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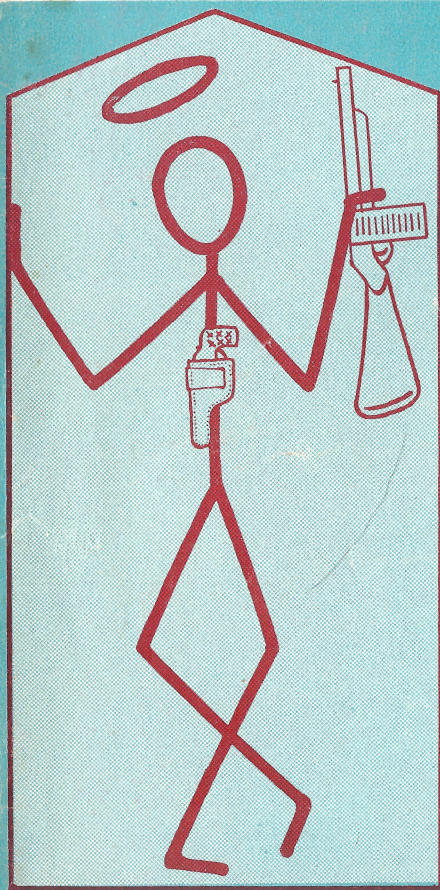
The **saint**
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

APRIL

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Edited by **LESLIE CHARTERIS**



In this issue

ERNEST BRAMAH

CORNELL WOOLRICH

AUGUST DERLETH

HAL ELLSON

LESLIE CHARTERIS

WATCH FOR **The saint** ON TV

house of the wolf

A NEW Story by BARRY PEROWNE

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

Having dedicated most of my literary life to the glorification of a character whose thumbnail description has always been "the Robin Hood of Modern Crime", and which has also been paraphrased in such book titles as THE BRIGHTER BUCCANEER and THE HAPPY HIGHWAYMAN, it is perhaps only inevitable that I should find myself intermittently nauseated by the ideal of conformity before which the public these days is urged to grovel by the egghead evangelists who have the run of the pulpits in most of the popular periodicals.

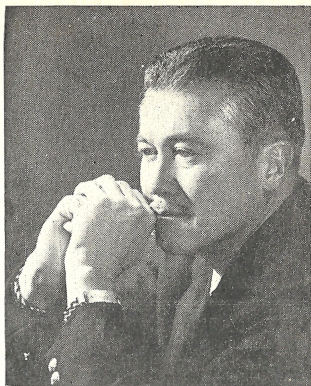
According to their monotonously multiplying bleat, the deadliest modern sin is to be "maladjusted". Conversely, to be "well adjusted", to revere all the accepted idols, to obey all the copybook admonitions and respect all the twittering tabus of the trite and the timid, to melt as inconspicuously as possible into a stereotype of the lowest common group denominator, is supposed to be the supreme achievement of civilized man.

It has reached the point where great industrial cartels subject their rising young executives to analysis by personnel pundits who couldn't themselves operate a peanut stand, to make sure that they have no off-beats of personality that might rock the organization boat; where the majority of movie stars make a point of marrying and raising families, even several times, instead of living in gorgeous sin and raising hell; where authors and artists would rather button their shirts and wear a tie than maintain their privilege of eccentricity against such arbiters of good taste as the head waiter of some over-publicized and over-priced hash-house.

A turnip, I suppose, is admirably adjusted. Or, if you insist on a more sentient example, so is a cow.

But I do not have to wonder where the world would be today if it had never been stirred up by its rebels. I am not thinking only of the scientific progress (so much of it devoted to good ends as well as the obvious bad ones) which has usually been made against the most stubborn resistance of established dogmatists; or the conquerors who built and destroyed empires with the bodies of uncounted and unremembered dead, but whose cruelties also spawned the liberators whose names are still an inspiration. I am equally certain that such trail-blazers as Marco Polo, Magellan, Columbus, and Cook were not nice, accommodating, Rotarian types. Nor were Gauguin, Gandhi, Byron, Washington, Voltaire, Churchill, or—make your own list. And don't forget the contemporary opinion of that most trouble-making radical of all, one Jesus of Nazareth.

Of course, anyone who disturbs the smug inertia of his fellows is a nuisance. But without upheavals the human race would long ago have smothered in its own stagnant wallow. The modern conformists proclaim that this is preferable to adventure. And today's iconoclast runs less risk of being thrown to the lions than of being nibbled to death by mice.



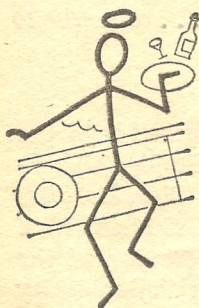
Leslie Charles

The [®] **saint**

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

APRIL, 1964

VOL. 20, No. 4



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VII: How the Fireworks went Off, and Cirano turned up his Nose.

vendetta for the saint

by Leslie Charteris



IT WAS a slow drive. Olivetti was obviously holding their speed down in order to give the engineers the half-hour's lead he had allowed for them. If his timing was right, they should meet the motorcycle advance guard at the exact moment scheduled for the assault.

They saw nothing of the coast or the sea, since the Major had wisely chosen to use only the interior roads that wound their way through the mountains. For the most part these roads were bad, and frequently they were terrible. Sometimes when they branched off on to an unpaved track to avoid a town, clouds of dust billowed up and swept suffocatingly over the Bugatti. Simon stopped more than once to let the worst of the dust settle, and then caught up with the column again, having no fear of losing it while there was still a trail of powdery fog to trace it by.

This dilatory progress continued until after midnight, when Simon felt they could not be much farther from the Mafia headquarters. They

SIMON TEMPLAR JOINS IN THE RAID ON THE MAFIA HEAD-
QUARTERS AND—AT LONG LAST—TALKS OF PLACES WHERE
THE SUN SHINES AND ONE CAN LAUGH—AND FORGET . . .

ground through a darkened village, then up a precipitous track that appeared to have been scratched out of the face of a cliff.

Lights flashed in the Saint's eyes from his rear-view mirror as a car came up behind and blinked its headlights to pass. He pulled courteously over to the side, and at the same instant was possessed by a prickling presentiment of danger.

What possible reason could an ordinary car have for being on such a road at this time of night—and in enough of a desperate hurry to risk trying to pass a convoy of trucks on such a dan-

gerous cornice? Only an errand of more than ordinarily reckless urgency. This did not ineluctably mean that the car was driven by Mafia sympathizers. But with the telephone wires cut, anyone who wanted to warn the Mafia headquarters of the approaching column would have to go by road. This road.

This reasoning went through the Saint's head in the brief moment during which the car was overtaking him, and as soon as it was past he swung out behind it and kicked on his high beams. They blazed out like twin searchlights and impaled a long open Alfa-Romeo, not new but ob-

WHAT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE

For once in his adventurous life Simon Templar had been expecting nothing more dramatic to be happening to him than that moment of moments when, at long last, they would bring out the *Arragosta alla Vesuvio* and, for some blessed moments, he could forget the noise and the stench of the Naples streets . . .

And then Alessandro Destamio was to intrude into his life with that singlemindedness and lack of subtlety which had caused him to be nicknamed "Gopher" Destamio in the Press, in the States, and even blunter things by his colleagues when they were certain he wasn't nearby, before the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the United States Department of Justice had been unkind enough to initiate the proceedings which, in due course, returned him to the country of his birth. Gentlemen with Destamio's unique talents, even if not welcomed with open arms by the Government up in Rome, were however welcome in Mafia territory, even if it was felt that he lacked some of the subtlety, some of the home-style way of coping with things, which local folks associated with those who had not emigrated—for a while—to America. Destamio, if for no other reason, by virtue of his professional standing in the country that had deported him, was soon enough a key man in the Mafia. Once more, Simon Templar had tangled not only with a particularly deplorable specimen of the ungodly, but also with the power and the might of the Mafia itself. And this could be fatal.

Simon narrowly escapes assassination, and arrest because he has not allowed himself to be assassinated, and does things to Destamio's blood pressure as he openly probes into Destamio's background, with the incredible Gina Destamio, Alessandro's niece, an unexpected fringe benefit of his researches. The Saint is genuinely shocked to find that Destamio's friends have so little

viously still capable of a good turn of speed. The driver kept his eyes on the road, but the man beside him turned, shading his eyes from the glare with the turned-down brim of a black hat.

Simon sounded a warning series of blasts on his horn to attract attention, and the officer in the scout car ahead was not stupid. He waved the Alfa-Romeo back as it started to pass him, and held up a gun to show that he meant business.

The reply from the Alfa-Romeo was instantaneous. The driver accelerated, and his companion produced a pistol and began firing at the scout car. The

officer ducked down, and the Alfa-Romeo went safely by, staying in the scanty lane between the trucks and the sheer drop into the valley.

It was a long chance, but it looked as if they might get away with it. The trucks trundled stolidly along on the right-hand side of the trail, while the Mafia car tore up on their left, its wheels within inches of the unfenced verge. The scout car swung out of line behind it and raced in pursuit, the occupants of both cars exchanging shots, though neither seemed to be having any effect.

The end came with shocking

respect for Italy's cultural treasures that they are prepared to blow him up in one of them, a rare example of the genius of Ettore Bugatti. And, soon after this, as he is a prisoner in the Mafia headquarters, the dying leader of the Mafia makes it very clear that the time has come for the organization to settle some accounts with the unrepentant Saint.

The *palazzo* in which the Saint is being held is perched on the very edge of a precipice. The window from which he leans out looks out into what at first seems a dark void. Far below him, however—if he can get down there—are orchards and fields and roads leading away from his hosts.

And, understandably anxious to not add to their problems—the leaders of the Mafia are gathered there to await the death of the leader of them all—Simon Templar begins his long and hazardous climb down into the unknown dangers below.

Suffice it that he does escape only to be hunted by these men who are not accustomed to the victims of the Mafia thumbing their noses at their waiting executioners. The Saint, sometimes hours, more often moments ahead of the hunters, discovers a side of Sicily that tourists never see—experiences hospitality—and smells fear—and is in time sitting with his detective friend who had enlisted him in his crusade against these *fannuloni*. Simon Templar has met two remarkable people in these past days, "Gina with the dark virginal eyes and the wickedly nymphic body and the young eagerness and un-sureness", and this detective, Marco Ponti, whose mission it is to smash the Empire of Crime ruled over by Alessandro Destamio and his associates.

But now read on as Simon Templar rides with Marco Ponti and a company of *bersaglieri* who are about to attack the Mafia headquarters, the *palazzo* from which the Saint had escaped.

suddenness as one of the truck drivers farther up the column became aware of what was occurring. He must have seen the flash of gunfire or heard the shots above the grinding of engines, and reacted with commendable intelligence and initiative. As the Alfa-Romeo came up to pass his truck, he edged out of line and narrowed the space between the flank of his vehicle and the edge of nothingness. The Mafia driver, crowded by the scout car immediately behind him, held down blaringly on his klaxon and made a frantic bid to squeeze through. The truck remorselessly held its course and hogged a little more. Finally the sides of the two vehicles touched, with much the same effect as a ping-pong ball grazing a locomotive. The Alfa-Romeo was simply flipped sideways off the road, and was gone. There was a delayed crash and a flash of fire from the ravine below, but the convoy had rolled on well beyond that point before the final reverberations could rumble up to its level.

This was the only crisis that disturbed the purely figurative smoothness of the trip. Within minutes the road levelled out, and brake-lights glowed as the column ground to a halt. Major Olivetti's car roared back down the line and stopped beside Simon.

"The engineers are there, and

report all the wires cut as ordered," he said. "We're ready to go in. According to the map, the house is only about a kilometer ahead. The scouts will go first and I will follow, and it would be best if you kept close to me. I must have positive identification of the house before there is any shooting."

He was away again before the Saint could do more than half-salute in answer. Simon gunned the Bugatti after the Fiat scout car and followed it down the road, until a motorcyclist waved them to a stop. They pulled off into an open orchard, and with instinctive prospiscience Simon backed his car into a position from which it would be free to take off again in any direction. After this they continued on foot through the orchard, until the trees thinned out to disclose a house looming ahead across a clearing, blacked out and silent.

"Is that the place?" Major Olivetti asked.

"It could be," Simon answered. "I can't be absolutely certain, because I never saw it from this side. It looks something like the right shape. Does the location fit the description I gave you, on the edge of a cliff?"

"Perfectly. And the scouts report no other house near here that fits it. You can see the beginning of the road there that leads down to the village, gravel surfaced as you described it.

Another column is down there, blocking any escape that way. We can go into action as soon as you are absolutely certain that this is the right place."

"Are all your men in position?"

"On all sides. The mortars should be down and sighted by now, the machine guns set up as well."

"Shall I go and ring their front door bell?" Simon asked, straightening up and taking a few steps into the moonlit clearing.

"Don't be a fool—get down! They can see you from the house!"

"That is precisely the idea," Simon said. "The people inside must have heard your trucks, and if they have guilty consciences they should now be keeping a rather jittery look-out."

He stood gazing intently at the building for several seconds, and then stepped back with exaggerated furtiveness behind a thick-trunked tree.

He had gauged the impression he would give, and its timing, with impudent accuracy. There was a rattle of gunfire from the house, and a covey of bullets passed near, some of them thunking into the tree.

"That seems to settle it," Simon remarked coolly. "And now that they've started the shooting, you

have all the justification you need for shooting back."

With or without the reassurance of such legalistic argument, some of the deployed soldiers were already returning the fire. The house promptly sparkled with more flashes as its occupants accepted the challenge. Bullets whipped leaves from the trees and keened away in plaintive ricochets. Someone turned a spotlight on the building, and before it was shot out they could see that most of the heavy shutters on the windows were open for an inch or two to provide gun slits, and most of them seemed to be in use.

"Very nice," Olivetti said, crouching beside Simon and Ponti. "You ask me to help you make a raid on some criminals, but you did not tell me we should be fighting a minor battle."

"*Mi despiace, Commandante,*" Ponti said. "I did not plan it this way."

"You are sorry? This is the best thing that could have happened! In the summer no skiing, and all they do is chase girls and drink. We shall sweat some of the wine out of them tonight! All I want to know is in what condition you want those men inside the house. If it is dead, it will be easy. Only there will be a certain amount of mortar fire necessary, and before entering rooms we would roll in a

grenade or two. That way, there may be very few prisoners."

"There are some that I want alive," Ponti said. "The leaders only. The rest, your soldiers can practise their training upon, and save the courts much useless expense. But I want the men at the top, to identify them and bring them to a public trial which will focus the attention of the whole country. If they are only killed here they will become martyrs: the lesser leaders will take over, and the whole organization will soon be flourishing again."

Simon thought of reminding them that Gina Destamio might also be in the house, for all he knew. But if she were, the *mafiosi* themselves would protect her as much as they could, if only until they could use her as a hostage. And as a mere possibility it was too speculative to justify holding up the assault.

"That is more difficult, but we can try," Olivetti was saying. "I will blow open the front door and the ground floor windows, and we will rush them from three directions. We shall have some casualties, but—"

Suddenly headlights blazed on the far side of the house, and a car roared around the driveway and careened into the road. It was closely followed by another. Both were large sedans and apparently well manned, for their

windows blazed with a crackle of small arms.

"Aim for the drivers!" bel-lowed the Major, in a voice that could be heard easily above the rising crescendo of gunfire. "Then we can take the others alive!"

The leading car drove straight at the front of the army truck which had been strategically parked across the road, without slackening speed, smashed into it, and burst into flame. Frantic men tumbled out and stumbled away from the flickering light. The second car braked violently, but not enough to lose all momentum as it crashed into the rear of the first. It then became clear that the whole sequence was deliberate: the first impact had slewed the truck around enough to leave a car's width between its bumper and the bordering stone wall, and the second car was now ramming the burning wreck of its companion through the gap.

Soldiers were running in from all sides now, firing as they came. It seemed impossible that the second car could still move: two of its tires were flat, and gasoline was pouring from its tank. Yet its rear wheels spun and gripped and it managed somehow to plough on, pushing the first car through with a horrible groaning and clanking of metal and making an open path for itself.

VENDETTA FOR THE SAINT

"Give me that!" roared the Major, and snatched an automatic rifle from a trooper.

He scarcely seemed to aim, but the gun barked five times and glass flew from the driver's window. The man slumped over the wheel, and the car careered wildly down the road and smashed into a tree. Two passengers scrambled out and fled into the darkness.

"I want every one of those thugs," Olivetti shouted. "But only wounded. They can recuperate in a prison hospital."

"I don't think any of the leaders were in those cars," Simon said, coming up beside him. "They were only creating a diversion or clearing a way. We must look out for another break."

The accuracy of his hunch was proven at that instant by the black bulk of a third automobile that surged out of the driveway. It had obviously been parked around the same angle of the building as the first two cars, in a courtyard probably flanked by former stables, and its occupants had been able to embark with impunity during the distraction caused by the first sortie. In the light of the burning wrecks Simon recognized the car that had tried to chase him down the road after his escape: it had reminded him then of a boot-legger's limousine from the brawling days of Prohibition, and this resemblance turned out

to be more than superficial. As it plunged forward the soldiers had a perfect target, and streams of automatic fire converged on it; but the windows were all shut and there were no answering shots.

"It's bullet-proof!" the Major howled in frustrated rage. "The tires—shoot off the tires!"

But even there the bullets had no effect: the tires must have been solid rubber. Not designed to give a featherbed ride, perhaps, but an excellent insurance against inopportune deflation. The car aimed at full speed for the space between the wall and the interlocked truck and trail-blasting sedan, and hurtled through with only a scraping of fenders. A storm of bullets dimpled its high square stern but did not penetrate. It rocketed away down the road.

"*Tenente* Fusco, take my scout car and get after that thing!" yelled the Major, jumping up and down with wrath. "Stop it with grenades if you can, but at least stay with it and keep in touch with me by radio. You others—how much longer must I wait for you to clean out that rats' nest?"

Men with trained reflexes leapt obediently to their assignments. A mortar, already ranged in, exploded a shell against the front of the building, and a yawning hole appeared where one of the shuttered windows

had been. The scout car was already bouncing on to the road when Simon grabbed hold of Ponti, who seemed momentarily petrified with indecision as to which unit he should be joining.

"Come with me!" snapped the Saint. "The soldiers will take care of the house—but I bet nobody is left there who would interest you much." He hustled the dazed detective into a run as he talked. "The big shots are in the car that got away—and the Bugatti has more chance of catching it than a Fiat."

The Bugatti growled with delight as he aroused it to life again, and as soon as Ponti was beside him he slammed it forward in a bank-robber's take-off, using the violent acceleration to swing the doors shut. He went on to justify his boast of its speed by thundering past Lieutenant Fusco's command car while still in third gear, turning to wave mockingly as he went by.

The escaping limousine, for all its armored weight and over-worked springing, was harder to catch, thereby vindicating at least a part of the Saint's prognosis, but after several minutes he caught it in his headlights as he came around a corner. As he started to overhaul it he saw something else, and switched his foot abruptly to the brake as little tongues of flame spat towards him and were followed

by the whip-crack reports of cordite.

"Very neat," Simon said. "Real gang-war stuff. There is a firing port just under the rear window, I saw the gun muzzle when it poked out. Luckily the road is too bumpy for them to have much chance of scoring at this range, but they could do better if we came much closer. Now we shall just have to keep them in sight from a safe distance while you think of some plan to stop them."

Ponti muttered curses under his breath, but not far enough under to deprive Simon of some of the more picturesque imprecations. He looked back for the scout car, but they had already left it far behind and were almost certainly increasing their lead.

"We need grenades, at least. On one of these hairpin bends, we might lob one ahead of them. Perhaps we should slow down and wait for Lieutenant Fusco."

"And maybe never see our quarry again," retorted the Saint. "Have you noticed that the speedometer is reading around a hundred and fifty kilometers most of the time? At that speed, they only have to be out of sight for a couple of minutes at any crossroads, and we should be flipping coins to help us guess which way they went. That car may look as if it belongs in a

museum, but so does this one, and you can see how un-decrepit we are. We simply can't afford to fall any farther behind than we have to to avoid stopping a bullet."

Ponti answered with a short pungent phrase which summed up the situation more succinctly than anything printable.

"I thoroughly agree," said the Saint sympathetically. "But it still leaves us nothing to do except follow them. So you might as well relax on this luxurious upholstery until your fine mind comes up with something more constructive."

There was obviously no simple solution. They were in something like the classic predicament of the man who had the tiger by the tail. There seemed to be no way to improve the hold; and although letting go might be less disastrous, it was an alternative which neither of them would consider for a moment.

"Eventually they must run out of gas," Ponti said, not too optimistically, as he watched the tail light weaving down the road ahead of them.

"And so must we. Of course, if it happens to them first, you and I can surround them."

Simon Templar was in much better spirits, perhaps because he had had more opportunities in his life to become acclimated to tiger-tail-holding. From his

point of view, the night so far had been a howling success. The Ungodly were on the run, and he was right behind them, goosing them along. The next move might be a problem; but so long as nothing as yet had positively gone wrong, everything should be considered to be going well. The dying autocrat whom he had seen was probably dead by now: even if nature had not taken its course, he would have been in no condition to be moved, and could likely have been helped over the last step out of this vale of tears rather than left to be captured. Certainly the men in the scudding carriage ahead could only be the most vigorous and determined aspirants to the throne. And among them was surely Al Destamio—or Dino Cartelli—the man who was the main reason for Simon's involvement in the affair.

He refused to believe that Fate would cheat him of a showdown now . . .

There was a faint smile on the Saint's lips, and a song in his throat that only he could hear above the drone of the motor.

Crossroads flashed by, and occasional tricky forks, but Simon followed the limousine through them all. It could not outdistance him or shake him off. Most of the time he stayed maddeningly just out of hand-gun range, but

he always managed to creep up when it counted most and when the rough-riding swings of the pursued car made it least risky. What he feared most was a lucky hit on a tire or the Bugatti's radiator, but none of the fugitive's erratic shots found such a mark. It did not seem to occur to the Saint that he could be hit himself, though one bullet did nick the metal frame of the windshield and whine away like a startled mosquito with hi-fi amplification.

Another village loomed up, lining a straight stretch of road that the limousine's headlights showed clear for a quarter of a mile ahead. The limousine seemed to slacken speed instead of accelerating, and Simon eased up on the throttle and fell even farther behind.

"What's the matter?" Ponti fumed. "This is your chance to pass them!"

"And have them nudge us into the side of a building?" Simon said. "Either that, or have a nice steady shot at us as we catch up. No, thank you. I think that's just what they want to tempt us to do."

But for the first time his intuition seemed to have lost its edge.

The car in front braked suddenly, and swung into a turning in the middle of the village which made a right-angle junction with the main road—if such

a term could be applied to the one they were on.

Simon raced the Bugatti towards the corner, but slowed up again well before he reached it and made the turn wide and gently, for it was an ideal spot for an ambush. The side road was empty, but in a hundred yards it made another blind curve to the left, and again Simon negotiated the turning with extreme caution. Again there was no ambush, but the black limousine was less than fifty yards ahead and putting on speed up a grade that started to wind up into the mountains. Simon could judge its acceleration by his own, as he revved up in pursuit and yet at first failed to narrow the gap between them.

Then as he whipped the Bugatti around another bend, and began to gain a yard or two, something clicked in his mind, and he laughed aloud with exultation.

Ponti stared at him in amazement.

"May I ask what is so funny?"

"The weird whims of Providence, and the philosophical principle of the Futility of Effort," said the Saint. "Here we were racking our brains to find a way to end the stalemate, and forgetting that the Ungodly must have been doing the very same thing. Now they have made their move, and I think I know what

it was. Let us catch up and make sure."

"You are crazy! Just now you would not catch up because they would fill us with bullets!"

"But now I don't think they will. However, the only way to be sure is to try it—as the actress said to the bishop."

"I was a fool to ever have anything to do with you," Ponti said, taking out his gun and preparing to die with honor.

In a minute they screamed out of another turn only a couple of lengths behind the limousine, but there were no shots and the firing port remained closed. The full beam of the Bugatti's headlights blazed into the rear window of the car ahead as the road straightened.

"They are gone!" Ponti shouted incredulously. "It is empty except for the driver! Unless they are crouching down—"

Taking advantage of the straight stretch, Simon poured on the gas, and the Bugatti surged forward as if a giant hand had slapped it from behind.

"No, there is only the driver," he said calmly, as they thundered alongside. "And I think he is making the fatal mistake of lowering his window so he can shoot at us."

Ponti was prepared. He sat sideways, his left hand cupped under his right elbow to steady it, and took careful aim. When

the bullet-proof glass had dropped far enough, while the driver was still raising his own gun, Ponti's pistol barked once. The driver's head was slammed sideways and he flopped over the wheel. Simon braked quickly as the limousine veered wildly across the road, rolled over, and somersaulted crazily out of sight.

Still braking, Simon spotted a cart track on his right, spun into it, and backed out to face the way they had come. He stopped again, and got out.

"You can send for the body later," he said. "But now slide over and take the wheel. You are getting a second chance to enjoy driving this marvelous car."

"Why?" Ponti asked blankly, as Simon got in on the other side.

"Because two can play the trick that they thought of. Did you notice that it took them entirely too long to make that double jog out of the village, and how close we were behind them even though I deliberately slowed up? That was because they stopped for a moment while they were out of sight, and the passengers piled out, counting on the driver to lead us on a wild-goose chase through the hills."

Ponti had the Bugatti in gear and moving again by that time.

"Then they are probably still hiding in the village! We only

have to locate the house—”

“And get mowed down when we do it. At one time I saw at least four passengers in that car, and wherever they went to earth is bound to be a nest of more *mafiosi*. No, you will have to go back and meet Fusco’s scout car, and radio for reinforcements.”

“And give those *fannulloni* time to slip away!”

“That is why I made you take the wheel. You will go through the village in low gear, making a terrific noise, and skidding your tires around the corners, so that they will hear everything and have no doubt that you went through without stopping. But actually as you come into the main street you will only be doing about fifteen kilometers an hour, and that is when I shall leave you. If they do try to slip away, I shall either follow them or try to detain them.”

“It is an insane plan. What chance would you have?”

“What better chance do *we* have? Try to apply the power of positive thinking, Marco *mio*. Look on the bright side. This may be where the Ungodly are delivered right into our hands. And I feel lucky tonight!”

Running downhill, the dark outskirts of the village were before them surprisingly quickly, and the curve into the side street that would intersect the main road.

“Down into second gear,”

snapped the Saint. “Give them the full sound effects. With enough tire-squealing, exhaust-roaring, and gear-grinding, they should be convinced that you went through here like a maniac, and it will never occur to them that we are plagiarizing their brainstorm.”

“I only hope,” Ponti said gloomily, “that you know some rich industrialist who will give a job to an ignominiously discharged police officer, if there is not a happy ending to this night’s work.”

But he obeyed his instructions, taking the bend on two protesting wheels and slipping the clutch to get an extra howl out of the engine. Simon unlatched the door on his side and braced himself, holding it ready to let it fly open at the right moment as they blatted down the narrow street. With the main junction rushing towards them, Ponti added the extra touch of a blast on the horn which raised stentorian echoes from the sleepy walls, and which Simon could only hope would give pause to any other vehicle which might happen to be on a collision course on the main road. Then came another screech of rubber, and the Bugatti broadsided around the corner.

Ponti took the clutch out again as soon as he had steadied the car, but kept the throttle open to maintain the level of exhaust

noise, and during that instant of minimum speed Simon threw the door open and jumped. He had not touched the ground when Ponti let the clutch in again and set the red monster racing away.

The Saint landed running, the slap of his feet drowned in the departing reverberations of the motor, and in five long strides he was sheltered in the darkness of a doorway. The Bugatti vanished down the road, its uproar died away, and stillness descended again like a palpable blanket.

He was alone once more, in a citadel of potential enemies.

For five minutes he stood in the doorway, unmoving and silent as the ancient walls. He saw no lights and heard no sounds, and the windows of the buildings opposite from which he might have been observed remained shuttered and dark. A scrawny cat stalked down the sidewalk, paused to gaze at him speculatively, and hurried on. Other than that there was no sign of life. It was impossible that the tumultuous passage of automobiles had not disturbed anyone, but either the inhabitants had learned that discretion was the better part of curiosity in those Mafia-dominated hills or they were more bucolically interested in getting back to sleep for the last hour or two of

rest before another morning's toil.

With the luminous dial of his watch turned to the inside of his wrist so that its glow would not betray him to any hidden watcher, if there were one, he verified that it was twenty minutes past three. So much had happened that night that it seemed as if it should already have been completely spent, yet he estimated that there must still be about an hour of darkness left. An hour which would give him the most concealment, before the early risers began to stir and the gray pre-dawn exposed him to their view.

Which was either plenty of time, or nothing like enough . . .

At first impression, it might have seemed an impossible task, to locate the hideout of Al Destamio and his buddies among all those barred and silent buildings. But actually it was by no means a search without clues. In the first place, by far the greater part of the village, through which Simon had had the limousine in sight, could be ruled out. Secondly, his quarry's choice of that particular town had not been dictated by its cultural amenities or picturesque charm, nor would it have been picked on the spur of the moment: the Ungodly must have known exactly what refuge they were going to dive into when they hopped out of their car,

without trusting that blind luck would let them blunder into something suitable. Nor would this merely be the home of some known sympathizer, since this would have involved an impossible delay for banging on the door to rouse him and waiting for him to open up. It had to be a place that they could get into at once; and since the telephone lines to the château had been cut long before their flight, they could not have called ahead to announce their arrival and prepare anyone to receive them. Therefore it would have to be a place to which they had a key, or where they knew that some door was always unlocked. Therefore it was most probably the home of one of them. And to qualify as the domicile of such an exalted member of the Mafia, it would have to be perceptibly more pretentious than the average of its neighbors. So that again a greater part of the remaining theoretical possibilities could be eliminated.

Satisfied now that he was not being observed, Simon Templar eased himself out of the doorway and made his way back up the side street as soundlessly as the cat.

The hideout was almost certainly beyond the second turning at the end of the block, since that would have given the fugitives more time to disappear before the Bugatti could come in

sight of them again, and somewhere within the fifty-yard stretch that had separated him from the limousine when he saw it again. The Saint moved more slowly from the corner, staying in the deepest shadows and assessing the buildings on each side, his eyes and ears straining to pick up any glimmer of light or whisper of sound that would betray a suspiciously early wakefulness within.

The houses were ranged shoulder to shoulder, but not in an even line, some having chosen to set farther back from the road than others. Simon prowled past two, then three, a small shop with living quarters above, another tall narrow building, none of them giving any sign of life. Then there was something only about two meters high which pushed out closer to the road than any of its neighbors, and in a moment Simon realized that it was not the projection of a ground floor but simply of a wall enclosing the front garden of a building which was itself set back quite a distance from the street.

And as he drifted wraith-like towards the angle, he heard from beyond it a soft scuff of footsteps, and his pulse beat a fraction faster at the virtual certainty that this must be the place where Destamio & Co had holed up.

As he flattened himself against the side wall, with his head

turned to allow only one eye to peep around the corner, a black shape took one step out from a gateway in the front and stood to glance up and down the road. The firefly glow of a cigarette-end brightened to reveal the coarse cruel face of a typical subordinate goon, and to glint on the barrel of what looked like a shotgun tucked under his arm.

That was the obliging clincher. A large house, behind a walled garden—and an armed guard at the gate. Any skeptic who insisted on more proof would probably have refused to believe that an H-bomb had hit him until his dust had been tested with a Geiger counter.

So now all that Simon had to do was to withdraw as softly as he had come, meet Ponti and the soldiers outside the town, and lead them to the spot.

Except that such relatively passive participation had never been the Saint's favorite rôle. And it would certainly have been an anticlimactic dénouement to the enterprise which had brought him that far. Besides which, he had already been pushed around too much by the Mafia to complacently leave others to administer their comeuppance. Major Olivetti and his *bersaglieri* had been fine for a frontal attack on the castle fortress, the boom of mortar shells and the flicker of tracer bullets had made it a stirring produc-

tion number worthy of wide-screen photography; but Simon felt that something more intimate was called for in his personal settlement with Al Destamio.

He waited motionless, with infinite patience, until finally the bored sentinel turned and went back into the garden.

With the fluid silence of a stalking tiger the Saint followed behind him, and sprang.

The first intimation of disaster that the sentry had was when an arm snaked over his shoulder and the braced thumb-joint of its circling fist thumped into his larynx. Paralyzed, he could neither breathe nor yell, and he never noticed the second blow on the side of his neck that rendered him mercifully unconscious.

The Saint caught the shotgun as it dropped, and with his other hand clutched the man's clothing and eased his fall to the ground into a mere rustling collapse. Then he picked the limp form off the driveway and carried it to the shadow of a clump of bushes and rolled it under.

The driveway led straight to the doors of a garage, a status symbol which had obviously been cut into one corner of the ground floor of an edifice much older than the horseless carriage, and a flagged path branched from it to three steps which mounted to the front door. Simon

tiptoed up the steps, and the door yielded to his touch—which was no more than he expected, for the Ungodly would hardly have been old-maidishly apprehensive enough to have locked the guard outside. The hallway inside was dark; but light came from a crack under a door at the back, and a deep murmur of male voices. With the shotgun in one hand, Simon inched towards the light with hypersensory alertness for any invisible obstacle that might catastrophically trip him.

The voices came through the door distinctively enough for him to recognize the hoarse rasp of Destamio's; but the conversation was mostly in Sicilian dialect, mangled and machine-gun fast, which made it almost impossible for him to follow. Occasionally someone would slip into ordinary Italian, which was more tantalizing than helpful, since the responses instantly became as unintelligible as the context. There seemed to be a debate as to whether they should lie low there, or leave together in a car which appeared to be available, or disperse; the argument seemed to hinge on whether their assembly should be considered to have completed its business for the present, or to have only been adjourned. The controversy flowed back and forth, with Destamio's voice becoming increasingly louder and

more forceful: he seemed to be well on the way to dominating the opposition. But the next most persistent if quieter voice cut in with some proposal which seemed to find unanimous acceptance: the general mutter of approval merged into a scraping of chairs and a scuffle of feet, the inchoate clatter of men rising from a council table and preparing to fly the coop.

Which was precisely the move that Simon Templar had undertaken to deter.

He had no time to make any plan, he would have to play it entirely by ear, but at least he could give himself the priceless advantage of the initiative, of throwing them off balance and forcing them to react, while giving them the impression that he knew exactly where he was going.

Before anyone else could do it, he flung open the door and stood squarely in the opening, the shotgun levelled from his hip.

"Were you looking for me?" he inquired mildly.

Pure shock froze them in odd attitudes like a frame from a movie film stopped in mid-action, a ludicrous tableau of gaping mouths and bulging eyes. The apparition on the very threshold of their secret conclave of the man they had been trying to dispose of in one way or another for a day and two nights, who

must have been responsible for their recent rout before the armed forces of justice, and who they had every right to believe had at least temporarily been shaken off, would have been enough to immobilize them for a while even without the menace of his weapon.

There were four of them: nearest the Saint, a stocky man with a porcine face and a scar, and a taller cadaverous one with thick lips which made him look like a rather negroid death's-head, both of whom Simon had seen at the bedside of Don Pasquale, and behind them Al Destamio and the man called Cirano with the nose to match it. They had been sitting around a circular dining table on which were glasses and a bottle of *grappa*, under a single light bulb with a wide conical brass shade over it. Cigarette and cigar ashes and butts soiled a gilt-edged plate that had been used as an ash-tray.

Destamio was the first to recover his wits.

"It's a bluff," he croaked. "He only has two shots with that thing. He dare not use it because he knows that even if he gets two of us the other two will get him."

He said this in plain Italian, for the Saint's benefit.

Simon smiled.

"So which two of you would like to be the heroes, and sacri-

fice yourselves for the other two?"

There was no immediate rush of volunteers.

"Then move back a bit," ordered the Saint, swinging the shotgun. "You're not going anywhere."

Scarface and Skullface gave ground, not unwillingly; but Destamio kept behind Skullface, whose bulk was not quite sufficient to mask the protrusion of Destamio's elbow as his right hand crept up his side. Simon's restless eyes caught the movement, and his voice sliced through the smoky air like a sword.

"Stop him, Cirano! Or you may never find out why he is a bad security risk."

"I would like to know about that," Cirano said, and widened his mouth in a tight grin that made double pothooks on each side of his majestic nose.

He did more than talk; he caught hold of Destamio's right wrist, arresting its stealthy crawl towards the hip. Their muscles conflicted for a second before Destamio must have realized that even the slightest struggle would nullify any advantage he might have sneaked, and hatred replaced movement as an almost equally palpable link between them.

"You would listen to anyone if he was against me, *non è vero?*"

Destamio snarled. "Even to this—"

"A good leader listens to everything before he makes up his mind, Alessandro," Cirano said equably. "You can be the first to sacrifice yourself when he has spoken, if you like, but there can be no harm in hearing what he has to say. You have nothing to cover up, have you?"

Destamio growled deep in his throat, but made no articulate answer. He abandoned his effort reluctantly, with a disgusted shrug that tried to convey that anyone stupid enough to accept such reasoning deserved all the nonsense that it would get him. But his beady eyes were tense and vicious.

"That's better," drawled the Saint. "Now we can have a civilized chat."

He advanced to within reach of the bottle on the table, picked it up, and took a sampling swig from it, without shifting his gaze from his captive audience. He lowered the bottle again promptly, with a grimace and a shudder, but did not put it down.

"Ugh," he said politely. "I don't wonder that people who drink this stuff start vendettas. I should start my first one with the distiller."

"How did you get here?" Cirano asked abruptly.

"A stork brought me," said the Saint. "However, if you were

wondering whether I had some connivance from your guard at the gate outside, forget it. He never drew a disloyal breath, poor fellow. But he had an acute attack of laryngitis. If he is still breathing when you find him, which is somewhat doubtful, I hope you will not add insult to his injuries."

"At the least, he will have to answer for negligence," Cirano said. "But since you are here, what do you want?"

"Some information about Alessandro here—for which I may be able to give you some in return."

