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**NOVEL by**

**FREDERICK C.  
PAINTON**



**A RED CIRCLE  
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**GUN TRAP FOR A MONEY KILLER**

**by  
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**SIDE SHOW TO HELL**

**by  
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# Traffic Management Home-Study

*made interesting and practical thru problem method*

**Y**OU know that Traffic Management TODAY is one of the important departments of business—that it is a profession offering unusual opportunities, and pays many men three, five and seven thousand dollars a year and more.

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Only—instead of having at your command the counsel of a single individual—one traffic expert—you have back of you the organized experience of a great business training institution, the authoritative findings of scores of able traffic executives, the actual procedure of successful practitioners.

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Knowing these facts, ask yourself if there can be any further question about the practicability of this training for you—ask rather if the real question is not about your own ambition and your determination.

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# STAR 10 STORIES DETECTIVE

Vol. 2, No. 4



July, 1938, Issue

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- BULLET BAIT . . . . . (7) . . . . .** by H. C. Brokmeyer 78  
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People would be shocked to hear of old Fuld's unfortunate death—especially his murderer!
- HORROR IN THE RAVINE . . . . . (9) . . . . .** by Brent North 90  
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- A COP BREAKS THE LAW . . . . . (10) . . . . .** by John Douglass Stolp 106  
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STAR DETECTIVE published quarterly by Western Fiction Publishing Co., Inc. Office of publication, 4600 Diversey Ave., Chicago, Ill. Editorial and executive offices, RKO Bldg.—Radio City, New York, N. Y. Entry as second class matter pending at the Post Office in Chicago, Ill., under Act of March 3, 1879. Entire contents copyright, 1938, by Western Fiction Publishing Co., Inc. Yearly subscription, 40 cents.





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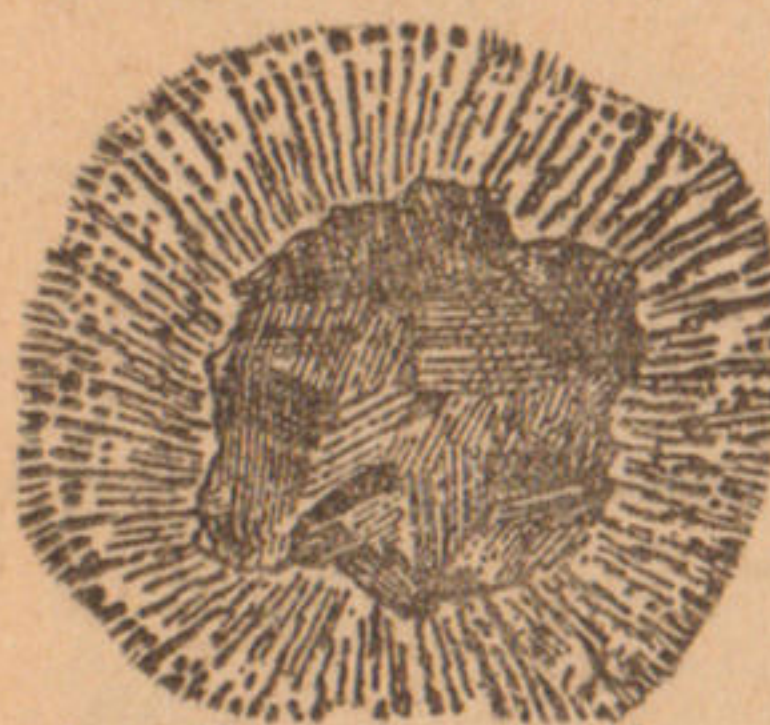
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# Lovers Die Young—A True Crime Article

**Y**OU have heard jealousy called the green-eyed monster. But you don't know what a demon it may become when it enters the soul of a woman passionately in love.

There is a farmer in Yugoslavia who told me the story of Angelina Sekoshan, not yet seventeen when she wreaked a vengeance swift and terrible on Franz Nagara, the man who spurned her affection for the love of another woman.

Call it puppy love on the part of Angelina, if you will. But puppies can fight and puppies can kill. And once again remember that "There is no fury like a woman scorned."

Repudiation may come in words that are soft and tones that are gentle. But for Angelina the sting remained. She brooded over it and she decided that if she could not have Franz no other woman should.

The story the farmer told me dates back many months before he was eye-witness to that tragedy of young love, as swift, as thrilling, as terrifying a melodrama as you have ever seen enacted on any stage. And yet every action of the girl seemed foreign to her nature.

Take Angelina. She was rightly named, or so it seemed. Sweet as they come, she was, docile by nature and lovely in her dark, striking way. A puppy may be sweet, docile and pretty too, and yet able to fight. And sometimes, when he strikes, strikes to kill.

Hers was a modern romance. A motorcycle was the vehicle which she fondly imagined could ride her and Franz into a heaven on earth.

To speed was her delight and, seated closely behind her lover, she raced with him up and down the fertile valley of the Danube. But healthy beings as they were they could not forever speed through what Angelina said was "paradise on earth."

"Let us eat," Franz would say, as he lifted Angelina from the seat beside him. Then they would have luncheon on the terrace of an inn overlooking the blue river.

Again Angelina would say, "Let's go down to the sea." They would roar faster, faster than ever, past Sarajevo to the Adriatic. Again they would leap

from the motorcycle and, forgetting that they were fully clothed, rush out into the surf, hand in hand, laughing as they ran.

**S**UCH was their love in the beginning; a love which merely served to entertain Franz. But to Angelina it was like a consuming flame.

That is why, perhaps, the farmer told me, Angelina determined to quench that flame when she found it did not burn in the heart of Franz Nagara.

At first there had been rides every evening. A ring glistened on the hand of Angelina as they rode in the moonlight. Franz had given it to her. Soon they were to be married.

But there came a night when he did not come to take her out. There were other such lonely nights, many of them when no Franz stood at the door.

Then one evening there came a knock. Franz was there.

"You have come back to me," Angelina cried happily as she threw herself in his arms.

But Franz repulsed her gently. He drew back. He spoke as if from a long ways off.

He told her, very gently, it is true, but with a patience that was maddening, "I thought I loved you. That is so. But now I know I no longer care.

"You are but a child. Other men will come into your life. As for me I have fallen in love with a woman of suitable age. I am going to marry her. Won't you wish me the happiness that I wish for you?"

The girl stifled a sob. She said:

"I do, Franz, I don't blame you. It isn't your fault if you have fallen in love with somebody else. We can't control things like that. They just happen."

Then she coaxed, "But do just this for me, anyway; just one thing. Take me riding with you, just once more for old time's sake."

It was while she was talking with him that the demon of jealousy was born and Angelina, the gentle one, Angelina, the child, became Angelina the woman, who swore vengeance would be hers. That night she paced the floor in paroxysm of jealous rage.

The next afternoon she was wreathed

*(Please turn to page 61)*



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# Beware the Devil's

A Startling, Fast-Action Feature-Length Novel as Timely as Tomorrow's Headlines!

## CHAPTER I

### CALLERS FOR MR. QUAILE

MR. PETER QUAILE'S gray, bird-like eyes held a glint of high excitement as he entered the office of the New York *Sphere* that

the afternoon, this was the most colossal story that had ever broken in America. Hence, he thought he had a right to be excited.

The receptionist, however, caught none of this. She nodded respectfully and said, "Good afternoon, Mr. Quaile."

Mr. Quaile's accurate mind caused him to say, "It is really a nasty afternoon, Miss Bowlen. Too much rain."

"Yes, sir," she agreed as if his was the voice from the mount. "There are



*As the foreign man turned, gun relaxed at his side, Bill swung a looping right hand that had one hundred and eighty pounds of hellfire in it*

afternoon at his accustomed time of five o'clock. It was the first time in his long quiet life that he had permitted anything to break his remarkable calm. But as he had been telling himself most of

two gentlemen in your office, waiting for you."



# Spy Ring!

By FREDERICK  
C. PAINTON

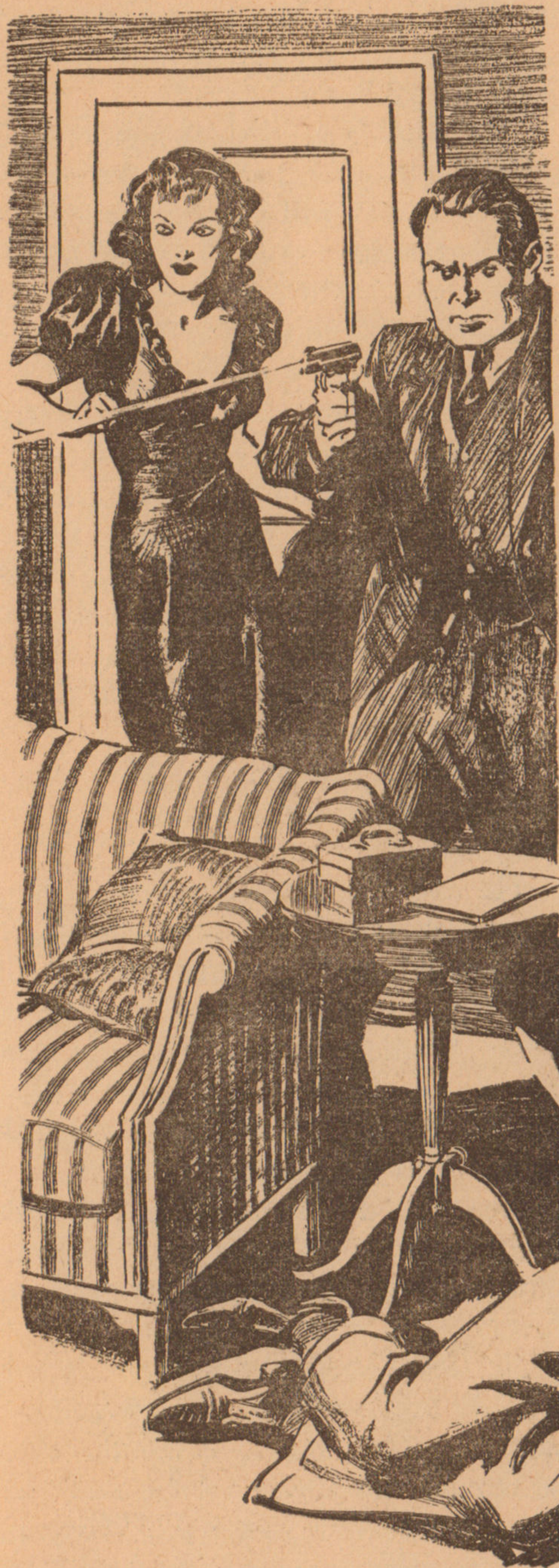
*Author of "Death Pays All Debts," etc.*

Mr. Quaile's eyes danced anew. "Are there, really? Dear, dear! So soon! Hm, thank you!"

He renewed his grasp on his black malacca walking stick and strode firmly across the city room, now more or less quiet as the news-gathering machinery poured in tomorrow's headlines.

Peter Quaile had walked across that city room for twenty-six years, six days a week without break at five o'clock. For twenty-five years of this time no one had ever paid the slightest attention to him. If a newcomer had noted his shy, quiet figure and made inquiry, somebody, usually an office boy, would say, "Oh, him? That's Quaile, the exchange editor and assistant librarian. He's as stuffed with facts as a turkey with peanuts. He can tell you anything you want to know about anything in the world important enough to get two lines in any newspaper. We call him 'the guy who knows everything.'"

And it was true that Peter Quaile



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*Portentous international complications, murder, treachery, and diabolic intrigue—Peter Quaile was surrounded by them all, simply because his mind was a natural repository for off-trail facts!*

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had saved many a reporter precious minutes as a deadline drew near by being able either to recite facts out of his head or place his hands instantly on the proper file envelope that had the needed background.

All this, mind you, for twenty-five years. The twenty-sixth year brought a remarkable change. The cable editor, uncoding a terse message one day, gasped as he saw that a certain prominent American playboy, named Anthony, had been arrested in Bucharest and held incommunicado.

"Arresting American citizens," he yelled. "By God, we'll blow this into the biggest yarn. We'll—"

He had to have background on previous unlawful arrests of American citizens and he consulted Mr. Quaile.

Mr. Quaile read the cable. He said quietly, "The man's name is not Anthony. He is Armand Lupescu, a notorious agent for Bukarina. Play down the story or you will be made ridiculous."

When the said Armand Lupescu made a spectacular escape and later dispatches developed his real identity and purpose, the cable editor mentioned the remarkable accuracy to the city editor. The city editor mentioned it to the managing editor, and the chief of the editorial board heard about it and had a brainstorm.

"That's it," he shouted, "with everybody in Europe getting ready for a war, they all want American gold or munitions or help and they'll do murder to get it. America is the greatest hotbed of intrigue there is, and nobody knows more about that than Peter Quaile."

MR. QUAILE modestly admitted he knew a lot of unusual facts, and these he began to print under a front-page daily column, *THE INSIDER SPEAKS*. News behind the news, and it was a honey, syndicated to three hundred papers, making Quaile, now that

McIntyre was dead, the greatest columnist in America.

As he walked in his spry way to his office, the assistant city editor looked up from the day's assignment book and said, "Hi yuh, Mr. Quaile, do we get anything hot on the munitions explosion story?"

Mr. Quaile paused. He stared pensively into space. "Yes," he said at length, "there will be developments. Of a er—startling nature, I fear. Developments which truth causes me to state will shock this country as it has not been shocked in twenty years."

He passed on, unaware of the startled look on the assistant city editor's drawn face. Of the quick notation to arrange for the emergency organization to snap an extra on the street in forty minutes.

In his office Peter Quaile removed his neat black hat, his neat black topcoat, hung up his black stick and bowed politely to the two men.

"How do you do, Mr. Montague?" he said in his quiet shy voice. "And you, Mr. Mardale?"

He could not see beyond his high-piled desk, but the two men, one fat, one lean, could, and they were rigid, pallid and stricken with horrified amazement. Peter Quaile's mouth suddenly compressed in alarm. With movements remarkable in one so unassuming, he hastened to the side of the office.

He stared down at the body, his quiet features suddenly pale, grim and somehow terrible with suppressed grief and fury.

No sound escaped him for so long as it might take a man to count five. Then, wrapping his hand in a handkerchief, he reached for the telephone and when the girl responded he said, "Give me Mr. Macpherson on the city desk." And presently, "Mr. Macpherson, Peter Quaile talking. My secretary, Charles Burke, is dead in my office. Please notify the police and send in photogra-



phers. . . . Eh? What? Oh, no, no accident. He's been murdered."

He paused a space and the wire crackled with Czar Macpherson's suddenly excited voice.

Then Quaile's unnaturally quiet voice. "Poisoned, I should say. I detect a clear bitter almond odor that would indicate cyanide of potassium."

He placed the French phone back on its rest. His spare shoulders suddenly squared themselves. You knew there was grief behind his eyes, shock and sorrow, too, for curly-headed Charles Burke had been dear to him whose life had been without many human contacts, had known few if any friendships. He stared at the two men.

"Well, gentlemen," he said softly, "what can you tell me of this?"

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## CHAPTER II

### MR. MONTAGUE SPEAKS

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EDWARD MONTAGUE, president of American Explosives, Inc., drew in a whistling breath and exhaled with a sharp gush of sound. Gradually his pale face assumed its naturally red color.

"I saw him die with my own eyes," he said queerly. "He was sitting there in your chair. He had just said he had to assemble stuff so you could dictate your column. He said you would be in promptly at five. He reached into the desk and passed us a box of cigars. We refused. He laughed and said he did not smoke cigars often but to show us how good these were he would violate his custom. He lit the cigar."

