Pierre-*fou* than another, eh?" He stood up to go.

Paul already had his coat on. "I'll get my rifle," he said, "and meet you in the village. We'll find him."

Annette stared into space. "You won't need your rifles," she said. "Pierre will not try to harm you."

Paul raised his fists in impatience. "How can you just sit there and talk that way? Here's a boy who has never been able to talk, much less to think. His own stepuncle turned him out of the house years ago, and now he lives in a dirty, dark loft over a hot, dirty blacksmith shop. He never works. He just begs and steals. Everyone else in this town is hard working and honest, and yet you sit there and tell us that he is harmless! And you saw him with your own eyes at Ballou's this morning. You saw him immediately after the murder, and you saw him *run*." His voice was suddenly quieter. "I'm sorry, Annette, I didn't mean to be angry. But some day you will push good will too far and it will be your own throat that is

slit. That is why I want you to realize . . ."

Papa LeBrun patted Annette gently on the shoulder. "I will go with you," he said to Paul.

Annette watched the four men walk briskly down the lawn to the road into town. They were right, of course. There could be no doubt. And though they were all in danger while Pierre was still loose, it was, as Faivre had said, a pity.

She knelt at the window and said a prayer for the *fou*.

She put the soup back on the fire when she heard Papa stamping his boots on the porch. She did not turn around as he came into the kitchen, and she could feel his helplessness as he looked at her, not knowing quite what to say.

"You found him?" she asked.

"Yes." Papa's voice was sad. "He was sitting in the sunlight in front of the blacksmith's, whittling, whittling. Faivre had to take away the knife, of course."

"Of course."

"Funny, though. There was no blood on it. I didn't think he'd have enough sense to wipe it off."

Annette ladled out a bowlful of soup and set it on the table.

"Aren't you going to have any?" asked Papa.

"I had mine already," Annette lied.

Papa sat down. "At first he seemed surprised to see us. But it didn't take him long to understand why we wanted him. Then he started to gesture wildly, some nonsense or other, and he put up a strong fight before we finally got him to come along."

"What will they do to him?" Annette asked.

Papa dunked a heel of bread into the thick soup. "Don't be afraid, Annette, they won't be unkind to him. These people are good. Anyway, Faivre wants to start things rolling early Monday morning, because the store room he uses for a jail is none too strong when it comes to holding a killer."

"They are guarding him?"

"Certainly. Paul is there now. The men will take turns the rest of today and tomorrow. And, Annette—"

"Yes?"

"Don't be too harsh with Paul. He is young and he is impetuous. You are young but gentle. The two of you must learn to accommodate the other's qualities."

Annette looked straight at Papa for the first time and smiled. "I know, Papa. I will try. Paul is a good man, but sometimes he forgets . . ."

She had put by a late snack for Papa and then hurried down to the church. It was a beautiful building, and Annette was awed

anew every time she went inside. Its fame had brought visitors from all over Canada and America, and its people were proud to be part of it.

Now, as she rubbed the oak panels of the fine organ to a high polish, Annette listened to Mme. Faivre practicing the music she was to play tomorrow morning.

Mme. Faivre stopped in the middle of the hymn. "I declare, I can't even control my fingers what with all the doings of Bal-lou and that Pierre-*fou*. I'll be glad when he's done away with. Always been no good, and I've always said so." She looked pointedly at Annette. "There's some as have tried treating him like a regular person, but they know better now, I'm sure."

She rolled up her music and tucked it under her arm. "There's one thing I been saying for years and that's that we should have fixed that crazy one a long time ago. His drunk old stepuncle, too, if you ask me. The two of them looneys ought to have been put away before they could cause any trouble to self-respecting people. The old man isn't stark crazy, of course, but he's still no good. Does nothing all the time. Should have been put away *together*, that's what. Teach 'em both a lesson."

She ran a critical finger over the music rack which Annette

had just dusted. "Well, nothing rubs off. Be nice if you gave it another quick rub tomorrow morning before we start." Then her voice took on a tone of disgust.

"And *these* things can certainly be removed as soon as possible next week." She gestured at the four saints' heads which stood on the corners of the organ. "I never did like them, anyway, and I certainly won't stand for them now. It would be a heathen thing to come to church and be stared at by saints carved by a murderer." She tossed her head. "Well, don't forget to be here early in the morning. And bring that father of yours with you, and that nice young man, too. Good night."

Annette listened to the heavy steps clomp their way down from the loft. When she heard the great front door whoosh shut, she got up and inspected the carved heads closely. She had always loved them very much. Pierre had whittled the first one quite by chance, and the pastor had stumbled upon it equally by chance. Pierre had been enchanted at the pastor's respect for the tiny bust, and had indicated he would make others. He fashioned the remaining three statuettes according to the features on the statues around the fringes of the altar. They were crude, but there was a

might and purity about them that was undeniable.

When the pastor asked if he might put them on the corners of the new organ, Pierre had been almost ecstatic. He refused to accept money for them, but did take a hen and half a dozen cabbages. And every Sunday since, he had been the first to arrive in the choir loft. Throughout the service he would sit in silence, listening dazedly to Mme. Faivre's music, and gazing at his haloed statues. Annette fingered them now, suddenly afraid that Mme. Faivre might get her way about having them removed.

Suddenly there was a clatter in the vestibule below, and a babble of voices.

"Annette! Annette, are you up in the loft?" It was Paul.

Annette leaned over the railing of the loft and looked down.

"Why, yes, of course. What's the matter?"

"Thank heaven you're all right. Pierre got out of the store room somehow, and he was headed in this direction. Have you heard anyone come in?"

"No. No one."

"Well, we're going to search the church anyway."

"All right. I'm going to finish up here."

She turned around. Pierre stood ten feet away, eyes wide and fearful, the shine of a knife gleaming in his hand. They both

stood motionless, staring at one another. From below came the murmurs of the searchers.

Pierre cradled the knife in both palms and lifted it, as if in offering, toward Annette. Then he took it and placed it on top of the organ and showed her his empty palms. Then he waited.

It startled Annette to find that somehow she was not afraid. A completely strange feeling had come over her, but it was not fear. It was something indefinable, something which seemed to be giving her some sort of power. She knew that there did not have to be spoken words for her to understand the message in Pierre's eyes. *You can give me up to them if you want to, they were sayin'. I am standing here waiting for you to tell them I am here with you. If you believe that I am guilty . . .*

Very slowly Annette walked toward the mad boy. With one hand she squeezed his wrist reassuringly. Then she raised a finger to her lips, warning him to make no sound. Pierre nodded his head, and the fear in his eyes softened a little.