"He is playing for time," Destamio rasped shrewdly. "What could he possibly tell any of you about me?"

"That is what I should like to know," Cirano said, with his great nose questing like a bird-dog.

He was nobody's fool. He knew that the Saint would not be standing there to talk without a reason, but he was not ready to jump to Destamio's conclusion as to what the reason was. Even the remote possibility that there might be more to it than a play for time forced him to satisfy his curiosity, because he could not afford to brush off anything that might weight the scales between them. And being already aware of this bitter rivalry, Simon gambled his life on playing them and their parti-

sans against each other, keeping them too preoccupied to revert to the inexorable arithmetic which added and subtracted to the cold fact that they could overwhelm him whenever they screwed up their resolve to pay the price.

"Of course you know all about his riper or even rottener years," said the Saint agreeably. "But, I was talking about the early days, when the Al we know was just a punk, if you will excuse the expression. Don Pasquale may have known—but doubtless he knew secrets about all of you which he took with him. But Al is older than the rest of you, and there may not be anyone left in the mob who could say they grew up with him. Not many of you can look forward to reaching his venerable old age: there are too many occupational hazards. So there can't be many people around unlucky enough to be able to recognize him under the name he had before he went to America."

"He is crazy!" Destamio choked. "You all know my family—"

"You all know the Destamios," Simon corrected. "And a good sturdy Mafia name it is, no doubt. And a safe background for your new chief. On the other hand, in these troubled times, could you afford to elect a chief with an air-tight charge of bank robbery and murder against him

on which he could not fail to be convicted tomorrow—or with which he might be blackmailed into betraying you instead?"

Simon Templar knew that at least he had made some impression. He could tell it from the way Skullface and Scarface looked at Destamio, inscrutably waiting for his response. In such a hierarchy, no such accusation, however preposterous it might seem, could be dismissed without an answer.

"Lies! Nothing but lies!" blustered Destamio, as if he would blast them away by sheer vocal volume. "He will say anything that comes into his head—"

"Then why are you raising your voice?" Simon taunted him. "Is it a guilty conscience?"

"What is this other name?" Cirano asked.

"It might be Dino Cartelli," said the Saint.

Destamio looked at the faces of his cronies, and seemed to draw strength from the fact that the name obviously had no impact on them.

"Who is this Cartelli?" he jeered. "I told you, this Saint is only trying to make trouble for me. I think he is working for the American government."

"It should be easy enough to prove," Simon said calmly, speaking to Cirano as if this were a private matter between them. "All you have to do is

take Al's fingerprints and ask the Palermo police to check them against the record of Dino Cartelli. No doubt you have a contact who could do that—perhaps the *maresciallo* himself? Cartelli, of course, is supposed to be dead, and they would be fascinated to hear of someone walking around alive with his identical prints. It would call for an urgent investigation, with the whole world looking on, or it might pop the entire fingerprint system like a pin in a balloon. But I'd suggest keeping Al locked up somewhere while you do it, or a man at his time of life might be tempted to squeal in exchange for a chance to spend his declining years in freedom."

Destamio's face turned a deeper shade of purple, but he had more control of himself now. He had to, if he was going to overcome suspicion and maintain his contested margin of leadership. And he had not climbed as high as he stood now through nothing but loudness and bluster.

"I will gladly arrange the fingerprint test myself," he said. "And anyone who has doubted me will apologize on his knees."

It was the technique of the monumental bluff, so audacious that it might never be called—or if it was, he could hope by then to have devised a way to juggle the result. It was enough to tighten the lips of Cirano, as

he felt the mantle of Don Pasquale about to be twitched again from hovering over his shoulders.

"But that will not be done in these two minutes," Destamio went on, pressing his counter-attack. "And I tell you, he is only trying to distract you for some minutes, perhaps until more soldiers or police arrive—"

His black button-eyes switched to a point over the Saint's shoulder and above his head, widening by a microscopic fraction. If he had said anything like "Look behind you!" Simon would have simply hooted at the time-worn wheeze, but the involuntary reaction was a giveaway which scarcely needed the stealthy creak of a board from the same focal direction to authenticate it.

The Saint half turned to glance up and backwards, knowing exactly the risk he had to take, like a lion-tamer forced to take his eyes off one set of beasts to locate another creeping behind him, and glimpsed on the dimness of a staircase disclosed by the light that spilled from the room a fat gargoyle of a woman in a high-necked black dressing gown trying to take two-handed aim at him with a shaky blunderbuss of a revolver—the wife or housekeeper of Cirano or Skullface or Scarface, whoever was the host, who must have been listening to everything since the dining-room door opened, and

who had gallantly responded to the call of domestic duty.

In a flash Simon turned back to the room, as the hands of the men in it clawed frantically for the guns at their hips and arm-pits, and flung the *grappa* bottle which he still held up at the naked light bulb. It clanged on the brass shade like a gong, and he leapt sideways as the light went out.

The antique revolver on the stairs boomed like a cannon, and sharper retorts spat from the pitch blackness which had descended on the dining room, but the Saint was out in the hall then and untouched. He fired one barrel of the shotgun in the direction of the dining-room door, aimed low, and was rewarded by howls of rage and pain. The pellets would not be likely to do mortal damage at that elevation, but they could reduce by one or two the number of those in condition to take up the chase. He deliberately held back on the second trigger, figuring that the knowledge that he still had another barrel to fire would slightly dampen the eagerness of the pursuit.

Another couple of shots, perhaps loosed from around the shelter of the dining-room door frame, zipped past him as he sprinted to the front door and cleared the front steps in one bound, but respect for his reserve fire-power permitted him

to make a diagonal run across the garden to the gate without any additional fusillade.

Outside the gate he stopped again, listening for following footsteps, but he did not hear any. He could have profited by his lead to run on down the road in either direction, leaving the Ungodly to guess which way he had chosen; but that would also have left them one avenue of escape where he could not hinder them or see them go. Now if two of them came on foot, he worked it out, he would have to slug the nearest one with his gun barrel and hope he would still have time to fire it at the second; if there were three or more, the subsequent developments would be very dicey indeed. On the other hand, if they came by car, he would have to shoot at the driver and hope that the glass was not tough enough to resist buckshot.

He waited tensely; but it seemed as if the pursuers had paused to lick their wounds, or were maneuvering for something more stealthy.

Then he heard something quite different: a distant sound of machinery rumbling rapidly closer. It was keyed by the throaty voice of the Bugatti, but filled out by an accompaniment of something more high-pitched and fussy. Lights silhouetted the bend from the village and then swept around it. The Bugatti,

with Ponti at the wheel and Lieutenant Fusco beside him, was plainly illuminated for a moment by the lights of the following scout car, before its own headlights swung around and blinded him. Simon ran towards them, holding both hands high with the shotgun in one of them, hoping that it would stop any trigger-happy warrior mistaking him for an attacking enemy.

The Bugatti burnt rubber as it slowed, and Simon sidestepped to let it bring Ponti up to him.

"You took long enough," he said rudely. "Did I forget to show you how to get into top gear?"

"Lieutenant Fusco would not abandon his scout car, and I had to hold back for them to keep up with us," said the detective. "Did you have any luck?"

"Quite a lot—and in more ways than one." Simon thought the details could wait. "There are at least six of them in that house behind the wall: four live ones, big shots, a guard whom I may have killed, and a woman who would make a good mother to an ogre."

Fusco jumped out and shouted back to his detachment: "Report to the Major where we are and that we are going in after them, then follow me."

"A good thing we're not trying to surprise them," Simon remarked. "But they already know

they're in trouble. The only question is whether they will surrender or fight."

They went through the gate and up the short driveway together. The three soldiers from Fusco's scout car followed, their boots making the noise of a respectable force before they fanned out across the lawn.

Ponti produced a flashlight and shone it at the front door which Simon had left half open.

"Come out with your hands up," he shouted from the foot of the steps, "or we shall come in and take you."

There was no answer, and the beam showed no one in what could be seen of the hall.

"This is my job," Ponti said, and shoved Simon aside as he ran up the steps.

Fusco ran after him, and Simon had to recover his balance before he could get on the Lieutenant's heels. But no shots greeted them, and the hall and staircase showed empty to the sweep of Ponti's flashlight. A flickering yellow luminance came from the door of the dining room, however, and when they reached it they saw Skull-face and Scarface lying on the floor groaning, while the woman of the house tried to minister to their bloodstained legs by the light of a candle.

Cirano also lay on the floor, but he was not groaning. There was a single red stain on his

shirt, and his eyes were open and sightless. His magnificent nose stood up between them like a tombstone.

Ponti bent over him briefly, and looked up at the Saint.

"Did you do this?"

Simon shook his head.

"No. The others, yes—with this." He broke the shotgun, extracting one spent and one unused shell. "I didn't have a pistol. But Destamio did, and so did these two, and so did Florence Nightingale. I broke the light"—he pointed to it—"and they were all blazing away in the dark. It *could* have been an accident. You will have to try matching bullets to guns. But there is one gun missing." He turned to the woman. "*Dov 'è Destamio?*"

She glared at him without answering.

"There must be a back way out," Simon said. "Or else—"

He turned and pushed two of the *bersaglieri* who were crowding at the door.

"Go and watch the garage," he snapped. "And one of you block the driveway with your car."

He went on across the hall and opened the door on the opposite side. It led to the kitchen, which was lit by a weak electric bulb over the sink. He strode across it to another door, which was ajar. Ponti was following him. They stepped out into darkness and fresh air.

"Your back way," Ponti said. "We should have looked for it before we came in at the front."

"If Al used it, he was probably gone before you got here," said the Saint. "Now, is he holed up somewhere else in the village, or would he try to make it out of here on foot? If Olivetti and his troops catch up soon enough, you might still be able to cordon off the area."

The detective was shining his flashlight this way and that. They were in a small walled courtyard with an old well in one corner, garbage cans in another, and an opening to a narrow alley in a third. The light swung to the fourth corner, and a brief pungent malediction dropped from Ponti's lips.

"I think we are already much too late," he said.

In the fourth corner, a short passage led back to a pair of large wide-open doors, beyond which was a bare-walled emptiness, and at the back of that the inside of another pair of doors, which were closed.

"God damn and blast it, the garage!" Simon gritted. "With doors at both ends, and a back alley to drive out. What every Mafia boss's home should have. And if there was a boss-grade car in it, he could be twenty kilometers away already."

They returned through the house, and Simon went on out of the front door and across to

the gate. Ponti stayed with him.

"The guard I incapacitated is under those bushes," Simon said, pointing as he passed them.

"Where are you going?" Ponti asked.

Simon squeezed past the scout car which had been moved into the opening.

"I'm taking back my car and going home, thanking you for a delightful evening," said the Saint. "There's nothing more I can do here. But if I happen to run into Al again I will let you know."

"I think you have an idea where to look for him, and I ought to forbid you to try anything more on your own," Ponti grumbled. "But since you would only deny it, I can only ask you to let me see him alive if possible. The two whose legs you peppered, I know them, and they will be good to see in the dock, but Destamio would make it still better."

"I'll try to remember that," said the Saint ambiguously. He cranked up the Bugatti and climbed in. "Which is the way to the coast road?"

"Turn to the right on the main street, and take the next fork on the left. It is not very far. *Arrivederci.*"

"Ciao," said the Saint, and backed the great car around and gunned it away.

It was in fact less than ten minutes to the coast highway,

and it was with a heartfelt sigh of relief that he greeted its firm paving and comparatively easy curves. In spite of his steel-wire stamina, the accumulated exertions and shortage of sleep of the last few days had taken their inevitable toll, and he was beginning to fight a conscious battle with fatigue. Now it was less of a strain to make speed, and in the next miles he broke all the speed limits and most of the traffic laws; but fortunately it was still too early for any police cars or motorcycles to be abroad.

The sky was paling when he roared into the outskirts of Palermo and slowed up to thread through back roads that were already becoming familiar. There was just one piece of evidence that he had been cheated of, which he still needed before this adventure could be wound up; and when he finally brought the Bugatti to a stop, the gates of the cemetery which he had visited the night before had just slid past the edge of its headlights before he switched them off.

The gates were not locked, but the padlock on the Destamio mausoleum had been fastened again. He had no key this time, but he had brought a jack handle from the car which would do just as well if more crudely. He inserted it and twisted mightily. Metal grated and snapped,

and the broken hasp fell to the ground.

He knew that there was no fallacy like the cliché that lightning never strikes in the same place twice, but for someone else to be lurking there to attack him again, as he had been waylaid on his previous visit, would have been stretching the plausibilities much farther than that. Secure in the confidence that no biographer could inflict such a dull repetition on him, he walked inside without hesitation or trepidation, aiming for the tomb that he had so narrowly missed seeing before.

His pocket flashlight had long since vanished, but he had found a book of matches in the glove compartment of the Bugatti. He struck one that flared high in the windowless vault. There was a bronze casket almost at his eye level which looked newer than the others, though it was itself well aged and coated with dust. He bent close, and brought the match near the tarnished bronze plate on the side.

It read:

*Alessandro Leonardo
Destamio—1898-1931*

VIII: How Dino Cartelli dug It, and the Saint made a Deal.

The main portals of the Destamio manse stood wide open

when the Saint saw them again. It was the first time he had seen them that way, and his pulse accelerated by an optimistic beat at the thought of what this difference could portend. As his angle of vision improved, he discerned on the driveway inside the shape of a small but very modern car limned by the dim light of bulb over the front door. It had been backed around so that it faced the gateway, as if in readiness for the speediest possible departure; and it did not seem too great a concession to wishful thinking to visualize it as the vehicle in which the man known as Alessandro Destamio had made his getaway from the village hideout, and its position as indicating that this was not for a moment intended to be the end of the flight.

But, now, it seemed that it could be the end of the story . . .

Simon came on foot, after coasting the Bugatti to a stop a good two hundred yards away, since its stentorian voice was impossible to mute to any level consistent with a stealthy approach towards apprehensive ears. But as he cat-footed up the drive, he began to hear from inside the villa a steady thumping and hammering which might well have drowned out any exterior noise except during its own occasional pauses. Yet, far from being puzzled by the clangor within, the Saint had an

instantaneous uncanny intuition of the cause of it, and a smile of beatific anticipation slowly widened his eyes and his mouth.

Even while he was enjoying a moment of his mental vision, however, his active gaze was already scanning the windows of the upper floor. All of them were dark, but one pair of shutters was open a few inches, enough to show that they were not bolted on the inside, and those gave on to the balcony formed by the portico over the front door. For a graduate second-story man, it was no more than an extension of walking up the front steps to climb one of the supporting columns and enter the room above.

There was a sound of heavy breathing and a movement in the room as he crossed it, and a light clicked on over the bed. It revealed the almost mummified features of Lo Zio, sitting up, the ruffled collar of a night-shirt buttoned under his chin and a genuine tasselled nightcap perched on his head.

The Saint smiled at him reassuringly.

"*Buon giorno*," he said. "We only wanted to be sure you were all right. Now lie down again until we bring your breakfast."

The ancient grinned a toothless grin of senile recognition, and lay down again obediently.

Simon went out quickly into the corridor, where a faint yel-

low light came from the stairway. The hammering noises continued to reverberate from below, louder now that he was inside the building, but before he investigated them or took any more chances he had to find out whether Gina was in the house. It was unlikely that she would be on that floor, from which escape would have been too easy, but the stairs continued up to another smaller landing on which there were only four doors. Simon struck a match to observe them more clearly, and his glance settled on one which had a key on the outside. He tested the handle delicately, and confirmed that it was locked, but with his ear to the panel he heard someone stir inside. There could be only one explanation for that anomaly, and without another instant's hesitation he turned the key and went in.

In a bare attic room with no other outlet than a skylight now pale with dawn, Gina gasped as she saw him and then flung herself into his arms.

"So you're all right," he said. "That's good."

"They only tied me up and gagged me and brought me back here, after you were knocked out," she said. "Uncle Alessandro told Donna Maria to keep me locked up and he would explain everything later. But when they took you away I thought they were taking you for a ride

like they do in the gangster movies."

"I suppose that was the general idea, eventually," he said. "But people have had plans like that before, and I always seem to keep disappointing them."

"But how did you get away? And what has been happening?"

"I'll have to tell you most of that later. But you'll hear the important answers in a minute, when Al and I have a last reunion." Reluctantly he put away for the time the temptations of her soft vibrant body. "Come along."

He led her by the hand out on to the landing. The thudding and pounding still came from below.

"What is it?" she whispered.

"I think it's Uncle Al opening another grave," he replied in the same undertone. "We'll see."

As they reached the entrance hall, Simon took the gun from his pocket for the first time since he had been in the house.

The door of the once somberly formal reception room was ajar, and through the opening they could see the chaos that had been wrought in it. The furniture in one far corner had been carelessly pushed aside, a rug thrown back, and the tiles assaulted and smashed with a heavy sledge-hammer. Then a hole had been hacked and gouged in the layer of concrete under the tiles with the aid of a

pickaxe added to the sledge, which had afterwards been discarded. The hole disclosed a rusty iron plate which Destamio was now using the pickaxe to pry out. He was in his shirt-sleeves, dusty, dishevelled, and sweat-soaked, panting from the fury of his unaccustomed exertion.

Donna Maria leaned on the back of a chair with one hand, using the other to clutch the front of a flannel dressing-gown that covered her from neck to ankle, watching the vandalism with a kind of helpless fascination.

"You promised me that nothing would go wrong," she was moaning in Italian. "You promised first that you would leave the country and never return, and there would be enough money for the family—"

"I did not come back because I wanted to," Destamio snarled. "What else could I do when the Americans threw me out?"

"Then you promised that everything would still be all right, that you would keep away from us with your affairs. Yet for these last three days everything has involved us."

"It is not my fault that that goat Templar came to stick his horns into everything, old woman. But that is all finished now. Everything is finished."

Grunting and cursing, he finally broke the sheet of metal

loose, and flung it clanking across the room. He went down on his knees and reached into the cavity which it exposed, and lugged out a cheap fiber valise covered with dust and dirt. He lifted it heavily, getting to his feet again, and dumped it recklessly on the polished top of a side table.

"I take what is mine, and this time you will never see me again," he said.

It seemed to the Saint that it would have been sheer preciousness to wait any longer for some possibly more dramatic juncture at which to make his entrance. It was not that he had lost any of his zest for festooning superlatives on a situation, but that in maturity he had recognized that there was always the austere moment which would never improve itself.

He pushed the door wider, and stepped quietly in.

"*Famose ultime parole*," he remarked.

The heads of Alessandro Destamio and Donna Maria performed simultaneous semicircular spins as if they had been snapped around by strings attached to their ears, with a violence that must have come close to dislocating their necks. Discovering the source of the interruption, they seemed at first to be trying to extrude their eyes on stalks, like lobsters.

Destamio had one additional

reflex: his hand started a snatching movement towards his hip pocket.

"I wouldn't," advised the Saint gently, and gave a slight lift to the gun which he already held, to draw attention to it.

Destamio let his hand drop, and straightened up slowly. His eyes sank back into their sockets, and from the shift of them Simon knew that Gina had now followed him into the room.

Without turning his head, the Saint gave a panoramic wave of his free left hand which invited her to connect the wreckage of the room and the hole in the corner with the dusty bag on the table.

He explained: "The game is Treasure Hunt. But I'm afraid Al is cheating. He knew where it was all the time, because he buried it himself—after he stole it from a bank in Palermo where he worked long ago under another name."

"Is that true, Uncle Alessandro?" Gina asked in a small voice.

"I'm not your uncle," was the impatient rasping answer. "I never was your uncle or anybody's uncle, and you might as well forget that nonsense."

"His real name," Simon said, "is Dino Cartelli."

Cartelli-Destamio glowered at him with unwavering venom.

"Okay, wise guy," he growled in English. "Make like a private

eye on television. Tell 'em my life story like you figure it all out in your head."

"All right, since you ask for it," said the Saint agreeably. "I've always rather liked those scenes myself, and wondered if anyone could really be so brilliant at reconstructing everything from all the way back, without a lot of help from the author who dreamed it up. But let's see what I can do."

Gina had moved in to where he could include her in his view without shifting his gaze too much from its primary objective. It made it easier for him than addressing an audience behind his back.

"Dino—and let's scrub that Alessandro Destamio nonsense, as he suggests," he said, "is a man of various talents and very lofty ambitions. He started out as a two-bit punk right here in Palermo, and although he is still a punk he is now in the sixty-four thousand dollar class, or better. He once had an honest job in the local branch of a British bank, but its prospects looked a bit slow and stodgy for a lad who was in a hurry to get ahead. So he joined the Mafia, or perhaps he was already a member—my crystal ball is a little unclear on this point, but it isn't important. What matters is that somebody thought of a bigger and faster way to get

money out of the bank than working for it."

Cartelli's eyes were small and crafty again now, and Simon knew that behind them a brain that was far from moronic was flogging itself to find a way out of its present corner, and would take advantage of all the time it could gain by letting someone else do the talking.

"That's a good start," Cartelli croaked. "What's next?"

"Whether it was Dino's own idea, because he'd already been tapping the till in a small way and an audit by the bank examiners was coming up, or whether he was recruited for the job from higher up, is something else I can't tell you which doesn't matter either. The milestone is that the bank was robbed, apparently by some characters who broke in while he was working late one night. He seems to have put up a heroic fight before he was killed by a shotgun blast in the face and hands which mutilated him beyond recognition or even routine identification. But have you read enough detective stories to guess what really happened?"

"Go on," Cartelli said. "You're the guy who was gonna dope it out."

"For a first caper, it was quite a classic," Simon went on imperturbably. "In fact, it was a variation on the gimmick in quite a few classic stories. Of

course, the robbers were Dino's pals and he let them in. He helped them to bust the safe and shovel out the loot, and then changed clothes with another bloke who'd been brought along to take the fall. He was the one who was killed with the shotgun—but who would ever doubt that it was the loyal Dino Cartelli? Dino got a nice big cut off the cake in return for disappearing, a lot of which I think is still in that valise; the Mafia got the rest, and everyone was happy except the insurance company that had to make good the loss. And maybe the man with no face. Who was he, Dino?"

"Nobody, nobody," Cartelli said hoarsely. "A traitor to the Mafia, why not? A nobody. Don't tell me you care about some son-of-a-bitch like that!"

"Maybe not," said the Saint. "If the Mafia confined themselves to knocking off their own erring brothers; I might even give them a donation. But then, many years after, in fact just the other day, something went wrong with the perfect crime that Dino thought had been buried and forgotten. A silly old English tourist named Euston, who once upon a time worked in the bank beside Dino, recognized him in a restaurant in Naples after all those years—partly from that scar on his cheek, which Euston happened to have given him in a youthful brawl. And this Eus-

ton was too stupid and stubborn to be convinced that he could be mistaken. So—perhaps without too much reluctance, after such a reminder of that bygone clout in the chops, Dino had him liquidated. That was when I got interested. And practically everything that's happened since has stemmed from Dino's efforts to buy me off or bump me off."

"But my uncle?" Gina asked bewilderedly. "How does he fit in?"

"Your uncle is dead," Simon said in a more sympathetic tone. "I went back to the mausoleum before I came here, and finished the search we started the other night. Alessandro Destamio did die in Rome of that illness in 1931, as you suspected, and Dino here stepped into his shoes. But the family still had enough sentiment to insist on putting Alessandro's coffin in the ancestral vault. Why they let Dino take his name should only take a couple of guesses."

He had spoken in Italian again, with the calculated intention of including the comprehension of Donna Maria, and now she responded as he had hoped.

"I will answer that, Gina," she said, with some of the old iron and vinegar back in her voice. "Your uncle was a good man, but a foolish one with money, and he had wasted all that we had. He was dying when this Dino came to me and offered a way

to keep our home and the family together. I accepted for all our sakes, with the understanding that he would never try to be with us himself. But first he broke that promise and now he will leave us destitute."

"You should have taken over his loot while you had the chance, for insurance," said the Saint, touching the lock on the valise.

The matriarch drew up her dumpy figure with pride.

"I am not a thief," she said. "I would not touch stolen money."

Simon shrugged his renewed bafflement at the vagaries of the human conscience.

"I wish I could see the difference between that and the money he used to send you from America."

"What she forgets," Cartelli said viciously, "is that Lo Zio himself was once a Mafia Don—"

"*Sta zitto!*" shrieked Donna Maria unavailingly.

"—and she had nothing against his support in those days. And after he had a stroke and was no more good for anything, Don Pasquale offered him this deal as a kind of pension, and he was glad to take it."

"Enough, *vigliacco!* Lo Zio is sick, dying—you cannot speak of him like that—"

"I tell the truth," Cartelli said harshly.

Then he spoke again in English: "Lookit, Saint, these people

don't mean nut'n to you. When I hadda give a contract for Euston—yeah, an' for you too—it was self defense, nut'n else, self defense like you get off for in court. Nut'n personal. Okay, so now I'm licked. You tipped off the cops about me, an' even the Mafia won't back me no more after all this trouble I brought on them. But you an' me can talk business."

The Saint's thumb moved against the catch on which it was resting, and the fastening snapped open. The valise had not been locked. He lifted the lid, and exposed its contents of neatly tied and packed bundles of paper currency in the formats and colors of various solvent nations.

"About this?" he asked.

"Yeah. I oughta have left it anyhow—I done without it all these years, an' I got enough stashed in a Swiss bank to keep me from starving now, once I get outa Italy. You take it—give what you like to the old woman an' Gina, an' keep the rest. There's plenty to make up for all the trouble you had." Desperate earnestness rasped through the gravel in Cartelli's voice. "No one ain't never gonna hear about it from me, if you just gimme a chance an' let me go."

Simon Templar relaxed against the table, half hitching one leg on to it to make a seat, and played the fingers of his free

hand meditatively over the bundles of cash in the open bag. For some seconds of agonizing suspense he seemed to be waiting and listening for some inner voice to advise him.

At last he looked up, with a smile.

"All right, Dino," he said. "If that's how you want it, get going."

Gina gave a little gasp.

Cartelli gave nothing, not even a grunt of thanks. Without a word he grabbed up his coat and huddled into it as he went out.

Simon followed him far enough to watch his flat-footed march across the hallway, and to make sure that when the front door slammed it was with Cartelli on the outside and not turning to sneak back for a surprise counter-attack. He waited long enough to hear the little car outside start up and begin to move away.

He came back into the room again to see Donna Maria sitting in a chair with her face buried in her hands, and Gina staring at him in a kind of lost and lonely perplexity.

"You let him go," she said accusingly. "For his stolen money."

"Well, that was one good reason," Simon said cheerfully.

"Do you think I would touch it?"

"You sound like Donna Maria. So don't touch it. But I'm sure the bank, or their insurance com-

pany, would pay a very handsome reward for having it returned. Do you see anything immoral about that?"

"But after all he's done—the murders—"

From outside, but not far away, they were suddenly aware of a confused sequence of roaring engines, squealing brakes, shouts, a crash, and then shots. Several shots. And then the disturbance was ended as abruptly as it had begun.

"What was that?" Gina whispered.

Simon was lighting a cigarette, with the feeling that this was a moment for rather special indulgence.

"I think that was Dino's curtain call," he said calmly. "As he told us, he should never have come back for these souvenirs of that old boyish escapade. But—" he reverted to Italian again for the benefit of Donna Maria, who had raised her head in bemuddled but fearful surmise—"I suppose greed got him into this, and it's only poetic that greed should put him out. Digging up this money cost him enough time for me to catch up with him, and then I only had to gain a little more time for the police and the army to catch up with me. We've been having a lot of fun since last night which I'll have to tell you about. A little while ago I managed to take over the fastest transportation,

which was mine to begin with anyway because I hired it most respectably; but the head policeman this time is nobody's fool, and I knew he would not take long to guess that this might be the place where I was going."

"The police," Donna Maria repeated stonily.

Simon looked at her steadily.

"This one, Marco Ponti, is not like some others," he said. "I think I could persuade him to let Dino Cartelli be buried under his own name—shot while trying to escape after digging up his share of the bank robbery, which he buried in the Destamio house, where the family had been kind enough to receive him as a guest in his young days, knowing nothing about his Mafia connections. I don't think he will mind leaving Lo Zio to another Judge

whom he will have to face soon enough. I think Marco will buy all that—if you will agree not to try to keep Gina here against her will."

"But where will I go?" Gina asked.

"Wherever the sun shines, and you can dance and laugh and play, as a girl should when she's young. You could try St Tropez for a change from everything you've been used to. Or Copenhagen or Nassau or California, or any other place you've dreamed of seeing. If you like, I'll go some of the way with you and get you started."

Her wonderful eyes were still fixed on him in demoralizing contemplation when the jangle of the front door bell announced an obligatory but obviously parenthetical interruption.

Watch For The Sign Of

THE SAINT



HE WILL BE BACK!

*if
the
dead
could
talk*

by Cornell Woolrich

HE WAS in a dim little room off the arena somewhere. He looked so jaunty, in his tunic picked with spangles. He looked so husky, in the tights that encased his muscular thighs. He looked so devil-may-care and debonair, on the side of his face where there was still pink-tan greasepaint. He looked so dead.

There were a pair of clowns there, near the door, with that sad-eyed expression they always have when you're standing too close to them. There was a Roman charioteer there, in a gleaming cuirass and plumed helmet and kilt. There was a bareback rider in a frothy pink skirt. Just for a minute, taking a last look. Then they all turned and drifted silently outside. There was still a performance going on out there. They had to get back. The others stayed.

There was a girl there, a member of his own troupe, a cape around her tights now, looking down at him. Just looking at him. Just standing looking at him, as though she'd never get through. There was a young fellow next to her, a third member of the

There are times when we forget that a circus, whether big or small, is very much a world apart—with all the rivalries and the hates and the loves—and the fears—found in any community of people. Cornell Woolrich, author of THE BRIDE WORE BLACK, PHANTOM LADY, etc., and one of the great names of this generation, here proves this point . . .

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same troupe, standing holding one arm around her. The other hung stiffly beside him, ending in a mitten of gauze bandaging, as though he'd hurt his hand at some fairly recent performance. He kept looking at her, only at her, not at the still form she was looking at.

No one said anything. What was there to say? It could have happened to anyone.

Last of all, there was a detective there, jotting something in a notebook. He was all through now. He'd done all his questioning, all his looking around and investigating and reconstructing. It was no secret affair. Nearly a thousand people had seen it happen. He'd found out all there was to find out. Found out all anyone could tell him. Anyone living.

* * *

I knew I was going to kill him from the night she said, "I'm sorry, Joe, it's him, not you any more." I knew it from then on. I only didn't know when or how. That's how I am. That's what my blood is, what my nature is. I couldn't change that even if I tried.

I tried to stop myself from doing it, in every way I knew how. But it was no good; I knew it was going to happen anyway, I knew it was coming and there was no holding it back. I knew

I was going to see him kissing her sometime, or even just looking at her in a certain way that meant she was his and not mine—and that would bring it on whether I wanted to or not.

It's queer how those things are. It's the closer you are to a guy that makes you hate him the worse, when he takes something away from you. And no one was ever as close as him and me. We were brothers in everything but blood.

Here's how it was: we both ran away from our homes the same night. We first met each other on the same night, we both ran away. We were both within a year of one another's age—I was fourteen and a little the older. And we were both on our way to join up with the same traveling circus-outfit that had passed through those parts only a day or so before, pitching in his town first, then crossing the hill and pitching in mine. You can't be any closer than that, for a starter.

I was sneaking down a line of boxcars, stalled in the freight-yards, in the moonlight, keeping an eye open for the watchman and trying to find one of them that was open, when a hand came out to me and a voice whispered: "Try this one in here, where I am." I could tell by the sound it was somebody my own age, so I took his hand through the narrow black open-

ing and floundered in. We closed it up again after us and got acquainted in the dark, like run-away kids do.

"I'm Tommy Sloan," he said. "What's your name?"

"I'm Joe Crosby. Are you on the lam too?"

"I'm heading after that traveling circus, you know the one."

"That's what I'm doing too." It didn't seem strange to us that we should both have the same idea, and meet like that on the same night we'd both carried it out. What would have seemed strange to us was that one of us should some day want to kill the other.

"I heard 'em say their next pitch was going to be over at Gloversville. *This*'ll take us there. I know because I overheard one of the yardmen telling somebody that. All we gotta do is lie low and keep our eyes open for it when it passes through." He hugged his knees in the gloom and shared his last soda cracker with me. "I wanna get in that trapeze-act they got. The one with the man and the lady, and the little girl that they pass back and forth to each other. Gee, them high bars," he sighed wistfully.

I'd had my eye on that too. It had to be that or nothing, don't ask me why. That's how trapeze-artists come into being, I guess.

"Think they'll take us?" he asked.

"Not right away. You gotta learn how. But maybe they'll let us string along with them and practice up."

We both gave a gusty sigh of mutual yearning in the shadows of the boxcar. "I ain't never going to be anything but one of them trapeze-guys," he said in a low, dreamy voice.

"Me neither," I echoed.

A thousand and two kids have said that in their time. We were the two that carried it through.

The line of box-cars jolted, started to crawl slowly forward under us, and the world began.

That's how it was.

When they saw they couldn't shoo us away, and when they found out neither one of us had come from enough of a home to make it worthwhile sending us back to it, they took us with them and trained us. Mom Bissell mothered us. They broke us into the act while we were still pliable and our muscles hadn't stiffened yet. That's the only way you can be broken in; at that age.

We were still in the embryo stage when we lost Mom one night. Not in the ring, in bed, the way she'd always said she never wanted to go. We cried as though she'd been our own mother, him and me both.

Pop took us into full partnership as soon as we went out again after that. He had to, to keep the turn going. We were ready for it by then anyway. It

was a proud night for us when we first stood up there on the take-off platforms, tall already but skinny in our new tights, alongside Pop and *her*, and then went sailing out into space on our own, not just filler-ins any more. They say about the stage that once you've been an actor, it gets into your blood so, that you never want to be anything else. Tommy and me, we both found out that night that once you've gone sailing out between the bars, light and fast and sure, you never *can* be anything else.

We were a quartet for awhile. Then Pop went to his rest too. He was getting too stiff and brittle, he had to drop out. He'd taught us all he knew. We used to visit him in the boarding-house where we'd left him, whenever we got back to town. Then after a couple of seasons, there wasn't any reason to go around there any more. That's the way life goes; death beckons someone out of line, but the line keeps closing up.

Two men and a girl now. We didn't look lanky in our tights any more, we'd grown into them, and we'd come into our prime. We rearranged the turn. We worked on the blindfolded triple-somersault ending in an upside-down hand-grip, that Pop had showed us, until we had it cinched. Then we took the net away. The net was just a state

of mind anyway. Nothing was going to happen, once we had it down pat.

They both learned the spinning dive, she and Tommy, just so there'd always be an alternate handy in case any little thing went wrong some night, and we wouldn't have to leave it out of the turn. We couldn't do that, it was our showpiece. But in our line it's always good to figure on any little thing going wrong some night, and having a substitute ready. One of you might eat some last week's fish and get a folding-pain, or have a hand caught in a bus-door.

So they doubled in it between them, Tommy and *her*. I was always the brake, the anchor. I was a little too heavy to be able to turn fast enough in the air, but the heaviness came in handy for coupling onto and steadying the plunger hurtling down. I was also a good half-head taller than him, and still taller when it came to *her*, and that meant either of them could take the three complete turns going down in less time than it took me; have more room left to straighten out for the hand-grip at the end, not have to crowd their somersaults to get them all in.

But Tommy was the one usually did it. She just kept warmed up at it, she was like what they call an understudy in the theater. She looked prettier tying the blindfold around him and get-

ting him poised on the edge of the platform. It looked better like that, than for a girl to be risking her neck while a man stood looking on up there doing nothing. Just showmanship. You have to take those things into consideration.

We got good bookings on the strength of it too. Before we knew it, no more dinky little tent-shows folding up under us in the middle of nowhere. The big time now, our names on three-sheets, winter quarters in Florida, the Garden in New York, and all the rest of the trimmings.

And meanwhile she got lovelier every season. Natalie. The three of us went around together everywhere, always the three of us; her in the middle, with her laughing eyes and dark-gold hair. That was all right while we were still two boys and a girl. But before we noticed it we weren't two boys and a girl any more. We were two men and a woman. Then it wouldn't work any more. She couldn't like the two of us the same, the way she had till now. We wouldn't have wanted her to if she could.

It happened fast when it happened; all at once, like a flash. She came back to the rooming-house and knocked on my door the night she first found out. I think it was in Toledo. He wasn't with her. He must have stayed

out to count the stars somewhere.

She said, "I'm sorry, Joe, it's him, not you any more. I found out for sure tonight. You asked me to tell you, so I am."

I didn't say anything, I just looked at her. "Good night, Joe," she said softly. I closed my door again.

I didn't know right away how bad it was going to be. That was because I'd only seen her by herself as yet, without his being with her. The poison hadn't been added.

We always shared the same room together, wherever we stopped. It was only when he came in by himself, afterward, and I heard the way he was whistling to himself while he undressed in the dark, that I knew how bad it was really going to be. That I knew I was going to kill him, before I'd let him have her.

I could hold it back tonight yet. And tomorrow night. But sometime before long it was going to get away from me; maybe the night-after-tomorrow. I couldn't do anything against it. It had me.

It came on slow but sure. Awfully sure. Every look they gave each other across a midnight lunch-table, every walk they took together, every hidden handclasp down low at their sides that they thought nobody

saw, that brought it a little closer.

It was in St. Louis I bought the gun. I knew a guy there in a little pawnshop across the river in East St. Louis, from when we got stranded there with smaller outfits in the past, and he let me have one without asking too many questions.

Then we moved on, and the next pitch we made I finally got him alone one night, just like I wanted to. I'd been watching and waiting for this. She was supposed to meet him at some amusement park on the outskirts of town. She'd had something to attend to right after the performance, and instead of waiting for her, he left a note for her telling her where he'd be when she got back. That was my chance. I saw him slip it under the door of her room, and as soon as he'd gone on his way I tore it up, so she wouldn't know where to go looking for him when she returned. Then I gave him about ten or fifteen minutes head start, and followed him out there myself. With the gun.