He paused, licked fat red moist lips. "Then he fell over without a sound. He never made a sound, did he, Phil?"

The thin man, known to newspapers and many boards of directors as Philip

Mardale, multi-millionaire vice-president and general manager of American Explosives, ran a thin bronzed hand over pure white hair that made his face pinkish and youthful.

"Not a sound," he corroborated. "It was ghastly. I swear to you I thought I could see his last breath lock in his throat."

Peter Quaile knelt gently by the body of the curly-haired youth whose once handsome face was now distorted by the cyanic spasms. Peter Quaile was thinking, "This gentle boy died because of me. I who brought him here that he might learn to be a journalist, who came to love him as a son, who wished for him high honor, have brought about his death."

He rescued the dead cigar from the floor, sniffed at it, and placed it on the desk.

When he stood up Czar Macpherson, a homicide detective, and two photographers burst in.

There was then that first confusion of excitement and aimless curiosity and pointless guessing that so annoyed Peter Quaile with all police investigations. He respected the police; he had often said that, considering the type of men they obtained, the political obstacles interposed between them and their goal, their successes were startlingly high. But he had little use for them himself.

So finally he raised his voice slightly and said, "Detective Horrigan?"

They stopped and listened to him; they always did.

"Poor Charles Burke," said Peter Quaile, "died—the victim of an attempt on *my* life. It is known that I smoke cigars as I dictate, and being er—intent, I frequently fish out such cigars without examining them. Someone," his jaws clamped grimly, "substituted a layer of cigars soaked in cyanic acid—a very deadly, almost instantly fatal



poison made from cyanogen."

"Yeah," said Horrigan, "but who done it? And why? If they was tryin' to get you, you know more than you've told me."

"Yes," admitted Peter Quaile readily, "but that, for the time, I propose to keep to myself. I promise you one thing, however, you shall have the killer of Charles Burke."

Meantime, Edward Montague, fully recovered, exhibited a marked impatience and glanced frequently at a wrist watch set with diamonds.

"I regret all this, naturally," he said in his pompous voice, "but I came here to see Mr. Quaile on a vitally important matter. Is it possible to speak to you, Mr. Quaile—outside—alone?"

"Listen," said Horrigan, "this is murder. And you saw this guy die. You—"

"Do you know who I am?" cried Montague arrogantly.

"Yeah," assented Horrigan, unimpressed, "you're the salesman for death—the guy that does murder in wholesale lots. You sell guns and ammo for big-time wars."

"Why—" Montague's face turned purple, "why—how dare you—"

"Most picturesque and, somehow, as all people's expressions are—unusually accurate," said Mr. Quaile. "However, Mr. Horrigan, I will vouch for Mr. Montague's presence at whatever place you desire him when you want him."

HE gestured with his hand toward the door. None molested him or Montague or Mardale when they went out. It bespeaks Peter Quaile's strength of mind that he did not look back at the curly-headed youth stretched on the floor.

His mild blue eyes sought Edward Montague's face. "Well?"

"It's about my son," began Montague, "my son, George."

Peter Quaile nodded slowly. "Pre-

cisely. He did not go away for a long visit as you had the newspapers state. He has been kidnaped—or murdered."

Edward Montague grew purple, his mouth opened but no sound came out. Philip Mardale said, "How can you know that?"

"It is my business to know many things," Peter Quaile rejoined softly, "as that the explosion in the Climax Powder Company was not an accident but deliberately arranged to blow up House Five. It is my business to know that certain interests are attempting to gain control of American Explosives."

He stopped abruptly, then: "What word have you had of your son?"

Edward Montague wet his lips. "Listen, Quaile, I'm a self-made man." He held out his hands. "Thirty years ago I was a hard-rock man, handling dynamite, lighting pipes with it. I worked my way up from nothing, and I didn't let anything stand in my way. My wife couldn't take it and she died before I got where I could deck her in diamonds like I said I would. I never married anybody else. I ain't—" he stopped, corrected— "never have had anybody but George. Maybe he's a play-boy, and had it easy and been reckless. But I love him. And that dirty skunk Lupescu hit below the belt when he grabbed George."

"Armand Lupescu of Bukarina hits where it hurts," said Quaile quietly. "So he er—snatched your son. What is the price of return?"

"A ten million dollar munitions credit for machine guns, hand grenades, and automatic rifles," grunted Montague. "A further ten million dollar credit to any new, recognized Bukarinian government—and—" his mouth clenched. He ceased speaking.

"And what else?" prodded Peter Quaile.

"Nothing," snapped Montague. "The other business has no relation. What I



came here for was to ask you to put in your column a statement that American Explosives, through me, announces the granting of such a credit."

"That's right," nodded Mardale. "Your statement in your column is the signal to the kidnapers to turn George loose."

"Ah, yes, precisely. Why were they forced to resort to such measures to gain such a credit?"

"Edward was a fool," said Mardale in explanation. "When Lupescu first approached us, I suggested the granting of the credit. But Ed, here, was afraid that maybe Lupescu's Green shirts couldn't make their revolution good and we'd lose the money. He refused. They threatened—and carried out the threat."

HE frowned disapprovingly at Montague. "I hate to say I told you so, Ed, but—" he shrugged resignedly.

Peter Quaile studied Montague keenly. "You are afraid to go to the police?"

"He's my son," scowled Montague. "The police could do nothing. Lupescu works through agents, fanatics. George would die—maybe the killer would die—but that doesn't end it."

"No," admitted Peter Quaile, "but if you yield—surrender—you realize what happens?"

Montague pursed his mouth indifferently. "A new government in Bukarina—what difference does it make?"

"Ah," murmured Quaile. "More than that. The Green Shirts—if they establish a new government—make a solid reactionary, absolutist bloc in Central Europe. Bukarina is the key to a nationalist hegemony in all of Europe. Lupescu and his kind hate America. They build now for the future—for the conquest of America."

"Nonsense!" growled Mardale. "Europe can't concern America yet—

other than economically."

"You do not look like a fool, sir," said Quaile mildly, "but you talk like one. Men's lives are short—nations go on until they die of internal rot. Men—many men—scheme and die now for what may happen in ten, twenty, fifty—yes, even a hundred years from now."

He studied Montague gravely. "I say to you if you yield to these people you endanger the future of this country."

"I'm thinking of my son," frowned Montague, "and beyond him, nothing."

Mardale stared at Quaile. "You move me," he said, and Quaile thought his voice queer, unreal, "I say nothing more on one side or the other."

"Yes," snarled Montague, "enough of this lecture on morals and patriotism when a boy's life is at stake. Will you print my statement or won't you?"

"No," rejoined Quaile, "I will not print it. But if you will tell me whom you are to contact and where, I will do my utmost to bring back your son."

"Ah, yes," sneered Montague, "your own secretary just murdered. Won't that keep you busy?"

"Yes," acknowledged Quaile, "but you forget—the same people who kidnaped your son also tried to murder me and killed my secretary. I perform two tasks."

"They may kill George if I delay—if I start something."

Inwardly Quaile sighed. He was not a cold-blooded man, nor one lacking in sympathy for a suffering father or a captured youth who loved life. But he was thinking, with that vision of his, of the thousands of youths who might die at a future date, to give one youth a few more years of life.

"How much time have you?" he asked.

"Until ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

"Then tell me the contact man, where



or how you are to meet him, and at what time."

MONTAGUE looked inquiringly at Mardale. Mardale shrugged. "Quaile knows more than he says. You can't go wrong giving him a chance."

"Very well," said Montague grudgingly, "but you will have to print my statement. After it appears I am to drive along Third Avenue at Fortieth Street and slow up in front of the Sure-Fire Employment Agency. There a signal will be manifested to me."

Quaile nodded. "That is enough. If I have your word, I will print a statement that construes consent. I will have it in the first edition. After that the responsibility and action will be mine. I will call on you tomorrow noon in your apartment."

He saw the two men to the door. Montague went out without further word, but Philip Mardale dallied, staring curiously at Quaile. "You know an awful lot about European intrigue," he murmured.

"I know human nature," rejoined Peter Quaile. "Those who have not would take it from those who have—it's criminal when an individual does it and the law punishes. Nations have no laws. Good day, sir."

He returned to his office, glad, indeed, that the body of Charles Burke had been removed. There still lingered the bitter almond smell to remind him how imperiled his own life was. He sat down, presently called Czar Macpherson.

"I wish to have Mr. William Gates assigned to me," he said. "Please send him in."

Bill Gates, star reporter of the *Sphere*, received the order with a frown. His big, brawny body stiffened in protest.

"How long since a first string reporter has to be bodyguard for an em-

balmed lily?" he growled.

"The newspaper game," said Macpherson, "is going to hell in a hand-basket. In the old days, a reporter said 'sir' to his city editor, he took his orders and said nothing. Now, by God, I'll have discipline on this sheet. A man is murdered in Quaile's office. Quaile's life is in danger. A story is developing that we can print in sixty point type all over page one, and you'll get out and do your part. And don't let me hear another word out of you."

Bill's anger faded. He grinned good-naturedly. "My, my, what big teeth you have, grandfather, darling."

He ambled into Quaile's office and lowered one-hundred and eighty pounds of bone and muscle into a chair.

Mr. Quaile studied his lean bronzed face, the six-feet-two of them. "You think, Mr. Gates," he said thoughtfully, "that I am a er—false alarm is the expression, I believe. You do not like me."

Bill's gray eyes widened. "Do you keep a dictagraph on me?" he demanded.

"No," said Mr. Quaile, "I just er—learn facts—I soak them up." He looked at Bill's big capable hands.

"Mr. Gates," he went on, "you are an excellent pistol shot. You are brave, as I know. And since you are a reserve military pilot, I judge that you love this country of ours."

"Why," said Bill, "I expect I do."

Mr. Quaile nodded. "Then get your very best pistol, Mr. Gates, and be prepared to accompany me. What we shall do may or may not be published in the public prints. We may both die rather ignominiously and none know why or how. But if we succeed, rest assured that the future generations—and I do not mean to be rhetorical—will owe you much for the preservation of these liberties of ours for which so many splendid men have died."



Before Bill could answer this deep passionate outburst, Mr. Quaile said, "I have your telephone number at home. Stay near that telephone and do not leave under any conditions. That is all now, Mr. Gates, and thank you for coming."

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### CHAPTER III

#### HOT TRAIL

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**B**ILL GATES sat by his window, moodily drinking a glass of sherry wine and thinking of a lot of things he could be doing. Bill was smart, he was ambitious, and he didn't like this idea of being armed guard for Peter Quaile. Bill was fair about it: maybe the guy was a whiz on foreign affairs and international intrigue which (Bill thought) existed only in novels by British authors. But why didn't Quaile stay in his own bailiwick? Certain it was that young Chuck Burke, a likely lad, had been murdered.

There was a story Bill could bite his teeth into; he was a crime reporter and why didn't they let him play along with the police and find out who did kill Burke? Bill tried to be fair because he was a fair-minded person, but the idea that a fragile old coot like Quaile could find that clever killer—

The telephone jangled peremptorily. It was Quaile.

"Be in front of the Paramount Building in twenty minutes, please," came the precise tones, "and be sure and bring your pistol."

Bill hung up, got his Colt automatic and checked it. For just one moment he wondered if this dried-up kindly old gent expected real trouble. A thrill went through Bill.

"I'll postpone judgment on him," he decided, "until I see what happens."

He found a cab in front of his apartment and climbed out in front of the Paramount Building. He stood on a curb while another car drove up. Peter Quaile's lean gray face leaned out, and then the door opened. Bill climbed in.

"Third Avenue," said Mr. Quaile.

The cab started and Bill leaned back. "Have you got a gun?" he asked.

"No," rejoined Mr. Quaile regretfully. "It is one part of my er—learning that has been neglected." He paused, then added, "if certain events work out I hope to remedy that lack."

Bill stared down his nose. "You go barging into jams like this not knowing how to protect yourself?"

Mr. Quaile shrugged. "I must do what is demanded of me. Also, Mr. Gates, I have er—methods of protecting myself."

Bill let it go at that. By now the cab was poking through Third Avenue traffic. He felt his inner excitement grow; had a quick sense of sharp suspense as if great events were about to unfold. He put his gun in his side pocket.

"Here," said Mr. Quaile to the driver, and the cab slid along the curb. Grimy, ill-dressed men clotted in front of the employment agency signs where in chalk various positions and pay were written on blackboards. Also, here, were sandwich men, hopeless down-and-outers who paraded endlessly advertising two pairs of pants with Jacob's made-to-measure suits.

One of these Quaile scanned. The sandwich board said, "Adler Hotel, Rooms Fifty Cents. Cuisine Excellent."

"Drive on," Mr. Quaile said. "Go to the Adler."

"Is that all?" demanded Bill.

"Is it not enough?" queried Mr. Quaile. "Mr. Montague and Mr. Mardale made contact and know the place of meeting, the Adler Hotel. They have gone there. We follow."



HE stared pensively at Bill as the cab wheeled left to Second. "Mr. Gates," he said, "do you believe in ghosts?"

Astonished, Bill replied, "No."

"Neither do I. Nor do I believe in repetition of pattern—that is to say, if one man has a style of action, another man, a stranger, could not thus repeat that pattern in detail."

"All of which means which?" grunted Bill.

"Did you ever hear of Armgaarde Valery?"

"No," said Bill. And then, "Wait a minute, I did, too. He was a diplomat or something and he was killed in an airplane crash seven years ago. Didn't he work for Germany during the World War?"

"He did—as a spy-master. His daughter died with him."

"Humph!" said Bill. "No love interest."

"No," said Peter Quaile, "yet it is queer that Armand Lupescu should follow a pattern of action that only Valery could have schemed. It is ghostly. I see moves that only Valery could conceive."

"You see more than I do," grunted Bill. "I see Charlie Burke dead, a guy named George Montague kidnaped, and a loan being forced to Bukarina. Those are facts. But what do they lead to? Where is the pattern? What's the eventual idea?"

"You will learn," promised Quaile.

Now, the Adler Hotel, a cheap, run-down hotel in a cheap, run-down neighborhood, confronted them. Mr. Quaile leaped lightly down. His gray bird-like eyes glittered.

"Come, please," he said with as close to an appearance of authority as he had ever used. He led the way into the hotel. Accurately, to the clerk, he described Edward Montague. The clerk nodded.

"Him and another gent went up to five-twenty-four ten minutes ago."

The elevator creaked and the old pull-rope slid raspingly through the holes. Bill's right hand tightened on the butt of his gun. Mr. Quaile pattered down the hallway. He muttered once, "These men are bold, too bold."

He rapped on the door panel. When there was no reply, he nodded grimly to Bill. "Your broad shoulders, please, Mr. Gates."

Bill stared, then grinned joyously. He hurled his big, grand body against the door. On the second thrust the old wood and older lock splintered and he charged through the wreckage to sprawl in a grimy room on a grimy carpet. He got up, hand clasped to his gun.

"Pardon me," he chuckled, "I hope I'm not intruding."

Four men were in the room. Bill already knew Edward Montague and Philip Mardale. The guy with the white hair, white tufted eyebrows and clipped white mustache he suspected to be Armand Lupescu. The other man, foreign-looking, had a hand inside his coat near his armpit. His eyes were snake-like.

"Don't," said Bill mildly. "I couldn't miss even through my coat."

"Gregov," said Lupescu sharply, "do not play the fool."

Gregov's hand fell away but he continued to stare malevolently at Bill. Bill produced his gun and hefted it, took a position with his back to the wall. And then, as if the stage were set, Peter Quaile advanced modestly into the center of the room.

MONTAGUE recovered from the surprise. "You did wrong to break in, Quaile," he cried harshly. "If word is not sent to the place where George is held in an hour, he will be killed. I have surrendered. I have



given the pledge—and Lupescu knows my word is my bond.”