Paul was calling again. "Annette, I want you to come down now. I can't leave you alone here with Pierre on the loose."

"I'm almost done, Paul. There are just a few more things. You go ahead, I'll be all right."

Paul hesitated. "Well, all

right, if you'll come right down, as soon as you're finished. And Annette, go directly next door to Mme. Faivre's, and wait for me there. Don't try to go home alone. I'll come for you as soon as I can."

"All right, Paul. Thank you."

She heard Paul follow the others out of the great church, and then there was silence, except for the low thin cry behind her.

She turned to face Pierre once more, wondering suddenly, now that she was alone with him, whether she had done a very foolish thing. Her heart caught for a moment as Pierre snatched the knife from the top of the organ.

"Pierre!"

Pierre gestured and smiled. Immediately he began whittling on one of the four little busts, the one which he had carved first, the one which had not been made to resemble any particular saint.

Annette watched in fascination as Pierre hacked off the halo. He then made lines on the cheeks, in the forehead, and under the chin. He changed the shape of the nose, and with a deft cut at the corner of each eye, he transformed the head from that of a peaceful saint to a leering devil. With a grunt, he wrenched the head from its corner, and shoved it in front of Annette's face.

It had a vaguely familiar expression, like a face which had been seen a very few times and not altogether forgotten. But where she had seen it, Annette could not remember. Pierre gestured. He pointed at the head and then at himself. He pointed at the head again, and then pretended to stab somebody with the knife.

He looked at Annette, waiting for recognition to come into her face. She tried to understand the gestures, to recall the face. Then Pierre made a cradle of his arms, and pretended to rock an imaginary baby. He pointed to the head again, to himself, and then made the cradle again.

Of course! Annette felt a tremor of cold waft over her. Pierre's stepuncle! The one who lived alone in the woods, the one who had beaten Pierre and starved him as a child, and who, finally, had turned him out of his house altogether. And the memory of the face now came back to her. It had been five or six years since she had seen the man, but his face had impressed her with its evil.

She nodded at Pierre, and tried to smile. "Yes, I understand, Pierre, I understand. What do you want me to do?"

Pierre grabbed her by the hand and pulled her toward the stairs.

"All right, wait a minute." Annette switched out the lights,

and crept quietly down the stairs after Pierre. She caught hold of his sleeve as he was about to go out the front door, and guided him around to the small rear door in the vestry. Annette went out first, and seeing nobody, motioned for Pierre to follow.

The trip through the woods was a nightmare. "Either there was no defined trail at all or else Pierre did not want to use it. He scrambled through bushes and brambles, and Annette followed. Her dress was torn and her arms stung with scratches. She could see nothing at all, and she wondered how Pierre could possibly know where he was going. For what seemed like miles, they stumbled over logs, weaved around trees, sank to their ankles in marsh mud.

As they went on, Pierre's rasping cry became increasingly hoarse with excitement. Here in the trailless woods, the cry sounded to Annette like that of an animal grotesquely wounded.

Suddenly Pierre stopped. Through the bushes in front of them, Annette could make out a faint light. Gradually she saw that it came from the lower part of a window set in a small shack. She froze with fear as she realized that Ballou's murderer was inside that shack right now.

The fear passed as quickly as it had come, and Annette knew instinctively what she must do. She pulled out a handkerchief

and held it in front of Pierre's face. Then she tore it in strips, and plucked at his shirt.

"I want your shirt, Pierre. I must have your shirt." She held up the handkerchief strips. "See. I must tear your shirt."

Pierre hesitated for a moment, then nodded abruptly and removed his shirt.

"You stay here," Annette whispered. "You sit here until I get back." She pushed him gently to the ground. "I will come back, Pierre. You must stay right here until I do. Do you understand that?"

Pierre made a whining noise and nodded vigorously.

Annette turned and hurried away. She did not know where she was, but she knew how to walk a straight line, and if she kept in that line, she'd come to the town road eventually. Meanwhile, she would tie strips of cloth to the bushes every ten or fifteen feet so that she could find her way back.

It was a laborous journey, and Annette was exhausted before she reached the road. She ran out of strips and began tearing them from her skirt. Finally she reached the road and realized she was about a half mile on the other side of the church.

Recognition of her surroundings gave her a new burst of strength, and she half ran all the way to Mme. Faivre's.

She stumbled into the house without bothering to knock.

Paul leaped up. "Good Lord, Annette, where have you been? I've been frantic."

Annette slumped in a chair, trying to catch her breath. "I'm all right," she said. "I've been out in the woods."

Paul knelt by her chair. "I couldn't imagine where you had disappeared to. I could only think of Pierre, that he might have found you. Mme. Faivre, would you fetch some hot milk for Annette?"

Mme. Faivre nodded and left the room.

Annette smiled to herself. "Paul, Pierre did not kill old Ballou."

Paul groaned. "Please, Annette, don't start that again. Here you come staggering in from the woods, covered with scratches, your dress half torn away, and all you can think of is that crazy Pierre."

Annette looked sharply at him for a moment before she spoke. "I know where Pierre is, Paul."

"You *what?*"

"I'll take you to him, providing you do as I say."

"Good heavens, you *were* with him, then! That's what explains the way you look. Tell me, where is he? I'll find him and kill him with my own two hands!"

"Paul, you're getting excited again. I told you I'd take you to

him only under certain conditions. Do you agree?"

He looked at her suspiciously. "Poor Annette, I think you must be temporarily out of your senses."

"Do you agree, I asked you?"

He frowned. "What conditions?"

"We will go alone. Neither Faivre nor anyone else must know where we've gone. Also, you must let me carry your rifle, and you yourself must carry no weapon at all. And you must make no move to lay hands on Pierre until I tell you to."

"Annette, this is the most absurd thing I've ever heard of."

Annette smiled. "Very well. I shall sit here and drink my hot milk and talk to Mme. Faivre, and you shall not see Pierre."

Paul sighed in exasperation. "You win. As always, you win."