The place was in a big woodland park just outside of town. The lighted-up part of it, where they had the pavilion and things, just occupied a small fraction of it. The rest was pitch-black, natural woods. It was a good place for it. It was a swell place

for it. I couldn't have picked a better one myself.

I found him sitting there waiting for her, drinking root-beer at a concession. I told him she'd asked me to find him and tell him she wasn't coming, she felt tired and thought she'd go to bed instead. Right away he wanted to go back, but I managed to talk that out of him. I got him to come for a stroll with me, and little by little, without his noticing, I led him off away from the lights, deeper and deeper under the trees, until we were far enough in so there were no people anywhere around to see it happen. Or even to hear the shot go off.

I was going to claim it was an accident. It would have been easy enough. We'd been fooling with it, and it had gone off and hit him, while we were looking it over. Or we'd been taking potshots at some stray animal we came across, and he stepped out suddenly from behind a tree and got in the line of fire. They could never prove it wasn't that way.

We stopped finally and sprawled out on the ground side by side in a little open grassy patch under the trees. Even now the fool couldn't keep his mouth shut, couldn't keep from talking about her. Telling me all about how wonderful she was—as if I didn't know—and how lucky he was.

"You're not so lucky," I

thought to myself, fingering the gun in my pocket.

I left my cigarette in my mouth, and took the gun out and snapped the safety down. Then I reared up on one elbow and pointed it at him, sort of lazy, sort of slow. He'd been looking the other way. He turned his head just then, and when he saw it, instead of getting scared, he asked me in a sort of friendly, drawling way where I got it, and what I was doing carrying it around with me like that.

I just kept it like it was.

Then he laughed and brushed his hand out at it, like at a mosquito, and said, "Don't, Joe. It's liable to go off while you've got it sighted at me like that." And when I still didn't move it, I guess he thought I was trying to play with him. He bunched a fist and pretended to swing it and take a poke at my jaw, but just let it land light.

I couldn't do it, with his face grinning into my own so close. Things kept getting in the way. I saw, instead of his face, the face of a kid of fourteen helping me climb up next to him into a box-car on a siding. I saw the face of my partner, standing next to me on the take-off platform, sharing our first spotlight together, the night Pop first broke us into the act. Saying to me out of the corner of his mouth, with a half-scared but awfully proud look, "Are you nervous, Joe?

Boy, my knees are knocking together like triphammers!" I couldn't do it.

The thing tipped over of its own weight. I jarred to my feet all of a sudden and grunted, "I'm getting out of here, I'm going back!" and I started to walk away from there fast.

He stayed where he was a minute, overcome by surprise. Then he jumped up and tried to come after me like a fool. He didn't realize how lucky he'd already been once tonight, what a chance he was still taking now. He hollered after me, "What's the matter, Joe? What's your rush? Wait a minute and I'll come with you."

I turned on him and warned him back in a tight, choked voice. "Keep back! Don't walk next to me, understand? Don't walk next to me *until I get out of here!*"

He dropped behind and just stood there looking after me, scratching his head like he couldn't figure out what got into me. I walked away fast. Boy, how fast I walked away from him! I threw the gun into a little lake I passed along the way out.

She was standing waiting on the rooming-house stairs in her wrapper when I got back. She was standing there waiting halfway down from the floor her room was on, almost as if she'd sensed something was wrong, as if she'd had a feeling something had nearly happened tonight.

Women are funny that way. She must have been standing there like that for a half an hour or more when I came in. Her face was kind of white too.

It got even whiter, when she saw that it was me and not him.

"Joe?" She said his name in a whisper. "He always leaves me a note when he goes off anyplace—"

"I was with him just now," I said. "He's all right."

I passed by her and went on the rest of the way up without saying anything more. And she looked at me, I could feel her looking. All the way up she looked at me from where she was. That's how I think she knew. But maybe I'm wrong.

They got married a week later. Maybe that hurried it up. Maybe not. Maybe she didn't really guess anything. I know he didn't. We were playing a split week in one of the big upstate cities. They were both late for the Saturday matinee. I got made up and ready, and there was still no sign of either one of them. Our turn didn't come until later, but we'd never missed a grand opening march yet. I went out by the runway leading into the arena, and took my place in the line-up without them. I kept turning my head and looking for them. I knew by now what the reason was.

At the very last minute, all of a sudden there was a lot of shov-

ing and shifting-aside behind me, and the two of them showed up, working their way through the other performers and all out of breath. The seams of his trunks were all crooked from pulling them on so fast, and he hadn't had time to put any grease on. But he didn't need it. His face was all lit up. I looked down at her hand and I saw the ring on it.

The band blared up and the three of us went on out.

It was coming now sure. The hate choking in my chest and the liquid fire running through my veins told me that I knew this was the last performance I could risk. If I went through any more, it would happen right in the act, and I didn't want that.

I beat it away fast after that show, went off by myself away from the two of them. I went into some eating-place just out of habit, sat staring at a cup of coffee that I didn't touch. Then at my usual time for starting back, I got up and walked outside again, still just out of habit. But when I got out on the street, I turned and walked the other way, away from the big auditorium we were using.

I knew I had to stay out of the night performance. I knew what would happen if I went back for it. I was afraid of being in it with Tommy. I knew my only safety lay in missing it.

It was easy at first, while there

was lots of time. I roamed around for awhile. Finally I came to a little park and sat down on a bench. But as the time for getting back started to tighten up on me, it began to get harder and harder, as though an invisible current had set in, trying to pull me back. I could *feel* it, I tell you, feel the pull of it, like when you're in water and an undertow catches you up.

You see, I'd never missed a show yet. It was my food, my drink, my breath.

I tried to hang onto the park-bench I was on, I actually gripped it with both hands along the edges. I kept talking to myself inside, I kept warning myself: "Stay where you are, now. Stay out of the act, now. You know what's going to happen if you don't! Keep the act clean, at least."

It wouldn't work. I tried not to look at my watch, but there was a big clock there facing the park to tell me anyhow. Eight minutes to showtime. You can still make it at an easy walk, from out here where you are. Five minutes. You can still make it, but you'll have to hurry a little now. Four minutes. Three. You ought to have your shirt off already.

I couldn't hold out. I got to my feet, like I was being dragged by the scruff of the neck. First I still tried to go the other way, away from the auditorium. I

couldn't do that either. My feet turned around under me and started me back the right way. They were a performer's feet, a circus-man's feet. You couldn't tell them what to do.

First I was walking slow, still trying to hold out, still trying to fight against it. Then faster, faster all the time—until suddenly I was running like a streak, to make up for lost time. And presto, there I was, back in the dressing-room again, all winded and floundering into my chair.

It's an awful feeling, to know what you're going to do if you come back to a place, and yet not be able to stay away.

He was sitting there beside me, finishing up. I didn't look at him.

He didn't say a word to me about their getting married that afternoon; I guess they'd decided to keep it to themselves for awhile. All he did say was, "Where'd you disappear to? I wanted to blow you to a swell steak dinner tonight. Nat and me, we both looked high and low for you." So that told me, just the same as if he had.

I sat there in my undershirt; that was as far as I was able to get. I hung onto the edge of the dressing-table hard, the way I had that bench in the park, to try to fight it down. I hung on until my knuckles showed white. I was afraid to be in there with

him alone like this. There were so many sharp things around loose. And he had that happiness still shining all over his face, almost like phosphorus.

He got up to make it decent for me. I said, "Leave the door open."

"There's women out there."

"Leave it open, I tell you! I can go over in the corner. I can hardly breathe in here." I caught hold of my own throat.

He was so dumb. God, how dumb a guy is when he trusts you! "Yeah, it is kind of stuffy," he agreed, with easy-going unconcern. Nothing could have needled him tonight. It was his wedding-night. It was also his—

I was in my tights now, but I'd stopped again, I couldn't go ahead. I kept pleading to myself, "Wait till after the show, if you've got to get him. *But don't do it in the act.* Don't go out there with him now, or you're going to do it right in the act!"

He was standing looking over at me from the doorway now, from the passageway outside. He saw me sitting there without moving. He said, "What's the matter?"

I said, "I'm not coming out."

He came in again and stood behind my chair and tried to reason it out with me. He put his hand on the back of my chair. Luckily he didn't put it on me, on my shoulder or anything, or

I think it would have happened right then.

I didn't hear most of what he said. I was looking at something in the glass. I seemed to see a death's head in the glass, where our two faces were, his and mine. I'm not kidding, I actually saw it there—some trick of the lighting and shadows, I guess. It came on slow, until I could see the deep, greenish holes where the eye-sockets were, and the grinning rows of teeth, and the shiny white dome of the skull. I couldn't see whose face it covered most, his or mine. Then it faded away, slow, again.

He couldn't do anything with me, and the time was getting shorter. He went outside finally and I heard him whispering to someone down the line. I knew what it was; he was putting her up to work on me, to see if she'd have any better luck. I'd been afraid of that. She was the only one that could, and I didn't want her to try.

I got up quick to try and close the door, but she was already standing there before I could make it. She looked so beautiful it hurt. But she had the wrong hand out, against the edge of the door. The one with the ring on it. His ring.

She said, "Is it something to do with the act, Joe?"

I said, "No, it's nothing to do with the act."

She said, "Then if it's some-

thing outside the act, keep it outside the act. This is the act, Joe. If there's one thing I've got no use for, it's a guy that'll let the act down."

I had one last plea left in me. Only one, and then no more. I made it. I made it good and strong too. My whole voice shook. I said, "*Don't* ask me to go out there tonight, will you, Nat? You run through it with him. Do what you can. Fake the triple plays. Only, *don't* ask me to go out there tonight."

She reached out and touched the side of my face, kind of soft. I wish she hadn't. Just as his touch would have meant death, hers meant—"We'll be waiting for you over by the entrance," she said. "There goes the fanfare." The doorway was empty.

I grabbed up my brush and gave a last lick at my hair. My hand stabbed down at the little tube of fixative I sometimes used to shine it up a little. It was a petroleum-jelly base, with a little other stuff added. It was pretty well used up, folded over to within an inch or two of the cap. My hand didn't break motion. It swept it up and stuck it inside the waistband of my trunks. Then I swung around and out, and down the dressing-room alley after her, to take my place in the show.

It went off like clockwork, the turn, I mean. It always did, it

was such second nature to us by now. The precision-climb up the ladders to the two little take-off platforms, me on one side of the ring, the two of them over on the other. We even had that timed to a split-second, so that the two halves of us always got up to the top at the same instant, not unevenly. Then the steady-ing of the spots on us, the throwing off of the capes, the dramatic flourishes with the hands. And then into the business.

We mixed it up for awhile, and though it might have seemed breakneck to them down below, it was just warm-up stuff to us. "Treading air" from bar to bar, exchanging bars simultaneously so that we passed each other on the fly, turning right-about-face on the wing in midair, from one grip to the next. All that. We'd had that kind of stuff down pat when we were sixteen already. Pop had trained it into us. It was so automatic I could even think while I was doing it. I mean about other things. I didn't tonight; I didn't want to.

I did a specialty, and she did one, and Tommy did a lesser one of his own; not the flash-finish yet. Then the three of us worked together in one. The applause sounded like it always did, coming up from way down below: like giant feet treading on gravel. And that brought us up to the break.

We always broke the turn in the middle, and took a breather. We could have run right through it to the end without stopping, without getting too winded, but that was showmanship again. It made it seem like harder work to the audience if we knocked off a minute and passed the cloth around, while the announcer built up what was coming next over the amplifier below.

We were up to the show-piece at the end now. That was Tommy's. His blindfold dive down to me, waiting up-side-down for him way down below on the middle trapeze. Three complete turns in the air before he reached me. I knew that was when I was going to get him.

We passed the cloth around, lolling on our perches. I got it from him, and I always sent it on over to her after I was through with it. We never changed that. It doesn't pay to vary anything in a precision-act, not even the trimmings, like that was.

While I was twirling it around in my hands, I stuck a finger to my waistband and the tube came up hidden behind the flourishing cloth. I got the cap off with my nail, and pinched, and a coil of it spurted out across my palm. It lay there frozen, like a little twinkling snake. It *was* a snake; a snake whose bite was death. I got the empty tube back into my waistband. I could get rid of it

easy enough afterwards. And then, still under cover of the flitting cloth, I greased my wrists up good with it. I saturated the tape on each one, until they were as slippery as a pair of eels. That was where he was going to hang onto me, by the wrists.

It left a sort of cool feeling on my hands, like it always did when I used it on my hair. And that was all. I sent the cloth on to her, and that finished its rounds.

I wasn't in any danger, it didn't matter about me, I used my leg-muscles to hang on by. I'd stay up. Tommy was the one.

The spiel was through now. They lowered my trap into position, halfway down, far below the others, to give Tommy room enough for three spins. She traveled the bars over to his side and grounded on the platform there, to stand behind him, ready the blindfold, and poise him on the brink.

I turned over lazily on the bar, hung head-down by the crevices of my legs, flexed my arms full-length below me a couple of times, and waited.

He got the spotlight and the play. It was his stunt. It was also his finish.

A big hush fell. This always got them, every time. Well, it should have, it was no phoney.

I don't know if she found out, or if something really did go wrong up there. I'll never know.

Maybe there was something about the feel of the cloth when she got it back from me. Or maybe she got a whiff of a scent that it had left behind, and remembered having noticed it before that on my hair. Or maybe it was just a guess, her instinct. Like that night in St. Louis, on the stairs.

If she did find out, it must have been hell for her. A hell I'd never wished for her. And only seconds in which to know what to do. The spotlight blazing on them both, for a thousand eyes to see. The drums already beginning to roll. She couldn't grab him and hold him back, we'd have been booed out of the ring and finished in circus-business.

But when you love a guy, I suppose there's always a way out.

But maybe it had nothing to do with her at all; maybe it really was a mishap. They'd been married today and maybe they were both a little excited. Or maybe it was just his lucky star.

I missed seeing it at the actual instant it occurred. I heard the gasp go up, and the drums falter. My head was upside-down, and by the time I'd bent my neck to look, his body was already dipping lopsidedly into thin air, off the side of the platform, like when you step into a hole over your head that you're not expecting. He had one hand on the

guy-rope, that was all that saved him. Anything might have caused it; an accidental nudge of her elbow, or maybe too much of his heel had gone offside at the rim of the platform.

A great shuddering moan of terror, like wind through the trees, came souging up from below. He went spiralling down, in a sickening, dizzy corkscrew, all the way to the bottom. *But he never let go of the rope.* That one-hand hold on it he crushed tight into a life-and-death grip that nothing could have pried open. And the rope came searing steadily up through this, taking all the skin with it, I suppose, but at least breaking the velocity of his fall.

He landed in a huddle at the bottom. But then he picked himself right up, before anyone could get over to him. So he was evidently all right, nothing broken. You could tell by the way he stood there, though, head low, hand held tightly pressed between his thighs, that he was in stiff pain, couldn't go ahead. Probably his hand was raw.

She never came down off the platform. She was a natural-born trouser if there ever was one. Before they'd even finished helping him out of the ring, she must have passed some signal that I missed seeing, both to the announcer below and the electrician's box way up high in the

flies. Suddenly the spotlight had blazed out on her again, brighter than ever, the announcer was booming out that the event would continue and she was adjusting the blind to her eyes.

So I guess she didn't know, after all, and it was just a star, not her.

There was a split-second in which she signalled me to drop my head and begin the count, with her eyes still clear, then before I could get my own mad-dened message back—to stop, not to go ahead—the bandage had dropped over her eyes and I was cut off from her.

The drums began their growling thunder. My voice couldn't reach her now.

There was no way to stop those drums. No way but one.

I opened my left leg a little, and I slipped down a notch on that side. I opened my right a little, and I dipped down a little on that side. They couldn't see it yet, nobody but me.

My left leg was starting to slip down by itself now, without my

having to open it any more. Now my right was too. The bar was coming free. It was out. I heard the roar from hundreds of throats come shooting up past me, and I knew that was death.

* * *

He looked so jaunty, he looked so husky, he looked so dead.

There was a girl there, standing looking at him. Just standing looking at him, as though she'd never get through. There was a young fellow standing beside her with his arm around her, looking at her instead. There was a detective there, jotting something in a notebook. He was all through now. He'd found out all anyone could tell him. Anyone living.

This is what he jotted:

Name: Crosby, Joseph.

Age: Twenty-five.

Profession: Trapeze artist.

Cause of death: Accidental fall while engaged in giving a performance.

RELIC

We are indebted to the Stanley Stamp Company of Vancouver, British Columbia, *Newsletter* for September 1963 for the story of the woman in California who discovered that her husband had become interested in "ethnology". She had found a ticket in his pocket which seemed to be for the fourth at Tanforan.

"What is this, dear?" she had asked.

"It's the relic of a lost race," was the diplomatic answer.

the scar

by Guy Tolman

THE BITTER ENMITY that lay between the two men had always been one-sided. Or at least that was the way it had seemed to Lincoln.

Hugh Whitehead and Karl Dinze formed a study in contrasts. Whitehead was tall, blond and spare with a handsome, rather weak face. Dinze was short and swarthy with irregular features, piercing brown eyes and coarse black hair that grew low over a bulging forehead. His voice was a sharp staccato and his hands were never still.

Once Lincoln had shared a rat-infested studio in Greenwich Village with his two friends. They had been young then, and ambitious. Whitehead was an artist. He painted with hard, clear lines that had simplicity, clarity and sometimes a touch of humor. There was the spark of greatness in his work but he rarely sold a canvas.

Dinze was a composer. Beneath the strident, raging clash of chords which marked his compositions lay a whiplash beat that set the nerves to screaming. Critics recognized the surging power in the man and in his

Friendship is a fragile thing. Fighters have found this to be so, once they've begun to slip. Political figures have likewise found this to be so, once they no longer have the power—and the patronage—in their hands. And the friendship of still others likewise has this fragility. This deadly fragility . . . Guy Tolman is the pseudonym of a nationally famous writer in the true crime field.

music but they said he lacked form and discipline.

As for Lincoln, he was a dabbler, writing intermittently on a novel which was to grow yellow in his trunk. He was content to bask in the superior talents of his friends and to prevent their bickering from erupting into open quarrels.

Whitehead and Dinze each recognized the genius in the other and each, in his own way, spurred the other to greater effort. Whitehead through gentle raillery. Dinze through shouted diatribes. Neither bothered about Lincoln. He was not a rival. When he threw in the sponge to take a steady job they joined in congratulating him on the wisdom of his decision.

There was a second cause of rivalry between the two. Each was attracted to the same type of girl. Black-haired, with pallid skin, overly large eyes and fragile bodies. Again Lincoln had been no competitor. He favored big, buxom blondes. Eventually he had married one and moved away from the Village. He only drifted back once in a while to visit with his old friends.

Without Lincoln's calming influence, Whitehead and Dinze soon separated. Success came early to Whitehead although not in the pattern that he had planned. A chain of popular

magazines picked him up to do illustrations. His portraits of languorous, long-legged girls and handsome young men with crew hair-cuts were in evidence on every news-stand. At thirty he wasn't as famous as Ken or Falter but he was well on his way.

He moved into a large, well-lit studio in MacDougal Alley. He asked Dinze to share his quarters but the invitation was caustically refused. Dinze might be a failure but he still had his pride. He wasn't accepting charity from Whitehead.

Dinze found a basement room and worked at odd jobs to eat and pay the rent. The two men gravitated into different circles. Whitehead was constantly surrounded by a coterie of admirers. Dinze hung about the fringes of the artistic world, mingling with those who, like himself, were down and nearly out.

At first, when their paths crossed, Whitehead made friendly overtures. They were always rebuffed.

"Keep your hands off me," Dinze would snarl. "Maybe to your fancy friends you're a big shot. But to me you're a no-good bum who's sold his talent for a mess of pottage."

Whitehead would turn away, spreading his hands in resignation, a hurt look on his hand-

some face. "There's a man who's a great artist," he would say. "All he needs is one break to hit the top. Gee, I wish I could give it to him."

Soon Lincoln remained the only link between them. He still admired them both. Sometimes he'd sit in a dingy bar with Dinze, paying for the beers and listening to Dinze rant against Whitehead.

"He's a pretty boy, shallow and smug. But, believe it or not, he had the spark of genius in him. There was a time when he could paint. But not now. He's prostituted his art too long. Candy box stuff. That's all he's good for. Cheap tawdry trash."

"Some people think he's tops."

"You know better. He may be rolling in green but he's still a punk. Peddling his stuff around like a two-bit floozie. I hate his guts. I'd like to kill him."

Lincoln would study the bitter, brooding face, then surreptitiously slide ten or twenty dollars across the table. The money came from Whitehead but Lincoln never dared admit it. If he had, Dinze would have ripped up the bills.

Dinze would pocket the money and drink in angry silence. Lincoln knew that the jealousy was inflamed not only by his enemy's success but by the girls he'd lost to Whitehead.

Jennie—Ellen—Sue. Half a dozen more whose names Lincoln couldn't remember. Dinze's defeat was all the more humiliating because Whitehead had made no apparent effort to attract the girls. Sometimes he'd even try to send them back to Dinze. But none of them wanted the squat, ugly, down-at-the-heels composer. Not after they'd met Whitehead.

Dinze would snap out of his reverie long enough to growl, "Go back to that pretty-faced punk and tell him to keep his nose out of my affairs. If he messes around with me again, by God, I swear I'll skrag him."

On another evening, Lincoln sipped Martinis with Whitehead in the Jumble Shop. "What gives with you and Dinze?" he asked.

"There's a guy who'll never give himself a break. I sent word to him that Meredith needs some scores for a TV show I've got a hand in. Stuff that Dinze could knock off with both hands tied. You know what? Dinze wouldn't even go up and talk with Meredith. He says he's above cheap commercialism."

"Why don't you wash Dinze out of your hair? He hates you and he could be dangerous."

"Sure. I know. But all the same I admire the guy's integrity. In a way he's right too. Long after I'm forgotten, he'll

live among the immortals. He's really got what it takes." He shrugged and gave a rueful grin. "As for myself, I want a little of my pie while I'm on earth to enjoy it."

Perhaps the violence would have lain dormant in Dinze if it hadn't been for Phoebe Crane. Lincoln never knew where Dinze found her. She was like his other girls. Dark hair. Deep sorrowing eyes. A wistful mouth. A soft rounded chin. She wasn't Lincoln's type but even he could feel her appeal and recognize her fragile beauty.

Lincoln was with Whitehead the night Phoebe came to the studio door. Just a timid rap, so muted that at first both of them had thought it was the wind. Whitehead had gone to the door anyway and opened it. Phoebe slid into the room. Half-shy, half-frightened, her lips quivering.

"I had to come. Please let me stay."

"For Pete's sake, you're Dinze's girl. Go on back to him."

"I won't. I won't. I'd rather die."

"Don't talk nonsense, child."

"I mean it. I'll throw myself in front of a subway train."

"Oh, come off it. Dinze isn't that bad."

"All he thinks of is his piano. He sits there and pounds and

pounds at the keys. The music's crazy, filled with hate. I'm afraid of him, Hugh. There's a demon in him."

Whitehead moved closer to her and suddenly she was in his arms, her face nestled against the lapel of his pale blue suit. He looked over her head at Lincoln and lifted a shoulder as though to say, "What can I do?"

Lincoln was embarrassed. He said, "I'll be shoving along."

"No. Stick around for a while."

But Lincoln had already picked up his hat and was at the door.

Lincoln was with Whitehead again the night that Dinze struck. They came out of the studio into the darkness of the alley. The gas lamp near the door had been extinguished and heavy shadows lay across the uneven roadway. Only a stipppling of yellow light seeped through the curtained windows.

Dinze stepped out of a strip of blackness into the pale glow. There was something comic about the squat, arrogant figure in his shapeless clothes.

He twisted to face Whitehead. "You rotten lousy bum. I'm going to fix you this time. You're not going to get away."

Whitehead's voice was casual. "Cut it out, Dinze. Why can't we be friends?"

Dinze growled deep in his

throat and his right arm swung back. It was then that Lincoln saw the steel chain looped about his fist, the end links honed to razor sharpness. He called a warning but Whitehead had caught the glint of steel, too.

"Drop it," Whitehead said softly.

Dinze bared his teeth in a grin and his arm raised high, the tail of the chain swirling.

Whitehead could have run but he stood still, balanced on the balls of his feet. The chain came whistling toward him. Whitehead jerked backward, twisting away from the blow. But he wasn't quite quick enough. The end link lashed across his cheek, slicing into the flesh, covering his face with blood.

Whitehead toppled to one side, scrabbled on his hands and knees, then slid slowly to the cobblestones and lay face down, motionless.

Dinze's shadow fell across him but he made no effort to strike again. He stood there, almost as though in meditation, looking down at his fallen enemy.

The cop came out of nowhere, his feet pounding, his voice raised in a wordless yell.

The alley offered an escape route between two houses but Dinze didn't choose to take it.

Instead he stood flat-footed until the cop was almost upon him, then raced forward as though to duck under the out-flung arms.

The cop grabbed him and spun him around. The chain snaked out and slashed across the cop's throat. In the darkness, he probably never knew what struck him. He gave a strangled cry, broken off almost before it was started, and crashed downward in a broken heap.

Dinze fled then, his footsteps echoing frenziedly as he ran to the mouth of the alley and swung south toward the park.

They arrested Dinze an hour later. He had gone back to his basement room and was beating out a weird, dirge-like composition on his battered piano when the police broke in to charge him with murder.

They told him the cop had died, his jugular severed by the honed steel edge of the chain. Dinze appeared indifferent.

"What about Whitehead?" he asked.

"He'll live," he was told. "The side of his face was ripped open but it will heal.

"He'll have a scar," Dinze said. "He won't be a pretty boy any longer."

The officers exchanged glances but they didn't say anything.

They were strangely gentle with Dinze. He was a cop killer and he was precious. They wanted to make sure that they delivered him safely to the electric chair.

Lincoln didn't see Dinze again until the trial. He was subpoenaed as a witness. Testifying against his old friend wasn't pleasant. He looked straight ahead while he answered the questions that were fired at him.

Whitehead followed Lincoln on the stand, the side of his face still swathed in a bandage. He was an uncooperative witness, stammering excuses for Dinze, trying to assume some of the prisoner's guilt. The reluctant evidence didn't help Dinze. Lincoln, watching the jury, could see their faces grow hard, could sense their growing determination that Dinze should die.

The verdict was guilty of murder in the first degree without a recommendation of mercy. Dinze's fate was sealed. He was smiling when he listened to the sentence of death.

There were delays. An automatic appeal. A stay of execution. Nearly two years passed before the sentence was carried out.

Lincoln bought a fifth of gin that night and drank himself into a stupor. He couldn't bring himself to see Whitehead. Not

until the mid-afternoon of the following day did he drop into the studio.

He had expected Whitehead to be broken up, probably nursing a hangover. Certainly he wasn't prepared for what he saw. Whitehead was in front of the big mirror in his bedroom, studying the slanting scar that crossed his cheek. He turned at Lincoln's approach.

"Dinze burned last night," Whitehead said tonelessly.

"Yeah. I know."

"Crazy, isn't it? The stupid jerk tries to kill me and all he does is grant me a favor."

"A favor?"

"The scar. You know, I sort of like it. The girls all go for it too. They ask me if I got it in a duel."

"What do you tell them?"

"That a murderer gave it to me. It goes over big. The girls fall all over me."

Lincoln looked at Whitehead's face. The wound had healed but it had left a deep gash from the cheekbone to the corner of the mouth.

Dinze had been right. Whitehead wasn't a pretty boy any longer. The scar gave strength to the face, a vulpine quality that would arrest the attention of women. The weakness was gone and in its place was some-

thing reckless, dangerous and cruel.

"It's a pretty good scar," Whitehead said. His blue eyes were bland; his voice controlled.

Lincoln didn't answer. Suddenly a lot of things clicked into place and made a pattern he'd never recognized before. The hatred between the two men hadn't been one-sided. Whitehead had hated too.

But more than that he saw the evil, the inhuman quality in Whitehead that had enraged Dinze.

There was nothing he could say. He turned and walked to the door. At the sill, he stopped and looked back.

Whitehead had forgotten all about him and was staring into the mirror, his fingers gently caressing the scar. . . .

NEXT MONTH—

THE HAUNTED POLICEMAN

by DOROTHY SAYERS

CHOWDERHEAD DOON

by L. G. BLOCHMAN

WAIT FOR ME

by STEVE FISHER

THE MAN WHO CONFESSED TOO OFTEN

by J. FRANCIS McCOMAS

THE LONG, LONG JOURNEY

by PHILIP KETCHUM

ASK A STUPID QUESTION

by LAWRENCE TREAT



*the
man
in
the
brown
hat*

by George D. Crothers

LEM SMALL is a "private eye." His office is on the second floor of an old brick building on Market Street.

One day, he looked out of the window of his office. He saw an accident. Two cars ran into each other.

A strange man in a brown hat stood on the curb, watching. A policeman came along and looked at the cars. He did not see the man in the brown hat.

One car was a black sedan. It was headed east on Market Street. The driver was Dr. White. He was not hurt. The other car was a blue car of foreign make. In the front seat was a beautiful young woman. She wore a light yellow dress. She was alone. Also, she was dead.

The policeman and Dr. White were looking at the dead woman. They did not see the man, who walked quickly down the street.

Lem stepped away from the window of his office. He went to his desk. He opened the top drawer. He pulled out papers

Mrs. Cass, the author of the book in which this story first appeared, is Associate in Americanization and Adult Education, New York State Department of Education. Dr. Crothers, a TV- and radio producer who works closely with adult education programs, has written what we believe to be the first detective story written specifically for adults who cannot read well or who have only recently learned to read, and for whom there is little or no reading material. The story was written within a 600 word vocabulary for such adults who are in fundamental literacy classes throughout the country.

H.S.S.

From: Angelica W. Cass' *LIVE AND LEARN* (1962, Noble and Noble, New York)
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and looked for a picture. Finally, he found it and read:

JOE ARCHER

Wanted by police for robbery
in Ohio.

Five feet, ten inches tall.

Brown hair, gray eyes.

Scar on his upper lip.

Lem Small felt sure that the strange man in the brown hat was Joe Archer. But what did he have to do with the accident?

Lem put on his gray felt hat with a black band and went down the stairs into the street.

When Lem reached the corner, Dr. White was examining the dead woman. The policeman was looking in her pocketbook. The policeman's name was Burns. Lem liked Officer Burns. They often worked together.

Officer Burns found a piece of paper in the pocketbook. On it was written: LEM SMALL. MARKET STREET. He handed the

paper to Lem and said, "Well, who is she?"

"I wonder," said Lem.

"You mean you don't know?"

"I never saw her before in my life," said Lem.

Officer Burns looked in the woman's pocketbook again. This time, he found a driver's license. The name on it was MRS. CORAL ARCHER.

Lem Small stood still, thinking. Then he started to walk away.

"Where are you going?" asked Dr. White.

"To telephone a man," said Lem. "Take care of the blonde, Doc."

When Lem reached his office, he picked up the telephone. He called a friend of his on the police force in Cincinnati, Ohio.

"Hello, Jack?" he said. "This is Lem Small in Middleburg. What can you tell me about a Joe Archer?"

Lem listened carefully. "Yes,"

Some weeks ago, in an American city, I was having my shoes shined when the boot-black, eyeing my deerstalker, asked, "Are you a private eye?" I said that I was not, but that I used to be. This anecdote has a meaning, if not a moral.

In England as in America there are people who do not read, because they cannot. But whether they read or no, people like stories; and most of all they like mystery stories. (After all, the best story in the Bible, "Joseph and his Brethren", is a mystery story. So is "Ali Baba".) So there is a place for the mystery story for adults who read only with great difficulty. The story has got to be simple; its vocabulary has to be limited. But it should excite the reader's curiosity—even curiosity about crime and death. . . . (The sentimental-ist who think that the ignorant or the innocent should not be faced with the sordid facts of life and death are wrong. They do not know people.) But above all, there must be a puzzle; the puzzle must be solved; justice must be done. The ignorant, as well as the young, can believe easily enough that there is

he said. "Yes, yes. And you say he's a pool shark? Thanks, that should be enough."

Lem put down the phone and put on his hat. He went down into the street and turned toward the police station. There he found Dr. White and Officer Burns talking to the sergeant.

"What did she die of, Doc?" Lem asked the doctor.

"Poison, I think," said Dr. White.

Lem Small let out a low whistle.

"That's not all," said the sergeant. He handed Lem a letter. "Read it," he said. "We found it in her stocking."

This is what Lem read:

Coral,

You can't back out. You are in this as deep as I am. And you had better not go to the police. If you do, I will fix it so you will never go anywhere else.

Joe

Lem looked up. "Sergeant," he

said, "swear out a warrant for Joe Archer. That's her husband. I think I can find him."

A minute later, Lem left with Officer Burns. They went straight to High Street and into the pool hall. Seated in a corner reading a newspaper was the man in the brown hat. He had a scar on his upper lip. Lem was sure it was Joe Archer.

Officer Burns arrested the man for the murder of the blonde woman. They found a small bottle of pills in his coat pocket. Lem took off the cap and smelled the pills.

"Maybe this is the poison," he said. He gave the bottle to Officer Burns.

Three months later, Joe Archer was found guilty of murder by a jury. He was sent to jail for the rest of his life.

After the trial, Lem Small went back to his office and sat down. The phone rang, but he did not answer it. He was thinking of Coral Archer.

mystery all about them. And that a man may be a private eye. And that in this world where so many seem to have the liberty to be bad, these bad people should be punished and, invariably, somehow, always are.

George Crothers' "The Man in the Brown Hat" fulfills all the conditions of a detective story for the semi-literate adult. It is extraordinarily simple. The man with special knowledge is there, the private eye who ensures that justice is done. The bad man, a very bad man, is caught; he is put away where he can't commit any more crimes. And there is the true moral note—the victim is not forgotten; she is pitied and remembered.

This, it seems to me, is how it ought to be done, and not by random comic strip violence (whether in print or on television) or by warmed over sugar candy stories originally intended for children and inflicted upon adults learning to read.

DENIS W. BROGAN

house of the wolf

by Barry Perowne

"CAR COMING!" Old Luis, the lobsterman, shattered the peace of the hot afternoon with an excited yell. Tugging at his star-board oar, he turned his boat and peered shoreward under the frayed brim of his straw sombrero. "Wake up! Lady coming!"

The white foam of small waves breaking frilled the sandy beach which almost girdled the lonely little bay. The only house in sight, a small house of white-washed stone, with a vine-shaded veranda, was rented by a foreigner called Ormond. He had lived there alone for more than a year, a man of only about thirty or so, yet never before had a visitor of any kind, let alone a lady.

Luis was interested. He saw the tenant Ormond, on his veranda, remove his feet abruptly from a table littered with books, papers, a typewriter, a straw-wrapped demijohn. Standing up from his cane chair, he crossed the flagstoned veranda to the head of the half-dozen steps that led down to the beach.

"A lady, Luis?" he called.

Barry Perowne, distinguished British novelist, while perhaps best known to readers in this field for his many contributions to the Raffles saga (RAFFLES AND THE MEANEST THIEF, SDM, Dec. 1956, RAFFLES AND SHIPMATE SADIE, SMM, April 1959, etc.) and for his stories about Prosper Fair, onetime Duke of Devizes (such as his recent THE LONG GOLFERS, SMM, July 1963), has also, as in this story, written of memories and fears—and hopes—still closer to many of us.

"Yes, yes, Don Carlos! Lady coming in car!"

The tenant Ormond rubbed his jaw. It was stubbled with black beard. He was tall, wiry. His rope sandals were ancient, his slacks wrinkled, his shirt had a rip in one shoulder. He stared out at Luis for a moment with eyes that looked light in his deeply sunburned face, then turned, went back to the table, and picked up the demijohn.

Luis looked up at the arid hill which rose steeply behind the house. The dusty track that wound down the hillside was lined by olive trees. He no longer could see the car, but he heard it coming closer, heard it fall silent, heard three sharp toots of a horn.

Luis looked at the veranda. The tenant Ormond was standing there quite still in the speckled shade, as though listening. He had a glass of red wine in his hand. Suddenly he tilted his head and drank the wine. Again the car's horn sounded, a long note. The tenant Ormond stood still for a moment, then he put the glass on the table and walked slowly into the house.

His visitor was getting out of the car as Charles Ormond opened the door on the other side of the house, and he saw at once that she was a stranger to him. She looked about twenty-four, a slight, dark-haired person

in a neat white suit, carrying a purse and a pair of net gloves. Her complexion was pale, and her gray eyes looked at him with grave appraisal as she held out a fold of paper.

"Mr. Ormond? I'm sorry to bother you, but I have an order to view from the Agencia Moreno."

Ormond, as he took the paper, glanced at the car and driver, judged them to be hired, and unfolded the paper. The name written in on the mimeographed form, in Paquita Moreno's purple-ink scribble, was Miss Nora Carneal. He had an instant feeling that he had seen the name before somewhere. He looked down at her.

"Please come in."

He soon showed her what little there was to see—three rooms downstairs, three upstairs. The walls were whitewashed, the rooms dim with the shutters closed against the glare outside. The furniture, what there was of it, was dark and massive. He told her it belonged to the owner of the house, a rich, querulous old lady called Doña Casilda Gamboa. Nora Carneal made no comment until he led her out, finally, on to the veranda.

"Oh, this is perfect!" she exclaimed.

"I practically live out here," he said. "That chap in the boat is tending his lobster-pots. He has a shanty about a mile away.

He's the only neighbor. Sit down, Miss Carneal. Try a glass of the wine of the country." He uncorked the demijohn. "I've been trying to remember where I've seen your name before. I think it was on the jacket of a book. You're a writer, aren't you?"

"Fancy your knowing that! Yes, I do write. Just romances."

Something in her tone made him glance at her. "Do I detect a wry note?"

She laughed. "Perhaps. I was thinking of a remark made to me not long ago by a Mr. Donner, who published the three books I've done so far. He was rather pleased with the third, but airy about the other two: 'Romances, just romances, Miss Carneal—they hardly count.'"

"Tactless of him," said Ormond, handing her a glass of wine.