“Furthermore,” said Philip Mardale, “Lupescu has convinced me at last that his Green Shirts can win control of the Bukarinian government. We turn a good piece of business and all is settled satisfactorily. You are not needed here, Quaile.”

Quaile said, “I think I am.” He stared thoughtfully at Mardale. “Do you think only of profits—of money—of millions more to spend? For money would you sell out the munitions industry of America?”

“It isn’t a question of selling out the munitions industry,” Mardale said evasively. “We sell munitions.”

“You lie,” replied Quaile quietly. “There is more to this scheme than merely gaining ten million dollars’ worth of munitions. More to it than putting Green Shirts in control of Bukarina. What the additional prize is I shall keep to myself pending further action. But this I do say, Montague, you will not sell a ten million dollar credit—and if you try I shall warn the State Department and have Federal authority hold you.”

Lupescu shouted angrily, “You dare not do this. I act for my party, representing my country—”

“Spare me that,” interrupted Peter Quaile wearily. “You are a spy, a cheat, a charlatan who works for someone else—who, I shall presently find out.”

“My son,” said Montague. “If I renege, what of him?”

It was a sign of weakness. Bill turned his eyes back to Quaile. In this moment of high drama he felt the little gray man’s power—the power of knowledge.

“Of course,” said Quaile. “Lupescu—where is George Montague?”

“I do not know,” this haughtily. “Why should I?”

Peter Quaile sighed. “I never threaten. I hate force. But, Mr. Gates, step forward.”

Wonderingly, Bill did so. Quaile said, “Lupescu, the Bukarinian consulate would like to lay hands on you. If they do, you will die enroute back to Bukarina. You know that.”

“I have my passport,” Lupescu licked his lips. “You dare not turn me over to those scoundrels. They would murder me.”

“Your passport can be rescinded,” said Quaile. “You can be ordered by the State Department to leave—the leaving being attended to by the Bukarinian consulate.”

Carefully, using his gloves, he took out two letters, threw them on a desk. “Those letters are addressed to me,” he said, “sent by Edward Montague.” Montague gave a start of surprise. “On them,” continued Quaile, “are your fingerprints, Lupescu. I will swear I mailed them in the box in front of my apartment. Other people will corroborate. The box was opened. The letters are found here—also—” he flung down a screw driver—“the tool that was used. On that you can be convicted of tampering with the United States mails and deported to Bukarina.

“A ghastly lie—a frame-up,” gasped Lupescu, turning green.

Quaile shrugged. “In the argot of the modern young person—so what? Tell me where George Montague is—” he advanced determinedly to the telephone. Bill tensed. And well he did, for with no more warning than a striking copperhead gives, the man called Gregov lunged forward. The gun whipped from his pocket and was streaking fire before it seemed to be level.

**B**ILL shot the man twice in the arm so that it hung like a broken tree branch, blood drooling from the finger-



tips. The man neither groaned nor cried out. The gun fell from the shattered wrist. Peter Quaile advanced thoughtfully and picked it up.

"Excellent, Mr. Gates," he murmured, "highly commendable."

The tenseness went out of that room then, and Bill knew that Quaile was master. Quaile twirled the gun by the trigger guard.

"Do I use the telephone, Lupescu, or do you surrender young Montague?"

"If I tell, what then?" Lupescu twitched with fear.

"You will be permitted to sail on the *Queen Mary* tomorrow and choose your own port of call," said Peter Quaile.

Mardale and Montague had been a witness to all this. Mardale said, "Don't be a fool, Lupescu, you've lost. Tell us where George is."

With a vindictive glance at Montague Lupescu swallowed, said, "He's in the Garden Hotel, eight hundred and eight—with a woman, and drunk. It wasn't hard to keep him."

He advanced apace. "And unless you supply the arms, Montague, there are—"

"Spare the threats," cut in Quaile sharply. "Already I regret sparing such a snake."

He turned. "That is all, Mr. Montague. We shall return your son. Your agreement is off. Right?"

"Right," nodded Montague dully. "I'll go with—"

"You will go home, taking Mr. Mardale with you. Come, Mr. Gates."

Bill backed to the door. He had a sudden sense then of incompleteness, as if somehow this was just a move in a game whose ultimate end was cloaked in tragedy. He understood then that Quaile, by his mysterious references, was hinting at something greater than a mere loan. Silently he got into the cab. As it moved away he turned to Peter Quaile.

"I owe you an apology, Mr. Quaile. I thought you were an old—old dodo. But I think you're tops—and on the trail of the story of the century. And I want you to know I'm with you to the finish."

Peter Quaile smiled gently. "Thank you," he said. "We shall get along. And I'll call you William."

"I wish you would," laughed Bill. "To me you're the Professor from now on."

Bill held his peace for a while and then suddenly blurted, "There's a lot more to this than the murder of Burke, the forced loan and the abduction of George Montague. Something terrible going on. You know what it is. Won't you tell me?"

"I wish I could," said Mr. Quaile gravely. "I can only tell you that these are steps in an infernal conspiracy to gain control of the American Munitions industry. For what purpose remains to be seen."

The Garden Hotel was a smart, brightly lit hostelry that catered to a flashy crowd and cared little what went on in its rooms, gambling and otherwise, so long as the guest paid his charges. Peter Quaile reached the room door first. Bill found him staring intently at the knob.

Bill stared, too, and his heart gave a leap. A tiny spot of fresh blood lay on the chromium brilliance of it.

"The door's unlocked, too," he gasped. "My God, have they found out what you've done and come and killed the guy?"

PETER QUAILE thrust on the panel. The door slid silently open.

"Ghosts!" he muttered. "Ghosts!"

Bill piled hastily after the little man. The gaily furnished room, even yet littered with newspapers, empty whiskey bottles and glasses, looked hurriedly vacated. No one was in sight.



Yet a trunk reposed squarely in the center of the floor.

Peter Quaile spoke grimly. "Blood on the floor. Signs of a struggle. Something devilish has hapened. . . . Open the trunk, William."

Ginigerly, using his handkerchief, Bill lifted the lid. He stared within, staggered back, his stomach leaping and gagging against his diaphragm.

"My God!" he muttered, "it's a woman."

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## CHAPTER IV

### DEVELOPMENTS

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THE surprise to Bill Gates was overwhelming. He had suspected murder, but he had looked for a man's body—George Montague's body. Nor had Bill missed the look of supreme astonishment on the face of Peter Quaile. The gray columnist stared at the naked, lovely figure, at the pretty face, pretty even with the ghastly rouge on it.

"Never," he said almost bitterly, "let one say I know everything. I have made mistakes—many of them. But God helping me, I shall make no more."

"But where's Montague?" demanded Bill.

Peter Quaile did not immediately reply. He recovered a handkerchief—it had George Montague's initials on it. He recovered a penknife, obviously the weapon used to hack this girl's throat. It had George Montague's name in gold on it. To Bill's further amazement, Peter Quaile carefully wrapped these up, put them in his pocket. He looked around for other objects, finally, not finding anything, went to the telephone.

He called Center Street and the Homicide Bureau. When he got Horrigan he said, "Yes, another murder,

Jim. Her name is Sally Barlow. She is, or rather was, a dancer in the Green Palm night club. She sued a playboy named Carrol two years ago for breach of promise. I loath to speak ill of the dead, but she was not er—er—all she should be. We can't remain here. All I wish you to do is keep this death a secret for at least twenty-four hours. It is the final clue I need to solve the main problem. And when the main problem is solved, the murders will be cleared up."

He hung up. Bill said, "Did George Montague kill her?"

"No, I think not," rejoined Quaile carefully. "That is why I am keeping these clues." He glanced at his watch. "It is time to go."

"Where?"

"To see George Montague."

This made no sense to Bill, but Peter Quaile was obviously distracted as he went to the street and Bill forbore to ask questions since all would presently be made clear.

In the cab going crosstown Peter Quaile suddenly said, "William, you asked me a little while ago what was the main motive behind these mysterious violent events. I told you I was not sure. I am sure now. I know who did this."

"Who?" cried Bill eagerly.

"Armgaarde Valery."

"The spy who was dead."

"The spy who was reported dead," assented Quaile gravely. "But he is not dead. This has a definite pattern that only his mind could conceive. It has an ultimate objective that only he would wish."

"And that?"

"The conquest of America."

Bill gaped. "War?"

"Oh, not war now. Nor next year. Perhaps not for twenty years. Conquests are developed like the policy of nations over a period of years. It is a



game of chess in which you maneuver your pieces until you have the king checkmated."

The older man stared moodily at the passing lights.

"The formation of nationalist governments in countries like Bukarina—making a solid bloc of poor, desperate people who will be offered the lure of conquest and loot. That is one move."

HE shrugged. "A European war must come first. That war will be won by the side having the greatest amount of munitions. America has a neutrality policy, but suppose—" he leaned forward intently—"suppose the bloc of nationalist nations *owned* American munitions industries. They could be supplied and win. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes—no—" Bill stuttered weakly, "it's so damned big I—it makes my head reel."

"Yes," murmured Quaile, "I can understand. It made me reel as I followed each subtle little scheme from its inception to its conclusion. This plan has been under way for twenty years, William. European politics are governed by it. The conquest of Ethiopia was a small point. The establishment of Manchukuo—"

"Japan!" gulped Bill.

"Armgaarde Valery married a Japanese woman of nobility," said Peter Quaile gravely. "Japan says openly she seeks world domination. In a little over a hundred years she has become one of the three great powers of the world." He shrugged, stirred. "But here we are."

His teeth clicked as he opened the cab door. "Montague has lied and withheld vital information. What he knows is the key to our future action. I shall have no mercy."

So Bill followed the amazing little man to the triplex eighteen-room apart-

ment that Edward Montague maintained in the most exclusive apartment house on Park Avenue. In answer to the buzzer a tall, thin, cold-faced butler responded.

"Mr. Montague has but just returned," he said. "Who shall I say called?"

He blocked the doorway solidly. "Peter Quaile."

"I have orders to inform you Mr. Montague is not at home."

Peter Quaile sighed. "William, you will please remove this obstacle."

In that instant the butler took a swing at Quaile. Had he struck him the little man might have been seriously hurt. But Peter Quaile grabbed the arm, twisted it in strange fashion and the butler screamed in pain. At that instant Bill, who had already unleashed a punch to save Quaile, hit the butler on the chin. The man went down and his twisted arm cracked like a rotten branch.

Peter Quaile walked around him and so into the apartment. Montague came running, face purple, "What is the meaning of this?"

Unperturbed, Peter Quaile said, "Before we discuss that, tell me how you happened to employ that butler?"

"Wilson? Why, he's been with me six years. He's—what does this mean? What have you done to him?"

"His name is Helwig. He is a spy," said Peter Quaile. "Search him, William, and make sure he is tied. He has a reputation as a killer."

As he spoke he had been advancing on Edward Montague and the big munitions czar backed before him until they came into a salon whose furnishings alone must have cost nearly a hundred thousand dollars.

"Where's your son George?" Quaile demanded.

"Why—I don't know. He—" Montague fumbled for words.



"Cease lying," said Peter Quaile, his eyes flashing. "He has been home—came home before you got here. He told you about the girl Sally Barlow being dead. You're afraid he'll be arrested for murder. You intend to slip him away."

"You devil!" growled Montague, then defiantly, "Yes, he is here. But he didn't kill the woman. Other men did. A man called Stanislaus."

"I have no doubt that is true," said Peter Quaile, "and for the moment we can let the matter rest there to take up something far more important."

**B**EFORE the steady blaze in his eyes Montague's glance dropped. He was suddenly no longer the great, potent munitions magnate possessed of millions of dollars, but a harassed tired old man.

"In my office," said Peter Quaile softly, "you spoke of an additional demand made on you when George was kidnaped. You refused to say what it was. I mistakenly did not press the point. But I must know now. What else was asked of you?"

Edward Montague had a tortured air. "I cannot tell you. I can't. It means ruin for me."

"Ah," said Peter Quaile, "ruin, you say. You have millions invested in European munitions plants. You wanted to establish a world trust. You mean you would lose all that."

"I mean I would lose my life," shouted Montague. "I mean—the hell with you. I won't tell you."

"But you will," said Peter Quaile dangerously, "I have the evidence involving George Montague in the death of Sally Barlow. A penknife. A handkerchief. I do not believe the boy touched her. But the police will think differently. You will speak, Montague, or by Godfrey, I'll call them."

Montague teetered helplessly, hatred,

fear, helplessness twisting his face. As he stood there a smaller, plumper replica of him slid palely into the room. Bill saw it was George Montague, the missing kidnaped son. Bill took up a stance, his gun leveled, to watch developments.

Montague surrendered. He said sullenly, "One of the demands was that I was to offer in the public market one hundred and twenty-one thousand shares of American Explosives at four hundred dollars a share."

"Ah, yes," Peter Quaile's bird-like eyes grew bright. "That represents control of American Explosives, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"And the person holding control can say to whom munitions will be sold?"

"Yes."

"You accepted?"

"No," blazed Montague energetically. "I refused. That offer came before George was kidnaped. I did not know the same parties were involved until Lupescu repeated the same proposition."

"You mean you had a note outlining this offer to purchase?"

"Yes."

"Get it," ordered Peter Quaile with ill-concealed eagerness.

He paced up and down as Montague left the room. Finally he halted before the plump youth of twenty-four.

"What happened in the room?" he asked.

There was no power, no verve in George Montague. He looked like his father, but he had not the drive that had pulled the older man to a tremendous fortune and power.

He let his eyes slide away. "Nothing. They kept me there. Then they killed—killed Sally—" his lips quivered—"and I hit one of them and ran out."

"Do you know why they killed her?" Peter Quaile asked.



"No, it was murder, wanton murder," burst out the youth.

FOR a space Peter Quaile stood quite motionless, as if weighing the boy. Under the regard of the older man's bird-like eyes the boy fidgeted, twisted. Finally he yelled, "I didn't kill her. I swear it. I—"

"You are lying," interrupted Quaile quietly. "You were having an affair with the girl. You took her to that hotel. There you were surprised by those who held you prisoner."

"I married her," cried the boy. "In Westchester. We went to the hotel—and the men came and held us prisoner."

"Married her," muttered Quaile. "How extraordinary! That explains everything."

Bill was all excitement but before the point could be developed, Edward Montague returned and silently handed Quaile a note. Quaile read it. He nodded, and into his face came such a light, his eyes blazed so that he seemed transfigured.

"Yes, Armgaarde Valery's writing. The man who hates America with a hatred that is as black as pitch."

Peter Quaile was actually trembling with excitement. Slowly, he handed back the note. "If that man dies," he spoke tensely, "the peace of the world could be insured for twenty-five years."

"It is not his life to consider," snarled Montague. "It is mine. George's."

Peter Quaile's teeth clicked, as if he had reached a decision. "One thing has gone awry in Armgaarde Valery's plan. He must make another move. He will do so. Then, please God Almighty—" Peter Quaile spoke reverently,—"I shall have him."

"But now—what now, man?" cried Montague.

"You and your son will remain in this apartment. You will not leave without

my express order."

Firmly Peter Quaile placed his black hat on his head. Shrugged into his black topcoat.

"Bring Helwig, William. He knows something. Even a little may be important now."

Bill's arrangements were simple. He lashed Helwig's broken arm and his good hand together with the man's own Ascot tie. He jabbed him in the back with the gun.

"Onward, and forward, fellah," he said.

Peter Quaile hailed a cab. He chuckled as he seated himself. "We have made tremendous progress, William."

"Yeah," said Bill. "Too much if you ask me. If this guy Valery is as clever as you say, then this looks too simple."

