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The saint® MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

In this issue

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A New Story by WILLIAM O'FARRELL

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

I see no inconsistency between the last two of these essays—the former, in which I tended to support the daring new reformers who advocate the legalizing of all narcotics, on the grounds that this would be more economic and less pernicious than surrendering to gangsters' control of a commerce which cannot in practice be extirpated anyhow, and the latter, in which I confessed to being a cured cigarette addict and a staunch convert to the belief that anyone else is a specialized kind of idiot, no matter how amiable.

I did not suggest that it would be a good idea to outlaw smoking, which would be just as assinine as all such well-meant prohibitions, and would only lead to a new form of bootlegging, the institution of smoke-easies, a fresh avenue for official corruption, and the additional encouragement to smokers of endowing their vice with the specious glamor of a romantic gesture of defiant individualism.

I think that any stalwart soul who thinks himself superior to the statistics linking cigarettes with lung cancer should be as free to lay his life on the line as he should be to bet it on any kind of horse, whether four-legged or the powdery variety which is the trade euphemism for heroin. This, in the most literal meaning of the expression, is his funeral.

I do think, however, in conformity with my primary thesis that the only genuinely anti-social acts are those which positively harm or inconvenience non-participating members of the community, that there should be more protection for the increasing number of non-smokers.

Not-smoking is a negation which affects nobody but the non-smoker. But smoking in public places is an aggressive act, in that it inflicts itself on everyone in its vicinity, by forcing them to inhale its fumes whether they like them or not. This is no different in principle from forcibly pouring alcohol into teetotallers, stuffing meat into vegetarians, or playing a radio full blast in the middle of the night beside an open window aimed at your next-door neighbor's bedroom.

I freely admit that in my smoking days I was as oblivious as any typical smoker of the many discomforts I must have caused my non-smoking friends, of whom I did have a few. But my humble and profound regret for all the transgressions which I cannot now undo, I fear, makes me no less sensitive to the suffering which I now endure in my turn. And the poetic justice of my punishment cannot prevent me seeing the need for some rational regulation of such a widespread nuisance. Only a non-smoker, perhaps, can understand the nauseous ruination of a restaurant meal which can be achieved by gusts of secondhand cigar smoke wafted from an adjacent table.

A ban on smoking in certain areas where it could create misery for victims who cannot escape, such as theaters, is already established and accepted, as is the system of designated smoke-free sections on railways and buses. I would like to see a total prohibition extended to such asphyxia traps as elevators, and will reserve a special accolade for the first restaurateur who sets aside an enclave for patrons who prefer the aromas of good food and wine uncontaminated by the vapors of burning garbage.

Cyril Connolly

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instead of the saint—IV

by LESLIE CHARTERIS

HONESTLY, I was told once about a young lady, allegedly of great charm and personality, a one-time friend of a friend, whose one weakness was a tendency to kleptomania. This idiosyncrasy expressed itself, as it often does, in the shape of amateur shoplifting, but with the peculiarity that she confined herself to stealing books. According to my informant, she was otherwise normally respectable, and made no great secret of her book stealing. She argued that books were merely thoughts expressed in words, and that if she had happened to meet the author she might have heard much the same words spoken for free, so why should she pay to read them just because she hadn't been lucky enough to meet him?

This is about the most extreme case I have encountered of an attitude of mind which, perhaps without using quite such a specious argument, is not at all uncommon, and which can hardly be discouraged by the fact that there is no country which has any copyright laws which does not place a finite limit (and not a very long one, either) on the term of copyright: the belief that writing is a pretty soft racket.

Almost everyone you meet has the notion, either proclaimed or secret, that he or she could write a book if they really set out to do it; and one of the tribulations of the literary world is that so many of them do. This places a heavy burden on the professionals who have to wade politely through the junk submitted for tender criticism by their acquaintances, although it does provide an honest living for a host of editorial readers who get paid for ploughing through the slush.

It attains heights of insult through the mouth of the ubiquitous jerk who buttonholes a writer and says: "If I told you some of the things that have happened to me, you could really write a book. All they need is putting on paper, but that would be easy for you." The only thing that could happen to this oaf that any author would be interested in recording would be the story of his lingering death in a Siberian labor lamp.

The same patronizing attitude is all too frequent in the movie business. Even the producers who pay sometimes quite fabulous salaries to writers have an uneasy suspicion that somehow or other they are being taken for a ride. "Words!" jeers a little bee in the executive bonnet. "I talk with words all day, don't I? I write letters, don't I? There's nothing to it. Why do I have to pay this bum so much dough just to sit around and make with words?" But he still has the last word himself, with the result that his name comes out in large type on the advertisements, like the actors who speak the words, while the writer's name is often hard to find even with a magnifying glass.

I must admit that I myself was lured towards this business by some not unrelated assumptions. Surveying my prospects of living in the style to which I hoped to become accustomed, and also staying out of jail, I considered various careers in the light of my limitations. I did not fancy keeping office hours, I did not favor business suits and ties, I wanted to be free to travel wherever and whenever the whim impelled me. Writing, which I had started practising almost in infancy, seemed the ideal solution. The only difference between me and most other people with similar aspirations was that I was lucky enough to turn out to have been a natural born writer.

This doesn't mean that it was just a breeze. It is not enough to be born with a talent, which in my opinion you can talk freely about without boasting, since it is just as much an accident of nature as having red hair. You still have to work to make a living at it. I believe that writing is a gift like music: no amount of effort will develop it if you haven't got it, but even when you've got it you have to slog like a slave before you're a Bernstein.

But musicians still have the advantage of being criticized, where it counts most, by other musicians. Most modern writing, on the other hand, can only have its chance of appealing to the public after filtering through a barricade of editors and

producers who, literate as some of them may be, have seldom written anything creative themselves. It is true that no book-list, play, movie, or magazine could be put out without some process of selection; but it is equally true that the power to give or deny a writer an audience is concentrated in the hands of a relatively few satraps who establish standards which you might not indorse at all.

In the magazine and television fields, these arbiters are not even free to exercise their own personal judgment, since these media usually depend for their subsidy on advertising revenue, and advertisers are not going to support a publication which they think might harm their business. You can imagine how likely you would be to find in a popular magazine (except THE SAINT), or on any television show (including THE SAINT) a story which revolved around the villainy of an unscrupulous manufacturer of poisonous patent medicines. This is reasonable enough from a commercial point of view, but does not constitute the finest basis of literary selection.

Book publishers are probably the most unobstructed channel of access to the public, since they are not beholden to sponsors and in general approach a piece of writing with a certain old-fashioned respect. Once they have taken the step of giving an author a break, they have an indisputable yardstick by which to measure his popular appeal: if he sells well, he must have some quality which the public likes. Even if a lot of readers don't like him, but there are enough to show a profit on his publication, the credit all goes to him—unlike the case of a magazine, which may sell on the strength of one story out of a dozen, or a movie which may only draw because of the stars in it. Therefore, once an author has proved himself, a book publisher will usually let him be his own editor.

However, there are also other more subtle pressures. The only story I have failed to sell since I became what is called "established" dealt elaborately and ingeniously with a Japanese plot for a sneak attack on the United States; it was completed in the summer of 1941, and the only error in my crystal ball was that the attack was organized for the coast of Southern California instead of Pearl Harbor, and was planned as part of an immediate invasion, in which I was smarter than the Japanese High Command. It was killed by the national magazine I wrote it for because "we do not think this is the time to publish anything which might aggravate the tensions

with our Japanese friends". And now, of course, unlike other prophetic stories which I first brought out when they *were* prophetic, there would be no point in publishing it.

One of the best books I have never written still remains, after 30 years, only an idea in my head, although every year I see newspaper headlines which point more sharply towards its real possibility. But I am wise enough now to know I shall never write it, because even my book publishers would protest that it was still too violently controversial and would tread on too many organized and vociferous toes.

Like almost everything else in the times we live in, the practice of authorship has become much more complicated and involved with more cosmic considerations than it was when our predecessors dipped their quills in the ink.

In my last essay, if you remember, I was bemoaning the fact that aside from such superannuated survivors as myself there was hardly anyone putting out the kind of fine flamboyant fanfared adventure that quickened my pulse when I was young. But I neglected to mention some of the extenuations for this deficiency.

That kind of derring-do requires fine unequivocal villains that you can love to hate. Dumas, writing for the anti-clerical France of his day, was unconcerned about any Catholic reaction to the rôle in which he cast Cardinal Richelieu. But today, we are not only being urged by plaintive psychiatrists to believe that every heavy is just an overgrown mixed-up kid, in need of a happy home life rather than a spike in the sternum, but the writer is also beleaguered by clamourous minorities (and sometimes majorities) demanding that this excrescence should not be portrayed as one of their religion, race, or national origin. After which producers and editors, as well as writers, have to think of their foreign markets, which in these days may be economically crucial, and the increase of chauvinistic sensitivities in a world which theoretically should have been becoming ever more cosmopolitan.

It was all very well for Rafael Sabatini to write the joyous destruction of Spanish galleons loaded with cruel and treacherous Inquisitors, but Generalissimo Franco would have something to say about the propagation of such tales in his territory. And General de Gaulle, I feel, would take a dim view of those spendid exploits of the Scarlet Pimpernel snatching victims of the French Revolution from the guillotine.

So in a world where everyone wants to be at least a blood relation of Simon Pure, there is a mounting dearth of dragons to set up for a Simon Templar. There is practically nothing left already but Russians, and they too will probably be ruled out before long in the interests of peaceful co-existence.

So writing is an easy job?

I am told that there has been some puzzlement about a reference in the *Saint Magazine* to something called an "Upper Berkeley Mews Halo", to which I feel obligated to supply some elucidation.

Once upon a time in England when the upper classes were upper than anything and Income Tax had not even been nigthmared of, the aristocracy built themselves many mansions along certain fashionable streets which their descendants are still trying to turn to practical use. Nothing like the present boom in real estate had then been foreseen, but even so the prices of street frontage were comparatively high. Therefore in London the lots were narrow enough to allow no waste space at the sides, and houses grew up solidly along the shoulder to shoulder in a solid phalanx a block long. They would have a rudimentary yard at the back, scarcely worth calling a garden; and at the end where it bordered on a cobbled alley they would have stables for a horse or two and a space for the family carriage, with living quarters for the coachman in the loft above. These alleys were called the mews.

For the benefit of any insatiable seekers after trivial knowledge, I am glad to explain that the word has nothing to do with cats. It is derived from the old French *muer*, meaning "to moult", and was originally applied to the place where noble sportsmen kept their hawks. One of the English kings finally foresaw the decline of falconry, and presciently turned his sheds into stables; but the site was still called "the mews" even after the buggy had replaced the bird.

The first impact of a housing shortage which really started even when you and I were young turned many envious eyes upon the mews of London. The lofts were painted, decorated, and equipped with modern plumbing, and a generation for whom the Ford had supplanted falconry as a status symbol moved in to enjoy the luxury of keeping its car on the premises downstairs instead of in a garage half a mile away.

In due course I eventually became one of those, and in

natural sequence the Saint acquired a similar address.

There is no such lane in London as Upper Berkeley Mews, although the name suggests that it might be found in the expensive purlieus of Berkeley Square. The address is entirely fictitious, and the description is a glorified synthesis of various mews that I have known and which an explorer in London could find without much trouble. This is where the Saint made his headquarters for the duration of several books, as is known to all faithful students of my Immortal Works.

Now in yet another hemisphere, it seems that some such students, located in Racine, Wisconsin, formed themselves into a society calling themselves the Upper Berkeley Mews Haloes, in flattering emulation of the Baker Street Irregulars who similarly commemorate the fictitious residence of Sherlock Holmes. The leading light appears to have been one Bernard Doll, who, to prove that this was no fly-by-night gesellschaft, sent me a copy of the minutes of one of their meetings, which I will quote in part:

> The fourth meeting of the UBMH was opened at 8 p m Thursday, June 20, in the den of the Chief Lieutenant by the Sacred Pledge. . . .
>
> The second chapter of *The Invisible Millionaire* from FOLLOW THE SAINT was read.
>
> The meeting then adjourned to the official club Social Center, of which Mr. Doll is the co-owner, where the toasts were drunk and a discussion was held.

That was in 1946, and I had heard nothing more about the UBMH until it was referred to a year or so ago in an item by Dean W Dickensheet of San Francisco, which we reprinted in the *Saint Magazine*. So apparently the movement did not expire in Racine.

I would welcome any news about its subsequent spread or development, or about any new and independent aficionades who may have been inspired to form a similar fraternity. I should be a monumental fraud and hypocrite if I pretended to be uninterested in any such manifestations of hero-worship—by which I refer to our communal hero, not myself. I cannot personally take any active part in their instigation, formation, or operation, because of both a shortage of time and an excess of diffidence; but they would give me much patriarchal satisfaction, if their agenda followed such an intelligent pat-

tern as seems to have obtained in Mr Doll's group. And, if their activities are interesting or amusing enough, we shall be glad to give space to reporting them in the Magazine.

At this moment, for a reason which may become apparent before I sign off, I am impaled on a needle of curiosity about hats.

In two words, I want to know: Why Hats?

According to my junior dictionary, a hat is "a shaped covering, especially one with crown and brim, for the head". To anyone who has observed a crowd of women at a luncheon or garden party, this definition stops so far short of even starting to tackle the subject as to imply a definite evasiveness on the part of Mr Webster.

Incontestably a hat was originally a covering for the head. No obscene associations having yet been attached to the human noggin, the covering was not modest but utilitarian. It was first designed to protect that dome from sun, rain, or unfriendly projectiles.

The tin hat, whether styled for the medieval knight or the modern construction worker, is a practical example of the last category. Almost any hat will keep off some sun, although this is best achieved by skimmers especially designed for the purpose; and this may be a fair justification in some latitudes, or for people who do not devote all their vacation time to getting as much sun as possible on every other exposable inch of their epidermis, or for those handicapped individuals of whom it was rhymed that "years of worry and of care have made his head come through his hair". As for keeping off the rain, this is accomplished up to a point by most ordinary male hats, but not nearly so well as could be done by a waterproof cowl or an umbrella. All military forms of caps, for some reason, are conspicuously useless in this respect, being ingenously designed to permit the maximum amount of water to run down the back of the neck—possibly to prove the impermeable hardiness of the warrior.

The female hat seldom fulfills any of these qualifications. It is too fragile to withstand the impact of even a small brick, it is usually made of materials too delicate to be subjected to moisture; and while its shape has often been known to approach the dimensions of a small parasol, it has just as often been reduced to a grotesque miniature which would scarcely cover the conk of a pigmy's doll, requiring **elastic**

bands or pins to secure it to the noodle, and incapable of providing shade for anything bigger than a mouse.

The absurdity of the average female hat has made even jokes about it weary. But I must confess that whenever I see a woman who is not ravishingly beautiful, who could get away with wearing anything but by the same token would look better still in nothing, with some horrible confection clamped on her nut, I have a frightening vision of her in the millinery department, trying on one monstrosity after another, studying them in several mirrors from every angle, and finally settling on the atrocity which she now wears, with a sigh of satisfaction and the warming conviction that it really Does Something For Her.

The enslavement of men to hats is still more preposterous. Deprived by today's traditions of even the flippant outlet of lush materials, gay colors, or impudent design, they crown themselves with the nondescript felt, the skull-crushing derby, or the corny straw. About the only justification for this seems to be the employment it provides for some comely wenches in most of the joints where men are not encouraged to wear their hats at the table, who for a liberal tip will undertake the labor of hanging the lid on a peg.

Even Gods have taken sides on the hat question. A man is not allowed into a Christian church with his hat on, or into a Jewish temple without it. It seems to me that God and Jehovah should at least have made a deal on this by now; but apparently salvation still depends on whether your favorite deity likes you hatted or unhatted.

In short, since it has become nothing but an ornament which is often not ornamental, I can see no further excuse for hats except as things to talk through, which is the only use I have for mine.

If I am not mysteriously assassinated meanwhile by some agent of the Hat, Bonnet, and Beanie Manufacturers' Benevolent Society, I think I shall have some more unorthodox views on the conventions of clothing to ventilate in my next essay.

the eyes of fu manchu

by Sax Rohmer

"DR. GREGORY ALIEN?" Gregory looked up with a start from the newspaper he was reading in the lobby of his hotel. He recognized that clipped English voice but hadn't expected to hear it now in Paris. He saw a tall, lean-faced man, his crisp hair silvered at the temples, a man who looked like a retired Indian Army Officer but whose smile was thirty years too young.

"Nayland Smith!" Gregory jumped up, hand stretched out. "What a happy surprise! How did you trail me here?"

"Got your address from the Sorbonne." Sir Denis Nayland Smith dropped into a chair facing Gregory and began to fill his pipe. "I was one of your admiring audience in the lecture theater. You speak French better than I do—in spite of your American accent!!

"I didn't join the mob in the lecturer's room; but I enjoyed the account of your remarkable researches. For a youngster in his early thirties you have gone far."

"Whatever were you doing

Sax Rohmer, as we have said before, contributed much to the folk-mythos of these times. An entire generation grew up in the shadow of these stories, accepting them as gospel truth, certain that all sorts of strange and heathen things could be found in the Chinatowns of the West. . . .

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there?"

"I have reached an age, Allen—" Nayland Smith gave the boyish grin—"when your theories of extending life far beyond its present span begin to interest me"

"You don't look as though you need any of my new chemical discoveries to keep you young," laughed Gregory.

"The fact is," Nayland Smith said seriously, "that I hoped to find a certain person in your audience, a person who illustrates in his own survival the truth of your theories; a man of fabulous age—beyond doubt scientifically prolonged.

"I refer, of course, to Dr. Fu Manchu. He will have followed your career with great interst. We know he's in Paris. But we couldn't spot him, although the place bristled with French detectives."

Gregory stared hard at the older man. An ex-Commissioner of Scotland Yard and now an agent of the British Secret Service, Nayland Smith couldn't be romancing.

"Does Fu Manchu really exist?" Gregory asked incredulously.

"Indeed he does," Smith said. "He is both the greatest scientist and the most dangerous man alive. You must have heard his name!"

"His name, yes! But I thought—"

"You thought Fu Manchu was a myth," Nayland Smith rapped. "Others have made the same mistake."

"But a person of such unusual appearance—here!"

"He has a variety of unusual appearances, Allen. He doesn't conform to the popular idea of a Chinese and can pose successfully as a European. He speaks many languages fluently. His vivid, green, oblique eyes and his hands betray the Asiatic; but in public he wears gloves and tinted glasses."

"To have escaped prison or the gallows for so long, he surely has a lot of helpers?"

Nayland Smith smiled—but it was a grim smile.

"He has an international organization, men and women; scientists, politicians, watching eyes everywhere."

"But what kind of person would work for him?"

"Every kind. He has his own methods of recruiting assistants—and seeing that they work. Tell me, where do you go next?"

"To London. I'm invited to repeat my lecture at Kings College. My grant from Columbia University doesn't allow luxury, so I have reserved accommodation in a small hotel near the Strand."

"Give me the address. I'll

look you up."

"Bring our mutual friend, Dr. Petrie, if he's in town. I should love to see him again. I need hardly say how much I'd like to meet Dr. Fu Manchu as well!"

"I hope you never do!" Nayland Smith replied. . .

It was crowded next day on the cross-Channel steamer. As the ship cleared Calais, Gregory found a quiet spot at the portside rail well forward. There were many things he wanted to think about, but the shadowy Dr. Fu Manchu kept returning to his thoughts. In fact, he found himself inspecting the passengers in search of a man wearing tinted glasses and gloves.

He hadn't seen one. But he had seen a very pretty girl coming on board alone, carrying a large artist's portfolio, and had imagined that she stared at him. But of course he might have been staring at *her!*

Came a sudden roll to port. Someone passing on the deck stumbled against him, clutched at his arm and dropped a large portfolio in the scuppers at his feet.

Gregory steadied himself against the rail, grabbed up the portfolio and turned. She was even prettier than he had thought in the first glimpse as she came on board.

The ship rolled to starboard, and Gregory grasped a slim shoulder to support the swaying, petite figure.

"I'm so sorry," he spoke awkwardly. "Are you feeling unwell?"

Her delicate coloring seemed to make the question absurd. "Oh, no," she assured him. "It was the so sudden lurch that nearly upset me." She had a delightful accent. "It made me feel a littie—swimmy." She laughed gaily. "Thank you very much."

"There's nothing to thank me for. Are you traveling alone?"

"Yes. I go to meet friends in London."

Rather relunctantly, Gregory relaxed his grip of her shoulder. She had remarkable blue eyes which possessed the strange quality, even when her lips smiled, of retaining a look of sadness that Gregory found indescribably haunting.

"I have a splendid prescription for that swimmy feeling," he told her in French, tucking her portfolio under his arm. "As a fellow artist, of sorts, please take my advice."

She hesitated for a moment. The blue eyes considered him. Then she nodded and they staggered off along the deck together. The swell

was increasing. Presently they faced one another across a table in the nearly deserted dining room. Gregory ordered dry champagne.

He learned that his fascinating acquaintance was "Mignon," who earned her living drawing caricatures for one of the Paris weekly journals, but had already exhibited two paintings at the Salon.

"Your card says you are a doctor. I never heard of a doctor of painting."

Gregory laughed happily. And he told her how during his two years at the Sorbonne, where he had completed his studies, he had found time also to study art, which had been his first choice as a profession.

"I, too, am a bred-in-the-bone Bohemian, Mignon."

"Oh, I know you are." Across her piquant face a shadow of compassion passed. "What a pity you changed your mind. Don't you think science is going too far? Isn't it upsetting the balance of nature? Science creates horrible things, and art creates beauty."

"You have something there, Mignon."

She watched him wistfully. "You must often think of those Paris days, of the carefree life of the students at the *atelier*. You lived in two different worlds. Do you ever regret the one you gave up?"

Gregory refilled Mignon's glass. Those compassionate blue eyes were oddly disturbing. "I sometimes wonder. . ."

Gregory couldn't make out how he managed to miss Mignon at the customs shed. But, somehow, in the crowd at Dover he lost sight of her. He walked from one end of the boat train to the other but couldn't see her anywhere, until, looking farther afield, he caught a glimpse of a sleeck Jaguar gliding away from the dock. Mignon was in the passenger's seat.

He concluded that black and white art paid better than science research and said good-by to a dream. . .

It was raining by the time the train reached London. From his hotel suite Gregory called Kings College, but he could find nobody there from whom to get particulars about arrangements for his lecture. He ordered some liquor to be sent up, ice and soda, and wondered how he was going to kill time until the rain stopped.

He wondered, too, if he would ever see Mignon again. Evidently the friends she had come to meet moved in a financial circle in which he would be a misfit. Mignon? She had given him no other name. But

Mignon was exactly the right one for her.

Mignon seemed completely a part of the Bohemian Paris that he loved. Gregory took out a sketching block and a soft pencil. He began to draw a figure. His knowledge of anatomy had helped him in the life class, and he drew sweeping, confident lines, blocked in the features with bold touches of light and shade. At last, he held the drawing away for a critical look—and saw a rough but recognizable sketch of Mignon!

One thing was wrong. He had captured her pose, the slim lines of her figure, the oval face and smiling lips. But her eyes had defeated his pencil.

He had been subconsciously aware for some time of a sound which resembled muffled footsteps, but had ignored it. And at this moment he became aware of the footsteps again.

They were soft but continuous. There was something furtive in this ceaseless padding, something eerie. At one moment he thought it came from a room above; at another from the passage outside his own room—a sort of phantom patrol. Once, when the uncanny footfalls seemed to be passing his door, he ran and opened it. But there was no one there.

Gregory took a look out of the window. He felt nervous and decided that a brisk walk would be good for him. The rain had stopped.

His mood was on odd one, an unhappy one. He had succeeded in his chosen profession, had earned the respect of older scientists whose accomplishments he revered. His researches had won him international recognition. Yet tonight he wished he had chosen to be a painter; he longed to escape from his accepted self, to be his natural self. For he was still young, and there was a world outside the world of science, a world in which there remained room for romance, for beauty.

In the lobby he paused to light a cigarette. A wave of self-contempt swept over him. Had he, a trained scientist, fallen for that romantic myth, love at first sight? He left a message at the desk that he would be back in half an hour, swung the door open and stepped out into the street.

He was greeted by a flash of lightning which changed the gloomy night into a sort of ghastly blue-white day. Then came a volley of thunder so awesome that it might have heralded the end of the world. In fact, it heralded a fresh

deluge which in a matter of minutes turned the quiet, sloping street into a torrent.

Gregory retired inside the porch. Left and right the street was deserted, until a slim figure came running through the downpour, a girl caught in the storm.

She dashed into the shelter of the porch, swept her damp hair back from her forehead, and Gregory found himself looking down at a piquant face, wet with rain, drops of which hung on her long lashes —and into the blue eyes of Mignon.

They stood for a moment watching the rain and then went to Gregory's small suite.

She sat in the only comfortable chair which the living room offered. The expression in her eyes was almost tragic, but she forced a smile.

"It is the thunderstorm. They affect me very much."

Gregory sat on a shabby hassock, looking up at her. There came another electric flicker through the shaded window, a shattering crash of thunder. Mignon flinched; tried to control herself. Gregory took her hand, reassuringly. "I don't know what you were doing out on such a night, Mignon."

"I came to look for you. At Dover you disappear. I don't know what has happened."

"Mignon!"

And in the sudden silence which fell as the thunder died, Gregory heard the footsteps again.

But their pattern had altered. At regular intervals the patrol was halted, and three deliberate beats came. Now, as he felt Mignon's grip tighten, he glanced back at her; and before she could lower her lashes, he caught an expression of such frantic compassion that it frightened him.

"Mignon, there's no danger," he said. "The storm is passing. It was very good of you to come."

But he knew that whatever she feared, it wasn't the storm. She opened her eyes, still clasping his hand.

"I am silly, Gregory. Try to forgive me. Why, oh why, didn't you stay an artist?"

Her manner, her disjointed phrases, told a story of nervous tension for which he could find no explanation.

"Listen, Mignon. Take it easy. Let me give you a cigarette and a little drink, so we can talk quietly."

"No, no!" She held onto his hand, detaining him. "I don't want a drink—yet. I want to talk to you—yes. But it is so hard."

"What do you want to tell me? That we're not going to

see one another again?"

He knew that the words betrayed his secret dreams, but he didn't care; for he knew, now, that Mignon wasn't indifferent and he meant to hear the truth.

"No," she whispered, and her eyes filled with tears.

Three soft taps sounded distinctly.

Gregory was on the point of asking Mignon if she had heard the queer sound when a third flicker of lightning came and another crack of thunder. She closed her eyes, still clutching his hand.

"Let's go downstairs," Gregory proposed, "and have a drink in the lounge. This room is suffocating."

He pulled her up from the chair, and they moved toward the door. The three muffled taps were repeated.

It seemed to Gregory that Mignon stopped as suddenly as if unseen hands had grasped her.

"Oh, Gregory, I feel so—swimmy! I think I will have a drink now, after all."

Her manner certainly suggested that she needed one, as she turned and dropped back into the chair. Gregory poured out two drinks of brandy, glanced at Mignon's pale face, and hurried into the bathroom for soda water. It took him a maddeningly long time to discover where the man had hidden the opener, and when at last he found it and came out, Mignon was looking at his sketch and in some degree had recover herself. The storm seemed to have passed.

She held up one of the glasses. "I am so sorry—but please could I have a little plain water in mine?"

Gregory brought a jug of water, added soda to his own glass, and took a drink, of which he, too, began to feel in need. Mignon picked up the drawing again.

"Is it very bad?" he asked her.

She didn't look up. "No. It is very good. It was sweet of you."

Mignon raised her eyes as she spoke, and he had only time to see that they were cloudy with tears when the phone buzzed. Puzzled and bewildered, he took up the receiver.

"Gregory Allen?" a familiar voice demanded.

"Here, Sir Denis." The caller was Nayland Smith.

"Good. Listen. I have just arrived. Followed you by plane. This is urgent: Don't leave your apartment until I get there. On no account allow anyone in."

Gregory hung up, turned—and saw Mignon through a mist. He staggered to the couch, gulped the rest of the

brandy. What was the word Mignon had used? *Swimmy.* Yes, that was what he felt, too.

He fell back. His mind began to wander. He tried to call Mignon, to explain to her—but his voice would not come. He tried to rise. He couldn't move. But he could hear Mignon's voice—as from a great distance.

With one arm she supported his head. Her fingers caressed his hair. Something wetted his check. He looked up, and into her sad blue eyes. Mignon was crying like a child. He wanted to console her, to warn her. But he couldn't speak, couldn't move a muscle!

"You must try to forgive me," she was moaning. "Try to understand. One day, you will. How sorry I am. . ."

She had gone. He didn't see her go, for he couldn't turn his head. All he could see was the ceiling above him and part of the wall. His brain now was clear enough; but his heart was sick—for at last he guessed the truth. She had doped his drink, and those uncanny footsteps were drawing nearer.

A number of people came in. He recognized the voice of the hotel manager. "How lucky you were in the hotel, Dr. Gottfeld."

Someone bent over Gregory: a tall man. He wore black silk gloves and tinted glasses. With a delicate thumb and forefinger he raised Gregory's lids. Then, he removed the glasses and stared down at him with brilliant green eyes. And Gregory knew he was face to face with Dr. Fu Manchu.

"Very lucky." The words were spoken with a guttural German accent. "I see from his baggage labels that he is recently in lower Egypt. There was a mild outbreak there of plague two weeks ago. Do not be alarmed. There is no danger—yet. But we must act quickly."

Conscious—seeing, hearing, but incapable of speech or movement — Gregory heard the man they called Dr. Gottfeld volunteer to drive him in his own car to the London Hospital for Tropical Diseases —"Where they know me well," he explained.

Mentally alert, but helpless as a dead man, Gregory passed through the frightful ordeal of listening to that German voice giving explicit directions concerning locking off of the apartment, destruction of its contents, and fumigation of the rooms. Knowing the symptoms of every variety of plague, he was well aware

that the man was a liar.

Why had he been doped by Mignon? Was she in the power of this insidious monster? He thought about the drug. Its composition was unknown to him, but he suspected a proportion of hyoscine. Then he heard a hurried exodus. He was alone with Dr. Fu Manchu!

Fu Manchu bent over him, again removing the tinted glasses, and Gregory knew that those hypnotic eyes were claiming him.

"I have studied your career with interest." The words now were spoken in perfect but curiously precise English. "I recently lost my chief assistant in your particular field of research, Dr. Allen. You have become indispensable to me in my search for a way to continue my life—indefinitely. Your service will not be unpleasant. There are rich rewards."

He was charging a hypodermic syringe when there came a faint buzzing.

A few words, harshly spoken, told him that Dr. Fu Manchu carried some kind of two-way radio device which kept him in contact with his associates. When again the Chinese scientist bent over him, he knew that the message had been a warning. The green eyes blazed with frustration.

"Your death could avail me nothing. Your life may yet be of use. I bid you good night, Dr. Allen. Convey my deep respects to Sir Denis Nayland Smith." Gregory realized that he was alone in the room.

He fought to retain the state of unreal consciousness in which he was held, but found that his overtaxed brain was defeating the effort. Coma overcame him.

As something out of a dream, he heard Nayland Smith's voice: "What is it, Petrie? Are we too late?"

"Very simple. A knockout drop. It was in this glass—the one with the soda water?"

"I assure you, gentlemen" —the manager's frightened voice climbed to a falsetto— "it is *plague!*"

"Plague be damned!" Dr. Petrie snapped. "He's been drugged. I don't quite know what's in it. But I suspect a proportion of hyoscine." *Good for you, Petrie!* Gregory silently applauded. "I'm going to take strong measures. Sheer luck, Smith, that I hurried straight from the hospital to meet you and had my bag with me."

Gregory caught a glimpse of Dr. Petrie's earnest face bending over him, and knew that the doctor had adminis-

tered an injection.

Recovery was slow, and nauseating, but at last he regained control of his muscles as well as of his brain, sat up and looked about him.

Dr. Petrie was watching him with a professional regard.

"Thanks, Doctor!" Gregory grasped his hand. "I agree with you about hyoscine. But I wish I knew the other ingredients."

Nayland Smith was looking at the drawing of Mignon. He glanced up as Gregory spoke.

"Hullo, Allen! This must be the young lady who informed the management that you were taken seriously ill and then disappeared. They gave me her description."

Gregory nodded.

"I warned you that Dr. Fu Manchu has eyes everywhere. You know now how fascinating those eyes can be. His scouts warned him in some way that I was close on his heels, and once again he has slipped away."

Nayland Smith put the drawing of Mignon where he found it and glanced at Gregory. There was sympathy in the gray eyes.

"Don't condemn her," he said. "She's in his power, a helpless slave—as, but for an act of Providence, *you* might have been." His voice hardened. "You must never under any circumstances, Gregory, try to see that girl again."

For the next few days Dr. Gregory Allen prowled the streets of London, driven by the ridiculous hope that somewhere in the crowds which thronged the Strand and Piccadilly he would see the auburn hair and piquant face of Mignon. His scientist's brain told him Nayland Smith had been right in warning him that he must never see her again. But against reason was set a desperate urge to find the girl, free her from the spell of Dr. Fu Manchu and take her back to New York with him.

Sometimes, in his restless walks, he had the feeling he was followed, but whether by one of Fu Manchu's assistants or a Scotland Yard man assigned to protect him, he did not know. Nor did he know where to look for Mignon. He didn't even know her last name.

With faint hope he had written off to Paris to the weekly magazine which regularly published her lively sketches. An answer came back promptly. The magazine could not give out contributors' addresses. But they

would see that his message reached Mignon.

The letter filled him with hope. When he returned to his small hotel two days later, there was a plain white envelope with his mail. "Exhibition of French art at the Tate Gallery," it read. "Please come there at 5:30 this afternoon. Wait near the Gauguin paintings, but when I come in pretend not to recognize me. Destroy this note.—Mignon."

Gregory approached the Tate Gallery at dusk. He told himself, once again, that he was playing with fire; but he could not blind himself to the fact that he had become hopelessly infatuated with the alluring French girl.

The building was all but deserted. It was near to closing time. He found the appointed spot and then decided to wait on the other side of the room, pretending to examine the sketches and charcoal studies.

Few visitors came. At every footstep, Gregory turned. One man, dark, of a saturnine cast of features, and wearing a white raincoat, strolled through twice; but Gregory decided that he was probably a gallery detective. He glanced anxiously at his watch. And still Mignon didn't come.

He had begun to lose heart when he heard light footsteps, and a slim girl came into the gallery. She wore a scarlet cape, and her auburn hair was almost entirely hidden by a close-fitting beret.

Mignon! But she gave no sign.

The dark man strolled in, glanced around, and went out by another door. Mignon, a moment later, went out, too. Gregory followed. She passed through several other rooms and stopped in a room devoted to French drawings. There was no one there.

She turned, and Gregory ran to her.

"Mignon!" He grasped her shoulders, looked hungrily into her eyes, those lovely eyes in which a shadow always lay. "How wonderful!"

She turned her head aside. "I am glad to see you, too, Gregory. But you must be mad. You should hate me. I have done you only harm."