"To tell you the truth," she said, with a slight frown, "I'm not sure that I know what he meant. It's worried me. I couldn't see what was so different about the third one."

"I think it must have been one of the others that I saw your name on," Ormond said. "It certainly had a romantic jacket, as I recall. I must admit I didn't read it myself, but a person I know was reading it—and liking it."

"I wish Mr. Donner could hear that!"

She sipped her wine, and Or-

mond saw her glance at the typewriter and the untidy stack of paper beside it on the table.

"If you're wondering if I'm a writer, too," he said, "the answer is no. Not really. But that is an attempt at writing something—a first attempt. It set out to be a study of Outlawry through the ages—'Wolf's head shalt thou go,' as the old sentence to outlawry had it. But I doubt whether it'll ever get finished now."

"What makes you say that, Mr. Ormond?"

He sat down, nursing his glass. "It was this place that prompted me to try my hand at writing. Where could you find a more perfect place? The trouble is, it's too perfect. I've still a long way to go on that ambitious Outlawry project. I doubt whether it'd survive an uprooting from here."

He laughed, but his visitor looked a shade troubled—as though, if she were planning to buy the house, she felt some compunction at the thought of dispossessing him.

"You know," he said, "you must seem a good prospect to Paquita Moreno, the owner's agent. Doña Casilda's been pressing her to find a buyer for a long time. I haven't the money to buy it myself, unfortunately, and for most people the place is a bit isolated. But it'd just suit a writer of romances, I imagine."

He emptied his glass.

"I'll tell you something," he said. "I nearly started writing a romance myself, instead of that Outlawry effort. I had an idea, but for the life of me I couldn't see how to develop it." He glanced at her with his light eyes. "Would it bore you to hear the idea, Miss Carneal? It might be in your line."

"I'd love to hear it," she said, with a quick smile.

Ormond rubbed his beard-stubbed jaw, then reached for her glass.

"Let me give you some more wine first."

Meanwhile, Paquita Moreno was discussing Charles Ormond over the telephone with the rich, querulous owner of the house, Doña Casilda Gamboa. Paquita was a vivid young woman with sleek hair partly blonde, partly brunette, and big, black, flashing eyes.

"I gave this Miss Carneal an order-to-view," she said, sitting at the desk in her hot little office. "The tenant Ormond is bound to respect an order-to-view, Doña Casilda."

"How do we know he will?" quacked the telephone angrily. "You should have driven the prospect Carneal out to the house yourself."

"But she had a hired car and driver, Doña Casilda."

"Then you should have gone

with her, woman! I don't trust that man out there."

"He at least pays his rent, Doña Casilda."

"Hah, it's little enough! But the point is, Paquita, how do we know he won't try to discourage the girl from buying the house, so that he can go on renting it cheap?"

"Well, we can always give him a month's notice, Doña Casilda."

"And maybe have the house standing empty? Paquita, talk sense! It's hard to find tenants for that house. Anyway, I want it sold—it's too far out to keep an eye on."

"Yes, Doña Casilda."

"You should have taken the girl out there yourself. Do I pay you to neglect my business?"

"No, Doña Casilda."

"I want a report from you the instant the prospect Carneal returns."

Paquita flashed her magnificent eyes at the ceiling, beseeching patience. Outside in the narrow, oven-hot street, a single-decker yellow tram ground by with its bell clanging.

"Yes, Doña Casilda."

Out at the house, it was cool and peaceful on the vine-shaded veranda. Ormond sat down again after refilling the wine glasses.

"My romance," he said, "if I'd ever been able to write it, would have been about two men in love

with the same girl. Both men are out in the Middle East. They're in the same sort of job—intelligence service—but working in different cities. The girl lives in England, and one of the men is on his way there, on leave. He's at an airport *en route*—Athens, let's say."

Ormond put his glass on the flagstones, took a pipe and pouch from the table.

"Our man's planning to ask the girl to marry him," he went on, "but he's a worrier. He's worried about what the girl's feelings may be for the other man—call him Steve. Our man can't stand the thought of baring his heart to the girl—and getting a brush-off. He's one of that kind, Miss Carneal."

She nodded absently, watching Luis's boat out on the water.

"Well, our man has a certain—skill," said Ormond. "It's a knack that's helped make him a good linguist and been useful to him in other ways in his intelligence job, especially for bluffing information out of people over the telephone. He's adept at picking up accents, counterfeiting people's voices, intonations."

Ormond tossed his tobacco-pouch back on to the table.

"An idea has come into our man's head," he said, "and he just can't resist it. He puts through a telephone call, from Athens airport, to England—to the girl. Let's say her name's

Ruth. After a while, he hears her voice: 'Hallo?' And he says, 'Ruth? Steve here!'"

Nora Carneal turned her head and looked at Ormond.

"He's imitated Steve's voice," Ormond explained. "His idea was that the tone of her response to that unexpected call, coming from abroad late at night, might give him some inkling as to just what Steve meant to her. Our man had planned to hang up as soon as she answered, but the way she says 'Steve?'—so thrilled, incredulous, overjoyed—well it stuns him. It tells him all he wanted to know—or, rather, all that he didn't want to know. It speaks volumes, as they say. He stands there listening to her like a man in a dream: 'Steve! Can you hear me? Hallo? Steve!' Finally, our man puts the telephone back on its hooks. He feels pretty sick."

Ormond laughed shortly. He took a book of matches from his shirt pocket.

"Our man knows now," he said, "what answer he'd have got if he'd asked Ruth to marry him. He's certainly not going to ask her now. He's not even going to see her. The best thing he can do, he realises, is forget her—if he can. But when he gets to London—Ruth lives down in the country—he gets a shock. He happens to pick up an evening paper. A military aircraft has crashed in the Middle East. It's

a shuttle transport he's often used himself, on his job. But aboard it this time—his name is in the list of the killed—is Steve."

Nora Carneal looked down at her net gloves, drawing them thoughtfully through a cupped hand.

"Well," Ormond said, "our man realises he might now have a chance, after all. He wants Ruth, you know. He's never thought of another woman. But he realises he must play his cards carefully. He lets a couple of weeks go by, then writes and tells her he's in England. He makes a brief, sympathetic mention of Steve. She writes back and invites our man down to see her."

Ormond lighted his pipe, flicked the spent match out on to the sand.

"He finds her—as lovely as he's always found her," Ormond said, looking out at the small waves breaking on the beach. "She seems—untouched. They talk inconsequential stuff—the weather, a book lying there that she's reading, the garden. Quite suddenly, she says, 'You know, Steve wasn't on that plane. He telephoned me several hours after the time that aircraft is reported to have crashed. This is one of those intelligence service things.'"

Nora Carneal said, "I don't quite understand."

"It's simply that she's got the

idea in her head," Ormond explained, "that to cover Steve on some job they've sent him on, the intelligence service have put it out that he was killed in that crash. It's a staggering shock to our man. It had never occurred to him that she might get such an idea. But she's perfectly confident about it. She says to our man, 'You know as well as I do that there's nobody I can go to for the truth. The service will keep up the story as long as it suits them. I don't know just why Steve called me—his call was cut off—but it was hours after that crash. I know perfectly well he's alive and on a job. He'll turn up.' She doesn't say another word on the subject. And after a while—our man goes away."

"He says nothing?" Nora Carneal exclaimed. "He doesn't *tell* her it was he who made that call, not Steve?"

"How can he?" Ormond said. "Look, he's done an utterly unforgivable thing. He can't bring himself to tell her the truth to her face. He thinks he'll write and tell her—put it in a letter. But even that he can't do. He tries over and over, but it's such a damnable thing. What might it do to her? He's hamstrung by the feeling that it might be better, for her sake, just to keep quiet—give her illusion time to fade out in the natural course of events."

Ormond looked at Nora Carneal.

"What do you think?" he said. "You're a woman. How long would she be likely to hold on to that illusion? What might it do to her life? What could happen? To her? To him? What could be the ultimate outcome of that telephone call? I don't know. There's the idea, Miss Carneal. I can't make anything of it. I never shall. Could you? Is it in your line at all?"

"I don't know," she said slowly.

"If you find you can do anything with it," Ormond said, "use it by all means. I shan't expect a cut of your proceeds." He smiled. "Just a free copy and—a dedication, perhaps? Say—'To C.O.'?"

"To C.O.?" she said, looking at him meditatively.

"I should feel honoured," said Charles Ormond. "Shall we have a drink on it?"

But she stood up.

"No, thank you. I really must go now. My driver's been waiting a long time."

Old Luis, loitering in his boat, keeping a curious eye on the tenant Ormond and his lady visitor, saw them leave the veranda and, talking together, go into the house. Almost at once, he heard the car start up. He began to pull for the beach. Looking round over his shoulder, he saw the tenant Ormond come out on

to the veranda again and uncork the demijohn.

Luis shipped his oars as the boat grounded with a soft thump. Jumping out, his trousers rolled up, he lifted from the boat a rush basket, streaming water.

"Don Carlos! *Langusta?*"

"*Langusta?*" echoed the tenant Ormond, and his voice rose in a high, nasal cry. "*Langusta! Calomares! Muy buena, muy fresca!*"

"Yes, yes!" Luis grinned, gap-toothed, amused by the perfect mimicry of his own market cry. "You buy one, eh?"

"Come up here and have a drink, Luis," said the tenant Ormond, "and I'll see what you've got."

Paquita Moreno dialed the telephone on her desk and, after a moment, the telephone quacked, "Gamboa."

"Good evening, Doña Casilda. Paquita Moreno. Miss Carneal just got back from seeing the house. She tells me she'd like to think it over."

"Paquita! Does she like it or doesn't she? Tell me in plain Spanish."

"It seemed to me she was very taken with it, Doña Casilda."

"Then what's she got to think about? Paquita, it's the tenant Ormond! He's put a spoke in our wheel—he's said something to her!"

"She assured me he was most

obliging when he saw the order-to-view."

"Bulls' bellows!" scoffed the telephone testily. "I know what's happened! He's put some idea in her head, that's what it is, Paquita!"

"Oh, I don't imagine so, Doña Casilda. It's simply—"

"How long does she intend to think it over, may I ask?"

"She's going to write to me."

"From England? Paquita! You're letting her get away to England?"

Paquita flashed her superb eyes at the ceiling, summoning fortitude.

"Well, Doña Casilda—"

Nora Carneal's sister Corinne, who was three years the elder and not long married, opened the door of the spare room in her house, and peeped in.

"What, awake already, Nora?" She went in, carrying a cup of tea. "I thought you'd be tired after travelling yesterday."

"I've been awake for hours," Nora said, putting aside her writing-pad and fountain-pen. "Teal! Bless you, Corinne!"

"Bill's just left for the office," said Corinne. "He gets the eighteen—forty minutes to Charing Cross." She glanced tolerantly at the writing-pad. "Got started on something new?"

"Started? I've done a tremendous amount! I spent a few weeks in Paris, on my way back

from Spain, and hardly left my room. But then a party of conference delegates arrived, and the din they made with their junketing drove me out."

"You'd better stay with us for a bit. I'm sure Bill won't mind—much." Corinne sat down on the edge of the bed. "But you've been homeless ever since I got married and we gave up that flat we shared. You can't go on living out of a suitcase, Nora. What about that house you mentioned in your card from Spain?"

Nora looked troubled. "I'm in an odd position about that, Corinne. It's just the house I've always promised myself if ever I made a little money, but there's a tenant in occupation. He's slaving away at some sort of history of Outlawry through the ages: 'Wolf's head shalt thou go—'" She sipped her tea thoughtfully. "It sounds an ambitious project, but he as good as told me that if he has to leave the house—he hasn't the money to buy it himself—his work'll probably never get finished at all."

"Surely that's up to him?"

"Yes, but if I disturbed him and spoilt his work by buying the roof over his head," Nora said, "I wouldn't feel too happy about it—because it's he who gave me the idea for this book I'm writing myself."

"How weird!" said Corinne. "Is the idea so good, then?"

"Heaven knows! But it both—"

ered me, somehow. At the time, I couldn't help wondering if what he told me was something that had actually happened to himself. But I don't think so. It makes him appear such a moral coward that, if it were true, I think he'd keep quiet about it. Anyway, I couldn't help trying to make something of the basic situation. Then I really got down to it, and now I've done so much that I've got to finish it, just to get free of it. I ought to have it done in about another month."

"Meantime, what about the house?"

"I've decided to do nothing about it till I know whether Mr. Donner is going to publish this book," Nora said. "If Mr. Donner likes the book, I shall feel pretty much in debt to that man out at the house. He only asks for a dedication. But I shall probably let the house go, for fear of disturbing him."

"Sufficient unto the day, in fact?" said Corinne. "Well, I hope you know what you're doing." She stood up. "Will the din of my vacuum-cleaner put you off, Nora? I've *already* got a house to look after."

"Posts, Don Carlos!" The rowlocks of Luis's boat creaked as he rowed excitedly toward the beach. Looking round over his shoulder, he saw the tenant Ormond, on his veranda, remove his feet from the table and stand

up from his cane chair. "Posts comel!" old Luis shouted.

His boat grounded with a soft thump on the sand. Jumping out, he took an oblong package from the boat, and stumped hurriedly up the beach.

"For you, Don Carlos," he panted, his bare feet flapping like fish up the stone steps to the veranda. "I was at market with lobsters this morning. Posts gave me this to bring you."

It was the first time Luis had known the tenant Ormond to get anything with foreign stamps on it, and the lobsterman waited with impatient curiosity as Ormond took the package and frowned at it. He rubbed his beard-stubbled jaw thoughtfully, then abruptly broke the brown-paper tape that sealed the package.

"A book!" Luis exclaimed. "A present, Don Carlos? Ah, beautiful!" He pointed a horny finger at the shiny new jacket. "See, Don Carlos? A wolf!" The jacket depicted a wolf's head with fanged jaws gaping wide to engulf a vignette of an agitated girl speaking into a telephone. "Beautiful, Don Carlos!"

"*Love's Last Call*," Ormond muttered. "By Nora Carneal." He turned over the first three pages. "To C.O."

"*Ay-de-mi*," said Luis, shaking his head in admiration.

Ormond, putting the book on the table, uncorked the demi-

john with a plop. "Luis, how many months would it be since I had that lady visitor out here?"

"About ten months?" hazarded Luis. His eyes on the wine glugging red from the demijohn, he licked his tooth. "Yes, yes—ten months. Ah, thank you!" Taking the proffered glass, Luis removed his sombrero from his grey-bristled head to propose a formal toast. He raised his glass. "To the book, Don Carlos!"

But there was a strange look in the tenant Ormond's light eyes, and he said, "I think I'd better read it first, Luis."

"Claro," said Luis, nodding wisely.

They both drank.

Along the beach, the small waves splintered like glass in the sun-glare.

It was early yet for lunch, and many tables in the Soho restaurant, its subdued light starred by the pulsing flames that awaited the chafing-dishes, were unoccupied. To the tall, good-looking young woman with the copper gleam in her hair, who had just inquired for Miss Nora Carneal's table, the carpeted place seemed hushed as she followed the headwaiter.

Her mission was so odd, so personal, that she felt tense and nervous even when she saw that the person sitting alone at the table for which the headwaiter was making looked slight, harm-

less, rather pale, surprisingly young. A glass before her on the starched cloth, she was drawing her gloves absently through a cupped hand. Glancing up, she rose with a quick smile.

"Miss Walsh? How nice of you to come!"

"How nice of you to ask me, Miss Carneal!"

They shook hands and sat down, the headwaiter adjusting the chair tenderly for the new arrival, and Nora asked her, "What would you like to drink?"

"Is that sherry you're having? I'd love a sherry."

This was brought, lunch was chosen with the portly connivance of the headwaiter, and, left alone, they looked at each other with bright, guarded smiles.

"Well!" said Nora. "Did you—have you come up to London just this morning?"

"Yes, I came up on the eight-forty-five. I must admit, Miss Carneal, that when I wrote to you care of your publisher, I didn't expect—"

"Your letter," Nora interrupted meditatively, "was signed Naomi Walsh."

"Of course. It's my name. Why?"

"I was thinking of the name associated with Naomi—in the Bible story," Nora said. "I'm sorry, it was a passing thought. Do go on."

"I was only going to say that when I wrote to you, I didn't ex-

pect to be invited to lunch. I thought you'd just answer my question by letter."

"I felt," Nora murmured, "we should perhaps have a talk."

"About the 'C.O.' to whom you dedicated your book?" Naomi Walsh said. "He's a man called Charles Ormond. I'm well aware of that, from certain things in your book—as I told you in my letter."

"You didn't tell me—" Nora looked at her wineglass, twirling its stem gently between finger and thumb—"why you want to know where he is."

"Do I have to tell you, Miss Carneal?"

"You don't *have* to, of course. But—"

"But if I don't," Naomi said, and her brown eyes looked levelly and appraisingly at Nora Carneal, "you won't tell me where he is. Is that it?"

"Oh, no!" Nora said quickly. "It's just—well, I'm not at all sure where he is."

A waiter wheeled the *hors d'oeuvre* trolley to the table and, while he was serving them, Nora said casually, "You read a good deal, I imagine, Miss Walsh?"

"Yes, for pleasure—and business, too. I run a small circulating library."

"You run a library?" Nora exclaimed.

"Yes—including records, mostly L.P., these past few years." To

the waiter, Naomi said, "And I'll have one of those, please." To Nora, she went on, "I can't compete with the County Library on non-fiction books, but I manage to keep ahead of them in the lighter lines—just romances and—" She checked herself. "Oh, I'm sorry, Miss Carneal, I oughtn't to have—"

"No, please!" Nora smiled. "I'm interested that you should say that—*just* romances. I've had the remark made to me before." The wine-waiter was hovering inquiringly, and she tasted the wine he had just poured for them. "I'm not very good at botanizing about wine," she said to Naomi. "What do *you* think?"

"I think it's delicious," Naomi said, after having a taste. But she put down her glass, as both waiters went away, and her tone changed. "You're not *sure* where Charles Ormond is, Miss Carneal?"

"No. I sent him a copy of my book when it came out about six weeks ago, but I've had no acknowledgment from him."

"But if the package hasn't been returned to you, then presumably he's still at the address you sent it to—or else he's left a forwarding address there."

"Presumably." Nora glanced up as a man paused by the table.

"Why, Mr. Donner!"

"How are you, Miss Carneal?" The publisher was about thirty-six, tall, blond, impeccably

dressed. "I see you haven't gone abroad house-hunting again, then?"

"Not yet." Nora introduced the publisher to Naomi Walsh. "Miss Walsh wrote to me care of your office, Mr. Donner—about *Love's Last Call*."

"A complimentary letter, I hope?" said Edward Donner indulgently.

"I'm afraid not," Nora admitted. "Miss Walsh had a personal question to raise with me about the book."

"Really?" A pucker of publisher's worry appeared between Edward Donner's clear blue eyes. "Nothing tendentious, I trust?"

"Oh, I think we can settle it between ourselves, somehow or other," Nora said, "don't you, Miss Walsh?"

"I hope so," Naomi said quietly.

Edward Donner looked as if he hoped so, too, but he said only, "Well, I'm afraid I have a guest with me, so if you'll excuse me—"

As the worried man moved away, Nora said to Naomi, "And I was told this was such a good place for a quiet talk over lunch, without interruptions!" She smiled. "Now, where were we?"

"You were just going to tell me the last address you had for Charles Ormond."

"Was I?" Nora explored an an-

chovy with her fork. "I don't think so."

"But you can give me the address you sent the book to, surely?"

"I'm afraid not."

Naomi said evenly, "Do you mean that you refuse to, Miss Carneal?"

"I'm so sorry," said Nora.

Naomi sat quite still for a moment. Then, with abrupt decision, she placed her napkin on the table.

"Oh, please don't go," Nora begged.

"I see no point in staying," Naomi said coldly.

"Miss Walsh," said Nora, toying with the anchovy on her plate, "could you conveniently get away for a short while, do you think?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"I was wondering if you could come abroad with me for a few days—as my guest?"

They looked at each other.

The headwaiter's generous shirtfront came looming to the table to bestow the balm of his solicitude on them.

"Everything satisfactory, ladies?"

Edward Donner took an early opportunity to skim once more through a copy of *Love's Last Call*. Having done so, he asked his secretary if she had a telephone number for Nora Carneal.

"I think we have, Mr. Donner."

"She puzzles me," he said. "She started with two quite attractive little romances, but her third effort seemed to me to have undertones—or possibly overtones—that were unexpected enough to quicken my interest in her future."

"I know just what you mean, Mr. Donner."

"Now this," Edward Donner said, frowning at the book before him on his desk. "I still can't tell from it whether she has a future—or not. But again I find in it, even more markedly, things I shouldn't quite have expected from her. Still, the particular thing I've been looking for in this book I haven't found."

"Really, Mr. Donner?"

"I ran into her a few days ago," said Edward Donner. "She was giving lunch to a Miss Naomi Walsh. I understood this Miss Walsh had some bone to pick with Miss Carneal about the book. I wasn't able to go into the matter at the time, but I sensed a distinct tension between them. I've been thinking about it, and perhaps I'd better find out what's going on. Will you see if you can get Miss Carneal on the telephone for me?"

"Certainly, Mr. Donner."

As his secretary went out, Edward Donner tilted back his desk-chair, linked his hands behind his head, and looked at the portraits of his father and grandfather, facing each other across

the comfortable office. They had published many successful books, but so far Edward himself, sitting now in the chair they once had sat in, had made no conspicuous discoveries on his own account, and this weighed on him.

A knock sounded, and he let his chair-legs thump back on to the carpet.

"Apparently, Mr. Donner," said his secretary, coming in, "the number we have for Miss Carneal is her sister's. I've just spoken to the sister, and she tells me Miss Carneal has gone off suddenly to Spain—with a Miss Walsh."

"Miss Naomi Walsh?"

"Apparently so, Mr. Donner."

"Thank you," said Edward Donner austere.

As his secretary went out, he took up the copy of *Love's Last Call* again.

A tram was clattering by along the narrow, sun-sweltering street as Paquita Moreno, in her cluttered little office, dialled a number excitedly.

"Gamboa," quacked the telephone.

"Good morning, Doña Casilda. Paquita Moreno. You remember the Miss Carneal who seemed a likely prospect to buy your outlying house a few months ago?"

"A few? Paquita! That was close on a year ago!"

"I've just had her in my office

again, Doña Casilda. She was full of apologies for not having written to me, and she wanted to know if the tenant Ormond was still out at the house."

"Hah! Well?"

"She asked for an order-to-view, and she's just gone out there."

"Paquita! Are you mad? You should have taken her there yourself!"

"But she had a hired car and driver—and there was another girl waiting for her in the car, Doña Casilda. I—"

"Woman, you should have insisted on going with them!"

Paquita flashed her marvellous eyes at the ceiling, imploring forbearance.

"Yes, Doña Casilda."

"Car coming!" Old Luis shattered the peace of the hot afternoon with an excited yell. Tugging at his starboard oar, he turned his boat and peered shoreward at the tenant Ormond's veranda. "Don Carlos! Ladies coming!"

The tenant Ormond jerked his feet down from the table, rose from his chair, crossed to the head of the steps.

"Ladies?" he shouted.

"Two!" Old Luis waved a couple of fingers in the air. "Two ladies, Don Carlos!"

Ormond crossed to the table, uncorked and tilted the demi-john.

Luis heard the car coming closer, heard it fall silent as it pulled up on the other side of the house, heard three sharp toots of a horn. The tenant Ormond drank his wine. He refilled his glass. The car's horn sounded again, a long note.

"Ladies waiting!" Luis shouted reproachfully.

The tenant Ormond was standing quite still, glass in hand. Suddenly he tilted his head back, drank the wine. Putting the glass down on the table, he turned and walked slowly into the house.

Nora Carneal, trim in a white suit and carrying a purse and a pair of net gloves, had just stepped out of the car when she saw the door of the house open.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Ormond," she said. "Here I am—back again." With a calm she did not feel, she added, "I believe you know Miss Walsh."

She saw the tall girl, standing beside the car, look at Ormond's frayed sandals, his ripped shirt, his black-stubbled jaw. Her brown eyes went no higher than that; and Ormond, who had opened his mouth to speak, closed it again, hard.

"Well!" said Nora, with unnatural brightness. "Mr. Ormond, I have Miss Moreno's order-to-view again. May we come in?" She moved forward as she spoke, and Ormond stood aside

slowly. Nora glanced back. "Do come, Naomi. You should at least see the veranda. Mr. Ormond's practically lived on it for the past—what? Two years?"

Naomi Walsh, without looking at Ormond, followed Nora through the doorway, through the shadowed house, out into the vine-stippled light of the veranda.

"That man in the boat out there," Nora said—"that's Luis, a lobsterman." The beach shimmered in the white lightning of the sun. "Isn't this veranda perfect, Naomi? This is where Mr. Ormond told me a story about a telephone call and a girl he called Ruth. What an interesting substitution of names, Mr. Ormond—Ruth for Naomi. You must have an odd kind of mind, I think."

Nobody answered her. Drawing her gloves through a cupped hand, she looked out at the small waves. They sucked in on themselves and broke with a glitter.

"In my book," she said, "I gave the girl quite a different name. But then, in the book, I developed the situation rather differently from the way it has developed—so far—in actuality. I suppose Mr. Donner would say that the way I developed the book was—romance, *just* romance. I wonder what he would call this moment? I mean, it's actually happening. Here you both are."

Neither of them spoke. There was only the whisper of the small waves breaking.

Nora turned. "Why don't you say something? Why don't you at least speak to each other?"

Naomi looked at her in silence. Ormond took his pipe from his shirt-pocket.

"You've plenty to talk about, surely?" Nora said. "For instance, how's your own book coming along, Mr. Ormond? Naomi, he's been occupying his time here with a study of Outlawry through the ages—'Wolf's head shalt thou go.' Curious subject, isn't it? I wonder what made you choose it, Mr. Ormond?"

He looked at the pipe in his hand. He said nothing.

"Did it spring, perhaps, from the way you felt about yourself?" Nora asked. "From your sense of guilt about a telephone call you once made from Athens—or wherever the actual place was?"

"Miss Carneal," Ormond said softly, "why don't you go away and leave us for a few minutes?"

"Why should I?" Nora said. "Why do you think I *brought* Naomi here, instead of just giving her this address?"

Naomi spoke for the first time. "Why did you, Miss Carneal?"

"You deliberately made use of me," Nora said, looking at Ormond. "I know that now, of course. You thought that if I could be tempted into writing up the story you told me, it was

highly likely that Naomi would read it sooner or later. And she could hardly read the book, with your initials there on the dedication page, without reading your indirect confession into it—and realising that her belief that 'Steve' was alive, if she still had that belief, was pure illusion."

Ormond tapped out his pipe against the wall.

"You made use of me," Nora said—"probably on the same sort of distorted impulse as prompted you to make that wretched telephone call in the first place. You made deliberate use of me, Mr. Ormond, so I feel I'm entitled to see the outcome. And I have my own reasons for wanting to."

Ignoring Naomi, who was looking at her in a puzzled way, she spoke again to Ormond.

"Why didn't you acknowledge the copy I sent you of my book?" she asked him. "I see you got it. It's here on the table. But why are *you* still here, Mr. Ormond? Weren't you tempted to vanish when you'd read the book? Didn't you feel an urge to evade any consequences it might have, and go away and bury your head in the sand somewhere else and try to forget the whole thing, the way you tried—but evidently failed—to forget the telephone call? Why aren't you gone, Mr. Ormond? What kept you here?"

Tucking his pipe back into his shirt-pocket, Ormond crossed

abruptly to the table and uncorked the demijohn.

"Why don't you keep quiet now, Miss Carneal?" he said. His hands were unsteady as he poured wine; red drops spattered the copy of *Love's Last Call*. He said harshly, "Go back and take a look at the beach or something."

But Nora said, "What kept him here, do you think, Naomi? Can it possibly have been some idea that my book itself put into his head?"

"Please!" Ormond said, in anguish, and he struck the table with his fist.

Nora was frightened, but she was determined; she was here to see this through, whatever happened.

She said, a little breathless, "And I've something to ask *you*, Naomi. Would you have come abroad with me, come here with me, if you'd been in love with the memory of a man called 'Steve'? Or *ever*, perhaps, been in love with a man called 'Steve'?"

Ormond was suddenly still. Naomi Walsh gazed out at the sun-glare. Old Luis's boat loitered on the water.

"After all," Nora said reasonably, "doesn't any girl, getting an unexpected telephone call late at night, from a friend abroad, sound delighted and excited? Does that really 'speak volumes'?

—unless love and self-doubt read volumes into it?”

No one answered her.

Again she asked, “Why aren’t you gone, Mr. Ormond? What kept you here after you’d read my book? Was it some slight hope that you might get a letter or something? If so, was it my book itself that put that slight hope into your head? I mean,” she said slowly, “the way I had it in my book, the girl knows from the very first who really made that telephone call.”

In the silence the small waves whispered, sliding their loops of foam up the sand.

“But that was just romance,” Nora said. “Perhaps it’s not true in reality?”

Naomi said quietly, “Of course I knew.”

Ormond put the demijohn carefully on the table. He looked out at Luis’s boat.

“I suppose I’m partly to blame,” Naomi said. “I guessed who had really made that telephone call. I think I even guessed why.” She looked directly at Ormond for the first time. “What *made* you the way you are? Was it your secret service job? Always working alone—always feeling out the ground carefully—always half-suspecting some kind of—of joker in everything? Even in your personal relations? Even with me?”

Nora glanced at him. He was watching the dip, the lift, the

hot flash of old Luis’s oars, out there in the glare.

“That day you came to see me,” Naomi said. “How could I ask you pointblank if it was you who’d made that call? How could I ask you a thing like that? But I gave you every possible opening to tell me the truth of your own accord. You said nothing. I felt so desperate I even tried to hint to you what kind of an illusion your deception might have created if I’d had some really deep feeling for that other man.”

He turned and looked at her.

“I was wrong to do that,” she said. “I know. I’ve blamed myself, since. But at the time—I thought it would force you to tell me the truth. I simply couldn’t believe it when you went away *still* without saying anything. To go away like that—then give up your job and just go off—vanish—”

She looked at him in wonder.

“Charles, do you truly believe,” she said, “that there’s nobody on earth who might just possibly have wondered and worried about what had happened to you? All this time?”

Nora Carneal glanced from one to the other of them, then went quietly down the steps to the hot sand and the full glare of the sun.

Old Luis’s eyes, under his frayed sombrero, followed the

tenant Ormond's visitor—the slight, dark-haired one in the trim white suit—as she wandered off alone along the beach, and he thought he saw her drop something. As she walked on unaware, he pulled on his port oar, turning his boat, and rowed to the beach.

The boat grounded with a soft thump. Jumping out, he picked up a glove from the sand. He called to her and, when she turned, he held up the wisp of net in a calloused hand. She came to meet him and, taking the glove, she smiled and thanked him. He thought she looked pale, as though she had been under some sort of strain. She glanced past him toward the tenant Ormond's veranda, and her expression was strange.

"End of a lone wolf," she said.

She spoke more to herself than to him, and in English, incomprehensible to Luis. But he was always willing to please and, following her glance, he nodded sagely.

"Claro," he said.

In halting Spanish, she asked if there was some way she could reach the other side of the house, and he took her to a path that curved round that way from the back of the beach. His sombrero in his hand, he stood watching her until she passed from view in the shade-flicker of the olive trees.

Soon he heard her car start up.

He passed a hairy forearm over his forehead, put on his sombrero, and, with a discreet glance toward the tenant Ormond's veranda, plodded back, barefoot on the hot sand, to where his boat waited in the glitter of the small waves breaking.

"Gamboa," croaked the telephone.

"Good morning, Doña Casilda. Paquita Moreno. I've just had the tenant Ormond in my office here. He's given a month's notice. He's returning to England."

"Paquita! I don't want that house standing empty out there!"

"Don't worry about that, Doña Casilda. There's a further development."

"What are you talking about? Tell me in plain Spanish, woman!"

"Doña Casilda, I've just sold your house to the prospect Carneal."

For once, the telephone was struck dumb. Paquita's incomparable eyes flashed a glance wicked with triumph at the ceiling. But her voice was as the cooing of doves:

"You said something, Doña Casilda?"

Business disposed of, Edward Donner tilted back his desk-chair, linked his hands behind his blond head, and looked searchingly, though with a smile,

at Nora Carneal, in the deep leather chair facing him.

"I must confess," he said, "I've been wondering about the—the bone your correspondent, Miss Naomi Walsh, had to pick with you about *Love's Last Call*?"

"That's all settled now," Nora said, "though it put me through a most uncomfortable ten minutes or so—thanks to a remark you once made to me about 'romances, just romances, they hardly count.' Do you remember that, Mr. Donner?"

He frowned. "Miss Carneal, I think you misunderstood my meaning."

"I hope I did," she said, "because it's bothered me quite a lot. It was the reason why, when I found recently that I was faced by a rare opportunity to see how a certain situation worked out in actuality as compared with the way I had worked it out in a book, I felt obliged to accept the opportunity."

"Indeed?" His smile was tolerant, but his eyes were attentive, appraising her.

"Frankly," she said, "I shrank from it, but I forced myself, quite ruthlessly, to see it through." She drew her gloves meditatively through a cupped hand. "I made myself perfectly hateful. I had to. But at least I found out something. I found that the situation developed very differently from my book—in detail. But in the essence—in the

outcome—it came to very much the same thing. So what conclusion is one to draw from that, do you think, Mr. Donner?"

He looked at her keenly. Somehow, she still puzzled him. Had she really, he wondered, a future? He smiled.

"On the whole," he said, "I shouldn't worry too much about theory, if I were you. The pen, like the heart, has its reasons, no doubt. Tell me, Miss Carneal, how is your house-hunting getting on?"

"Oh, I've found the perfect house," Nora said. "As soon as I'm settled there, my sister and her husband are coming out for a week or so." A thought seemed to strike her. "Mr. Donner! I wonder if you'd care to make up the party?"

Edward Donner was so surprised that he let his chair-legs thump back on to the carpet.

"That's extremely nice of you, Miss Carneal." He found himself unexpectedly pleased. "I think I should like that very much—if I can possibly get away."

"Please try," she said.

"Yes, of course," said Edward Donner. He was glad, now, that he had invited her to lunch after their talk. It might be as well to know more about her. He became aware that he was looking at her searchingly. Collecting himself, he stood up abruptly.

He reached for his hat and umbrella. Tall, impeccably dressed, he turned to her pleasantly. "I expect you're hungry?"

"Oh, I am," Nora said.

Smiling, he held open the door for her. But as he followed her out, he glanced back fleetingly,

with his brows lifted in question, at the portraits of his father and grandfather. They had no advice to give him. As the door closed on them, they continued to gaze at each other across the room—with their usual understanding. . . .

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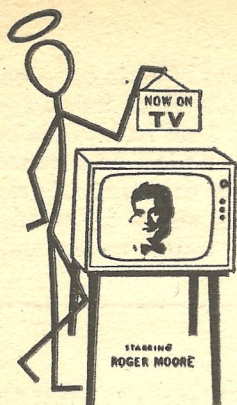
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The **saint** **on TV**

***A rough way to
make a living***

A lot of hard work goes into the filming of anything seen on the screen or on TV today. The much told of days of the temperamental star who would be hours late for his or her scenes and would stick around just long enough to add to the ulcers both producer and director were already nursing are long since gone. Today there is simply hard work—hard grueling work—generally lost sight of on the screen. Today the fragile looking heroine of the film you've been seeing will have reported for work long before seven o'clock while it was being filmed. Hours later—six hours later or even longer than that, and cold and shivering if they're shooting on location, she is liable to be still working, bright and sparkling, showing no hint of the fatigue that's in her so long as the cameras are trained on her.

There's no denying that when these people relax—they do so.

They have to do so, to unwind. But when they are working, whether in the studio or on location (as in the case of the much publicised filming on location of *THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA*), they must be ready to take an incredible amount of punishment before the day is done with and it's time to sit down, after everyone has caught their breath, to talk about what has to be done the next day. And the next day.

Take what Roger Moore had to go through in the course of the filming of "The Saint Plays with Fire".

One of the most spectacular fires ever "set" inside a film studio was staged at Elstree when they were working on this episode. A blazing country house is one of the highlights of this drama of a neo-Nazi movement which arises in England. A newspaperman working on the story is the victim of the deliberately

set fire, despite the efforts of the Saint to rescue him. Roger Moore, as the Saint, had some extremely hot moments as they were shooting this with the flames all around him, seemingly anxious to get at him . . .

And do you think that was all that Roger Moore had to cope with?

There was the fire.

And a quick fight with a gunman, played by Joe Robinson. More about this in a moment.

And he is knocked down and taken prisoner; tied up, his hands behind his back, in a cellar; his wrists are burned, and before he's had a chance to even half limber up, he finds himself in a terrific fight with Joe Robinson, wrestling and judo ace turned actor, who plays the part of a neo-Nazi strong-arm thug.

Thirty-four year old Joe Robinson, with whom Roger Moore has to tangle, is over six feet tall and has a chest measurement of fifty inches. He comes from a famous wrestling family. His grandfather was the first to become a champion wrestler. His father, Professor Jack Robinson, followed in his footsteps. And both Joe and his brother Douglas

have carried on the family tradition. They run a wrestling and judo school together, to which many London actors come for "tuition". And, as Joe puts it, "I bounce out whenever I'm called to do some acting."

He has won the world judo title four times; has won the European wrestling title; and the Cumberland World Title. Born in England, he was brought up in South Africa until he was nineteen. His father was instructor to the South African Police in Johannesburg. "Tiger" Joe Robinson has appeared in many British films and on the stage (he played Charles the Wrestler in "As You Like It" at the Old Vic) and in five Italian pictures in one of which he was a Tarzan-type prehistoric man.

This is the man Roger Moore had to fight with. You can understand why, afterwards, Roger called the episode, "Not exactly the most peaceful of productions to make!"

As we said earlier—a lot of hard work goes into the filming of anything seen on the screen or on TV today! A lot of hard, grueling and exhausting work!