Peter Quaile nodded gravely. "William, you impress me more and more. That is the exact truth. Armgaarde Valery has made moves to which we have answered. It is as if he had cut a trail through an impenetrable jungle, knowing we must follow to the trap he has laid."

Bill shrugged uneasily. "That's my feeling. So what do we do?"

Before Peter Quaile could reply, Bill yelled, "Look out," grabbed one hand at his prisoner and gave Peter Quaile a terrific shove with the other. But even so he couldn't prevent what was going to happen.

A chromium and black car, thirty feet long, and costing a thousand dollars a foot, came tearing out of the side street right against the red light. As straight as an arrow it roared toward the side of the cab. The driver yipped and twisted his wheel but that was all the good it did him, for the thick bumper of the car crashed the taxi right above the running board and tipped it over as easily as Bill could have tipped a child's tootsie toy.

The car went over on its side, rolled



on until the roof was down, skidded this way and then rolled lazily on over with a terrific crash that swerved it so that it slid like a wounded snake up on the sidewalk and bashed through a solid twenty feet of plate glass window.

Bill and Peter Quaile and Helwig were tossed around like squirrels in a rotating cage. Bill wondered why they weren't dead and thanked God for all-steel construction. As he emerged, a thin whicker of sound whispered past his ear, and a bullet imbedded itself in the cushions.

He staggered in dodging, tripped and fell flat. Past him Helwig shot like a sprinting runner. Bill dragged himself upright and snapped off a shot. He knew he hit the car and that was all he knew. For as Helwig reached the running-board, the great car whirled and with a scream of motor shot up the street like a bullet.

Bill caught one glimpse of the driver. And it staggered him so, that look, that he gaped and did not shoot again as he had intended.

For the driver was a girl so beautiful that she seemed unreal. Only the gun in her hand, a big automatic with a knob on the end told him that she was real. That she had deliberately toppled over this cab, that she had deliberately fired at him to kill.

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## CHAPTER V

### MIDNIGHT SURPRISE

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**B**ILL GATES arrived at the *Sphere* office, crushed by the check administered to Quaile's plans, stunned by the fact that such a beautiful girl could have tried to kill him. It violated all convention, it broke down all his beliefs.

"Valery took that trick," he groaned,

"and now we'll never get Helwig to talk."

Peter Quaile, rubbing a bruise with ointment, took a more philosophical view.

"Your opponent must take a trick once in a while," said he, "grant him this and let's plan on the next."

"What next?"

Peter Quaile was thoughtful. "There are two mistakes in this scheme of Valery's," he murmured. "First, the kidnaping of George Montague failed, and was a weak move. Valery knew it or else the lad would not have been permitted to return alive. Doubtless Valery charged that off to having proved to Montague what he could do if forced to it. So to drive Montague into a corner and get control of American Explosives, he must devise another means."

"What was the second mistake?" queried Bill.

"The murder of that girl, Sally Barlow. It doesn't fit into the pattern. Yet it is not wanton murder—Valery does not go in for that. It had a motive. What was it?"

Bill shrugged. "She knew something."

"Exactly," cried Peter Quaile. "And that something, I believe, is the identity of Armgaarde Valery. So that gives me my next move."

"And that?"

Quaile smiled at the youth gently. "You will not be needed, William. See Macpherson and get an expense voucher and draw a hundred dollars. Buy such things as you need and go to the Royal Pine Hotel. Register under an assumed name. Do not leave the hotel under any circumstances."

At that instant Peter Quaile blushed. "Get a twin bed room—and I will join you there. But," he warned, "do not go to your own home under any circumstances."

"You mean they'd try to get me?"



"I mean they would and without fail," assented Quaile gravely. "And you must at all costs stay alive now. For in case I am er—abolished, you can carry on."

Bill stared in alarm. Something happen to Peter Quaile? A few hours ago he would not have cared so much. But now, since being with the man, Bill had conceived a fondness for the older man that viewed with horror any chance of a tragedy.

"I'll go with you," he announced.

"You will go to the hotel and sleep, as I have said," rejoined Quaile firmly. "The great task still remains. You must be fresh for it. Goodnight, William," he smiled and his eyes twinkled.

Bill patted the old man on the back. "Goodnight, Professor," he said, "and don't let anything happen to you. I'd start shooting with both hands."

He went to the door, and suddenly recalled he hadn't asked Quaile something.

"Who was that girl?" he cried. "I'd know her among a million."

"No doubt," assented Peter Quaile. "I do not know her, lad."

AT the city desk Macpherson silently filled out the money voucher. Then: "Do we get a big piece?"

"So hot," said Bill, "you'll need asbestos paper."

On the way to the Royal Pine, New York's greatest hotel, he stopped at an all-night drug store for toilet articles and a pair of pajamas wrapped in cellophane.

"Everything but drugs," he muttered. "Maybe they don't even carry those."

At the desk he registered as James Bates and took a suite of two bedrooms and a parlor, grinning as he thought of Peter Quaile's blush.

"Save the Professor's modesty," he chuckled.

The bed was thick and soft and he

lay his tired bones down on it, his brain spinning with the swift events of the evening. But not for long. He was young, nerveless and tired. He snored. He never knew why he awoke but suddenly he came up from the black depths of exhaustion, stirred by a noise.

"That you, Professor?" he muttered.

"No," said a soft, husky voice.

Sleep fled from Bill's brain. He reached for his gun. He sat up suddenly in bed. He switched on the light. The girl of the car, dressed in a white filmy evening gown, stood there looking at him. Bill half levelled the gun. The girl made no move in defense, just stared.

"Hello," said Bill. "How did you get in?"

"With a key," she rejoined. "You can lay aside the gun. I could have killed you instead of awakening you."

This was logic. Bill dropped the automatic.

"Do you usually pay calls at—" Bill glanced at his wrist watch—"Four o'clock in the morning?"

"I came as soon as I saw Mr. Quaile." She smiled. "Were you frightened when my bullet came close?"

"Petrified," said Bill.

"I am a good shot," she said, "and I had to make that look good. Arm-garde Valery was crouched behind me."

Bill looked puzzled.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Stasia Gordon," she rejoined. "Beyond that it is of no interest what I am. I simply tell you we play on the same side."

"Secret Service?" Bill was thrilled.

She turned her back. "Get dressed, please. We must go at once."

Bill hopped out of bed, grabbed his clothes and went to the bathroom. Suddenly he remembered Peter Quaile.

"Where is Mr. Quaile?" he asked.

"He went to see Tony Weeks, the



husband of Sally Barlow, the murdered girl."

"Oh-ho!" said Bill. "That's a big lead."

"We will know when he joins us."

"I've got to check with him," said Bill.

Bill, now dressed, reached for the telephone. She watched him, her hair a dark cloud of loveliness to frame her face. He called the office.

THE dog-watch editor said, "Quaile? He went out about three o'clock. A guy by the name of Tony Weeks called him. He was all hot and bothered and and streaked out of here like a rabbit."

Bill hung up. He had been slightly suspicious of this girl for all her explanations. But he was satisfied now. He moved closer to her, thrilled by a subtle perfume.

"Where do we go, and why?" he asked.

"To capture Armgaarde Valery and Lupescu," she said, her eyes blazing.

"Just you and I?" he exclaimed.

She smiled without mirth. "There will be two other agents and Mr. Quaile."

"But," said Bill, "why haven't you been in my life before?"

She stamped an impatient foot. "Can an under-cover agent expose herself?" she said. And then: "Don't you see things like this have to reach a head before we can strike? And tonight the situation is at hand. Valery is going to blow up the Climax Powder Works, Montague's biggest eastern plant."

"Wow!" Bill muttered. He suddenly remembered. The Forsythe Powder Works had had an explosion two weeks ago. Peter Quaile had made some queer hints in his column.

"Listen, did Valery blow up the Forsythe Works, too?" he asked.

"Of course. But not to do much damage. Only one building. There were

four men in there—two of them comrades of mine—" her eyes were black—"they had to be gotten rid of. That was the way he did it."

Bill pocketed his gun. His teeth clicked.

"Let's go," said he.

She snuggled warmly against him in the cab; he was aware of this subtle perfume, one he had never smelled before. This girl was a honey, he told himself, and sitting next to her now, he was suddenly possessed of a longing to take her into his arms. She was sensuous, mysterious, voluptuous. Somehow his hand strayed to hers, warm and firm, and she permitted it to remain so.

"Don't you get afraid in jams like this?" he asked.

"I have no fear of anything," she replied. "I don't love life that much."

"Wait 'til I grow on you," grinned Bill.

"I hate men," she said. "I hate the human race."

Bill felt a sudden chill. What could have hurt this girl that she talked like this? He said gently, "That's no way to talk."

She did not reply. To change the subject he asked, "Who is Armgaarde Valery?"

"You mean, what does he look like?"

"Yes."

She startled him by saying, "I do not know." Unconsciously he drew her close.

"Don't know?"

"Precisely. The man has always worn a flesh-colored mask."

"Melodramatic idea," said Bill. "I wonder why?"

She shrugged inside his arm. "Probably—" this ironically—"because we would know his real face."

"Humph!" grunted Bill. "That isn't funny." He paused, then exclaimed, "By Golly!"

"What now?" she asked.



"Maybe," cried Bill, "this Valery is someone I know—somebody we've met."

"Well, what's so surprising in that?"

"Nothing," admitted Bil, "only I hadn't thought of it before. I just figured—oh, skip it."

NO more was said until the cab stopped at the gate of the Climax Powder Company's main factory. Bill paid the meter while the girl hung close.

"Don't try to skulk," she warned. "Valery thinks I'm his agent, and I'm expected to bring another. They've tied up the watchman."

"Where are the two secret service men?" Bill demanded.

She nodded toward a toolroom entrance. She walked to it, tried the door. Then she tugged at Bill's arm.

He passed within and, in darkness, followed the girl through the tool shop, past a nitrate reduction unit, and so by a long connected passage to a mixing room. Bill knew something about this. Much of the explosive was kept in refrigerators; some was mixed in vast vats of water. Around him, he knew, was enough explosive to rip a city to bits. He hoped Quaile and these people knew what they were doing. If Valery touched this off, he realized with a chill that the pyrotechnics would make daylight out of darkness, the thunderous roar would shake the windows out of houses fifteen miles away.

He had his gun out now, tightly gripped; and he wondered just how the capture was going to be effected.

Suddenly he bumped into the girl. She had stopped before a small room, possibly a foreman's office, off the main floor. The girl thrust Bill ahead of her. "In here," she whispered.

Bill advanced through the darkness. He heard the door click behind him.

As it did so a voice said, "Are we all here?"

"Yes," the girl said.

With that the lights went on. For a moment the brightness dazzled Bill. Then as he squinted through thick lashes he saw Peter Quaile.

Peter Quaile bound hand and foot!

Beyond Quaile was Edward Montague. Tied up like a mummy. And George Montague! And as his eyes strayed to the floor he saw a dead man. The man had been shot through the skull at close range, for powder marks spattered the thin, cold features. Bill did not know who he was but he had a dreadful hunch.

He whirled. There was the girl, Stasia Gordon. And beyond her was Armand Lupescu, and two lean foreign-looking men with enormous pistols in their hands. Lupescu was smiling thinly, apparently amused at Bill's stupefaction.

"Drop the gun, Gates, this is where you get off."

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## CHAPTER VI

### "BLOW 'EM UP"

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BILL took a big breath and blew it out. He relaxed, then managed a wry grin.

He said, "Secret agent, eh? Not a brilliant lie."

"A fool like you doesn't demand brilliance," she said.

"As an actress," said Bill, "you ought to be in pictures."

"They don't take half-castes, half-breeds in pictures," she said bitterly.

Bill looked his bewilderment and Peter Quaile spoke mildly, "Miss Gordon—to use her present name—is Arm-garde Valery's daughter. Her right name, I believe, is Pokette. She is a half Japanese."

"You know too much," she flashed,



"and it is time you were extinguished."

Bill remembered his gun, still clasped in his right hand. He made to raise it.

"Don't bother," Pokette Valery said wearily, "I took the cartridges out while you held my hand."

Lupescu laughed softly. "Well, we have them all here as planned. The fuse is laid. Why do we wait?" He stared at Bill as if hoping to see him flinch, show fear.

Bill grinned. Loudly he said, "How'd they get you, Professor?"

Peter Quaile shrugged ruefully. "I went to see Tony Weeks. They were there—these three—and having killed Weeks they brought me along. The Montagues came because they thought I ordered them."

Lupescu growled. "Quiet." And then to the girl: "Why do we wait?"

"My father will be here in a few minutes," Pokette Valery said. "He wishes to speak to Edward Montague."

Edward Montague stared at her pop-eyed with terror. "He wouldn't kill me," he blurted, "my God, what is to be gained by that?"

The girl shrugged indifferently. "What is to be gained by your living?"

Bill was shocked. This girl was inhuman in her callousness. He knew then she had tried to kill him in the cab wreck and, failing, had made a fool of him by luring him here with a few tricks.

The girl lit a cigarette, stood moodily inhaling on it. Finally she said, "Bind him."

Bill was swiftly trussed, despite his ineffectual struggles, and consigned to sit next to Peter Quaile.

Bill said, "I was a fool, Professor. I am sorry."

"Hush, William," rejoined Mr. Quaile mildly. "She has tricked more subtle men than you."

"Maybe," admitted Bill, studying the girl's lovely contours, "but I hate

to think my dumbness ruined all your plans."

"My plans," whispered Peter Quaile, "are not altogether destroyed. Your opponent must always play out his move."

Bill tried to get some slack in his bonds and failing, relaxed in angry silence. The girl was whispering to Lupescu. The Bukarinian replied angrily. The girl shrugged, "You are altogether too quick to strike, Armand. You should not have had Gregov kill this Sally Barlow. It was a mistake and Father is furious."

"I did it for you," he implored. "The girl would have exposed us all. She was going to blackmail that young fool Montague—and then found out about us."

HE broke off sharply as a gentle studied rap thudded on the door. "That's Father. Turn out the lights," said the girl. The lights went out. The door was unlocked and Bill heard a quick firm step. His heart suddenly hammered excitedly. At last he was to see this infamous Armgaarde Valery. "Put on the lights," said Pokette.

As they went on Bill looked eagerly at the man now standing near the girl. He could not restrain his exclamation of amazement.

But before he could utter a word Edward Montague gave vent to a yell of rage.

"Philip Mardale! Why—this—you—it's impossible!"

The dapper, gray-haired man with the dark, almost sallow skin in this light, smiled without mirth. A sinister smile you never saw when he was executive vice-president of American Explosives.

"People are always surprised when they learn who I am," he said. "It is usually the last surprise they have." He turned to Lupescu, "You have been a



fool but we will discuss that later." He chucked Pokette under the chin, "Sweetheart, you were perfect as usual."

A moment or so of silence and then Edward Montague thrashed in his bonds.

"But what do you gain by killing me?" he cried hoarsely.

"The thing I should have thought of long ago," laughed Armgaarde Valery. "The thing which would have saved me many steps in this problem, steps that gained me nothing but possession of a man I wish to kill." He glanced venomously at Peter Quaile.

"What? For God's sake, what?" Montague half-yelled.

"I should have thought of the inheritance tax in your country," grinned Valery. "Your heir to pay many millions must put part of your stock on the market. As a director, as your dearest friend for six years," he laughed wickedly, "I shall advise him when and how to sell. I shall buy it in. For the Japanese syndicate that is backing Lupescu—planning for the future."

He licked his lips, affixed his stare to Peter Quaile. "You escaped my perfumed cigars, Quaile. I doubt if you can escape five tons of trinitrotoluol."