"I *am* mad, Mignon—mad about *you!* Look at me. I understand it all. Nayland Smith has told me. Don't reproach yourself. I know!"

She glanced up at him, furtively, timidly. "You should not have come. Nor should I. You had one narrow escape from Fu Manchu. Why do you take another risk? You must forget me — forget we ever met."

"I can't forget you," he said hotly, "and I won't even try unless you tell me, here and now, that I have no right to think about you as I do."

"There is no one else, in the sense you mean," she whispered. "Think of me, Gregory, as you would think of a nun—or a slave: someone inaccessible."

He held her close. "There are no slaves," he said tensely. "Come with me—now. Back to America. Nayland Smith has the power of the government behind him. You will be safe from Dr. Fu Manchu."

Mignon rested her head against his shoulder for a rapturous moment. His heart was beating hammer strokes.

"How I wish it could be, Gregory! It is my father, hopelessly under the hypnotic power of Fu Manchu, whom I must protect." She looked up swiftly. "Every moment you stay with me you are in danger. My father is in danger. So am I."

He bent to her lips. Mignon thrust her hand against his mouth. Her eyes were wild. "If you value my life, Gregory dear, please let me go! I mean it. Don't even look back. Don't try to follow me!"

She slipped from his arms. He dared not ignore the urgency of her appeal. But as he heard her light footsteps retreating through the next gallery toward the door he *did* look back.

Mignon was out of sight.

Three minutes later Gregory was on the Embankment in front of the Gallery, staring right and left. Dusk had drawn in, and the opposite bank of the Thames was curtained in mist. And then in the direction of Millbank, under the light of a street lamp, he had a glimpse of the scarlet cape.

As he set out to follow, another figure passed under the lamp, close behind Mignon—the white-coated figure of the dark man!

Gregory hurried on. Mignon was being covered. But if he could find out where she was going, Nayland Smith could do the rest. For Gregory was determined, now, to get Mignon away from Fu Manchu even if he had to kidnap her.

The scarlet cape disappeared around a corner not far from the Gallery. The white coat closed up and disappeared also.

Gregory raced to the corner. He was just in time to see Mignon turn into one of the many narrow streets which abounded in this district. The white-coated man followed no

farther. He went straight ahead.

Gregory ran on to the head of the street where she had turned. He could see no sign of the scarlet cloak. It was dark in the opening, but there were some lighted windows beyond. He stood for a moment, listening for the sound of an opening or closing door. He heard nothing — then moved in cautiously.

No sound warned him of his danger. No blow was struck. He suffered a sudden sharp pain — and remembered no more . . .

Except for a slight headache, he felt no discomfort when he woke up. He took one look around, then closed his eyes again. This must be a realistic but fantastic dream!

He lay on a divan in an Oriental room. The walls were decorated with a number of beautiful lacquer panels. The ceiling consisted of what looked like silk tapestry, and in and out of its intricate pattern gold dragons crept. The appointments were mainly Chinese. Rugs covered the floor. There was a faint smell resembling that of stale incense. At a long, narrow desk facing the divan a man sat writing. He wore a yellow robe and a black cap topped with a coral bead.

This man's face possessed a sort of satanic beauty. The features were those of an aristocrat, an intellectual aristocrat. And an aura of assured and terrifying power seemed to radiate from the whole figure.

It was Dr. Fu Manchu!

"Good evening, Dr. Allen," he said, without looking up. "I am happy to have you as my guest. I anticipate a long and mutually satisfactory association." Gregory swung his legs off the divan. Fu Manchu didn't stir. "I beg you to attempt no vulgar violence. Even if it succeeded, you would be strangled thirty seconds later."

Gregory sat upright, his fists clenched, watching him, fascinated.

"To all intents and purposes, Dr. Allen, you find yourself in China—although this room, which has several remarkable qualities, was designed by a clever Japanese artist; for you must not fall into the error of supposing that my organization is purely Chinese in character. I assure you that I have enthusiastic workers of all races in the Order of the Si-Fan, of which I am president."

This menacing and cynical statement Dr. Fu Manchu made without once glancing up from the folio volume in which he was writing margi-

nal notes. Gregory sat still, watching him, and waiting.

"For instance," the strange voice continued, "this room is soundproof. It was formerly a studio. The Chinese silk conceals the toplights. The seven lacquer panels are in fact seven doors. I use the place as a *pied-a-terre* when my affairs detain me in London. I am much sought after, Dr. Allen —particularly by officials of Scotland Yard. And this apartment has useful features. Will you take tea with me?"

"No, thank you!"

"As you please. Your unusual researches into the means of increasing vigorous life prove of great value to my own. I am no longer young, my dear doctor, but your unexpected visit here inspired me to hope that in addition to securing your services, I may induce a mutual friend to call upon us."

Dr. Fu Manchu laid his pen down, and for the first time looked up. Gregory found himself subjected to the fixed regard of the strangest human eyes he had ever seen. They were long, narrow eyes, only slightly oblique, and they were brilliantly green. Their gaze threatened to take command of his will and he averted his glance.

"When you followed a member of my staff, Dr. Allen, whom you know as Mignon, I was informed of this—at the time that you left the Tate Gallery — and took suitable steps. A judo expert awaited your arrival, and dealt with you by a simple nerve pressure with which, as a physician, you may be familiar. I am aware that Mignon made a secret appointment to meet you. She awaits her punishment. What it shall be rests with you."

Gregory experienced an unpleasant fluttering in the stomach. He sensed what was coming, and wondered how he should face up to the ordeal. He said nothing.

"There is a telephone on the small table beside you," Fu Manchu told him, softly. "Be good enough to call Sir Denis Nayland Smith. Tell him that you have met with an accident on Chelsea Embankment and are lying in the house of a neighboring doctor who was passing at the time. This apartment is rented by a certain Dr. Steiner. His plate is outside. His surgery adjoins this room. One of the seven doors leads to it. The address is Number 5B Ruskin Mews. Request Sir Denis to bring his car here for you at once."

Gregory sprang up. "I refuse!"

Lacquer doors to left and right of him opened silently, magically, as if motivated by his sudden movement. Two short, thickset Asiatics leapt in. They carried heavy knives. Holding them poised in their hands for a throw, they watched him—waited.

"I deplore this barbarous behavior, Dr. Allen. At my headquarters I have more subtle measures available."

"To hell with your measures! You can kill me, but you can't make me obey your orders."

Fu Manchu sighed. One long yellow finger moved ono his desk; and a third door, almost facing Gregory, opened. Mignon came in. Another member of the gang of thugs, who presumably acted as a bodyguard, grasped her by the wrist. In his other hand the man carried a whip.

Beret and scarlet cape were gone. Mignon wore a black skirt and a white blouse. Her auburn hair framed her pale face. One glance of passionate entreaty she flashed at him, then lowered her head.

"You daren't do it!" Gregory blazed in a white fury. "You may consider yourself to be in China, but if you attempt this outrage, you'll find you're still in England! We'll rouse the neighborhood!"

The point of a knife touched his throat. One of the pair guarding him had moved closer. Fu Manchu slightly shook his head.

"You forget, Dr. Allen, that this room is soundproof. Be so wise as to call Sir Denis. I am advised that he is at home at present, and Whitehall Court, where he resides, is no great distance away. But he may be going out to dine. We are wasting time. I think you'll find the number is Whitehall 9213."

Gregory cast a last, despairing glance around the room, then took up the phone and dialed the number. Nayland Smith's man answered, recognized the speaker and immediately brought Nayland Smith.

"Smith here. What's up, Allen?" came the crisp voice.

The words nearly choked him, but Gregory gave the message which Dr. Fu Manchu had directed. His eyes remained fixed upon Mignon as he spoke, and he knew that he dared not risk any hint of warning.

"Good enough. Bad luck. Be with you in ten minutes." And Nayland Smith hung up.

Fu Manchu uttered a guttural order; the knife point was removed from Gregory's jugular; his guards retired; Mignon, without a glance in

his direction, was led away. The silent doors closed. He found himself alone again with Dr. Fu Manchu. He dropped back ono the divan.

He had done a dastardly thing, a thing with which he would reproach himself to his last day. To save a woman who had never truly meant anything in his life from suffering, he had betrayed an old, tried friend into the power of a cruel and relentless enemy. He groaned aloud.

Fu Manchu had resumed his annotations. He spoke without looking up.

"To do that which is unavoidable merits neither praise nor blame, Dr. Allen. That curious superstition, the sancity of woman, which is, no doubt, a part of your American heritage, left you no alternative. I am transferring Mignon to another post, where I trust you will no longer be able to interfere with her normal efficiency."

And Dr. Fu Manchu went on with his notes.

Gregory was reaching boiling point, but knew that he was helpless to avert the evil he had brought about. If he could have killed Fu Manchu with his bare hands he would gladly have done it, regardless of the cost. But he knew, now, that he couldn't hope to get within reach of him.

Nayland Smith was racing into a trap! In a matter of minutes he would be here. And when Gregory thought of the steely gray eyes of the secret service official, which could so quickly soften in kindness, he wanted to groan again.

A curious, high bell note broke the complete and awesome silence of the room.

Dr. Fu Manchu stood up, put the folio volume under his arm and, opening one of the seven doors, went out.

As the door closed behind the Chinese doctor, Gregory, risking everything, grabbed the phone and dialed Nayland Smith's number.

There was no reply!

But no one had disturbed him; none of the seven doors had opened. He dashed at one at random; could find no means of opening it. The door defied all his efforts. He tried another, worked on it frantically. It was immovable. He stepped back and put his shoulder to the gleaming lacquer. Nothing happened.

Panic threatened. He clenched his teeth, tried to think calmly. The absolute silence of that soundproof room began to appall him.

Then, with a tearing crash, the silence was broken. The door by which Dr. Fu Manchu had gone out burst open, and

the dark man wearing a white raincoat stared into the room!

Gregory counted himself lost, when the man turned and shouted back over his shoulder: "This way, sir! Here he is!" Then he stepped into the room. "Glad to see you still alive, Doctor!"

And Nayland Smith ran in behind him!

"You caught me only just in the nick of time, Allen," Nayland Smith assured him. "Sergeant Ridley here—" he nodded to the man in the white coat— "has been shadowing you for nearly a week! You see, I knew you were trying to get in touch with the little redhead, and his orders were, if you succeeded, to transfer all his attention to the girl when she left you. He did so tonight, and had no idea you were somewhere behind! He reported to me that Mignon had just gone into Ruskin Street."

Gregory forced a pale grin. "Thank you, Sergeant," he said weakly.

"Scotland Yard's crime map has a red ring drawn around this area," Nayland Smith explained. "We have suspected that Fu Manchu had a hideaway here. The Japanese artist who reconstructed this place disappeared six months ago, and a certain Dr. Gottfeld took the apartment over, though the name of Dr. Steiner appears on the plate."

"Of course," Gregory broke in. "Gottfeld was the name the hotel manager called Fu Manchu when they came to my suite. Have you got him?"

Nayland Smith shook his head grimly. "I'm afraid he has done another of his vanishing tricks. The raid squad I brought along is searching every cranny. But my guess is that Fu Manchu has slipped away to one of his old haunts near Limehouse."

He motioned to the Sergeant, who brought in a man of perhaps fifty whose eyes had that peculiar glaze which showed he had been under Fu Manchu's hypnotic spell. "But at least we've rescued a man who may be able to give us a great deal of information about Fu Manchu's operations. Dr. Allen, this is Dr. Gaston Breon. Besides being a famous French entomologist, he is Mignon's father!"

"Thank God you've saved him!" Gregory said, as he gripped the scientist's limp hand. "But, Smith, have you rescued Mignon?"

Nayland Smith slapped him on the shoulder. "We got her with two of Dr. Fu Manchu's henchmen who were trying to force her into a motor launch. I had her taken to my apartment." As Gregory looked at

him gratefully, he smiled that boyish grin. "She's your responsibility now."

Ten minutes later Gregory walked past a guard and into Nayland Smith's large book-lined study. Mignon sprang up from a chair near the window and ran to him, her eyes wild with terror.

"Gregory! You must compel them to let me go!" she cried. "Fu Manchu will kill my father if I do not return to him." She stared at Gregory in bewilderment. "Why do you smile?" she asked sharply.

But Gregory was looking beyond her to the door, and Mignon turned. A little sigh of joy escaped her as she ran to her father. "My child, my child," Dr. Breon muttered, awkwardly patting her shoulder. "The nightmare is finished, Mignon. We have both been freed from the terror of Dr. Fu Manchu."

"Oh, what they've done to you these past two years, my father," she whispered.

Gregory crossed the room swiftly and stood at her side, his arm around her shoulders. "We'll have him right in no time," he promised. "All he needs is rest and the care we'll give him."

Mignon's head came back, and the tears were gone. What was more, the look of infinite sadness he remembered from their first meeting was gone, too. In its place there was a sparkle that danced in the light of the lamps with swift invitation.

"I think it is quite safe for you now to love me, Gregory," she said.

He took her into his arms.

NEXT MONTH —

THE PHANTOM GARDENER

by NIGEL BALCHIN

MIDNIGHT RENDEZVOUS

by MARGARET MANNERS

A VILLAGE BORGIA

by AUGUST DERLET

THE BUTLER DIDN'T DO IT

by TALMAGE POWELL

—in the next issue of THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

philosophy and the dutchman

by William O'Farrell

BANDOL IS A TOWN on the French Riviera. It is an hour and a half's drive along the Mediterranean coast from Marseilles, and considerably less than that by train. For more than two years I was its only American resident, but it was a popular vacationing spot for Parisians and there were a few discerning English who showed up season after season. They probably still do. It has an attractive beach, Plage Renecros, which is located in a rockbound cove and is gay with colored umbrellas and small cafes. There is a yact harbor and a movie theatre, or cinema, which shows French, American and Italian films. The town also has its quota of eccentric characters of whom a man I came to think of as The Dutchman was occasionally one. He no longer uses Bandol as a headquarters. Neither do I although I once believed I loved the place. Perhaps I did. It's hard now to be sure.

I never go back there nowadays because a certain zest-

This is a publishing find—an unpublished story by William O'Farrell, who will be remembered for THIN EDGE OF VIOLENCE, CAUSEWAY TO THE PAST, THE SNAKES OF ST. CYR, and other novels, and as a frequent contributor to both EQMM and this magazine. As I have said before, O'Farrell wrote about our times and about people who were credible and very much alive. This is why many of us miss him, as a writer—and as a friend. H.S.S.

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ful quality which I can only describe as youth has left me; and because in Bandol, as I knew it, only the young can feel at home. This short history is dictated in an attempt to fix the moment of my youth's departure and, perhaps, to find out why it left.

I first saw the Dutchman on the quay opposite a cafe called L'Escale. He was wearing a suit of silvered papier-mache armor, carrying a lance and riding a sway-backed horse. The mild shock he gave me faded when I realized that he was passing out handbills. These turned out to be advertisements for a movie currently showing at the theatre, one of those historical horse operas beloved of the French.

It was a hot afternoon. Most of the town was asleep, and he must finally have seen that his performance was a waste of effort. The third time he passed he dismounted, hitched his horse and came toward my table in the awninged shade.

He was a huge man with blue eyes and blond, shaggy hair. Recognizing my foreignness, he stopped. "American?" he asked.

I nodded.

"Ca va bien," he said, and smiled. His smile was singularly childlike. "I am one time three months in Philadelphia. I talk English good."

Uninvited, he sat down, ordered a pastis and told the water to refill my wineglass. (Both items appeared later on my bill, which I paid without rancor and without comment). He took a Gauloise cigarette from above his ear, lit it and began to talk.

I had placed him as a native of one of the Scandinavian countries but he had been born in Holland. He told me so within thirty seconds of having joined me. The Dutchman took an uninhibited delight in talking about himself. The waiter brought our drinks. A few people passed. The green of his pastis turned milky as he added water. He sipped it, rolled the licorice-tasting liquor under his tongue.

"America is rich country," he said. "You are rich?"

"No."

"How you make money?"

"I'm a writer."

He didn't understand and I didn't try too hard to explain. "Je suis un auteur," I said, and let it go at that.

"Un auteur des romans?"

"Yes," I said. "I've written a number of novels. What do you do?"

"I am musician. I don't make money but I have the philosophe."

He meant philosophy. So far as I know, "philosophe" means "philosopher" in French, and

nothing else. But the Dutchman didn't worry about the minor pitfalls of the four languages he spoke; and not to worry, just to take things as they came, was the essence of his philosophy. He was the younger of two brothers of an Amsterdam family that derived its wealth from Javanese plantations. He had lived in Java before the war but invading German troops had caught him on a visit home. He spent the war in a Bavarian labor camp, and after Germany's surrender he returned to Holland to find his brother and his mother dead —the latter of natural causes —and his father ostracized for collaborating with the enemy.

"I go in the house," the Dutchman told me. "My father has good health. He say, 'Son, what you want? What I can give you?' I say, 'Give me nothing. Give yourself a bullet in the head.' I take my guitar, walk from the house, walk south where is sunshine and warm. When I see my father, I think is last time I get angry. Nobody make me angry now. I don't worry about nothing. I sit in the sun, play my guitar."

"Don't you ever work?"

"But certainly. I work today"—he indicated his imitation armor—"for the cinema. Next week I am in Italy, pick grapes. I am good baker. I work, but only when is necessary, you understand."

"You haven't told me your name."

"Is Pieter de Vogel. I am happy meeting you."

He was Pieter de Vogel. De Vogel went where he pleased and did as he pleased, and refused to be concerned with superficialities. I envied him, and if I give more space than seems warranted to a description of his manner of living, it is because at that time it came close to paralleling my own. There was, however, one fundamental difference between us. I had my typewriter and a good agent in New York. With these, I frequently told myself, I could live anywhere and, within limits, anyhow I wanted to. I assured myself that I was as self-sufficient as a man could get, but I never really believed it. A single curtly rejected story was enough to sink me in self-doubt, start me worrying about finances, spoil any relish that I might have had in living simply and in simply living. I could never hope to break away completely, as he had done. And that, of course, was why I envied him.

The Dutchman stayed in Bandol for three days on that

trip. I talked to him again before he went away. My villa was on the hillside overlooking Plage Renecros, and I saw him one morning from my balcony. I put on my trunks and went down winding stone steps to the sand.

"Hi," I said.

"Allo, Americain! You are to swim or see the girls?" He smiled in the direction of a group of well-shaped, practically nude young women.

"Both, I suppose. They're eminently seeable."

He shugged. "A convenience, women, but also a derangement to the spirit. You got wife?"

"No. Have you?"

He laughed. "What need I got for wife? I don't marry, never." His laughter died. "You don't marry either, I advise."

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Because," he said, "I think you are mélange of peoples. Not one man but three, is how you are. What you want to be on top, barbarian on bottom, with what is you in middle. Top part marry an angel, middle part live with her, then the barbarian see the angel is just a woman and he shoot holes in her, I think."

(Why didn't I listen to you, Dutchman? If I had, the revolver lying upstairs on the floor would never have been fired. There would have been no necessity for firing it).

He went to Italy the following day and, a month later, again passed through Bandol, but I didn't see him. I didn't see him for a year, although I heard once that he had gone to Paris and another time that he'd been seen selling candid snapshots on the Cannabiere, and still again that he was working in a Marseilles bakery and had fallen in love with the daughter of the proprietor. All three rumors later were confirmed.

So that year passed. The lovely weather of the fall and early winter was replaced by the mistral and rains so heavy that the line of demarcation between the shore and sea grew watery and indistinct. Then the rains stopped, the wind died, the sun came out and it was spring again, and finally summer.

I loved the summer in those days: its pungency and close, enveloping heat. Or told myself I loved it, which often amounts to the same thing. I remember, one evening as I walked downhill into the town, that I grew acutely aware of the odor of verbena. It was such a clean odor, and yet so heady that it made me drunk. Verbena doesn't affect me like that any more, and dry Martinis are no substitute.

Across the road from the post office I saw a familiar gigantic figure. The Dutchman sat on a stone wall looking at the harbor. He wore stout shoes and corduroy shorts, and a blanket-roll lay beside him on the wall. I came up behind him silently.

"Welcome home," I said.

"Ha! The famous one!" He did not turn. "I see your books translated to the French. You do not depart Bandol?"

"You know a better place?"

He ignored my question. "I attend my girl. She telephone her father in Marseilles. The father has for me a grand aversion."

With reason, I thought, when I learned why. The Dutchman had said that he would never marry, and he hadn't. He had merely started on a walking tour and taken the baker's daughter along for company.

"Is good summer on the Cote d'Azur," he said. "We go to Cannes."

"Walking?"

"What other way? Tonight we sleep on beach." He had turned, was smiling past me in the direction of the post office. "Odette, she come." His voice was husky. Huskiness was only one symptom of the distress Odette Dumain was capable of inflicting on most men of his age. And of mine.

She was very young, almost a child in appearance, and with an air of trusting innocence. She wore shorts and walking shoes, as the Dutchman did, but the rough clothes only accentuated her seeming fragility. She was not a tall girl; as she shook my hand —that up-and-down quick pumping motion of a French handshake—I could look down on the babushka that restrained her light blonde hair. Her hair and the Dutchman's were precisely the same shade. The two looked so much alike, in fact, that she might have been his younger sister. His narcissism, I thought, has been extended to its logical conclusion. He's fallen in love with his feminine counterpart.

"My father is angry," she told him, speaking the patois of the Midi in a low, sweet voice. "I shall wait a few days and then return to see him."

"From Cannes?"

"You must go alone to Cannes. I shall join you later."

The Dutchman didn't like it. There was no place in Bandol for her to stay. That was his surface objection. His real one was that he didn't trust her. But I didn't know that then.

"Make up your minds tomorrow or the next day," I told them. "Plenty of room

for both of you at my place." There is an old superstition that the Devil never enters a house uninvited. For what happened after that I had only to blame my unsuperstitious self.

They stayed at the villa until the following morning. My envy of the Dutchman, now that I had met Odette, was shot with resentment and well on its way to becoming an obsession, and I didn't get much sleep. Once during the night I was awakened by what sounded like a footstep in my room. But I could see no one and I shut my eyes again. In the morning the Dutchman looked up one of his married friends and arranged for Odette to stay a few days under the watchful eye of his friend's wife.

That was an eventful day. Odette left and the Dutchman started for Cannes about noon. In the late afternoon, the doctor who came from Toulon twice a week told me that an irritation in my throat might possibly be cancer. If so, unless excised immediately, it would kill me. He wanted to take a biopsy but I went home to think about it. When I got home Odette was waiting for me. Should I have reacted in a manner other than I did? Hardly, I think, in the circumstances. When a man believes himself about to die, he takes what comfort he can get.

I had a jade ring, the only article of jewelry I ever wore. Odette had admired it the evening before, and shortly after I got home she stopped what she was doing to examine it again. I took it off my finger and gave it to her. It was a freely given present and it made her happy. That was all I asked in payment: that she be happy. If I received more, that was her gift to me.

She left me early in the morning. She loved me, she said, and promised to return that night. She did not come. When I went looking for her, the Dutchman's friend told me that she had gone to see her father. I searched Marseilles for a full week. Every Dumain in the directory and every bakery in the city were checked before I gave up. I had not known that I could feel so deeply about a woman, and to this day I'm not sure whether my feeling was triggered by infatuation with Odette or jealousy of the Dutchman or an insidious combination of both. I hated him. I took his serene self confidence as a personal affront.

Time has an eroding effect on memory. Until a few hours

ago, I believed that the week I searched Marseilles was the period during which youth went out of me forever, when I accepted as fact the fear that I would never see Odette again. It wasn't. I recovered after a while. Nor had it been when the Toulon doctor said that he suspected cancer. With Odette's timely help I'd managed to survive that shock. And, of course, a later diagnosis by a specialist in Paris—he called the swelling a benign tumescense—was nothing but an anticlimax. I didn't feel much of anything when he gave me my reprieve; but—which seemed to me the ultimate pragmatic test—I retained an interest in my work. Returning to Bandol, I spent the next three months finishing a book and planning one to follow it.

The book was finished in November. I had packaged it for mailing and was fixing dinner when someone knocked on the door. It was Odette, as certain of her welcome as she would have been if she were not four months late. I pretended to be less delighted than I actually was.

"What do you want?"

She replied in passable English, "You not happy to see me?"

"Where did you learn English?"

"In Cannes. Many Americans in Cannes."

"Where's de Vogel?"

She s h r u g g e d. "Who knows?" Again she asked, "You not happy to see me?"

"Very happy," I said quietly. "Come on in."

She came in and I shut the door. I was about to kiss her when her attention was caught by the odor of cooking food. She ran into the kitchen and helped me serve the meal.

We had dinner on the balcony by candlelight. It was a romantic setting but I got the impression that she would have enjoyed it equally under almost any other circumstances, provided there was enough to eat. She ate greedily and didn't stop until there was nothing left. Then she leaned back in her chair and smiled.

"You think I am glouton—like you say, a pig?"

"I think you're charming."

"Is because when I am little girl we eat only what my papa take from bakery. We eat maybe one time every week."

"Doesn't your father own the bakery?"

"He do now. But when I am little my uncle do. Now is better because my uncle die. I not hungry now but I remember."

I circled the table and knelt beside her chair. I put my arms around her waist. "You'll

never have to be hungry again," I said.

This time our kiss remained uninterrupted, but later in the evening she told me about a pair of earrings she had seen in a jewelry store in town. They were priced at eighteen thousand francs—in the neighborhood of fifty dollars."

"You buy for me tomorrow, please?" she said.

"Why?"

"They are pretty."

"Did de Vogel ever give you anything that cost that much?"

"You give to me this ring." She showed it to me. "I wear it always. It make me love you much."

"You didn't answer my question."

"Pieter is poor man. You buy earrings?"

"No."

"Please?"

"I told you—no."

She got up and started for the door.

"Where are you going?"

"You not love me. You not caring where I go."

"Come back here, damn it!"

"No." She opened the door, went out and shut the door again. I caught her in the garden, pulled her back into the house. She came willingly enough. Why not? She knew that she had won.

At two o'clock in the morning a heavy shoulder smashed in the front door. The noise awakened me. I had my bathrobe on and was standing beside the bed when the Dutchman walked into the room. He looked down at Odette. I waited silently. An explanation or apology would have accomplished nothing. I had to take whatever was coming to me; and that, I figured, would be a disfigured face at least. He topped me by four inches and could have torn one of my arms off if the notion to do so had occurred to him.

Instead, when he finally turned, I was puzzled to see only pity in his eyes. "You too, my friend?" He shrugged, and turned back to Odette.

"Get up and dress yourself," he said in French.

"I don't want to. I was sleeping. Go away."

"You will either come with me or I shall leave and you will not see me again," he said.

For a few seconds I hoped she would defy him. Then she reached for her clothes and I got out of the room. I was on the balcony when I heard them leaving. The moon was in its waning crescent; I felt as washed-out as it looked. It came to me with stunning impact that I had actually fallen in love with Odette. I was in

love with a mercenary little tramp, who was not mercenary with the Dutchman; and that, in so far as she was concerned, he had proved himself to be the better man. I knew that I would never be able to forgive him that.

As soon as I could I sailed on the U. S. Line's *Constitution* for New York. I'd soured on Europe, soured especially on Bandol. Every time I passed the jewelry store I'd see those earrings with an eighteen thousand franc pride-tag on them, and be conscious of a grinding shame. The week before I sailed I went into the store and bought them. I took the damned things home and stamped them into junk, and the act of doing so made me more ashamed than I had been before. I was sick: homesick, I thought. I wanted to hear unaccented English spoken, to be with my own kind again.

Back in New York I began to feel a little better. A book of mine had sold to television and I got the assignment to do the script. The money was good and I enjoyed writing the necessarily lean, taut dialogue. I believe I can remember that first assignment as being fun. A second one took me to California. That's where I am now.

The money is still good. I live in a beach house in Malibu and own two cars. I'm married and I have a swimming pool which, with the Pacific Ocean just below my picture window, I don't need. My neighbors display equally useless status symbols. Martha Maynard, who made such a tremendous hit in "Woman With a Whip," lives on my right, and Harry Bishop, the producer, on my left. I still write scripts for television but I don't enjoy doing it any more. I don't really enjoy anything. I just go through the motions, pass the time.

This morning I got a phone call from my agent. "You know a guy named de Vogel, first name sounds something like Peter?"

I had a few bad seconds. "Yes," I told him. "Why?"

"He saw one of your credits on TV and called the Guild. Want me to give him your number? He's going to call back."

"I'll drop him a note," I said. "Get his address."

"Got that already. It's a bakery on Ventura Boulevard. Here's the number."

He gave it to me and we both hung up. I went to the garage, backed out the Mercedes-Benz and drove through Malibu Canyon to the San Fernando Valley. The Dutchman's bakery was two miles east of Sepulveda. Only it wasn't his bakery. He told me

so when he came from the rear of the shop to shake my hand.

"But it's a good business," he said. "The boss is old and wants to sell out. Cheap. Five thousand dollars."

I needed time to think. "Your English is much better than it used to be."

"Why not? I am nine years in this country. Come—" His big hand closed around my arm. "We drink some beer. The bar is right next door."

We sat in a booth and had three beers apiece. It was one of those pay-as-you-drink places and the Dutchman consistently beat me to the checks. He, too, had changed, although in appearance he could still have been the same free soul who years before had sat down at my table blandly assuming that I would pay for his pastis. He must have changed. Why else would he have looked me up? Why would he have told me the bakery was for sale? There was only one answer. He was going to try to touch me for the five thousand he would need to buy it.

It had to be that way, and I found it gratifying to be at least in a position of ascendency. "Still have the philosophe?" I asked.

He smiled, and it was that his smile had remained singularly childlike. "But naturally—only now my philosophy is that of an older man. I am busy. I work hard. I support my family."

"Married—you? You told me—"

"What I said when I was young was true for then," he interrupted. "It is not true for now. Is same with you?"

"It's the same with everybody, I suppose. Is your wife American?"

"She come from Strasbourg but, like me, she is international. Also she is faithful and the mother of three children. There are no deranging contretemps like always with Odette."

He, not I, had brought Odette into the conversation. "You have any idea where she is?" I was enjoying this. I hadn't felt like this for a long time.

"None. A friend in Bandol sent me a postcard. He thinks Odette is in this country, but it's a big country and I do not see her. I do not see her," the Dutchman said, "since one night on Plage Renecros when I try to drown her. I am glad I did not succeed."

I said softly. "Mind telling me about it?"

"I do not mind," he said. "Your remember the night I found her in your villa?"

"I do, indeed."

"That time she was with you. Other times with other men. At first it made me angry. Not very angry, just a little. I send one poor fellow to the hospital in an ambulance."

"You weren't angry with me," I remembered.

"No, I got used to it. It was necessary. Always when I told her, 'Come with me or I will leave you,' she would come. She loved me, I thought. With the others she amused herself or they gave her little presents; they did not count. Then she met a man who did count. When I said, 'Come with me,' she would not come."

"Must have been quite a man," I murmured.

The Dutchman shrugged. "Perhaps. She thought he was; that was of importance; nothing else. She preferred this man to me. I caught her alone one night after she had told me so. I took her to the beach. I put my hand over her mouth so the noise she made would not be heard. I carried her into the sea and held her under water. When my spirit failed she was almost dead. If my spirit had not"—He broke off and was silent for a moment. "But it did fail. My courage left me, and it was long time before it came back."

I frowned. "You mean it did come back?"

"Oh, yes. Something is in you, maybe it don't work sometimes. But it don't leave you always, never." He seemed surprised. "Always it come back."

"You like the way you're living now? You feel about things as deeply as you used to in Bandol?"

He shrugged again. "Why not? I am the same." He leaned toward me over the table. "Why you ask these things?"

"Because something's happened to me. You may not know it but it's happened to you, too. I've lost—we've both lost—well, I suppose you'd call it the joy of living."

His smile was puzzled. "No, we don't lose anything. I am the same, a little older. I think you are like always. Just the same."

It was my turn to be silent. Then, "Let's get this straight," I told him. "Are you implying that, even in Bandol, I was like a washed-out vegetable, the way that I am now?"

He seemed embarrassed. "You say this thing, my friend. I do not say it."

"But it's what you think?"

"I do not like to talk like this."

"I don't, either. But I want an answer. Tell me what you

think."

"You insist? Very well. I do not say you were a vegetable; that is too much. But I know what you mean." He paused. "Is true."

I managed to control my voice. "It is not true! The world was vivid then. I loved and hated; I didn't merely tolerate. I loved Bandol, and if you want to know the truth I hated you!"

The Dutchman said uneasily, "You distress yourself. Please do not do this."

"Why don't you admit it? Admit there was a time when I felt things as deeply as you did!"

"It is not for me to say this. Only you can know. But I do not understand why you think this is important. Some men have such feelings as you talk about. Most men do not. Does it make a difference?"

"You think it doesn't?"

"Yes, that is how I think. We all come to same place in the end—what matter how we get there? Young men read of love and hate in books, they see it in the cinema, they sing about it in their songs. Then they tell each other, 'Look—I feel it, too!' And so"—the Dutchman's g e s t u r e was vague but somehow succeeded in conveying what he was trying to express—"and so I think, like many peoples you pretend. But you don't love Bandol; you don't hate me."

"I loved Odette."

"I do not think you do."

"I married her."

He looked as though I'd slapped him. It did me good to see the startled incredulity in his face. "What is this you say?"

"We're married. She got my forwarding address from the American Express and followed me," I told him. "We've been married for five years."

"My poor friend! I am sorry."

"Don't be. We're happy enough. It was just a question of her finding the right man." I took out my check book, wrote him a check for five thousand collars and slid it across the table. "For the bakery."

He picked it up and studied it as though he'd never seen a check before. Then he studied me. "Why you do this?" he asked.

"It's what you wanted, isn't it? Don't worry. I can afford it," I told him, "and the check is good. Call it a loan. You're a business man now. You'll probably make a lot of money. Maybe someday you can pay me back."

He shook his head wonderingly. "But I don't want to borrow money. I don't want to buy this bakery. Yesterday

I tell my wife, 'I think next week we go to San Francisco.' She say, 'Fine. Is good seafood in San Francisco. I like it there.' But now I think maybe we go to Mexico. I don't know. We find out when we start."

"If it wasn't for money, then why did you look me up?"

Again the gesture that—perhaps because of its very vagueness—got across his message. "I don't know, now. I think, when I call your agent, I will be happy to see you, But — seeing you — it make me very sad.

He handed back the check. I left him in the bar and drove home the way that I had come. I parked the Mercedes-Benz in the garage, walked to the front door of the house, unlocked it, went inside. Harry Bishop was in the living room. He was short of breath and a little red-faced, as any man might be when he has just come rushing down the stairs.

"Well, hi!" he said, getting up. "I dropped in—"

"Save it, Harry. Don't make with the excuses. Just get out," I said.

He got out and I watched him go. I watched him from a window and, when he was out of sight, I climbed the stairs. I took the revolver from its drawer in my bedside table and went looking for my wife. I found her in her bedroom. Odette had wrapped herself in a Chinese-red silk negligee and was sitting at her dressing table, her back turned to me and to the room.