*the
last
exploit
of
harry
the
actor*

by Ernest Bramah

THE ONE insignificant fact upon which turned the following incident in the joint experiences of Mr. Carlyle and Max Carrados was merely this: that having called upon his friend just at the moment when the private detective was on the point of leaving his office to go to the safe deposit in Lucas Street, Piccadilly, the blind amateur accompanied him, and for ten minutes amused himself by sitting quite quietly among the palms in the centre of the circular hall while Mr. Carlyle was occupied with his deed-box in one of the little compartments provided for the purpose.

The Lucas Street depository was then (it has since been converted into a picture palace) generally accepted as being one of the strongest places in London. The front of the building was constructed to represent a gigantic safe door, and under the colloquial designation of "The Safe" the place had passed into a synonym for all that was secure and impregnable. Half of the marketable securities in the

This story about Max Carrados, Ernest Bramah's blind detective, was written more than a generation ago. Bramah, as Baynard Kendrick, author of the Duncan Maclain stories, later wrote, was a pioneer in "the contemporary field of blind detection". The art of deduction by touch, hearing, taste and smell when sight is missing is a challenge to the writer who must tell a credible story. Whether Ernest Bramah did so in these stories is however unimportant. Bramah, like Oppenheim and still others, has his niche in this genre's Hall of Fame. H.S.S.

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west of London were popularly reported to have seen the inside of its coffers at one time or another, together with the same generous proportion of family jewels. However exaggerated an estimate this might be, the substratum of truth was solid and auriferous enough to dazzle the imagination. When ordinary safes were being carried bodily away with impunity or ingeniously fused open by the scientifically equipped cracksman, nervous bond-holders turned with relief to the attractions of an establishment whose modest claim was summed up in its telegraphic address: "Impregnable." To it went also the jewel-case between the lady's social engagements, and when in due course the family journey north—or south, east or west—whenever, in short, the London house was closed, its capacious storerooms received the plate-chest as an established custom. Not a few traders also—jewellers, financiers, dealers in pictures, antiques and costly bijouterie, for instance—constantly used its facilities for any stock that they did not require immediately to hand.

There was only one entrance to the place, an exaggerated key-hole, to carry out the similitude of the safe-door alluded to. The ground floor was occupied by the ordinary offices of the company: all the strong-rooms and safes lay in the steel-cased base-

ment. This was reached both by a lift and by a flight of steps. In either case the visitor found before him a grille of massive proportions. Behind its bars stood a formidable commissioner who never left his post, his sole duty being to open and close the grille to arriving and departing clients. Beyond this, a short passage led into the round central hall where Carrados was waiting. From this part, other passages radiated off to the vaults and strong-rooms, each one barred from the hall by a grille scarcely less ponderous than the first one. The doors of the various private rooms put at the disposal of the company's clients, and that of the manager's office, filled the wall-space between the radiating passages. Everything was very quiet, everything looked very bright, and everything seemed hopelessly impregnable.

"But I wonder?" ran Carrados's dubious reflection, as he reached this point.

"Sorry to have kept you so long, my dear Max," broke in Mr. Carlyle's crisp voice. He had emerged from his compartment and was crossing the hall, deed-box in hand. "Another minute and I will be with you."

Carrados smiled and nodded and resumed his former expression, which was merely that of an uninterested gentleman waiting patiently for another. It is something of an attainment to

watch closely without betraying undue curiosity, but others of the senses—hearing and smelling, for instance—can be keenly engaged while the observer possibly has the appearance of falling asleep.

“Now,” announced Mr. Carlyle, returning briskly to his friend’s chair, and drawing on his grey suede gloves.

“You are in no particular hurry?”

“No,” admitted the professional man, with the slowness of mild surprise. “Not at all. What do you propose?”

“It is very pleasant here,” replied Carrados tranquilly. “Very cool and restful with this armoured steel between us and the dust and scurry of the hot July afternoon above, I propose remaining here for a few minutes longer.”

“Certainly,” agreed Mr. Carlyle, taking the nearest chair and eyeing Carrados as though he had a shrewd suspicion of something more than met the ear. “I believe some very interesting people rent safes here. We may encounter a bishop, or a winning jockey, or even a musical comedy actress. Unfortunately it seems to be rather a slack time.”

“Two men came down while you were in your cubicle,” remarked Carrados casually. “The first took the lift. I imagine that he was a middle-aged, rather portly man. He carried a stick,

wore a silk hat, and used spectacles for close sight. The other came by the stairway. I infer that he arrived at the top immediately after the lift had gone. He ran down the steps, so that the two were admitted at the same time, but the second man, though the more active of the pair, hung back for a moment in the passage and the portly one was the first to go to his safe.”

Mr. Carlyle’s knowing look expressed: “Go on, my friend; you are coming to something.” But he merely contributed an encouraging “Yes?”

“When you emerged just now our second man quietly opened the door of his pen a fraction. Doubtless he looked out. Then he closed it as quietly again. You were not his man, Louis.”

“I am grateful,” said Mr. Carlyle, expressively. “What next, Max?”

“That is all; they are still closeted.”

Both were silent for a moment. Mr. Carlyle’s feeling was one of unconfessed perplexity. So far the incident was utterly trivial in his eyes; but he knew that the trifles which appeared significant to Max had a way of standing out like signposts when the time came to look back over an episode. Carrados’s sightless faculties seemed indeed to keep him just a move ahead as the game progressed.

"Is there really anything in it, Max?" he asked at length.

"Who can say?" replied Carrados. "At least we may wait to see them go. Those tin deed-boxes now. There is one to each safe, I think?"

"Yes, so I imagine. The practice is to carry the box to your private lair and there unlock it and do your business. Then you lock it up again and take it back to your safe."

"Steady! our first man," whispered Carrados hurriedly. "Here, look at this with me." He opened a paper—a prospectus—which he pulled from his pocket and they affected to study its contents together.

"You were about right, my friend," muttered Mr. Carlyle, pointing to a paragraph of assumed interest. "Hat, stick and spectacles. He is a clean-shaven, pink-faced old boy. I believe—yes, I know the man by sight. He is a bookmaker in a large way, I am told."

"Here comes the other," whispered Carrados.

The bookmaker passed across the hall, joined on his way by the manager whose duty it was to counterlock the safe, and disappeared along one of the passages. The second man sauntered up and down, waiting his turn. Mr. Carlyle reported his movements in an undertone and described him. He was a younger man than the other, of medium

height, and passably well dressed in a quiet lounge suit, green Alpine hat and brown shoes. By the time the detective had reached his wavy chestnut hair, large and rather ragged moustache, and sandy, freckled complexion, the first man had completed his business and was leaving the place.

"It isn't an exchange lay, at all events," said Mr. Carlyle. "His inner case is only half the size of the other and couldn't possibly be substituted."

"Come up now," said Carrados, rising. "There is nothing more to be learned down here."

They requisitioned the lift, and on the steps outside the gigantic keyhole stood for a few minutes discussing an investment as a couple of trustees or a lawyer and a client who were parting there might do. Fifty yards away, a very large silk hat with a very curly brim marked the progress of the bookmaker towards Piccadilly.

The lift in the hall behind them swirled up again and the gate clashed. The second man walked leisurely out and sauntered away without a backward glance.

"He has gone in the opposite direction," exclaimed Mr. Carlyle, rather blankly. "It isn't the 'lame goat' nor the 'follow-me-on,' nor even the homely but efficacious sand-bag."

"What color were his eyes?" asked Carrados.

"Upon my word, I never noticed," admitted the other.

"Parkinson would have noticed," was the severe comment.

"I am not Parkinson," retorted Mr. Carlyle, with asperity, "and strictly as one dear friend to another, Max, permit me to add, that while cherishing an unbounded admiration for your remarkable gifts, I have the strongest suspicion that the whole incident is a ridiculous mare's nest, bred in the fantastic imagination of an enthusiastic criminologist."

Mr. Carrados received this outburst with the utmost benignity. "Come and have a coffee, Louis," he suggested. "Mehmed's is only a street away."

Mehmed proved to be a cosmopolitan gentleman from Mocha whose shop resembled a house from the outside and an Oriental divan when one was within. A turbaned Arab placed cigarettes and cups of coffee spiced with saffron before the customers, gave salaam and withdrew.

"You know, my dear chap," continued Mr. Carlyle, sipping his black coffee and wondering privately whether it was really very good or very bad, "speaking quite seriously, the one fishy detail—our ginger friend's watching for the other to leave—may

be open to a dozen very innocent explanations."

"So innocent that to-morrow I intend taking a safe myself."

"You think that everything is all right?"

"On the contrary, I am convinced that something is very wrong."

"Then why—?"

"I shall keep nothing there, but it will give me the *entrée*. I should advise you, Louis, in the first place to empty your safe with all possible speed, and in the second to leave your business card on the manager."

Mr. Carlyle pushed his cup away, convinced now that the coffee was really very bad.

"But, my dear Max, the place—'The Safe'—is impregnable!"

"When I was in the States, three years ago, the head porter at one hotel took pains to impress on me that the building was absolutely fireproof. I at once had my things taken off to another hotel. Two weeks later the first place was burnt out. It *was* fireproof, I believe, but of course the furniture and the fittings were not and the walls gave way."

"Very ingenious," admitted Mr. Carlyle, "but why did you really go? You know you can't humbug me with your superhuman sixth sense, my friend."

Carrados smiled pleasantly, thereby encouraging the watch-

ful attendant to draw near and replenish their tiny cups.

"Perhaps," replied the blind man, "because so many careless people were satisfied that it was fireproof."

"Ah-ha, there you are—the greater the confidence the greater the risk. But only if your self-confidence results in carelessness. Now do you know how this place is secured, Max?"

"I am told that they lock the door at night," replied Carrados, with bland malice.

"And hide the key under the mat to be ready for the first arrival in the morning," crowed Mr. Carlyle, in the same playful spirit. "Dear old chap! Well, let me tell you—"

"That force is out of the question. Quite so," admitted his friend.

"That simplifies the argument. Let us consider fraud. There again the precautions are so rigid that many people pronounce the forms a nuisance. I confess that I do not. I regard them as a means of protecting my own property and I cheerfully sign my name and give my password, which the manager compares with his record-book before he releases the first lock of my safe. The signature is burned before my eyes in a sort of crucible there, the password is of my own choosing and is written only in a book that no one but the manager ever sees,

and my key is the sole one in existence."

"No duplicate or master-key?"

"Neither. If a key is lost it takes a skilful mechanic half a day to cut his way in. Then you must remember that clients of a safe-deposit are not multitudinous. All are known more or less by sight to the officials there, and a stranger would receive close attention. Now, Max, by what combination of circumstances is a rogue to know my password, to be able to forge my signature, to possess himself of my key, and to resemble me personally? And, finally, how is he possibly to determine beforehand whether there is anything in my safe to repay so elaborate a "plant?" Mr. Carlyle concluded in triumph and was so carried away by the strength of his position that he drank off the contents of his second cup before he realized what he was doing.

"At the hotel I just spoke of," replied Carrados, "there was an attendant whose one duty in case of alarm was to secure three iron doors. On the night of the fire he had a bad attack of toothache and slipped away for just a quarter of an hour to have the thing out. There was a most up-to-date system of automatic fire alarm; it had been tested only the day before and the electrician, finding some part not absolutely to his satisfaction, had taken it away and not had time

to replace it. The night watchman, it turned out, had received leave to present himself a couple of hours later on that particular night, and the hotel fireman, whose duties he took over, had missed being notified. Lastly, there was a big riverside blaze at the same time and all the engines were down at the other end of the city."

Mr. Carlyle committed himself to a dubious monosyllable. Carrados leaned forward a little.

"All these circumstances formed a coincidence of pure chance. Is it not conceivable, Louis, that an even more remarkable series might be brought about by design?"

"Our tawny friend?"

"Possibly. Only he was not really tawny." Mr. Carlyle's easy attitude suddenly stiffened into rigid attention. "He wore a false moustache."

"He wore a false moustache!" repeated the amazed gentleman. "And you cannot see! No, really, Max. This is beyond the limit!"

"If only you would not trust your dear, blundering old eyes so implicitly you would get nearer that limit yourself," retorted Carrados. "The man carried a five-yard aura of spirit gum, emphasized by a warm, perspiring skin. That inevitably suggested one thing. I looked for further evidence of making-up and found it—these preparations all smell. The hair you

described was characteristically that of a wig—worn long to hide the joining and made wavy to minimize the length. All these things are trifles. As yet we have not gone beyond the initial stage of suspicion. I will tell you another trifle. When this man retired to a compartment with his deed-box, he never even opened it. Possibly it contains a brick and a newspaper. He is only watching."

"Watching the bookmaker."

"True, but it may go far wider than that. Everything points to a plot of careful elaboration. Still, if you are satisfied—"

"I am quite satisfied," replied Mr. Carlyle gallantly. "I regard 'The Safe' almost as a national institution, and as such I have implicit faith in its precautions against every kind of force or fraud." So far Mr. Carlyle's attitude had been suggestive of a rock, but at this point he took out his watch, hummed a little to pass the time, consulted his watch again, and continued: "I am afraid that there were one or two papers which I overlooked. It would perhaps save me coming again to-morrow if I went back now—"

"Quite so," acquiesced Carrados, with perfect gravity. "I will wait for you."

For twenty minutes he sat there, drinking an occasional tiny cup of boiled coffee and to all appearance placidly enjoying

the quaint atmosphere which Mr. Mehmed had contrived to transplant from the shores of the Persian Gulf.

At the end of that period Carlyle returned, politely effusive about the time he had kept his friend waiting but otherwise bland and unassailable. Anyone with eyes might have noticed that he carried a parcel of about the same size and dimensions as the deed-box that fitted his safe.

The next day Carrados presented himself at the safe-deposit as an intending renter. The manager showed him over the vaults and strong-rooms, explaining the various precautions taken to render the guile or force of man impotent: the strength of the chilled-steel walls, the casing of electricity-resisting concrete, the stupendous isolation of the whole inner fabric on metal pillars so that the watchman, while inside the building, could walk above, below, and all round the outer walls of what was really—although it bore no actual relationship to the advertising device of the front—a monstrous safe; and finally, the arrangement which would enable the basement to be flooded with steam within three minutes of an alarm. These details were public property. "The Safe" was a showplace and its directors held that no harm could come of displaying a strong hand.

Accompanied by the observ-

ant eyes of Parkinson, Carrados gave an adventurous but not a hopeful attention to these particulars. Submitting the problem of the tawny man to his own ingenuity, he was constantly putting before himself the question: How shall I set about robbing this place? and he had already dismissed force as impracticable. Nor, when it came to the consideration of fraud, did the simple but effective safeguards which Mr. Carlyle had specified seem to offer any loophole.

"As I am blind I may as well sign in the book," he suggested when the manager passed to him a gummed slip for the purpose. The precaution against one acquiring particulars of another client might well be deemed superfluous in his case.

But the manager did not fall into the trap.

"It is our invariable rule in all cases, sir," he replied courteously. "What word will you take?" Parkinson, it may be said, had been left in the hall.

"Suppose I happen to forget it? How do we proceed?"

"In that case I am afraid that I might have to trouble you to establish your identity," the manager explained. "It rarely happens."

"Then we will say 'Conspiracy.'"

The word was written down and the book closed.

"Here is your key, sir. If you will allow me—your key-ring—"

A week went by and Carrados was no nearer the absolute solution of the problem he had set himself. He had, indeed, evolved several ways by which the contents of the safes might be reached, some simple and desperate, hanging on the razor-edge of chance to fall this way or that; others more elaborate, safer on the whole, but more liable to break down at some point of their ingenious intricacy. And setting aside complicity on the part of the manager—a condition that Carrados had satisfied himself did not exist—they all depended on a relaxation of the forms by which security was assured. Carrados continued to have several occasions to visit the safe during the week, and he "watched" with a quiet persistence that was deadly in its scope. But from beginning to end there was no indication of slackness in the business-like methods of the place; nor during any of his visits did the "tawny man" appear in that or any other disguise. Another week passed; Mr. Carlyle was becoming inexpressibly waggish, and Carrados himself, although he did not abate a jot of his conviction, was compelled to bend to the realities of the situation. The manager, with the obstinacy of a conscientious man

who had become obsessed with the pervading note of security, excused himself from discussing abstract methods of fraud. Carrados was not in a position to formulate a detailed charge; he withdrew from active investigation, content to await his time.

It came, to be precise, on a certain Friday morning, seventeen days after his first visit to "The Safe." Returning late on the Thursday night, he was informed that a man giving the name of Draycott had called to see him. Apparently the matter had been of some importance to the visitor for he had returned three hours later on the chance of finding Mr. Carrados in. Disappointed in this, he had left a note. Carrados cut open the envelope and ran a finger along the following words:

DEAR SIR:

I have today consulted Mr. Louis Carlyle, who thinks that you would like to see me. I will call again in the morning, say at nine o'clock. If this is too soon or otherwise inconvenient I entreat you to leave a message fixing as early an hour as possible.

Yours faithfully,
HERBERT DRAYCOTT

P.S. I should add that I am the renter of a safe at the Lucas Street depository.

H.D.

A description of Mr. Draycott made it clear that he was not the West-End bookmaker. The caller, the servant explained, was a thin, wiry, keen-faced man. Carrados felt agreeably interested in this development, which seemed to justify his suspicion of a plot.

At five minutes to nine the next morning Mr. Draycott again presented himself.

"Very good of you to see me so soon, sir," he apologized, on Carrados at once receiving him. "I don't know much of English ways—I'm an Australian—and I was afraid it might be too early."

"You could have made it a couple of hours earlier as far as I'm concerned," replied Carrados. "Or you either for that matter, I imagine," he added, "for I don't think you slept much last night."

"I didn't sleep at all last night," corrected Mr. Draycott. "But it's strange that you should have seen that. I understood from Mr. Carlyle that you—excuse me if I am mistaken, sir—but I understood that you were blind."

Carrados laughed his admission lightly.

"Oh yes," he said. "But never mind that. What is the trouble?"

"I'm afraid it means more than just trouble for me, Mr. Carrados." The man had steady, half-closed eyes, with the suggestion of depth which one notices in the eyes of those whose business

it is to look out over great expanses of land or water; they were turned towards Carrados's face with quiet resignation in their frankness now. "I'm afraid it spells disaster. I am a working engineer from the Mount Magdalena district of Coolgardie. I don't want to take up your time with outside details, so I will only say that about two years ago I had an opportunity of acquiring a share in a very promising claim—gold, you understand, both reef and alluvial. As the work went on I put more and more into the undertaking—you couldn't call it a venture by that time. The results were good, better than we had dared to expect, but from one cause and another the expenses were terrible. We saw that it was a bigger thing than we had bargained for and we admitted that we must get outside help."

So far Mr. Draycott's narrative had proceeded smoothly enough under the influence of the quiet despair that had come over the man. But at this point a sudden recollection of his position swept him into a frenzy of bitterness.

"Oh, what the blazes is the good of going over all this again!" he broke out. "What can you or anyone else do anyhow? I've been robbed, rooked, cleared out of everything I possess," and, tormented by recollections and by the impotence of his rage,

the unfortunate engineer beat the oak table with the back of his hand until his knuckles bled.

Carrados waited until the fury had passed.

"Continue, if you please, Mr. Draycott," he said. "Just what you thought it best to tell me is just what I want to know."

"I'm sorry, sir," apologized the man, coloring under his tanned skin. "I ought to be able to control myself better. But this business has shaken me. Three times last night I looked down the barrel of my revolver, and three times I threw it away. . . . Well, we arranged that I should come to London to interest some financiers in the property. We might have done it locally or in Perth, to be sure, but then, don't you see, they would have wanted to get control. Six weeks ago I landed here. I brought with me specimens of the quartz and good samples of extracted gold, dust and nuggets, the clearing up of several weeks' working, about two hundred and forty ounces in all. That includes the Magdalena Lodestar, our lucky nugget, a lump weighing just under seven pounds of pure gold.

"I had seen an advertisement of this Lucas Street safe-deposit and it seemed just the thing I wanted. Besides the gold, I had all the papers to do with the claims—plans, reports, receipts, licenses and so on. Then when

I cashed my letter of credit I had about one hundred and fifty pounds in notes. Of course I could have left everything at a bank, but it was more convenient to have it, as it were, in my own safe, to get at any time, and to have a private room that I could take any gentleman to. I hadn't a suspicion that anything could be wrong. Negotiations hung on in several quarters—it's a bad time to do business here, I find. Then, yesterday, I wanted something. I went to Lucas Street, as I had done half-a-dozen times before, opened my safe, and had the inner case carried to a room. . . . Mr. Carrados, it was empty!"

"Quite empty?"

"No." He laughed bitterly. "At the bottom was a sheet of wrapper paper. I recognized it as a piece I had left there in case I wanted to make up a parcel. But for that I should have been convinced that I had somehow opened the wrong safe. That was my first idea."

"It cannot be done."

"So I understand, sir. And, then, there was the paper with my name written on it in the empty tin. I was dazed; it seemed impossible. I think I stood there without moving for minutes—it was more like hours. Then I closed the tin box again, took it back, locked up the safe and came out."

"Without notifying anything wrong?"

"Yes, Mr. Carrados." The steady blue eyes regarded him with pained thoughtfulness. "You see, I reckoned it out in that time that it must be someone about the place who had done it."

"You were wrong," said Carrados.

"So Mr. Carlyle seemed to think. I only knew that the key had never been out of my possession and I had told no one of the password. Well, it did come over me rather like cold water down the neck, that there was I alone in the strongest dungeon in London and not a living soul knew where I was."

"Possibly a sort of up-to-date Sweeney Todd's?"

"I'd heard of such things in London," admitted Draycott. "Anyway, I got out. It was a mistake; I see it now. Who is to believe me as it is—it sounds a sort of unlikely tale. And how do they come to pick on me to know what I had? I don't drink, or open my mouth, or hell round. It beats me."

"They didn't pick on you—you picked on them," replied Carrados. "Never mind how; you'll be believed all right. But as for getting anything back—" The unfinished sentence confirmed Mr. Draycott in his gloomiest anticipations.

"I have the numbers of the notes," he suggested, with an at-

tempt at hopefulness. "They can be stopped, I take it?"

"Stopped? Yes," admitted Carrados. "And what does that amount to? The banks and the police stations will be notified and every little public-house between here and Land's End will change one for the scribbling of 'John Jones' across the back. No, Mr. Draycott, it's awkward, I dare say, but you must make up your mind to wait until you can get fresh supplies from home. Where are you staying?"

Draycott hesitated.

"I have been at the Abbotsford, in Bloomsbury, up to now," he said, with some embarrassment. "The fact is, Mr. Carrados, I think I ought to have told you how I was placed before consulting you, because I—I see no prospect of being able to pay my way. Knowing that I had plenty in the safe, I had run it rather close. I went chiefly yesterday to get some notes. I have a week's hotel bill in my pocket, and"—he glanced down at his trousers—"I've ordered one or two other things unfortunately."

"That will be a matter of time, doubtless," suggested the other encouragingly.

Instead of replying, Draycott suddenly dropped his arms onto the table and buried his face between them. A minute passed in silence.

"It's no good, Mr. Carrados," he said, when he was able to

“I can’t meet it. Say what you like, I simply can’t tell those chaps that I’ve lost everything we had and ask them to send me more. They couldn’t do it if I did. Understand, sir. The mine is a valuable one; we have the greatest faith in it, but it has gone beyond our depth. The three of us have put everything we own into it. While I am here they are doing laborers’ work for a wage, just to keep going . . . waiting, oh, my God! waiting for good news from me!”

Carrados walked round the table to his desk and wrote. Then, without a word, he held out a paper to his visitor.

“What’s this?” demanded Draycott, in bewilderment. “It’s—a cheque for a hundred pounds.”

“It will carry you on,” explained Carrados imperturbably. “A man like you isn’t going to throw up the sponge for this setback. Cable to your partners that you require copies of all the papers at once. They’ll manage it, never fear. The gold . . . must go. Write fully by the next mail. Tell them everything and add that in spite of all you feel that you are nearer success than ever.”

Mr. Draycott folded the cheque with thoughtful deliberation and put it carefully away in his pocket-book.

“I don’t know whether you’ve guessed as much, sir,” he said in

a queer voice, “but I think that you’ve saved a man’s life to-day. It’s not the money, it’s the encouragement . . . and faith. If you could see you’d know better than I can say how I feel about it.”

Carrados laughed quietly. It always amused him to have people explain how much more he would learn if he had eyes.

“Then we’ll go on to Lucas Street and give the manager the shock of his life,” was all he said. “Come, Mr. Draycott, I have already rung up the car.”

But, as it happened, another instrument had been destined to apply that stimulating experience to the manager. As they stepped out of the car opposite “The Safe” a taxicab drew up and Mr. Carlyle’s alert and cheery voice hailed them.

“A moment, Max,” he called, turning to settle with his driver, a transaction that he invested with an air of dignified urbanity which almost made up for any small pecuniary disappointment that may have accompanied it. “This is indeed fortunate. Let us compare notes for a moment. I have just received an almost exploring message from the manager to come at once. I assumed that it was the affair of our colonial friend here, but he went on to mention Professor Holmfast Bulge. Can it really be possible that he also has made a similar discovery?”

"What did the manager say?" asked Carrados.

"He was practically incoherent, but I really think it must be so. What have you done?"

"Nothing," replied Carrados. He turned his back on "The Safe" and appeared to be regarding the other side of the street. "There is a tobacconist's shop directly opposite?"

"There is."

"What do they sell on the first floor?"

"Possibly they sell 'Rubbo.' I hazard the suggestion from the legend 'Rub in Rubbo for Everything' which embellishes each window."

"The windows are frosted?"

"They are, to half-way up, mysterious man."

Carrados walked back to his motor-car.

"While we are away, Parkinson, go across and buy a tin, bottle, box or packet of 'Rubbo.'"

"What is 'Rubbo,' Max?" chirped Mr. Carlyle with insatiable curiosity.

"So far we do not know. When Parkinson gets some, Louis, you shall be the one to try it."

They descended into the basement and were passed in by the grille-keeper, whose manner betrayed a discreet consciousness of something in the air. It was unnecessary to speculate why. In the distance, muffled by the armoured passages, an authori-

tative voice boomed like a sonorous bell heard under water.

"What, however, are the facts?" it was demanding, with the causticity of baffled helplessness. "I am assured that there is no other key in existence; yet my safe has been unlocked. I am given to understand that without the password it would be impossible for an unauthorized person to tamper with my property. My password, deliberately chosen, is 'anthropophaginian,' sir. Is it one that is familiarly on the lips of the criminal classes? But my safe is empty! What is the explanation? Who are the guilty persons? What is being done? Where are the police?"

"If you consider that the proper course to adopt is to stand on the doorstep and beckon in the first constable who happens to pass, permit me to say, sir, that I differ from you," retorted the distracted manager. "You may rely on everything possible being done to clear up the mystery. As I told you, I have already telephoned for a capable private detective and for one of my directors."

"But that is not enough," insisted the professor angrily. "Will one mere private detective restore my £6000 Japanese 4½ per cent bearer bonds? Is the return of my irreplaceable notes on *Polyphyletic Bridal Customs among the mid-Pleistocene Cave*

Men to depend on a solitary director? I demand that the police shall be called in—as many as are available. Let Scotland Yard be set in motion. A searching inquiry must be made. I have only been a user of your precious establishment for six months, and this is the result.”

“There you hold the key of the mystery, Professor Bulge,” interposed Carrados quietly.

“Who is this, sir?” demanded the exasperated professor at large.

“Permit me,” explained Mr. Carlyle, with bland assurance. “I am Louis Carlyle, of Bampton Street. This gentleman is Mr. Max Carrados, the eminent amateur specialist in crime.”

“I shall be thankful for any assistance towards elucidating this appalling business,” condescended the professor sonorously. “Let me put you in possession of the facts—”

“Perhaps if we went into your room,” suggested Carrados to the manager, “we should be less liable to interruption.”

“Quite so; quite so,” boomed the professor, accepting the proposal on everyone else’s behalf. “The facts, sir, are these: I am the unfortunate possessor of a safe here, in which, a few months ago, I deposited—among less important matter—sixty bearer bonds of the Japanese Imperial Loan—the bulk of my small fortune—and the manuscript of an

important projected work on *‘Polyphyletic Bridal Customs among the mid-Pleistocene Cave Men.’* To-day I came to detach the coupons which fall due on the fifteenth, to pay them into my bank a week in advance, in accordance with my custom. What do I find? I find the safe locked and apparently intact, as when I last saw it a month ago. But it is far from being intact, sir. It has been opened, ransacked, cleared out. Not a single bond, not a scrap of paper remains.”

It was obvious that the manager’s temperature had been rising during the latter part of this speech and now he boiled over.

“Pardon my flatly contradicting you, Professor Bulge. You have again referred to your visit here a month ago as your last. You will bear witness of that gentlemen. When I inform you that the professor had access to his safe as recently as on Monday last you will recognize the importance that the statement may assume.”

The professor glared across the room like an infuriated animal, a comparison heightened by his notoriously hircine appearance.

“How dare you contradict me, sir!” he cried, slapping the table sharply with his open hand. “I was not here on Monday.”

The manager shrugged his shoulders coldly.

You forget that the attendants also saw you," he remarked. "Cannot we trust our own eyes?"

"A common assumption, yet not always a strictly reliable one," insinuated Carrados softly.

"I cannot be mistaken."

"Then can you tell me, without looking, what color Professor Bulge's eyes are?"

There was a curious and expectant silence for a minute. The professor turned his back on the manager and the manager passed from thoughtfulness to embarrassment.

"I really do not know, Mr. Carrados," he declared loftily at last. "I do not refer to mere trifles like that."

"Then you can be mistaken," replied Carrados mildly yet with decision.

"But the ample hair, the venerable flowing beard, the prominent nose and heavy eyebrows—"

"These are just the striking points that are most easily counterfeited. They 'take the eye.' If you would ensure yourself against deception, learn rather to observe the eye itself, and particularly the spots on it, the shape of the finger-nails, the set of the ears. These things cannot be simulated."

"You seriously suggest that the man was not Professor Bulge—that he was an impostor?"

"The conclusion is inevitable.

Where were you on Monday, Professor?"

"I was on a short lecturing tour in the Midlands. On Saturday I was in Nottingham. On Monday in Birmingham. I did not return to London until yesterday."

Carrados turned to the manager again and indicated Draycott, who so far had remained in the background.

"And this gentleman? Did he by any chance come here on Monday?"

"He did not, Mr. Carrados. But I gave him access to his safe on Tuesday afternoon and again yesterday."

Draycott shook his head sadly.

"Yesterday I found it empty," he said. "And all Tuesday afternoon I was at Brighton, trying to see a gentleman on business."

The manager sat down very suddenly.

"Good God, another!" he exclaimed faintly.

"I am afraid the list is only beginning," said Carrados. "We must go through your renters' book."

The manager roused himself to protest.

"That cannot be done. No one but myself or my deputy ever sees the book. It would be—unprecedented."

"The circumstances are unprecedented," replied Carrados.

"If any difficulties are placed

in the way of these gentlemen's investigations, I shall make it my duty to bring the facts before the Home Secretary," announced the professor, speaking up to the ceiling with the voice of a brazen trumpet.

Carrados raised a deprecating hand.

"May I make a suggestion?" he remarked. "Now, I am blind. If, therefore—?"

"Very well," acquiesced the manager. "But I must request the others to withdraw."

For five minutes Carrados followed the list of safe-renters as the manager read them to him. Sometimes he stopped the catalogue to reflect a moment; now and then he brushed a finger-tip over a written signature and compared it with another. Occasionally a password interested him. But when the list came to an end he continued to look into space without any sign of enlightenment.

"So much is perfectly clear and yet so much is incredible," he mused. "You insist that you alone have been in charge for the last six months?"

"I have not been away a day this year."

"Meals?"

"I have my lunch sent in."

"And this room could not be entered without your knowledge while you were about the place?"

"It is impossible. The door is fitted with a powerful spring and

a feather-touch self-acting lock. It cannot be left unlocked unless you deliberately prop it open."

"And, with your knowledge, no one has had an opportunity of having access to this book?"

"No," was the reply.

Carrados stood up and began to put on his gloves.

"Then I must decline to pursue my investigation any further," he said icily.

"Why?" stammered the manager.

"Because I have positive reason for believing that you are deceiving me."

"Pray sit down, Mr. Carrados. It is quite true that when you put the last question to me a circumstance rushed into my mind which—so far as the strict letter was concerned—might seem to demand 'Yes' instead of 'No.' But not in the spirit of your inquiry. It would be absurd to attach any importance to the incident I refer to."

"That would be for me to judge."

"You shall do so, Mr. Carrados. I live at Windermere Mansions with my sister. A few months ago she got to know a married couple who had recently come to the opposite flat. The husband was a middle-aged, scholarly man who spent most of his time in the British Museum. His wife's tastes were different; she was much younger;

brighter, gayer; a mere girl in fact, one of the most charming and unaffected I have ever met. My sister Amelia does not readily—"

"Stop!" exclaimed Carrados. "A studious middle-aged man and a charming young wife! Be as brief as possible. If there is any chance it may turn on a matter of minutes at the ports. She came here, of course?"

"Accompanied by her husband," replied the manager stiffly. "Mrs. Scott had travelled and she had a hobby of taking photographs wherever she went. When my position accidentally, came out one evening she was carried away by the novel idea of adding views of a safe deposit to her collection—as enthusiastic as a child. There was no reason why she should not; the place has often been taken for advertising purposes."

"She came, and brought her camera—under your very nose!"

"I do not know what you mean by 'under my very nose.' She came with her husband one evening just about our closing time. She brought her camera, of course—quite a small affair."

"And contrived to be in here alone?"

"I take exception to the word 'contrived.' It—it happened. I sent out for some tea, and in the course—"

"How long was she alone in here?"

"Two or three minutes at the most. When I returned she was seated at my desk. That was what I referred to. The little rogue had put on my glasses and had got hold of a big book. We were great chums, and she delighted to mock me. I confess that I was startled—merely instinctively—to see that she had taken up this book, but the next moment I saw that she had it upside down."

"Clever! She couldn't get it away in time. And the camera, with half-a-dozen of its specially sensitized films already snapped over the last few pages, by her side!"

"That child!"

"Yes. She is twenty-seven and has kicked hats off tall men's heads in every capital from Petersburg to Buenos Aires! Get through to Scotland Yard and ask if Inspector Beedel can come up."

The manager breathed heavily through his nose.

"To call in the police and publish everything would ruin this establishment—confidence would be gone. I cannot do it without further authority."

"Then the professor certainly will."

"Before you came I rang up the only director who is at present in town and gave him the facts as they then stood. Possibly he has arrived by this. If

you will accompany me to the boardroom we will see."

They went up to the floor, above, Mr. Carlyle joining them on the way.

"Excuse me a moment," said the manager.

Parkinson, who had been having an improving conversation with the hall porter on the subject of land values, approached.

"I am sorry, sir," he reported, "but I was unable to procure any 'Rubbo.' The place appears to be shut up."

"That is a pity; Mr. Carlyle had set his heart on it."

"Will you come this way, please?" said the manager, re-appearing.

In the boardroom they found a white-haired old gentleman who had obeyed the manager's behest from a sense of duty, and then remained in a distant corner of the empty room in the hope that he might be overlooked. He was amiably helpless and appeared to be deeply aware of it.

"This is a very sad business, gentlemen," he said, in a whispering, confiding voice. "I am informed that you recommend calling in the Scotland Yard authorities. That would be a disastrous course for an institution that depends on the implicit confidence of the public."

"It is the only course," replied Carrados.

"The name of Mr. Carrados is

well known to us in connection with a delicate case. Could you not carry this one through?"

"It is impossible. A wide inquiry must be made. Every port will have to be watched. The police alone can do that." He threw a little significance into the next sentence. "I alone can put the police in the right way of doing it."

"And you will do that, Mr. Carrados?"

Carrados smiled engagingly. He knew exactly what constituted the great attraction of his services.

"My position is this," he explained. "So far my work has been entirely amateur. In that capacity I have averted one or two crimes, remedied an occasional injustice, and now and then been of service to my professional friend, Louis Carlyle. But there is no reason at all why I should serve a commercial firm in an ordinary affair of business for nothing. For any information I should require a fee, a quite nominal fee of, say, one hundred pounds."

The director looked as though his faith in human nature had received a rude blow.

"A hundred pounds would be a very large initial fee for a small firm like this, Mr. Carrados," he remarked in a pained voice.

"And that, of course, would be independent of Mr. Carlyle's pro-

fessional charges," added Carrados.

"Is that sum contingent on any specific performance?" inquired the manager.

"I do not mind making it conditional on my procuring for you, for the police to act on, a photograph and a description of the thief."

The two officials conferred apart for a moment. Then the manager returned.

"We will agree, Mr. Carrados, on the understanding that these things are to be in our hands within two days. Failing that—"

"No, no!" cried Mr. Carlyle indignantly, but Carrados good-humouredly put him aside.

"I will accept the condition in the same sporting spirit that inspires it. Within forty-eight hours or no pay. The cheque, of course, to be given immediately the goods are delivered?"

"You may rely on that."

Carrados took out his pocket-book, produced an envelope bearing an American stamp, and from it extracted an unmounted print.

"Here is the photograph," he announced. "The man is called Ulysses K. Groom, but he is better known as 'Harry the Actor.' You will find the description written on the back."

Five minutes later, when they were alone, Mr. Carlyle ex-

pressed his opinion of the transaction.

"You are an unmitigated humbug, Max," he said, "though an amiable one, I admit. But purely for your own private amusement you spring these things on people."

"On the contrary," replied Carrados, "people spring these things on me."

"Now this photograph. Why have I heard nothing of it before?"

Carrados took out his watch and touched the fingers.

"It is now three minutes to eleven. I received the photograph at twenty past eight."

"Even then, an hour ago you assured me that you had done nothing."

"Nor had I—so far as result went. Until the keystone of the edifice was wrung from the manager in his room, I was as far away from demonstrable certainty as ever."

"So am I—as yet," hinted Mr. Carlyle.

"I am coming to that, Louis. I turn over the whole thing to you. The man has got two clear days' start and the chances are nine to one against catching him. We know everything, and the case has no further interest for me. But it is your business. Here is your material."