"You plan with all your old skill, Valery," murmured Peter Quaile, admiringly, "but why did you permit the story of your death to go forth?"

Armgaarde Valery pinched his lips thoughtfully. Finally he smiled.

"The man who knows everything they call you," he said, "so you shall know everything. It can do no harm now." He paused, then: "Foreseeing the war between the east and the west, I had to die. I had worked for Germany. People knew me. True, Germany was Japan's friend now, but would be our enemy to be crushed later. So I died. A plastic surgeon re-made my face, my body. I came to America

with six million dollars of Japanese money. I bought munitions stocks until I was elected executive vice-president."

He laughed.

"It was simple. Our first move against America, which we shall conquer in fifty years."

He ceased to speak, turned to Lupescu. "I shall light the fuse. You arrange the rest."

WITH no further word he turned to go. As he did so, Bill, to his amazement, felt his bonds relax, fall away. His wrists were free. He felt a nudge from Peter Quaile. How this had been done Bill did not know. He only knew that the two foreign-looking men were whispering together. That Pokette Valery was lighting a cigarette. That if he did not act now he would die like a trapped rat.

He gathered his muscles. Pokette said, "Father's going out. Turn off the lights while the door is open. Those other watchmen might see."

Bill relaxed slightly and, as the lights went off, he came silently to his feet, heard a slight scrape as Peter Quaile joined him.

Bill took three long strides, poised, hands ready, body tensed. The girl said, "Switch 'em on."

One man would be at the light switch and Bill knew where that was. Before the lights gleamed he was on his way. He covered the last three yards in one terrific bound. As the foreign man turned, gun relaxed at his side, Bill swung a looping right that had one hundred and eighty pounds of hellfire in it.

The gun fired from reflex action, but the foreign man hit the floor on his neck and crumpled in a heap, his mouth spurting blood. Bill dove after him and the movement saved his life. A slug meant for his back, clipped a lock of his blonde hair and hissed into the wall.



Bill never heard the roar of the shot, nor any other sound. When the body is geared to high intense effort, all sounds are shut out. Bill pounced on the foreign man, wrested away the gun, and twirled, arm shooting out, blood-shot eyes looking for a target.

There was none! Every one had fled the room!

He saw Peter Quaile on the floor, blood flowing from his right side near the shoulder. The older man looked suddenly wan and weak.

"They've gone," he said hoarsely. "Get Montague and his son out. They'll blow the place and kill us yet."

Bill flung back his head and laughed a great laugh. "A moment, Professor." He strode to the speechless Montagues. He unloosed the ropes that bound father and son.

"You ought to know your way around the joint," he said grimly. "Find your way out—and you'd better hurry."

He was back instantly to Peter Quaile and picked up the old man tenderly.

"We go out together, Professor," he grinned, "one way or another."

But quick as he was, the Montagues, squealing affrightedly, were quicker. George, the youth, was quickest of all. He flew through the door. And that exposed the next trap.

A revolver roared in the cavernous room outside and George Montague wheeled and fell with a crash of sound. But he was not dead. He moaned and yelled, but he kept on crawling. His father shrank back, stunned by this new menace.

"Cut the light, you fool," Bill shouted. "They're trapping us here."

Edward Montague, moaning, turned out the light. As he did so a steady burst of gunfire rattled like castanets outside and Bill could hear the bullets zinging off the floor, thudding into the woodwork. At the same moment a

flashlight from another watchman sent a beam across from the far end.

BILL got down and crawled toward the door, dragging Peter Quaile with him.

He heard Peter Quaile say, "Leave me, William, you haven't time. Valery has fired the fuse."

"We'll have all eternity," he heard himself answer, "or sufficient minutes."

Just then, as the gun ceased to bellow, he heard some sort of a crash of sound on the right. It was not repeated. But he heard Pokette Valery cry, "Armand! Something's happened to Father. He can't get out. Hurry!"

Lupescu's voice rang out, "Hold them, Feodor, let no one escape and live."

An instant silence fell, broken only by the scuff of the watchman's shoes as he boldly advanced, shouting, "Up with your hands, all of ye."

Then a muffled voice, Armgaarde Vallery's. "Go, Pokette. Clear every one, except the prisoners. The fuse is lit and *I can't put it out.*"

In that instant Bill saw a shadow turn from the wall. Armand Lupescu. Pokette Valery cried out, "Armand, help my father."

"He is beyond help. Run, Pokette. I will hold the prisoners here."

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## CHAPTER VII

### SCHEMER'S FATE

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AN unearthly silence held for brief seconds when no one moved. Then from the right came a hacking noise as if Pokette Valery was tearing at the door to aid her father. Bill dare wait no longer. Dragging Peter Quaile inch by inch, he suddenly made out between him and safety, two



shadows. Carefully he leveled his gun, squeezed the trigger. At the same instant the watchman, still advancing boldly, emptied his gun in a series of spitting flashes. But the fool kept his flashlight lit and it made a perfect target.

From a point twenty yards ahead of Bill a gun roared twice. The flashlight fell, but did not go out. The watchman uttered a dismal groan and Bill heard the heavy thud of him as he fell. Bill stifled his pity; the man had been brave and, in dying, had done Bill a service, for the flashlight made a wall of light that silhouetted Bill's enemies. They knew it. Lupescu yelled something in a strange language and ran. The other man opened up with a rattling roar of shots that could only have come from a sub-machine gun. Bill jerked to one side, dragging Quaile with him. Even so the slugs rained around him, two burning his flesh like hot irons.

It took a supreme effort of will not to blindly fire back. But he waited motionless until silence fell. Bill's stomach was jumping and he felt the heavy gun wobble as he caught the figure on the right and squeezed off. The gun roared.

A wild scream followed. Then the twitching convulsive movements of a body thrashing on the floor.

Quietly Peter Quaile said, "Splendid, William, right through the brain."

"Yeah," grunted Bill. "I was aiming at his guts."

Swiftly he lifted Peter Quaile, dashed for the door.

"Watch out for Lupescu," warned Peter Quaile, "he intends to leave Valery to his fate and go on alone."

But he spoke too late. The gun blazed into Bill's face. He never saw the man. How the slug missed was a mystery. Blinded by the flash, Bill fired at it. He heard the thud, staggered on, still with

the red flash on his retina. That was a mistake. As he started to go through the door, Lupescu rose to his knees from the floor like a malignant shadow. His gun exploded, and this time there could be no miss. Bill felt the shock of the slug and the impact whirled him. He lost hold of Peter Quaile, tripped and fell to the floor.

Dimly he heard Lupescu shout, "Pokette! In the name of God, come!"

Bill drew a sobbing breath. The fall must have stunned Peter Quaile, for the older man did not move after falling from Bill's arms. Bill had no pain now; somehow his head was clear, and only his lower limbs were paralyzed.

He saw Lupescu fall, get up, fall again and drag on his knees toward the door, calling again and again to the half-caste girl. Bill thought, queerly, that as long as he had to die he ought to stop Lupescu. All go out together.

He crawled, dragging himself foot by foot to intercept Lupescu. The Bukarinian saw him, scarcely credited his eyes. He raised his gun, aimed point blank at Bill. Bill tried to dodge. The trigger clicked. The gun was empty. He hurled it at Bill's head. It struck Bill's shoulder, but it did not stop the big reporter. He kept coming. He wished now he had his own gun, dropped when the bullet whacked him.

**B**UT not having it, he kept going anyway. And he caught Lupescu five feet from the door to outside and safety.

Lupescu squealed like a pig, pounded with his fists at Bill's head. Bill laughed, a horrid, terrible sound, deep in his throat. His great fingers grabbed Lupescu's hair, pounded the man's head against the floor.

"Pokette!" cried the Bukarinian despairingly. "Help!"

He spoke no more, for Bill's fingers closed around his neck. The thumbs



bit deep in the man's flesh.

Bill was not quite sane. He did not drop the man even after death came. He did not even know Lupescu was dead. Half senseless, he waited for the end. But suddenly the patter of light feet cut through his half-stunned mind. The thump of heavier ones. Vaguely he saw the white flashing figure of Pokette as she raced toward him and the door. Still he only got to his knees. Her right hand came up, blazed.

The roar seemed awfully loud to Bill. And he gasped amazed as he saw that her arm was a bloody mess from the elbow down. The gun flew from her helpless fingers. She staggered, would have fallen except that Armgaarde Valery, running behind her, seized her, held her up. Swiftly he swung her into his arms, lifted her. His gun arm was still free.

"Quaile," he yelled. "You and I."

He shot point-blank.

Bill did what he could. With his last strength he hurled himself at Valery, grabbed the man's legs. He heard the explosions, then something lay across his body and pinned him down. "Hell!" he thought, "this is the end."

But it was not. The next thing he knew, fingers tugged at him. Peter Quaile's voice called urgently into his ear. "I can't carry you. You must get up. Get up, William, do you hear?"

And, strangely enough, Bill got up. Got up on dead feet. Felt warm blood pour down his legs. He staggered drunkenly toward the door. He laughed weakly. He tugged at Quaile who was taking a step, falling, coughing in a wheezing terrible fashion. They reached the door.

Passed out. Beyond the fence a hundred headlights made a white glare. The whir of a police siren rose as Bill appeared. Quaile fell. Did not get up. Bill picked up the frail body, stumbled, went on, until hands seized the body and took

it away from him.

"The girl, Pokette!" Bill mumbled drunkenly, "get her out. She knows all the answers."

The cop said, "Good Geez, man, this guy says they's a fuse laid in there."

Bill stared at him owlshly. "What difference does it make? Get her out. Her confession clears all the points."

"He's screwy," said the cop, "get him back."

Bill punched the man who took hold of him. Walking as if on stilts, he turned toward the door. The fuse had evidently touched off some inflammable stuff, for beyond the room he had just left was a brilliant crimson light that lit the interior with a scarlet glow.

Bill called, "Pokette! Get up and come here."

HE tried to move forward again, but he had already done too much. He weaved and couldn't take a step. Swaying there, he repeated, "Pokette. Did you hear me?"

He could see her plainly. The girl was on her knees, supporting the body of her father. Her voice came to him clearly. "Help me to save him. I don't go without him."

As Bill tried to advance, a man darted up, seized him around the middle. Bill tried to shake him off, couldn't.

As he was drawn back to the fence, the fuse reached the explosives. A crimson, purple flash as bright as a stroke of lightning hit the night. Bill had the queer sensation of seeing the world go to pieces. Things rose out of their natural position. A blast of air struck Bill and he felt the man holding him go down, yelling. Bill tumbled over and over. The light hurt his eyes. Horrible sound beat at his ears. A terrible pain struck up from his hips and back and as the crescendoing roar of the explosion smashed upon him like a wildly beating



tidal wave, he went down—and a blackness rose up and engulfed his senses. . . .

The nurse said, "Don't bite down on that thermometer." Bill opened his eyes and saw she was smart and pretty.

He took the thing out. "Am I all in one piece?"

She firmly thrust the thermometer back. "You're all in one piece. But the doctor took a bullet out of your back that came so near to severing your spinal column that you couldn't have put a safety razor blade between it and the vertebrae."

"My, my!" said Bill, "what you'd call a close shave, then."

"Wise cracker." She laughed. Her cool fingers counted his pulse. Bill suddenly ceased to yawn as memory hit him.

"Peter Quaile!" he exclaimed. "What of him?"

"He's recovering from a bullet that hit his right chest deflected from a rib and saved him." She scolded gently, "He's too old a man to be shot. You should take better care of him."

When Bill saw Quaile two weeks later he told that one, and the older man laughed gently. "You did your best, William," he said.

"You flatter me," rejoined Bill. "Now bring me up-to-date."

"Little enough of that, William," said Mr. Quaile. "The Montagues, father and son, survived. Edward seems to have reacted queerly. A U. S. government corporation was formed in Delaware to take over his munitions interests at par. Edward Montague is establishing a private endowment to destroy espionage in America. A freak idea, a phobia if you like, but one that may well help his country."

He raised his eyebrows. "He has put twenty million dollars in the fund and wants me to head his spy-catchers."

"He couldn't do better," said Bill. "What happened to Valery and his

daughter?"

"They died in the explosion," said Quaile gravely. "And much as I hate to speak evil of the dead, their death is a relief to me. They were two of the most dangerous people I knew."

Bill nodded. He had all the answers now, and he was wondering just how much he could print. Probably little enough with a quiet gent in Washington telling the managing editor to soft pedal. Then he remembered a puzzling fact. "Say, how did you get free to release me just when we were in the tightest spot?"

PETER QUAILE smiled amiably.

"Years ago," he rejoined pedantically, "Harry Houdini was a friend of mine. And my er—rabid curiosity about all facts prompted me to learn many of his escape tricks. He had told me that any man with small bones like mine and resilient muscles could escape from any 'rope-tie,' I believe the expression is. He was right."

Bill grinned. "Then you are the man who knows everything."

"Oh, no!" cried Peter Quaile hastily. "After these mistakes that I have made, such a nickname is mockery."

"Pish-tush!" said Bill. "Your modesty is the bunk."

Peter Quaile flushed and hastily changed the subject.

"I have accepted Montague's offer. I came to ask if you would care to be my assistant."

He paused, blushed. "I have been a lonely man, William, making few friends. I am er—very fond of you."

He stared gently at Bill. "I wish," he went on wistfully, "you would."

A lump was in Bill's throat. He growled, "I'll have to accept. You're so reckless, somebody has to be around to keep you alive."

Peter Quaile laughed joyously. "Precisely, William, precisely."



A SMASHING NOVELETTE OF COP COURAGE!

# Public Servant's Payoff

by J. A. CHAMBLISS

Author of "Free-Lance G-Man," etc.

HE drank slowly the hot sweet coffee out of the thick white mug, stopping occasionally to stir it and then putting the spoon back on the glass counter. Millie had taught him that—not to leave his spoon in his coffee cup. Twenty—twenty-two years ago that was, when they had just been married.

*Suddenly Herkimer swung, there was a snap of breaking bone, a scream*



He read idly and for the last time the blotchy announcements on Chick's mirror behind the coffee urn: "SPECIAL—FISH CAKES AND SPAGHETTI, 25c." He had read those specials for six years now, stopping in at seventy-three every evening he was on patrol—and could have read them for twenty-four years before that, if Chick's lunch counter had then existed.

"Last night on duty," he observed

*What does a retiring copper do with the last half hour of his law-enforcement career?*



conversationally. "Gettin' retired tomorrow."

"Y' don't mean it, Herk! You retired? How old you anyway?"

"Fifty-two next month—the sixth of July. Been wearin' this uniform for thirty years—or one like it."

"By Gawd!" Chick's pock-marked Armenian visage lifted from wiping glasses. "I'll have to give you some-thin'." He scuttled to the ice box. Presently steak sizzled on the hot plate. Herkimer saw that Chick was making up a sandwich—the best in the house—for him to take out.

He might as well accept it. He had cadged little enough in his thirty years in harness. When Chick had it done and wrapped in wax paper, the old officer accepted it with gruff thanks. Sure, he promised, he would drop in sometimes.

He put on his cap and picked up his nightstick and went out to the sidewalk, with the sandwich in his pocket.

A car hummed past—a long expensive limousine—going up Monroe Avenue from the river. There was something familiar about it but he didn't pay much attention. Thirty more minutes in uniform, he was thinking, and then it would be all over.

Officer Frank Herkimer, Shield No. 917; 6' 2"; weight, 215; slow, burly, red-faced, grey-haired, sighed perfunctorily and started off down the sidewalk.