Finding the turnoff into the woods had not been difficult. And using the lantern which they borrowed from Mme. Faivre, Annette and Paul followed the trail marked by the strips of cloth. Now they went more cautiously, for Annette thought that they were close to their goal.

She stopped. "I don't want you to forget the conditions."

"I won't," Paul said sulkily.

"Be very quiet now."

After another hundred yards, Annette saw the glow from the

window. She moved to the spot where she had left Pierre, but he was gone. Tugging at Paul's sleeve, she edged toward the window and peered in.

Pierre was huddled in a corner, bound by a stout rope. Standing crookedly over him was the man with the evil face, the man whose eyes had leered from the bust whittled by Pierre, and in his hand was a knife.

"*Mon Dieu!*" Paul gasped.

"See, Paul, it is the old man. He is the one who killed Ballou, not Pierre." Suddenly fear tore at her. "Paul! He is going to kill Pierre! Get him, Paul, quickly!"

She thrust the rifle toward Paul, but already he had dashed around the corner of the shack, and she heard him crash through the door. Quickly she smashed the window and poked the rifle through. If anything went wrong, she would not hesitate to use it, she promised herself. She fought down the trembling in her body lest she hit Paul or Pierre by mistake.

Paul lunged at the old man and threw him to the floor. The knife hurtled to the corner and struck Pierre in the cheek. The old man raised his knee to kick Paul, but Paul's fist was already traveling toward the evil jaw. It struck, and the old man went limp.

For a moment, no one moved. Then Paul got up slowly and walked to Pierre, and cut the

ropes which bound him. Pierre was sobbing in his arms when Annette went inside.

The pastor had foregone his prepared sermon, and instead had talked of Annette and Paul and Ballou, and particularly of Pierre. Everybody had come to listen except Constable Faivre, who was guarding Pierre's stepuncle in the store room. The stepuncle had confessed to everything, and had told Faivre where old Ballou's tiny pile of cash was hidden.

Pierre, sitting between Paul and Annette up in the choir loft, listened rapturously to the pas-

tor, too occupied to notice that even Mme. Faivre smiled fondly at him.

"I think," Paul said later, "that we should keep these good villagers in doubt no longer, Annette. I think we should be married very soon."

Her heart leaped. "I think so, too." Her voice was very soft.

"And, Annette—" and he paused, "I was thinking that maybe we might fix up an extra bedroom. I mean, a dirty loft is no home for a growing boy."

She smiled, careful not to look at Paul. She reached for his hand, and they walked on silently toward Papa LeBrun's.

From the notebook of Inspector Martin

Inspector Favard and I talk sometimes about the good old days, at the turn of the century, when life somehow seemed easier. You really wonder if it is simply nostalgia influencing your memory, and still it does seem as if even what little sinning we did was done less blatantly.

Take the case of Deschamps, the little Bank Manager with political ambitions who used to hang around Leon Daudet's offices and whose one ambition was to be hailed by Daudet's young idiots. Deschamps embezzled 300,000 francs—this in a day when that was a small fortune. He must have paid more than one printer's bill for Daudet and his royalists.

His chief had called us in as soon as irregularities in the little man's accounts were suspected. We waited for him outside a reception later that evening, waiting patiently until he'd come out. We were moderately efficient in the Surête even in those days. We knew when he took his last drink, when he bowed his good-bye to an indifferent hostess, we knew, almost to the second, when he would stand there in the doorway.

He saw us immediately and came forward, a strained look in his little puppy eyes. Favard, murmuring apologies at the lateness of the hour, asked one question, and Deschamps stiffened. He stared at us blankly for a moment, then shrugged his shoulders in defeat. I don't really know which of us murmured the, "Why, Monsieur?" but I can still see the little man as he suddenly straightened, looking us in the eyes, and answered softly, "It was for France . . ."

And undoubtedly he thought so.

double exposure

by . . . *Nicolas Bentley*

A woman with too much to hide may turn to dark violence as her only weapon — despite the gentle forbearance of the Law.

THE JEWELRY trade is quite different from the usual run of dry-as-dust occupations. Jewelry is a romantic commodity—if I may be forgiven a slight contradiction in terms, for we do find odd things happening in our business occasionally.

I suppose you might say that what happened wasn't really "in" the business, although Regnier's was involved. Naturally, in writing about it, I have changed all of the easily identifiable names and places for the sake of discretion.

A very personable gentleman came into the shop one morning with some unusual pieces to dispose of. They were antiques, of course—we only deal in the antique. There was a small diamond necklace, with drops to match, and one or two other pieces of considerable intrinsic value. Mr. Regnier was ill and absent for the day. I was in the office with our accountant when Miss Susskind brought the things in for me to decide whether we would be interested. I examined

There's danger in the jewelry trade on both sides of the Atlantic, but in England it somehow seems to rise to a higher crest. We are frankly at a loss to understand why. Perhaps the answer lies in the fear which Scotland Yard must always entertain concerning a possible theft of the Crown Jewels. At any rate, without any theft of the Crown Jewels, Nicolas Bentley has made that danger leap and soar in a thrilling story of blackmail and double dealing.

them briefly, and told her to ask the gentleman to come back later when I would be free.

When I had finished checking our accounts, I returned into the shop. The first thing I saw was a newspaper lying on the floor. I picked it up and immediately noticed that someone had marked the names of several horses on the sports page. Well, I never bet on the races, so naturally I wasn't interested.

But I said to Miss Susskind: "Just what is this? Are these your first, second, and third choices for tomorrow?"

Of course, I failed to get so much as a smile out of her. I doubt if she has smiled since VE-day. I mean, she just hasn't got it in her to smile, although she is thoroughly trustworthy and careful. You could hardly ask for more in a business like Regnier's.

"It belongs to the man who brought that necklace in," she said. "I didn't like him."

I asked her why.

"His breath," she said. "He'd been drinking heavily. He actually leered at me."

Well, I hadn't seen him, so I had to reserve judgment.

Later on in the afternoon he came back again. I was still busy—we had a big buyer to impress—so Miss Susskind brought the things into the office for the second time, and practically glared at me. If I hadn't been so busy I would have gone out and dealt

with the man myself. However, I told her what to offer, having first checked to make sure the things were not in the latest police listing of stolen property likely to be pawned, or offered for sale.

When she went out again I was careful to look in the mirror which hangs on the office wall. It is so arranged that when the office door is shut you can see a reflection of the shop counter through the fanlight. It is a very ingenious arrangement.