"On that one occasion when the 'tawny' man crossed our path, I took from the first a

rather more serious view of his scope and intention than you did. That same day I sent a cipher cable to Pierson of the New York service. I asked for news of any man of such and such a description—merely negative—who was known to have left the States; an educated man, expert in the use of disguises, audacious in his operations, and a specialist in 'dry' work among banks and strong-rooms."

"Why the States, Max?"

"That was a sighting shot on my part. I argued that he must be an English-speaking man. The smart and inventive turn of the modern Yank has made him a specialist in ingenious devices, straight or crooked. Unpickable locks and invincible lock-pickers, burglar-proof safes and safe-specializing burglars, come equally from the States. So I tried a very simple test. As we talked that day and the man walked past us, I dropped the words 'New York'—or rather, 'Noo Yrk'—in his hearing."

"I know you did. He neither turned nor stopped."

"He was that much on his guard; but into his step there came—though your poor old eyes could not see it, Louis—the 'psychological pause,' an absolute arrest of perhaps a fifth of a second; just as it would have done with you if the word 'London' had fallen on your ear in a distant land. However, the whys

and the wherefores don't matter. Here is the essential story.

"Eighteen months ago 'Harry the Actor' successfully looted the office safe of M'Kenzie, J. F. Higgs & Co., of Cleveland, Ohio. He had just married a smart but very facile third-rate vaudeville actress—English by origin—and wanted money for the honeymoon. He got about five hundred pounds, and with that they came to Europe and stayed in London for some months. That period is marked by the Congreave Square post-office burglary, you may remember. While studying such of the British institutions as most appealed to him, the 'Actor's' attention became fixed on this safe-deposit. Possibly the implied challenge contained in its telegraphic address grew on him until it became a point of professional honor with him to despoil it; at all events he was presumably attracted by an undertaking that promised not only glory but very solid profit. The first part of the plot was, to the most skilful criminal 'impersonator' in the States, mere skittles. Spreading over those months he appeared at 'The Safe' in twelve different characters and rented twelve safes of different sizes. At the same time he made a thorough study of the methods of the place. As soon as possible he got the keys back again into legitimate use, having made duplicates for his own private ends, of

course. Five he seems to have returned during his first stay; one was received later, with profuse apologies, by registered post; one was returned through a leading Berlin bank. Six months ago he made a flying visit here, purely to work off two more. One he kept from first to last, and the remaining couple he got in at the beginning of his second long residence here, three or four months ago.

"This brings us to the serious part of the cool enterprise. He had funds from the Atlantic and South-Central Mail-car coup when he arrived here last April. He appears to have set up three establishments; a home, in the guise of an elderly scholar with a young wife, which, of course, was next door to our friend the manager; an observation point, over which he plastered the inscription 'Rub in Rubbo for Everything' as a reason for being; and, somewhere else, a dressing-room with essential conditions of two doors into different streets.

"About six weeks ago he entered the last stage. Mrs. Harry, with quite ridiculous ease, got photographs of the necessary page or two of the record-book. I don't doubt that for weeks before then everyone who entered the place had been observed, but the photographs linked them up with the actual men into whose hands the 'Actor's' old keys had

passed—gave their names and addresses, the numbers of their safes, their passwords and signatures. The rest was easy."

"Yes by Jupiter; mere play for a man like that," agreed Mr. Carlyle, with professional admiration. "He could contrive a dozen different occasions for studying the voice and manner and appearance of his victims. How much has he cleared?"

"We can only speculate as yet. I have put my hand on seven doubtful callers on Monday and Tuesday last. Two others he had ignored for some reason; the remaining two safes had not been allotted. There is one point that raises an interesting speculation."

"What is that, Max?"

"The 'Actor' has one associate, a man known as 'Billy the Fondant,' but beyond that—with the exception of his wife, of course—he does not usually trust anyone. It is plain, however, that at least seven men must latterly have been kept under close observation. It has occurred to me—"

"Yes, Max?"

"I have wondered whether Harry has enlisted the innocent services of one or other of our clever private inquiry offices."

"Scarcely," smiled the professional. "It would hardly pass muster."

"Oh, I don't know. Mrs. Harry, in the character of a jealous wife or a suspicious sweetheart, might reasonably—"

Mr. Carlyle's smile suddenly faded.

"By Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "I remember—"

"Yes, Louis?" prompted Carrados, with laughter in his voice.

"I remember that I must telephone to a client before Beedel comes," concluded Mr. Carlyle, rising in some haste.

At the door he almost ran into the subdued director, who was wringing his hands in helpless protest at a new stroke of calamity.

"Mr. Carrados," wailed the poor old gentleman in a tremulous bleat, "Mr. Carrados, there is another now—Sir Benjamin Gump. He insists on seeing me. You will not—you will not desert us?"

"I should have to stay a week," replied Carrados briskly, "and I'm just off now. There will be a procession. Mr. Carlyle will support you, I am sure."

He nodded "Good-morning" straight into the eyes of each and found his way out with the astonishing certainty of movement that made so many forget his infirmity. Possibly he was not desirous of encountering Draycott's embarrassed gratitude again, for in less than a minute they heard the swirl of his departing car.

"Never mind, my dear sir," Mr. Carlyle assured his client with impenetrable complacency. "Never mind. I will remain in-

stead. Perhaps I had better make myself known to Sir Benjamin at once."

The director turned on him the pleading, trustful look of a cornered dormouse.

"He is in the basement," he whispered. "I shall be in the boardroom—if necessary."

Mr. Carlyle had no difficulty in discovering the center of interest in the basement. Sir Benjamin was expansive and reserved, bewildered and decisive, long-winded and short-tempered, each in turn and more or less all at once. He had already demanded the attention of the manager, Professor Bulge, Draycott and two underlings to his case and they were now involved in a babel of inutile reiteration. The inquiry agent was at once drawn into a circle of interrogation that he did his best to satisfy impressively while himself learning the new facts.

The latest development was sufficiently astonishing. Less than an hour before Sir Benjamin had received a parcel by district messenger. It contained a jewel-case which ought at that moment to have been securely reposing in one of the deposit safes. Hastily snatching it open, the recipient's incredible forebodings were realized. It was empty—empty of jewels, that is to say, for, as if to add a sting to the blow, a neatly inscribed card had been placed inside, and

on it the agitated baronet read the appropriate but at the moment rather gratuitous maxim: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth—"

The card was passed round and all eyes demanded the expert's pronouncement.

"—where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal.' H'm," read Mr. Carlyle with weight. "This is a most important clue, Sir Benjamin—"

"Hey, what? What's this?" exclaimed a voice from the other side of the hall. "Why, damme if I don't believe you've got another! Look at that gentlemen; look at that. What's on, I say? Here now, come; give me my safe. I want to know where I am."

It was the bookmaker who strode tempestuously in among them, flourishing before their faces a replica of the card that was in Mr. Carlyle's hand.

"Well, upon my soul this is most extraordinary," exclaimed that gentleman, comparing the two. "You have just received this, Mr.—Mr. Berge, isn't it?"

"That's right, Berge—'Iceberg' on the course. Thank the Lord Harry, I can take my losses coolly enough, but this—this is a facer. Put into my hand half-an-hour ago inside an envelope that ought to be here and as safe as in the Bank of England. What's the game, I say? Here, Johnny,

hurry and let me into my safe."

Discipline and method had for the moment gone by the board. There was no suggestion of the boasted safeguards of the establishment. The manager added his voice to that of the client, and when the attendant did not at once appear he called again.

"John, come and give Mr. Berge access to his safe at once."

"All right, sir," pleaded the harassed key-attendant, hurrying up with the burden of his own distraction. "There's a silly fat-head got in what thinks this is a left-luggage office, so far as I can make out—a foreigner."

"Never mind that now," replied the manager severely, "Mr. Berge's safe: No. 01724."

The attendant and Mr. Berge went off together down one of the brilliant colonnaded vistas. One or two of the others who had caught the words glanced across and became aware of a strange figure that was drifting indecisively toward them. He was obviously an elderly German tourist of pronounced type—long-haired, spectacled, outrageously garbed and involved in the mental abstraction of his philosophical race. One hand was occupied with the manipulation of a pipe, as markedly Teutonic as its owner; the other grasped a carpet-bag that would have ensured an opening laugh to any low comedian.

Quite impervious to the pre-

occupation of the group, the German made his way up to them and picked out the manager.

"This was a safety deposit, *nicht wahr?*"

"Quite so," acquiesced the manager loftily, "but just now—"

"Your fellow was dense of comprehension." The eyes behind the clumsy glasses wrinkled to a ponderous humour. "He forgot his own business. Now this goot bag—"

Brought into fuller prominence, the carpet-bag revealed further details of its overburdened proportions. At one end a flannel shirt cuff protruded in limp dejection; at the other an ancient collar, with the grotesque attachment known as a "dickey," asserted its presence. No wonder the manager frowned his annoyance. "The Safe" was in low enough repute among its patrons at that moment without any burlesque interlude to its tragic hour.

"Yes, yes," he whispered, attempting to lead the would-be depositor away, "but you are under a mistake. This is not—"

"It was a safety deposit? Goot. Mine bag— I would deposit him in safety till the time of mine train. Ja?"

"*Nein, nein!*" almost hissed the agonized official. "Go away, sir, go away! It isn't a cloakroom. John, let this gentleman out."

The attendant and Mr. Berge

were returning from their quest. The inner box had been opened and there was no need to ask the result. The bookmaker was shaking his head like a baffled bull.

"Gone, no effects," he shouted across the hall. "Lifted from 'The Safe,' by crumb!"

To those who knew nothing of the method and operation of the fraud it seemed as if the financial security of the Capital was tottering. An amazed silence fell, and in it they heard the great grille door of the basement clang on the inopportune foreigner's departure. But, as if it was impossible to stand still on that morning of dire happenings, he was immediately succeeded by a dapper, keen-faced man in severe clerical attire who had been let in as the intruder passed out.

"Canon Petersham!" exclaimed the professor, going forward to greet him.

"My dear Professor Bulgel" reciprocated the canon. "You here! A most disquieting thing has happened to me. I must have my safe at once." He divided his attention between the manager and the professor as he monopolized them both. "A most disquieting and—and outrageous circumstance. My safe, please— yes, yes, Rev. Henry Noakes Petersham. I have just received by hand a box, a small box of no value but one that I *thought*, yes, I am convinced that it was

the one, a box that was used to contain certain valuables of family interest which should at this moment be in my safe here. No. 7436? Very likely, very likely. Yes, here is my key. But not content with the disconcerting effect of that, professor, the box contained—and I protest that it's a most unseemly thing to quote *any* text from the Bible in this way to a clergyman of my position—well, here it is. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth—' Why, I have a dozen sermons of my own in my desk now on that very verse. I'm particularly partial to the very needful lesson that it teaches. And to apply it to *me!* It's monstrous!"

"No. 7436, John," ordered the manager, with weary resignation.

The attendant again led the way towards another armour-plated aisle. Smartly turning a corner, he stumbled over something, bit a profane exclamation in two, and looked back.

"It's that bloomin' foreigner's old bag again," he explained across the place in aggrieved apology. 'He left it here after all.'

"Take it upstairs and throw it out when you've finished," said the manager shortly.

"Here, wait a minute," pondered John, in absent-minded familiarity. "Wait a minute. This is a funny go. There's a

label on that wasn't here before. 'Why not look inside?'"

"'Why not look inside?'" repeated someone.

"That's what it says."

There was another puzzled silence. All were arrested by some intangible suggestion of a deeper mystery than they had yet touched. One by one they began to cross the hall with the conscious air of men who were not curious but thought that they might as well see.

"Why, curse my crumplet," suddenly exploded Mr. Berge, "if that ain't the same writing as these texts!"

"By gad, but I believe you are right," assented Mr. Carlyle. "Well, why not look inside?"

The attendant, from his stooping posture, took the verdict of the ring of faces and in a trice tugged open the two buckles. The central fastening was not locked, and yielded to a touch. The flannel shirt, the weird collar and few other garments in the nature of a "top-dressing" were flung out and John's hand plunged deeper.

Harry the Actor had lived up to his dramatic instinct. Nothing was wrapped up; nay, the rich booty had been deliberately opened out and displayed, as it were, so that the overturning of the bag, when John the key-bearer in an access of riotous extravagance lifted it up and strewed its contents broadcast

on the floor, was like the looting of a smuggler's den, or the realization of a speculator's dream, or the bursting of an Aladdin's cave, or something incredibly lavish and bizarre. Banknotes fluttered down and lay about in all directions, relays of sovereigns rolled away like so much dross, bonds and scrip for thousands and tens of thousands clogged the down-pouring stream of jewellery and unset gems. A yellow stone the size of a four-pound weight and twice as heavy dropped plump upon the canon's toes and sent him hopping and grimacing to the wall. A ruby-hilted kris cut across the manager's wrist as he strove to arrest the splendid rout. Still the miraculous cornucopia deluged the ground, with its pattering, ringing, bumping, crinkling, rolling, fluttering produce until, like the final tableau of some spectacular ballet, it ended with a golden rain that masked the details of the heap beneath a glittering veil of yellow sand.

"My dust!" gasped Draycott.

"My fivers, by golly!" ejaculated the bookmaker, initiating a plunge among the spoil.

"My Japanese bonds, coupons and all, and—yes, even the manuscript of my work on *'Polyphyletic Bridal Customs among the mid-Pleistocene Cave Men.'* Hah!" Something approaching a cachinnation of delight closed

the professor's contribution to the pandemonium, and eyewitnesses afterwards declared that for a moment the dignified scientist stood on one foot in the opening movement of a can-can.

"My wife's diamonds, thank heaven!" cried Sir Benjamin, with the air of a schoolboy who was very well out of a swishing.

"But what does it mean?" demanded the bewildered canon. "Here are my family heirlooms—a few decent pearls, my grandfather's collection of camei and other trifles—but who—?"

"Perhaps this offers some explanation," suggested Mr. Carlyle, unpinning an envelope that had been secured to the lining of the bag. "It is addressed 'To Seven Rich Sinners.' Shall I read it for you?"

For some reason the response was not unanimous, but it was sufficient. Mr. Carlyle cut open the envelope.

"MY DEAR FRIENDS: Aren't you glad? Aren't you happy at this moment? Ah yes; but not with the true joy of regeneration that alone can bring lightness to the afflicted soul. Pause while there is yet time. Cast off the burden of your sinful lusts, for what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? (*Mark, chap. viii., v. 36.*)

"Oh, my friends, you have had an all-fired narrow squeak. Up

till the Friday in last week I held your wealth in the hollow of my ungodly hand and rejoiced in my nefarious cunning, but on that day as I with my guilty female accomplice stood listening with worldly amusement to the testimony of a converted brother at a meeting of the Salvation Army on Clapham Common, the gospel light suddenly shone into our rebellious souls and then and there we found salvation. Hallelujah!

"What we have done to complete the unrighteous scheme upon which we had laboured for months has only been for your own good, dear friends that you are, though as yet divided from us by your carnal lusts. Let this be a lesson to you. Sell all you have and give it to the poor—through the organization of the Salvation Army by preference—and thereby lay up for yourselves treasures where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and

where thieves do not break through and steal. (*Matthew, chap. vi., v. 20.*)

"Yours in good works,
PRIVATE HENRY,
THE SALVATIONIST

"P. S. (in haste).—I may as well inform you that no crib is really uncrackable, though the Cyrus J. Coy Co's Safe Deposit on West 24th Street, N. Y., comes nearest the kernel. And even that I could work to the bare rock if I took hold of the job with both hands—that is to say I could have done in my sinful days. As for you, I should recommend you to change your T. A. to 'Peanut.'

— "U. K. G."

"There sounds a streak of the old Adam in that postscript, Mr. Carlyle," whispered Inspector Beedel, who had just arrived in time to hear the letter read.

HELICOPTER POLICEMAN

Time and time again the New York Police Department helicopter is proving to be bad news for the men who formerly could operate in peace and quiet, undetected by land-bound policemen.

Recently the patrolman assigned to the helicopter spotted three men stripping an outboard motorboat near a Marina in the Bronx. After questioning the men the three finally admitted having stolen nine boats from Oyster Bay and sailing them to the Bronx where they'd stripped them.

Still another time the patrolman had to jump into a Brooklyn marsh to capture two young men who'd gotten away from less mobile policemen.

It's all in the day's work.

bum rap

by Arthur Moore

"PARK IT on the bench, Fogie," says Big Ed, with a wave of his ham-sized hand. "Be with you in a sec."

I do like he says because Big Ed is not only the biggest cop on the force but he has got a temper like a tornado which has hit every house in town but one an' ain't got time to go back. I am only a half-pint, and anyway, I am in the cop house.

"So look who's got cold hands this mornin'," says a nasty voice at the back of my neck. I swivel around and it is Tim Durkin. Durkin is a detective who is glad to see me here on account of he has hauled me in before and ain't made the rap stick yet. "Too bad," he goes on in a raspy voice. "This here joint is losin' class. Nice to see the old pros is givin' us a tumble."

"Hi, Mr. Durkin," I say, real polite.

Durkin looks like a used car salesman. He is standin' in front of me with his hands on his hips and a sneer on his red puss. "What they make you for, Fogie?"

My name is Fogerty but they call me Fogie. "It's a bum one, Mr. Durkin," I tell him. "I am

Those of you who remember the Johnston McCulley stories about Thubway Tham—some of which we have reprinted in this magazine—will welcome the present report on the trials and tribulations of Fogerty, a man fully as misunderstood, and likable, as was Thubway Tham. . . .

picked up on suspicion. Happened a citizen lost some leather near where I am waitin' for a bus."

He clucks his tongue. "Yeah? How much was in the wallet?"

"I didn't dig no leather," I say. "This here is a roust. I am clean as a Kosher lamb chop." I see then that he has got a kid with him. The kid is a skinny, seventeen-year-old mophead with acne and eyes like soft boiled eggs. He is wearin' a checkered shirt and a pair of pants which is too big for him and is probably a hand-me-down from his old man. His shoes is run over at the heels and he ain't wearin' no socks at all. Also he is scared silly.

"Seems like I heard that one someplace," says Durkin, givin' me a fast once-over. My brown suit is pressed and I am wearin' a tie, on account of I wish to look respectable when I am jostlin' a mark. He don't find nothin' to squeal at so he turns away, shovin' the kid onto a chair.

I am some relieved, not that it ain't a bum rap like I said. But the cop house has always been the last place where I would go to duck a atom bomb. I am detained in this here Irish Club-house on account of I have run shy in the luck department. I am settin' up a likely mark near the square when Big Ed comes along just as a stout citizen is slappin' his threads and yellin'

that he has been relieved of his poke. Big Ed don't hesitate. He sees me and even though I could 'of been havin' tea with the Bishop, I am plunked down on the bench here in no time with the sneezer just around the bend.

The whole soaker is on account of Trudie. We are goin' steady for the last nine years and I have finally bobbled her birthday. She is sore as a tiger with green stripes, and I have ducked out the back door, which is a sound move under these circumstances. Trudie has been tossin' out hints as broad as the rear end of a desk sergeant about how she wants one of them little baguette watches with chip diamonds and a dial you have to read under a microscope. This is why I am in the square sizin' up marks.

But I am clean, like I said. Big Ed has put the arm on me before I have a chance to follow through on the pocket prowl. But the kid who is sittin' across from me ain't so lucky. He is watchin' Tim Durkin who is chattin' with another detective, takin' his time and makin' the kid sweat out the visit. I hear Durkin say:

"She's a real beauty, ain't she?" He is holdin' up a watch by the band. "Took this here bauble off the kid there."

The other detective is a bald old timer who is fightin' a type-writer, tryin' to make out a report. He squints at the watch and shakes his head. "Don't pay

for a kid to try t'fence one of them jobs."

Durkin gives the kid a nasty look an' pockets the watch. I am surprised to see it is just the kind which Trudie has been chewin' at me for. I watch him real careful and it goes into his left hand coat pocket.

"He ain't real smart," says Durkin. He speaks to the kid. "You ain't real smart, huh, kid?"

The kid shakes his head, hangin' it down an' not sayin' nothin'.

Durkin says, "Answer me, punk. I talk to you, you answer me."

"I ain't smart," the kid mumbles.

"Mister Durkin."

The kid nods. "I ain't smart, Mister Durkin."

"Now that's better. More polite." Durkin laughs his nasty little laugh. "Whadda you suppose he wanted the watch for, Charlie?"

Charlie rubs his bald head and glances at the kid. "The movies maybe?"

"He's got a better line than that, Charlie. He's got a poor old mother home, she needs medicine and vitamins. How's that for a line?" He lights a cigarette. "You punks gimme a assache with them sob stories."

"It's the truth," mumbles the kid. He looks up fast. "Mister Durkin."

Durkin gets up with a sneer,

draws back his hand like he is gonna swat the kid, and walks across the room to a file cabinet.

The way Durkin draws back his hand reminds me of another cop who did that to me twenty years ago. Only this cop went ahead and swatted me. I am starin' at the kid who is just about my age when I get it in the kisser. I am starin' at the kid only it seems like I am sittin' here starin' at me.

I am pretty sure the kid is tellin' the truth. He has pinched the watch to boost a little moo for the old lady. He looks like he could use a square meal himself. Accordin' to them detectives, the kid has been made when he tries to fence the ticker. That shows he ain't no professional. He shouldn't 'of been that dumb. I have got a strong suspicion this is the kid's first tumble. It don't hardly seem fair for a kid to have to stagger the rest of the road with that there rap hangin' over his head. The pokey ain't gonna reform him none. It sure as hell didn't reform me.

I light a cigarette and think back over the road I have come. I am three times the kid's age, and I have got plenty to show for it. I have got seven clams in my pocket; one suit of clothes and nothin' in the bank. And I am sittin' in the cop house wonderin' if they are gonna roust me over

to Jersey and tell me not to come back.

I am a real success story. And I am a pro who is as good as the next guy at lifting leather. Also, I don't know nothin' else. I am starin' at the kid, wonderin' if he is gonna ride that same gravy train. The way he is lookin' at Durkin, the tough cop who pushes kids around, is makin' up my mind. I am figurin' maybe I can shove my two cents into the deal. They got to have that there watch for evidence. Without it they're goin' to have to throw the case out. The judge is gonna say: "Yes, Detective Durkin, and where is the evidence? You bringin' this kid in here sayin' he stole something? OK, badge boy, what'd he steal?" And Durkin ain't gonna like that.

I can see Big Ed still humped over his desk writin' like he is copyin' the encyclopedia and is only up to G. I get up and stretch a little. Durkin is comin' back from the file cabinet. He flips a butt on the floor and steps on it with his heel.

"OK, wise boy," he says. "Let's us take a walk."

The kid shuffles over to him and Durkin takes his arm, I can see him twistin' it a little. I sidle to the door so they have to go past me. A uniformed copper comes through and Durkin yanks the kid out of the way. In the pushin' I dip easy into Durkin's

left side coat pocket. He don't notice it at all.

I go back to the bench, only now I am lookin' around sharp for a spot to ditch the loot. Durkin is gonna be findin' he ain't got it, and he is gonna be hotter'n a snake with two sets of rattles. With my rep, he is gonna be headin' straight for me.

I spot the water cooler which looks like a snazzy touch. I head for it and am just liftin' a paper cup when Big Ed sees me.

"Gimme one of them," he calls.

I nod and grab another cupful and take it over to him. He has shucked his coat, it is hangin' over the back of his chair.

"Thanks," he grunts and downs the water. I slip the watch into his left coat pocket. Them detectives sure as hell ain't gonna search each other.

"Nother one?" I ask, real polite.

"Naw." He goes back to the paper. Then he looks up. "I called the girlfriend," he says. "She's on her way down."

"Trudie? How come you do that?"

"Lissen, Fogie," he puts down the pencil and leans back in the chair. "I'm levelin' with you. We ain't holdin' you on this here squeal. But you are gettin' a job or we are puttin' you on the train to Jersey. You are gonna be hot in this town, boy."

"But Trudie. . . ."

"She is seein' eye to eye with us, Fogie. You are goin' straight or you are goin' somewhere's else to shack up." He picks up the pencil and I mosey on back to the bench.

The situation is pretty clear. I am losin' not only the big town, I am losin' Trudie. That is a combination I am not gonna beat. Unless I get a job. And any job I am gettin' is gonna be payin' the kind of chicken feed I am makin' in three, four hours in the park.

I am mullin' this over, losin' Trudie for good, and takin' the chance of another slice of stir, when Trudie herself walks in.

She is wearin' her best coat and she has put her hair up. She looks better'n she did when she was hat checkin' at the Carlton. I get up from the bench but she gives me one of them cold-fish eyes and sails on past up to Big Ed.

Tim Durkin comes in right after her. He is alone and he is even redder in the face. He runs at me, grabs my arms and shoves me up against the wall. "Hey!" I yell. "Whassa big idea?"

"Shut up," he growls. He makes me turn around and he is goin' through my pockets like he is slappin' out fires. Big Ed lumbers over and frowns at him.

"What you doin'?"

"This here Goddamned runt picked my pocket!" he snarls. "I'm gonna turn him inside out!"

"Fogie?" says Big Ed.

I shake my head at him. "I ain't done nothin' . . ."

Durkin makes me take off my shoes. "You ain't gettin' away with this, I am throwin' the book at you!"

"What'd he do?" asks Big Ed.

"This here punk lifted that watch!"

"What watch?" Big Ed is bewildered by the whole thing. He has already searched me.

"That damn baguette watch with the diamonds!" says Durkin. He pulls my coat off and goes through it again. He paws through my hair. I glance at Trudie and she is suddenly lookin' scared, like she knows I have got it.

"He ain't got no watch," says Big Ed, huffy. "I already frisked him."

"I ain't got no watch," I tell him. "What kinda jerk would lift a watch offa you in here?"

Durkin is still red in the puss, but he has gone over every square inch of me. He ain't found it. He stares at me suspicious as hell, but I give him my best innocent, open-faced look, the kind I give to the marks. He snarls some more, but what I have said seems to percolate. I am sure as hell not gettin' out of the station house with no watch and he knows it.

He throws my coat back at me and I put it on. Big Ed pushes me to the door. "You re-

member what I said," he says. I nod and Trudie grabs my arm. We are halfway down the hall before I have got my hair combed again.

Outside on the sidewalk Trudie faces me. "Did you lift that watch?" she demands.

"Trudie, darlin'," I say. "I ain't got no watch." She fixes my tie, her black eyes is still a little scared, like she is worryin' that I am not levelin'. I am beginnin' to realize that maybe Big Ed is right. I have got a lot to lose.

"That was the kind of watch I was wantin'," she says, low in her throat. She kisses me on the cheek real quick. "Even if you didn't get it, it was nice of you to try."

I look around, nervous at all the attention, but nobody is noticin'. "I ain't got no watch," I tell her again, like a broken record. "I sure wish I had one, Trudie, darlin'." I let her brush

off my coat. "I am goin' straight from now on."

She stops pawin' me and looks me in the eye. She blinks a lot all of a sudden. "You mean that, Fogie?" She bites her lip. "You really goin' straight? For me?"

"For you, baby," I tell her. "I ain't takin' no chance of us bustin' up. I am goin' straight."

Big Ed's voice booms behind me. "I am glad to hear that," he says, real jovial. I see him wink at Trudie. He has got his hat on like he is goin' home. He puts out his hand and I shake it. "You keep him on that there straight and narrow," he says to Trudie. He tips the hat and walks away.

"I sure will," she says. She grabs my arm and we hustle off down the street. "I don't care about the watch," she says. "I'll make us some spaghetti tonight and we'll celebrate your goin' straight." She sounds real happy.

So I don't give her the watch till after dinner.



*the
usual
way*

by Hal Ellson

THE ARRESTS by the new guard, John Martin, came with almost disconcerting regularity. Naturally they evoked envy among some of the men. Sheer luck, some said. It can't continue.

But it did. Arrest followed arrest, each being added to Martin's thickening folder. Such diligence and efficiency had to come to the attention of his superiors. In command of the force that guarded the piers—eight in all, was Chief Vinson, a tall thin man who carried his authority like a badge. Second in command was Humburt, a short dapper fellow with a reputation for strictness. Both were in the office when the call came through. Jameson picked up the phone.

He took the message and cradled the phone. "That was the senior on Pier Eight," he announced. "Martin just made another arrest."

The Chief and Humburt exchanged glances. "What was it this time?" the chief asked.

"Three-hundred pounds of beef. Truck driver taking it out."

The Chief nodded and again met Humburt's eye. "This fellow Martin must have a crystal ball. What's he like?"

Things happen on our piers at night—and have done so throughout history, whenever and wherever there has been a need for men such as these about whom Hal Ellson now writes. A frequent contributor to SMM, Ellson will be remembered as the author of the best-seller DUKE.

"To tell the truth, he's nothing to look at. A small man, doesn't have much to say and keeps to himself."

"That's not telling me very much. You're supposed to know the men," the Chief snapped. He turned to Jameson now. "Get me Stein."

Jameson picked up the phone, dialed and handed the instrument over. The Chief asked for a brief on Martin. On the other end of the wire Stein cleared his throat, paused, then described Martin much as Humbert had, adding, "The man fooled me."

"What does that mean?" The Chief demanded.

"Just that he doesn't look the part. It takes guts to make all those arrests. The longshoremen have sworn to get him."

"He knows that?"

"Yes, but it doesn't appear to bother him."

"A rare one. Have him come to the office. I'd like to see him." The Chief put down the instrument, lit a cigarette and waited.

Ten minutes passed. The Chief glanced at the clock on the wall. Outside, the wind blew cold across the harbor. Since early evening it had battered the waterfront and piers, moaning at intervals and raising its voice to a demented scream. Now suddenly it dropped off, silence prevailed and deepened. The Chief glanced at the clock again, and a tatoo of footsteps sounded

outside the office. Moments later the door opened. John Martin stepped in.

"You sent for me?"

The Chief nodded. "Yes, have a seat." His eyes went over Martin. Nothing remarkable about the man. In fact, he hardly looked competent.

Seated, Martin folded his hands in his lap. The Chief cleared his throat and said, "Congratulations on another arrest."

"Thank you."

"That was quite a haul tonight. Three-hundred pounds of beef going out in a truck."

"Under the truck," Martin corrected.

"I see." The Chief nodded. "Now tell me, how did you know it was under the truck, and that one in particular?"

"I didn't know," Martin said blandly.

"Ah, I don't think I follow. If you didn't know. . . ."

"It was the driver's face. Something told me to stop him. In this case. . . ."

"What about the others? You made the arrests on the same principle?"

"There were a number of cases. I don't quite remember them all."

The Chief laughed and banged the desk. "A number, you say? Do you know how many?"

"Not exactly. I don't keep count."

The Chief laughed again. "No, I can see you don't. But I'll tell you this, you've made more arrests in the short while you've been with us than any other man in the outfit."

"I've been lucky," Martin shrugged.

"Oh, no. There's more to it than that. All those arrests."

"And all those thieves. The piers are loaded with them."

"Admitted," said the Chief. "Which reminds me. I understand you've been threatened."

Martin nodded.

"You're not afraid?"

"I have a job to do."

"I like your spirit, but let me remind you. We had another man here with a record almost as good as yours. 'They' reached him and he's no longer with us, if you follow me."

"They killed him?"

"Almost. They followed him to the subway and pushed him onto the tracks. Not that I'm trying to frighten you, but be careful."

"I try to be."

"All right, keep up the good work. You can return to your post now."

Martin got up and went to the door. As it closed behind him, the Chief turned to Humburt. "Well, what do you think?" Humburt said.

"An odd duck. He certainly didn't let anything out about himself."

"Or how he made those arrests."

The Chief nodded, turned to Jameson and asked for the folder on Martin. When it was brought to him, he went through it and shook his head. "The fellow never finished high school. Never had a decent job in his life. With that background, I don't know. It doesn't make sense. All those arrests, and he isn't afraid. What do you think?"

"He delivers the goods. We should keep an eye on him."

"That goes without saying."

"If he keeps up the pace, he should get a quick promotion."

The Chief and Humburt exchanged smiles; that also went without saying.

The ordinary and prosaic abounds without end; the incredible, by its very nature, tends to rareness. The series of arrests made by John Martin appeared to be the consequence of sheer luck. This seemed a valid interpretation, considering the man's background. But, oddly enough, the arrests continued and also the threats against Martin. They were not to be taken lightly, yet they didn't appear to disturb him and, strangely, none was carried out. Which, after all, was not very strange. A marked man is a feared man. Undoubtedly word had been passed to watch out for Martin.

But the greedy are unwary,

and thieves must work their trade. A week following Martin's interview with the Chief, he made two arrests within a minute of each other. One arrestee was a longshoreman, the other a gang-boss, a man of evil reputation and leader of a gang of thieves.

The two arrests were brought to the attention of Chief Vinson. "Incredible," that one cried. "I want to see Martin. Send for him."

When Martin entered the office, the Chief congratulated him again, asked him to be seated, gave him a cigarette and lit it for him. That done, he said, "If you don't mind, I'd like to know how you managed two arrests at two different points within a minute."

"I managed it because two different crimes were taking place at the same approximate time and within the vicinity of each other," Martin blandly answered.

"Of course, but how did you know they were taking place, or about to take place?"

The question appeared to stump Martin, but finally he nodded and cleared his throat. "You may not believe this," he began, "but I knew what was going to happen before it happened."

"How?" said the Chief.

"It was a feeling I got. It always happens."

"What kind of feeling?"

"I look at a man and I know he's going to steal."

"That's not explaining much. You mean you operate by intuition?"

"No, it's more than that, more than just feeling. I know when I look at the man. It may be the way he walks, or the look on his face. It's always some physical manifestation that expresses guilt and gives the man away. I'm able to detect the signs and I never ignore them."

"And the two men you arrested today? That's how you did it?"

"Yes, I was standing on the after-deck of the ship on Pier Seven. A man passed me on his way to the off-shore side. He was walking fast, oddly, but it was the look on his face that told me."

"What kind of look was that?"

"A look of guilt."

"And the other man?"

"The same look was on his face. He crossed the deck toward the gangplank, which complicated matters for I was just about to follow the first man. I changed my mind and followed the second one."

"What made you do that?"

"I had to. He was heading toward the gangplank and could have gotten away. I followed him. He didn't go off ship. When he reached the cabin in front of the gangplank, he stepped

inside. I went in after him and saw him go down below to the ship's storeroom. I waited, followed him down and caught him breaking into the stores. He'd just cut a cheese in half and was wrapping it up when he heard me on the stairs. I had him dead-to-rights, so I hustled up the stairs."

"You left him there?" said the Chief.

"Yes, I had his badge-number, so it didn't matter if he ran. Anyhow, I had no time for him. I wanted to catch the other man."

"How did you know where to find him?"

"There were ship stores piled in an alley on the off-shore side of the cabin. It was my belief that he was after them and that that was the place to catch him. But the fellow was quick. He'd already hit the stores by the time I reached them. He'd have gotten away with it, but he lost his nerve, I guess, and started to run. I heard his footsteps on the steel plates and took after him. Trouble was when I reached the alleyway. He was gone."

"Then how did you manage to catch him?" asked the Chief.

"Well, I knew he couldn't have gone far. In fact, judging by distance, there was only one place he could go—the engine room. I caught him halfway down the iron ladder."

"Fine work. Great work," said the Chief. He turned to Hum-

burt and asked for Martin's folder. When it was handed to him, he checked the number of arrests Martin had made and looked up. "An incredible record," he said. "It seems impossible."

If Martin was impressed, he didn't show it. Actually, he seemed impatient to leave, but the Chief had a surprise for him. "A check for your good work," he said, handing it over.

Martin thanked him and started to rise.

"One moment," Humburt put in. "There's a bigger surprise."

Martin sat back again, and the Chief smiled at him. "That's right. A bigger surprise. In fact, it won't be necessary for you to leave."

"What do you mean?" asked Martin, clearly puzzled.

"Just that. As of this moment, you're working in this office."

Martin was stunned. The Chief and Humburt smiled at each other, then at Martin who was still unable to speak.

"Ah, I see you're surprised," said the Chief.

Martin nodded. "I appreciate the offer, but I'm turning it down."

"What?" It was the Chief's turn to look stunned. "Do you realize what you're refusing?"

"I'm well aware, but. . . ."

"Any man in the outfit would seize the opportunity."

"I don't doubt that."

"You won't have to go out on the piers and freeze. You won't have to work very hard. You won't have to deal directly with that scum on the piers. You. . ."

"I'm sorry. I don't mean to appear ungrateful, but. . ."

"You're turning it down. Why? I don't understand."

"It's very simple," answered Martin. "I don't care to work in an office."

"But. . ."

"Besides, I can do more on the piers."

"You could also run into serious trouble. In fact, since you arrested Gilson today, you'll have to watch your step pretty closely. He'll be out to get you, and no two ways about it."

"I know," said Martin.

"Perhaps you better think it over. Take a little time. After all. . ."

"My mind's made up. I'm sorry, and thanks." Martin stood up, buttoned his coat and started for the door. When it closed after him, the Chief and Hum-

burt looked at each other.

"Well, that was a surprise," said the Chief. "Who'd believe anyone would turn down such an offer?"

"I had a feeling he might," Humburt admitted. "A queer duck like that is always unpredictable."

"He's a queer one all right, but don't tell me you believe that story of his about looking at a man and knowing if he's going to commit a crime."

"I don't know," Humburt shrugged. "But all those arrests, it's almost uncanny."

"Unfortunately for him," said the Chief. "If he had accepted the office job. . ."

Humburt lowered his eyes. "Then—"

"It can't be otherwise. At the rate he's going, there's no telling what he may uncover."

Humburt nodded. "When will it take place?"

"Tonight."

"The usual way?"

"Yes, the usual way."

HONG KONG POLICE FORCE INFILTRATED

The recent dismissal of three senior Chinese members of the Hong Kong Police Force as security risks has underlined the force's vulnerability to both Communist and Nationalist Chinese infiltration. Some seventy-five percent of the colony's policemen are Chinese, including seven superintendents and more than three hundred and fifty inspectors. While only a handful of officers have been dismissed for political reasons there is obvious under-surface pressures upon them, fully as much as in the trade unions and in the schools. An example of how high up this reaches was the deportation to China in 1961 of an assistant superintendent who had held the extremely sensitive post of Deputy Commandant of the Police Training School.