"What do we have now?" she asked. "Another scene?" Her English, like the Dutchman's, had improved.

"Not another one. The last."

"How often have I heard you say that!"

"You won't hear me say it again. Met an old friend of yours todays," I told her. "De Vogel. We had quite a talk."

She said excitedly, "You saw Pieter?" After a moment, she added, "So that is what's the matter! You are jealous."

"Hardly."

"You were always jealous of Pieter. Where is he staying? I must look him up."

"You won't be able to. Turn around."

"Why should I? I can see you in the mirror. I can see that silly gun." She laughed. "You not use it. I know you. You would not dare.

"You're wrong. I have more courage than the Dutchman, Odette. Turn around."

"I won't. I am busy. Go away."

She wouldn't turn, so I shot her in the back. And as I

pulled the trigger I thought only that at last I had accomplished something that de Vogel had tried to do and failed. She toppled from the bench and I stooped to feel her heart. It wasn't beating. It must have stopped instantaneously, and I was glad it had. I wouldn't like to think that I had caused her pain. I could remember a time when I had loved her, or thought I could remember such at time. Now, seeing the ugly clash of her red blood against the orange-red of her negligee, I felt nothing but distaste. You'd think a man who has just married his wife would feel considerably more than that.

I left the revolver where I'd dropped it and went downstairs. I entered my study with its thermostatically controlled temperature, non-glaring desk lamps and soundproof walls of knotty pine. I sat down in a comfortable armchair and switched the tape-recorder to "Dictate". I dictated this statement of what happened and why it happened as it did.

It's finished. As soon as I have smoked this cigarette I'll telephone the police. Or possibly I'll go back upstairs and blow my brains out with the revolver I left lying on the floor.

It's hard to decide just what to do. Maybe I'll get in the Mercedes-Benz and try to make it to the border. I've always thought I'd like to spend a few days in Acapulco. But even if I were lucky enough to get that far, Acapulco would probably turn out to be another Bandol, just another town.

Damn you, de Vogel! Do you understand?

NEXT MONTH

THE WONDERFUL WAR

AN EARLY ADVENTURE OF THE SAINT, FROM THE DAYS—ACTUALLY NOT SO LONG AGO, WHEN YOU THINK OF IT—WHEN REVOLUTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA WERE UNCOMPLICATED BY COSMIC IDEOLOGIES AND A FEW MEN, CONVINCED OF THE JUSTICE OF THEIR CAUSE, COULD AND DID CHANGE THE HISTORY OF THEIR COUNTRIES!

—in the next issue of THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

the horse with heels

by Negley Farson

This is the story of a young man, chronically broke, in the last days of Romanoff Russia.

Of a horse with about half a mile between its front and its hind feet. Of a hotel which had a wondrous way of life all of its own, as every top hotel should have; of a Finn who emulated Mohamet's coffin and suspended himself between heaven and earth (he had a singularly supple personality); and of the unwisdom to say nothing of the unlikelihood of holding a Full House with Aces up, against four Jacks at 3 a.m. in the New English Club, on the Morskaya, in wartime Petrograd. The way I went dramatically bust. For, as any hopeful who has ever tried to pick up the discards will tell you, you do not lose much money at Poker holding poor cards: you lose your shirt when you hold good ones—and someone holds better.

It was my winter of bad luck. The Finn who tried to follow the prophet was Jack Hoth. Well known to all British and Americans who

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James Negley Farson, who will be remembered for his SEEING RED (1930), THE WAY OF A TRANSGRESSOR (1936), etc. etc., led a varied and adventurous life as an RAF pilot in Egypt, a sailor and a newspaperman. In Russia when it happened, he witnessed the 1917 revolution.

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saw the fall of Petrograd. As accomplished and kindly a rake as ever graced the end of a regime or kept his ex-mistresses in the style to which he had accustomed them.

He was the man who held the four Jacks. When all the others had dropped out, and he and I were left with, it seemed, about all the money there had ever been in the game lying on the table between us, I said: "I don't want to begin owing money right here at the start in Petrograd, signing I.O.U.s. I've got you licked but, if you will accept what I offer, I raise you whatever I've got left in my pocket?"

He nodded. I slid all my small change into the pile, and, putting down my hand, reached for the pot. "Just a minute," smiled Jack (he had the expressive face and beautiful hands of a Jean-Louise Barrault). "Please look at these." And one by one, he laid down the four Jacks. And so he broke me the first night I met him.

Jack owned the rope works which made the rigging for the British Navy in Nelson's day. No one could bluff him. This was winter and I did win some money from shooting live pigeons on Sundays out at the club on Krestovski Island.But then he won it all back. And by the long days of mid-summer, when the sun never completely sets, I was so broke that I could not even tip a waiter.

I ate "brunch" in my own room, where the floor waiter now knew as much about me and my affairs as I did. I could afford to give him a small tip, now and then, to keep him sweet.

This was in the Hotel Astoria, which "had a truly Russian soul and ran itself in a truly Russian way." A way which allowed them to let me go eight months without even *showing* me my bill, which is how I managed to hold out until I met this horse.

I was a mere munitions salesman, as some of us were erroneously called. But we had at the Astoria aside from the medalled staff officers of all the Allied armies, shaven-skulled Cossack *atmans* with no heels to their soft boots and swords 300 years old, and Locker-Lampson with his armoured car chaps en route for the Carpaths, a coterie of Slav cocottes as gay and bouncing as the chorus of the *Chauve Souris*, who were forced to compete professionally with some young ladies from occupied Warsaw, all Maria Waleskas in embryo.

If we salesmen and these

women of the so-called half-world had one common denomination it was that, unlike the bland diplomats who saw life only through the Embassy windows and did not know what was going on down in the street, we *were* in the street—we knew that the Russian armies fighting with such desperate bravery at the front were losing the war in Petrograd: no supplies, no ammunition could be got through to the hard-pressed Russian soldiers until General Rake-off had got his tip.

We were talking about the Revolution as early as the summer of 1915. That gave us a bond, even though a melancholy one: and as it was common knowledge that I was the hardest-up foreigner in the glamorous Hotel Astoria any love I had had to be free. Which made it all the more exciting.

It was at a party in my rooms one night, where the door never opened except to admit the waiter bringing more bottles, that Jack Hoth just vanished, and after a frantic search was found suspended above the street, three stories up, having managed to squeeze himself through the double-windows sealed against the bitter Russian winter.

And it was in this room, one summer's noon, as the bells of St. Isaacs began their crazy bingle-bongling, that, counting up my exchequer, I found I had only 20 roubles left in all the wide world.

I had just received a cable from New York informing me that the man I had left in London, with the power to draw my salary and pay my share of the apartment we shared together, had cleared out for parts unknown with the lot. And as I had shown no signs whatever of ever being able to do any business with the Russian War Department, I had better return forthwith.

Now here, I thought is the end of the road—and remembering that old silver miner's saying: "There is only one sure thing about luck: *some* day, it will turn," I decided to take my 20 roubles and go to the horseraces—I, who only have to bet on a horse to watch it immediately break a leg.

Old Louis Terrier, that unbelievable Frenchman whom the Russians had put in to run the Astoria—who was just piling up millions as a consequence—was in his box,

and waved me to come up.

"Mr. Farson—let me pick you a winner," he said, twisting his white waxed moustache. He named one, after a careful survey as they walked past; and I put ten roubles on it, having used part of the other ten to get on to the course.

It came last. "Well, that's finished my day," I said. "I can rest easy now." But then —think of this for an omen —his nephew to whom we had given the money to place at the *pari-mutuel* came back with our money. He had not been able to reach the wicket.

"Now," I said, emboldened, "let me pick the horse." "But do you know anything about horses?" asked old Terrier. "Not a thing. But my pick can't be any worse than your last one. I have a hunch."

The horses for the next race were walked past. Colours, jockey, what? I was in this dilemma when I saw myself looking at a nag, this horse with half a mile between its front and hind feet, which, now that I saw it, also had a hogged back: and I seized Terrier's arm—"*There!* Look at that one! Look at that *black* horse. Put every damn rouble you've got on it!" He just stared at me: "Are you *mad?*"

"Listen," I ordered. "Look at the animal closely. Did you ever see such a bone-shaker? Now it stands to reason that that bag of bones simply must have something up his sleeve —that horse, can't you see the reason in my argument?— must be a genius! Otherwise, he couldn't have got here."

Terrier sagely nodded his old reprobate head. "You know I think you have reason. Alphonse! — (or whatever was the name of that nephew, —take this." And he handed him a bundle of 500-rouble notes. "And this," I said, handing him my 10-rouble one. "You make it quick to the *pari-mutuel.*" Then I turned my back to the course: "Terrier, I can't bear to look at it. You tell me how that horse wins this race."

I heard the roar from the crowd as the barrier went up — and Terrier's hand suddenly left my shoulder. He was using the glasses then I heard him say sadly: "No luck." The crowd was also strangely silent. "Why," I asked, "what is happening?" "Our horse is already 10 lengths out in front," said Terrier. "No horse can do that."

I closed my eyes. . . . "Tell me, tell me. Terrier—where is he now?" "Twenty lengths." "In this same race?" I joked. "This is incredible!" Terrier was stuttering. "I-I never saw anything like it." "And where now—where now?" I asked. "Last turn—losing a little——but still—*still* a good ten lengths out in front! My God! My God—he's won!"

I still did not move. I felt that the last thing that could happen to me in my year of discontent would be for that damnable nephew to return and tell us that he had not been able to reach the wicket. I waited a long time—"18 to 1!" shouted Terrier — "I've made thousands! Thousands. Mr. Farson — what a judge of horses you are! What a man! What a horse! Tonight I give a party for us at the Villa Rode —with champagne for all the gypsies. . . ."

"Wait for Alphonse" I cautioned. But he came back bearing bundles of roubles like hay. "I've won thousands, thousands!" laughed old Terrier. "And I," I said, "have won 18C roubles. Give me that. But now I know my luck has turned."

So it had. I got a small order later, nothing to write home about, but it did permit me to remain in Petrograd until after the Kerensky Revolution. Terrier had vanished. Then one day years later, going down in a train through France, trying to get the waiter of the Wagon-Lit, in my French, to get me a package of Gold Flakes, the man who had been sitting opposite me held out his gold cigarette case. "Mr. Farson — may I ask you to have one of mine?"

"Terrier!" He slowly took a torn ten rouble note from his wallet and held it up: "All I have left of all my millions. I am a poor man now. But happy. Here is my card, my hotel—a little one, nothing like the grand Astoria—but do come some day and stay with me. Maybe—perhaps you and I will go to the races again?"

the saint at fleetway

by W. O. G. Lofts

SUNDAY EVENING is generally regarded as the peak viewing time of the week, and an estimated fifteen million television fans in England, are to be found at approximately 7-30 p.m., enjoying the latest weekly adventures of Simon Templar, better known as The Saint, currently played by handsome Roger Moore.

Indeed, and for the last thirty six years, countless millions of readers from all parts of the globe have also enjoyed the stories in the various Saint publications, in which that swashbuckling hero of so many tussles with his friendly foe of Scotland Yard Chief Inspector Claud Eustace Teal, has always come off best!

With full length films, Radio programmes, comic picture strips, and THE SAINT MAGAZINE, Leslie Charteris, the creator, can easily claim first place in the history of famous thriller writers, for The Saint must now rank side by side with such national institutions as Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, and Fleetway's

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W. O. G. Lofts, who has been called the "Sir Bernard Spilsbury" of juvenile literature, served in the Royal Artillery in the second World War, engaged in jungle warfare against the Japanese. He has written extensively on history in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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own famous character, that fat boy of the Remove, Billy Bunter of Greyfriars.

Although it would be incorrect to say that The Saint made his initial appearance in a Fleetway magazine, a fact which may be unknown to the majority of younger readers is that prior to the second world war the Saint *did* play a large part in a Fleetway publication entitled *The Thriller;* and there is no doubt that this paper helped a great deal in presenting this character to the British public. But for the start of our story concerning the remarkable author, Leslie Charteris, and for a brief history of The Saint, we must begin as always at the beginning.

Born at Singapore on the 12th of May 1907, he was the son of a surgeon, and from a very early age he had always a strong ambition to become a writer, when as a boy he had edited the school magazines. He also read avidly the Boys paper, *Chums,* which featured adventures of swashbuckling pirates, gold seekers, and everything a boy could dream of being. Eventually settling down in England, he attended Rossall School, and also set out to acquire the best education possible in criminal technique, reading all the crime books he could lay his hands on. His favorite writers up till about 1930 were Alexander Dumas; E. W. Hornung; 'Sapper'; W. J. Locke; Dornford Yates; and Edgar Wallace.

His first successful magazine sale about the age of 16 was of a story set in the pacific and concerned a pearl; this unfortunately, cannot now be traced; but another early effort featuring a detective, appeared in Hutchinson's SOVEREIGN MAGAZINE in January 1925 entitled 'One Crowded Hour'. This was under the name of 'Leslie C. Bowyer', the latter part being his mother's maiden name. 1926 saw him attending Kings College, Cambridge, where after studying a year, he left against his father's advice, to take up writing as a full time career.

1927 saw his first hard cover novel published entitled 'X Esquire'. This was followed by 'The White Rider'—whilst his third book (which introduced The Saint) in September 1928 was called 'Meet the Tiger'—all of these were published by Ward Locke & Co.

The middle of 1928 saw the introduction, by the then Amalgated Press Ltd, of a new paper to be called *The Thriller*, and plans were laid by the controlling editor, Mon-

tague Haydon, to present to the British public a full length 7/6d mystery story each week, written by leading crime writers for the lowly sum of twopence!

To give the paper a tremendous opening boost, the exclusive services at a fabulous fee were secured of the undisputed king of thriller writers Edgar Wallace, so when the first number appeared on the bookstalls on the 9th February 1929, it contained a story by this author entitled 'Red Aces'. The circulation reached very high proportions in the early numbers for it was really wonderful value for money in the days just before the great depression in the '30s.

The editor of *The Thriller* (Under Monty Haydon) was Len Pratt, who also controlled *The Sexton Blake Library*—assisted by that very capable man Jackie Hunt—who later ran *The Detective Weekly*—and *Miracle Library*. The editorial in issue No. 3. giving news of the following week's story (which incidentally was the first by the creator of The Saint) had this to say. . . .

"Leslie Charteris is the author of the new school. He is a young man of genius; one who is going to be talked about during the coming years. His skill of the pen is remarkable, and he is a past master of thriller writing."

In my opinion no editor has ever spoken a truer word!

Number 4 of *The Thriller* was entitled 'The Story of a Dead Man' and was, of course, by Leslie Charteris. Its main character was a Jimmy Trail, though Chief Inspector Teal appeared a great deal in the story. Issue No. 9, entitled 'The Secret of Beacon Inn' by the same author, featured yet another character who went by the rather improbable name of Rameses Smith!

After these two stories however, Leslie Charteris decided that one secret of success was to stick to one particular character and to concentrate on building him up. To save himself the trouble of creating another one, he cast back to what he had previously written in book form, and decided that The Saint had shown most promise. So in issue number 13 (incidentally the 'The Five Kings') we had The Saint as leader of a crook organisation known as "The Five Kings," who worked on the side of the law, and yet who were most certainly outside the law!

Reverting back to 'Meet the Tiger' (in order to get our history into correct sequence) the creation of The Saint

makes most interesting reading, Although he was not presumably anyone Leslie Charteris knew in real life, I have a very strong personal feeling that Simon Templar's characteristics, may have been the creator's own mental image of what he would have liked to have been in his younger days. The name of Simon Templar was most cleverly thought out. Christened Simon (He was far from being a Simple Simon, as all those he pitted his wits against found to their cost!) the surname of Templar, was probably taken from the Knights Templar, a military religious order first established about 1118, by a small band of knights to protect pilgrims to the holy land. His first familiar nickname of "The Saint," was first reputed to have been acquired at the age of 19, partly from his initials, but mainly from his saintly way of doing the most unsaintly things!

The famous Saint calling card figure of a skeleton figure complete with halo, was created by remembering a childish memory of drawing matchstick figures in one of his magazines—actually cheating at drawing the comic strip!

The characterisation of The Saint was built on the successful formula of a gentleman crook—who took justice into his own hands in order to help those who had been swindled; robbed, or in any other way fallen into the hands of other crooks. Robin Hood was probably the first self-proclaimed King of this kind of justice, though in actual fact the outlaw of Sherwood Forest was a real life person, his real name Robert Fitsooth, rightful Earl of Huntingdon in the days of Richard the Lionheart and the Crusades. Another rarely mentioned these days was Goetz Von Berlichingen, the hero of the German folk ballad, whilst later heroes were Maurice LeBlanc's Arsene Lupin, and E. W. Hornung's gentleman crook Raffles.

"I never robbed anyone who wasn't a thief or blackguard, although they might have been clever enough to stay within the law. I've killed people too, but never anyone that the world wasn't a better place without. Sometimes people seem to forget it, since I got to be too well known and had to give up some of the simple methods I used to get away with when I was more anonymous, but my name used to stand for a kind of justice, and I haven't changed."

So said the Saint on one memorable occasion when taunted by a very unpleasant crook by the name of Nat Grendel —and this sums up The Saint's unusual character.

We meet Simon Templar for the first time living in a converted pill box in North Devon at a place called Baycombe. He was then simply described as aged 27, tall dark, keen-faced, deeply tanned, and with blue eyes. He had in those days a manservant by the name of 'Orace' who had served in the first world war as a sergeant in the marines, and had been wounded at Zeebrugge, causing him to walk with a limp.

No mention was, and has ever been made of the Saint's background, and this has been, entirely left to the readers' imagination. Personally, I have always inclined to the theory that he had a University background, came from an influential family (where he was a very black sheep indeed!) and served with great distinction as an officer in the first world war where 'Orace' was his faithful sergeant-batman.

It was in this story that we also meet the blue-eyed, fair-golden haired Patricia Holm, the ward of court, who was The Saint's girl friend, and partner in so many of his future adventures. After unmasking 'The Tiger', Simon Templar and Patricia Holm sail away together with the faithful 'Orace' to New York to collect a reward for returning some ducats to the Confederate Bank's agents.

Incidentally 'Meet the Tiger' was reprinted in the Fleetway's 4d *Boys Friend Library* in 1929 under the title of 'Crooked Gold.'

With the Five Kings organization now finished in *The Thriller*, Leslie Charteris thought he could cope with two characters at the same time, so he created yet another, called Lyn Peveril, who starred in three further Thriller stories. By that time however ,he was already tired of him, and so in the very next Thriller yarn, brought back once more The Saint. Like most young writers who started out in the late 20s, our author found the early going tough, with stories selling so slowly, that it was a job to make ends meet, but he little dreamed that in a few years time, The Saint would become world famous, and also a household name!

The Saint, in later issues of *The Thriller*, was now living in London, and gradually developed into a much

more mature individual — at the same time aging slightly to keep time with his chronicled adventures. Like Peter Pan, however, having reached the age of thirty-three, there he remained; probably Leslie Charteris felt he was entitled to take the same 'poetic licence' which many artists have taken in depicting famous comic strip characters!

Simon Templar was 6 ft., 2 ins. in height, weighed about 13 stone, 3 pounds, had black hair brushed straight back, and carried the scars of various affrays, one of which was, unfortunately, on his forearm. This betrayed him on several occasions when he was disguised as 'Sebastian Toombs', his favourite nom-de-plume and surely a most extraordinary one to choose! He had an apartment in Brook Street, Mayfair, just off Piccadilly, and owned a Hirondel and a Furillac car. He carried firearms and was an expert knife-thrower; he could speak several languages fluently, was always immaculately dressed and loved good living. He was a connoiseur of food and wine, and his favourite drink was a 'Peter Dawson.' He was also a fully licenced air-pilot.

It would be impossible, within the scope of this article, to relate the whole of the amazing adventures of The Saint. As the Robin Hood of modern crime he successfully combated the activities of crooks engaged in vice, drug smuggling, kidnapping and killing, and was many times instrumental in frustrating their attempts to promote war. The latter fact proved that although he did not operate on the side of law and order, The Saint was one hundred percent patriot!

> *'I think the King is waiting to speak to you,' said Detective Inspector Carne, on one historic occasion—after The Saint had successfully stopped an attempt to wreck the Royal train. For this gallantry, he received the Royal pardon.*

A private fortune of over half a million pounds was reputed to be in Simon Templar's bank account, this representing the proceeds of his various activities. Where money was involved he usually took ten percent in accordance with his own rules! If the amount of his personal fortune was correct, the same healthy financial position could not have been said to exist for his creator. Although payment for a *Thriller* story was good, and Leslie Char-

teris could write one in ten days, it was a highly competitive market. Apart from this, the author felt the urge to travel and widen his scope, as well as to improve his income; so towards the end of 1932 he left England for New York. Here he was most certainly to find fame and fortune!

He landed in America with only fifty dollars, and his first magazine sale was a short story entitled 'Judith'. Later he wrote film scenarios in Hollywood and was able to save enough money to enable him to write what was probably his most successful novel —aptly named 'The Saint in New York.' This he sold to *The American Magazine*.

The Saint, like his creator, had now switched his attentions to the U.S.A., where—much to the relief of Inspector Teal—he now remained to pit his wits against Inspector John Fernack of the New York Police. Despite his great success in America, however, Leslie Charteris did not forget his English market and after eighteen months' absence The Saint returned once more to *The Thriller*. Needless to say, his readers were delighted, and the editorial which accompanied this return read as follows;

'Leslie Charteris and his immensely popular character, Simon Templar—better known as The Saint—always mean a rise in the circulation figures. Charteris has come straight from his sojourn in Hollywood, where he has been writing film stories.'

By this time many characters had appeared with The Saint. As already mentioned, the most prominent and popular of these was Chief Inspector Claud Eustace Teal, of Scotland Yard, a brilliant character study of a real and believable person. Teal, of the pink face, large bulky figure, black bowler hat and sleepy baby-blue eyes, with his fondness for chewing-gum perhaps to help him with his indigestion, was by no means the 'dumb cop' usually depicted by writers. In fact, it was said of him if Scotland Yard's records had been destroyed he could have replaced them from memory!

From the moment of their first clash, Teal recognized The Saint as someone immeasurably superior to the usual law-breaker and if they had not been fated to cross swords in their chosen professions they would undoubtedly have been very good friends — which, in a sense, they really were. The Saint

affectionately called him 'Claud' and readers must always have had a sneaking sympathy for him.

"We aren't in The Saint's class and some day I suppose we will have to admit it. If this was a republic we should make him Dictator, and get some sleep" thus Teal, gloomily, to the Assistant Commissioner on one occasion.

Patricia Holm, with hair like 'ripe corn in the sun', skin like rose petals, blue eyes, and the figure of a young nymph, was probably the second greatest supporting character. Amongst others were Monty Hayward — based on the popular controlling editor of *The Thriller*, Montague Haydon (Though he did not own a yawl at Burn-on-Crouch!) — Roger Conway, Dicky Tremayne, Peter Quentin, Terry Mannering, Archie Sheridan, and Hoppy Uniatz a seventh-rate gunman of the classic Bowery breed and accent, with a skull of phenomenal thickness. Last, but by no means least, there was Sam Outrell, head porter of his apartment in Brook Street, and one of The Saint's most faithful watchdogs.

One of the most persistent enquiries which Leslie Charteris still receives is; "What has happened to so many of these characters? This query usually arises when certain of the above-named have failed to appear in the stories.

The reason is easily explained by the fact that The Saint as a rule preferred to be alone. He was so superbly capable, and so confident of his own abilities that it irked him to have to delegate even the least important part of his schemes to others. It exasperated him beyond measure to have to explain and discuss his inspirations with those whose minds did not comprehend or leap to decisions as quickly as his own.

All *The Thriller* stories, as well as those featuring Lyn Peveril, Jimmy Traill and Rameses Smith (in this connection the respective characters were changed to The Saint) were reprinted into book form, which ran into dozens of editions. They were also translated into French, Spanish, Portugese, Dutch, German, Italian, Hebrew and, intermittently, into Arabic, Japanese, Greek, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish and even into Braille. Surely an accomplishment of which Leslie Charteris could rightly be proud! Before the days of the Iron Curtain they were

also translated for Poland, Hungary, Roumania, Czechoslavakia and Latvia — but unfortunately The Saint's philosophy was not approved of in these countries, though, suprisingly, a book was printed in Yugoslavia.

"These are the classic Saint stories" a collector friend of mine said to me some years ago, showing me a beautifully bound leather volume of short Leslie Charteris tales. Readers of *The Thriller* must have experienced the same feeling in the mid-thirties, when these stories appeared in this paper; originally they appeared in the now defunct Sunday 'Empire News.' I personally consider 'The Unfortunate Financier' (in which a decendant of Titus Oates, the notorious inventor of the Popish Plot, who was whipped from Aldgate to three hundred years ago, suffered an even worse indignity at the hands of The Saint) was the most amusing story I have ever read in any field of fiction.

June 1938 saw the first film of The Saint, produced by R.K.O. Radio and entitled 'The Saint in New York'. Louis Hayward played the leading role and although the film was quite well-made, regular readers must have been greatly disappointed in Hayward, for he in no way resembled their conception of The Saint.

He was far too short and small, and much too excitable in his manner. The second film, 'The Saint Strikes Back', made in March 1939, had a new Simon Templar — this was George Sanders; and he was apparently regarded as well suited to the role, for he played in the next half dozen or so. In my opinion, however, he was too much the 'cad' and never the gentleman The Saint was; also, he lacked the youth and debonair charm one associated with Simon Templar. Hugh Sinclair was the third 'Saint' and I would prefer to pass quickly over this-surely a perfect example of 'mis-casting' if ever there was one! In April 1954, most suprisingly Louis Hayward returned to play in 'The Saint's Girl Friday'. Yet another Saint film was produced in France with an actor named Felix Marten — this was, I am told, a very poor effort and has never been seen in England.

'The Saint in New York', one of Leslie Charteris' most successful books and certainly the most successful film, was later reprinted in *The Thriller* in serial form; and in response to requests from thou-

Fleetway Saint series — 'The Five Kings' also appeared again in serial form. Editorial chats continued to give praise to the writings of Leslie Charteris —

"There never has been a more romantic, merrier dare-devil than The Saint in the pages of modern fiction. I feel sure that my pen cannot do justice to the story—one cannot gild the lily!"

The advent of World War II saw the end of *The Thriller*, through paper shortage, in 1940; although new Saint stories, in book form, continued to be published and reprints of old stories were still selling in countless thousands throughout the world. Surprising enough, very few Saint tales were written during the war years. Leslie Charteris had strong reasons for not pitting The Saint against spies and saboteurs, fifth columnists and traitors — he thought quite understandably, that it was ridiculous for The Saint to be battling with rats when a fully-grown dragon was ravaging Europe. His books were enjoyed wherever they went, and I can personally vouch for the uplifting effect on morale his stories had amongst troops resting from jungle warfare in Burma.

Radio listeners in the U.S.A. first heard the adventures of The Saint on the air in 1945, when Tom Conway, Brian Aherne, Barry Sullivan and the present 'horror' king, Vincent Price, played the title role. About this time The Saint comic strip was syndicated to an increasing list of newspapers from New York to all places around the world.

The Saint proved himself a real 'Saint' in another respect — when *The Saint Club* was formed, and after the subscription funds had provided and maintained an eight bed ward at the Invalid and Crippled Children's Hospital in Plaistow for many years — the introduction of the National Health Service, saw the interest switched to the Arbour Youth Club in Stepney, East London. Here approximately £300 a year goes towards helping the club in its heavy cost of teaching boys to become good citizens.

A highly successful Saint Magazine was launched in 1953; millions have been sold of the American edition, throughout the Commonwealth and English speaking countries, the French edition, and the Dutch. And, as we go to press, Afrikaans and Spanish editions are in

the works. Fleetway Publications also used The Saint strip form format in the late fifties in the *Thriller Comic Library* and *Super-Detective Library*.

And above all, as already mentioned at the commencement of this article, recent years saw The Saint brought into millions of new home, through the medium of Television. Roger Moore is far the best of all those who have portrayed Simon Templar so far. If one must be critical, one could say in comparing him with The Saint in the stories, he is a trifle good looking—and not convincingly tough enough, but that is only my opinion!

Leslie Charteris became a naturalized American citizen in 1943; now living in Florida he continues to enjoy the fruits of his success, though no doubt he often thinks back to his early struggles when he knew what it was to go hungry! His own background certainly provides a colourful and authentic atmosphere to his stories.

He travelled round the world several times before he was twelve, and has worked in a tin-mine, rubber plantation, and prospected for gold in the jungle. He has tried pearl fishing, and worked on a wood distillation plant as well as sailing on a freighter as a seaman. He has been a professional bridge player in a London Club and a bartender in a country inn; he has travelled the English countryside with a fairground sideshow blowing up balloons for the public to throw darts at them for prizes. Not to mention studying bullfighting in Spain (where he wrote a book on the subject) truly a life as varied and adventurous as The Saint himself could wish for!

Nevertheless, he still remembers, with gratitude the help and guidance Monty Haydon gave him during his days on *The Thriller*, where they discussed new plots and ideas over lunches in the Press Club.

As Inspector John Fernack of the New York Police; Inspector Archimede Quercy of the Paris Police Judicaire — and above all Chief Inspector Claud Eustace Teal might possibly echo in chorus (outside the hearing of their superiors!)

"Let us hope that The Saint will be with us for many years to come."

Truly the best—loved 'sinner' of them all!

who am i?

by Miriam Allen deFord

LIKE MOST identical twins, John and James Williamson not only were physical duplicates, but they also possessed exactly the same temperament. Unfortunately, in their case this temperament was aggressive and irritable. They squabbled as babies, they quarreled as children, they fought as adolescents, and as young men they became bitter enemies.

This last development came about because, as might have been expected, they both fell in love with the same girl. As for Lydia Carruth, though she was strongly attracted to—was it John? was it James?—The constant bewilderment and confusion arising from the fact that she could never be sure which twin was which finally wore her out and she broke with them both.

Each twin blamed the other for this calamity, and to the distress of their parents they both left the family home to avoid each other and took separate lodgings. Luckily, they were employed by different firms (they were both building construction workers) and now seldom met.

Miriam Allen deFord, author of STONE WALLS (Chilton), a study of the prison reform movement, and other books, will be remembered by readers of this magazine for her delightful THE SILVER SPOONS (SMM, May, 1963), ARTUR'S STORY (SMM, Febr. 1963), etc.

Their relatives and friends learned to evade situations in which they might meet accidentally. In a town the size of Bradenville this was rather difficult, but as far as possible each brother managed to shun the other.

Just outside Bradenville, where the farming country begins, there is a disused dry irrigation ditch. For two or three years people have been in the habit of using it as a dump; no matter how often it is cleaned out, sooner or later cars will drive up to it at night and deposit old bedsprings or discarded stoves or broken radios. The small boys of the vicinity consider it a treasure trove. And it was two of these boys, very early on a Friday morning in July, who met at their private hideaway to go on a forbidden hunt for loot in the dry ditch.

Timmy Martin, running a little ahead of his pal Sam Eakins, let out a whoop of delight.

"Hey, lookit!" he yelled. "There's a bike down here, as good as new!"

Sam caught up with him, and they stooped down to pull the bicycle out.

As it came up, suddenly they dropped it simultaneously and ran back to the road.

"Is—is he dead?" quavered Sam, his teeth chattering. Timmy nodded, gulping down nausea.

Under the bicycle lay the body of a man, grotesquely twisted from his fall.

The two frightened boys dashed to the Martin house, which was nearest, and gasped out their story. Timmy's father phoned the sheriff's office.

Deputy Sheriff Millington, who was first to arrive on the scene, was pretty sure what must have happened. The night before, which had been dark and cloudy with a threatening thunderstorm, the victim must have ridden off the road and tumbled into the ditch, bicycle and all, breaking his neck in the fall.

But when others arrived and the body was carried out, it became obvious at once that though the man's neck was broken that had not been the cause of his death. His left temple had been crushed by a heavy blow.

The dead man was soon identified. It was one of the Williamson twins.

Everybody in town knew of the anger and enmity between the brothers. Both of them owned bicycles, both of them worked on construction projects where they used heavy tools, neither of them (it was soon ascertained) had spent the night before with other

people who could swear to their presence.

Neither had reported to work that morning. Neither was in his rooming house. But one twin was soon located walking aimlessly down High Street, dressed as he had left work the day before, with tin hat and heavy gloves, and brought in to headquarters.

"Which are you, Williamson—John or James?" Sheriff Eastwood barked as the young man entered.

Williamson looked a bit pale and haggard, as if he had not slept, but he was perfectly calm. The officer who had brought him in had undoubtedly told him why, but no one expected one brother to grieve at the death of the other. He smiled sardonically.

"Find out," he said.

And that was that. Even when, farther along in the ditch, a short iron bar was found, smeared with blood and hair, but with no fingerprints on it, the man in custody refused to say another word. The senior Williamsons, the mother hysterical, the father grim and horrified, were summoned to headquarters. Neither of them could say positively if this was their son John or their son James.

"We never could tell them apart, to be absolutely sure every time, either of us," said the father. "Nobody could, from the time they were born. The doctor told me only their fingerprints was different." His voice broke. "Son, tell us the truth. Did you do this thing?"

There was a long silence, and then the young man seemed to make up his mind.

"Yes," he said, "I did it. You know we never did get along. It was him or me."

Swiftly the sheriff called a police stenographer.

"It wasn't enough that he broke us up—Lydia and me." The words came now in a flood. "He tried to do me dirt again when I finally got interested in another girl. You'll find that out—she'll be coming forward when this gets in the paper.

"She lives in Wilton. I met her at the county fair and we liked each other and started going together. Her name's Rose Parsons. She was *my* girl—mine, and not maybe mine and maybe his because she couldn't tell us one from the other. We were talking about getting married—then nobody would have thought I was him or he was me: I'd be the Williamson twin that was married to Rose Parsons.

"I don't know how that sneak managed to find out about us and keep track of

when we met, but he did. Because Tuesday night I didn't get down to Wilton; I had a cold coming on and I felt too rotten to go. By the next day I was better and I rode down as usual Wednesday night. I started explaining why I'd missed our date, and she said, 'What are you talking about, honey? Are you out of your mind? You were here last night all right—you ought to remember!' And she giggled.

"So I knew right away what had happened. I saw red. I told Rose, 'I guess I must feel worse than I thought; I'd better take it easy and take care of myself so I'll be O.K. by Saturday'—we were going to a dance then. 'I'll see how I'm feeling by tomorrow,' I told her, 'and if my cold isn't better I won't be coming down.'

"Then I made a point next morning—yesterday—on my way to work, of going around past where his outfit is on a job. I thought I'd see him, and I did. Once in a while we couldn't help meeting, of course, and as long as it was just 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' we got by without trouble. So I said 'Hi' and he said 'Hi' and I said 'How goes it?' and he said 'Good enough: how about you?' and I made a big show of pulling out my handkerchief and blowing my nose and I said, 'I've caught cold; going to stay home tonight and nurse it.' And all he said was, 'Darn, now *I'll* be catching cold; we always get the same things.' So I rode off on my bike and left him."