I couldn't see the man very well, but I was able to set his age at about fifty. He was clean-shaven and rather tall.

I had been doing some serious thinking and in view of the horse racing sheet and his whisky breath, it didn't seem right to me for him to be so persistent about the jewelry he had brought in. But what made me wonder most of all was that when Miss Susskind had offered him the sum I had suggested—leaving some room, naturally, for a bit of haggling—he had jumped at it without any bargaining or argument.

Well, just as the big buyer in my office got up to leave, the man in the shop left too. I immediately decided it wouldn't do any harm to see if I could find out more about him. You never know—and in our line of business you can't be too careful. So as it was nearly five, I said goodnight to

Miss Susskind, and left the shop.

The man was a few steps ahead of me when I got outside, but I managed to keep my eye on him. He had not seen me at all, so I knew that even if he turned around he would fail to recognize me.

Well, in about ten minutes we were at Belgrave Square. I was almost sure by then that he was making Pimlico. But I was wrong.

Just off the square there is a big foreign embassy. I recognized it instantly by the flag on the pole. Then I remembered that the ambassador's wife, Madame G., had been to the shop several times. I had never met her personally, because she is the kind of client Mr. Regnier insists on attending to himself.

You can imagine my amazement when the man I was following went up the embassy steps and let himself in at the front door with a key. I thought to myself, *Well, my friend, you are certainly not the ambassador, whoever else you may be.* And I was not far wrong.

I walked on around Belgrave Square, trying to decide what I ought to do, and finding the effort depressing. After all, I hadn't a great deal to go on—precious little, in fact. He looked a bit agitated, and if Miss Susskind was to be believed, he was a heavy drinker. Moreover, judging by the way he had snapped at the

price she had suggested, he was urgently in need of money. Still, that did not make him a crook, and I realized it. But at the same time I couldn't rid myself of the feeling that he was on the wrong side of the law.

Well, with Mr. Regnier being too ill to come to the shop I hated to bother him unless I could be certain there really was something suspicious going on. I did not precisely know what to do.

I only knew that going to the police would be out of the question. What could I say to them—that I did not much care for the look of the man? There are some policemen whose looks I do not care for either. But it isn't the look that makes the crook, luckily. Otherwise there would be no doubt at all as to where quite a few respectable parties would wind up.

I slept on the problem overnight, and early the following morning, when I got to the shop, I took the things out of the safe—the diamond necklace and the rest—and I told Miss Susskind I had some important business to attend to. Then I went straight to the embassy.

I rang the bell, and a manservant answered. I gave him my card and asked if Madame G. would be kind enough to spare me a few minutes. I mentioned Mr. Regnier. He took me into a sort of waiting-room, and there

I waited. By this time I was beginning to feel decidedly uncomfortable, fearing I had gone a bit too far.

Presently a butler came into the room, and he is none other than the man from the shop. And there I sat with all of his belongings in my pocket!

Fortunately, he did not know me from Adam. He just led me up a double flight of stairs and left me to wait by myself again in a sort of sitting-room.

By now I was in a truly apprehensive state, as can be imagined. And I would never deliberately choose to go through again what I felt when I saw standing on the mantelpiece a photo in a silver frame of Madame G. wearing all of the jewelry that was burning a hole in my pocket. And the next instant, in she came.

Well, to get to the crux of my story I told her I had reason to believe that we had been offered some jewelry that really belonged to her. I then showed her the diamond necklace, and to my utter amazement she denied that she had ever seen it before.

What could I say? Primarily, of course, I had the firm's good name to think of. As I had started the ball rolling, it was up to me to see it did not roll into some corner Mr. Regnier would not like.

"I am afraid you've put me

into a very difficult position, madam," I said.

I went over and took the photo from the mantelpiece, and without saying a word I put it beside the jewelry. Poor Madame G! I felt badly enough as it was, and you can imagine my consternation when she suddenly burst into tears.

"It is quite true," she said.

And then she told me the whole story. What it amounted to was that she was being blackmailed by her butler. I did not want to hear about it, but I had to listen. I think it was a relief for her to tell someone about it, and perhaps my being a stranger made it easier for her than if I had been someone who knew her better and whose good opinion she would have valued.

Of course, I said at once I would have to tell Mr. Regnier—in strict confidence, of course. He would have to decide what to do. But she begged me not to. The truth would ruin her—and her husband's career as well.

"Not if matters are kept absolutely quiet," I assured her. "And Mr. Regnier is absolutely the soul of discretion."

But Madame G. would not hear of it for one moment. She became so worked up that I began to think to myself, "*Well, perhaps there is more in this than meets the eye.*" I did not hesitate to repeat my thoughts aloud.

I was sure she had reached the

limit of what she was prepared to say to me—a total stranger. But she went on, literally throwing herself on my mercy. They say the quality of mercy is not strained. But by the time she had finished mine was pretty nearly bent double.

Of course, she had no right to confide in me and put me in such a position. But, poor thing, she was in such an overwrought state that I think she hardly realized what she was saying. She was afraid that if I told Mr. Regnier he might take some kind of action, and then the whole sordid affair would come out.

According to her story, about two years before she had given out that the jewelry had been stolen, and had then notified the insurance company, who had given her the best part of four hundred pounds—and every penny of that sum had gone to the scoundrelly butler.

Well, of course, that put a very different complexion on matters—and a very ugly one, too. She could have been sent to prison for compounding a felony.

Morality is a very funny thing. I do not think you could call me unmoral, but neither am I the stern sort, and I don't suppose everyone would see eye to eye about what I decided to do.

I had felt certain all along there was something wrong about the blackmailing wretch, and now that I knew it beyond dispute it

helped me to make up my mind. I am not a very quick thinker in an ordinary sense. But when a man's on his mettle it's sometimes surprising how much it speeds up his brain.

I told Madame G. she would have to leave the matter in my hands entirely and let me do whatever I thought best. But I made one condition. If I got the money back she would hand it over to the insurance people and tell them the jewelry had been returned to her under a promise of secrecy—or any other tale we might decide on.

She did not like it at all. But she could not very well oppose me. So I said I would come back the following day and give her final instructions.

The butler himself showed me out. His name was Seer. I hoped it did not mean that he had second sight. He looked efficient enough, most polite and respectable in fact, and he bowed to me quite graciously as he gave me my hat and stick on the way out.