It was a funny feeling—this last patrol business. Not that he was grief-stricken or upset about it. Hell, he was old enough. Thirty years was plenty. Rheumatism was getting to be a nuisance. If he drank more than two or three slugs of liquor in an evening, he belched like a horse. No fun to that. Might as well take his pension and take it easy, him and Millie.

Still, it would have been fun to be a hero just once before he shed the harness. In all those thirty years of serv-

ice, of pounding a beat and handling minor malefactors, nothing exciting had ever happened to him. He had helped hammer into submission any number of burglars and sneak thieves, of course, and had assisted in the capture of one or two murderers—but no single-handed *coup* had ever been his fortune.

He wasn't smart enough—that was the answer. He was honest and he was willing; he knew how to patrol a beat and win the confidence of the taxpayers and scare off hoodlums; he had a good memory, he was good-tempered and the neighborhood children liked him—but he wasn't one of the smart ones.

TAKE that limousine that was going up Monroe when he came out of Chick's. He could remember now—just as if his mind was a slot machine—that he had seen it standing outside the bank yesterday morning when he went in to put five bucks in his savings account. He had noticed then that the machine was monogrammed "P. C." and thus had known it was the latest luxury of Peter Cassell, the bank president and richest man in town. It was the only foreign-manufactured car in the city.

And that was just the sort of inconsequential tripe that filled up his mind. He knew more faces and more automobiles than any cop walking post—but what the hell of it? He had never seen his face in a newspaper, had he?

"Well, well, it don't matter now," old Herkimer decided. And yet he knew that in one way it did matter.

It mattered to Millie.

He crossed Eighth Street and clumped along past the dark warehouses that lined this last block of Monroe Avenue. He left the sidewalk and crossed over, to take a peek in Stengel's Alley, as he always did.

Yeah, it mattered to Millie, because Millie had always thought he had the makings of a hero. She was still wait-



ing for a citation and a newspaper story to frame and hang up for when they were old. No hope now. Retired tomorrow. Half an hour more.

From the dark mouth of the alley he flashed his light in a cursory sweep, expecting nothing. This section was safe as a church these days: not like it used to be. But something unanticipated caught the beam; he focussed on it. It looked like a roll of bedding lying alongside the warehouse wall.

Officer Herkimer carried his big feet in that direction, with the light preceding him, wondering if there had been a robbery somewhere. But when he came alongside the object, he recognized it for what it was. Not a roll of bedding but a human figure wrapped mummy-like in a blanket.

He said, "Tsk, tsk," and after a prudent look around and behind him, he bent closer. The figure was bent at the hips and knees in a semi-praying position, and lay on its side. Herkimer shook it. "Hey, there."

It was cold. And stiff. He quickly put down his flashlight, drew on his gloves and found a corner of the blanket. Throwing it off, he gazed upon a hideous, white, contorted object which turned out to be a man's face. There was nothing the matter with it save the expression, but there was a great deal the matter with that.

"Dead," Herkimer decided stolidly. "Must have been murdered, to get that look on him. Wonder what's the blanket for."

He discovered, by throwing it open. The man was stark naked. Also he was wet, or rather damp, in spots. Herkimer played his flashlight over the body, failed to recognize the face, vainly canvassed the ground nearby, and grunted to a standing position. He had seen what had killed the man. Behind his left ear was a little hole and from that hole protruded a steel fragment,

like the end of a hatpin from which the head had been broken.

"Doc Simmons will like that," Herkimer thought to himself as he jogged back for the alley mouth. His call box was just around the corner. The routine of what to do was second nature to him. It didn't even strike him as strange that he should find a murdered man on his last night of duty. He had found plenty of 'em in thirty years—and promptly notified the homicide squad and then gone on about his business.

**B**UT suddenly—and so unthinkingly that it mystified him—Herkimer stopped dead as he was running down the sidewalk. Murder! Millie! His last chance! And that limousine of Peter Cassell's, which had gone up Monroe from this direction!

"God preserve us!" he whispered to himself. "Losin' my mind! Can't do a thing like that. Gotta ring in. Gotta follow the book. This is a job for—"

Far back in his mind the small voice said resignedly: "Okay, old cop with the grey hair. It's your last chance."

Nobody was there to see the big man in the blue uniform as he struggled with himself on the dark sidewalk. The fellows at H. Q. would have laughed. Some would have said "Old Herk" had gone a little balmy in his last hour of duty. Thinking about not reporting a murder and handling it himself!

"Cassell's car," he was whispering now. "No doubt about that. Two men in it, I remember. They must've brought the body. Who is it, and who the hell's involved . . .?"

He started running—away from the call box, up Monroe Avenue, seeking a taxi. Old Herkimer had made the most momentous decision of his thirty years in uniform.

Cassell, the banker, lived in a massive stone mansion in Elmwood Park



surrounded by ten acres and a high iron fence. The upper floors of the house were dark as Herkimer paid off his taxi at the gate, but there were lights downstairs. He followed a winding drive past shrubs and flower beds.

As he realized the enormity of his offense against regulations, a deep inward excitement stirred his veins. He had left a murder victim where he lay. He had abandoned his post. And he would very likely fail to ring in, when he was due to report in twenty minutes.

A long flat-hooded limousine was standing dark before the porte cochere of the mansion, the very car he had seen on Monroe Avenue. He quietly opened one of its doors, bent his large uniformed body and played his flash light over the tonneau floor. When a moment later he walked to the house entrance and pressed a buzzer, he had certain proof that the dead man had been carried in that limousine.

A butler appeared. Officer 917 desired to see Mr. Cassell on police business. The lackey vanished, reappeared and led Herkimer across a marble hall and through sliding doors into a spacious, dimly-lighted drawing room. Then the butler withdrew and as Herkimer accustomed his eyes to the light, he saw that three persons were standing and regarding him.

There was Cassell senior, a big sallow man, darkly dressed, with iron-grey hair and an impenetrable expression. The younger, slighter man who stood to the left of Cassell and two yards from him was his son, Eric, Herkimer believed. He was dark, too, but sullen—the cashier in the bank. The third person was a young woman, and Herkimer became aware of perfume in the air. She was tall, pale, stunning, with a mass of platinum-blond hair coiffured high, and her sea-green evening gown would have cost Herkimer a year's salary.

"Well, officer?" The banker clipped.

"I'm the patrolman on the beat on lower Monroe Avenue. About forty minutes ago I saw your car down there, Mr. Cassell, coming up from the direction of the river. Right after that I found a naked dead man in Stengel's Alley. I've just examined your car and found the floor of the tonneau wet—along with something else."

THE girl raised slowly a white ringed hand and pressed its knuckles against her mouth. She retreated, bumped into a chair and sat down suddenly. Herkimer recognized her from society pictures. She was Fay Wadsworth, Cassell's niece and the siren of the younger set.

"Are you intimating that my car carried a dead man down to the section you patrol, and left him in an alley?"

"Might as well admit it, Mr. Cassell. I've got proof."

There was a silence like the snick of a minute hand on a waiting-room clock. Young Cassell had a handkerchief out, was running it inside his collar while watching his father.

"Sit down, officer." The banker's voice had dropped an octave.

Herkimer obliged. Cassell waved his son to a chair and he himself came over to stand before the patrolman. He asked Herkimer's name, nodded and said: "Herkimer, you've got us where it hurts. We handled that body—my son and I, though it didn't come from here. It's the corpse of a New York gangster, named Mike Ferrero. He died of heart failure."

"Heart failure, nuthin'!" grunted Herkimer. "He was murdered!" And he told them he had found the hole in back of the gangster's ear where a hatpin had been shoved into his brain. "And I found the head of the hatpin in your car, where it broke off. One of you murdered him?"

Cassell glared and went pale. He



clamped his teeth over a retort, whirled to glare at son and niece, then suddenly rushed past Herkimer and into the hall. He came back with a hat on.

"The man died by accident," he gritted. "I know that for a certainty. But if you think it's murder, we'll all of us go back to where it happened. Eric! Fay! Come on, Herkimer!"

"Where we goin'?"

"To the house where Ferrero died. It's only ten blocks off. We'll drive. I'll tell you on the way."

Herkimer shrugged and followed him into the hall while the others trailed dazedly after. All piled into the limousine at the front, with Eric Cassell taking the wheel. They shot away. Herkimer was in back with the banker. As soon as they were under way Cassell began talking.

"We're going to Clay Erskine's. You know him—the lawyer. He's my niece's fiance. That's where it happened—in his apartment. Now listen to me while I give you the facts, and don't interrupt."

Herkimer scowled. It seemed to him this wasn't quite the orthodox way to investigate a murder: letting your suspects drag you around. Ferrero had been murdered, hadn't he? And Cassell and his son had handled him . . . ?

"That man Ferrero came to Clay Erskine's apartment tonight to give him and us some information about Dick Wadsworth, my nephew, Fay's brother, who disappeared six months ago. Probably you remember the case. Well, Erskine has been working on it for us and he contacted this gangster, brought him here. We all gathered at Erskine's tonight at seven o'clock to hear what this fellow had to say, still hoping that Dick is alive, somewhere. Ferrero had claimed he knew something.

"But when he arrived he was wet and filthy from falling in the river during a

fight, and he wanted a bath, so Erskine sent him into the bathroom. While the rest of us—my son and Miss Wadsworth and I—waited around, Erskine went out to buy Ferrero some clothes. Then the first thing he knew we heard water overflowing in the bathroom, and when we went in there Ferrero was dead, drowned or killed by a heart attack."

CASSELL turned to full-face Herkimer, grabbing his sleeve. "Damn it, man, he couldn't have been murdered! Hatpin? Hell, you saw something else! Who could have murdered him? There were only the three of us there!"

Herkimer didn't say anything. It was the most mixed-up story he had ever listened to. But presently he growled doggedly, "Mister, he was murdered. I don't make mistakes like that: not after thirty years in uniform. Somebody killed him. The whole lot of you is in a bad mess. . . . Here's Erskine's house."

The car had halted. They all climbed out before a two and a half story brick house on the northeast corner of the street, whose first floor was taken up by the lawyer's offices.

Clay Erskine, tall, lean, saturnine and thirtyish, stood like a guardsman in double-breasted blue before the fireplace of his big living room and listened alternately to Herkimer and Peter Cassell. Young Cassell and Fay Wadsworth huddled mutely on a divan.

"Unbelievable," Erskine clipped at last. "He couldn't have been murdered. It's true, we don't know exactly what killed him except that—"

"Hold on a minute!" interrupted Herkimer, whose thinning grey hair was a trifle awry and whose mild blue eyes held a hard look. "There's no use talkin' like that. The guy was murdered! I saw the hole under his ear



and the hatpin stickin' out and I've got the head of the hatpin in my pocket. You could tell from the look on his face that he hadn't died natural. We'll start from there. He was killed in this apartment, and it looks like one of you people did it. Now go on with what you were sayin'."

Erskine filled his lungs. "Haven't you reported this? What business has a patrolman got investigating what he thinks is a murder?"

"I'm on special duty," the big cop came back glibly, "and I'm supposed to handle by myself all cases originating in my tour." With that falsehood so readily out of the way, he added another: "There's a substitute taking my place."

He got out notebook and pencil, eyeing the four people in turn. "Let's get busy. I want to know what everyone of you was doing this evening from the time Ferrero got here until you lugged him out."

It took twenty minutes to get a statement from each one. The sum of them was that either Cassell Senior or his son Eric might have slipped into the bathroom and buried the hatpin in the brain of the New York gangster. That Fay Wadsworth had there was little likelihood. For Clay Erskine it would have been impossible.

Ferrero had arrived at a few minutes before seven, "looking and smelling like the wrath of God," according to the lawyer. "He said two thugs had jumped him in a saloon on the docks, and thrown him into Morton's Slip, which was shallow and full of muck. He climbed out and came here and I agreed tht he ought to clean up before he met the others. I showed him the bath and left him there just as the others arrived. I was on my way out to buy him a fresh outfit of clothes."

"We sat around here," the banker took it up, "and heard him in the bathroom: that is we heard him turn on the

water and splash around. That was about ten after seven, I guess. For the next twenty minutes the three of us were more or less wandering around. Fay went back into the library. I think I stayed here in the living room. Eric went to the dining room to mix some drinks."

**H**ERKIMER took a stroll around the apartment, opening and closing doors. The bathroom was off an inside hall which could be reached from either living room or dining room. To get there from the library, however, Fay Wadsworth would have had to go through the living room, in sight of her uncle.

"We ain't gotten very far," he growled, looking at his watch and feeling the prick of conscience when he saw it was after eight o'clock. He had no time to lose!

"No distance at all," Cassell agreed. "How can you expect to? Why would any of us kill him?—that's what I'd like to know!"

Herkimer slumped into a chair, squinting at the four of them. There was something: why would either Peter Cassell or his son have wanted to dispose of the gangster, who was here to give the family information on the fate of Dick Wadsworth?

Young Wadsworth. . . . He'd been a wild one, had worked in the bank, too. All sorts of rumors had flown around when he suddenly and inexplicably vanished from sight last December. That he'd been up to crookedness in the bank, working with one of the Cassells, and they'd connived at his disappearance. That he'd committed suicide, joined a gang, gone to South America. Even that his sister had sent him away secretly to an asylum so as to control what money he hadn't squandered.

Motives aplenty for one of these to want to silence Mike Ferrero from New



York, if he knew the truth . . .

Herkimer shook his big head from side to side. Nothing to go on, though. He got up and lumbered aimlessly around the room while the others watched him. If he didn't get an idea pretty soon he'd have to give up his flight into sleuthing, turn the setup over to homicide—and face the music.

What would *they* do—the smart ones, the lads with the brains from Headquarters? They'd look for something definite, wouldn't they?—to get their teeth into. Fasten on some one thing that stood out in the case. But what one thing did?

Herkimer halted, turned. Suddenly he ejaculated, "By Gorry!" Then he was slapping on his cap, stowing notebook and pencil in his jacket and backing for the door. "I got a place to go. You four people stay right here, and don't any of you try to take a skip. I'll be back—don't worry!"

Where Morton Street met the riverfront and made Morton's Slip was a block of one story buildings, most of them warehouses and fish stores. The corner, however, was occupied by a saloon and free lunch that had "*Kon's*" scrawled on its windows in gaudy gilt paint. "*Kon*" was Argo Konopulos, a ferret-eyed Greek who owed favors to old Herkimer.

It was dark in that section except for the saloon when Herkimer pushed in the side door and motioned the fat Greek to follow him to the back room.

"Listen, Kon, there was a guy was jumped by a couple of hoods down here this evening around six o'clock or later. They pitched him in the Slip."

"I seen it, Herk. Wot t' hell! He was a punk hisself, I figgered. Y' ain't fussin' about stuff like that, are you? Besides this ain't on your beat!"

"Worry about what I ask you, fat-guts. This guy he was a redhot from New York, but he's gotten himself

bumped off. I'm thinkin' there was somethin' phoney about his being bumped and pitched in the Slip when nobody didn't know him. Who hopped him?"

"They was Jerry Pollard and Tony Scusi. They followed him out of here after he'd had a beer. I wondered what they was up to. But where's the tie-up between that and his being bumped off? It wasn't them who bumped him. I seen him climb out!"

HERKIMER was moving doorward. "Sure, but maybe they were paid off to dirty him up, Kon. Y' see, he was killed while he was takin' a bath."

He went out to the street, cast about for an instant in his mind and then started legging it briskly westward along the waterfront. A cool night breeze fanned his cheek. He hoped he wouldn't meet up with Tim O'Casey who had his beat. Jerry Pollard and Tony Scusi: he knew them as well as Millie's polkadot dress: a couple of mush-heads, dirty-necks, marijuana smokers, the kind of scum who got their fun out of hiding in dark doorways in wait for street-walkers, socking them cold and then beating them up, just for the sport of it.