"Was anybody else around that saw you talking?" Eastwood asked.

Williamson grinned. "I know what you've got in mind—somebody from the job where he was working to come up, so you could find out which job it was. But there wasn't nobody. He was just turning in on his bike when I saw him.

"So last night I planted myself early on the road to Wilton, alongside the dry ditch, and waited. And sure enough, right after dark, here comes my dear brother pedaling along to make time with my girl, and her none the wiser.

"I had this iron bar with me, just in case—and don't think you can tell which job it was taken from—there's dozens of them around just like it on both—and when he got up even with where I'd been scrunching down by the side of the ditch—"

For the first time he broke off. He breathed deeply, and said in a low voice:

"I let him have it."

With a low moan, Mrs. Williamson collapsed in a faint. Her son reached out to her,

but he was pulled back, and one of the deputies helped her husband carry her out of the room.

"O.K.," said the sheriff crisply. "This'll be written out and you can sign it. We're holding you on suspicion of murder. You'll be given a chance to get yourself a lawyer."

"I don't need a lawyer," said young Williamson coolly. "And you can't hold me. When the county attorney gets here he'll tell you so himself."

"Now don't start putting on an act, pretending you're nuts!" growled Eastwood angrily.

"I'm not. Look, who are you arresting?"

"What do you mean? We're arresting *you*."

"You can't arrest or hold somebody without a name for killing somebody else without a name. Are you accusing John Williamson of murdering James Williamson, or James of murdering John? You can't tell which one I am, and which one he is, and he can't tell you now, and I never will. And you can't tell by fingerprints, because neither of us is on record. If you bring an indictment against the wrong one, and I can prove it, I'll sue you for false arrest."

Eastwood was dumbfounded.

"Well, you're a material witness if you're nothing else," he snarled at last. "And we'll lock you up till we've got this figured out."

"He's right, damn it," said County Attorney Smithers. Sheriff Eastwood just shook his head. Deputy Millington, in on the conference, was speechless with rage.

"We can't indict a suspect without knowing whether he *is* the suspect—or whether the victim is the victim," Smithers reminded him.

"There must be *some* way of finding out which twin is dead and which committed the murder," Millington burst out.

"How?" asked the sheriff. "Their own parents, and the two girls besides, couldn't tell them apart. You were at the inquest; you heard the testimony. Why, they've even buried the guy just with 'Beloved twin son of Walter and Mary Williamson' on his tombstone."

"John was working for Hardin and Company," the county attorney continued, and James for McGettigan. But there's nobody to say whether James stopped by at Hardin's job, Thursday morning, or John stopped by at McGettigan's. Their land-

ladies knew which one rented a room from them, but neither of them was home all Thursday night."

"How about truth serum? Could that make the guy own up?

"It can't be given without his consent, and it's inadmissible in court."

They sat in gloomy silence, thinking hard. Then Smithers slapped the desk.

"I've got it!" he crowed. "Hardin's building the high school extension up at the north end of town; McGettigan has the contract for that new subdivision down by the creek.

"Send both the Williamson brothers' shoes to the state laboratory for analysis of the soil particles in the seams."

The dead man had worked for Hardin. James Williamson was convicted of murdering his brother John.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 132)

man's mother. An unidentified spokesman for Mrs. Abbott said, ". . . This is the way it always happens when any of the authorities are put on the spot in this case. They turn and run . . ."

Finally, about a week after his sensational court appearance, Dr. Schmidt told "all" in an interview with the San Francisco *Chronicle*. Readers may judge for themselves how much the doctor's "all" really was. Dr. Schmidt said that in January, 1957 he visited Abbott on The Row and urged the doomed man to admit his guilt and throw himself on the mercy of the governor. Abbott replied, according to Dr. Schmidt, "Doc, I can't admit it. Think of what it would do to my mother." In response to further urging, Abbott said, "Doc, she could not take it."

And that was it. Abbott refused to discuss the matter further. Richard McGee, head of California's penal system and a world-famed penologist, stated he did not consider it much of a confession. Attorney General Mosk formally ended the affair with the announcement that he had received no new evidence that warranted reopening the case of Burton W. Abbott.

Georgia Abbott had apparently resigned from the cast. During the ten-day wonder no word was heard from or about her.

a gift from edith

by E W. Horsley

If there was anything Andrew didn't want, it was another woman. He had suggested it purely out of spite. He never thought she would take him seriously, and certainly he did not expect her to agree to bring Tina over from the States. He took another sip of his Benedictine, and continued to stare sullenly at a fat man across from their table who was grappling with a peach melba. The Parisian sky was at the last phase of twilight, the air was sweet and cool, and the populace of Paris was beginning its Parisian night.

It was at least three minutes since Edith had said, "All right, if it would really make you happy, I'll have her here within a week." She was still waiting for him to reply, sitting on the other side of the table with its bread crumbed white cloth, her red stole held precisely together at the division of her thin breasts, her expression—Andrew knew without looking at her — an elegant version of amorous desperation. Sometimes he felt it was like glue

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The most unlikely persons—or so it'll seem, later, to others—are apt to commit murder. This is one of those generalizations which are so comforting that little thought is wasted on the others, the victims, those who often work so hard at precipitating that rather final moment. . . .

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all over him. He became tired merely from the emotional effort exerted to express his irritation in an obvious manner without recourse to words. Andrew hated the spoken scene. He felt it was vulgar, and it only tended to make things worse.

"You may do what you like with her," she said in a probing tone, as though not sure after all that her offer had made a strong enough impression.

He deepened his frown and took another sip from the small rimmed cordial glass.

"I wouldn't deny you anything," she said, leaning back. "How can you hate me so when I have never had anything but love for you?"

Andrew imagined her pale, watery blue eyes going red rimmed. She might easily cry in the next minute, and he hoped she wouldn't because people always began to stare at that point. She's incredible, he mused. She would actually use the life of this young girl like a commodity, offering her to him in the hope of receiving some slight smidgen of gratitude which she could interpret as affection.

He had married her because two years ago he thought it would be nice to have someone to take care of him. To be fully subsidized with love and money would leave him free, he naively thought, to pursue his art and his way of life which was essentially a singular one—that is, single, alone, free to live his own dreams and work at his painting. He was rather short, dark, and had a princely look which drew women of all ages. It was not that he didn't like women. He had simply begun to feel at forty that he had enough—at least temporarily. That was what he told himself in his calmer moods. Actually, to him, all women meant Edith at this point in time, and Edith was unbearable.

She was twelve years older than he which put her in her fifties. She had a certain angular grace which had at first appealed to him. She was intelligent. She thought he was a genius. He had enjoyed transforming her tailored Boston dress into the European flair for bright colors and strong lines. Now it was a nightmare of putting up with her self torturing passion upon which she fed voraciously.

A month ago they had come to Paris from his studio in Nice at his insistence. He hoped the city would be big and busy enough to put a little distance between them, but he knew that the only way to

really free himself from her was to be extremely nice to her. And that he could not manage. He longed to be by himself again but he knew there was no question of her letting him go.

"So you intend to bring Tina to Paris for me?" he said, squinting at her.

"She must be quite grown up now. Twenty-one, isn't that right? And you thought she was so talented."

"Talented? Yes . . ." he answered, drawing the word out slowly.

"You said you'd like to have her here, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did," he replied casually, motioning to the waiter for the bill. "Have her come. That will be fine."

She smiled at him — a distraught and grateful little thin lipped smile. At least there will be a third person to these téte a tétes, he thought. It will be more difficult for her to reach me alone. And it will perhaps satisfy her for a while if she thinks she has made me happy with her gift. He remembered little Tina. Blond, full of mysticism, art and other adolescent enthusiasms. Any change in the present unendurable circumstance of his relations with Edith could be pleasant. Besides, she would be Edith's responsibility.

Their hotel on the Quai Voltaire was not far, so they walked home.

"Good night, Edith," he said to her on the second floor landing, and continued up one more flight to the sanctuary of his own room.

Later that night he heard her scratching on the door. He listened for a while, deciding at last that she might stay there all night again. He got up, released the lock on the door and opening it, stared for some minutes into the impassioned, pleading face. She's looking older, he thought. At least she doesn't dare say anything. Finally she went away, going quickly down the red carpeted hall in her satin houserobe. He knew she would lie awake for a long time even now that it was late, with the door unlocked as always, waiting for him although she must have known that he would never come.

There were great yellow puffs of cloud over Orly Airport—Veronese clouds he called them. Tina was coming towards them, almost running, in a pink corduroy coat, her blond hair blowing across her face. It must be quite an adventure for her, he thought. She looks so gay and excited. There was only her New England aunt at home and the

museum art school. She had written that she continued to study there, although the teacher was "so poor after all that you have taught me and which I will never forget."

What would she never forget? He remembered suddenly her hardly concealed tears on his last day at the museum, and felt a brief pang of foreboding. Nonsense, he reassured himself as the full, pink-swathed figure hurried towards them. She's just a child.

But she was not as he remembered her. She stood breathless in front of them, cheeks flushed and blue eyes shining—eyes that were somehow not quite innocent, not altogether young.

"It was such a wonderful trip! Only I was in such a hurry to get here that I could hardly stand it!" she breathed.

"I'm very glad your aunt agreed to let you come," said Edith rather stiffly.

"Oh, so am I! It was such short notice though. I mean there I was doing nothing and all of a sudden there's this telegram. I didn't believe it."

Edith smiled. "Come along. We'll get you through customs."

"You've cut your hair," said Andrew who had not yet managed to say anything.

"Yes," she said, smiling at him blissfully. "I think it looks better. And besides I'm older now."

"I can see that."

Edith was walking slightly ahead of them. Tina gave Andrew a look laden with some burning message meant only for him. Taken aback, he tried briefly to decide exactly what she was trying to get across.

"Hurry or we'll have to wait an awfully long time," said Edith glancing back at them. She sounded a little cross.

They took her to the Café de Chaillot for dinner. Edith was very sweet to Tina, and Tina was ecstatic. She asked hundreds of questions, and in between she kept throwing little glances at Andrew — secret, almost conspiratorial looks that hit him all through dinner like tiny darts. He began to consider seriously that there had been a misunderstanding. Did she think that he was responsible for her coming? Increasingly irritated and uncomfortable, he said as little as possible, and tried to maintain a detached air.

Edith was wearing the necklace. In trying to find a focal point for a neutral stare he had fastened on it, and as he listened to the high and al-

ways breathless voice of Tina, ruminated about it. "The necklace" was only one of several hugely expensive jeweled neckpieces Edith owned, but it was the only one he had ever chosen for her. It was a choker of smallish diamonds and emeralds, and since he had decided its purchase, it was her favorite piece. It rested on her gray white skin like a reproach.

He lifted his gaze to Edith's profile, and felt an uprush of revulsion. It happened so often now when he would look at her suddenly—a kind of physical spasm, a species of shudder.

I absolutely can not stand this woman, he thought. She is ruining my life. Even my painting has no inspiration anymore. I am being suffocated, ensnared . . . yes, that's the word. She's like a spider with her gangling, hard, nervous body. The gray-white skin is false and dead. Underneath the spider structure shows — brownish, unfleshly. I couldn't bear to touch it with anything but my feet . . . to crush it, end its creeping, dry, primeval life beneath the soles of my shoes. And the other one. Tina is like her . . . in the same dimension of femaleness: scheming, dry underneath, and outwardly vibrating with excitement — teaming nerve fibrils swarming towards me.

He felt sick. A sip of café filtre made him gag, and he got up and left them sitting there. In the street he could still feel their stunned, insect eyes upon him, and he had to force himself not to run across the square.

By the Seine it was better. The night air was fresh and full of comforting city sounds. He walked down the stone steps to the river's edge and followed the black rippling water with his eyes. He walked along beside its soothing presence, listening to the clack clack of his own footsteps. He did not think of them; only in his mind the image of the necklace was like a sign. After a while he began to think again—to consider what was to be done.

It was midnight exactly. He noticed the time on the wall clock behind the registration desk at the hotel because his mind was clear. He could not simply pack and leave. It was not a question of money; he had a small amount since she did not keep him entirely dependent upon herself, knowing instinctively that he was not capable of bearing that kind of complete humiliation. He couldn't leave because she would have him traced. She

would institute a search for him, and even if he got to the North Pole, she would probably find him eventually. He didn't want always to be running, and she would never let him leave. There was nothing he could do to keep away from her no matter how he treated her. No, there was only one way—and that was amazingly simple.

It was a quiet hotel, fairly clean, reasonable rates. There was no one in the lobby, and the night clerk was dozing. He woke him up to ask for his key, and climbed the marble stairs, aware of the strong smooth motion of his legs as he took them two at a time. He saw what was in front of him, thought only of the moment—cool brown and white marble, black banister dusty in corners, cool iron under his sliding hand; the scent of dusty carpets, old walls, the odor of transient humanity. He was above his decision; beyond it. He need not consider it now.

Her door, of course, was not locked. She sat up on the bed, startled. He even thought the tired face suddenly so lit with joy was pitiful.

"You've come at last," she said, as though afraid her slightest movement would make him disappear.

"Yes. At last."

She slipped her hands girlishly over her short salt and pepper hair.

"I knew you would come back someday," she whispered.

Her eyes devoured him as though the very sight of him fulfilled her.

He moved a few steps toward her, feeling a kind of exaltation spreading through him—a thrilled confidence. "Lie down," he told her.

There was only the dim bedside light. He stood above her, looking down into her face that seemed as though it might disintegrate with happiness. I will remember her like that, he thought. This is the face I will remember.

The light was off. He did not want to touch her any more than was necessary. He reached quickly across her for the other pillow and brought it down across her face. She struggled. At last he had to press his knee into her chest, clutching her two hands at each side of the pillow with a sudden flow of strength.

She is killing herself, he mused. See how she holds the pillow there. But it will take some time. . . .

When he had finally assured himself that it was over, he turned on the bedside lamp again. He then arranged her in repose, the pillow back in its place. They would think

she died in her sleep. There was no motive. Some time ago she had arranged her will so that he would not be her beneficiary. When she had told him, he had been shocked. He had not thought she was so cynical, or that she could be objective in her passion. Had she imagined him capable of killing her? He had not minded terribly about the money. Afer all, he had not expected her to die so soon, and he was not avaricious though he enjoyed living well. He had no girl friend, certainly, although there were several of his current female students who would have liked to be. True, they lived in separate rooms in the hotel, but they had had no loud scenes. No one could say with any certainty what their relations were. He knew the room next to hers had been empty for the last couple of days, and his own was on the other side. No one had seen him come in, and no one could have heard anything.

He looked at her again, and saw that her wrists were red. They would discolor soon. He thought about it. No, they might not believe it after all.

He was beginning to feel nervous. The silence now seemed to him intense. It rang in his ears and he wished he dared to talk to himself out loud. He forced himself to think logically and calmly. If they see signs of a struggle they will think she was killed. Murder. The inner sound of the word made him shudder. Her presence was all around him, making him dizzy. He turned away from the bed and walked softly about the room. Who will they think killed her? Me, of course—even if they don't know the reason. Well then, Andrew, make it look like somebody else. Rape? He felt an hysterical chuckle bubbling inside him at the thought of Edith raped, and clenched his fists to keep it down. A burglar?

He paused in front of the bureau, running one finger absently along the smooth wood. He kept his eyes lowered so that he wouldn't catch sight of himself in the mirror. Opening the top drawer, he saw the box which he knew contained the necklace. He knew now what he was going to do. It was as though the plan had been there all along, waiting for him to acknowledge it. He sighed and took the box in his hands, holding it for a moment. The other jewels were at the desk downstairs, but this would be enough. There were some tissues on the bureau and he took a few, wrapping the necklace carefully and replacing the empty box in the drawer.

Taking care not to look at her again, he turned out the light and going to the window, opened it, and placed the wrapped necklace on the ledge.

It extended about five feet before the cornice of the window in the next room, and he realized that he needed something to push the parcel out into the stone corner. He debated for a moment, considering the possibly unwise idea of turning on the light again in order to find something to push it with, and decided finally that there was really no reason not to turn it on. No one, after all, could have seen into the room. There was no building across the street—only the Seine, and the left bank of the city stretched beyond it. He thought of finger prints and took some tissues to wipe off the table, the lamp, and the bureau so that they wouldn't know he had visited her that night. Next he opened the closet and unbent a hanger, rturning to shut off the light for the last time. With the wire he was able to push the necklace along the edge almost to the corner, easing it along so that the tissues would not come undone. Satisfied at last that everything was as it should be, he shut the window, bent the hanger so that it fitted under his jacket, and left the room.

Soon I will be well and free again, he thought as he closed the door. Everything will be all right. Tomorrow I will send the girl home. . . .

A mounting excitement was making him tremble. I must be careful, he cautioned himself. Tomorrow I will have to look grief stricken when I discover that, alas, my poor wife has died. It will dawn on the police that it was not natural, they will think of a burglar, search her things. . . .

He wished he were somewhere he could laugh all by himself, loudly for a long time. Quietly he closed his own door, preparing to fling himself on the bed and allow himself to experience fully the strange elation that was choking him. He switched on the light.

Instantly his throat went dry as he caught his breath. There on the bed was Tina, wearing a filmy peignoir, curled up against the pillow and smiling ecstatically at him.

"What are you doing here?" he heard himself asking.

She was coming towards him. He wanted to turn and run, but he couldn't move. The hanger fell unnoticed to the floor.

"Andrew, I never would

have thought you loved me so much."

She was about to throw her arms around him, and he stepped back quickly against the door.

"What?" he said, weakly.

"I watched you . . . I saw it all," she said, falling to her knees and clasping her arms around his legs.

Her touch sent a shiver of panic through him. He reached down and thrust her arms away so that she nearly fell over backwards.

"What are you talking about?"

"You didn't want me to know? Oh, but it will be our secret together, my dearling."

"Stop!" It came out in a rasping whisper. He was trying hard not to scream.

She stayed there on the floor, not trying to move towards him now at least, and looked up at him.

"I came to see you . . . I had to. It was impossible to sleep. And you weren't here so I thought maybe you were with her and . . . oh I know I shouldn't have, but I had to know . . . I went to her door, and I looked through the keyhole. I saw you standing over her, and then the light went out. She made some horrible little sounds . . . I didn't know what was happening . . ."

"She didn't. She didn't make any noise at all . . . I'm sure she didn't," he said to himself.

"Oh yes she did. Didn't you hear her?"

Andrew stared at her wonhappening. Perhaps he was delirious—the emotional shock.

"That was clever about the necklace," she said.

"The necklace? he whispered, dazedly.

She gave him a pitying look. "Poor thing. It must have been so hard for you. . ."

"You saw, then?"

"Yes."

She stood up and smiled at him. He stared at her.

"I love you Andrew. I've always loved you. I'd do anything to keep you."

He continued to stare in horror at the fair face with its brilliant blue eyes, the length of blond hair, the round, full breasts rising and falling beneath the nearly transparent blue nylon. Edith's loving gift to him. How perfect it all was.

"Andrew," she said softly, looking at him steadily, "I know it's an awful thing to say, but I just don't care. How long before we can get married?"

room for murder

by Baynard Kendrick

Doris Corbin was on duty back of the newsstand when Mr. Shelton Thomas arrived. Although it was late September, slightly off-season, the Waverly - Lansing, Atlantic City's newest hotel on the boardwalk, was capacity full. A labor convention was checking out at the close of a stormy five-day meeting, and another, an association of investment brokers, was checking in.

One convention looked much like another to Doris after three years of handling cigar counters in big hotels of the Lansing chain. She had seen them in action in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. Nearly a year at the Waverly-Lansing since its opening had more than confirmed her opinion that all delegates acted like kids once they were a hundred miles from home. She had an added conviction that in Atlantic City, the World's Playground, they went just a little wilder.

"It's the salt air," Val Toohey, the house detective, had told her once after officially

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Baynard Kendrick, one of the all time greats in this field, is of course best known for his novels about Captain Duncan Maclain, the blind detective. Readers of SMM will recall his CLOTH OF GOLD MURDERS (SMM, June, 1962) and MURDER MADE IN MOSCOW, (August 1957).

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Paul R. Reynolds**

brushing off a white-haired gentleman who had annoyed Doris to a point of anger. "These old wolves breathe it in. Then they take a look at that smile of yours and the glint in those Irish-blue eyes—"

"My eyes are Irish-green," Doris told him, "and my family was Dutch. Go home to your wife and children, Valentine."

"They're in Philadelphia," Val had said with a grin.

But Shelton Thomas didn't look like a wolf. He didn't conform to the delegate type, either. There was nothing to indicate that he was bringing with him trouble in bunches. He was a quietly dressed, brown-haired man of medium height in a light gray coat and Homburg hat.

Charlie Ross, the bell captain, brought in his bag from the taxi entrance—an impressive suitcase of shiny aluminum. Even in a lobby replete with luxurious luggage, it shone with outstanding grandeur when Charlie set it down in the "No Reservation" row.

Instead of going to the desk to register, as Doris expected an incoming guest to do, Mr. Thomas headed straight for the cigar stand.

"Six Superbas, please, miss." He pointed down through the glass with a long, artistic forefinger at a box of fifty-cent cigars.

Seen at close range, Mr. Thomas matched the importance of his suitcase. His shirt was white, his tie black. His well-tailored suit was dark steel-gray. His squarish, undistinguished face was pinkly shaven and sloped down into the hint of a double chin.

Doris took the cigar box from the warm, moist case and set it on the counter. Mr. Thomas selected six that pleased him, testing each in turn by rolling it with a caressing gesture between his agile fingers. He was tucking them into a morocco case with gold-bound corners when another guest came up to the stand.

"Six packs of playing cards and four boxes of chips, please." The man's voice was thick, his words a trifle garbled. "Charge them to Roy Hubbard in 610."

"I'll be with you as soon as this gentleman is served, Mr. Hubbard," Doris said, smiling. She turned back to Shelton Thomas.

"I have a problem," Thomas said. "Serve Mr. Hubbard first, if you will."

Doris got the cards and chips and made out a charge slip that Hubbard signed.

"I added a buck for you,"

he said, grinning. "Don't thank me. We'll kitty it out of the game." He took his purchases and ambled off in the direction of the elevators.

Thomas watched Hubbard's progress. Halfway across the lobby a short, rotund man in a bulging Tuxedo that sported a tricolored delegate's badge laughingly attached himself to Hubbard's arm, and together they entered the elevator. The doors slid closed, shutting them from view.

"A friend of yours?" Doris asked, making conversation as she waited for Mr. Thomas to pay.

Shelton Thomas turned his head, and Doris found herself conscious of his eyes. It was an experience, she decided, and not a pleasant one, meeting those eyes at close proximity for the very first time. They were dull, tired eyes, hard, deep-set, almost colorless, and far too pale. They made a careful insulting note of Doris's hair, face, and figure.

"Did I give any indication that he was a friend of mine?"

His tone wasn't hostile, merely curious. His pinkish face, if anything, was a shade more bland than before. He was a self-assured guest in the crowded lobby of a fashionable resort hotel gently rebuking a minor employee for presuming, for the space of an inquiry, to step from her position behind a counter and intrude in his private affairs. It was the pale eyes that injected a note of menace. Doris was aware of a strange discomfort, closely akin to fear.

"It was just one of those things," she said, vainly trying to force a laugh that wasn't there. "I heard you call him by name."

"You called him by name, too," Thomas said. "Did you know him before?"

"No,' Doris said, "I didn't know him before. . . . The cigars are fifty cents each—three dollars, please."

With a dexterity that smacked of sleight of hand Shelton Thomas produced a ten-dollar bill and laid it on the counter. "I told you I had a problem." His gaze never left her as she stared at the unfamiliar markings on the bill. "I'm Shelton Thomas, of Montreal. I'm just checking in. I'd like to pay you with this Canadian bill. It's perfectly good and worth nine dollars in American money."

"I'm sorry," Doris said. "I'm not allowed to accept foreign money of any kind, even for a guest. The cashier would probably change it for you if you're registered here." She looked toward Mr. Thomas's

bag parked in the "No Reservation" row. "I'm afraid that unless you have a reservation it may be difficult to get in."

Shelton Thomas took out his morocco case, selected one of the cigars, and lit it with a gold-plated lighter.

"You're a very difficult young lady," he said through the first puff of smoke. "And although it's none of your business I'll tell you what happened: I had a hundred dollars when I left Canada last night, fifty in American money and fifty in Canadian, all I was allowed to bring in. I lost the fifty dollars American in a bridge game on the train. I'll leave the bill with you and redeem it when I get a check cashed—after I get my room."

"I'm sorry . . ." At that moment there was only one thing she hated worse than Shelton Thomas—a lobby scene. She looked around for Val's broad back, but it wasn't in sight.

"Further," Thomas said through more smoke, "I have friends all around the world. I could share a room with Mr. Horace Forbes, the gentleman who helped Hubbard into the elevator, but it won't be necessary. I've yet to find the hotel, here or any place, where I needed a reservation to get in." He walked off toward the office desk, leaving her scowling at the Canadian bill.

Bob Sydenham, brown-haired, suave, and courteous, was on the desk handling arrivals from four to midnight. Doris allowed herself the pleasure of a malicious smile as she watched the arrogant Mr. Thomas elbow a couple of people aside at the desk and pull a registration card toward him. She could anticipate Bob's reactions with pleasure — the slightly quizzical raising of his eyebrows, the slowly dawning look of astonishment nicely balanced between deference and authority. Judging by her own short contact with Shelton Thomas, it was going to be quite a scene.

Five minutes later her cheeks were burning in protest at a world that was full of flagrant injustice. Thomas signed. Bob gave one brief glance at the man and his signature, then took a key from the honeycombed key rack and signaled for a bellboy. Even the bellboy looked surprised when he picked Shelton Thomas's bag from the "No Reservation" row, and bellboys were used to anything. Doris watched bag, boy, and Thomas vanish into the elevator.

"So the man is a liar as well as a bore," Doris thought. "He did have a reservation." Obviously she, like Shelton Thomas, had been taken in.

Charlie Ross, the bell captain, stopped at the stand to buy some magazines and cigarettes for one of the rooms.

"Who was the duck with the aluminum suitcase that number four just took up?" Doris asked him.

Charlie scratched his hair, gone gray in hotel service. "We've roomed a thousand guests today—"

"This one had an aluminum suitcase parked in the waiting row," Doris explained. "We've been sleeping them in bathtubs for the past six weeks. He must have told you he had no reservation or you wouldn't have put his bag where you did. He has a pink face and pale eyes—"

"Oh, *him*." Charlie's eyebrows came together in a thoughtful frown. "Name's Shelton Thomas, Montreal, according to the rooming card. He didn't have a reservation. It's marked on the card. Maybe he was just lucky and picked up a cancellation. Bob put him in Suite Twenty-sixteen." Charlie paused, holding tight to his cigarettes and magazines. "You don't miss much that goes on around this job, do you, Doris? Funny thing, that guy tipped me with a Canadian half a dollar—said he had no American money when I brought his bag in. Maybe he's a friend of Bob's. Anyhow, he's in."

Charlie hurried off in his gait that always seemed a perpetual run.

Val Toohey had showed up in the lobby, now that Doris didn't need him. She put down an impulse to tell Val about Thomas and his Canadian bill. Instead, she soothed her irritation by watching Val, who was mingling in what he considered an unobtrusive fashion among the guests in the lobby. The rear view of his wide shoulders that stretched his official Tuxedo to a point of no return finally brought her a smile. Val was about as likely to escape notice in a crowd as a Mark IV tank.

Doris served a customer cigarettes, then pulled out the little stool that folded back under the counter and sat down, feeling sorry for herself. Until Bob Sydenham had come to work at the hotel, six months before, she had never pitied herself. She liked her work—eight to four one week, four to midnight the next, serving an ever-changing crowd of interesting people. She had a nice room, shared with Anna Pelty, her assistant, a plain, studious girl. The pay was good, the food tops, and she had progressed swiftly through five hotels to the best one of the chain.

She closed her eyes and gave herself up to the luxury of an instant's full bodily relaxation. Her mind kept bouncing back through the summer—lunches, dinners, swims, and sun baths; off-time hours spent buying vicariously the treasures offered for sale in the auction-rooms that lined the boardwalk.

She opened her eyes and stared at Bob, busy checking in the last of the arrivals from the afternoon train. In all that shifting mosaic of good times remembered, Bob was always set in the center. Cut out the sound of his voice, the touch of his hand, the lean strength of his sun-tanned body, the look in his dark-brown eyes, and instantly the flashing colors grew dim.

She had to admit to herself that she didn't affect Bob the same way. Bob just liked to be with her as she liked to be with him. There it ended. Period.

Fellows contemplating marriage talked about themselves. Bob talked about everything else. Six months of constant good times with him had finally turned up the important facts that he had lived in Canada and worked in hotels before. Beyond that, Doris had deduced he was single only because he never said he was married. She had found out that he was often morose, but that was only because she had been with him and watched him. Now she was beginning to suspect that somewhere in Quebec he might have a wife and three children hidden away.

At eight, Anna Pelty came on to give Doris a half-hour break. Doris explained to her about the Canadian bill and pointed out the separate till where she had put it in the cash drawer. "Get three bucks from him and give him his bill," Doris said. "If he tries anything else call Val."

"Oh, one of those." Anna was unperturbed.

Doris shook her head. "Dear, no—the kindly, quiet, reserved type of gentleman that any landlady would simply adore to have in her best front room—but so was Jack the Ripper."

When Doris got back from a sandwich and coffee in the staff bar back of the Ocean Room, Anna Pelty was making a sale. Finished, she said, "You boy-friend didn't come back for his bill."

"No," Doris said, "I saw it in the till."

"Nice tip, if he doesn't show. Six bucks."

"If he doesn't," Doris said, "I'll split it with you."

Anna laughed. "You've put a hex on him now. He's

bound to come back." She signaled to a girl who was waiting for her, "I'm ducking out for a nine o'clock picture. 'Night." She joined the other girl, who worked in the coffee shop and was also on duty the following day from eight to four.

Doris leaned her elbows on the counter and stared at the well-dressed throng of brokers milling aimlessly about the lobby. People endlessly changing. She had learned to like them, study them, and be interested in their problems. Maybe she magnified incidents, but incidents like Mr. Thomas and his ten-dollar Canadian bill kept life from becoming monotonous in the day-after-day routine of a big hotel.

About 10:30 Shelton Thomas got out of an elevator alone walked straight to the newsstand, and handing Doris three dollars, said, "I want my bill."

She gave it to him without any words and without any smile. She allowed herself the satisfaction of classifying him mentally with a few unladylike thoughts as he took his Canadian bill. Without thanks or a tip he strode off toward the Ocean Room.

Nobby Clark's ten o'clock show, the last performance before the band quit at midnight, was nearly over. Out of the background of Nobby's Canadian Château Band, Doris could hear Shirley Lamont's rich, warm voice drifting out from the Ocean Room as Thomas went in.

It was easy to picture Nobby Clark once you saw him. Six-foot-three, with dark wavy hair and a brilliant smile, he liked to think he looked like a movie star. What he lacked in singing and acting talent, he made up with a repertoire of excellent imitations, ranging from Ronald Colman to Humphrey Bogart.

In Doris' estimation the vocal part of the Canadian Château Band should have been left to Shirley Lamont. Shirley was a dark, sultry rapier of a girl who wore her clothes like a scabbard. When she was sparkling and gay there was no one better, but when her deep, dark eyes took on a discouraged look her tongue became a rapier, too, stabbing out at everything.

Twenty minutes after Thomas went into the Ocean Room, Doris was admitting to herself that he must have some hidden charm of personality that she had overlooked entirely. He came out with Shirley holding on to his arm in a fashion that Doris

considered more bold than friendly. Together, oblivious of curious glances from lobby-sitting guests, they went on into the cocktail lounge.

It was around 11:30, half an hour before Doris got off duty, when Roy Hubbard came down, accompanied by the paunchy broker, Horace Forbes, the man whom Thomas had said he knew. Both Forbes and Hubbard looked much the worse for wear. They wove a course from the elevator to the blue-mirrored doors of the cocktail lounge and disappeared inside.

Just before Doris closed at midnight, full of eager thoughts of bed and an hour's reading, Charlie Ross, the bell captain, came out of the cocktail lounge to tell her that she should take a look. On her way, Doris stopped to peek in through the blue-mirrored doors. Shirley's party had become a foursome. Thomas, Forbes, and Hubbard had the sultry singer neatly hemmed in in the darkest booth in a corner.

Bob was still on duty back of the desk. He finished talking to a guest, saw Doris was waiting for him, and held up one finger and pointed to the clock. She knew he had been hooked in for an hour's extra duty again, a not unusual occurrence in the Waverly-Lansing's rush. Disappointed, she went to the staff bar for a hot milk and sandwich nightcap.

On her way through the downstairs hall to her room she was surprised to encounter Shirley Lamont. Shirley looked very lovely in a sheath of sleeveless black gown with a plunging neckline, a single strand collar of small pearls, and a white cloche hat set off by one startlingly long black feather that swept down over the tan of her shoulders.

"You seem to have made a conquest of Mr. Shelton Thomas," Doris said, with a smile. "I saw you in the cocktail bar."

Shirley made a grimace of distaste. "He's a gambler and a creep. I've run into him a couple of times, once in Detroit and once in Cleveland."

"He seems to have fallen for you," Doris reemarked.

"Look, darling," Shirley said; "when they fall for me they don't leave me stranded at half-past twelve in September. Thomas looked me up in the Ocean Room for one reason only: He was pumping me about the Waves Club, where Nobby goes to gamble. He wanted Nobby to get him in. When Thomas orders, Nobby jumps."

"Why?" Doris asked.

"Because Nobby is on the hook to Thomas for thousands."

Doris said, "Did the other two go with him?"

"They did not," Shirley declared with heat, "nor with me." She took out her vanity and looked herself over in the mirror. "Just plain hag," she said. "Nobby comes breezing into the cocktail lounge as soon as he's through for the evening. Is he looking for me? Oh, no. He's looking for Shelton Thomas. Then there's Hubbard, the lively, red-faced boy. The Waves Club sounds too steep for him, so he goes up to his room, where he can have a quiet little game with some brokers. Then there's the jovial Mr. Forbes. He's a hot-shot broker from Detroit who discovered last year that his liver's turning to rubber. He has to get his beauty sleep, so he's gone to bed in six-o-nine."

Shirley closed her vanity with a snap. "It seems to me, Doris, that if anybody needs beauty sleep it's me. I'm about to repair to my little cell in the women's detention wing. After four stand-ups in an evening it should be safe to leave the door open and throw away the key." . . .

Doris shut her eyes for the twentieth time and concentrated on the complicated series of red and blue concentric circles that were forming designs on the ceiling. They wove in and out, consuming one another, until they finally merged into one great polyp of wakeful purple. The more she thought about it the more the whole process seemed beautifully consistent. If she opened her eyes and stared up at it, the purple polyp would turn into Roy Hubbard's red face as he grinned at her. A moment later she'd be watching Bob as he made a fool of her by letting Thomas check in.