I did not go straight back to the shop. I went first to the police station in Gerald Road, and I saw a friend of mine there. It is always best to keep on the right side of the law, and Inspector Finch knew Mr. Regnier and me quite well. Now and again things happen in the jewelry trade which the police are eager to consult us about, and vice versa.

I did not say a word about Madame G. or Seer, naturally. All I did was to ask the inspector if he could find out something for me—one little point that I felt might prove to be of great importance. He promised to try, so I told him I would come back again next day.

When I kept the appointment he had the answer typed out for me on a slip of paper. I took it with me to the embassy and was very abrupt with Madame G.

"Will you send for Seer," I said. "I would like to see him alone."

When the butler appeared she avoided his gaze. "Seer, this gentleman has something to say to you," she said, her voice so low and shaky it was barely audible. Then she left us.

I do not know whether I was glad or sorry. But I remember that I felt so nervous I hardly knew how to begin. "The day before yesterday," I said, "I think you sold some jewelry to Regnier's in Knightsbridge?"

To say he looked flabbergasted would be to convey an utterly wrong impression. I was the one who must have looked surprised, because he said: "Yes, that is quite right. I did."

I saw I would not get him off his guard as easily as that, so I went on quickly: "Well, I am afraid there has been some misunderstanding. I have since found that the jewelry belongs to

Madame G." I told him I had come from Regnier's, of course.

He nodded, his face almost insultingly impassive. "As a matter of fact, she gave it to me to sell," he said.

My anger was rising. "That is not quite the same story she told me."

He said contemptuously: "Naturally it wouldn't be. But it's true, all the same."

"Very well," I said. "If you are determined not to act sensibly, I shall report the matter to the police." Of course, I had not the slightest intention of doing so.

He stared at me thoughtfully. "I am not quite clear what it is you want me to do."

"Refund the money you were paid for the jewelry," I said, "and give me the three letters which you have been using to blackmail Madame G."

"Ah!" he said. "I thought there was a catch in it somewhere. All right, go to the police. Tell them whatever you like. If you do, I will tell them everything I know."

"And which of us do you think they would believe?" I said.

"Letters speak louder than words," he said.

"Yours wouldn't. Why should they believe a man with five convictions—three for forgery—a man who has been nine years in prison, on and off? You could tell the jury what you like. It

might relieve your feelings, but you would not get a shorter sentence. And blackmail is no joke."

Well, he looked just as if he had gone off into a trance, and when he came out of it he said in a hoarse whisper: "All right."

He must have been more or less stunned, because he did not even ask me how I knew.

He went out of the room and presently came back with the letters and the money. Meantime, I had asked Madame G. to come in from the next room. I gave her the letters, which she identified, and then counted the notes. They were five pounds short.

"Well," she said, "it doesn't matter. As you still have five pounds that belongs to me, I need not give you any wages in lieu of notice. But I should like you to leave at once, Seer."

"His name is not Seer," I said. "It is Burns, alias Cooney, alias Lane."

To this day he has no idea how I found that out, but afterwards, of course, I told Madame G.

Before I went to see her for the second time I carefully polished my walking-stick—it is a handsome malacca—and when I went upstairs from the hall I left

it standing against the table, making sure that there was nothing touching it. When I left I purposely waited for Seer, alias Burns, alias Cooney, to hand it to me—and a perfect set of fingerprints at the same time.

I took it straight round to my friend at the Gerald Road station and told him I thought it possible that they might belong to someone already known to the police. Of course, it was a very long shot, but that is precisely how you often score a bull's-eye.

I said that if he could identify the prints he might be able to make an arrest. Well, of course, he checked them with Scotland yard and found out all about the man's record and after I had faced Seer with the facts the case was ended as far as I was concerned.

But some months after this a terrible tragedy occurred. Poor Madame G. committed suicide. It came out at the inquest that it was because photostats had been sent her husband of letters she had received from another man.

It was terrible, and in a way I felt I was partly to blame. But I had never thought of photostats.

be
smart,
really
smart

*by . . . William
Campbell Gault*

“Fists are lethal weapons in this state,” the Warden reminded him. “You should have been careful.”

THE WARDEN said, “I—suppose you’ll be going back to your—your trade.”

Steve nodded. “Yes, sir, I suppose I will.”

“Just between us,” the warden added quietly, “I think you got a rough deal. But fists are lethal weapons in this state, if they’re a fighter’s fists, and you should have been more careful.”

“Yes, sir, I suppose I should have.”

The warden frowned. “Let’s see—what was the name of that man you hit?”

“Burrows, sir, Matty Burrows.”

“That’s it. Racketeer—isn’t he?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

Silence, and then the warden smiled. “Well, this is no time for extended dialogue.” He stood up and held out his hand. “Good-bye and good luck, Steve. And—*be smart, really smart*, this time.”

“Yes, sir,” Steve said. “I’ll try. Good-bye.”

There was a slight rain drifting down, outside, more fog than precipitation. It was a gray,

William Campbell Gault tells a story straight from those headlines on the sports pages that report on the doings of this and that “personality” who owns a piece of the fights rackets. There is a deceptive simplicity to this story of an uncomplicated man, caught up in a web of violence and deceit.

dull morning. Steve went diagonally across the quiet street, and over to a Caddy sedan parked in front of the rather grimy bakery.

A heavy-set man with full jowls and large brown eyes was sitting in the back seat of the Caddy. Behind the wheel, a short man with lumpy ears looked straight ahead.

Steve opened the back door and said, "Hello, Matty. I got your message. What did you want?"

The big man smiled. "Get in, Steve."

Steve looked at the short man in the front seat, and then back at Burrows. He shrugged, and climbed in.

"To the Club, Arty," Burrows said.

The Caddy purred into life and pulled away from the curb.

Burrows said, "I've been a damned fool."

Steve said nothing.

"I had that poke coming, the runaround I gave you, Steve. I've been thinking, while you've been sitting. I feel like a damned stool pigeon. And I should. Because that's what I was."

Steve said, "Don't feel sorry for yourself, or for me. I told Mike not to meet me because I thought you had something big to talk about."

"I have, Steve." Matty Burrows looked at his hands. "Title

talk, Steve. That's big enough, isn't it?"

"That's too big, without Mike here."

"It doesn't include Mike."