The fish stores gave way to taller buildings and they in turn to long row tenements and gloomy-faced houses. Herkimer turned a corner, crossed the street, covered another half block and climbed the steps of a rooming house.

The door wasn't locked. He entered a hallway whose vague stink was so pervading it seemed to be connected with the dim ceiling light. Up a flight of stairs and down a hall and up another flight, and he halted before a front door.

He shifted his nightstick to his left palm, heeled down his belt and holster so it lay low below his coat on his meaty hip, and knuckled the door.



"Whatcha want, copper?"

Jerry Pollard, whose room this was, was peering out through a six inch crack. He was in undershirt, pants and slippers; he needed a shave and his red hair stood on end. Herkimer smelled booze.

He pushed in and prowled the room, finding no one else.

"Sure, it's just a railroad station!" Pollard snarled behind him. "You don't need to even knock unless you want to!"

Herkimer pushed him in the chest and the redhead sat down on the bed. Blood flushed his face, mottled his eyes.

"How much change did you and Scusi pick up for roughin' that guy Ferrero?"

"Is it me you're talkin' to or the end of my jaw where you're about to poke me? Who's Ferrero?"

Herkimer poked him, not hard, about the way a big cat cuffs a smaller one. "The baby you helped toss in Morton Slip. Someone hired you to do that, Pollard. I want to know who. That guy has been murdered."

Pollard rose slowly from the bed and threw a wild left for the cop's ear. Herkimer blocked it with a swish of his nightstick and jacked his knee up into the redhead's groin. As Pollard jackknifed old Herkimer brought his willow down on the back of Pollard's head, then caught him with both hands and roughed him back onto the bed.

"What the hell's goin' on here?" demanded a nasal voice. Herkimer turned, saw a slim dark man standing in the doorway. His chin was out of sight in shadow and his right hand was out of sight in his coat pocket.

Herkimer turned himself about, not hurriedly, like a mastiff sizing up a new foe. He knew that was a gun in Tony Scusi's pocket and he knew that Scusi, when he heard the setup, might use it.

"Come in, Scusi."

"What's up, Herkimer?"

"I'm asking who paid you men to toss a stranger into Morton's Slip tonight. I was just telling Pollard—he's been murdered. There's a hookup."

"Murdered!"

SCUSI backed off. Herkimer flung his nightstick in a low flat arc just as Pollard began yelling and just as Scusi set his shoulder. The dark one's pocket belched fire and noise. Herkimer was knocked off stride by something that pushed his left thigh. He did a dive for Scusi's legs as Scusi fired again and leaped back.

Herkimer caught a shoe. It was immediately jerked free, and then Scusi was running for the stairhead. Herkimer reached for his holster and had his gun out by the time Scusi was starting down. There were two shots. Scusi fell out of sight.

Herkimer jumped up, whirled and collared Jerry Pollard who was about to try a rush past him. "Now, damn you, see what's happened? Scusi's got himself bumped off! You talk to me, rat, or I'll take you apart! Someone paid you for that job, didn't they?"

"Yeah—yeah—but we didn't know—! I'll tell you who is—"

"Out of here first!" growled Herkimer, dragging him for the stairs. "There'll be cops here in four minutes, and I ain't the one to face 'em."

They got out of the taxi before Clay Erskine's house. Herkimer paid off. It was nine o'clock now, and probably by this time he was being hunted all over the city and Millie was in a stew. He walked Jerry Pollard across the sidewalk, down the steps to the basement of the house, and there they disappeared.

When they re-ascended several minutes later Herkimer wore a lop-sided grin that sat strangely on his large face. The redhead was handcuffed to him. As they mounted to the porch and Herkimer rang Erskine's second-floor bell,



Pollard quavered:

"Sure, Jeez, I can see it, Herkimer, but Scusi and me didn't have no cut in it. We didn't know nuthin' about that part of it! All he told us was to—"

"Yeah, swallow it," growled Herkimer. "It just goes to show what a dumb punk Scusi was, gettin' hot-fingered as soon as he heard the word murder. Was he squirmin' when you stepped over him or was he dead?"

"He wasn't squirmin'," gulped Pollard.

The door lock rattled, admitting them. They climbed to the upper hallway. Herkimer unlocked the handcuff that brothered him to Pollard and whipped off Pollard's belt, saying, "That'll keep you busy holdin' your pants up till I want you."

He pushed him out of sight as Clay Erskine opened the door. Herkimer marched in and slammed it.

"Well, I think I know where we stand now," he said loudly, leading the way into the living room. "First I'd better phone headquarters. Where's it?"

Erskine pointed and Herkimer picked up the instrument, phoned downtown. He said what he had to say in a minimum of words and hung up on a ranting desk sergeant. The Cassells and Fay Wadsworth were watching him, the girl with wide eyes.

"I told you all along that fellow Ferrero had been murdered up here," Herkimer said, advancing to the center of the room, "and now I've proved it. Only it didn't happen quite the way we thought. Any of you folks got any idea what he had to tell you about Dick Wadsworth?"

**D**UMB headshakes. Herkimer cocked a look at Erskine.

"The man absolutely refused to talk to me," the lawyer asserted, "even though he knew I was acting for the family. Said he'd wait and tell every-

body at once."

Herkimer grunted. "Well, I've got a hunch. It ain't humanly possible for me to figure *all* the angles in this thing, but here's my hunch. Miss Wadsworth, I'm afraid your brother had turned gangster. I'm guessing he joined up with a mob in New York after he skipped out of town here, and maybe even turned killer. Probably by now he's dead. That's why Ferrero stuck his head up."

"Oh—please—no!" whispered the tall girl.

"Understand, I'm just guessing. But something like that is all that explains why Ferrero was murdered by the man who murdered him. The murderer's idea was to shut Ferrero up—*so he could use Ferrero's information to blackmail you!*"

Herkimer swung on his heel, went down to the door and dragged in Jerry Pollard. "Inside, lug! Now tell it to his face!"

"Yeah, he caught me, damn you! And you'd never have hired either me or Scusi if we'd thought you was gonna bump that guy! Wanted us to dirty him up, didn't you? So when he got here he'd have to take a bath! So you could murder him the way you had it figured out, and either pass it off for accident or plant it on one of these people! Okay, bigshot, I'll testify against you!"

Fay Wadsworth was back against the fireplace, clutching her breast. The Cassells had their jaws hanging. But it was Clay Erskine who seemed most affected, though he had not moved. He was plaster-white, stiff, facing the red-head.

"Rat!" he spat. "What are you talking about? Suppose I did hire you to muss up Ferrero?" He whirled on Herkimer. "Surprise, eh?" he sneered. "And what does this prove?"

"Nuthin'," smiled Herkimer. "Though you'd have a hard time explaining it ex-



cept the way I've got it explained. What proves somethin' is this." From his pants came a paper-wrapped object. Unfolded, it revealed itself as a brass valve head, for water pipes. The lawyer started.

"Now, say you left your fingerprints on this when you turned the house water off down in the basement before Ferrero got here this evening. Say you put some more prints on it when you turned the water back *on*, when you went out about ten minutes after seven, saying you were going to buy Ferrero some clothes?

"Wouldn't that be evidence that you'd stuck that hatpin in Ferrero *before the others got here*, and had left him dead in the bathtub, and then made the others think Ferrero was still alive in there when they heard the water go on?"

Erskine drew his lips across his teeth. "You know damn well it wouldn't."

"It'd make you awful uncomfortable in a courtroom. Here's another try. Suppose I'm right about Dick Wadsworth and what Mike Ferrero had to tell you. Suppose Ferrero had made a statement, or maybe even young Wadsworth made one before he died, and Ferrero had it, and that's why he came to town. You wanted that to blackmail Miss Wadsworth and the Cassells. If you got it, you'd have mailed it to yourself when you went out this evening, wouldn't you? It would come to your office in tomorrow's mail, hey?"

"You damned lucky guesser!" shouted Erskine, and leaped for him.

THEY wrestled in the center of the room. Herkimer outweighed his man by fifty pounds, but the lawyer was twenty years younger and that much quicker. He locked the old cop's right arm and snatched for his holstered gun. Herkimer was breathing

like a steer. Both men were flat on their feet.

Suddenly two arms shot up, Herkimer swung, there was a snap of breaking bone, a scream, and Erskine reeled backward, deathly white and moaning, while his left arm hung grotesquely.

"So I had it right, did I?" Herkimer roared, charging him into the wall and pulling free his handcuffs.

"Yes—Yes! God, get me to a doctor! God—fix this arm! Yes! You—!" Erskine fell sideways, comatose. He landed with a crash.

Herkimer bent down and, very methodically, as a good patrolman should, he handcuffed him.

"Is that really what happened?" asked Peter Cassell hoarsely.

"You heard his admission, Mr. Cassell. He was your lawyer maybe, and your niece's fiance, and he lined up Ferrero for you—but when he found out what had really happened to Dick Wadsworth and saw the chance for blackmail, he turned crook.

"'Course, I don't know yet the real facts about young Wadsworth, but they're probably about what I guessed. We can learn 'em from tomorrow's mail."

"And he murdered the man! Before we got here!"

"And parked him in the bathtub, and turned on the faucets. The water was turned off downstairs then. He left you all here, went downstairs, slipped into the basement, turned on the main line—and up here you heard the water start running in the bathroom and thought Ferrero had just turned it on. You even heard his body slip down and splash a bit when the water loosened him."

The banker passed a hand across his brow.

"Don't cry, Fay, don't cry!" young Cassell was muttering thickly to his sobbing cousin on the divan. "He was a rat. There're lots of other fellows."



Herkimer roared at Jerry Pollard: "What're you standing there gogglin' for? Get down in the foyer till the cops come here!"

"But how did you ever get on to it, Herkimer?" Cassell asked wonderingly, as Pollard scuttled away, holding his pants.

Old Herkimer blushed ever so slightly. "Well, I tried to see what stood out in the case, something I could fasten on." For just a moment, perhaps, he sounded like an Inspector. "And it seemed to me that the strangest thing in the whole business was that a gangster should come to see a lawyer and right away take a bath. You got to admit that's uncommon. So when I started thinking about that, and why it had happened, and the fact that maybe the bathtub was necessary to the murder—then I naturally wondered if someone mightn't have hired those two lugs to toss Ferrero in the river. And once I started there, the rest was easy."

"Even so—?"

"FIGURIN' out the water trick? Hell, once I knew from Jerry Pollard that Erskine must be the murderer, and remembered that his whole alibi was based on you people hearing the water turned on, I just naturally wondered if that could have been rigged."

"But I still can't understand why Erskine committed the murder himself!

If he was hiring those men to throw Ferrero in the river, why didn't he have them kill him? Drown him?"

"And have them two come back at him later and blackmail him out of all *his* blackmail? You don't know the way a crook figures, Mr. Cassell. Besides, if Ferrero disappeared or was killed after Erskine was known to have contacted him but before you all saw him, Erskine would be the only suspect. The way he worked it, you were all in it. And Pollard and Scusi didn't know a thing of what was really going on."

Cassell poked out his hand. "You ought to be a Captain instead of a patrolman."

"They're retirin' me tomorrow," Herkimer grinned as they gripped hands.

He took a look at his prisoner. Erskine was still unconscious. So Herkimer walked down the living room to be in the foyer when the headquarters men got here.

He had broken a lot of rules but he felt pretty satisfied. He'd grabbed his chance and made it pay off. And though he'd be on a pension this time tomorrow, Millie would finally get her citation and front page story and his picture in the papers.

She could frame 'em like she'd always wanted to and hang 'em up in the bedroom, or—hell—maybe even over the fireplace.

THE END



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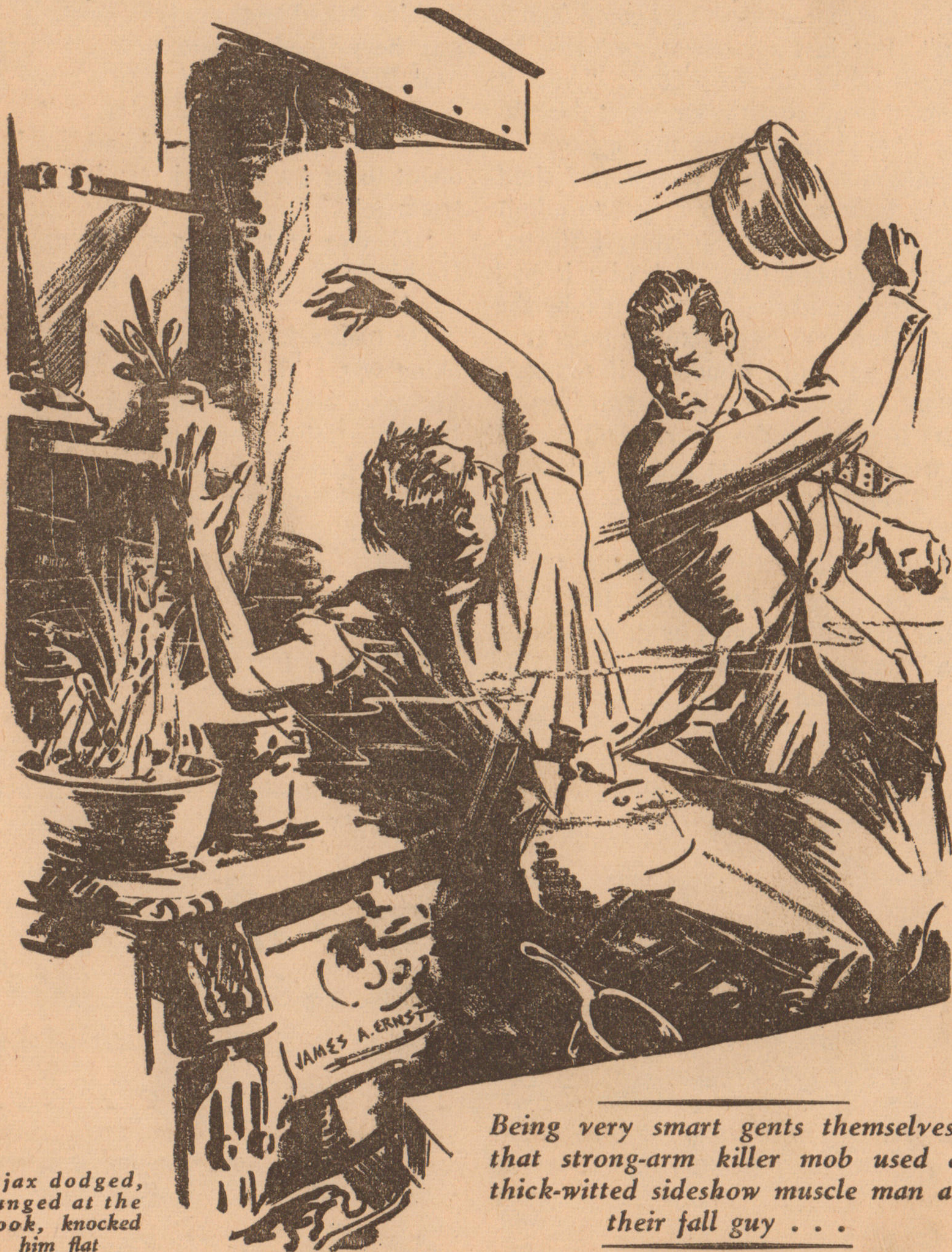
# Side Show to Hell

by VANCE C. CRISS

**T**UXEDO THORNE, Tux to the thugs he bossed, used to worry about the feds. He quit that when he found a fool-proof way to run dope into the city. Those dumb narcotic agents raided his place so many times he finally sent 'em word to call when-

ever they pleased. Even told 'em he wouldn't fuss if they dropped around without a search warrant.