She tried a relaxing exercise, but it wouldn't work. After fifteen minutes she realized that the purple polyp on the ceiling came from a neon sign on the top of a hotel across the gardens outside the staff wing of the Waverly-Lansing, and that the soft *plop-plop* of pursuing footsteps that had started beating against her ears was in reality the continuous sound of Anna Pelty's breathing in the twin bed across the room, and not Shelton Thomas chasing her around the lobby yelling, "Fool! Fool! Fool!"

She reached out and switched on the night light by the bed. This maneuver had the merit of eliminating the pur-

ple polyp, and also enabled her to look at the electric clock. It was twenty minutes past two. She got out of bed.

Down the hall on the same level were the locker-rooms. In the locker-rooms, available to the employees after hours, there was an electric cabinet. Fifteen minutes of baking herself in its enervating heat would, if she followed it with a lukewarm shower and a touch of cold, make her sleepy. It was an added attraction, of course, that she also might sweat off a pound or two.

She slid into a white bathrobe and shoved her feet into a pair of slippers. The more she thought about it the more the idea had merit. She took a heavy bath towel from the bathroom, hung it over her arm, and switched off the night light. She went into the hall.

A vaulted passage, done in green tile, led past the vast, deserted kitchens. Doris followed it and went through an arched service door to the front of the house. There the hall widened out close by an automatic elevator that served the hotel's ocean bathers.

A little farther on, on the right, a lighted green electric sign proclaimed the Men's Locker-Room. Directly across the hall another door led into the section reserved for women. Since the 15th of September, when the man and woman in charge had departed for Florida, the locker-rooms had been unattended. In winter, women guests who wanted electric cabinet and massage could always get in touch with a local masseuse, available by phone.

Beyond the doors to the locker-rooms a ramp led up in a gentle slope to the boardwalk. It was cluttered now with rolling chairs parked in ranks for the night, each one marked with a yellow sign of the Waverly-Lansing Hotel.

The women's side was lighted by a single bulb in the ceiling when Doris went in. It threw stark shadows onto the six tiled, curtained shower baths and the three massage tables ranged in booths at the farther end of the room. Doris always had the feeling when she came there at night of stepping into the deserted amphitheater of a hospital. She flipped a switch, and three banks of fluorescent lights suspended from the ceiling flickered eerily, and then blazed on.

The electric cabinet stood on four rubber-tired rollers. During the summer it was used by both attendants, who would take it up to a bed-

room if a guest desired. Banks of electric-light bulbs inside, surrounding a white metal chair on three side, furnished the heat. There were two solid doors in front, and two glass-paneled ones set at an angle above them, cut so that when they were closed they fitted about the neck of anyone sitting in the machine. A switch inside the cabinet gave the occupant control of the heat so that he could turn the light bulbs off and on.

Afterward, Doris remembered thinking that someone had been careless. The cabinet stood out in the middle of the floor just inside the entrance, its plug-in cord trailing out behind it full-length on the floor. She moved it a few feet sideways to where a wall socket was available, and plugged it in. Whoever had used it last had neglected to shut it off when finished. All of the light bulbs went on inside, flowing out brightness through the two glass panels.

As the lights came up in the cabinet, all the events of the evening that had made her so wakeful seemed suddenly to press down on her heavily. She grew abnormally conscious of sounds again, as she had been in the bedroom. Her hearing stepped itself up to an uncomfortable preciseness. Where she'd been listening before, its thunder grew ominously, as though the ocean were getting too close and might engulf her.

She forced herself back into rational calmness and realized what had actually upset her was the sound of a foostep in the hall. Four watchmen, under Val Toohey's supervision, patrolled the hotel all night long. The beat of one took him past the locker-rooms and up through the rolling chairs to the boardwalk doors. She tried to hear him come back, but there was only silence and the intruding ocean. Finally, to reassure herself, she stuck her head out into the passage and looked up and down. The hall was empty, except for the stolid rolling chairs.

She shed her bathrobe and the cabinet. Then, fascinated and motionless, she stood staring down through one of the sloping glass panels into the brightly lighted cabinet. She hadn't liked Mr. Thomas's pale eyes when she saw them upstairs in the lobby, and she liked them much less right now.

They were leering back at her up through the panel. And Mr. Thomas was dead.

Instead of being able to move, she found herself supporting her weight with a hand on each side of the cabi-

net and leaning closer. She was full of a dizzy, delirious sensation, as though she might be swimming around in nothing.

There was a white bathrobe sash around Mr. Thomas's plump red neck and it was tight enough to be almost imbedded in the skin. The two ends were cut on a bias, and hung down on one side like a decoration against Mr. Thomas's naked shoulder.

She pushed herself erect with an effort and decided she should scream. But when she opened her mouth no sound came out.

Thinking of the sash around Thomas's neck, she felt ill. It was strange, but one of the few places where you learned to know what bathrobes people wore was in a summer hotel. Bob's bathrobe had a flat sash cut on a bias and the material was rough white toweling. She'd sat on that robe many times during the summer, taken cigarettes from the pockets, used the sleeves to wipe salt water from her eyes. She'd even sunbathed on it, face down, staring through her folded arms at the material, not six inches away from her nose, for hours at a time.

She forced herself to lean forward for another look and peered in the cabinet again. It made her feel better even though she felt more ill. There was a faint, white, traceable design in the material of the sash that had strangled Shelton Thomas. There was a design in the sash of Bob Sydenham's bathrobe, too. The difference was one she could probably never explain, but that wasn't Bob's sash around Thomas's neck. That much she knew.

Somehow she got her bathrobe back on and pulled herself together enough to remember that on a table at the end of the row of shower baths there was a phone. She flopped down on the white metal chair with her back turned away from the horrible cabinet and lifted the receiver.

There must have been almost a tenth of a second between the time that Doris asked the operator for Val Toohey and the instant the metal dumbbell, taken from the rack by the showers, crashed down on her head. For just the fraction of a second she realized that she and Mr. Thomas weren't in the ladies' locker-room alone. . . .

Icy water was wetting her hair and sloshing against her face when she came to. She was lying on one of the massage tables. Val Toohey, looming large in his inevitable

Tuxedo, was gently wielding her dampened bath towel against her forehead.

"Feeling all right?"

"I guess so," she said.

"You sure got a crack, Doris." His deep-blue eyes and round face mirrored concern. "I don't suppose you saw anyone?"

"Do you think I'd be alive if I had?" Doris blinked her eyes two or three times, trying to think through the pain of a splitting headache.

"No, I guess you wouldn't, at that," Val admitted.

"My head aches," she said.

"It should." Val opened his big fist to disclose a bottle of smelling salts. "I used these to bring you around. There's a first-aid kit in the attendant's office. There's aspirin there. Wait; I'll get you a couple."

Doris pushed herself up to a sitting position on the massage table and pulled her bathrobe tighter around her. While he was gone she turned her head to stare at the cabinet. It was covered now with a clean sheet that Val had thoughtfully taken from the linen locker. Doris was relieved. Even now it would take her years to rid her mind of the sight of Shelton Thomas.

Val came back with the pills and some water. She swallowed the pills dutifully.

"Look here," Val said kindly, "you got conked with an iron dumbbell. It's over there." He pointed to a spot near the cabinet on the floor. "I haven't touched it, because there may be finger-prints, although they're pretty much out of date if anybody has any brains today. Anyhow, you were pretty lucky and you look pretty rocky. In about an hour this place will be crawling with Atlantic City cops, all wanting to talk to Miss Doris Corbin."

"But I don't know anything," Doris protested.

"That's just what I'm trying to say," Val continued. "I spent fifteen years on the force, myself, before some hood cracked down on me with a gun and got me retired on a pension. When coppers can't find a killer, talking to the dame that found the body is the next best thing. Do you feel up to answering a couple of questions?"

Doris nodded. Her head was beginning to clear.

"God," said Val. "Then I'll get Miss Donaldson, the nurse, and route out Dr. James, the house physician. They'll stick you in bed under medical care, and when the cops get here you'll be out of the way until morning." He jerked a thumb over his shoulder toward the cabinet.

"By any chance do you know the name of that guy in there?"

"I know even more than his name," Doris said slowly. She proceeded to tell Val in detail all that had happened during the evening.

"So you think that in addition to Hubbard, Forbes, and Shirley, Bob may be able to give up some information on this fellow, too?" Val asked when she had finished.

Doris asked, "Why did he let him in?"

Val looked at her closely for a few seconds and finally began to grin. "If you love that guy, Sydenham, as much as I think you do, it strikes me that the only fair thing is to wake him up now and ask him. Thomas will keep for fifteen minutes. Bob's room is just a few doors from yours, isn't it?"

"Five down the hall," Doris said.

"Do you feel up to it?" Val looked worried.

Doris forced a smile. "I'm perfectly all right now, Val, and I thing it's perfectly swell of you to hear what Bob has to say before the police start questioning him."

"Don't thank me," Val said. "I'm a copper at heart. . . . Holy Moses, wouldn't it be something to have this murderer under wraps before the local law move in!" . . .

There was no question to Doris that Bob had just wakened from a very sound sleep when he answered Val's rap on his door. Well, what did she expect? she asked herself. Did she think that just because Bob had been a little mysterious during the summer and had annoyed her by letting Shelton Thomas into the hotel without a reservation that Bob had killed him? Certainly not. Her discovery of Shelton Thomas's body had brought things to a head, that was all. In the short space of an hour all unessentials had been swept away. It just meant more to her to be certain, that Bob Sydenham had had nothing to do with Thomas's murder.

Because she knew now without a shadow of a doubt that she cared more for Bob than anyone living. Everything in connection with him had become of double importance. So unconsciously when he opened the door she had glanced at him partly from Val Toohey's point of view. Until Thomas's killer was found she'd be looking at Shirley and Nobby and Hubbard and Forbes and everyone who had contacted Thomas from the same point of view. Only, her reactions and her

interest couldn't possibly be as strong.

She had been in Bob's room a couple of times before, for cocktails when he was returning some of the courtesies shown them by Nobby and Shirley during the summer. Expansive Nobby was a free spender and apparently had taken an instant liking to Doris and Bob. He had swum with them often and had them out to dinner several times. Shirley was always along.

Tonight when she and Val went in, Doris was more than usually aware of the Spartan simplicity of the room and the military preciseness with which Bob kept his personal possessions. She wondered if Val noticed it, too. It smacked of the Army or some rigid institution where men were taught under penalty to keep everything with geometric precision and put everything away. With a quaver of disloyalty, she considered that a penitentiary might producce such neatness, too. But one thing she noticed, which she felt sure Val must notice, was that Bob was wearing his toweling bathrobe and the sash was tied tightly around his waist. Her heart filled with a happy little song.

"Sorry to get you up, Bob." Val's watchful eyes took in the rumpled bed and Bob's dishevelment.

Bob brushed sleep from his eyes and took in Val's Tuxedo, then moved to Doris's dampened hair and dressing gown. "Oh, think nothing of it," he said, with an attempt at airness. "I do my best entertaining at three in the morning."

Doris took a chair at the desk. Val remained standing. Bob sat on the edge of his bed, and after another close scrutiny said, "I guess it isn't a social call, at that. What's wrong?"

"It's Shelton Thomas," Doris began.

"I'll handle this, please," Val broke in, with an edge to his voice. "You checked in a man by that name, didn't you, Bob, earlier this evening?"

Watching him closely in the not too bright light of the desk lamp. Doris had an impression that his face had tensed and paled, but she might have been mistaken.

"I checked in a lot of people from four to midnight," Bob said, "during the time I was on."

"This one I think you might remember," Val said. "He bought some cigars from Doris before he checked in and paid her with a Canadian ten-dollar bill. Then he got difficult with her, to put it mildly. Anyhow, she had rea-

son to remember that his bag was parked in the 'No Reservation' row, and she was ready to bet that he wouldn't get in. But you let him in without a reservation—and the hotel busting at the seams." Val's voice lowered to deceptive mildness: "Why did you, Bob? That's all we want to know."

Doris said, "You put him in twenty-sixteen."

Bob took a cigarette from a pack on the table beside him and lit it. Doris noticed there was a tremor in his hand. "Tell me something, Toohey," he said, taking a placid inhale, "you're a good house dick. But when did you get the job of running this hotel? I happen to remember this fellow Thomas quite well. He's from Montreal. The people who had reservations on twenty-sixteen were late. It's my job to take care of incoming guests. Thomas was there, so I let him in. What about it?"

"This," Val said. "I thought you'd rather talk to me than the local law. Doris found his body a little while ago. He was strangled to death in an electric cabinet in the locker-rooms. Doris must have barged in onto it soon after the murder, for she got conked over the head while she was phoning for me. It's your choice, Bob. I'm taking a chance on my job and reputation by being here before I call the police. But I like both you and Doris. I thought it would look much better if I could tell them, instead of your telling them, how you happened to let Thomas in." He started toward the door. "I'll leave if you have nothing to say."

"Sit down a minute, Val. The truth's always unbelievable, but I have plenty to say." Bob smashed out his cigarette in a tray. "I seem to be one of those guys who get the breaks. Eighteen months ago I sat in a bar in London, Ontario, one night and wished out loud that I had a thousand dollars to buy into a business. Somebody evidently overheard me, and used it. I got my thousand—in a most peculiar way. It was in nice, new Canadian bills stowed away in the back of a desk drawer in my desk. The police went through the desk a couple of days later."

"You mean it was a frame?" Val straddled a chair and leaned on the back.

"A plant or a frame or anything you want to call it," Bob said. "Has it ever occurred to you that there's always a good story to be put forward by a dishonored employee or a fall guy?"

"You're neither," Doris put in quickly. "Has it ever occurred to you that you've never trusted me enough to tell me anything about this before? Why didn't you give it a try?"

"I'm giving it one now," Bob said. "I hope it will be good. I'm a pharmacist, a graduate of McGill. I got myself a good job with a wholesale drug firm in Montreal. After a few months they moved me to their branch in London, Ontario, and put me in charge of railway shipping and receiving—checking inventories out and in. I'd been with them in London eight months when somebody robbed a car."

"A car?" Val asked." An automobile?"

"A freight car," Bob went on. "It was loaded with A.C.T.H., cortisone, aureomycin, and a lot of other stuff, booked to Army and other hospitals through our warehouse. The stuff was worth plenty, Val, and, what's worse, almost imposssible to replace without the loss of weeks of time."

"You mean this all has to do with your checking Thomas in?" Val asked.

"Very much so," Bob said. "Give me time. We now reach the part where Sydenham plays the fool. That freight car arrived with two others routed through from New York an hour before we closed at four in the afternoon. It was pouring rain and I was out in the yard directing. I signed the delivery receipts, with a notation that I hadn't checked the contents on the bills of lading, when a man came up to me in the yard and handed me an office order."

"Look, Bob," Val interrupted again; "I'm a policeman by heart and by profession. Don't mind if I want to get some things straight, because I have to pass them along. Did you know this fellow who gave you the office order?"

"He wore a slicker and a slouch hat and I'd never laid eyes on him before, He said he was superintendent of a local hospital and asked me to spot the car on a siding near the highway, as his truck was going to call to get some of the medicine early in the morning. The placing of that car was confirmed by the office order. Anyhow, I fell for it and put the car there, where it set. The order was a forgery, filched from a pad in the office."

"I don't see where you were to blame a bit." Doris found herself suffering along with his obvious strain.

"I failed to check it with

Princely, the office manager," Bob went on. "The next morning the car was found empty, looted during the night. And the thousand dollars I shot my mouth off about wanting so badly was found in my desk."

"Neat," Val said.

"I didn't go to jail, because Princely, my boss, believed me," Bob said. "And so did one of the police officials, but they never found the pale-eyed man in the slicker who handed me the order. But I knew I'd recognize him the next time I saw him."

"Thomas?" Doris breathed.

"I'd have let him in under any name," Bob said. "Those eyes were burned in my brain. Until I could find that man and get something out of him, the career of Robert Sydenham, pharmacist, was through."

Val stood up. "There's one thing interests me about this, Bob. Looking at this from the angle of the police, after you got him safely checked in, what did you think you were going to do?"

"My first reaction, Bob said rather hopelessly, "was to tip you off or call the police. Then I got to wondering how the devil that was going to help. Sift it down, and what did I have?"

"Not much," Val was forced to admit; "that's perfectly true,"

"Not much?" Bob repeated bitterly. "It's less than nothing. I see a man for two minutes in a pouring rain in Ontario eighteen months ago, with no witnesses, so I try to tell you and the local police that I recognized Shelton Thomas as the man on sight. Why? Because they both have pale eyes. Now the guy's been murdered, and where am I?"

Doris had an idea: "You knew him on sight, Bob. Do you think he recognized you?"

"She has a point there," Val said. "You might have to watch your step if Thomas told whoever killed him that you were a dangerous man to have around."

"I don't think he knew me," Bob said, after a moment. "Don't forget he's been photographed on my mind with cause for a long time. Let's think in a thousand years he'd ever expect to find the room clerk in the Waverly-Lansing was an unimportant sucker he'd framed in a seventy-five-thousand-dollar steal."

"By the way, Bob"—Val looked thoughtful—"how did you happen to get this job?"

"Through a Mountie who worked on the case in London," Bob told him.

"A Mountie?" Doris asked.

"One of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police," Bob explained. "They work in Canada as the F.B.I. does here. One of their officers who believed my story put in a word for me with a hotel in Montreal that's in this chain. I went to work there and was transferred here. What's that got to do with our problem right now?"

"This," Vay said. "I think you're wrong in one thing. You may have come here by chance, but Shelton Thomas didn't. He came here to see somebody — Shirley, Nobby, Forbes, maybe Hubbard. It's my job and the job of the local police to find that person. That's our play." He looked at this wrist watch. "Speaking of police, I've waited too long to call them now. Even when I was on the force I never could resist playing detective. . . . Coming, Doris? I want to get Dr. James to take a look at you, as I said, and get you to bed with some nursing care." Val opened the door.

"I'm all right. Val," Doris told him firmly. "I can call Dr. James myself, if I really need him, or Bob can. Do you mind if I stay?"

"Here?"

"Yes," she said, "with Bob. Somehow I think I'd feel safer until the police get here. Whoever hit me over the head might have thought I really saw them, and they might have the same ideas about me that they had about Shelton Thomas. They might feel a darn' sight better if they thought I was out of the way."

"You may have something there," Val admitted, as he stepped into the hall. "Keep an eye on her, Bob, and get Miss Donaldson, the nurse, to stay with her when she goes to bed. I'll try to keep the cops out of her hair until morning. Anyhow, I'll pass on to them what both of you have to say."

Bob stared at her for a moment after Val had gone. His eyes were full of warm affection, and Doris found herself coloring. She was suddenly conscious of her own strong feelings toward him, the lateness of the hour, the fact that she was alone with him in his bedroom. She was still more aware that, more than anything, she wanted him free of any scar, any blemish, that Shelton Thomas might have left on him through that robbery in Canada.

They both stood up, and for a moment they were drawn together and she was in his arms, his kisses warm against her lips, against her hair. Then the realities of the moment intervened, and she freed herself—not without knowing

that love, full-blown in her heart, would always be there.

"How long before the police get here?" she asked him. She felt stronger than she really was. Her brain felt abnormally clear.

"Fifteen or twenty minutes," Bob said, "maybe half hour. They won't be long when Val puts in the call."

"Aren't you losing a chance?" Doris asked him.

"A chance for what?"

"To go through Thomas's things, Bob. The police will seize every bit of his stuff as evidence in this murder. They'll search his rooms the very first thing. There may be something there in his baggage or in his clothes that would clear you of that freight-car suspicion in Canada. Why not get it before the police do, and run it over to them later if you think it's necessary to convict the murderer. You can get a passkey, can't you?"

"You really believe in me, don't you, Doris?"

"With all my heart, she told him, "but others may not. That's what frightens me. Can you get a key?"

"I have a key," Bob said, "and there's nothing I'd like better, Doris, than to search that room, believe me. But it won't work. It's the first idea the killer would have. If I was trapped up there it wouldn't look too good for me."

"If the killer wanted to search that room he'd be all through by now," Doris was pleading desperately. "I'll admit it would look bad, too, Bob, if you searched it alone. That wasn't what I meant. This is your one big chance to clear yourself of that Canadian frame-up, and you're going to take it. But you'll need a witness to anything you find, and a witness to the fact that it was really my idea. You'll search that room of Thomas's with me." . . .

As they walked down the hall of the twentieth floor Doris decided she'd never make a criminal. She was imagining people all around her, ready to spring from behind closed doors and confront her with pointed, accusing fingers.

Late as it was, there was laughter from 2008, a clink of glasses in 2009, a heavy snorer in 2012. From 2014 came the sound of a dance band from a muted radio.

If she'd ever had any doubt about Bob's determination to see things through, they were gone by now. It was more than obvious that his concern, if any, had been only for her. His grin as he slipped the key in the door of 2018 put her tottering courage back on a

firm foundation.

The bedroom they entered was partly lighted from two lamps that had been left on in the adjoining sitting-room, 2016. They went through a bad quarter of a minute right after Bob closed the door behind them. Out in the hall she heard the opening and shutting of one of the automatic elevator doors. They stood close together, scarcely breathing, until the footsteps grew faint, as a party of guests walked toward the other end of the hall.

Bob switched on a light in the bedroom. The aluminum suitcase was standing open on a rack at the foot of one of the twin beds. It had been partly unpacked. Two pairs of shoes, one black and one tan, neatly fitted with trees, stood under it on the floor. A pair of silver-backed military brushes, a comb, and a plain silver shoehorn were on the bureau.

Bob stared for a few seconds at the four pairs of silk shorts, a half-dozen pairs of socks, and some handkerchiefs that were neatly folded in the suitcase, then walked over and opened the closet door. Three suits hung inside—a Tuxedo, a dark suit, and a light gray. There were bedroom slippers of shiny patent leather on the closet floor. A black silk bathrobe and a pair of red silk pajamas were hung on hooks on the inside of the door. Obviously, Mr. Thomas's tastes had been expensive and he had had the money to indulge them.

Bob had started a systematic search of the pockets of the dark suit when Doris, watching him, caught her breath with a quick reflex and switched off the bedroom light. She'd been listening with an unconscious intensity. Although she was certain she'd heard no further sound from the hall, some instinct had warned her that somebody was unlocking the door to the sitting-room, 2016.

Fortunately, Bob didn't utter a sound when the light went out. Doris reached out and took his hand, leading him close to the door through which they had come in. Together they stood in a spot where a long, three-paneled mirror, hung above the settee in the sitting-room, clearly reflected the door in the other room. They watched, rigid, as it opened. Roy Hubbard stepped into 2016.

Half inside, Hubbard stood still and listened. His right side was turned away from her, but she judged from his position that his hand was thrust in his sports coat

pocket. Something in his expression and his waiting stance gave warning that she and Bob might be in a most unenviable position if Hubbard should be suddenly alarmed. He looked like a man who was not only nervous but taking no chances. He also looked like a man who might be very well able to handle a gun.

Bob's fingers tightened hard on her arm as Hubbard closed the door behind him and stepped into the sitting-room. She had an instant of wild panic as she saw him walk across the sitting-room past the communicating door. Then she realized he was not coming into the bedroom, but was heading for a writing desk in the corner of the other room.

Without quite knowing how it had happened, she found herself beside Bob out in the hall and running down the thick, gray carpet toward the automatic elevator. The car was still on the floor. Apparently Hubbard had just come up in it.

Inside the car, as it started down, she had a disheartening sensation that it was falling far too fast for her to keep pace with it. Try as she might, she felt herself suspended in mid-air. "Maybe," she thought, "it's really going too slow and I'm the one who's going too fast." Her head was whirling, but so were the lights, shooting out beautiful blond rainbows that mingled with Bob's brown hair. Finally the elevator stopped, and Doris crumpled quietly to the floor. . . .

When she awoke, the sun was shining brightly through the open slats of the blinds. Bob and Val Toohey were sitting on chairs beside her bed. When he saw she was awake, Bob reached out and took her hand and Val Toohey started grinning. Suddenly Doris grinned back at him and felt much better. "What happened?" she asked weakly.

"You fainted," Bob told her.

Val pointed a finger at the bandage on her head and said, "You've been running around with a cracked skull. I told you to get to bed last night. Now the doctor has you fixed up with a Hindu turban."

Doris was aware that, in spite of Val's apparent friendliness, tension was thick as cigarette smoke in the bedroom air.

"We've been sitting here like a couple of ghouls waiting for you to wake up," Bob said. "Dr. James is afraid you have a concussion. How are you feeling now?"

"Fine," Doris told him.

"Well, I'll give you some-

thing to make you worse." Bob squeezed her hand. "Val thinks I killed Shelton Thomas's."

"That's a lie," Val said. "I merely stated you were a good prospect. You'll admit that yourself, won't you? If I thought you'd had anything to do with it at all, I wouldn't have passed on to you what I told Sullivan, the local homicide man."

"What did you tell him?" Doris asked.

"I told him the story of the drug robbery in London," Val said. "It was a good thing I did. Bob told him, too. It made things look better."

Miss Donaldson, the nurse, came in carrying a breakfast tray. She looked at Val and Bob and said, "Blow."

"Detective Sullivan wants to talk to her," Val said.

"In two hours," Miss Donaldson said, "maybe—if she feels like it. I gave her a hypo last night. They make you feel low."

"It's important," Val insisted.

"Why?" asked Miss Donaldson. "It'll take Thomas twenty-four hours to cool off after being in that cabinet, even though you've got him on a cake of ice."

"They ought to cool him off on a nurse's heart," Val said.

Doris gently released Bob's hand. Somehow she felt she had to get Val alone with her, if only for fifteen minutes. She told Miss Donaldson, "I'm feeling all right. There are some things I want to know before I talk to Mr. Sullivan. Can't Val stay?"

"He can come back in ten minutes, after I get you washed and polished." Miss Donaldson stood pointing firmly at the door.

Doris said, "I have to relieve Anna at four."

"That's what you think," Miss Donaldson said. "Not today."

The men went out, and Doris was half through her breakfast when Val came back in. Miss Donaldson eyed them for a moment and said, "You can sit up for a while if you want to, Doris, but don't try to do too much until Dr. James sees you at noon."

The door had scarcely closed behind the nurse when Doris plunged in breathlessly: "Val, if you and the police suspect Bob Sydenham at all, you're crazy. You saw, yourself, when we went to his room last night that he had his bathrobe on, and the sash was with it. Have the police searched yet for the robe that matches the sash that strangled Thomas?"

Val sat rigid on the edge of

a straight - backed chair. "Come again, Doris. Will you kindly tell me what brilliant piece of detective work you've cooked up now?"

"I'm talking about the white toweling bathrobe sash that was around Thomas's neck when I found his body," Doris explained. "My brilliant piece of detective work, as you call it, would be to find the robe with the missing sash and match them. I had one short look at the sash, that's all—but I'd take my oath that I'd know it again, or the bathrobe, any time and anywhere."

"Hold your horses!" Val got to his feet, his face brick-red. "Did you see the body after I brought you around in the locker-room?"

"You had the cabinet covered with a sheet," Doris reminded him. "How could I?"

"Oh, my own thick head!" Val pounded one beefy fist into his palm. "That's why the killer knocked you out, Doris, instead of running away. He wanted that sash. I looked at Thomas even before I saw you lying on the floor, but the only thing around his neck was a livid scar. Believe me, Doris, there was no sash there. You say you can identify it if you see it?"

"I'm positive of it, Val. The raised designs in the cloth were like the marks on a peacock's feathers. I'd know it anywhere."

"There's a chance it belonged to Thomas, himself," Val suggested.

"His bathrobe is black, with a red silk lining," Doris said. "That's another thing I thought you should know. Bob and I searched his room last night—or started to."

"Bob told me—and about Hubbard interrupting you." Val shoved his big hands in his pockets and began to pace the floor. "You're insane, Doris, you and Bob Sydenham, too. Keep out of this, both of you. I'm telling you. Feel that bandage on your head and you'll find out what happens to amateurs mixing around in a murder. It puts me in a panic."

"The killer may be in a panic, too," Doris suggested.

"*May* be?" Val repeated. "He is, and you know it. A bathrobe without a sash will hang him, a bathrobe with a sash will hang him if he tries to throw it away. All you need to do right now is start shooting your mouth off about seeing that sash and let word of it get around this hotel. Mr. Killer's going to find out that you're the only person living who can identify that bathrobe. The next time, Doris, the guy won't miss. It's you or

him, if he thinks you can identify that sash."

"I'm not shooting my mouth off," Doris said. "I haven't even mentioned it to Bob."

"Well, that's the smartest thing you've done so far." Val quit his striding and swung around. "Let me do all the mentioning. I assure you that Sullivan's the only one who'll hear it."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to start looking for bathrobes," Val said. "I'm going to start the police checking with the hotel valet. I'm going to have a look at the incinerator and the bins where the trash is thrown away." He half muttered to himself, "That also includes Mr. Sydenham's possessions. People have been known to have more than one bathrobe."

There was a knock at the door. Val answered it, and half hidden by a three-foot-high funeral wrath of tuberoses and calla lilies, Nobby Clark and Bob came in.

"Flowers make me sneeze," Val said. "I'm leaving now." He grinned at Doris and added, "Take it easy. I'm not really as dumb as I look. I'll see what I can do."

Nobby closed the door after Val's broad back, shutting him out in the hall.

Nobby was formally clothed in pin-triped trousers, a cutaway coat, a pearl-gray vest, and an ascot tie. He placed the collection of flowers on the bureau, where it blotted out everything, then swung around suddenly to Doris, who was staring with a feeling of hysteria at the massive floral tribute bristling all over her bureau. "Oh, no!" he said. "They told me you were dead."

"Well, I feel like it with that thing in the room." Doris fluttered a hand at it feebly. She couldn't help thinking that nobody in the world but Nobby would go to so much time and trouble to put across his own macabre, heavy-handed brand of humor.

"Well, smell it a while anyhow," said Nobby, "and I'll return it and see if I can get my money back." He settled himself in an easy chair and stretched his long legs out before him. "It's really too bad," he said. "I had a gorgeous funeral arranged for you at two o'clock tomorrow. I was going to sing *Moanin' at the Bar*."

"At least," said Doris, "I wouldn't have had to listen to you."

Nobby got up, fished down in the middle of the calla lilies, and brought out a bottle of brandy. "I'll give you this,"

he said, "if you and Bob will confess to killing that fellow Thomas."

"Why?" asked Doris. "Did you kill him?"

Nobby was silent while he reached in his pocket for a corkscrew. The brandy cork came out with a soft, sweet pop. "Get some glasses," he told Bob.

Bob got one from Doris' tray, two from the bathroom, and put them on the bureau. Nobby poured a more than generous portion in each one and passed them around.

"Here's to crime," he said. "You'll hear all about it soon enough."

Doris took a sip and felt the warm old brandy burn delightfully as it went down. She sat up higher in the bed and pulled her jacket closer about her.

"He had me on the hook for twelve thousand," Nobby said. "Frankly, I'm pleased to death that somebody bumped him."

Bob asked, "How'd he get his hooks into you?"

"He got around," said Nobby.

Doris said, "Apparently you do, too."

"Too much," said Nobby. "I'll just have to quit being lucky at love. It's a long story. It all started a couple of years ago when I ran into good old Shelton out at Victoria, B.C. We were playing out there and I was bored, as I always am, and looking for action. I sat in a game with him, and by the time he left he either owned my Canadian Château Band or I was in the red to him for a thousand or two—I don't quite remember. But I've run into him a half a dozen times since, and either he was lucky or I should learn his tricks." He stood up and finished his drink. "He was lit up like an electric sign when he left me at the Waves last night."

"What time was that?" Bob asked.

"It's all down in Mr. Sullivan's notebook," Nobby smiled, "but it was about a quarter to one. Thomas was too drunk to be gambling, and I told him so. I also told him how to find the electric cabinet here in the hotel. He suggested that himself, believe it or not. Even when he was drunk he was a man who tried to stay sober. I probably could've killed him, because I left the Waves around two—a little matter of running out of money, as I usually do. But I didn't kill him and I don't know who did." He walked over to the bed, stood for a few seconds looking down at Doris' bandaged head. "There's talk around that Bob had some rea-

sons for strangling Thomas, too."

"I hadn't heard that," Doris said.

"Well, you will," Nobby said, "before the police get through. This joint leaks talk like an old barrel, and outside of Shirley there are only about two people in it that I give a hoot about, dead or alive, and that's you two. That's why I brought my story in with your breakfast. I also wanted to drop a hint: Thomas wasn't only a gambler. He was one of the nicest international cutthroats that ever lived, and his murder was long overdue. But you're mixed up in something deep, kiddies. Very, very deep. Don't trust anybody, not even me. That's my fatherly advice to you."

He leaned down and brushed his lips against Doris's bandage. "I'm the melodramatic type, but watch your step. If I had my way I'd like to see both of you get out of this joint just as fast as you can, and stay away until this murder is cleared up." He went out of the room with a wave of his hand.

Doris said, "And so, kiddies, a new day dawns over the boardwalk at Atlantic City."

Bob went over to the window down and stood with his back to Doris. "We might keep our stories a little straighter if I knew what you had to say to Valentine."

"I told him the truth, Bob —that we tried to search Thomas's room last night, and that Hubbard came in and drove us away, but that I didn't think he saw us. Is that all right?"

"I'm glad you did," Bob said, "for I'd told them already—so I'm afraid he won't have anything much more to work on."

Doris had a quick pang of guilt at Bob's despondent tone. She started to speak, and checked herself. "If you don't mind, Bob, I think I'll get up and try to get dressed."

"Fine," he said on his way out. He turned at the door to add, "I'll see you later."

She felt deflated after Bob left. The bandage Dr. James had put on her head was cumbersome. Miss Donaldson had been right when she said that a hypo left you feeling low. She had been buoyed up by the excitement mixed with fright since finding Thomas's body. Now the excitement was gone entirely, and Nobby's profile of Thomas, coming on top of Val's vehement cautioning, had left her just plain weak and scared. She was on the point of getting up

and dressing when her phone rang.

The conversation was short, fast, and entirely one-sided. It started without introduction the instant Doris said, "Hello."

"Shelton Thomas said you were nosy. He's dead. Unless you keep your nose out of his business, and get out of Atlantic City today, you'll join him." The phone clicked off.

Mechanically Doris began to signal the operator, and got an answer after what seemed an endless tmie.

"This is Doris Corbin—"

"Oh, this is Betty. How's the head? I hear you got walloped on the dome.

"I'm okay, thanks, Betty. Did you handle a call to my room?"

"Sure did—Just a minute, please — Waverly-Lansing — Will you hold it, please?— Hello, Doris? . . ."

"Betty, have you any idea where that call came from?"

"Sure do—Will you hold it, *please?*—Doris? House phone number three by the boardwalk entrance downstairs—Take it easy—Waverly-Lansing—I'll be seeing you."

Doris lay back against the pillows. The warning voice on the phone had been muffled as though a handkerchief, or maybe a towel, had been stretched over the mouthpiece, but it had reminded her of someone. It kept beating against her tired brain—that hidden terror buried underneath the calm—that pleasant masculine menace that still was deadly serious. It was a voice she knew, a voice she had heard fifty times before.