Steve's face showed no surprise. He concentrated on the lumpy ears in the front seat.

Burrows voice was quiet. "Mike will never get you to the title, Steve. *Never*. I guarantee it."

"Well," Steve said, "we haven't any contract. "How much of me do you want?"

"We'll get to that. I won't want a piece of you until you're champ. You've got two fights before that, and both of them you won't have to share any purse."

"Two—fights?" Now, Steve turned to look at Burrows for the first time. Two fights with who?"

"Both of them with Turek."

"Oh."

Steve knew that Turek was Burrows' fair-haired boy, a nasty stocky spoiler with a yen for dames. Turek was number four in the division.

Burrows' voice was still quiet. "Get it, Steve?"

"I get it. The first one I lose; the second one's on the up and up."

Burrows shook his head. "The second one you *win*. I'm getting fed up with Turek. He's insolent and stupid and woman crazy. I can't stomach the slob,

any more." He paused. "Well, Steve?"

Steve smiled. "I see what the warden meant, now."

Burrows frowned. "Warden—?"

"Yup. He told me to be smart, to be really smart, this time. I've been kind of dumb. Okay, Matty, two fights with Turek. And then the title."

It had started to rain, as the Caddy pulled up in front of the Turf Club. Steve said, "I'd like to see Mike, Matty. I'd like to explain, personally, about the break-up. I'll see you this afternoon."

Burrows smiled. "Sure. Arty will take you wherever you want to go. I'll be here all afternoon."

Burrows got out, and the Caddy pulled away from the curb. Arty had the wipers going, now.

Arty's eyes found Steve's, in the rear view mirror. "Hello, champ," he said.

"Chump, you mean," Steve said.

"Not after you've tied up with Burrows," Arty answered. "He runs this leather throwing racket and only the chumps buck him. You're as good as crowned, right now."

"I can't believe he'd desert Turek," Steve said. "Turek's a gold mine. And young."

"And very unreliable," Arty added. "The boss wants a guy

he can rely on. That's where the money is, in this racket; the other money the government gets."

"Well," Steve said, "I'll try and be reliable. I've a great fondness for moola, myself."

"Include me," Arty said. "I'll bet Mike will burn, huh?"

"He had his chance," Steve said, "and he didn't take me to the crown. I've got to think of myself, Arty." Be smart, the warden had said, be really smart.

He went into training at Elk Lake, and Burrows put the propaganda machine to work. He had a battery of scribes living high off the hog up there, and a publicity man to see they didn't want for liquor.

None of the gang at Elk Lake were *officially* Matty's boys, but everybody but the boxing commission knew they were. Matty still had Turek, and Turek was training at Jerome. That's where Matty stayed.

One Sunday, after an easy work-out in front of a fair crowd, Steve was leaving the ring when someone put a hand on his arm.

Steve looked up into the narrow, tanned face of Sergeant Mareno.

The sergeant was a plain-clothesman with years of service. The sergeant had brought in Steve for the assault rap.

Now, he said easily, "A word, Steve?"

"Sure. In the dressing room." Steve's voice was even.

They walked there, together.

"No hard feelings, Steve?" the sergeant said, on the way.

"No more than usual. I didn't grow up loving cops."

"No, you didn't. You grew up along the river and you were a mug since you were nine. I kind of thought you'd straightened out when you got into the fight game."

Steve said nothing.

They went into the dressing room, and Arty was in there, with the trainer. Mareno looked at both of them, and said, "Scram."

Arty started to protest and then looked into Mareno's eyes. Arty and the trainer left quietly.

"Tough guy," Steve said.

"In my way. There's got to be some tough guys on the right side of the fence, too, Steve. Who's running this show?"

Steve smiled. "You been talking to Mike? Buddies, aren't you?"

"We've known each other a long time. I'm the man who suggested Mike pick you up. Do you know that, Steve? I figured it would save me some gray hair, in the long run."

"I knew it," Steve said. "I wish somebody'd worry about my gray hairs for a change. Mike's too soft for this game."

"Maybe. But you aren't, are you? I'm working for the commission, Steve. Special detail."

"That's what I figured. Well, don't worry about me. I'm just following the warden's advice. And another thing, *Sergeant*, I got a raw deal from you, last time we met, and any co-operation you might expect to get—"

Later that evening, after supper, Steve sat on the porch that ran the length of the main house and looked out at the quiet lake. He thought about Mike, and the long, fruitless trail they'd traveled. He thought about Sergeant Mareno and remembered what a bad time he'd given him when the sergeant was walking a beat, and Steve was one of the adolescent mugs of the River Gang.

Arty came out, picking his teeth, and took the chair next to Steve's. "I sure hate cops," he said. "That Mareno don't know how close he got to a mouthful of broken teeth."

"There's no percentage in slugging him," Steve said. "Burrows is the guy who plays it smart, everything nice and legal. That's why we wind up working for him."

"At least we're smart enough for that," Arty said. "But Mike is really going to be rooting for nickels, now."

Steve said nothing.

He wondered about Mike that night, wondered if Mareno had

gone back to town and looked up Mike.

On Friday, they went into town. Saturday morning, they weighed in at the commissioner's office. Steve weighed a hundred and fifty-nine; Turek was right on the line.

He was a thick-legged lad, with sloping shoulders, and Steve had a hunch he wasn't in on the fix. He wouldn't need to be, and the less who knew about it, the better. Matty wasn't a lad to share a gold mine.

Turek said to Steve, "I've been waiting for a crack at you for a long time. After this, I get a title shot."

The commissioner wasn't within earshot, and Steve said, "You know that for sure?"

"It's promised. Unless, of course, you should be a lot better than I figure you."

Steve grinned without malice. "That wouldn't be hard. Don't forget to duck, Muscles."

Turek looked him up and down, smiled, and turned away.

Confident lad, Steve thought. And with the heaviest right hand in the division, and a very fine hook. He couldn't see Matty letting go of Turek; he would have given odds that Matty had no such intention.

They came out of the commissioner's office—and there was Mike, in the hallway.

Mike said, "I—had to wish

you luck, Steve. You never had a professional fight without me, before, so I had to see you."

Steve took Mike's hand and smiled at that lined, sad face. "It's in the bag, Mike. This one we won't worry about."

"He's good, Steve, awful good." He took a deep breath of air. "I'll be sitting at the ringside—with the champ. He's kind of hot, himself, about the runaround you've been getting."