*a
way
with
the
ladies*

by August Derleth

DR. WILLIAM POTTS DUVALL was a character who would certainly have been more at home in the pages of a mid-nineteenth century novel than in real life. When finally he came to public notice in Janesville, Wisconsin, back in 1869 he was a man of about forty-five, "rather fine looking, with a well marked nervous temperament, a piercing black eye and long dark hair and whiskers." He carried a fine gold-headed walking stick, comported himself with dignity, and wore gold spectacles, which gave him a "sinister aspect."

The doctor very probably resented this description of him in the *Walworth County Independent*, but at the time he had other things on his mind. He was not really a medical man, though he styled himself "doctor". Thanks to the gratuitous gullibility of people, he had a rather more lucrative profession—he was a faith-healer, a layer-on-of-hands, and doubtless he, like so many of his kind, could produce scores of neurotics who would solemnly swear to the curative powers of his hands.

The doctor's hands had certain other powers, too, though unfor-

August Derleth, while no doubt best known to readers of this magazine for his inimitable Solar Pons pastiches (Ellery Queen once wrote that "in his literary adolescence August Derleth was incurably bitten by the Holmesian bug"), is a widely recognized authority on regionalism in American literature. And, as we saw in DEAR GRACE (SMM, June 1963) on regionalism in murder. . . .

H.S.S.

unately no really adequate exploration of his activities was ever made. He had come into this world as William Duvall Potts, but somewhere along the route of his peregrinations he became sensitive about "Potts" and shifted it to second place to become William P. Duvall. He moved around a great deal. From London, Canada to New Jersey, from Pennsylvania to St. Louis, from Minnesota into Wisconsin. There was a certain morbid method in his course, and he might have kept up with it for an unlimited time had it not been for the dark suspicions of a Janesville constable with the philosophical name of J. W. Plato, who was apparently one of those eminently sensible people capable of entertaining some doubts about layers-on-of-hands and their dubious ilk.

In the course of Dr. Duvall's meanderings across the face of the United States, the poor fellow lost no less than four wives. It was an especially sad occasion for the faith healer when he picked Janesville, Wisconsin, in which to lose his fourth wife, one Elizabeth Moore, affectionately called "dear Libby", whom he had acquired scarcely six months before in Owatonna, Minnesota, against her mother's strenuous objections. "Dear Libby" shuffled off this mortal coil in the night of April 29th, 1869, amid the doctor's inveighings against

heaven at this untimely loss.

Untimely was hardly the word for it. Libby was taken without warning. The doctor had gone about speaking of his wife's poor health, but he had neglected to provide adequate symptoms to prepare their acquaintances for her taking off.

The Duvalls had been living in Janesville for only six weeks when the tragedy took place. They had taken rooms in the third storey of the Borden House. On the evening of the twenty-eighth, the Duvall family, which consisted of three sons and a daughter by Duvall's first—and longest-lived wife—and William O'Keefe, described as Duvall's "business manager", a recent addition, had gone to bed at nine-thirty. They had all been in "the usual health". Yet, at two o'clock, the doctor had been awakened by his wife, who was "tossing her head and groaning". The doctor said she told him, "One of those giddy spells is coming on me." He roused his sons in the adjoining room, and sent one of them for his landlady, Mrs. Phebe Wintermute. By the time that lady reached the Duvall quarters, "dear Libby" had taken leave of her mortal clay.

Dr. Harry Palmer, a bona fide M.D., was summoned. Dr. Duvall confided to his confrere that his wife had died of apoplexy. He said he "had no doubt of the fact," which was

strange, since at the same time he told the undertaker she had died "in a fit," and confided to proprietor Daniel Wilcox of the *Janesville Gazette* that she had died of epilepsy. As a diagnostician, Dr. Duvall was hard to beat; he revealed subsequently that his wife had had a "blind spell", and recalled that his first wife, with whom he had abided no less than eight years, had died of "mercurial rheumatism of the heart".

The faith healer's grief was touching. It was so fulsome, indeed, that constable Plato was convinced it was overdone. The constable kept urging Police Justice Sanford Hudson to hold an inquest without delay; so Hudson summoned a six-man jury and proceeded to hold an inquiry. Dr. Duvall told his story. Like his grief, it was fulsome.

His wife, he said, was but half his age; "for six weeks past"—just the time he had been in Janesville—"her health has not been good; she complained of dizziness, pain in the head, drowsiness. Some days she would be nearly all day in bed and her rest was very much disturbed by nightmares." Moreover, the deceased had some curious habits—like getting up in the night to satisfy her longing "for wine". He admitted he had bought "a bottle of California sherry the day before"; his wife had taken some of it, but there

was nothing in the wine. He bravely tossed off a tumbler of it just to prove his contention. No, "dear Libby" had got up and taken "something else; I did not know what it was."

When he repeated his late wife's words at the inquest, there was some conflict with his earlier story; this time he reported his wife as having said, "My blind spell has come back." Blind "dear Libby" certainly had been six months before, when she trusted herself to Duvall.

Dr. Palmer had given it as his opinion, on preliminary examination, that Mrs. Duvall had died of "tetanic spasms". Her husband disagreed. Dr. J. B. Whiting had been called in. He agreed with Dr. Palmer that there was something uneasily shady about Mrs. Duvall's passing, and a post mortem was suggested.

Dr. Duvall was strenuously opposed to any kind of post mortem examination. He said a post mortem was "unnecessary", since he knew she had died of "apoplexy". Moreover, a post mortem, Duvall averred, would be "hard for the family". Nevertheless, Justice Hudson ordered a post mortem performed. Thereupon the ubiquitous Duvall insisted that he and his family be allowed to remain and watch the procedure; he frankly did not trust "the doctors", who, he maintained, had it in for him because he was so successful at

gulling the public by curing them with mumbo-jumbo instead of medicine. Duvall and his family were with some difficulty removed from the room while a quintet of medical men went about opening up "dear Libby" to see what could be found.

Mrs. Duvall's stomach was removed. Dr. Palmer later testified, substantiated by the testimony of his fellow medical men, that "the upper and lower portions of the stomach were inflamed, and two or three spots of the mucous membrane were softened and destroyed." Heart, lungs, intestines—all were "very healthy". Moreover, Mrs. Duvall had been some five months pregnant. The medical gentlemen came to the conclusion that Mrs. Duvall had died of poison, very probably strychnine; her stomach was sealed into a glass jar and entrusted to Dr. R. B. Treat to be delivered to Professor F. Mahla of the Chicago Medical College for a careful examination.

The inquest, however, did not wait on Professor Mahla's conclusions. Dr. Duvall gave his testimony; the doctors gave theirs. For good measure, Mrs. Phebe Wintermute set forth that Mrs. Duvall had appeared homesick and wished to see her mother. Apparently the doctor would not permit her to go. Yet Mrs. Duvall had "blushed and

said the doctor petted her. She and her husband were very attentive to each other."

As a result of the inquest, the jury decided that "the said Elizabeth Duvall came to her death . . . from the effects of poison taken into the stomach, but how taken, or by whom administered, the jurors were unable to determine."

On the following day William Potts Duvall was arrested and charged with the murder of his wife, on the complaint of the redoubtable Constable Plato. Pending the hearing, to be held as soon as the report from Professor Mahla came back, the layer-on-of-hands was summarily confined in quod. By the month's end, the report had come in; strychnine had been found in the stomach of "dear Libby"; and Dr. Duvall was speedily indicted for poisoning her by the Grand Jury of Rock County.

By this time the hitherto wily faith-healer was crying aloud to high heaven that "the doctors" were in a horrible conspiracy against him; claiming that one of them had slipped strychnine into the stomach in the jar, and that the evidence was purely circumstantial, he demanded a change of venue. This was freely granted. He was taken from Janesville to Elkhorn in Walworth County, and there he sat until March, 1870, when he came

before Judge Lyon for trial.

H. A. Patterson, the district attorney of Rock County, assisted by John R. Bennett for the State of Wisconsin, opposed William H. Ebbetts and George R. Peck of Janesville for the defense. Opposing counsel made brief summaries of their position, and then Mrs. Wintermute was called to the stand solely to testify to the presence of the Duvall family at the Borden House. She was encouraged also to say that "Mrs. Duval's health was good," and that "The doctor was very affectionate to her, more than I believe was real."

The prosecution next produced one Lewis Smith of Hastings, Minnesota, a young man who was described as "an agent for McCormick Reapers". He had known the Duvalls in Hastings. He had seen some affection bestowed upon Mrs. Duvall by the doctor in public, but in private there was some alteration in Duvall's attitude. Smith's room adjoined the Duvalls' and he could not help overhearing something of what went on. "I heard them quarrelling in their room; they were talking about some woman. She accused him of having business with a woman he had no right to. He said he would rather have her dead than prying into his business."

Cross-examination only made Mr. Smith's testimony sound worse. "He said he would not

have her bothering him, and he would make her stop it. She said he could not, he said he could, if he choked her." Later, in public, Dr. Duvall "showed a great deal of attention to her, it was not natural." However, he had "never heard them quarrel before or after but the one time." The best counsel for defense could do was to show that Smith did not "know them very well."

There was a little further delving into the defendant's past. The doctor certainly had a way with the ladies. He had begun by marrying Henrietta Myers back in New Jersey; she had survived no less than eight years after the marriage, long enough to bear Duvall two sons and a daughter before she died of what Duvall called "mercurial rheumatism of the heart". He then married Katherine (Katie) Cleveland; she lasted four years as his spouse. She had been found, the doctor said sadly, "by my children at the foot of the stairs, dying; she was well," he said, and added, "and about to be confined." He was careful to point out that he "was about a hundred feet from her when she fell and died," forgetting that in a previous statement he had said he was out in the yard when his wife fell down the stairs, and had to be called by his children. Thereafter, Katherine ("Katie the second") King; she lasted

only two years, but that was hardly surprising, since she had been "sunstruck as a child" and, besides, the doctor was getting on in years and there were so many unmarried women left in the world.

In all this time the doctor had been moving about, so that there might never be the embarrassing coincidence of having two wives die in the same locality. The third Mrs. Duvall had taken leave of life in St. Louis, which was commendably far from Janesville, Wisconsin. Dead Mrs. Duvalls marked the faith-healer's peregrinations from the east into the middle west. All had died in circumstances which were peculiar, to say the very least, but which lent themselves readily to such fancy diagnoses as "mercurial rheumatism of the heart". The doctor volunteered the information that before becoming a faith-healer, he had "preached some"—no less, indeed, than sixteen years, in a career begun when he was fourteen.

The doctor had managed things to a mathematical nicety insofar as his first three wives were concerned. With time, his ventures in marriage were exactly halved. From eight years with his first wife to four with his second and two with his third. Just why he grew impatient enough with his fourth wife to diminish the margin still fur-

ther one finds nothing to say. Unless, perhaps, it was "dear Libby's" misfortune in becoming pregnant. It was plain that the doctor loved his little family; it was equally plain that it was big enough for him.

The prosecution surprised the defense by offering in evidence a letter Dr. Duvall had attempted to smuggle out of jail by the hand of William O'Keefe, who had called on Duvall in Janesville in May of the preceding year. Charles Hunter, the turnkey, had learned of the transaction and had persuaded O'Keefe to surrender the letter. O'Keefe, by this time somewhat suspicious of Duvall, had given it up. The letter was read to the court, after being carefully identified as the document in question. It had been written to his older son, Fred, but was clearly meant for Robert and Etta as well, and was a curious missive indeed.

"I understand that Putnam, an officer of this city, has gone to Minnesota, the District Attorney having received a letter from some one there that important facts could be obtained there. I am afraid that it is going to involve Ettie in the affair. I got a letter from St. Paul, stating that Ettie made threats against Libby, and said something about me and the other children that led people to believe that neither myself nor any of my

family would be too good to poison Libby. Tell Ettie that she must remember what she said at St. Paul against Libby, and about her, as she may have to testify, and she must be prepared for it. There is no telling where this thing will end.

"You children may have to testify what you know of the death of your mother, and the two Katies. You and Robbie and Ettie must talk the matter over and become familiar with what you shall testify to. I shall expect you to testify correctly as far as you know. Of your mother, you can only say that you were too young to remember, but that you learned from your father that she died with rheumatism in the heart; that she was two weeks very bad. You don't remember any more.

"Of Katie the second mother, you can remember that she fell down a flight of stairs early in the morn, and that she was found by you children at the foot of the stairs dead. That your father was at that time with a near neighbor in his garden, it was in July. Of Katie the third you will remember that she was sun struck, first when a child, last June, the 28th, at Quincy, and nearly died after severe illness from it. Your time is short, be diligent and prepared, talk it over much. Stick to the truth and you can't fail. You, Ettie, and Robbie, must get together

and mature this well, so that you can answer everything readily and not contradict each other. You will be examined separately and one will not hear the other's testimony. If asked if we went with any other name, you will have to answer, and state that the name was changed because of the low words bad boys would associate with the name."

The "important facts" were nothing more than those pertinent to Duvall's extreme unpopularity. His brother-in-law, W. A. Sterling, testified that Duvall had stayed at his home and there met his wife's sister, Libby Moore. Duvall had called himself "a natural healer". He said he thought Duvall "was not acting proper to Libby before they were married. . . . I objected to the marriage. . . . He would not allow her to write a letter without his knowing the content. He was very jealous of her. He said he could go out on the prairie and obtain the root of a weed, which was deadly poison; he had learned it from the Indians."

Duvall's way with the ladies distinctly displeased the Minnesotans who knew him. "A petition was got up by some one and signed by seventy-two citizens asking him to leave town. A threat was made also telling him to beware of tar and feathers. A crowd of men came to my house at ten o'clock at night," Sterling went on, "and demanded

Dr. Duvall. I told them they could not see him. They said they would see him and proceeded to break down the door. I shot a man in the crowd; the man is living. The doctor offered me no assistance. I was prosecuted for the shooting and was acquitted."

The doctor threw out several suggestions that his wife had committed suicide, but there was so little basis for this that only the *Chicago Times* played it up, and even Duvall's counsel handled it very gingerly. The doctor's children were staunch believers in his innocence; it had never occurred to them that a man who could carry on a sanctimonious and pious vocation of preaching the gospel and curing by the laying-on-of-hands could be guilty of any serious breach of the peace. It seems never to have occurred to them, either, that the mortality rate among the wives of William Potts Duvall was unusually high.

The implications of Dr. Duvall's career were fascinating. The *Chicago Post* sent a reporter up to interview him. His account of the doctor revealed still other aspects of Duvall's personality. "He said he was a persecuted man, and this trouble was all the work of his enemies, the 'doctors'; that the people of Janesville were very low-minded, and had sworn falsely against him; the first night he was brought to

jail, he appeared very cheerful, sang songs and talked freely; but since the night before last he has become depressed and low-spirited." The reporter disclosed that the doctor was a "great writer" who "spends most of his time in writing letters, and composing poems; since his incarceration, he has composed a complete book of poems, and also a medical work entitled *The Highway to Life*," which ought to have been interesting indeed, considering that Dr. Duvall appeared to have been far more active along the highway to death than that of life, though no one could say he had not had his own full share, having outlived no less than four wives.

The doctor, said the *Post*, "keeps a picture of his dead wife in his cell all the time; speaks of her very affectionately, and when her name is mentioned always sheds tears. He still has the same proud and dignified bearing he had when first arrested, but long confinement and trouble have changed his looks. . . . It is indeed a sad, sad sight. He is a strange man—one that is a study beyond human comprehension, and is either an awfully persecuted man, in which case he should have retribution, or else he is the guiltiest of the guilty, and there is no punishment too severe for him to suffer. We will let the jury decide as a human tribunal. They

may be wrong; but there is a Judge in the better world above who reads the hearts of men, who cannot err, and who will reward the innocent and punish the guilty."

This may have given Duvall some small cold comfort. The trend of the trial did not. Counsel for defense harped constantly on the fact that only circumstantial evidence stood against the defendant; in this, Duvall's counsel could not be denied. The evidence was purely circumstantial. It was established beyond reasonable question at the trial that Duvall was unfailingly kind and affectionate to his wife in public; but that there were some acrimonious differences of opinion in private. Beyond this, however, and beyond the fact that "dear Libby" had very definitely died of strychnine poisoning, there was no single conclusive fact brought out at the trial.

Yet the circumstantial evidence added up to factors which, in the light of the doctor's previous experience with his wives, convinced the judge that Duvall's guilt was certain enough. The doctor was his own worst witness. His contradictions, his anxiety that he be not misunderstood, his accusations of prejudice, his vagueness, his admission that he alone had been with his wife during all the time in which she could have taken

poison, his insistence that she had got up and taken something at the same time that he said he slept like a cat, wakening at the slightest sound—all these led but to one conclusion: either "dear Libby" had made away with herself, which was incredible, since she had looked forward to becoming a mother; or else she had somehow got poison into her stomach by some hand other than her own.

There was considerable todo at the trial about "antimonial wine". On second thought, Dr. Duvall suggested that the sherry he had obligingly bought for his wife at Curtis's Drug Store was "antimonial wine". This Dr. G. W. Chittenden described on the witness stand as "composed of antimony and wine. Antimony," he went on, "is considered an irritant poison; it is frequently used as an emetic." Alas! for the defendant; he had made such a point of it at the inquest and at the trial that there had been no vomiting whatsoever.

Under cross-examination, Dr. Chittenden patiently explained that, while antimonial wine was not labelled poison according to law, "if given constantly it would destroy the appetite; it would take at least five liquid ounces to destroy life." Dr. Treat added that "if Mrs. Duvall had taken continued doses of antimonial wine, she would be depressed, have nausea, perhaps vomiting,

and but little appetite." Here, too, Dr. Duvall's loquaciousness served him ill; he had constantly stressed his wife's craving appetite.

Duvall had made such a point of his wife's desire for food. On the night of her death, he testified, "twenty minutes" after retiring, she had got up. "She went to a trunk; I do not know what she got there. When I next awoke, it was from her struggle for breath," said the faith-healer, inferring, of course, that his wife, who had come to bed after "playing on the piano, and singing some, in the parlor," had got the fatal dose from the trunk and taken it, without suggesting how it might have got there or why she might have wanted to take it.

By Saturday morning, March fifth, District Attorney Patterson commenced his argument for the prosecution. It was a long argument. It lasted through Saturday morning and into the afternoon when court had to be adjourned because "it was found the courtroom floor was giving way beneath the great pressure of human weight, the weight of evidence, or the legal power present"; it was resumed Monday morning and closed at noon. The *Walworth County Independent* characterized it as "a strong case". He was followed by Messrs. Peck and Ebbetts for the defense, who occupied that

afternoon, that evening, and Tuesday morning. The prosecution again took a hand Tuesday afternoon, but by late in the day, the judge charged the jury.

Judge Lyon pointed out with strict impartiality that "the testimony upon which the counsel for the prosecution ask you to find the defendant administered the poison to his wife is entirely circumstantial, or presumptive in its character. That is to say, no witness testifies that he saw the defendant administer to her the fatal draught, but the prosecution has given evidence tending to show, and which, it is claimed, does show the existence of various facts and circumstances which, in the aggregate, repel the presumption of the defendant's innocence, and from which you are asked to infer that he is guilty of the crime charged in the indictment." He went on to show that no evidence had been adduced to prove that Duvall had ever possessed strychnine, though he could very well have brought it with him into Janesville. He scored the absence of motive. Yet he remained entirely impartial in his long charge, and the jury was deeply impressed.

They were out until the tenth. On that day they brought in their verdict: "Guilty of murder in the first degree." Counsellor Ebbetts immediately made a motion for an arrest of judgment,

claiming a defect in the indictment. Judge Lyon refused to decide the point and referred the case to the Supreme Court. Duvall thereupon had a further reprieve and languished in the county jail for yet another summer.

It was October before the Supreme Court of Wisconsin decided that the indictment of Duvall was valid and directed the imposition of sentence by the circuit court. The *Janesville Gazette* was jubilant. "The sanctimonious, hypocritical villain has finally reached his reward, and will doubtless spend the balance of his days within the prison walls at Waupun. The punishment seems almost too light for the offense of deliberately taking the life of a young wife by the cowardly method of administering poison, yet there is hope that time will bring that remorse of conscience which will entail sufficient punishment on the perpetrator of this fearful crime."

On the twenty-second of the month, a Saturday, Judge Lyon returned to Elkhorn for the purpose of sentencing Duvall. The prisoner came in under the escort of the sheriff. "His bearing was calm, but he was very pale." He did not remain calm. When his counsel failed in a motion

to arrest judgment, the defendant himself arose and asked for a new trial on the ground that "the verdict was against the evidence, his guilt not being proved." Judge Lyon pointed out that the court could not and would not grant a new trial unless important new evidence had been discovered; none had.

Duvall then rose and read an address of two hours in length. It was nothing less than an autobiography. "I stand here," he cried, "with a dagger in my heart, and I am trying to get it out." He lifted his eyes and his hands toward heaven and boldly declared "The tallest angel at the throne of God in heaven is not more innocent of this crime with which I am charged, than am I." His eloquence was touching, but somewhat too late. Judge Lyon conceded that Duvall's appeals "touched" his heart, but inexorably sentenced him to life imprisonment at Waupun.

The doctor, every appeal having failed, received his sentence "with composure". He was forthwith removed to Waupun, and there he stayed. He might have remained free to ply his successful way with the ladies if he had not been in such unseemly haste to make away with "dear Libby" within the jurisdiction of the philosophical Plato.

*what's
new
in
crime*

by Stefan Santesson

JOHN J. MALONE is so close to being a part of the folk-myths of our times that there are no doubt people who will not be startled by PEOPLE VS. WITHERS & MALONE, by Stuart Palmer and Craig Rice (Simon & Schuster, \$3.50). They have known all along that Hildegard Withers and John J. Malone did meet and did on several occasions help to complicate the lives of quite a number of people. Those who did not read the stories when they first appeared will welcome their appearance with the same enthusiasm with which John J. Malone has been known to entertain a beautiful client—or suspect—particularly when he can't afford to do so. The reactions of Hildegard Withers to this are understandable.

There are no doubt purists who will feel that, undoubtedly due to Malone's sobering influence upon her, Miss Withers is no longer the formidable cross (or was it hair-shirt?) that Inspector Piper in his day had reason to tremble at the sight of . . . and still does. Hildegard Withers is mellowed, perhaps by the challenge represented by Malone's personality. This is particularly noticeable in the last stories, completed by Stuart Pal-

Mr. Santesson continues his column on recent novels and other books in which readers of SMM may be interested. The writer, editor of this magazine since 1956, edited the Unicorn Mystery Book Club during 1945-'52.

mer after Craig Rice's death, working from her notes, wherein the one-time school teacher continues to get Malone and herself out of the sort of situations he has lived with all his life.

Ellery Queen has this to say about Craig Rice in his Introduction: "Oh how she is missed these unfunny days: she was a wild, wacky, wonderful woman; she was gay, impulsive, generous, often reckless; she was fearful and courageous; and she was foolish and wise beyond her years." This is a tribute to the courageous and the lonely and the unorthodox personality that was Craig Rice which I suspect she would have chuckled over, perhaps in Tallulah's inimitable way. But much of all this does come through in these stories which I hope you will all read.

And may I also recommend, if **VENDETTA FOR THE SAINT** has caused you to be curious about Alessandro Destamio's friends and colleagues, that you write to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, for the text of the Hearings on Organized Crime and Illicit Traffic in Narcotics which were held this past fall in Washington before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations, better known as the McClellan Com-

mittee. I am perfectly aware of the fact that it is fashionable to minimize or underplay the very real importance of hearings such as these. We are, as a people, not too interested in matters which do not seem to have any bearing upon our own lives, and therein lies the very real danger to our society and to our ways of life, whether or not we like to admit this.

Let me underline what I mean . . . Robert Neville, writing about Alessandro Destamio's business associates in an article, **THE NEW MAFIA IS DEAD-LIER**, published in the *New York Times Magazine* for January 12, 1964, points out that by now the Mafia is "a way of life, a state of mind, a concept of society more than an organization." (p. 35). Those who have *not* read Mr. Charteris' novel will no doubt be startled when Mr. Neville describes Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister of World War I, as not objecting "to being billed in electoral campaigns as the friend of the Mafia" (p. 24) or when he quotes Indro Martinelli, the Italian journalist, as stating flatly that one Mafia leader "could get through on the telephone without trouble to the regional president, the prefect, the cardinal-archbishop of Palermo and any deputy or mayor of Sicily any time he wanted." (p. 28). This is simply the way things have been.

And in the more than six hundred pages of testimony by Joseph Valeche and others before the McClellan Committee there is ample documentation of the reality that this sort of thing isn't just happening in Palermo or somewhere else—or in a novel—where “it doesn't really concern us”. This, if I may put it that way, has come to be a part of the way of life of too many among us, and this is a reality which it is important that we both recognize and understand if Organized Crime's influence over the lives of men and women and children whom we, wherever we may live, see in the streets daily, is ever to be broken!

This should be required reading for law enforcement officers and for teachers and for officials at all levels and for all of us citizens who are concerned at the dangers to our society spotlighted at these hearings—and all too quickly forgotten by the general public. Send a check for \$3.75 to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, for the first two volumes. You will thank me for suggesting that you do so!

Ellery Queen's *THE PLAYER ON THE OTHER SIDE* (Random House, \$3.95) is the first new novel about Ellery and his father in five years.

This is news in any language and good news to the many for

whom Ellery Queen is a very real person, someone whom it sometimes seems they've known all their lives.

A beautifully plotted—and logical—study of a murderer, *THE PLAYER ON THE OTHER SIDE* should particularly interest not only those readers who would like to be challenged in the way too few novels do challenge the reader in these days, but also those professionally interested in the personalities of men such as the murderer. If you haven't already read it, do so. I prophesize that you will retire happily to your favorite chair, delighted by this newest addition to the Queen saga! Recommended!

Michael Gilbert's study of the community that is Melchester Close is an interesting contribution to the social history of these times. *The Cathedral Close* described in *CLOSE QUARTERS* (Walker, \$3.50) represents a way of life the survival of which many may not be aware of . . . Very much a classic detective story. Recommended.

Francis Swann's *THE BRASS KEY* (Simon & Schuster, \$3.50) will on the other hand seem to some to be a disturbingly realistic piece of off-the-beaten-tracks Americana, as in a sense it is. Seco, Maine, is not the Maine the tourists know. Do read this.

human reaction

by Randall Garrett

THE AIRCAB, moving several hundred feet above the tops of the buildings of New York City's Upper West Side, finally came to the address it was heading for. Carefully, the cabbie dropped out of the traffic pattern and settled to the landing area on the broad roof of the Giffer Building.

Two figures stepped out. One of them, a fairly tall, heavy-shouldered man, leaned into the front window. The cabbie handed him a receipt from the meter. The big man wrote his badge number on it, and, beneath that, signed: *J. F. Blaze, Lt., NYPD*. He tore off the part with his signature on it, handed it to the cabbie, and put the other part in his pocket.

As he walked towards the penthouse foyer that was the upper entrance of the building, the aircab lifted again and rejoined the traffic pattern.

Without looking at the somewhat smaller, leaner figure who followed him, Blaze said: "Now remember, I'll handle the questioning. You just listen and make notes. And remember, you're Detective Miller. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said the other. "I remember. It will not be neces-

It is a little difficult to adequately describe Randall Garrett. A remarkably gifted writer who has made his name in s-f; his most recent novels are UNWISE CHILD (Doubleday) and the forthcoming HOME IS THE HUNTER (Pyramid), Mr. Garrett is also the author of POPE JOHN XXIII: PASTORAL PRINCE and A GALLERY OF SAINTS (Monarch).

sary for me to take notes. I will remember everything they say or do."

Blaze stopped abruptly and looked at Miller. "I know that, damn it! But I don't want *them* to know it. As far as they're concerned, you're just another cop. Understand? If you look like you're taking notes, they won't suspect you're anything but that. Understand?"

"I understand."

"All right then. Come on." Blaze started walking again.

The two of them pushed open the doors that led into the penthouse foyer. Blaze glanced at the building directory on the wall as he went by, but only out of habit. He knew where he was going.

There was a uniformed policeman standing by one of the elevators—Number Four, at the far end of the bank of doors. As he saw Blaze coming towards him, he put his hand in his jacket pocket for a moment, then took it out, empty. He snapped a salute at Lieutenant Blaze.

"Take this elevator, sir," he said. "We've put a blanker on the control circuits of the others so they won't stop at the seventh floor."

"Fine," said Blaze. "Has the medic squad come yet?"

"Not yet, sir. They said there'd be some delay. Accident on the Flatbush-Yonkers Express—somewhere around 160th."

"All right. Who's in charge down there now?"

"Sergeant Becerra."

"O.K. You've already warned him we were coming." It wasn't a question, the way he said it. It was a flat statement.

The cop turned a little red. "Well, I—"

"Don't worry," Blaze interrupted. "All I want you to do is warn me if and when Inspector Brockton shows up. For the same reason. Understand?"

The cop smiled nervously. "Yes, sir."

"Fine. Only when the inspector comes, don't be so obvious about it. Don't stick your hand into your jacket pocket that way. Put the push button of your radiophone on the outside, so you can push it through the cloth. Then you just have your hand at your side, and nobody notices you're pushing the button. Got it?"

"Yes, sir." The cop looked more nervous than ever.

"Fine. And if I ever catch you doing that again, now that I've showed you how to keep from getting caught, I'll have you walking a beat in Kew Gardens. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fine." Blaze stepped into Number Four elevator, followed by the silent Miller. He touched the 7 panel, the door closed, and the elevator began to drop.

Miller said: "Why did you

tell the officer how to signal without getting caught? He isn't supposed to do that."

Blaze looked at him. "No. No, he isn't. But there's no way we can stop him, is there? Every cop carries a phone. It's a necessary part of his equipment. He's supposed to use it only for necessary communications, not for private calls or for signalling with the push button. But there's no way of preventing him from pushing that button unless we take the phone away from him, is there?"

"No," said Miller. His voice was emotionless, almost toneless.

"What he did was harmless," Blaze went on. "He was breaking a rule, though, and I caught him at it. I had to let him know that he wasn't putting anything over on me. Understand?"

"Will you report him for the infraction of the rules?" Miller asked.

Blaze looked exasperated. "Why? I couldn't prove anything. Not a damn thing. Besides, as I said, it was harmless."

"Inspector Brockton will know he is signalling, then," Miller went on, pursuing the subject with relentless single-mindedness. "Even if the officer gives no indication, the inspector will know."

"Sure he will," Blaze said. "But he won't be able to prove it, either. It's one of those things that everybody does, even if it's

against the department's rules."

"Then why are such rules passed?" asked Miller. "It isn't logical to pass a rule when you know it won't be obeyed."

"That's just the way human beings do things," Lieutenant Blaze said, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice. "We don't think things out with machine-like precision. The people who make the rules sometimes think they will be obeyed even if they can't be enforced."

"I understand," said Miller.

The elevator door slid open. The two of them stepped out into a hall full of uniformed police.

A man wearing sergeant's stripes came over to them. He was a large, dark-eyed man in his late thirties who weighed maybe twenty pounds more than he should. He saluted Blaze in a friendly manner, then glanced at Miller. He looked back at Blaze, did a double-take, and looked back at Miller. Then he looked back at Blaze again.

It was as though he were watching a tennis match.

He started to say something, but Blaze cut him off with a fast, sharp sentence that was just a shade too loud. "Becerra, this is Detective Miller."

Becerra said: "I didn't recognize—" Then he stopped.

"Didn't recognize him out of uniform?" Blaze covered smoothly.

"Yeah," said Becerra. "Yeah." He looked again at Miller and smiled an uncomfortable smile. "Congratulations on the promotion—uh—Miller."

"Thank you," said Miller, giving the sergeant a blank, meaningless smile.

Becerra took his eyes away hurriedly. "Want to take a look at the room?" he asked Blaze.

"Yeah. Let's see what happened."

Becerra led the way down a hall. Blaze and Miller followed briskly. As soon as the three of them were out of earshot of the policemen standing around the elevators, Becerra whispered to Blaze: "How come you're using the zombie on this case, Lieutenant?"

The lieutenant stopped dead in his tracks. "God damn it, Sergeant," he said in a low, angry voice, "you've been told not to use that word."

"Sorry, Lieutenant. It slipped out."

"Becerra, a cop should have better control over his God damn tongue! Let a word like that slip to the newsies, and we'd never be able to live it down! Get it through your head that a robot is just a machine—like your air-car or your pistol. He's a tool, that's all. Just a tool. Understand?"

"Sure, sure. I said I'm sorry, Lieutenant."

"O.K. Let's go. And remember,

I don't want any of these people to know that Miller is a robot. You behave towards Miller just like you would towards any other cop. I don't mean you have to like him. Hell, there are a lot of cops that you or I don't particularly like. But we don't let civilians know that. Understand?"

"I got you, Lieutenant," Becerra said. "I got you."

They went on down the hall to a double door marked with gold letters:

*SHELDON, MEYERS,
LINDSEY & ACTON
MAGNETO-INERTIAL
SYSTEMS
GRAVITIC ENGINEERING*

Becerra pushed open the door and went in. Blaze and Miller followed him. "Let's take a look at the body first," Blaze said. "I'll ask questions later."

"Over this way," said Becerra.

There were two doors. One of them was marked: *B. D. Sheldon*. To its right was the second, marked: *F. P. Meyers*.

Sheldon's door was open. As the three went in, they could see that there was an interconnecting door between the two offices. That, too, was open.

"Looks as though somebody set off a bomb," Blaze said.

"You might say that," Becerra agreed wryly.

"What does it look like to you,

Miller?" Blaze asked without looking at the robot.

Miller looked around carefully. Both of the human officers watched him out of the corners of their eyes.

Miller looked human enough. The tough but pliable plastic that covered his steel skull was as good an imitation of human flesh and skin as could be devised, and the artificial muscles beneath the surface gave the robot the ability to produce very human expressions. But now he had a blank poker-face as he looked around the room.

After perhaps twenty seconds of inspection, Miller began talking in a low, almost conversational tone.

"The damage was not caused by a chemical explosive such as dynamite or TNT. Nor by any nuclear explosive. There are the remains of a magneto-inertial transducer inside the desk. It was in the drawer of the desk, right over there." He pointed with a very human-looking finger.

"When it malfunctioned, it lifted the heavy plastic top right off the desk and smashed it against the ceiling. You can see the pieces of the top all over the room. It shattered when it hit.

"The rest of the desk is metal. It didn't move. A transducer like that has the property of pushing against a non-conductor just as an explosive would, but when the force hits a conductor, such

as metal, it sets up eddy currents instead and dissipates itself as heat. It throws a piece of plastic or glass, but it heats up a piece of metal. Look at the ash-tray and the desk calendar."

He pointed towards a glass ash-tray imbedded in one wall and a metal calendar that lay on the floor next to the desk. Its blackened face showed the date: *3 July 1991.*

Sergcant Becerra said nothing, but his face plainly showed that he had reasoned out the whole thing long before. As a matter of plain fact, the operation of a magneto-inertial transducer was so well known that any reasonably intelligent layman would have been able to see that such a device had caused the damage.

The body behind the desk gave further evidence. Human flesh is neither a very good conductor nor a very good insulator. It partakes of both qualities. Therefore, the body hadn't been pushed as hard as the glass ash-tray, nor had it been heated up as much as the metal of the desk.

The body lay crumpled against the base of the wall, collapsed on top of an overturned metal deck chair. It had obviously been slammed against the wall and then fallen. The dead man, however, didn't show the healthy pink of a living man nor yet the bluish colour of a dead man.

The body had been enough of a non-conductor to be shoved

backwards against the wall, and enough of a conductor to be cooked all the way through.

"Body been identified?" asked Blaze.

"Yeah. It's Sheldon."

"What's the run-down on him?"

Becerra pulled a notebook out of his jacket pocket and began leafing through it. He stopped when he came to the page he was looking for. Then he began reading.

"Sheldon, Benjamin Dayton. Forty-three years old. Senior partner of the firm. Widower. Wife died in '86." He looked up at Blaze. "Haven't had a chance to find out what killed his wife yet. According to one of his partners, Lindsey, it was cancer. I'll find out for sure." He looked back at the notebook. "He has—had—whatever it is—one son, Robert, nine. Being taken care of by an aunt—wife's sister—in Garden City, Long Island." He closed the notebook and returned it to his pocket. "That's all I got so far, Lieutenant."

"Uh-huh." Blaze looked down at the floor at the broken pieces of the heavy plastic desk top and the litter of papers which had been carried up with it and scattered when the top broke and fell. He looked up at the ceiling. The imprint of the spot where the desk had hit was plainly visible in the soft acoustic tile that covered the ceiling.

He could see the smashed remains of a desk clock that had been carried up with it and were still imbedded there. "A hell of a mess," he said. "A hell of a way to kill somebody." He looked down at the body again, then at Becerra. "What about the guy who got hurt? Where was he?"

"Meyers? He was over there." He pointed towards the door that communicated between the two offices. "Either the door was already open or he'd just opened it. According to Lindsey, the third partner, Meyers was lyin' right about here." He indicated a spot. "His feet were about six feet from the door, and his head was near the desk over there. He was lying on his back, Lindsey said."

"You only have Lindsey's word for that, then?" Blaze asked.

"No. His and the doctor's." Then he stopped, frowning. "Come to think of it, Lieutenant, you're right. What happened is this: Lindsey was in his office—that's across the big outer office out there, on the other side—and he heard the noise when this thing went off. Or, so he says. He came running in here. He saw Sheldon dead and Meyers looking pretty bad off. Didn't know if he was dead or not. So he knew better than to touch anything, so he called a doctor. Name of Gripsholm. Then he called us. He said he thought it was an accident."

"Oh?" Blaze looked speculative for a moment. "Go on."