Suddenly she had it, and instantly, with the knowledge, she began to cry from disappointment. She was still weeping softly when Detective Sullivan arrived at eleven. What would a hard-headed policeman think if she told him that the voice that had threatened her over the telephone was the composite voice of every movie gangster she had ever heard? . . .

Detective Sullivan of Homicide proved to be a mild, round-faced man with sparse gray hair. His heavy-lensed glasses partly concealed, and fully distorted, sympathetic eyes that on occasion turned flinty. He took the chair by Doris's bed, looked briefly at her reddened face, and asked, "Why the tears, young lady?"

Doris told him about the telephone call. Detective Sullivan took out a leather-covered notebook and started writing. He seemed to find her identification of the voice

as a movie gangster much more serious than funny. After his very first questions Doris began to agree. Under the strain she had forgotten Nobby Clark's imitative abilities as an entertainer.

"Did you know that Thomas and this fellow Clark went to a gambling club together last night?" Sullivan asked.

Doris told him of her conversation with Shirley Lamont just before she went to bed. Detective Sullivan put it down in his notebook.

"Clark told me himself that he does imitations," Sullivan said. "It will bear looking into. Something you don't know, Miss Corbin, is that before Thomas left the Waves Club last night, he and Clark had an argument that amounted almost to a brawl. I understand that Clark brought you those this morning." He pointed to the flowers.

Doris nodded, started to speak, and checked herself.

"A weird sense of humor." Detective Sullivan carefully polished his glasses and put them back on. "Almost like a gangster's. If you're worrying about not telling me what he told you this morning—about the gambling debts he owed Thomas—please don't. I'm not trying to trick you, Miss Corbin. I'm merely trying to get all the help you can give me. Val Toohey has told me about your seeing a bathrobe sash and that you feel sure you can identify the robe if we find it. I've already interviewed Mr. Horace Forbes."

Doris said weakly, "I don't know what else I can tell you. You already seem to know it all."

Detective Sullivan gave her a fatherly smile. "First, let me ask a question: Do you think Nobby Clark is stupid?"

"I certainly do not," Doris said. "Nobby's a fine musician, an artist."

"Thank you," said Sullivan. "Only a stupid man would use one of his well-known imitations when making a threatening call." He paused and looked down at his notebook, then added quietly, "Or an artist, who would argue correctly that I'd think just what I'm thinking—that something obvious would be the least suspect."

"Maybe it only sounded like a movie gangster to *me*," Doris said.

"I'm considering that, too," Sullivan reassured her. "Now, would you tell me very briefly something about Shirley Lamont. You said that she told you last night that she had met Shelton Thomas a couple of times before."

"I haven't any reason in the world to doubt her, Mr. Sul-

livan. I don't believe that she'd tell me anything that was untrue. She said that Thomas was a gambler."

"So far as we've been able to check," Sullivan said dryly, "that's perfectly true. Let me be more specific. Miss Lamont makes a hundred and fifty dollars a week and expenses. Knowing that, is there anything about her way of dressing that impresses you from a woman's point of view?"

Doris' mind flashed back to the summer. It was Bob who had brought up the fact that Shirley's salary as a singer must have been stretched to the breaking point to buy the square-cut diamond ring she wore and the mink stole she had sported one night on the boardwalk. Doris had defended her hotly, but all she had gotten from Bob was a cynical grin.

"She dresses up to her income and maybe a little beyond." Doris felt annoyed at Bob, who must have brought it up to Sullivan. "Is that any crime? I do it, too."

"It's the 'little beyond' I'm interested in, Miss Corbin. There's been a murder. I'm wondering if you know how Miss Lamont's income might have been stretched while singing with a band around hotels."

"No, I don't," Doris said firmly.

"You have no reason to believe," Sullivan continued, "that perhaps she directed prospective players to gambling houses, for which service she collected a fee?"

"If she did," Doris said, "I know nothing about it."

"Thank you, Miss Corbin," Sullivan said. "Now, have you ever seen any of the guests before who are in the hotel at the moment?"

"Yes," Doris said, "I think Mr. Forbes was here last spring. Maybe twice—once before that, right after the hotel opened last fall."

"Anyone else?"

"No one I can think of," Doris said.

"And now about the locker-room, Miss Corbin. Will you tell me exactly what happened, please, including everything you heard and saw?"

She told him in detail. When she finished there were icy beads of sweat on her forehead.

Detective Sullivan checked his notes. "Was this cabinet always on the women's side, Miss Corbin?"

"No, sometimes it was rolled over to the men's side."

"Thomas was killed on the men's side, Miss Corbin, as far as we know. We believe that after he was strangled

his body was hurriedly shoved down in, the cabinet unplugged and moved across the hall. He'd come down in his clothes and apparently had not been in a hurry, for they were carefully hung up in a booth in the men's locker-room. Can you think of any reason why a murderer should go to the trouble of pushing that cabinet across the hall?"

"A watchman patrols the place at night," Doris said. "Sometimes if he sees a light on the men's side he stops and looks in."

"But not on the women's side?"

"Not in the year I've been here," Doris said, "and I've taken altogether thirty or forty cabinets at night—sometimes with Shirley, sometimes alone."

"There are three ways to get into each of those locker-rooms," Sullivan said, "the main lighted entrance from the hall, a door through the attendant's office, and an entrance through the lavatories, nearest the automatic elevator at the end of the hall. When the murderer struck you, Miss Corbin, which entrance do you think he used to come in?"

"He must have used the entrance nearest the boardwalk, the one through the attendant's office. My back was to that door when I sat down to phone. Yes, I'm sure he did, because I heard those footsteps I was telling you about and thought it was the watchman. I even looked out, and there was nobody in the hall."

"And from where you were sitting at the phone you could see the cabinet, the main entrance, and the entrance through the lavatories?"

"That's right," Doris said, "although I'd tried to turn my back to the cabinet. The entrance through the lavatories is shielded by a wooden screen that ends about a foot from the floor."

"I think you're right," Sullivan agreed. "The killer ducked back into the men's side when he heard you come. He knew you were going to find Thomas's body and he wanted that sash, so he walked down the hall to the boardwalk, entered through the attendant's office, and waited till you sat down with your back to him at the phone."

"Yes," Doris said.

"Then I think you'll agree that whoever killed Thomas was someone Thomas knew quite well, someone he trusted. That is, unless he was sneaked up on as you were. But it seems to make more sense that they went down there together and that the killer had a bath-

robe on. The other thing that seems quite clear is that the killer knew an awful lot about the Waverly-Lansing Hotel. Wouldn't you think so?"

"Yes, I would," Doris said softly.

Sullivan cleared his throat. "Mr. Wilson, the managing director, would like you to be in his office at half-past two, if you feel able. I'd like to check on some of these things when everyone concerned is together."

"I'll be there," said Doris. "Half-past two."

"Thank you very much," Detective Sullivan said. He stood up to leave, and departed only after he had read his carefully made notes all through again.

Dr. James came at noon, removed the bandages, and left Doris with a not too noticeable two-inch strip of adhesive marking the spot where the dumbbell fell. He refused to allow her to handle the newsstand for a day or two.

When she appeared in Mr. Wilson's ocean-view office on the third floor of the north tower at two-thirty, the strip of plaster loomed in her mind as large as a movie screen. Outside of that concern she was feeling pretty fit and well.

But her feeling of well-being was false and built on sands as shifting as those she could see from the window. She realized that as soon as she entered the room.

Mr. Wilson was back of his uncluttered desk presiding over the tribunal, with Val on one side of him and Detective Sullivan on the other. His dark, unparted hair was slicked back in an unruffled smoothness, intended to give the impression of perpetual youthfulness, but Mr. Wilson's expression was far from young. Doris felt that she could read accusation in his face, an accusation that included her and all of the others in the office. It was plain that each had to share personally part of the blame for allowing murder to creep into Mr. Wilson's immaculate hotel.

Nobby and Shirley sat together on a small settee. Always the perfect showman, Nobby had kept his funeral toggery on, probably hoping it would outdo some of the stiffness of Mr. Wilson. Shirley, on the other hand, had dared the sanctity of the office in a molded pair of black velvet slacks which topped gold sandals and which were topped, in turn, by a low-cut shirtwaist and a flaming red jacket.

Roy Hubbard and Horace

Forbes had pulled two chairs together in a corner and were talking in whispers as Doris came in.

It was Bob who upset her. His calmness should have been reassuring. His friendly smile should have restored her fleeing confidence as he rose to get her a chair. But there was something in his manner, some new caution she'd never seen before, and aloofness, a weighing of her reliability. She thought of guilt and she thought of fear, and rejected them both. All she knew was that as she took the chair she was suddenly full of depression, shut out completely for the moment from this puzzling Bob Sydenham whom she couldn't define.

Mr. Wilson was speaking, thanking them all for their trouble and their courtesy in keeping such a delicate matter as a murder as quiet as it had been kept. "You understand, I'm sure, the very fine balance upon which rests the reputation of a resort hotel."

Doris's mind raced off on a different track. What did she know about Bob? Less than nothing except what her heart had told her. Where a life was at stake a heart might easily be wrong. And Nobby? Nobby had a scrapbook full of clippings—"Band leader rises from humble birth to fame." Shirley Lamont could be as easily traced—an established singer with an agent, a voice, and a name. Even Val had clippings—"Gallant officer shot by a bandit is retired on pension." Horace Forbes was a delegate to the brokers' convention, a three-time customer of the big hotel. Hubbard might have some explaining to do, but he was easily checked—nickel mines near Sudbury, Ontario.

But of Robert Sydenham she knew nothing at all. His story of the freight-car robbery was certainly pat. But was it entirely true? Suppose he had been bribed? Was his memory that good, that on one slight contact he could recognize Shelton Thomas walking into a strange hotel. She wondered if the quiet Detective Sullivan or any of the others were troubled by those thoughts as well.

It was a sparkling day, and noise drifted up from the boardwalk outside. A band could be heard giving its afternoon concert on a nearby pier.

She became aware that her head was throbbing and that if she stared hard enough out the open window at the sheen of sun on the Atlantic Ocean, the pale, popped-out eyes of

Shelton Thomas might stare back at her over the sill. She'd been involved in death before, when her mother had died, and her father. Murder was new. Death could hurt, but, like the pain of childbirth, it was quickly forgotten. Murder was different. It was a shock, like some terrible operation. You thought you were recovering, when, in reality, the aftereffects were only starting.

She saw that Nobby was watching her, and his words of the morning took on a deeper meaning: "I'd like to see both of you get out of this joint just as fast as you can, and stay away until this murder is cleared up." Suppose . . . Had it been his voice on the phone?

She didn't want to suppose. She was trapped in broad daylight in the middle of a bunch of strangers, and one of them had blood on his hands. She was caught fast behind the walls of an open penitentiary through no fault of her own. The thought of her job had become distasteful. She was losing the only man she had ever cared for. She wasn't watching a play. She'd become a principal actor.

"Did I understand you to say that you saw him there, Miss Corbin?" Detective Sullivan was speaking.

"What was that?" Doris raised her head in confusion, aware that everybody's eyes were on her. "I'm afraid I wasn't listening too closely. I guess I'm a little dizzy."

"I'm sorry," Detective Sullivan said. "I'll try not to keep you any longer than possible. We were talking about Mr. Hubbard. You said that you saw him come into the sitting-room of twenty-sixteen last night while you and Mr. Sydenham were there?"

Doris looked at Roy Hubbard. His red, weather-beaten face seemed slightly gray.

"So I was there," Hubbard said. "I told you before. Forbes and I are old friends. He's made investments for me. As a matter of fact, we have a hundred thousand dollars' worth of bonds on this hotel."

Detective Sullivan looked at Forbes and then at Mr. Wilson. Both men nodded.

Hubbard went on, "So Forbes brings this punk Thomas up into my room and gets him into the poker game. Ask any of the others—Denning from Boston— Mitchell from New York—Ailes from West Virginia—"

Val said, "We've checked with all the players, Mr. Hubbard."

"Then I'm sure they told you the same thing. Thomas cleans up nearly four hundred dollars and blows the game."

"You mean he left?" asked Mr. Wilson.

"And how," Hubbard said, "left—blew—got out. Forbes and I went downstair a little later and found him talking to Miss Lamont here, in the cocktail bar. A little later Nobby Clark came in. He and Thomas went off to some gambling house, I believe the Waves Club, together. Forbes went to bed and I went back to the game in my room. We all had a few drinks and got to talking about Thomas, and got sore. Later I got really burned. I went downstairs to the office and told the man at the desk that Thomas had sent me, and I got his key to twenty-sixteen. I thought maybe I could find some crooked dice or marked cards or something if I searched his room."

"Did you search it?" Sullivan asked.

"No," Hubbard said. "I got the idea that somebody was in the bedroom when I went in. Then I was certain of it because I heard the door close in the bedroom. I didn't want to be seen, so I stayed in there for a little while until I figured the coast was clear. I went back down to the office and left Thomas's key and then went back to the game. That was all."

Detective Sullivan scrutinized his notebook. "Sounds quite reasonable," he said.

Horace Forbes sat up straighter in his chair, unbuttoned the two bottom buttons of his vest that were squeezing his stomach, and said in a patient, hurt voice, "It doesn't sound reasonable at all. It makes me look like a fool."

"Oh, please, Mr. Forbes." Nobby raised a protesting hand. "Just because you introduced Shelton Thomas into a poker game and cost the crowd four hundred bucks don't say you're a fool. That's chicken feed to what he's taken out of me in the last three or four years. My trouble is I kept going back for more."

"Did this Mr. Thomas have any hold on you gentlemen?" Detective Sullivan inquired.

"If you call a mild form of blackmail a hold, yes," said Mr. Forbes. "Without exactly revealing my family life I might state in self-defense that I've always had a tendency to play."

"Last night you seemed to have lost it," Shirley put in. "It seems to me I've met you a couple of places before, Mr.

Forbes, when you were on some of your extended business trips. Do you happen to recall one night that you showed me the sights of Kansas City?"

"I remember it," Nobby said. "You started singing baritone, Shirley, and your excuse was that you hadn't had any sleep all night or all day."

Doris leaned slightly forward—that had certainly been a baritone voice on the telephone.

"Now, that's what I'm speaking of," Mr. Forbes said hastily. "Those are some of the little peccadillos that my better nature gets me into on conventions once in a while. Those are the incidents that I try very hard not to remember and that it seems Mr. Shelton Thomas had great ability to recall."

"He was really an enterprising sort of fellow," Nobby said, staring at the ceiling and speaking to no one. "He offered me an enlarged photograph of you and Shirley taken in a clip joint that he thought I might use in advertising the band."

"I have a mortgage and loan company," Forbes explained, "and a private bank in Detroit. Thomas found out that my wife, who's really very fond of me, put in most of the money to start it. The things Shelton Thomas remembered, he wasn't above using to cement lasting friendship."

"Then he really was a gambler," Sullivan remarked.

Nobby grinned. "I'd scarcely call it that. Would you, Mr. Hubbard? Let's say he had a knack of collecting information and using that information to find out where games of chance were going on."

"Yes," Forbes agreed moodily. "You might add that he took about as many chances as an investment broker. He seemed to have an uncanny knack of knowing where the cards were going to fall."

"Do you think that story he gave Doris Corbin on the newsstand was true?" Val asked. "He said he'd had only about one hundred bucks to get here from Montreal—fifty American and fifty Canadian—and on the train he'd lost the fifty American playing bridge."

"It's probably true," said Forbes. "He was a resident of Canada and that's all they're allowed to bring in—or rather out of the country. Actually, all I've ever known about him is that he had a real-estate business in Montreal."

"There was a lot more than four hundred dollars in his

clothes last night," Val said. "About nine hundred and twenty, wasn't it, Sullivan?"

Sullivan looked at his notes and nodded. "Nine hundred and twenty-three dollars and seventy-five cents American and forty-eight dollars and fifty cents Canadian."

"Five hundred of the American was mine," Forbes said. "He borrowed it to get in the game upstairs and gave me an I.O.U."

"I'll give you ten bucks for it," Nobby laughed.

Detective Sullivan looked as though he objected to the levity. "What we're getting at is this: The body was found about half-past two." He looked at Val. "That's correct, isn't it?"

"Well, a few minutes later." Val pulled a report sheet toward him on the desk. "The actual time was two forty-one. I turn in one of these reports for the twenty-four hours of each day."

"Officer Toohey was on his way to bed," Sullivan explained, "when the watchmen's lights turned on. They're controlled by the switchboard operator in the telephone-room." He turned to Mr. Wilson. "What is the exact idea of those lights, if you don't mind?"

"Well, it's sort of an alarm," Wilson said. "The operator can use it in the case of fire or some guest reporting trouble. There's one in every hall of every wing. Any watchman seeing them lit goes immediately to the nearest phone."

Val nodded agreement. "I was just going into my room to turn in when the light in my hall went on. Nellie, the night operator, had recognized Doris's voice and told me she'd called from the women's locker-room but had hung up the phone. I beat it down there as fast as I could, and found Doris on the floor and Thomas in the box."

"Let's get on with it," Nobby said. "I have to start at seven and play to twelve, and quit here and play till five at an outside ball. Thomas went to the Waves Club with me last night and left at a quarter of one, higher than a balloon. We had quite an argument, too. He wanted a steam bath or an electric cabinet, or something, and I told him where to find one. I ran out of cash and left the Waves at two. If Doris found him while the murderer was still in there Thomas must have been killed about twenty past two. I was in bed. Forbes was in bed. Bob was in bed. Shirley was in bed. And Hubbard should have been. He's the

only one of us who has an alibi—lots of alibis, Denning, Mitchell, Ailes, and a couple of others."

"I prefer to conduct this investigation myself," Detective Sullivan said, "although what Mr. Clark has stated seems to be quite true."

"Drive on, conductor, and just call me Nobby." Nobby slid down in the settee and closed his eyes. "I was only trying to make things easier for you."

"Well, it's been summed up very neatly," Sullivan said, after mature consultation with his notebook.

"I'll add one more thing," Nobby said, without opening his eyes. "You might check up on the Waves Club and that guy who runs it. I've been out with Thomas before in other towns. I know how he plays. He didn't go there to gamble last night. He went to look the place over. I think he's got a piece of it."

"Piece of it?" Sullivan was newly interested.

"Yes," said Nobby, "a chunk, a slice, a bite. I think he's a part owner, from the way he ordered people around and sized things up and asked questions."

Horace Forbes straightened up in his chair again. "It takes cash to buy into a gambling house," he said. "Thomas was a resident of Canada. There are heavy penalties for exporting funds into the United States without permission; a stiff fine and imprisonment, and the money found on his person might be confiscated by the Canadian authorities. I don't think they'd give Mr. Thomas permission to bring in money to invest in a gambling house under any circumstances. If Nobby Clark's right, then Thomas gave that money to somebody to bring into this country to invest for him. Find the person he gave it to and you'll find out who killed him. You see, under the Canadian law, if Thomas gave that money to someone, and that person brought it into the United States, Thomas could never recover. He'd be in a position where all he could do is ask for it without being able to sue."

"Quite a spot," said Nobby, with his eyes still closed. "To buy in part of a joint like the Waves would take an awful lot of dough."

There wasn't much more before the meeting was finished. Mr. Wilson took the trouble to give Doris a crisp, official word of thanks for her memory and discreet observations. It made her headache feel just a little better and left her with a tiny glow.

Sullivan asked her if she

felt up to a walk on the boardwalk with him. Feeling that he had something to tell her, she decided to go.

"I have to get a coat," she told him.

He nodded agreement, and said, "I'll meet you at the downstairs entrance to the boardwalk."

Coming out from her room through the passage, as she passed the locker-rooms she saw the first sign of official activity. A uniformed policeman was sitting inside the entrance to the men's lockers, discreetly screened from view.

On the boardwalk Sullivan took her arm and they walked some distance in silence. The feeling of confinement and of being strictly guarded that had oppressed her dropped away when her back was turned to the hotel. She'd wrapped a scarf around her head to hide the disfiguring patch of adhesive. She pulled her coat closer about her and started savoring the keen salt air.

"You looked as though you needed some air," Sullivan said. "Besides, I wanted to tell you that we've been through everybody's room in any way remotely connected with this thing and have found no bathrobe that might answer your description. I have two men checking all the laundries right now to see if such a robe might have been sent out from the hotel."

"There weren't any fingerprints, were there?" Doris felt that she was expected to say something, and drew the question out of her mystery lore.

Sullivan smiled. "We've taken all we could on the cabinet and in the locker-rooms and photographed everything. It isn't quite as easy as it looks to make up a case that will send a murderer to the electric chair. Up to the moment, we have found nothing anywhere in the Waverly-Lansing that really shouldn't be there. Now, look; take my advice and relax. You've been drawn into it pretty tightly because, I know, you're fond of young Sydenham. It may reassure you a little if I tell you that the police also think he's quite a guy. Now, do take half an hour's ride with me and forget such things as murders and criminals. Stay away from the hotel for a while." Without waiting for agreement, he signaled a double rolling chair.

He left in an hour and at Doris's request dropped her off some distance down the boardwalk. It was past four and Bob was already on duty.

While she felt a touch of guilt at doubling Anna Pelty's long trick at the stand, she'd done as much for Anna before and would do it again. She decided to take Sullivan's advice and to eat dinner out and see a movie.

Yet even watching the picture, she was unpleasantly aware that not until she knew who had killed Shelton Thomas could she cut that thin, strong elastic cord which kept pulling her back toward the Waverly-Lansing Hotel.

It was after ten when she got back in, using the entrance by the rolling chairs. The policeman on the lockerrooms had gone. She went on through the Nile-green tunnel, passing the kitchens, to her bedroom, and found Miss Donaldson reading there. The room was cloying with the scent of Nobby's flowers.

"Into bed and to sleep," Miss Donaldson said. "I'm giving you a pill."

"If you'll just take those flowers out with you I don't think I'll need it," Doris told her. She was seized with an unaccountable fatigue as though she'd just gotten up from a week of illness. "I feel rotten," she admitted.

"And look the same." Miss Donaldson eyed her keenly. "You still need a pill." She waited until Doris got in bed, then brought her water and a capsule and tucked her in. "Good night, Miss Pinkerton. Quit playing detective. This man's death is good riddance. In six months nobody will care."

Miss Donaldson switched off the lights and left with the flowers, giving entrance to the purple polyp that promptly appeared on the ceiling. For half an hour Doris lay on her back waiting for the pill to work. The electric clock grew louder. Water dripped in the bathroom. She shut it off and got back in bed, closing her eyes with force. That only made the gyrations of the colors and the purple polyp became noisy. It was easier just to open her eyes and stare.

"Of course, they'd searched Bob's room trying to find the robe," she thought. They'd searched everybody's, including hers. She'd seen where things had been disturbed as soon as she had come in. Then, where had the murderer put it? "That bathrobe will hang him," Val had said. "People have been known to have more than one bathrobe. Sometimes they have two." There had been a thousand dollars in Canadian money planted in Bob's desk drawer. Suppose that bathrobe—

Well, she could identify it if she saw it, and she had to know. Bob's room was not far down the hall and he never locked it.

She got up, put on her dressing gown and slippers, then stood for a moment clutching at the foot of her bed, a little dizzy. When her head had cleared she went out into the hall and walked to Bob's room without meeting anyone.

The door was unlocked. She went in and shut it behind her. She turned on the lights and started with the closet. Bob's regular white-toweling bathrobe that she knew so well was on a hanger. She brushed suits aside and looked at the hooks in the back of the closet. Nothing. There were shoes on the floor and bedroom slippers, and in the back of the closet a waterproof beach bag that Bob had used all summer. She zipped it open and took out two colored Turkish towels. Folded on the bottom was something else. It took a lot of strength to carry the bag out into the room and hold it close to the floor lamp's glow.

She hadn't the courage to touch it, for although it still looked clean and white, she knew there was blood on it. The bathrobe, and the sash that killed Shelton Thomas, were undoubtedly there.

She replaced the colored towels over the robe, zipped up the bag, and put it back in the closet.

Someone would spring the trap pretty soon. She sat at Bob's desk and tried to reach Sullivan by phone. He wasn't at police headquarters, wasn't home. She tried to get Val. He wasn't in his office and wasn't in his room. She asked the operator, whom she knew, to get him to call her in Bob's room, and please not to turn on the watchmen's lights; it was something personal and not that important.

After ten rigid minutes in a chair at the desk, she heard the telephone ring. It was Val. With tumbling-out words she told him what she'd discovered.

"Now, listen to me, Doris." Val put into his words every bit of intensity he could muster. "I told you you were foolish before—now you've gone completely mad. We know that bathrobe's there, and so does the killer. That's what it was put there for. You're being watched right now. Good lord above, Doris, haven't you any brains at all?" His voice went down into a tone of desperation. "Get out of that room before you get yourself killed and ruin

everything."

"What should I do, Val?" she asked him feebly.

"Get out of there, right now! And keep as far away from there as you can. I'm telling you you're in danger. Do you think the guy was kidding you this morning when he made that telephone call? You might be shot through the window right where you're sitting. *Get out of that room right now!*"

"I have the lights on, Val—"

"Do as I say!" he said wildly. "Get out of there right now." He hung up the phone.

It seemed easier to get out of the room with the desk light on, so she left it lit. Outside of Bob's door she stood frozen. Shirley Lamont had just stepped out of Doris's own room a few doors down the hall.

"Oh, there you are," Shirley said. Doris stood staring at Shirley's gorgeous white sequin gown. Shirley came closer, staring at Doris with a troubled frown. "You look like you'd just discovered three more dead men." She pointed at Bob's door. "Is Bob in there?"

"No," Doris said. "No, he's not in there. I guess he's still on duty. I got nervous in my own room. I didn't realize it was so early."

"You're getting into bed, and I'm giving you a sleeping pill." Shirley took Doris by the arm with a grip surprisingly firm and led her to her room.

"You're a little late," Doris said inside. "Miss Donaldson already gave me a pill."

"Well, get to bed." Shirley started to make herself comfortable. "I'm going to sit here with you until Bob gets off at twelve. I have to stay up anyway. I'm singing at one for Nobby at some ball."

"There isn't any use in my going to bed," Doris told her. "My nerves are shot."

"Look," Shirley said, still staring; "do you know what they do to aviators when their nerves are shot when they crash in a plane? They make them get back in right away and try another flight. That's what I'm going to do to you. You're about to have a cabinet. I'm going down to the locker-room and get it out and wheel it here down the hall."

At Shirley's words the same strange sense of awareness that had frightened Doris the night before returned to plague her. Once again she was quite conscious of that abnormally k e e n hearing which reached way out to the

outside world and pulled little noises near her. The ugly certainty that someone stood outside on the lawn trying to peer through the slats of the Venetian blinds kept her eyes away from the window, kept them fixed on Shirley and the door to the hall.

"Keep as far away from there as you can," Val had said not five minutes before.

"It would crack me completely to have you bring that cabinet here," Doris said. "Please don't try to argue. I'm not going to bar myself from any place for the rest of my life on account of my own foolish weakness. I'll take a cabinet, but I'll take it down in the locker-room if you'll come with me.

Shirley stared at her for a moment. "I don't know whether you're trying to test my nerves or your own. But either way I'll call your bluff. It is, if you'll pardon the expression, your funeral." She stood up. "Let us proceed to the embalming-room. I'd feel more relaxed if I'd brought my machine gun."

They met Tom, the night watchman, in the hall. Shirley said, "There's quite a run on the electric cabinet, Tom. Did you just come from there?"

"Yes, ma'am." The old man's face was a study.

"Is the coast all clear?"

"If you mean, is there anyone in there," said Tom, "no, ma'am. I even looked in the ladies' side. There's nobody there at all."

"Well, don't look in again for half an hour," Shirley told him. "Doris, here, feels that she simply can't sleep until she gets back in that cozy cabinet again. It's empty, isn't it? I mean, they moved out Shelton Thomas?"

"Oh, yes, miss," the watchman said. "They took him out this morning. I just looked in. There's nobody there at all." He walked off slowly, shaking his head.

Doris said, "You sure make things cheerful."

"Get in your oven and bake yourself and go to sleep," Shirley told her. "It wasn't my idea coming down to this place. I merely offered to wheel the cabinet to your bedroom."

She had been wise, Doris knew, when she got there. The lights blazed on and dispelled a lot of shadows in the room and in her mind. Doris stripped and got in the cabinet, and Shirley wet a towel with cold water and wrapped it gently around her injured head, as the attendant used to do. The heat crept in, relaxing her aching arms and legs, stroking and softening

every tensed-up muscle. It kept her mind away from Thomas, away from the bathrobe, away from Bob.

She concentrated on Shirley's beauty as the singer sat on the desk chair smoking. She let her hearing come back to normal, refusing to listen to the beating sound of the ocean, refusing to dwell on the silly idea that she had ever listened to footsteps passing outside in the hall. Then, before she knew it, Shirley was leaving.

"I'll get you a bath rug to use when you take your shower," Shirley said. "It'll put you to sleep. It always does me. It's down in my room."

She mustn't break. She couldn't scream, "Don't leave me alone!" She couldn't cry out, "Help, oh, help! I'm not as brave as I thought I was." She could only sit in that death chair waiting.

Then her eyes fixed on the screen that shielded the lavatories, the slatted wooden screen with its legs screwed to the floor and the space at the bottom unscreened. Two feet had come into view, and she knew the shoes, although the shoes were the only things she could see.

Her brain whirled around and stopped in a slot. There wasn't any plant in Bob Sydenham's room. She doubted if any thousand dollars had even been planted in his drawer. There was just complete chaos, with life and a universe whirling down inside it. She was the sucker who had been played along for a summer's entertainment:

It's nice to have known you, Doris, dear. I tried to tell you to keep out of this but you stuck your curious little nose in. That wasn't a plant in London. That was a thousand bucks I got from Shelton Thomas. If they ever check those laundry marks, which they never will, they'll find that one of my bathrobes wasn't just plain toweling. There was an older one you never saw. You might have lived if you hadn't gone in my room tonight and if you hadn't seen the sash around the neck of Shelton Thomas.

—Would he tell her all that before he killed her?

She couldn't make her mind be still. The fleeting wild, chaotic thoughts had taken full posession now. She couldn't think. She could just sit still and feel the all-consuming heat and watch the shoes she knew so well standing there so quietly beneath the lavatory screen.

Then she remembered the entrance through the attendant's office, and her hearing

grew acute again. One wild thought that she still might have a chance crept in. The door to that office was back of her as the cabinet was placed tonight, and in the office she heard the scrape of a chair as it was touched in the dark and, following the scrape, a single hopeful, stealthy footfall.

Then Bob stepped out to face her for in back of the lavatory screen. There was death in his face and death in the gun that came from the right-hand pocket of his white Tuxedo.

"Don't move," he said.

He pointed the pistol straight at her and fired. Something cracked inside her head and inside her heart. Close behind her someone swore. She turned her head away from the flame as it spurted out of the murderous pistol.

Down the hall she heard Shirley scream. Then a hand clutched weakly at her toweled head and an arm slid down by the cabinet. This time no one hit her. She only fainted, but before she blacked out there was that same split second of consciousness, bright and vivid, that she'd had the night before. In that split second she had the time to see where the bullet from Bob's gun had smashed Val Toohey's shoulder and she had time to see Val Toohey fall. . . .

"You lied to me," Doris said. "How can I marry a man who lied to me?"

"I didn't," Bob said hotly. "The story I told you about that thousand-dollar frame-up in London was true—only, it didn't happen to me. Part of my job has been to clear that kid's name. Besides, I didn't tell it to you. I told it to Val."

Doris was eating breakfast in bed again, Bob beside her on a chair.

"You still lied." Doris brushed away a tear. "You didn't have to cook up any song and dance for me."

"For Pete's sake, think about it," Bob said. "I've been here all summer working back of the desk, but actually watching and checking Toohey, which isn't his name. He's an ex-cop, bounced for graft from the force of a Western city. He took the name and identity of his cousin, a good cop, who was retired with a pension for valor in Philadelphia a long time ago."

"What *is* his name?" She wanted to know.

"Stranahan. He was traced here by the Canadian police, who had his description, but nothing else. They wanted

evidence against him for robbery and murder. They were also anxious to locate over two hundred thousand dollars, the proceeds of a series of robberies that they figured Val had smuggled out of Canada. In addition, they wanted definite proof that he was tied up with a partner still in Canada. He had gotten his job here on the strength of the Toohey clippings, the ones that so impressed you. I got his fingerprints and traced his real identity through the F.B.I.

"You're certainly brilliant," Doris said. "You can ask Mr. Wilson for Val's job now—or is that why you shot him?"

"I shot him to save your pretty neck," Bob said. "I'm beginning to wonder why. Val wasn't suspicious and the net was closing. The police thought he was safer here than any place, and so did he. I had to give Val a story, and fast, when you woke me up and told me I'd checked Thomas in without a reservation. I'd been through Toohey's mail and knew Thomas was coming — 'to check on some investments,' he wrote. We knew they'd worked together for a long time, but our only description of Thomas was those pale eyes. Months of work was lost if Toohey grew suspicious of me — or anything."

"So you told me that lie that you were that poor abused pharmacist — and poor fish Doris believed it."

"Yes, darling," Bob said as he took her tray. He returned to his chair and eyed her with approval.

She felt herself coloring, and pulled the covers higher about her. "What did he kill Thomas for?"

"Fear and money," Bob said. "Thomas had a piece of the Waves. Nobby tipped us that yesterday. Thomas did not know until he arrived here that Val had bought into the club with the Thomas-Toohey smuggled-in money. Val got greedy and planned to keep it all. The police think the Waves is only one of a number of joints they've bought into. How many more exist, the police don't know, but Val will talk to beat the chair." He paused to light a cigarette and went on, "Val knew police work. His best hide-out in the world was in a good hotel. He was a good house dick, too, but he's a dangerous crook and a killer. . . . . This hasn't been easy for me, darling. I love you. I know it's been doubly hard for you."

Doris lay back silent against the pillows. She was hurt,

and she had been terribly frightened, but of one thing she was certain: She loved Bob, too. "That bathrobe I found in your room last night—I thought it had been planted on you."

"Val stuck it in an outgoing laundry bag that belonged to a member of Nobby's band," Bob explained. "The bag was standing in the hall waiting to be picked up yesterday morning. Val had only a few minutes to dispose of the robe before seeing Sullivan. And then later you told Val you had seen and could identify the sash used by the killer. You scared him so with that, that he took a chance on that threatening telephone call. And it wasn't an impersonation of a desperate killer, it was the real thing. Sullivan's men picked up the robe at the laundry—they were after any and all white bathrobes coming from this hotel. The laundry mark on it was Val's. It was brought here after I went on duty for you to identify, but you were out. The police left it with me to show you when you came in, but unfortunately I didn't see you."

"I came in the entrance by the locker-rooms," Doris told him.

"I know that now." He spoke very soberly. "Last night it made things touch and go. You found the robe and called Val. He had to try to get you, and fast—his robe plus your identification would send him to the chair. Luckily, I was watching him closely, and followed him down to the locker-room."

"I'm still confused, Bob," Doris said. "Why did Sullivan turn that bathrobe over to you and let it out of the care of the police?"