"It's about time," Steve said. "Well, it will be a full house, I hear." He smiled again, and went down the hall.

At the Alamarc Hotel, with the pair of handlers, Steve played canasta until just before noon. Then he went down and had a bowl of soup. At three, he'd eat. At fight-time, he'd be hungry, again, but that's the way he wanted to be, at fight-time. It's the way he'd always been.

He came back to the room, after the soup, and stretched out on the bed. His handlers were still eating, downstairs. He kept seeing those sloping shoulders of Turek and hearing that confident voice.

At three, he went down and had a fine, rare steak and an all green salad, without dressing, and a glass of milk. Then he took a walk.

Just before he and the handlers went down to the cab, Matty Burrows walked in. Arty

was with him. Matty sent the handlers out.

Matty said, "I'll be waiting, after the fight, Steve. I'll be parked right next to the west door." His voice was without warmth, his smile without humor. "Everything's all set."

Steve nodded. "All set. Two fights with Turek, and then the title fight. What if Turek does not want to fight me, the second time?"

"He will. Remember, I'll be waiting in the car, right outside the west entrance."

Steve nodded. "I'll be there."

In the cab, the tightness started, working up from the base of his stomach, bringing annoyance with it, and the edge.

The dressing room smelled damp and close. Steve climbed up onto the rubbing table, and closed his eyes.

Turek would stay in close, bulling for a shot with the hook, saving the right for openings, for the later rounds. Turek, he knew now, would be coming in to punish; Burrows hadn't enlightened him.

He'd seen Turek fight, and Mike had shown him moving pictures of him; if the man had any vulnerabilities, the camera hadn't caught them. He fought a pressing battle, chin buried and both hands busy or ready.

One of the handlers was rubbing his legs, now, and his

voice was quiet. "Maybe I'm dumb, and maybe you'll get mad, but there've been stories going around, Steve."

Steve didn't open his eyes. "There's always stories, when Matty's involved."

"I know. But—with you, Steve, I didn't figure they were true, for a change."

"Maybe, they aren't," Steve said. "Think of it that way. And when we get to the ring, you go over and tell Mike that Burrows is going to meet me at the west entrance, after the fight." He opened his eyes to look at the other handler. "You can tell the boss that, if you want."

The other handler was flushed. "I figured to string with you, Steve."

"Fine," Steve said. "I'm in good hands, then. But this Turek is a man to beat."

"You beat him," the first handler said, "and you'll be beating Matty Burrows, too. He's right down to his last dime on this one. He'd be awful dangerous, if you won, Steve."

Steve smiled. "Maybe I'd better not win, then. Which way you got your money?"

"I didn't bet a dime. I work for Burrows, and didn't bet a dime. I guess that's kind of a compliment for you, Steve."

Steve smiled, and closed his eyes, again.

Later, going down the aisle, he was amazed at his reception.

He'd wondered about that, with his prison term still new in their memories.

It was the biggest hand he'd ever known.

Evidently, hitting Matty Burrows didn't qualify as a crime to the fans.

Just before he climbed up under the ropes, he saw the one handler going over to Mike, and he waved at Mike and the champ, sitting next to him.

Turek came down the aisle, and his hand was fair. He looked in the pink, his tanned body glistening with health. His coarse black hair was cut short, revealing the almost perfect roundness of his small head.

He climbed up under the ropes, and came over to Steve's corner. He said quietly, "What's all the stories about? You tanking it?"

Steve shook his head. "Better keep your chin buried, Muscles. I'm out to get you."

"That's better," Turek said. "You're no fighter, but I didn't figure you for a swan, either." He turned, and went back to his corner.

Steve said, "I wish I was as good as he thinks he is."

The handler said, "He's almost as good as he thinks he is. He should be rated higher than fourth."

The introductions, the instructions, and Steve was flexing on the ropes. He looked down

into the face of Mike, and winked, saw the champ smile.

Then he turned, at the bell.

Somewhere on Steve's side of ring-center, Turek met him, slid in under the left, and closed with a hook. It was a tentative hook, but a jarring sample of what was to come.

Steve managed one short right to the midriff, and then the ref was patting his back. They broke, and Turek tried to close again, almost immediately.

This time, Steve had the left high and working, and he circled away from Turek's right. Turek moved with a Louis shuffle, deceptive and ready for a shot with either hand. His eyes showed supreme confidence.

Steve caught him above the eye with the left, on the mouth, high on the jaw. Then Turek came in, again.

Steve had been waiting for that. The right he threw was short and swift and landed on the button. It didn't seem to even slow him. He kept coming in.

Steve back-pedaled, completely aware, for the first time of this slope-shouldered battler's invulnerability to button shots. Steve back-pedaled, avoided Turek's rush and chopped him as he went by.

Then Turek was in a corner, and this time it was Steve who moved in. He moved in fast, and pounded the hook low,

once, twice, three times into that cement stomach. He kept his hands moving, trying to rush Turek off balance.

He stepped clear, and threw a right hand.

It was a good, looping right, with weight behind it. It landed on the button, as the other had—and bothered Turek no more than the other had.

Turek brought his own hook into play. The first was a spine jarring smash and Steve's hands automatically dropped. The right Turek threw coincided with the bell.

Steve heard more than the one bell. Steve went back and down, as Turek turned and headed for his corner.

Steve was on his knees when his handlers came to help him to the corner. His brain was jangling. His knees had two-way hinges.

The smaller of the handlers said, "You really caught that one. You can't mix with that guy, early. He's a bull."

The stool was under Steve, and he closed his eyes. He felt the ice at the back of his neck and heard the warden say, "Be smart, be really smart."

How many of Turek's right hands, he wondered, had the warden caught? He rotated his head slowly, trying to relieve the stiffness in his neck. The taller of the handlers was digging at his legs savagely.

He wished Mike was here, with his words, with his hands. He looked down at the front row, but it was just a blur.

No minute had ever evaporated as fast. He was on his feet, and Turek was coming to finish him. He *had* to last out this round, and not for himself, alone.

He saw the blur of Turek's hooking left, and slid inside of it. He kept his own hands inside and sent a token hook of his own into the younger man's solar plexus.

He managed to whisper into Turek's ear, "You're better than I thought, Muscles. I underestimated you."

Turek grunted, and wrestled free. Turek started a finish right from way back.