"Yeah. Well, anyway, the doctor got here first. He's got an office on the floor above, and he knows these people. Came right down, he says. I got the times they gave me down here in the . . ."

Blaze waved him down. "Never mind. I can get times later. Go ahead."

"Well, this Dr. Gripsholm said he found Meyers lying right there—" He pointed again. "—but, come to think of it, Lindsey could've moved him before the doctor got here."

"Sure," Blaze said, as though it didn't matter much. "Then what happened?"

"Gripsholm and his nurse had brought down a stretcher. They put Meyers on that and carried him over into the other room—it's a sort of conference room and has a couch in it. Then Gripsholm called the hospital. The ambulance carried him to St. Luke's, over on 114th and Amsterdam. They left just a few minutes before you got here."

"They didn't touch anything else?" Blaze asked.

"Said not," Becerra told him. "Not in Sheldon's room, anyway. They knew he was dead, so they knew not to touch anything."

"Got any idea how badly Meyers is hurt?"

"Dr. Gripsholm said there were first and second degree

burns all over the front of his body. He'll probably live, but he'll have a tough time of it."

"Have you had the room photographed?" Blaze asked.

"Yeah, Lieutenant. We got fifty shots, from every angle. But just the routine shots. Anything special you want?"

Instead of answering, Blaze turned to the silent robot, Miller. "What do you think, Miller?"

"I think the standard shots would be enough. I will look the room over very carefully. Anything that has been missed in the standard shots can be reproduced afterwards from my visual memory bank, if that proves necessary."

"Go to it," Blaze said.

Miller went back into the room where Benjamin Sheldon's body lay amid the wreckage.

"Is that right?" Becerra asked in a low tone. "I mean, can he remember everything he sees and then reproduce it exactly from memory?"

"That's right," Blaze said.

"Will it hold up in court?"

"Sure. Why not? It's all in his memory bank. And that's not in his head, you know; his brain is actually in the Bell-Coupling Building, and it's half as big as this room. Everything he sees goes down on tape, just like a taped television programme. Why wouldn't it hold up in court?"

"Oh," said Becerra. He grinned

rather lopsidedly. "I had a picture in my mind of him drawing it all from memory. *That* wouldn't stand up in court."

"Trouble with you, Becerra," the Lieutenant said with a trace of acid in his voice, "is that you keep thinking of him as human."

"No, sir, I don't," the sergeant said firmly. "I was just thinking that a lot of photographers are going to be thrown out of work. Why take any photos at all if 'Miller' can remember all the details?"

Before Blaze could answer, there was a knock on the door.

"Yeah?" said Blaze.

A man opened the door and put his head in.

"Hi, Lieutenant. Where is he?"

It was Dr. Thurmond, of the Medic Squad, a deputy medical examiner.

Blaze grinned. "'Bout time you got here. Let's go in and get an expert opinion."

"What do you think?" Lieutenant Blaze asked 'Detective Miller' half an hour later. He and the robot were standing in the big outer office of the engineering firm. Around them were several desks covered with shrouded typewriters, where the office staff worked during the daytime.

"I have not yet arrived at any conclusion," said the robot. "I do not, as yet, have sufficient

data to produce a coherent logic chain."

"Was it murder or an accident?" Blaze asked. No one could overhear them. There were technicians working in the room where the death had occurred, lab men from headquarters who were making precise measurements of the damage and, most important, looking over the mechanism that had caused the destruction. But none of them could hear the conversation between Blaze and the robot.

"I have not yet obtained enough data," Miller said. "I can not yet form a logic chain."

Blaze shrugged. "All right. Let's go in and talk to the other two partners. Get your notebook out."

Blaze rapped on the door of the conference room. A uniformed officer opened the door. "How are they?" Blaze whispered.

"Fussin' and fumin'," Lieutenant, the cop said. "They're kinda tired of sittin' there."

"Have you got a complete record?"

The cop patted his pocket. "Sure have, Lieutenant. My recorder's been goin' since Sergeant Becerra told me to keep 'em in the room. Still going."

"O.K. I'm turning mine on. We'll go in and ask a few questions. You stay out here."

The cop nodded. Blaze walked into the conference room, fol-

lowed by Miller. The cop on guard shut the door behind them.

Blaze took off his hat and smiled in his pleasantest manner. "I'm Lieutenant Blaze of Homicide North," he said diplomatically. "This is Detective Miller." Before he could say anything more, one of the two people in the room stood up from his chair, scowling angrily.

"It's about time somebody with a little authority got here," he said snappishly.

This was George Lindsey, Blaze knew, the third partner. He was a tall, fairly good-looking man of thirty-eight or -nine, with dark hair that showed touches of grey along the sides of his head and dark blue eyes set well back beneath heavy overhanging brows. In another chair, halfway across the room, sat the fourth partner, Louise Acton. She was a good eight years younger than Lindsey, and her high-piled hair, sprayed a bright, metallic silver, her smooth, expressionless face, and her perfect complexion made her look no more than twenty-two. Her ice-blue eyes were cold with anger and possibly hatred, but whether that was directed at Lindsey or at himself Blaze couldn't be sure.

"I'm sorry about the delay," Blaze said easily. "These things get complicated sometimes. You know how it is."

"I don't like being kept a prisoner in my own offices," Lindsey said. "That cop wouldn't even let us go to the john without an escort."

"Not 'us,' George," Louise Acton said, in a voice that was as impersonally cold as her eyes. "Speak for yourself."

Lindsey ignored her. "Well, what is it, Lieutenant? More questions, I suppose?"

"Can we sit down?" Blaze asked in a friendly manner.

"Uh—oh—yeah. Sure, sure. Sit down." Blaze and Miller sat down in the two remaining chairs, avoiding the couch against the wall, where a rumpled sheet showed where Meyers, the second partner, had lain before being taken to St. Luke's.

Rather grudgingly, Lindsey, too, sat down.

Instead of speaking to Lindsey immediately, Blaze looked at Louise Acton. "Miss Acton, I understand you weren't here at the time of the—at the time your partner was killed. Is that right?"

She looked at him with those icy blue eyes. "That's right." She didn't volunteer any further information.

"Where were you?" Blaze asked.

"What time did it happen?" she countered.

"Some time between six-oh-five and six-ten, according to Mr. Lindsey's statement to the

police sergeant. Is that right, Mr. Lindsey?"

"That's right. Somewhere in there. I was too excited to look at my watch right away."

"That's understandable," Blaze said. "Where were you during that time, Miss Acton?"

"I was window shopping," she said flatly. "I was somewhere between here and Duval's Restaurant. I couldn't tell you exactly where."

"Do you know what time you left Duval's?"

"Five or ten minutes of six."

"And what time did you get here?"

"About twenty minutes after."

"Twenty-two minutes after," Lindsey said. "I looked at my watch."

She didn't look at Lindsey. Her eyes were on Blaze as she said: "George is always better at checking up on other people than he is at keeping tabs on himself."

Lindsey coloured. "Dr. Gripsholm called my attention to the time," he said. "Gripsholm said we ought to keep track of the time, that the police would want to know."

"That's quite right," Blaze said affably. "Perfectly correct. Then it took you between twenty-seven and thirty-two minutes to walk the seven blocks between here and Duval's, Miss Acton?" There was only blandness in his voice.

"I said I was window shopping," she reminded him.

"Yes, of course. What time did you leave the office to go to dinner?"

"At five, when the office crew left."

"I see." Blaze looked at Lindsey. "Mr. Lindsey, just exactly what happened?"

"I told all that to the sergeant," Lindsey said.

"Oh? Well, I'm afraid I haven't heard it. Would you mind repeating what you told him?"

Lindsey compressed his lips as if he were considering a sharp retort, but when he spoke his manner was straightforward enough.

"Well, as I told the sergeant, I was sitting in my office, working on some papers, when I heard the noise. I ran in immediately—besides worrying about someone being hurt, you know, there's always the chance of fire when one of those things blows. The metal in the vicinity gets pretty hot. So I—"

"Then you knew what it was *before* you went in there?" Blaze interrupted.

Lindsey compressed his lips even tighter before he answered the question. "Of course I knew. If you've ever heard a magneto-gravitic transducer blow, you'll recognize the noise if you hear it again. It's unmistakable."

To Blaze's mild astonishment,

Louise Acton nodded in agreement. Blaze didn't let the surprise show on his face. "I see. Go on. And what did you do then?"

"Why, I ran across the outer office and went to Ben's office. I opened the door and saw—saw the mess in there. And Ben against the wall, on the floor. I could see he was dead. I was going to call for help—call the police, that is—right away. Then I saw Frank through the open door. You know—the door between the two offices. I thought maybe he was still alive, so I went over and looked. He was still breathing, so I called Dr. Gripsholm upstairs. He came down, and we got Frank into this room on a stretcher and he called the ambulance and the police. I was pretty shook up."

"Did you touch anything in Sheldon's office?" Blaze asked.

"No. No, nothing. I just went through the room."

"Where did you get the burn on your hand?" Blaze asked mildly.

Startled, Lindsey lifted his right hand and looked at it.

On the edge of his hand, just below the root of his little finger, was a red weal. First, possibly second, degree burn.

"The door-knob," Lindsey said, still looking at his hand. Then, by way of explanation, "I touched the door-knob on the door between the rooms when I

went into Meyer's office. It was still hot."

"I see." Blaze thought for a moment, then said: "Tell me something about those transducers. They're used all the time, and I never heard of one going off like that accidentally."

But it was Louise Acton who answered. "They don't. They have to be built that way. They have to be way overpowered, and they have to discharge through a direct short. The circuits have to be specially built. It was no accident, if that's what you're looking for."

Blaze looked at her. "Then you believe it was murder?"

"I *know* it was," she said icily. "It couldn't be anything else."

Lindsey, too, was looking at her, and there was an odd expression in his face. It looked, Blaze thought, like—like *pity!* It was as though Lindsey were saying: *Poor, foolish girl; you just don't understand.*

"What do you think, Mr. Lindsey?" he asked quickly, trying to catch Lindsey off guard.

Lindsey kept looking at the woman for a moment longer, then turned his head towards the detective. "I think it was an accident, Lieutenant Blaze."

Louise Acton turned her head suddenly, looking at Lindsey. She looked as though Lindsey had said something idiotic. And yet she looked puzzled, as though she knew that Lindsey,

in spite of his words, wasn't the kind of man who would make an idiotic statement. She parted her gilded lips to say something, then thought better of it and said nothing.

"Miss Acton has just said that such a device would have to be built specially," Blaze said. "Is she lying?"

"No, no," Lindsey said hurriedly. "I didn't mean to imply that. She's quite right; this couldn't have been an accidental—" He paused, frowning. He glanced at the woman. "You know what I mean, Louise," he said.

"I'm not quite sure I do." The coldness was still there, but it had changed subtly. "But remember that the police are involved now. This isn't a civil case any more, George; it's a criminal case. They can dig into everything. There's no point in holding anything back. They'll find out eventually." She looked back at Blaze. "Isn't that right, Lieutenant?"

"That's right, Miss Acton. We'll find out eventually." He looked back at Lindsey. "Maybe you'd better explain, Mr. Lindsey."

Lindsey was still looking at the Acton woman, and Blaze could see the muscles at the hinge of his jaws, just below his ear lobes, contracting and relaxing methodically. Then he turned his eyes towards Blaze.

"It's not very complicated, really," he said. "It had to do with the books. We've been losing money over the past four years. Oh, I don't mean the company has been going in the red, but the net profits haven't been what they should be." He shrugged a little. "I checked up. The records indicate that Ben Sheldon has been engaging in hanky-panky of some kind. We were going to face him with it this evening. That's why we were all staying late tonight."

"Did Sheldon know you were going to do that?" Blaze asked.

Lindsey frowned. "I don't know for sure. I think he must have. I didn't tell him, but he might have found out from someone else." He didn't look at the Acton woman, but Blaze had a feeling that his words were for her.

"If he didn't know—that is, if you didn't tell him—what excuse did you give for asking him to stay after the usual office hours?"

"I didn't," Lindsey said. "Frank did that; Frank Meyers. He said to leave it to him, that he'd make sure Ben stayed over without getting suspicious."

"I see." Blaze thought for a couple of seconds, then asked: "Let's get back to the accident—as you said it was. What made you say it was an accident if you agree with Miss Acton that it couldn't have been accidental?"

"Well—" Lindsey paused to

moisten his lips with the tip of his tongue. All the irritation seemed to have gone out of him. "Well, in the first place, Louise is right; a transducer would have to be built specially for that purpose. But I still claim it was an accident. I think Ben built the thing himself. I think he intended to use it on the rest of us. I think he was probably working on it when Frank Meyers came into his office, and that he slammed the desk drawer shut to keep Frank from seeing it. And when he did that, the thing went off. He hadn't finished working on it, and something jarred loose."

"Why wouldn't he lock the door, then, if he didn't want Meyers to know?" Blaze asked gently.

"Because I don't think he knew Frank was in there." He licked his lips again. "I thought he had gone down to get something to eat, myself. I saw him leave. He must have come back shortly afterwards." This time, he looked at Louise Acton.

She nodded. "That's right. I saw him go out just a few minutes before I went out, myself."

"Then he must have come back later—before the 'accident' occurred, but after the office crew and Miss Acton had left," Blaze said thoughtfully. "Where were you during that time, Mr. Lindsey?"

"In my office. I was there the

whole time, until I heard the transducer discharge."

"Then Meyers could have come in at any time without being seen?"

"Certainly. He had a key to the hall door."

Detective Miller sat quietly through the interrogation, jotting down things in his notebook, and recording everything that was said in his robotic brain.

"Getting back to that transducer," Blaze said. "How do you think Sheldon would have used it?"

"Timed it to go off at a given time—er—if you see what I mean. Set it to blow at a time when all the rest of us were in the office together."

"How would he do that? With a clock?"

"No. That's not necessary. It has something to do with the capacitance tube and the power supply. I'm no engineer; I'm a businessman." He looked at Louise Acton. "How does that work, Louise?"

She looked at her brightly gilded fingernails for a moment and then looked up at Blaze. "There's nothing to it, actually. The rate of flow of energy into the reservoir depends on the rating of the capacitance tube. If you used one low in the series, such as an A or B tube, the thing wouldn't go off for days because the flow through those tubes is so slow. On the other

hand, if you used a Y or Z, the thing would discharge within minutes. By regulating the type of tube used and the voltage and amperage of the power pack, you can time the discharge to within a minute or less. There are gradations within each classification, too. For instance, an A-1 tube would take longer than an A-2, and so on down the line." She frowned a little. It was the first real expression Blaze had seen on her face. "Actually, the high-rated tubes—anything above the V classification—aren't used very often. Not for the line of work we do, I mean. A Z-9 wouldn't be needed for anything but an interplanetary ship. After that, you get into the AA's and the AB's, which are used for the heavy cargo vessels flying between here and the Asteroid Belt. But we only work on light stuff—aircabs, private vehicles and loading equipment."

"Is it very difficult to build one of those circuits?" Blaze asked.

"Not for a trained engineer," she answered. "An untrained person wouldn't be able to do it."

"Could you do it?"

The question was said in the same easy manner that Blaze had been using all along, but it brought a sudden, shocked awareness into Louise Acton's eyes. She looked as though she had suddenly realized that murder had been committed and

that she was a suspect. Blaze couldn't be sure whether the look was genuine or not.

The expression went away as quickly as it had come, and when she spoke her voice was coolly emotionless. "I could have, but I didn't."

There was a knock at the door.

"Yes?" Blaze called out.

The uniformed policeman opened the door and put his head in. "Sergeant Becerra said he wants to talk to you, Lieutenant."

Blaze nodded and stood up. "Excuse me," he said politely to Lindsey and Miss Acton. "Thanks for your help."

"How long are you going to keep us here?" Lindsey asked, the old irritation coming back into his voice.

"It shouldn't be too long," Blaze said. "I'll let you know as soon as possible. Let's go, Miller."

When Lieutenant Blaze showed up at headquarters the next morning, he felt tired, sleepy and angry. He had had a grand total of five hours sleep, just enough to make him feel groggy and not quite enough to make him feel rested.

The robot, Miller, was waiting for him in the office. He was just sitting there, doing nothing, staring at an invisible spot on the wall, waiting for Blaze to come in. He wasn't bored or impa-

tient; he was incapable of being either. He was simply waiting.

"Morning," said Blaze. "Any new developments?"

"Yes," said the robot, looking at him. "Here are the contents of the pockets of the dead man." He pointed at a small spread of objects on the desk.

Blaze looked them over. A pack of self-lighting cigarettes, half empty. An automatic pen-pencil. A key ring containing three keys. Eighty-five cents in change. A small bottle containing nine white pills. A crumpled five-dollar bill. And a billfold with the gold monogram *BDS* stamped on it.

Blaze opened the billfold and looked inside. Identification cards, credit cards, and a hundred and forty dollars in bills.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"No," Miller said. "I have had the pills checked. The doctor who prescribed them says they are mild tranquillizers. The chemical analysis bears that out. There were ten pills in there. One went to the chemist for analysis. The prescription called for exactly ten, and it was filled yesterday around noon. Sheldon had not taken any of them." He pointed at the key ring. "The keys fit the door to his apartment, the door to the office and the switch in his aircar." His finger moved again. "The pack of cigarettes was bought at the same time the prescription was

filled. He evidently smoked rather heavily."

"Yeah," said Blaze. He dropped the billfold back on the desk. "How about the other partner, Meyers?"

"His condition is dangerous, but not critical. He has not yet recovered consciousness, but the doctors expect him to come out of it at any time. They'll call us as soon as he's in a condition to talk."

Blaze nodded. "Fine. Let's take a squad car out to the plant in Garden City. I want to get out there before any of the employees has heard that Sheldon is dead." Then he looked sharply at the robot. "Unless somebody's given out the news release."

"No one has. Inspector Brockton agreed to keep the lid on it until you have had a chance to talk to the people at the plant."

"O.K. Then let's go."

The aircar lifted from the roof of the building five minutes later. Blaze, at the controls, kept it going vertically until he was a thousand feet above the city, in the emergency level, where no traffic except official vehicles on police or fire duty were allowed. Civilians could use that level only in an emergency.

Blaze let the aircar hover for a few seconds while he checked his route to Garden City, Long Island, then he headed towards it at high speed.

"Am I again to remain silent

and take notes?" Miller asked.

Blaze considered the question for a moment. Then he asked: "Were there any questions you would have asked last night that I didn't ask?"

"Yes. I would have asked both Mr. Lindsey and Miss Acton to give the timing of their actions much more accurately than they did."

"What time is it?" Blaze asked.

"Nine twenty-one and one half," the robot said promptly, without looking at anything except the windshield.

"How do you know?"

Ask a human being what his name is. Then, after he tells you, ask him how he knows. He'll be puzzled by the question. He may laugh, he may look at you as though you were loony, or he may even realize that your question is serious. But, usually, the only real answer he can give you is that someone told him that was his name when he was a child. Basically, the information is simply in his brain and that's all there is to it.

Miller didn't laugh or pause. He just said: "The data is in my brain."

Blaze knew that. He knew that the big building that housed Miller's brain also contained, as a part of that brain, a molecular clock that was accurate to within a millimicrosecond. Miller *always* knew what time it was, automatically.

"That information is *not* in *my* brain," said Blaze. "That's why I carry a watch. There are a few human beings who can tell the time with fair accuracy without a watch, but only a very few, and only within an accuracy of a minute or two. Accuracy to within less than fifteen minutes is not to be expected in an average human being unless he has looked at a watch or clock in the past half hour or so. If you ask him to recall the time of an event in the past, his accuracy will be even poorer. Understand?"

"I understand," said the robot.

"In answer to your question," Blaze went on, "I think it would be best for you to continue taking notes and not asking questions. You still don't know what questions to ask."

Miller did not answer. There was no need for him to.

But after a short pause, he asked a question. "I require more data on Miss Louise Acton's contract." For a robot, that is a question.

"What about it?" Blaze asked. "It's the ordinary kind of contract drawn up for a woman who wants to use her body to get ahead. The clause providing for the care of children doesn't mean much these days. Not with modern contraceptives."

"I understand that," said Miller. "That is not the information I desire. I noticed, however, that the physical privileges only ex-

tend to the two senior partners—Sheldon and Meyers. Why was Lindsey excluded?"

"There are two possible reasons—maybe more," Blaze said cautiously. "One: Even though Lindsey is listed as the third partner in seniority, he was actually the last to come in. He had money to invest, and he'd been working for the firm for a long time, so he could demand that right. Besides, the kind of contract the girl had drawn up precludes her from seniority—unless another female should get in under the same kind of contract. The law still looks on those contracts with a jaundiced eye."

"I am aware of all that," Miller said. "What is the second possible reason?"

"Two:" Blaze went on, "The Acton girl apparently doesn't like Lindsey at all. When he came in, she apparently refused to allow her contract to be changed, and the two senior partners backed her up."

"Would that provide a motive for Lindsey to commit murder?" the robot asked.

"It might," Blaze said. "Why? Do you suspect Lindsey?"

"Suspect?" Miller repeated the word as though it held little meaning for him. "I have not yet enough data."

The rest of the trip was made in silence.

Blaze skilfully dropped the

aircar to the roof of the smallish building where the firm of Sheldon, Meyers, Lindsey & Acton had its plant. SML&A was an engineering firm, not a manufacturing firm, and the building was more of a laboratory than a fabrication and assembly plant. When the firm took on a job, all they did was design the mechanism that was wanted and produce a pilot model. The rest was up to other manufacturers.

Blaze and Miller went directly to the office of the Chief Engineer, a middle-aged, heavy-shouldered man named Keefer, who took one look at Blaze's identity card and nodded. "Oh, yes. It's about the accident, I suppose. Mr. Lindsey phoned and said you'd be around. What happened, anyway?"

"That's what we want to find out," Blaze said. "Mind if we sit down?"

"Go right ahead. You can smoke if you want," Keefer said. "We allow it in the offices but not in the plant. We have to keep everything dust-free down there."

"Thanks," Blaze said. But he didn't smoke. "Did Mr. Lindsey tell you what had happened?"

"Only that there had been an accident at the office." Keefer frowned. "He was awfully secretive. Was anyone hurt?"

"Mr. Meyers was hurt," Blaze said. "He's in the hospital." By telling only a part of the truth,

he gave entirely the wrong impression. He didn't want Keefer to know that a murder was being investigated—not yet.

"Mr. Meyers? Is he badly hurt?"

"He'll be all right," Blaze said. "Mind if I ask a few questions?"

"Go ahead."

"Do any of the partners come here very often?"

"Mr. Sheldon does. He comes in two or three times a week," Keefer said. "He's the one who does most of the experimental stuff. Meaning no disrespect against any of the others, but Sheldon is the real genius of the outfit. Mr. Meyers is a hell of a fine engineer, but he doesn't have the spark that Mr. Sheldon does."

"How about Lindsey and Acton?"

"Mr. Lindsey? He's no engineer. He handles the business end of the partnership. And Miss Acton—" He spread his hands. "—well, she's a pretty fair engineer. Yes. Pretty fair." It was obvious that he had no respect whatever for Louise Acton as an engineer.

"Sheldon comes here pretty regularly," Blaze said thoughtfully. "How about Meyers?"

"Once in a while. Not often. He does most of his engineering on paper. Figures out the gimmicks and then sends the prints down for me to build the gadget."

"And he's pretty good at it?"

"Mr. Meyers? Oh, yes. Pretty good. Very good, in fact."

"How about Miss Acton? Does she come around much?"

"Not since she became a partner in the firm," Keefer said. "She comes around now and then, but not often. Usually, she helps Mr. Meyers with the prints. You know how it is."

"And Lindsey?"

"Mr. Lindsey only comes around at inventory time. Last time was three weeks ago."

"I see. When was the last time Mr. Meyers was here?"

"Last week sometime. Thursday, I think. Yeah, Thursday. He came by to talk to Mr. Sheldon, who was working in his lab. Stayed an hour, I guess. Then he left."

Blaze reached into his inside pocket and brought out a folded sheet of paper. He opened it and spread it on Keefer's desk, face up. "Know anything about that circuit?" he asked. It was a print that had been made by the police technicians.

Keefer looked at it. "Um. Yes. Um." Then he looked a little closer. He jerked his head up and looked at Blaze. "Why, this circuit would short out within an hour after it was activated. That's an S-7 tube in there. Hell, this would—" He stopped, still staring at Blaze. Then he said: "It was no accident, then."

"We don't know yet," Blaze

said. "Don't jump to any conclusions. Mind letting us take a look at Sheldon's lab?"

"I couldn't do that without Mr. Sheldon's permission unless you have a search warrant," Keefer said.

"I can get one if I have to," Blaze said. "I'd rather be able to say later that you were co-operative with the police."

"I'll have to call Mr. Sheldon," Keefer said stubbornly.

"It won't do either one of us any good," Blaze said softly. "Sheldon's dead."

Keefer stared. Then he swallowed and stood up. "Come along," he said in a hoarse voice. "I'll show you his lab."

He led the two detectives to an elevator and they dropped down two floors. "This is it," he said. "The whole floor. The car won't even stop here unless you have an executive key."

Blaze, who had watched him turn a key in the control panel when he pressed the button, nodded. "Who had keys like that?"

Keefer used the key again to open the door that led into the laboratory. "This is the only one," he said. "When Mr. Sheldon came to do any work, he got the key from me. If I'm not here, I leave it in the safe."

"Who has the combination to the safe?"

"For that one, only Mr. Sheldon and me."

Blaze looked around the room. It was cluttered, but not disorderly. There were machines and instruments of various kinds on the benches around the walls. "When was the last time anyone was in here?" he asked.

"Three days ago. Mr. Sheldon was here."

"Does it look O.K. to you? I mean, does it look as though anything has been disturbed?"

Keefer looked around. "Looks O.K. to me."

"O.K. Let me take a look at one of those tubes, will you?"

"You mean an S-7?"

"That's right. Any one of 'em."

"Mr. Sheldon keeps—kept a complete stock," Keefer said. "That is, of the most commonly used sizes. From the B-series to the U-series." He started walking towards an open door on one side of the room. "Over here," he said.

The door led into a small room lined with shelves. "There they are," Keefer said, pointing to a stack of boxes that filled three shelves.

Each tube was individually boxed in a plain white plastic carton about three inches square and seven inches long. On the bottom of each, in square block printing, was a number. They didn't seem to be in any particular order, Blaze noticed. Evidently Sheldon just stacked the things anywhere on those three shelves. They certainly were

not sorted as to size.

"All right if I take a look at one?" he asked.

"Go ahead."

Blaze took one of the boxes from the nearest shelf. It was marked L-5. He opened the box and took out the tube itself, a roughly cylindrical, opaque object that looked as though it were a cylinder of polished chromium, but it was much lighter than metal would be. On the base, in the same block print, the same number appeared.

Blaze took down another box, an F-2 this time. The tube was the same size and shape as the first; except for the number, Blaze couldn't tell one from the other.

He looked the other boxes over until he found an S-7, the type that had been used in the deadly machine. It looked the same as the others.

Blaze slid the tubes back into their proper boxes and put them back on the shelf. "They don't look very deadly," he said.

"They're not, unless you hook 'em up wrong," Keefer said.

"Could Sheldon have built a machine like the one in that print?" Blaze asked. "I mean, in this lab."

"Sure. He could have built it at home, for that matter. All of the components in the circuit, except for the tube are available anywhere. The tube is what's hard to get."

"You couldn't just walk down to any manufacturer and buy one?"

"You could, but you'd have to identify yourself."

"Do these things have serial numbers?"

"Yes. Sure. It's electro-impressed in the base. You have to take an X-ray to read the number, but it can't be removed or defaced without wrecking the tube."

"I see." He walked around the whole lab, looking at everything. Miller followed him. There was no way in except through that elevator shaft and a fire-escape door. The windows, as in most modern buildings, didn't open. Air-conditioning took care of the fresh air problem. The fire-escape door was one of the standard kind. Anyone could get out, but it would be impossible for anyone to get in.

"All right, let's go," Blaze said. "Where's your stock-room?"

"One floor down."

"Let's take a look at it."

The stock-room was a great deal neater than Sheldon's lab. The equipment was all arranged in order. There was nothing in particular to be learned there, but Blaze got a list of the serial numbers of all the tubes that had been checked out to Sheldon in the past six months—especially the S-7 type.

Blaze asked Keefer for the key to Sheldon's lab and got it.

"Thanks for your help, Mr. Keefer," he said. "There'll be some technicians down later. I'd appreciate it if you'd co-operate with them."

"I will," Keefer said. "I certainly will, Lieutenant."

As Blaze and Miller climbed back into the aircar, Blaze picked up the phone. He settled himself comfortably in the bucket seat, then punched a number. "Blaze here," he said when he got an answer. "Anything new?"

"Yes, sir. We got word a few minutes ago that Meyers is conscious. Sergeant Becerra has gone over to St. Luke's. He said he'd wait for you in the lobby."

"I'm on my way," said Lieutenant Blaze.

Sergeant Becerra was smoking a cigarette. When he saw Blaze, he dropped it casually into a nearby receptacle and walked across the lobby towards his superior.

"Be a few minutes yet," he told Blaze. "The doctor is giving him some shots or something. Anything new?"

"A few things." He told the sergeant what he'd found so far.

Becerra shook his head slowly. "It don't seem a man like Sheldon could be that stupid. Anybody could have found out he built that thing. He sure as hell got what was coming to him."

"Sheldon did not do it," Miller said.

Blaze glanced at him and said nothing.

Becerra glowered. "All right, *detective*," he said, "how do you figure that?"

"Sheldon was an expert. He knew how to handle those machines. He would not have built a machine that would go off and kill him. There was no defect in the machine. It was built to go off at that time. Lindsey's statement that Sheldon might have pushed it into the drawer and caused it to go off is in error. Besides, the drawer was locked."

"And I suppose Sheldon couldn't have locked it?" Becerra said sarcastically.

"With what?" Miller asked. "The drawer is not the kind that locks automatically. It requires a key. Sheldon had only three keys on him, and none of the three fit that drawer."

"All right. Maybe he intended to commit suicide."

"Why?" Miller asked.

"Because he'd been stealing from the company funds and knew he was going to be caught!" Becerra said triumphantly.

"There is no proof of that. Lindsey said that Sheldon was guilty of the thefts, but the books show that either Lindsey or Meyers could have been guilty, too."

"Then who *did* do it, bright

boy?" Becerra asked peevishly. "Meyers, I suppose?"

"No," the robot said calmly. "He would not have built a machine like that and then walked into the office at the time it was set to go off. He was as much of an expert as Sheldon was."

"O.K., zombie, then who did it?"

"Quiet, both of you!" Blaze snapped suddenly. "Lindsey."

George Lindsey was walking across the hospital lobby towards the desk. When he spotted the three officers, he veered away from the desk and walked towards them.

"May I ask him a question?" the robot asked softly.

Blaze hesitated only a fraction of a second. "Go ahead," he said. "As soon as I move my hand."

Lindsey stopped a few feet away. "I heard that Frank was conscious. Will I be able to see him?"

Blaze shook his head. "Not just yet. We want to talk to him first." He moved his hand.

Miller said: "Mr. Lindsey, why did you lie to us about where you were when the device shorted?"

Lindsey whitened. "What are you talking about?" His voice sounded almost normal.

"I am talking about the burn on your hand. If you had walked from your office to Sheldon's office and opened Sheldon's door, then the metal had cooled by the

time you got there. If it was still hot enough for the knob on the connecting door to burn you, then you would have been burned by the knob on Sheldon's door."

"I—I was! I—" He stopped, swallowing.

"Yes, you were," Miller said in his expressionless voice. "It was the heat from the knob on the door to Sheldon's office that seared your hand. You were standing just outside that door when the transducer blew. The heat penetrated through the metal of the knob. Fortunately, the massive door absorbed most of the energy, and you weren't hurt. You waited until the knob cooled and then went back in. Why were you standing there, Mr. Lindsey?"

Lindsey was obviously thinking fast. "Well. I—I was going to go into Ben's office. I—I wanted to talk to him. I was just going to go in when I heard the explosion."

"That is a lie," Miller said. "If you had put your hand on the knob to open it, the tips of your fingers would have been burned, not the skin down there near the heel of your hand. No, Mr. Lindsey, you were not going in. You had just come out. You had just pulled the door closed. Why are you lying?"

"I'm not!" Lindsey flared. He was trying to look angry, but it didn't come off well. The cold-

ness of the robot's voice seemed to have unnerved him.

"You are lying," Miller said. "Remember, we will be able to check with Mr. Meyers. He will tell us that you and Mr. Sheldon had an argument. Mr. Sheldon has a temper. When you stalked out of the room, he threw something at you. You had already closed the door, but you heard it hit the door, so you paused. Then you heard the inter-connecting door between the two offices open. Then you heard the explosion. Then you waited until the knob cooled off and you went back in. Isn't that right, Mr. Lindsey?"

Lindsey's inner defenses collapsed. His legs didn't buckle, but he seemed to sag inside. "Yeah. Yeah. That's right," he said. "I went in and told him I knew he'd been taking money from the firm, but that I would see to it that it didn't show if he'd make Louise Acton change the terms of her contract. He blew up and told me I was a— a goddam lecher or something like that. He told me to get the hell out. I told him I'd see him in prison and walked out. After that it happened just like you said." His voice was apathetic, toneless. "But I didn't kill him," he added in the same voice. "I don't suppose you'll believe that, but I didn't."

Miller started to say something else, but Blaze interrupted

quickly. "That's enough, Miller. Becerra, take Mr. Lindsey out to the squad car. Have the boys keep an eye on him. We may want to ask more questions later."

Becerra, looking slightly dazed, followed orders.

"How did you know Sheldon had thrown something?" Blaze asked as soon as Lindsey and his escort were out of earshot. "The calendar?"

"That is correct," Miller said. "The metal calendar was lying on the floor a little ways from the desk. It could not have been thrown by the explosion, since it was made of metal. If it had been on the top of the desk, it would have been imbedded in the ceiling, just as the clock was."

Blaze nodded. "Did Lindsey kill Sheldon?"

"No," Miller said. "He would not have been so near the thing at the time it was supposed to go off. And, more positive yet, he could not have made one of the transducers."

"How about Miss Acton?"

"Again, no. She, like Lindsey, could not have put her hands on one of those tubes. She never goes to the plant, and her name is not on the list of those who have checked those tubes out of the stockroom. Only Sheldon ever checked tubes from the stockroom."

"Then who *did* do it?"

"I do not know. I have logi-

cally eliminated all three of the surviving partners. We must look elsewhere. I need more data."

"Fine. As soon as Becerra comes back, we'll check with the doctor and find out if Meyers can give us any more data."

"Why wait for Sergeant Becerra?" Miller asked.

"Because he's afraid of his job," Blaze said. "He thinks you and others like you will replace him, just as automation has replaced so many workers."

"I do not understand."

"You don't need to. Just keep your ears open and your mouth shut."

Becerra returned a few minutes later. He still looked puzzled, and when his eyes fell on Miller, he glowered again. "Did Lindsey do it?" he asked Blaze.

"No," Blaze answered. He told the sergeant everything that Miller had said.

"Then who the hell *did* do it?" Becerra asked.

"Well, as Miller said, we'll just have to get more data," Blaze answered. "Here comes the nurse. I'll bet the doctor has told her to let us in."

He was absolutely right.

Outside the door of the private room, Lieutenant Blaze said: "What kind of shape is he in, Doctor? Can he take a shock?"

The doctor nodded. "You can

tell him that his partner is dead. We have him strapped in and connected to a cerebro-cardiac stimulator. He won't be hurt by anything you may say." He paused. "You're not all three going in, are you?"

"Yes. But I'll be the only one talking to him. These two men are just witnesses."

"Well—all right." He opened the door. The two humans and the robot entered. Becerra and Miller stood by the closed door while Lieutenant Blaze went over to the bed.

Meyers was swathed in sprayed-on bandages, and there were tubes and wires coming from various parts of his body.

"How do you feel, Mr. Meyers?" Blaze asked.

"Doggone lousy. No pain though. You're the police detective?"

"That's right Lieutenant Blaze. What happened?"

"I don't know. I was in my office, and I heard an argument between Sheldon and Lindsey. I heard a noise, and I opened the door to see what had happened. That's all I remember."

"You're lucky," Blaze said. "You almost got killed by your own bomb."

Meyers was suddenly very silent.

"Do you know where you made your mistake?"

"No," said Meyers softly. "No. What happened? It wasn't sup-

posed to go off until morning. Sheldon always got to the office half an hour before anyone else. It was supposed to go off then."

"You'd been stealing from the company funds and wanted it to look as though Sheldon had done it," Blaze said gently. "You wanted it to look as if he'd been making the thing and had had an accident."

"Yes. Yes. What went wrong?"

"A simple thing. You went to Sheldon's lab a few days ago to get the tube you needed. You stole one while Sheldon wasn't looking. What type tube did you take, Meyers?"

"An L-5. I timed it to go off in the morning," Meyers said dully.

"No. You took an S-7. The block printing on those cartons is a little confusing. Those square letters look different upside down. Turn S-7 over, and it looks like L-5. You took the wrong tube, Meyers."

Twenty minutes later, Blaze was out in the lobby. "Did you get all that confession down?" he asked Becerra.

"Sure, Lieutenant. My God, I'd never have guessed it!"

"I still do not understand," said Miller.

Blaze looked at the robot and grinned. "You're too logical, friend. You assume that humans are as perfect as you are. You see, we human police depend on killers making mistakes. That's the way we catch 'em. You eliminated Meyers *only* because you couldn't see that it was possible for him to make a mistake. You knew he wouldn't walk in the room when the bomb was due to go off. But what you didn't take into account is the fact that he didn't know the bomb was going to blow at that time. Understand?"

"No. Why would he make such an error? I do not understand."

"No, and you never will—because it isn't logical."

Becerra grinned. "It still takes a human to catch a human, eh, Lieutenant?" Then he looked at Miller. "Don't worry. When the perfect criminal comes along, we'll let *you* catch him."

"I am not worried," said Miller.

Blaze grinned without a word. He knew Becerra wasn't worried either. And the word would get around.

(Continued from other side)

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