"It wasn't out of the police department's care," Bob said. "It was merely transferred in emergency from one department to another. The police learned about Val's record as soon as they got here. But they had to track him down, because merely a record and suspicion wouldn't send him to the chair. You and the sash were the proof that was needed. . . . I have to go back to Canada, now that the Toohey-Thomas gang is busted. Are you going to be satisfied to marry me and live up there?"

Doris sat up straight. "You mean you're getting another job up there?"

"I mean I have another job up there."

"Listen," Doris said; "if you'll tell me what your real name is and what your actual business is, I think I'll

marry you, Bob, and go anywhere. You've grown so mysterious since the night before last that I don't even know what to call you."

"Your name will be Mrs. Robert Sydenham," Bob told her, and sealed it with a satisfying kiss. With his arms still around her, he said, "When you're not calling me "darling,' you might just call me 'Sergeant.' I'm here on detached undercover duty. I don't wear a red tunic and I haven't got a horse, but I really am Sergeant Robert Sydenham of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police."

"Oh, no!" Doris laughed in relief. "I knew in my heart I was smarter than you." She kissed him again. "I'm the one who got my man!"

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the case of the calm murderer

by J. Francis McComas

A MURDER case is a drama of unreason; it unfolds in a mad atmosphere of perverse illogic. So it was with the Abbott case. The leads in that monstrous play of kidnaping and murder all played their parts with such utter lack of recognizable good sense that the detached observer was (and still is) totally confounded. But the behavior of none of the cast, including that of the murderer himself, was as bewildering, as hopelessly confusing, as that of the murderer's wife . . .

On the sunny afternoon of April 28, 1955, Stephanie Bryan, a fourteen-year-old Berkeley schoolgirl, disappeared. This in itself was remarkable, for Stephanie was almost abnormally shy, not exceptionally pretty, though attractive enough—her complexion marred by adolescent acne. She was completely obedient to the rather strict discipline exercised by her parents, Dr. and Mrs. Charles S. Bryan, Jr. In short, Stephanie was no wild teen-ager, liable to run away from home for any of the various rea-

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This is a departure. We normally do not run two true-crime articles in the same issue, but we felt you would be as interested as we were in J. Francis McComas' classic report on the controversial Case of the Calm Murderer. The author, a distinguished writer and editor in this field, will be remembered for his THE MAN WHO CONFESSED TOO OFTEN, (SMM, May, '64). H.S.S.

sons that teen-agers, male or female, do leave the family circle.

Stephanie's last known movements were easily traced. She started home from her junior high school, accompanied by a girl friend. The two borrowed a couple of books from the public library, bought a paperback on parakeets from a pet store, stopped in at a doughnut shop for something to eat, then headed for home. The girl friend left Stephanie at the entrance to Berkeley's Hotel Claremont. The Claremont is a rambling, turreted vestige of the past, with several acres of beautifully landscaped grounds at the foot of the hills that ring Berkeley. Stephanie's homeward path was a shortcut through these grounds. She never arrived there.

Berkeley is a university town, conservative, famous for its "Vollmer-trained" police. The furore over Stephanie's absence was great. The Claremont grounds were combed. The hills above the hotel were searched, bush by bush. The area behind them (the Contra Costa county suburban districts) was meticulously examined. A total of eight persons (certainly a few of whom just wanted to get in on the act) reported seeing a man in a car struggling with a girl. The car was either parked alongside the freeway that leads from Berkeley to Contra Costa county or in motion on the freeway, depending upon your witness. There was a ransom call to the distraught Dr. Bryan from a gentleman who turned out to be a prematurely released mental patient.

Then, on May 10, an electrician picked up Stephanie's French textbook in Franklin Canyon, in Contra Costa county.

And there the matter rested until July 15, 1955, when the murderer's wife did what to many is still wholly inexplicable. Picture to yourself a quiet evening in a suburban household in Alameda, one of the three cities that, with Oakland and Berkeley, ring the east shore of the San Francisco Bay. It is the neat, white home of Burton W. Abbott, 27, a post-tubercular student of accounting at the University of California in Berkeley. (He has a disabled veteran's pension.) Abbott is cooking steak in the kitchen; present at the dinner will be: his mother, Elsie; his very pretty 32-year-old wife, Georgia; Otto Dezman, burly husband of Georgia's em-

ployer, beauty parlor owner Leona Dezman. Otto and Burton Abbott, known as "Bud" to friends and family, plan to play chess later. Georgia is scheduled to take part in some amateur theatricals.* So, while Abbott is performing the culinary chores, she goes down to the basement of the home—the Californians' equivalent to the Easterners' attic as a store-all—to look for potential costume material. There is a box containing cartons of old clothes, the general junk that a family discards but can't bring itself to throw away. Georgia paws through this . . . and discovers an unfamiliar red leather handbag. She opens the purse and finds a wallet. Georgia Abbott opens the wallet.

And finds: Stephanie Bryan's identification card; a transit company identification card for Stephanie Bryan (for reduced rate on buses to schools); pictures of Stephanie's schoolmates; an unfinished letter from the girl to a friend in Dartmouth, Mass., where the Bryans formerly lived. It was almost as if she had found the sleeping-garment of the Lindbergh baby!

The ever-to-be unanswered question is — what should Georgia Abbott have done then? Close observers of the case have long contended that there were but two *reasonable courses* open to her. One: if perfect confidence existed between her and "Bud" she should have waited until they were *alone*, showed him the exhibit, and asked *him* to decide their proper procedure. Or two: if—as has been hinted before, during and long after the trial—a darkness lay between them—she might have said, in effect: "Here is incontrovertible evidence that you knew that missing girl. If you did it, if you killed her, write a confession and then take an overdose of sleeping pills. Otherwise, I go to the police right now."

Remember, the billfold and the purse were the intimate property of a girl whose disappearance had been front-page news for months. They could not have been placed in the Abbott basement by someone without criminal knowledge of Stephanie Bryan's kidnaping. That someone was almost certainly one of three: Elsie Abbott, Georgia, or Burton.

Such were the *reasonable* courses open to Georgia. But as I said, murder cases are

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*The title of her play is lost in the mists of the case. Just as a pleasing footnote, the researcher would like to know what it was!

dramas of unreason; who connected with them follows reasonable courses? Georgia Abbott chose neither of these alternatives. Nor did she choose one of others that may have occurred to the reader, that of remaining silent with or without destroying the evidence she had uncovered. (While unethical, even criminal, such actions would have been understandably protective.) Rather, she rushed upstairs and, displaying her findings, cried out, "Isn't this the girl who disappeared?" And so sent her husband to the gas chamber.

Some say Dezman called the police. Georgia said, "It was Bud, not Otto Dezman, who told me to phone the police. . ." At any rate, the law was summoned. Burton Abbott seemed bewildered, but not frightened. After an officer had come and gone, Abbott and Dezman played chess for hours. "Bud" seemed mildly curious about his wife's find—they all talked it over between games—but even Dezman later admitted there was nothing guilty, or even worried in Abbott's demeanor.

The next day a host of police descended upon the Abbott home and proceeded to dig up the loose, sandy soil of the basement. (Upstairs, Burton quietly worked a crossword puzzle.) It was a fruitful quest. The officers found Stephanie's schoolbooks, the two library books, the paperback on parakeets, her brassiere and her glasses. The Abbotts, questioned, knew nothing; their garage had been used as a polling place the previous May. Anyone voting had easy access to the basement, they claimed. "Bud" Abbott talked freely to the Alamada county* district attorney and to the Berkeley police. He took a lie detector test in Berkeley, the results of which were later dubbed "inconclusive."

Next, it was learned that the Abbotts had a weekend cabin in the Trinity Mountains, a ruggedly beautiful range a few hundred miles north of the Bay Area. So a San Francisco newspaperman and a Trinity county "outdoorsman" took the latter's two dogs to the cabin area. The dogs led the two men up a hill across the road from the Abbott cabin to a shallow grave under a pine tree. Stephanie was found at last. Her pitiful corpse was badly decomposed, but it was easy to see that she had been savagely bludgeoned

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*Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda are all in Alameda county. Oakland is the county seat.

on the head. Her panties were tied loosely around her neck. They had been used either to strangle or gag her. It was impossible to ascertain if she had been sexually assaulted.

Burton W. Abbott was promptly arrested, indicted by the grand jury on charges of kidnaping and murder, and eventually stood his trial.

"Bud" Abbott is nearly as puzzling as his wife. For there were really two Abbotts. The one, frail, weighing not more than 130 pounds, tuberculous, with one lung and five ribs removed as a result of the disease. Physically, he seemed incapable of the strenuous crime. Georgia Abbott stoutly averred that "Bud is gentle and kind and good. No woman could ask any more in a husband and I am not easy to live with." She buttressed this avowal with astrology. "I am Leo-born. I am the lion. He is an Aquarius, the gentle one." His brother Mark, the burly antithesis of Burton, said that "Bud was always a gentle kid . . . He was easy-going and never tempery." Abbott's only physical recreation was an occasional trip to the mountain cabin for fishing.

The other Abbott, as described by the prosecution: "a constitutional psychopath" with "an infantile personality compatible with this sort of crime." His calmness was not, the D.A. claimed, due to stoicism or modesty, but to a frigid cynicism. Nor was "Bud" Abbott as physically weak as was argued; he had tried to reenter a veterans' hospital and the examining physicians found his condition "to be almost that of a non-tuberculous male." And Mark Abbott admitted before the grand jury that his brother was "able to participate in all normal outdoor pursuits."

There you have it. On the one hand, a sick veteran, a quiet student of accounting, with a personable wife and a little boy, to both of whom he was devoted. On the other hand, a cynical psychopath, a sexual aberrant, a vicious, egotistical, cold killer, who slew for kicks; one whose illness was all pretense, one who was able to snatch a girl in broad daylight, probably knock her unconscious in his car, drive her to his lonely mountain cabin, climb a rugged hillside and, panting in the thin mountain air, dig a grave and toss the poor girl's bludgeoned corpse in it.

(But why, oh why, take her most intimate belongings back home with him and bury them in his own basement?)

Abbott's trial started No-

vember 7, 1955 in Oakland. It ended Wednesday, January 25, 1956 and was certainly the most sensational, as well as the longest murder trial in Alameda county history. Abbott was defended by Stanley Whitney, well-known in Alameda political and legal circles, and Harold Hove, a former agent of the FBI. The prosecution was personally handled by District Attorney J. Frank Coakley, one-time orchestra leader and a bullying D.A. of the old school. Curiously enough, Coakley, while stating in his opening address to the jury that "we expect to find him [Abbott] guilty as charged," did not specifically ask for the death penalty.

It was a case based purely on circumstantial evidence. Classically, a prosecution is in clover if it can establish motive, means and opportunity. Abbott offered an alibi that attempted to show that, because he was out of town, on his way to the mountain cabin, at the time of Stephanie's disappearance, he certainly didn't have the opportnuity. (More of that later.) The means aspect was unimportant; anyone could have bludgeoned Stephanie to death with any "blunt instrument." The motive was never resolved.

And here we come to yet another aspect that sets the Abbott case apart from other classics of murder. There was absolutely *no* relationship between murderer and murderee. There was an attempt, shaky in its result, by the prosecution to prove that Abbott had seen Stephanie several times in the doughnut shop on Telegraph Avenue, in Berkeley, a block from her school, where she had stopped the last afternoon of her life. The prosecution contended, weakly enough, that, after long observation of the girl, Abbott had chosen Stephanie as his victim for a rape attempt. The defense countered, strongly enough, that Abbott had never, to his knowledge, seen Stephanie.

Either way, Stephanie Bryan was an unlucky accident.

The defense made no attempt to explain either the presence of Stephanie's things in the Abbott basement or the presence of her body in a grave so near the Abbott mountain cabin. Undoubtedly, both Whitney and Hove often wished these incontrovertible facts would just go away. (The defense did hint that Otto Dezman was the guilty man and had planted Stephanie's belongings to frame Abbott. The hint was ignored.) Abbott claimed a very simple alibi—that he had driven from

Alameda up to the Trinity mountains on the *morning* of April 28 for the opening of the fishing season. Obviously, he could not have been anywhere near the East Bay region in the *afternoon*, when Stephanie disappeared. Moreover, he had stopped en route at the State Land Office, in Sacramento, in the afternoon of the 28th. Abbott had, he averred, also stopped en route at restaurants in Corning, a town in the Sacramento Valley, and at Wildwood, near the cabin. On April 29 he had spent nine hours in the Wildwood restaurant, drinking and talking with a University of Chicago graduate who testified that Abbott did not become drunk and expressed nothing that was "neurotic, anti-social or vicious."

We may disregard the cloud of prosecution witnesses who "saw a girl struggling with a man in a car"—if so, why didn't they do something about it? Still, Coakley and his cohorts did manage to discredit the alibi pretty thoroughly; restaurant owners either denied Abbott's visits or were unsure of the dates. But the prosecution crushed the alibi attempt with the testimony of Leona Dezman, wife of Otto and Georgia Abbott's former employer. Mrs. Dezman stated flatly that Burton Abbott had visited his wife in the Dezman beauty parlor at 2:30 p.m. on April 28.

The prosecution clincher was the celebrated Dr. Paul L. Kirk, professor of criminology at the University of California. Dr. Kirk had subjected Abbott's car to exhaustive laboratory tests. He testified to matching hair and fibers found in the car to Stephanie's hair and garments. Moreover, he had matched samples of the dirt from Abbott's boots to samples of soil nine inches deep in Stephanie's grave.

Finally, Abbott took the stand in his own defense. And, as in the case of several celebrated murderers, this was a mistake. For the inhumanly calm, icily polite Burton W. Abbott did not make a good impression on the jury. One juror said, ". . . we felt Burton Abbott should have shown more emotion on the witness stand—after all, it was his life." From post-verdict interviews with jurors it seemed that whenever there was a choice between believing Abbott or a contradictory witness, the jury chose to believe the witness. The foreman of the jury, calling "Bud" Abbott a "mad dog that has to be

put out of the way," was deeply influenced by Abbott's "laughing on the stand" in reference to his claimed trip to Sacramento. The thunderous Coakley managed to trap Abbott in small lies, but he couldn't shake the defendant's composure. Which was, paradoxically, probably too bad for Abbott.

In these same post-verdict interviews with the press, jurors politely refused to discuss Georgia Abbott's testimony, especially her sworn statement that it was not the 28th that Abbott had visited her in the beauty parlor, but another date.

A significant factor in the trial was the failure of the defense to put on the stand any character witnesses for Abbott, although these were readily available. Such a procedure allows the prosecution both an opportunity to challenge such witnesses and *to place rebuttal witnesses in evidence*. The defense move thus prevented the prosecution from offering evidence to the oft-hinted fact that Abbott had a police record in Alameda as a sexual offender.

The jury was out for seven days, another county record. Jurors said later that most of that time was taken in conscientious consideration of the complex evidence, that there was no serious division of opinion among them at any time. Burton W. Abbott was found guilty of first degree murder and kidnapping and sentenced to death on both counts.

The aficionado of the case will always wonder what went through Georgia Abbott's mind when she heard her husband ordered to the gas chamber at San Quentin Prison.

"Bud" Abbott went to Condemned Row in San Quentin, where he remained until March 15, 1957, a model prisoner. His distraught family dismissed Counselors Hove and Whitney and retained Leo Sullivan, an Oakland Bill Fallon, and George Davis, San Francisco's famed defender of "lost causes." An estrangement developed between Abbott's wife, Georgia, and his mother and brother, Mrs. Elsie Abbott and Mark Abbott.

The California Supreme Court denied Abbott's automatic appeal. Sullivan and Davis futilely sought a review by this high court. They appealed to various federal courts in vain. United States Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas denied a stay of execution on March 13, 1957, two days before Abbott's date with death. On that same

day, the then Attorney-General Edmund G. (Pat) Brown, now California's governor and an outspoken foe of capital punishment, wired the individual justices of the state supreme court, asking them to reject any appeal from Abbott. California Governor Goodwin J. Knight repeated his announcement that he would not intervene in the Abbott case.

On March 14, 1957, "Bud" Abbott said his last goodbyes to his family. Georgia Abbott, driven to the prison by a sister, spent an hour, the maximum amount of time permitted, with her doomed husband. Abbott's mother and brother drove up to the prison gates as Georgia was leaving. The two groups did not exchange greetings. After seeing her son, Elsie Abbott, surely as pathetic an innocent bystander in the case as the murdered Stephanie's parents, broke down. "He's innocent!" she wept. "I know he's innocent!" The poor woman retained her faith in her "baby" to the bitter end. She made a desperate 45-minute phone call later in the day to one of Governor Knight's secretaries, frantically pleading for any kind of move that would prolong the life of her younger son. Her plea was in vain.

That afternoon Abbott, as calm as ever, was taken from Condemned Row down to a holding cell adjourning the gas chamber itself. He made a hearty "last supper" of prawns, ravioli and chocolate cake. He spent the evening chatting with the warden, a prison chaplain, and his guards. He went to sleep at 1:20 a.m. At 6:30 a.m. he awakened, jested with his guards, and ate the huge breakfast he had ordered: ham, bacon, scrambled eggs and hash-brown potatoes, orange juice, tomato juice and coffee.

Burton W. Abbott was scheduled to die at 10:00 a.m., the customary hour for executions in San Quentin. But this twisted, strangely mixed-up case ended as weirdly as it began.

That morning Governor Knight's official program called for his inspection of an airplane carrier in San Francisco Bay. From this fact stems an inordinate amount of confusion. The morning of an execution an open wire is maintained between the death chamber and the governor's office in Sacramento. But this morning the only means of communication with the governor was by ship-to-shore radio telephone. As Davis and Sullivan discovered to Abbott's

cost. To put it briefly, Knight ordered two stays for Abbott, one of an hour, one for fifteen minutes, to allow Davis to establish a federal question before the California Supreme Court. The state court denied the plea, Davis phoned the carrier at 10:52 a.m., but the line was busy and Davis couldn't get to Knight until 11:12 a.m.

Abbott was led into the gas chamber at 11:15 a.m. He was composed but his eyes were filled with tears. Quiet, passive, he played his role in the ritual of execution, obediently sitting down in the death chair when directed, watching attentively as guards strapped his arms, legs and body to the chair, staring back impassively at the 53 witnesses (an extraordinarily large number, but not a record) who crowded behind a glass partition to watch him die. Cyanide pellets dropped into a pail of sulphuric acid under Abbott's chair at 11:18 a.m. and the lethal fumes began to rise about him.

At 11:19 a.m. Governor Knight's secretary, Joseph Babich, relayed from Sacramento a call from the governor to Warden Harley O. Teets in the room behind the tank-like death chamber.

"Hold the execution," Babich ordered.

"It's too late," said Teets. "The gas is already being applied."

The stay would have been for one more hour.

Burton W. "Bud" Abbott was pronounced dead at 11:25 a.m., March 15, 1957, almost two years after Stephanie Bryan disappeared. With him died the secret of the precise when, where—and above all—*why* of the death of Stephanie Bryan.

The "equality" of this murder lies in two things: the elusive character of the murderer and the curious behavior of his wife. Now, while there have been other slayers as puzzling as Abbott, I submit that no character in any murder case has acted as strangely as did Georgia Abbott that night of July 15, 1955. Or should we say *apparently* strangely. Perhaps she behaved with a logic all her own.

After the execution of her son, Mrs. Elsie Abbott, grief-stricken, on the verge of collapse, vowed she would never rest until she proved "Bud's" innocence. Georgia Abbott and her small son went into "seclusion."

Chronicler's postscript: I had

concluded this study with the sentence: "The entire family has long since disappeared from the public prints." A week after that writing, on September 22, 1961, headlines in Bay Area papers blared: BUD ABBOTT CONFESSED, SAYS QUENTIN DOCTOR. So once again, for about a week, the Abbott case hit the front pages with a to-be-expected welter of charge and counter-charge.

Here, in as chronological an order as possible, is what happened. Testifying on September 20 at a Marin County hearing on the sanity of a condemned killer, Dr. David G. Schmidt, chief psychiatrist at San Quentin, remarked that out of 300 condemned murderers interviewed by him, about 250 had confessed their guilt. The Marin district attorney promptly asked if Burton Abbott had confessed.

"He admitted it," Dr. Schmidt testified. "Not directly but indirectly.

The doctor's testimony brewed up a quick storm. Warden Fred R. Dickson, the deceased Teets' successor at San Quentin, was reported as being "outraged" because Schmidt had kept the so-called confession to himself. "It is unheard of, almost unbelievable, that such information was not passed on to the warden and the governor," Dickson said. Former Governor Knight stated that, if he had known of the confession he would have given Abbott a 30-day stay of execution but that "nobody told him about it." Governor Brown demanded a "full report" on the pychiatrist's long-kept secret. Psychiatric reports in the Abbott file in the office of the Director of Corrections in Sacramento did not include any reference to the "confession." Stanley Whitney, repeating his belief in Abbott's innocence, asked, "What does Dr. Schmidt means by an 'indirect' question?"

A good many newspaper readers asked the same question.

Mrs. Elsie Abbott demanded interviews with both Dr. Schmidt and Governor Brown. The governor turned the whole matter over to the state attorney general, Stanley Mosk. Warden Dickson said that the doctor could see Mrs. Abbott "on his own time and off the prison grounds." Dr. Schmidt, reported as "sobered by the public consternation over his disclosure" stated that it was not a good time for him to talk with the dead

(please turn to page 64)

snow in yucatan

by Edward D. Hoch

IT WAS SOME nine hundred miles by land from Brownsville on the Rio Grande to the vast unknown wilds of the Yucatan peninsula, and by horse it had taken Ben Snow the better part of two weeks to make the trip. He'd begun to regret the journey as soon as he was south of the Tropic of Cancer—at Tampico—where where both the climate and the populace had turned suddenly ugly. While buying a new horse from a sleepy-eyed Mexican just outside Tampico he'd found himself set upon by a little band of drink-hardened bandits. He'd killed one, wounded another, and escaped the rest only by dint of some hard and fast riding across the shallow waters of the Rio Panuco. And all this with two-thirds of the trip still ahead of him.

He was riding in search of a man named Chancer—Wade Chancer. Just then it was a name and a story told in a San Antonio bar. Little enough to send Ben Snow riding nine hundred miles. Still, there were times when a story told in the barroom dusk

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Ben Snow ("Some say you're Billy the Kid.") returns in this story of his search for Wade Chancer, a deserter from the Rough Riders, who is attempting to carve out an Empire in Yucatan—an Empire that will see the rebirth of the ancient glories of the land—which he is not to see. . . .

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was enough to move a man. This was such a story. . . .

There'd been three of them, hard and bitter men with the unmistakable look of ex-soldiers. And it hadn't taken Ben long to verify that assumption—they'd served in Cuba with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Three ex-soldiers, spreading a pile of rumpled bills and gold coins on the table before him.

"Two thousand dollars," the biggest of them said. "We all chipped in. Others, too."

Ben Snow eyed the money suspiciously. "What's it for?"

"We want you to kill a man for us."

"I think you've got the wrong man."

The big one—his name was Ventnor — shook his head. "You're Ben Snow, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Then we got the right man. Two thousand to kill Wade Chancer."

"You men look quite capable of carrying out the assignment yourselves. If it's that important, why try to hire me?" He was interested. There was something here that touched the nerve of curiosity always just beneath the surface.

"Because Chancer is a thousand miles away, down in Mexico."

"And I'm supposed to ride all the way down there to kill him for you? Why?"

Ventnor spread his hands flat on the table. "He enlisted with us when the Rough Riders were formed. Most of the men were from the west —Indians, cowpunchers, stage drivers, miners, trappers—and if I say so myself we formed a pretty tough fighting unit. We went down there with Teddy and we beat the hell out of them Cubans. . ."

"Spaniards."

". . . Spaniards! They're all the same. Anyway, we'd have been down there yet if the yellow fever hadn't gotten us."

Ben Snow cleared his throat. "What about this man Chancer?"

"Yeah, I'm getting to it. Well, Wade Chancer was with our Troop when we went up San Juan Hill. He was with us and he deserted—and because he deserted, my brother and a few other real men died. The Spanish fire got them, at a point on our flank that Chancer was supposed to be covering. It took us a while to trace the rat, but we finally discovered he'd booked passage on a tramp steamer bound for Central America

with its first stop at Yucatan."

"You think he got off there?"

"We know he did," Ventnor said. "The Rough Riders came over from Florida on a ship called the *Yucatan,* and I remember him telling us he wanted to go there someday. Anyway, we heard just recently that he's down there, all right. Organizing the Indians to take over the whole damn country. Guess he made himself a general or something."

One of the other two men uttered a blunt curse. "Being a private was never good enough for the likes of him."

Ben leaned back in his chair. "And you want him killed for this?"

"We want him killed because he's a yellow no-good deserter, that's why. If the Army caught him they'd kill him, so we're just saving them the trouble."

Ben cleared his throat and spoke softly, not wanting to antagonize the men. "I didn't think the Rough Riders were actually a part of the regular Army. . ."

"We were the First United States Volunteer Cavalry, mister, even if most all the horses did get left in Florida. We were Army, all the way."

"Teddy hated the name of Rough Riders at first, but it stuck."

They went on like that, three old soldiers, not so old, reliving a brief moment of glory only just passed into history. United now perhaps only in their quest for vengeance. Ben listened for a time and then asked, "Why did you come to me? Who told you I was a hired killer?"

Ventnor smiled slyly. "You're Ben Snow. Some say you're also Billy the Kid. . ."

"Billy's been dead almost twenty years."

"Sure, sure. So you're just Ben Snow. You've still got quite a reputation around the country. We heard of you as far away as New Orleans, on the way back home. You're a killer."

"Maybe. But not your kind of killer."

Ventnor rose to his feet, and the other two followed. "Think it over. Sleep on it. We'll talk again in the morning."

"You can save your breath. I don't like Mexico anyway."

"Think about it."

Ben thought, but not very hard. It was almost by coincidence, later that night, that he found himself in the company of a federal marshal he knew slightly. The talk had drifted to Mexico, and the

growing menace of roving bandits, when Ben dropped the name of Wade Chancer into the conversation.

"Chancer. Down in Yucatan. Yeah, I've heard some stories in recent months. He's lots more than a bandit chief, though. He's a regular king down there, or a general at least. Wears medals and everything. Showed up there just after the war, and I guess he's really got the Indians buffaloed. Biggest thing since Cortez."

The news interested Ben more than he showed. It interested him and raised questions in his mind. "Don't you think those stories must be exaggerated? How could any one man so influence hundreds of Indians in just a few months."

"I'd like to know myself," the marshal chuckled. "I'd try the technique at home." Ben remembered that he had an Indian wife.

"I might be traveling down Mexico way soon," he told the man, not really knowing what had changed his mind, knowing only that it was a spark of the unknown, a quest for a sort of knowledge that had shaped his whole life. The army deserter who deserved to be murdered had become somehow a far more sinister character, a man of power. Men of power were always sinister to Ben, especially when the source of their power was clouded in mystery.

And so the next morning, before dawn, he packed his horse with the necessary supplies and headed south toward the border. He didn't bother telling Ventnor he was going. The ex-soldier would never understand why he was undertaking the trip on his own when he'd refused to do it for two thousand dollars. And perhaps Ben Snow didn't exactly know himself. Certainly he had no intention of acting as the assassin Ventnor wanted to hire. Killing was something for other men, in another age. Usually. . . .

South of Tampico, where country grew gradually more rugged as he approached the mountains around Mexico City, Ben seemed to find the going easier. He covered more miles each day, seeing fewer natives and none of the roving bandit bands he'd encountered further north. He passed through Veracruz, seeing in the distance the ancient Fortress of San Juan De Ulua which overlooked the harbor. This southernmost portion of the Gulf of Mexico became suddenly the Gulf of Cam-

pecho, named after a town on the Yucatan coast which he reached on the second last day of his long journey.

It was while he was changing horses for the last time, outside Campecho, that a Mexican horseman approached him, riding slowly but purposefully. "Ah, Senor! You are from the north?"

"Texas," Ben admitted. "And New Mexico before that."

"A long ride. Many horses away." The Mexican climbed down from his beast and walked over, resting his hand casually on the holstered revolver at his hip. Though Ben wore one too, it was still a bit startling to see an armed man approaching with seeming friendliness. Sidearms had vanished from most Texas streets some years before, and only the cowhands and lawmen were likely to carry them now.

"It is long. Perhaps I should have come by boat. The maps show it to be a little more direct."

The Mexican nodded. "You seek someone here?"

"I seek Wade Chancer."

"He is another day's ride across the peninsula. I can take you there if you wish."

Ben held out his hand. "Name's Ben Snow. Be happy to ride with you."

The Mexican nodded. "I am Antonio Yallahs. I am in the employ of Wade Chancer."

Well, Ben decided, if he'd made a mistake in revealing his destination, it was too late to correct it now. But if Chancer was really as powerful as the stories said, Ben would hardly have found him unannounced anyway. They drank together, in a little shack by the stables where a dirty Mexican served warm rum from a dusty amber bottle. Then, afterward, they rode —with Yallahs leading the way up a trail to the east.

They'd been riding for some hours when the scattered brush began distinctly to take on the appearance of a jungle. The weather was warmer, and the trail they followed was all but obscured in places by the unfamiliar vines and overgrowth of a tropic climate. Ben had known nothing like it in his life, and already he was finding his heavy shirt uncomfortable against the skin. Sweat glistened on his forehead, and riding was so uncomfortable that he was almost thankful for the occasional stretches of thick underbrush where they were forced to dismount and lead their horses slowly on foot.

"Is there much more of

this?" Ben asked Yallahs at one point.

"Not too much," the Mexican answered. "We are nearing some of the ruins."

"You know the country well."

"I have lived here in Yucatan all my life. Thirty-eight years now. And my father and grandfather before me. My father used to say our family went back all the way to Bartolomeo Columbus, Christopher's brother."

Ben nodded. "Up north, in my country, there are those whose ancestors came over with the Pilgrims. It's an honor, I suppose, to be descended from the brother of Columbus."

Yallahs shrugged. "He was not a very good man. Christopher made him acting Governor of the West Indies, and his main achievement was the introduction of bloodhounds to track and kill any native who opposed his rule. He stole their gold and made slaves of them."

"You're an educated man."

The Mexican laughed. "I learned about Bartolomeo on my father's knee."

"But you speak good English."

"I was educated in Mexico City, and I have traveled to your country. It is a good land."

"Tell me, what is Wade Chancer trying to do down here—build an army of Indians?"

Yallahs shrugged, and as they came out of the underbrush he remounted his handsome bronzed body easily into the saddle. "I believe he is only attempting to restore the glory that was the Mayan civilization. He is a great leader, a great general."

"He's a deserter from Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders." As soon as he'd spoken the words, Ben realized he'd made his second mistake of the day. Though the Mexican seemed friendly enough, there was no way of knowing just where his loyalties stood.

But all further conversation on that subject was cut short as the trail widened suddenly before them. Here, blocking the path as surely as some Spanish army of old, was a great vine-covered pyramid which might have been submerged in this jungle for a thousand years. A flight of crumbling stone steps led up the very center of it, and Ben remembered stories he'd read somewhere of high priests and human sacrifices to a god unknown. "Amazing," he breathed. "Really amazing!"

"There are many such ruins

in Yucatan," Yallahs told him. "They are the only remains of what once was a highly advanced civilization. I wonder sometimes as we enter this Twentieth Century what ruins our civilization will leave."

They rode on, for some hours, until finally a hint of salt air twiched at Ben's nostrils. "We're near the water."

"Correct. And near the end of our long ride. Soon you will meet Wade Chancer for yourself."

The jungle thinned out to nothing as they entered upon a level plateau that stretched perhaps a mile to the sea. On the very edge of a rocky cliff stood a number of ancient and modern structures — another Mayan pyramid and an equally old flat-roofed building of stone. Among these ruins a few shacks and houses had been built, and as they travelled nearer Ben saw the Indians coming out to meet them. He was struck at once by their difference from the feathered savages he'd known so well back home. Here, perhaps, there was still a sparkle of a long-dead intelligence in these faces, a something about the eyes which was not found among the American Indian. He saw also that many of them carried modern rifles. With Chancer as their General, they would already know how to use them.

Ben followed Yallahs past the watching Indians and into the ancient stone building next to the pyramid. Below, far below, the pounding of the surf on rocks reached up with a fine salt spray to envelope them, and he imagined that the wind must always be strong here.

The interior of the building was amazingly modern, with evidence that the crumbling stones had been reinforced with handsome timbers of polished wood, probably brought out of the nearby jungle. They passed through two outer rooms and then Ben was left to wait a few moments while Yallahs went off in search of Wade Chancer. It was not a long wait, though, and the Mexican soon reappeared—followed by the man Ben Snow had travelled some nine hundred miles to find. . . .

Wade Chancer was a tall young man, just barely out of his twenties, who looked more like a lawyer than a general or a gunfighter. Even the tiny beard on his chin and the three glistening medals on his chest did nothing to dispel the illusion that here was only a masquerade character, a play actor in the costume of the

moment. But there was the Army pistol swinging from his hip, and dangerous look in his yellowish eyes, and when you noticed those things you tended to revise your conclusion of only a moment before. At least Ben did, standing there before this man almost ten years younger than himself. Wade Chancer could be dangerous, simply because he looked so harmless at first glance.

"You've travelled a long way to see me," he said, holding out a hand in greeting. "What can I do for you?"

Ben gave him a smile meant to be friendly. "Oh, I was riding down this way and I heard the stories about you. I remembered I knew a friend of yours back in Texas and thought I'd stop to give you his regards."

The yellowish eyes hardened. "I have no friends in Texas. Or anywhere else for that matter."

"This man's name was Ventnor."

Wade Chancer smiled, and there was a touch of the cruel about his lips. "Mr. Snow, there are three rifles pointed at your back. If Ventnor sent you to kill me, I assure you you'll never get your gun out of its holster."

Ben pushed his hat back a little on his damp forehead. "I'm no hired killer, Chancer. I came only to see if the stories about you are true."

"They're true."

Yallahs appeared from somewhere with three heavy glass mugs. "I believe we could all use a cool drink, gentlemen. Cool drinks for hot heads."

Wade Chancer relaxed and poured the drinks. He settled into a carved wooden chair and motioned Ben to join him. "Excuse me. I wasn't being the proper host. Have a seat."

"Just what are you trying to do down here, Chancer?" Ben asked him.

The bearded young man waved a hand. "Organize a revolution, I suppose. Yucatan, Mexico, maybe all of Central America in a few years. It can be done."

"What is this power you have over the Indians?"

He smiled again. "Only the power of power, and of right. I want to lift them to their place of former glory in this world."

Ben leaned back in his chair, knowing that what he was to say next might bring him three bullets in the back if the rifles were still in position. "Ventnor said you deserted in Cuba."

"Ventnor is a fool. Why should I fight for the private

glory of a man like Roosevelt when I can lead my own army, win my own wars?"

Ben sipped his drink and found it a pleasing if unfamiliar mixture. Rum and some sort of fruit juice, he guessed. "Would you kill Mexicans to achieve your goal?"