His body twisted as he threw it, and for a second, his jaw was exposed.

Steve put all his moxie into the barroom right he aimed at that exposed jaw.

It wasn't a bulls-eye, but Turek was badly off balance. Turek stumbled—and Steve threw another right. Turek caught it high on the cheek, and went to his knees, and forward to the canvas.

The fans were going crazy. The fans didn't know Turek wasn't hurt. He was down, and he must have been hurt, they reasoned.

In a neutral corner, Steve saw

Turek's smile as he waited out the count. Then he was up, still smiling, coming in.

But coming in slowly and the smile had a certain rigidity about it.

Steve put a smile on his own face, though it was only technically that. He put the left up, and went into the waltz.

And now some warmth came to Turek's smile, and some speed to his hickory legs. A young man, a strong man, Turek knew, wouldn't have gone into a waltz after a knock-down. A strong man would have come in, bringing the clincher.

Turek stalked him, looking for a hole.

Steve moved warily, his left out, his right ready. His vision was clear, now, though his legs were still shaky. His left was temporarily stilled, his right was cocked, as he circled.

The chant from the fans grew. "Now, now, NOW—!"

They circled. And Steve sensed that, though Turek wasn't frightened, by any standards, he was a whisper less confident.

Steve moved in quickly, throwing a wild, amateur right.

It was high, but it was solid and Turek took a halting, side-ward step. Then they were stationary, throwing leather, bringing the fans to their feet.

Steve's blows were shorter, Turek's heavier. Steve concen-

trated as much as he could on the solar plexus and a spot above the heart. He rode what punches he could, blocked others—and saw Turek take the first, cautious backward step.

Steve was watching those shuffling feet, and now he threw the right again, stepping in as he threw.

Again, it was high, but again Turek caught it off balance. He was stumbling into the ropes—and the bell rang.

On his stool, Steve took a deep breath of air, dragging it down, shrugging his shoulders loose, relishing the probing fingers at the back of his neck.

"You trying to out-think him?" the smaller handler asked.

"What else. Can you see Burrows, anywhere?"

"I can see him. He's looking unhappy. You figure to do any good with this gorilla, Steve?"

"I figure to beat him," Steve said. "It has to be, or none of it makes sense."

"Burrows will be gunning. He won't swear out a warrant, this time. He'll be more hot than smart."

"That's why it has to be," Steve answered. "And it's going to be."

The third round was slow.

The fourth was the bloody one. Steve's mouth was gashed; blood seeped down from the new cut over Turek's left eye.

The gloves got red; the fans grew quiet.

Turek was slowed just enough from the early rounds to be a target for Steve's marksmanship. Steve worked on him as carefully as a surgeon, over the heart, in the solar plexus, on the bony ridge above the eyes. Steve knew he'd never been better than he was tonight, and he needed to be at his top.

In the fifth, though the fans didn't sense it, then, the road changed, the pattern of the fight swung over to Steve. Turek grew cautious and tried to think. He hadn't been trained for either of these two lines of strategy.

In the sixth, Steve got careless and the Turek right hand exploded on his ear. He went into the ropes, and the flurry of Turek leather closed in.

He weathered it. Without the steam he had earlier stolen from Turek's punches, he might not have weathered it. But he did, and walked without waver to his stool at the bell.

"Well—?" the small handler said.

"Next round," Steve said, "or maybe the one after. How's Burrows looking?"

"I don't want to look to find out. I hope you know what you're doing, champ."

"I hope so, too," Steve answered.

In the seventh, Turek was slow, coming across the ring.

Steve didn't hurry to meet him. In ring-center, Steve moved around him like a woodchopper with a poised axe.

Turek's chin was buried, though there wasn't any reason for it, really. Nobody in the middleweight division was likely to knock Turek out with a button shot.

Turek shifted, prodding with the left. Then, Steve saw the reverse shift—and he moved in quickly.

He feinted the left and put every pound he had into a right hand slam for the solar plexus.

Turek crumpled where he stood—while the fans screamed. Steve didn't hit him on the way down. Steve went to a neutral corner, and watched the ref's arm.

When it reached the tenth downbeat, bedlam took over.

Steve's handlers were hugging him, and then Mike was there and dozens of others, jamming the ring. Mike said, "You figured it right, boy. How many know about a solar plexus kayo? You figured it perfect."

Steve said, "I'll see you later, Mike. Better not stay too close to me, not now, Mike."

"I've got to," Mike said, but Steve shook his head.

The handlers cleared the dressing room, after a while, and then Steve told them. "You guys had better find a storm cellar. Maybe, by tomorrow, it

will be safe to come out. But not now. From here in, it's my battle."

Then, when he was alone, he dressed. He thought of the warden, and smiled. He thought of Mike and of the champ and of Mareno. He thought of Burrows, and the coldness came to him, as he finished dressing.

He went out and along the quiet, deserted west corridor to the entrance. He opened the door, and saw the Caddy.

Then Arty was standing next to him, and Arty said, "The boss says this one is personal. You got out of line *twice*, and the boss isn't hiring anybody for this one. He wants the personal satisfaction."

"That's what I figured," Steve said. "That's the way I played it, right from the start. All I promised was that Turek could have two fights. I don't think he'll want the second one."

Arty was staring at him. Arty walked along as Steve approached the rear door of the Caddy. Then the door opened.

Light from the street arcs glinted off the blued metal of the automatic in Burrows' hand. Burrows said, "Stand away, Arty."

Arty stood quickly to one side—and Steve fell to the pavement.

Burrows' gun spoke, as Steve fell. And from the areaway behind Steve, Mareno's gun spoke and from a doorway another twenty feet away, one of Mareno's men opened fire.

Burrows shivered at the impact. Burrows fell face forward from the open door of the Caddy, and sprawled grotesquely on the sidewalk.

Later, in Mike's apartment, Mareno said, "Maybe it wasn't just the right way to do it, but I think it was the only sure way. With his kind of lawyers and all the stooges he's bought, we had to catch him just the way we did. This is going to be a better trade, now, Steve, thanks to you."

"I want it to be a good trade," Steve said, "because in my division, I'm going to be the champ."

"And this time," Mike said, "I'll be in your corner. How can we miss, kid?"

"We can't," Steve said. "The next fight's a title fight, and I'm going to win it."

And that's exactly the way it was.

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