Chancer grinned. "I would kill Americans to achieve my goal. Wouldn't you?"

Another man entered, a middle-aged balding man with glasses. He was dressed in the European style, the manner now popular in the eastern cities of America, and to Ben he was as out of place here as he would have been on the Texas range. "You have a guest," the man said, a bit startled. "Excuse me."

"Quite all right, Professor Irreel. This is Ben Snow, down all the way from Texas to visit us." Then, to Ben, "Professor Irreel is a famous scientist back in Paris. He has worked with the Curies and many others. As you see, people come from all over to visit the domain of Wade Chancer."

Ben shook hands with the Frenchman. "Pleased to meet you, Professor. Are there any more surprises awaiting me here?"

Chancer laughed. "Only Marge Fisher. She is an American like yourself, a nurse in my employ."

Ben caught the "like yourself." Wade Chancer apparently no longer considered America his own home. He was a true man without a country, and perhaps that was why he felt the need to make his own nation. "Are you employed here too, Professor?" he asked.

"Oh dear, no," the Frenchman said, seeming to find the very thought humorous. "You might call this a working vacation. I am here for some months looking into native customs. As you know, the French have always had a deep interest in Mexico."

Ben smiled. "I thought they lost that interest about thirty years ago, with the help of the United States."

Professor Irreel flushed a bit. "We were not speaking of my country's occasional lapses into imperialism."

Wade Chancer was watching the byplay with passive interest, but now suddenly he doubled over and started to cough. He covered his mouth with a handkerchief, and when he removed it Ben caught a glimpse of the red of blood. He recovered his composure almost at once, though, and stood up. "Excuse me. I haven't been feeling well lately." Then he was

gone, with Yallahs hurrying after him, leaving Ben alone with Professor Irreel.

"An unusual man," Ben said, lighting up a cigarette from a box on the table.

"Unusual," Irreel agreed, "and dangerous."

"Just how dangerous is he?"

The Frenchman glanced around, his voice dropping to a whisper. "He has quite an organization among the Indians. He talks sometimes of an army to march on Mexico City, and I really believe he means it."

"The Indians would follow him on something like this? After all, he *is* an American."

Irreel shrugged. "But important Mexicans like Yallahs support him. They dream of a return to the glories of the Mayan civilization."

"It takes more than that to control ignorant Indians."

"He has a power. There is no doubt about that."

"The thing seems so unreal."

The Frenchman smiled. "Life is unreal. Even I am unreal—my family name even means *unreal*. But these things happen. Certainly the recent advances in science are even more unreal than a man like Chancer. But be careful. I have seen his natives kill strangers here rather than let them leave. None of us are ever quite safe, and especially you with your knowledge of Chancer's past."

"You heard?"

Irreel nodded. "I was listening for a time before I made my appearance. As I said, be careful. Very careful."

"I can manage."

Professor Irreel nodded and left, as suddenly as he'd appeared. It was already dark outside, and presently Yahlahs returned to show Ben to his quarters for the night. The place selected for him was in one of the wooden shacks near the ancient pyramid, an odd little room that appeared to be used for storage. He explored the area with some care after he'd been left alone, and was about to turn in when he heard the unmistakable sounds of someone approaching.

Ben's hand was resting on his gun when a candle flickered through the doorway and a girl appeared. She was an obvious American, with a freckled face and blonde hair, and she could only have been the nurse, Marge Fisher. "Hello there—I heard there was another American staying the night."

"Come in," he said, removin his hand from the gun butt. "This place is full of surprises. My name's Ben Snow."

"Marge Fisher. I'm a nurse

here, doing what I can to care for these Indians. I suppose it's a part of Mr. Chancer's schemes for conquest to supply them with a semblance of medical care." Her cultured voice had a bit of an edge to it that surprised Ben in a girl who couldn't yet have been twenty-five. He wondered irrationally if perhaps she also served as Chancer's mistress. "You're the second person tonight who's hinted at a dislike for Wade Chancer," he said. "Is Yallahs the only friend he's got"

"Chancer uses enemies the way other men use friends. Who else have you talked to?"

"The Frenchman—Professor Irreel."

She dripped a little wax on the table between them and set the candle firmly in place. It's flickering yellow light did things to her face that were not unpleasant. "Don't be taken in by Irreel," she said. "He's playing both sides for his own reasons. I'll bet when he was denouncing Chancer he didn't tell you he presented him with a medal, did he?"

"A medal?"

She nodded. "Two of those medals he wears are U. S. Army—I think he stole them off a corpse. But the middle one is French. Irreel brought it from Paris about a month ago and presented it to him, as a token of friendship from the French government."

He took in her firm young body, only partly hidden under the typically Mexican costume she wore. "Why are you telling me all this? What can I do about it?"

"You're an American, like me."

"So is Chancer."

"That's just it! I've known for a long time that the government in Washington wouldn't let this thing get out of hand. I knew they'd send someone to deal with Chancer."

"Well, I'm not the one, believe me. A man named Ventnor tried to hire me to murder Chancer, but I wasn't having any of that, either. You might say I'm just passing through, which is less than can be said for you."

The girl bristled a bit. "I told you he hired me as a nurse. If you don't believe me, come on my rounds with me tomorrow." As an afterthought, she added, "You can meet Old Oake."

"Who?"

"One of the Indians. He's the guiding spirit of them all, really. The oldest man in the world, I suppose."

"How old is he?"

"He says he was a small

boy when Cortez landed at Veracruz, in 1518. That would make him 390 years old. I know it's fantastic, but the tribe actually has written records about him dating back more than a hundred years. He was a withered old man already at the time of our American Revolution, and an American historian visited him in 1840."

Ben was beginning to see some light. "And Chancer hired you mainly to look after this old man, right? That was his first move to get control of the Indians—by showing a sort of kindness to their leader, a leader who was directly linked to the past Chancer is trying to revive."

The girl smiled. "You're a regular detective. Of course the Mayan civilization was already in its final days when Cortez conquered. . ."

Ben cut her off with a quick thrust of his hand, tumbling her toward him. "Someone outside!" he whispered urgently, his other hand going for the gun on his hip.

The wooden door was flung open, and two wild-eyed savages threw themselves in, long knives glistening in the candlelight. Under him, Marge Fisher gave the gasping beginning of a scream, but Ben already had his gun out. He caught the first Indian along the temple with his revolver barrel, feeling the cold blade of the dagger as it sliced smoothly through his shirt. Off balance, he toppled backwards, knocking the candle from the table. If it were only him he'd have taken a chance at hand-to-hand combat in the dark, but with the girl in danger he couldn't risk it. In the last instant of the candle's flicker he fired two quick but careful shots, picking his targets as he had for twenty years—with the unfailing skill of a man who lived by the gun.

Silence. And then, for a moment, "Ben?"

"Lie still. They might not be dead. Can you reach the candle?"

"I think so."

"Good. Light it and keep back out of the way."

The stub of candle leaped to life again, and in its glow Ben saw the bodies of the two would-be killers. He'd caught one in the left eye, but the other was still alive, gasping out his last few seconds on earth as the blood bubbled from a fatal chest wound. Ben knelt beside him, trying to catch the words his lips seemed to be forming. "What?"

"*Nieve* . . ." He spoke the word once more, clearly, and then he was dead.

"Snow," Marge Fisher translated. "He was saying your name."

"Maybe." Ben got to his feet and started reloading his pistol.

"What are you going to do with them?"

He looked around, out the door, and then carefully closed it. "Seems like no one's coming to investigate the shots. I'll dump the bodies off the cliff, into the sea. That way Wade Chancer will know I mean business. If he wants to send some others, I'll be ready."

"You're staying here, after this?"

Ben nodded. "At least till tomorrow. I want to go see this man with you, the one who's 390 years old. . . ."

Activity in the morning seemed to be normal to Ben's eyes, with the Indians going about preassigned tasks without visible concern over their two missing comrades. He saw. Professor Irreel strolling with Yallahs along the edge of the cliff, but if they were searching for bodies they gave no sign of it. With his wide-brimmed sombrero turning up in the breeze, the Mexican seemed dangerously off-balance.

Marge Fisher was at her own quarters, preparing a kit of assorted medicines for her daily rounds among the natives. "I was up early," she said. "Wade Chancer seems quite ill."

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know, exactly. Hemorrhages and diarrhea, but I don't know what's causing it. He's still a young man."

Ben glanced over some of the bottles. "You haven't been feeding him poison by mistake, have you?"

"Certainly not! I couldn't anyway—he has an Indian cook taste all the food for him, just like the old Roman emperors."

"Sometimes I think he's a devil, not human at all. See this?" She held up a square black box. "It's a camera, for taking pictures, you know. The Indian's are fascinated by it. But a few weeks ago I tried to take Chancer's picture and nothing came out. The film was all foggy, as if I'd photographed a ghost!"

Ben examined the camera with interest. He'd seen them before, but never close up, and the very idea of photography held a boyish fascination for him. "Another of the wonders of this Twentieth Century," he said. "Someday I suppose everyone will own one of these. Have you taken

any pictures of the old man?"

She nodded. "I have some good ones. But come along, and you can see him in person." Ben followed her as they made the rounds of some of the Indian shacks. She told him there were many more living in the jungle, and it was probably from there that the two now-dead assassins had come. Ben listened to her with interest, and observed the Indians they visited most carefully. About a number of the younger males there was a sameness of expression, a something in the eyes, that both attracted and repelled him, and he wondered about it.

Finally, toward noon, they reached the farthest of the outbuildings, a shack no different from the rest, but one which seemed set apart in spirit if not in actuality. "Here we are," Marge Fisher breathed, as if entering a church.

The man inside was indeed old — his wrinkled, almost mummified face was certainly the most ancient Ben had ever seen—and when he spoke there was about him an unmistakable death-like rattle. He talked in utter disregard to their questions, speaking in a half-Spanish, half-Indian tongue of the glories he had known, of the thunder and clash of armor as the mighty armies of Cortez moved across the land all those many years before. And by his side crouched Old Oake's great - great - great-great - great - great grandson, already an old man himself. Yes, Ben thought, this was the perfect place for a man with a dream of conquest, a dream of past glories. What better beginning for Wade Chancer than among a tribe of Indians who daily heard these tales of glorious warfare from the lips of a revered old man?

They remained there for some twenty minutes, drinking in the sight and the sounds of Old Oake. Finally, as the visit was coming to an end, Yallahs appeared in the doorway. "You must come, Miss Fisher," he said somberly. "Wade Chancer is very sick."

"I'll come at once."

They hurried off together, and Ben was left alone with his thoughts. He wandered slowly back, pausing for a time to climb among the worn, weed-grown stones of the great pyramid. There were steps leading to its summit, and Ben climbed them, resting for a while at the top to contemplate the vast panorama of sea and jungle that stretched below him. The

climb had made him short of breath, for he was no longer a young man, but up here so near to the clouds he forgot that for a moment. A man could feel the power from here, where everything else seemed so small. From here, a wise coward like Wade Chancer could imagine himself the ruler of all about him, could sacrifice human lives to his cause just as the Mayans had so long ago.

Ben climbed down reluctantly, and went in search of Professor Irreel. The Frenchman's quarters in a wing of the great stone house were easy enough to find, but the man himself was nowhere in evidence. Ben spent a few minutes glancing about the tidy, nearly bare room, noting the titles of a variety of reading matter on a bedside table. Most were booklets, printed in French, on a variety of scientific subjects. Ben had picked up a bit of French while living in New Orleans, and some of the titles were clear enough: *The History, Products, and Processes of the Alkali Trade,* by C. T. Kingzett, London, 1877; *On the Chemical Effects of Radium Rays,* by Marie Curie and Pierre Curie, Paris, 1899; *Metallurgy: Silver and Gold,* by J. Percy, London, 1880.

Ben picked up one of the booklets and was intent on translating what few words he knew when Professor Irreel returned. The Frenchman was white and trembling. "Wade Chancer has died," he said with a broken voice. "God help us all. . . ."

The gloom that hung over the great house throughout the afternoon gradually gave way to a growing sense of urgency as darkness approached. News of Chancer's death had already spread among the Indians, and the sounds of their restlessness reached them in the big room where Ben Snow had met Wade Chancer for the only time in his life. Marge Fisher was there, and Professor Irreel, along with Yallahs and Ben. The Mexican had a rifle out, and paced the floor like a caged lion in some terrible zoo of his own making.

"They'll kill us all," he said. "They're madmen."

"Then let's get out of here," Ben suggested.

"Back through the jungle?"

Professor Irreel cleared his throat. "Chancer kept a small boat at the base of the cliff. That would get us around the jungle and back to civilization."

But Yallahs only waived his rifle. "I'm not going. There's too much here to let

slip through our fingers."

"But you just said they'd kill us!"

"Not if we control them," the Mexican said. "Not if we control them the same way Chancer did."

"Through Old Oake?" the girl suggested.

Yallahs shook his head. "That was only part of it. Old Oake only helped create the right mood for a man like Chancer."

Ben decided it was time he was heard from. "Old Oake is a fake, anyway."

"A fake?"

"Of course! Nobody lives to be 390 years old, even down here. Haven't you ever noticed how much old Indians look alike, especially in the dim light? It's just a family plot—when one Old Oake dies, they bury him secretly and the son takes his place. The present son is almost old enough now to take over. If one of the Old Oakes ever dies without children, that will be the end of it. But in the meantime, it's a great legend—even though some of the other Indians must suspect the truth. There was a man in Europe I read about once, called Old Parr, who worked the same kind of thing. He was supposed to have lived from 1483 till 1635, but actually it was a grandfather, a father, and a son taking their turns at the role."

From somewhere outside came the sound of a shot. "The natives are restless," Marge Fisher said, trying unsuccessfully to make a joke of it.

Yallahs made for the door. "I'll stop them," he said. "I have to!"

Ben shouted to Irreel. "Take Marge down to that boat and wait for me. I'm going after that crazy fool."

Outside, a bonfire had been lit over near the edge of the jungle, casting its flames high in the night sky. By its glow, Ben could see a score of armed savages running his way. He fired two quick shots to hold them off and glanced around for Yallahs. The Mexican was halfway up the pyramid, hurrying toward the room of darkness at its top. Ben followed, making the climb for the second time that day. He knew the Indians would not be far behind.

"Yallahs!" he called out. "Stop!"

The Mexican had already reached the top, and was lighting a candle to guide his search for something. "You can't stop me. There's too much at stake!"

"What?" Ben asked, cornering him at last, panting for breath. "What could be worth

such a price?"

Yallahs turned, still clutching the rifle. "Understand me, friend. I do not want only power, as did Chancer. I want the glory that goes with power. See here—this is the sarcophagus of a Mayan high priest, a man dead for perhaps a thousand years. What I want is a rebirth of the glories he knew, for Yucatan and for all of Mexico."

"That is why you supported Wade Chancer?"

"That is why I supported him."

"And that is why you allowed him to give drugs to the Indians?"

"Drugs?" The Mexican's eyes were cautious in the flickering candlelight.

"You know damn well what I mean, Yallahs! Those Indians are half insane on narcotics. You can see it in their faces, in their eyes. That's why they followed Chancer's commands so readily—because he'd made addicts out of them. One that he sent to kill me muttered about *snow* before he died. He wouldn't have cared what my name was—he was calling for more of the drug, which I imagine is cocaine. It's white crystaline form must have seemed much like snow to the Indians, who'd know about snow probably only from some of the pictures Marge Fisher showed them."

Yallahs moved his free hand, and the lid of the high priest's sarcophagus slid back on stone rollers. "You're right. He gave them cocaine, and there's more of it in here—a fortune in cocaine that I helped him get from a Coca tree plantation in South America. I'm going to give it to them, control them as Chancer would have."

Ben drew his gun. "I can't let you do it, Yallahs."

The Mexican lifted his rifle. "I am not an evil man—this you must believe. I am only a man with a dream. If a few pounds of cocaine will bring back an empire, I am willing to use it. Now I must kill you, not because I hate you, but only because of my dream. I am sorry, deeply sorry."

His finger was tightening on the trigger when Ben shot him through the forehead. . . .

Ten minutes later, Ben was splashing through the surf to the waiting boat. Irreel and the girl pulled him aboard, where he stretched on the deck in utter exhaustion. "How did you get away?" Marge Fisher asked.

Ben coughed and sat up, his soaking clothes clinging to his chilled body. "It wasn't easy. The Indians must have had a

taboo about following me up the pyramid. They were waiting at the bottom of the steps, so I went down the back of it. The levels are about eight feet apart, but I managed somehow."

"Yallahs?"

"Yallahs is dead. And the cocaine he was going to give the Indians is at the bottom of the sea. I saw to that on my way down here."

"Cocaine!" Irreel muttered. "That's how he was doing it!"

"I almost suspected it at times," Marage Fisher said. "But I had no proof."

The wind caught at their sails and pulled them out toward the open sea. With luck they would be beyond the Yucatan in a few hours. Beyond the Yucatan and back, back someday even to Texas. "There's a man I should look up," Ben said, almost to himself. "A man named Ventnor. He was willing to pay two thousand dollars for Wade Chancer's death."

"Will you collect it?" Professor Irreel aksed.

"No," Ben answered, looking to see that the girl was out of earshot, busily adjusting the sails. "No, I won't collect it, Professor. Because it was you who murdered Wade Chancer."

"What do you mean? He died a natural death."

"I know next to nothing about it, Professor, so your secret is safe with me. I only knew a few paragraphs I was able to translate from a book on radium in your room. Radium is a new chemical element, just discovered in 1898, by some people named Curie with whom Wade said you worked. Not too much is known about its powers, but it could prove to be quite deadly. I think it did in the case of Wade Chancer."

Professor Irreel's face was impassive in the sea spray. Finally, after a few moments of silence, he said, "I had no knowledge that the radium would prove to be fatal. My own experiments with animals were inconclusive on that score. I only knew it would make him ill enough to remove the threat he posed."

"You acted as an agent of the French government in this?"

Irreel shrugged. "I am not free to say. I acted, shall we say, as an agent of men who feared Wade Chancer's dreams of power."

Ben nodded. "That's good enough for me, I suppose. I don't claim the power to punish you, or even to judge you." And then he said, "You might be interested in one effect of your radium. I think it fogged the girl's film when she tried

to take a picture of Chancer. That was another thing to make me suspicious."

"You know where the radium was hidden?" Irreel asked, and there was a certain sense of pride in his voice as he spoke the words. "It was only a tiny sliver, of course, but it was enough to kill him in a cer's chest. . . ."

month's time."

Ben gazed up at the sky, feeling suddenly sad, wondering what the future could hold for a world where rays of death could now kill invisibly. "I think I know," he answered. "I think it was in the medal you pinned on Wade Chan-

SMM EDITOR HONORED

Members of the Indian and Pakistani communities in the New York area met Sunday afternoon, October 4th, at a luncheon at the Kashmir Restaurant honoring Hans Stefan Santesson for his more than thirty years of service to the communities. The speakers at the luncheon, which was chaired by Ibrahim Chowdry, a member of the Board of the Islamic Foundation of New York and long active in social and religious work in the community, included Mohammed Idris, President of the Pakistan League of America; Khan Amir Nawab Khan, a member of the Pathan community; Abdul Basit Naeem, writer and editor; Ivan T. Sanderson of Chilton Books, author of THE CONTINENT WE LIVE ON, DYNASTY OF ABU, ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN, etc.; and Dr. S. A. Sidat Singh, President of the All India Progressive Association.

Those present included Sven Ahman, correspondent at the United Nations of the *Dagens Nyheter* of Stockholm; Professor Jean Comhaire, of ECA, Addis Ababa; Donald R. Bensen, of Pyramid Books; Dr. Sanford Griffith, Chairman, Program of African Studies, New School for Social Research; Ismith Khan, Trinidad-born novelist, author of THE JUMBIE BIRD, published in this country by Obolensky, and of THE OBEAH MAN, just published by Hutchinson in London; and Andrew Persad, of *M. Henri Wines*.

Mr. Santesson, who was editor of the *Unicorn Mystery Book Club* during 1945-'52, and has edited *The Saint Mystery Magazine* since 1956, was active in the fight, in the '40's, against the Oriental Exclusion law. He has written and lectured on Indo-Islamic art and history.

"I'll have her; but I will not keep her long."*

—*Richard III*, Act I, Sc. 2.

the murderer who quoted shakespeare

by Charles Norman

There are almost a dozen women of record whom George Joseph Smith either robbed or murdered. Sometimes he finished them off in a combined operation of extraordinary swiftness and skill which — unfortunately for him—he failed to vary, thereby calling attention to himself. But like all artists, he had become intoxicated with his *métier*—and with good reason: he had invented a new form of murder which was comparatively simple, inexpensive, and practically fool-proof. Except, of course, for his last performance, which benefited no one but His Majesty's purveyor of rope and the hangman who made it into a running noose.

Smith married the victims he marked for death, took over their savings, insured them when convenient, had mutual wills made, and drew a bath for them on the nuptial night. A day later, a cor-

*—motto suggested by Anthony Boucher.

Charles Norman, artist and literary critic, is the author of SO WORTHY A FRIEND: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE; MR. ODDITY: SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.; RAKE ROCHESTER; THE GENTEEL MURDERER; E. E. CUMMINGS: THE MAGIC MAKER, etc., etc. He taught Shakespeare at New York University for a number of years.

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oner's inquest invariably found "the said deceased died from misadventure" or, as Smith himself phrased it, "by a fit in the bath," though it was really from drowning.

This, to be sure, is only a sketch, or mere outline, of his performances. It is the detailed touches that show him to have been one of the greatest virtuosos in the field of crime. Consider: before drawing her bath, Smith always took his bride to a local physician, stating she had a fit —something like an epileptic seizure, but not quite. It has never been satisfactorily explained why his brides, healthy until the moment of their arrival in the resort towns to which he took them, suddenly had "fits," unless it was that their affectionate spouse provided some flavoring for their tea. But this visit to the doctor was an unvarying part of his procedure, and with reason: he now had, for the imminent inquest, a most valuable witness—not a mere private citizen, but the professional man who had prescribed for the unfortunate victim.

The bath drawn, and the bride dispatched, Smith always managed to slip out of the boarding-house unobserved, only to turn up in a few minutes knocking loudly, and holding aloft a purchase he had just made for the bridal breakfast or, rather, for his own. Once, however, he descended from the bathroom to the parlor, sat down at the organ, and let loud notes peal forth before he slipped quietly into the street. But this time, too, he returned with a purchase: tomatoes. The alibi was complete. A final touch: the three murders which figured in his trial were all perpetrated on Friday nights; inquest and burial took place before relatives even knew that death had occurred, and thus were embarrassing questions avoided.

It is not, however ,with Smith's accomplishments as an artist—in the De Quincey sense—that I am concerned here, but his literary side for, oddly enough, he had one. He read books and he wrote letters. While awaiting trial he wrote a letter asking for a testimonial to his sterling character from a former employer who, it appears, had summarily dispensed with his services some years before. In it, he calls attention to "my marked love of poetry and the fine arts," a phrase which has infuriated his biographers. Most of them have been English, and Smith was quite plainly an uneducated man without the slightest

trace of sensibility.

It is, to be sure, a very strong phrase — not merely "love," but "marked love," and not of virtue, but of "poetry and the fine arts." Poor Smith; he was clutching at straws, as poor Bessie Mundy clutched the cake of soap when he drowned her. For how even a favorable estimate of him as an employe in time gone by could have helped him at the tribunal he was shortly to face passes understanding. Nevertheless, that is what he asked for, and to get it put forth the claim to be considered a man of parts, of unsuspected gentility and culture. It appears incredible; but turns out, on investigation, to be rewarding. Another side of Smith is revealed: Smith the *littérateur*.

His reference to the arts can be dismissed after supplying two facts: he occasionally described himself to prospective victims as a dealer in antiques, and he deserted one of them at the National Gallery in London after mulcting her of all she had in the world, some £340 and every stitch of clothing except those she had on. But the reference to poetry is something else again. Since no books figured among Smith's possessions—if we except ledgers and bank books—it must have been in libraries that he indulged his "marked love" for this medium. Now, what would he ask for? For, bearing in mind that he never did anything except with a view to profit, it is most likely that he was drawn to book shelves and reading tables not by a love of literature, but because of the proximity they provided to single women outside his social sphere—that is, women with bank accounts. So that, on his arrival in those quiet precincts, it would be apparent to all who observed him, certainly to the librarian, that here was a man who did not know what to do, who was all awkwardness surrounded by books, who must be helped.

"Is there anything in particular you wish?"

He is ready with the reply.

"Yes. Shakespeare."

It was safe, it was sure.

The evil, hypnotic eyes light up; the librarian is glad to point out the book, or hand it over, and retire to the safety of her desk.

Smith may not have been at this time, which was—presumably—early in his career, the insatiate killer he was to become; but he was already "a bit peculiar," which was all that he admitted to after his arrest for multiple murder. But his life had become a play

in which he was the chief actor, the hero, even to donning top hat and frock coat. He did not cut a good figure, and he could not have been comfortable; but such were the aspirations of his commonplace soul. Thus decked out, he looked about him and took a place beyond the lamplight's glare. Amid such riches as surrounded him he must have felt like Ali Baba in the cave. How tempting those morsels of Edwardian or early Georgian days must have been to that tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide! But his appearance was against him, even in disguise. Those hypnotic eyes, stealing an appraising glance over the top of a book, even if that book was Shakespeare, proved too alarming in the wrong way. He tried reading.

The dedication of *Venus and Adonis* ranks with the great dedications. It is, at a hazard, known to every schoolboy—at least, until he forgets it. It was addressed to the Right Honorable Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton and Baron of Tichfield, and was signed William Shakespeare. Its opening sentence is:

"I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your Lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden; only if your Honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour."

I suggest that this sentence was part of Smith's reading in his library days; more, that he copied it out or memorized it for future use. There were no waste motions in his life. But if his biographers ever knew the sentence, it would appear that they had forgotten it.

Eric R. Watson edited the *Trial of George Joseph Smith* in the Notable British Trials series, and his Introduction to this volume serves as the monograph on Smith in the Penguin *Famous Trials*. It is "prime," to use a word which Mr. Watson quotes from an American admirer of British judicial procedure in connection with Smith. With the exception of a penny dreadful entitled *Brides in the Bath*, as well as an early study, *Bluebeard of the Bath*, Mr. Watson's account is the first considerable one about Smith outside the dossier so skillfully and so lovingly put together by Inspector Neil of Scotland Yard.

Speaking of the letter

Smith wrote to his former employer, Mr. Watson terms it "characteristic for its vile grammar and spelling, its incoherence, and its braggart assumption of 'my marked love of poetry and the fine arts.'" Smith, he also says, "was utterly incapable of writing a grammatical sentence or of spelling the commonest words. In a note before me now he writes 'wader' repeatedly for 'warder', and 'difficulity', 'voilence', and 'brusies' for the familiar words they are meant to represent.

There are other examples; in a note before *me*, reproduced in the *Trial* volume, a note which Smith scribbled to his counsel, I read: "This man Eaton is no doubt predudice," (How right he was!) On the same sheet of paper: "It was her who suggested to receive the money."

With all this, and much more, to establish Smith's epistolary range, almost any reader could be expected to notice a change of pace, a striving after the graces and embellishments of style, in the murderer's letter to Bessie Mundy's brother shortly before he drew her bath. But not Mr. Watson. Smith's letter to Howard Mundy follows (the murderer had previously deserted his bride, but had encountered her while on the prowl for other victims, and so was — briefly — her husband again):

"Dear Sir—I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to you, nor how you will censure me for using so strong a prop for supporting so grave a burden; only if you will accept my humble apology for pain and trouble which you share with your sister my wife, and let the past sink into oblivion, I account myself highly honored, and vow to take advantage of every future day that the great powers have ordained; until the miserable past is absolutely outlived and a character established which will be worthy of your appreciation. . . .

"In conclusion, no husband could possibly be more sorry than myself for what has occurred. Time is a great healer —Bessie and I have been living together since last Friday."

The letter is dated March 18, 1912; on July 13 Bessie was dead.

Mr. Watson commented: "Smith wrties to the brother in stilted style reminiscent of poor Aram's compositions—'I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to you, nor how you will censure me for using so

strong a prop to support so grave a burden.'" His reference, I take it, is to the schoolteacher murderer famous in poetry (Mr. Watson is also the author of *Eugene Aram: His Life and Trial*). There is no mention of Shakespeare. But oddly enough, Mr. Watson does quote something from Shakespeare, knowing it to be Shakespeare — the description of Gloucester's death, by drowning, in *Henry VI*, the hint for which he may have gotten from De Quincey's praise of this "incomparable miniature":

But see, his face
is black and full of blood,
His eyeballs further out
than when he lived,
Staring full ghastly,
like a strangled man;
His hair uprear'd, his
nostrils
stretched with struggling,
His hands abroad display'd,
as one that grasp'd
And tugged for life
and was by strength
subdued.

For he also quotes De Quincey himself:

"'In the murdered person all strife of thought, all flux and reflux of passion and of purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic; the fear of instant death smites him with its 'petrific mace.' But in the murderer . . . there must be raging some great storm of passion — jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred — which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look.' Thus wrote De Quincey in *Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts.*"

Now this is curious: Mr. Watson not only has the title wrong, but he has the wrong title wrong. The quotation is from De Quincy's *On the Knocking at the Gate in "Macbeth."* I will quote the other title correctly in a moment. "Petrific mace" is from Milton's *Paradise Lost:*

. . . The aggregated soil
Death with his mace
petrific, cold and dry,
As with a trident smote. . . .
(Book X)

Mr. Watson is not alone in overlooking the Shakespearean source of Smith's letter to Howard Mundy. In *Murder For Profit,* William Bolitho tells the story of the fatal second encounter between Smith and Miss Mundy at Weston-super-Mare. After quoting a letter from the murderer to Mrs. Tuckett, landlady, who had taken an instant dislike to him, Bolitho continues: "Pleased with this effort and still full of zeal, Smith went on to write an-

other to the brother, which begins with the peerless lines" (here he quotes the paraphrase of Shakespeare). There is no comment of any sort, unless "peerless lines" be one, and this, from the context, appears sarcastic.

And yet, as in the case of Watson, something should have warned him. Throughout his account he, too, gives examples of the killer's real writing vein, which is sometimes playful—in a sinister sort of way—and always ungrammatical, or turgid, as well as full of misspellings. In addition, he has nothing but contempt for "that stupid rogue, Smith" and Smith's "second-rate mind." It is Bolitho, incidentally, who makes this interesting observation about our murderer. "He began to frequent public libraries, and soon was praising himself for his literary taste."

Edmund Lester Pearson, the *doyen* of American crime writers until his death, gives an account of Smith in "Three Footnotes to De Quincey." The chapter, which appears in his book, *Murder at Smutty Nose, and Other Murders*, begins with a quotation:

"'Are you familiar with De Quincey's masterpiece on "Murder As a Fine Art?" Mr. Raffles?'

"Lord Thornaby, of the "Criminologists' Club,' was speaking to Mr. Hornung's famous burglar.

"'I believe I once read it,'" replied Raffles doubtfully.

"'You must read it again,' pursued the earl. 'It is the last word on a great subject; all we can hope to add is some baleful illustration or blood-stained footnote, not unworthy of De Quincey's text.'"

Mr. Pearson continues: "It is true that De Quincey, in the two papers and the postscript combined under one title — which is never correctly quoted, by Lord Thornaby, nor anyone — has laid down, for all time, the requirements for an interesting murder."

But in spite of this elaborate introduction, his study of Smith is not "prime" Pearson at all. His comment on the murderer's prose style is indicative of the sparseness of the materials with which he chose to work. It is comprised in six words: "he was not an educated man." He, as well as Watson, appears to have overlooked a coincidence; it is all the more surprising since both were writing with De Quincey's masterpiece in mind.

Smith married Miss Mundy

under the name of Henry Williams, son of Henry John Williams. Had he been reading De Quincey as well as Shakespeare? In the famous Postscript to his essay, "On Murder Considered As One Of The Fine Arts," De Quincey wrote:

"Never, throughout the annals of universal Christendom, has there indeed been any act of one solitary insulated individual armed with power so appalling over the hearts of men as that exterminating murder by which, during the winter of 1811-12, John Williams, in one hour, smote two houses with emptiness, exterminated all but two entire households, and asserted his own supremacy above all the children of Cain." Again: "He had but to say "My testimonials are dated from No. 29 Ratcliffe Highway,' and the poor vanquished imagination sank powerless before the fascinating rattlesnake eye of the murderer."

If Smith ever read this, it would have been around the centenary of Williams's stirring achievements. He was an artist himself; perhaps "the shock of recognition" operated strongly on him, strongly and sardonically, and he gave homage to his predecessor by assuming his name. The two men had something else in common.

"I am convinced," wrote Sir Edward Marshall Hall, who defended Smith, "he was a hypnotist.' It was in reply to a query by Watson. "Once accept this theory, and the whole thing — including the unbolted doors [of the bathrooms]—is to my mind satisfactorily explained."

As for Smith's credentials, they are dated from Herne Bay, from Blackpool, from Holloway, and inferentially — as the trial made abundantly clear — from many other places. "I am of opinion that we have not, so far, discovered the full list of this man's crimes," wrote Inspector Neil after Smith's arrest. The trial of Smith was the only event that displaced World War 1 from the front pages of English newspapers. It began on June 22, 1915; on August 13 he was hanged at Maidstone.

And now a word as to the possible other use that Smith made of his library reading.

In *The Scalpel of Scotland Yard, the Life of Sir Bernard Spilsbury,* the pathologist who examined the bodies of Smith's victims for traces of poison—he didn't find any — the authors, Douglas G. Browne and E. V. Tullett, re-

mark on Smith's "predilection" for resort towns: "In such towns, instinct or experience taught him, he would most readily meet lonely women no longer young, but still craving for what they thought of as romance."

Repulsed in the library, it was to the resort towns of England that Smith carried his new-gained knowledge to impress, at the first encounter by the sea wall, his prospective victims.

"I might just as well tell you she is a notch above me," he said of Bessie Mundy when he saw the effect produced by himself and his bride at Herne Bay.

All of his victims were a notch above him. Perhaps, in the opening gambit of those fatal interviews, he quickly brought in a reference to Shakespeare — De Quincey would have scared the daylights out of them. A reference to Shakespeare; it would give a hint of culture to offset his commonplace though muscular and military exterior.

Said Messrs. Browne and Tullett of Smith at Weston-super-Mare: "A few days later the vulgarian who boasted of his 'marked love of poetry and the fine arts' was writing to Bessie's brother and trustee, 'I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to you,' and going on about Time, the great healer." They, too, fail to give the source of the quotation.

As for Time, Smith probably had something special in mind, and would have appreciated Shakespeare's way of expressing it:

Time hath, my lord, a
wallet at his back
Wherein he puts alms for
oblivion.

And being a supreme artist, every detail was worked out, so that

the funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth
the marriage tables;

metaphorically speaking, of course, for he never spent anything in the pursuit, and a deal coffin, a common grave, sufficed in the aftermath.

"When they are dead they are done with," he remarked in his own inimitable style at Blackpool, and the significance of the plural escaped his shocked auditor.

(Continued from other side)

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