Tux owned the old Linder place, deep in the Missouri Ozarks and just the right distance from the city for night runs in with the dope. The old stone



Ajax dodged,  
lunged at the  
cook, knocked  
him flat

*Being very smart gents themselves,  
that strong-arm killer mob used a  
thick-witted sideshow muscle man as  
their fall guy . . .*



house stood on a bluff that overlooked Indian Lake and Courtois Spring. That house would be a chateau in France and a castle on anybody's Rhine.

People in Ironville, the nearby town that never had heard a locomotive whistle, thought Tux was a gentleman farmer. He never told 'em anything—let 'em think he'd made his pile and just raised crawfish for the city market for the fun of the thing. Indian Lake was tops for that.

Tux leaned back at the desk in his library with a smile. He'd drive into Ironville for another look at that carnival. Not that he cared anything about seeing the shows, because he didn't. But he did like to watch the rubes stand around in open-mouthed wonder.

The shiny, high powered roadster took him to town in a hurry. He parked in front of the sideshow that featured a strong man and a bunch of girls the yokels thought were cuties but weren't.

"Beauty and the beast," sang the barker. "You can see it all for a dime. See the little ladies do the dance of the South Sea Islands. See Ajax, the Strong Man, do—"

The rest wasn't easy to understand. Ajax, the Strong Man, took the barker's neck in his left hand, the seat of his pants in his right. With a boyish grin that showed more good nature than intelligence, the big fellow hoisted the barker at arms' length above his head. The crowd gaped and guffawed.

Back on his feet, the barker caught sight of the shiny roadster. "Laydees and gentlemen," he announced, "Ajax, the Strong Man, will now show his strength by lifting the gentleman's chariot of beauty and power."

The grinning Ajax jumped from the platform, ambled to the car and took hold of a front wheel by the spokes. He lifted the wheel from the ground without a grunt.

That gave the contemptuously smiling Tux an idea. He needed a strong man at his place. He had plenty muscle men but he couldn't pay much on 'em in the country. When it came to handling an axe or a crosscut saw, they had muscle but no technique.

Tux thumbed the big fellow to him. "Whadda yuh make on this job?" he asked.

Ajax told him.

THE dope runner sniffed his contempt. "Wanna make real money?"

The grin on the strong man's face ran from ear to ear. He nodded.

"How soon can yuh quit this racket?" Tux asked, with a jerk of his thumb toward the tent.

"Soon's I change clothes."

Tux named the figure he'd pay. With a grunt of satisfaction the big fellow strode into the tent. He was back at the car in a minute, wearing street clothes and followed by the manager.

"Whadda yuh mean," the manager began, "by—"

He stopped when he caught the glitter in Tux's eyes. He'd been around. He knew a killer's look.

Ajax climbed in the car with Tux and they headed for the Linder place. Tux told him on the way what his job would be. "The main thing," Tux finished, "is to mind your own business and nobody else's. Savvy?"

The strong man grinned and nodded.

Tux put him to work on the woodpile, stopped now and then that afternoon to watch him. The gangster never knew before how fast a fellow could make little sticks out of big ones.

Ajax ate supper alone in the kitchen. He enjoyed it. The cook knew his job. He got his start in a railroad eating house and took a postgraduate course in the parole commissioner's kitchen as a prison trusty.

A hulking, gorilla sort of fellow, with



a nose almost as flat as his face, came in while Ajax polished off his second piece of pie. He licked his lips but forgot the food when Tux stepped in.

"Chief," he began, "the load's ready for Zippy's place. Ther's enough dope in them—"

He quit when Tux blued the air with a string of oaths.

"Don't yuh know better'n to spill your guts," Tux demanded, "before a guy that—"

"Hell, Tux," Flat Nose interrupted, "I seen yuh talkin' to him. I thought he was okay."

Ajax still grinned.

Tux faced him. "After that boner," he snarled, "we gotta take care of you, big fella."

The grin left the strong man's face. His jaw sagged. He stared from one to the other. His eyes bulged when he saw Tux fondling a rod.

"Mebbe yuh're okay, big fella," Tux told him, "but yuh're in the wrong pew now."

Tux and Flat Nose took Ajax to the big barn with its concrete floor and iron stall posts. The big fellow looked surprised, wanted to know what it was all about. Nobody told him. If he could get Tux in one hand and Flat Nose in the other, he'd soon find out. Tux thought about that too. He kept out of reach. The big fellow had sense enough to know that strength don't count against a rod ten feet away.

"Put your arms around that," Tux ordered, nodding at one of the iron posts sunk in the concrete and fastened to a ceiling beam. The big fellow obeyed. "Wire his wrists together," Tux snapped to Flat Nose.

Ajax grumbled that the wire cut into his wrists. But he made no move to fight. Just dumb, Tux figured.

"We'll see what to do with you tomorrow, strong boy," the hoodlum announced. "We may keep you, we may

let you pull out of the country—and we may blot you out.

"You may be strong," he finished with a laugh, "but that post'll hold yuh. Even the bull couldn't shake it."

Jake Lebitz and Joe Givoni, whose faces would be poison to any cop, came in to have a look. They'd been sorting and packing crawfish.

"TAKE a look at him now and then," Tux told Flat Nose, "but no rough stuff. I've got a date with a sweetie in town—if the corn-fed cutie can get loose from the apron strings.

"Joe, you and Jake get started in with that loada craws."

The hoodlums left. Ajax watched them file out, then listened. Wasn't long till he heard the roadster skim down the drive. The truck followed.

Ajax waited a little longer. He didn't want to try anything if anybody was watching. He worked his hands around the four-inch iron pipe at his knees, pulled up. Nothing doing. He couldn't get his hands in position to push but he could use his shoulder. With all his mule's strength, the pipe didn't budge a hair breadth.

For an hour he studied the post, pulled, pushed, tried to lift it.

He stood with both hands gripping the pipe above his head when Flat Nose came back.

"These wires hurt my wrists," he grumbled. "Can't you loosen 'em?"

Flat Nose laughed, stepped a little closer.

The top of the pipe swung out and down, caught the startled hoodlum on the shoulder, knocked him flat.

Ajax leapt along the pipe, freed his arms from the weight, landed with his knees in Flat Nose's belly. He had the rod before the hoodlum could start reaching.

"Get on your belly, ape!" he snapped.



Flat Nose obeyed.

Ajax lay down facing the hoodlum, thrust out his hands with the gun leveled. "Reach out with your right hand," he growled, "and undo this wire around my wrists."

The hoodlum tried, fumbled. "I need both hands," he whined.

"You'll get that wire loose in a hurry with one hand or you'll take a one-way trip to hell," Ajax rumbled.

He shifted the rod from one hand to the other to chafe his wrists when the wire came off. Then he wired the hoodlum's arms and legs around another pole. He wired ankles and wrists together. "Now let's see you grip that pole tight enough to unscrew it at the top, like I did," he grinned.

"I'm gonna leave you here while I clean house," he finished. "If I hear a sound outa yuh, I'll come back and beat your head to jelly."

The strong man thrust the revolver in his pocket and eased out toward the kitchen. The cook was busy with the dishes.

"Heist 'em!" Ajax barked with the rod leveled.

The cook whirled, saw the gun, fired a bowl at the big fellow's head. Ajax dodged, lunged at the hoodlum, knocked him flat. He didn't want to shoot. Tux might get back any minute. One shot would be plenty warning to *that* guy.

Ajax strode to the cook, half under the kitchen table. He caught the sound of a step, straightened, whirled. Tux stood in the open door.

"What the—" he yelped, reached for his rod.

AJAX crashed the table at him, leapt as it drove Tux against the wall. The hoodlum's gun arched to the floor in the center of the room. The big fellow grabbed Tux by the throat, shook him. He had business for that guy,

wanted him alive and able to write.

The cook sat up, watched the fight, got his brain to work. He sidled toward the rod on the floor. Hate blazed in his eyes. Tux bit, kicked, scratched. His eyes bulged. His face went blue. His strength was gone. The cook reached the gun, grabbed it.

Ajax caught the move in the corner of his eye. He clamped his left hand tighter on Tux's throat, jerked out the rod with his right, fired once. The cook crumpled. Blood spurted from his chest.

The big fellow slammed the helpless Tux on the floor, threw water in his face, watched him beat back to life. Tux gasped, tried to swear and failed. He knew the words but he couldn't say them.

Ajax frisked him for another gun. He picked up the rod on the floor, shoved it into his pocket. He stooped over the cook, felt his wrist. That hood was ready for the morgue.

With Tux under his left arm, Ajax headed for the library. He set the dope king on the chair at his desk.

"What road did them fellas take to the city?" he demanded.

Tux answered with a volley of gasping oaths.

Ajax took one step toward him, thrust a big paw at his throat. Tux told him then.

The big fellow shoved a pen and a sheet of paper in front of the hood.

"Write 'em a note," he ordered. "Tell 'em you've changed your plans and I'm taking charge of the load. Tell 'em to do what I say."

Tux swore. "I'll not tell 'em any such—"

"Listen, fella," Ajax growled, "you oughta know by this time that I'm running the show. If you don't, I'll prove it by kicking your ribs in."

The hoodlum wrote the note exactly as the big fellow told him. He also told



where to look for the dope, after Ajax slapped him around.

Ajax put the note in his pocket and tucked Tux under his left arm again. When he finished, the thug was wired to a stall prop so tight he'd wait till somebody called for him.

The big fellow surveyed Tux and Flat Nose with a broad grin. "You two can visit while I'm gone," he said. "I can place that load of dope where the pay'll be better than it is here for cutting wood."

When he headed out the door, Tux started to tell him what he'd do to anybody that tried to muscle in on his racket. Then he decided not to. He'd rather have his ribs whole. He could settle with Ajax later.

Ajax climbed in the roadster and shot for the city. He caught up with the fast, light truck in the suburbs. It was easy to flag Lebitz and Givoni to the curb. They recognized the roadster. The big fellow showed them the note. They grumbled, wanted to know more. That's all the good it did.

The big fellow locked the roadster, climbed into the truck, stood behind the two thugs.

"Drive on downtown," he told them. "I'll tell you what to do then."

AJAX caught sight of a man half a block away strolling toward them. He eyed him through the gray of the dawn and smiled.

"Pull over to the curb and stop," he ordered.

Lebitz started to pull over, noticed

the man's blue uniform.

"Jeez!" he rasped, stepped on the gas, swung into the street.

Givoni jerked up, reached for his gun.

Ajax grabbed a neck in each hand, slammed two heads together with a thud. The hoodlums slumped and Ajax reached for the switch. He gave the wheel a yank. The car coasted to a stop at the curb.

The man in the blue uniform hurried up.

"Officer," Ajax rumbled with a broad grin, "I'm Tom Blair of the federal narcotic squad. Wish you'd call Chief Ward at his home and ask him to meet me at headquarters right away. Then I'll appreciate it if you'll come back and help me take these two rats and a load of dope the rest of the way."

"Dope!" the copper exclaimed. "I know that truck. Them's crawfish."

The man who called himself Ajax grinned even broader.

"If you look right close," he said, "you'll find the dope in metal capsules under their shells."

The copper took off his cap, scratched his head, eyed the big fellow with a look that was a cross between admiration and doubt.

"How'd you do it?" he asked.

Blair tensed his right arm, ran his left hand over the bulging biceps.

"I was born and raised in the country," he said. "I thought Tux Thorne might need a husky farm boy on his place."

THE END

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# Murder's Not Funny

THRILLING NOVELETTE

by DALE CLARK

**D**ETECTIVE SERGEANT Martin Hale looked up at the white dome of the State Capitol, told the cabbie, "Stop here! This side of it!" and sprang to the sidewalk. This side of it was the Executive Wing, tacked on at right angles under the dome. A long flight of wide steps climbed the hill to the huge, Romanesque, chalk-colored building. Hale's long legs carried him rapidly up these steps. He was six lean feet of plainclothes cop, steel-muscled, and steel-faced, too.

Pushing through the big doors, he glimpsed a knot of reporters inside—and yanked up his ulster col-

*They weaved to and fro, the man pushing Kathleen farther out onto the girders.*



---

*How could Sergeant Hale combat the stark terror mantling the State Capitol—when his only suspect was a life-long friend's daughter?*

---

lar, ducked his head, walked faster. But halfway down the granite corridor trotting footfalls matched the detective's stride.

"Hey, Hale! What you up to here?"

It was Jamieson, a weazened news-hawk from the *Times*.

Hale's ink-black eyes gave the reporter a gloomy stare. "Sightseeing,"



he said coldly. "It's free, ain't it?"

The *Times* man pulled a wise-guy mouth. "Now look here! You lived in this town a dozen years, Hale. Don't tell me you're just getting around to see what the Capitol looks like inside!"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Listen! The Governor's working Saturday afternoon—that's a scoop in itself." Jamieson hunched his shoulders. "Old Joe Vanderpoint was in to see him this morning. Senator Cloud has been up there twice. Vanderpoint's over in the Senator's office right now. Now when the District Attorney's ace trouble-shooter gumshoes in—boy, it looks like a story ought to break!"

These were big names, and they surprised Sergeant Hale, but his lean face did not show it.

He grunted. "Sorry, fella. I'm not here for the D.A. I'm on my own time—" He jerked an elbow high, masked his face.

A photoflash bulb blazed beside the pair. Jamieson's cameraman, a cub on the staff, had sneaked the shot. Hale spun around, said "A-a-hh!" in loud disgust, strode on angrily.

Behind him, the photographer mumbled:

"Huh? What's eating the guy?"

"You sap! Popping off at him—you're lucky he didn't bust your box," Jamieson declared. "That's Marty Hale—that's the toughest cop in town!"

"I thought all them dicks wanted to be mugged for the papers."

"He don't! He's a different kind of a cop! He's like the old-timers—but you won't run into many of that breed any more."

Marty Hale's neck burned, brick-red, as he wheeled into the rickety elevator and growled, "Four!"

The elevator was just as slow as it looked. He swung out of it impatiently,

into the fourth floor corridor. Light from Roman-arched windows flung milky shafts across the hall. Busts of former governors frowned in wall niches. There was a lot of granite and terra cotta and potted ferns; still the place looked like a railway station, and smelled like one, too.

THERE was an oak desk with a uniformed guard behind it, opposite the elevator gate. Hale nodded, and showed the badge in the cup of his hand as he passed. He turned into a side corridor, showed the badge again to a second guard who sat in a sentry box walled with frosted glass. To get into the Governor's chambers, you had to explain your business to this guard; but Hale was expected, and went right in.

He stepped around the sentry box, pushed through an oak door, entered the carpeted reception room.

This was a comfortable chamber, warmly furnished in contrast with the bare corridor outside. It might have been the living room of a private residence. A coal fire played in an open grate. The bookcases were open, too, and comfortable armchairs and a sofa faced the fire. A bald man with a sandy moustache occupied the sofa. Sergeant Hale threw a sharp glance at this man, who looked more than half asleep, and threw another sharp glance at the stack of ledgers at the sofa's end.

There was a reception desk, but no girl because the Capitol employees got Saturday afternoons off. Hale went up to a door across the room, a door that had a grillwork cut into its upper panel. He looked into the next room: it was businesslike. He looked twice at the girl at the typewriter in there, pushed the door open, said:

"Hello, Little Captain!"

A suddenly warm smile curved his usually grim lips. His eyes smiled, too—those jet eyes that could be, that al-



most were, hard as obsidian.

The well-trained whisper of the silent typewriter stopped. The girl swung around, faced Hale. She was Irish, blue-eyed Irish, with amazing tawny hair. Color started into her cheeks, and then went away, leaving her eyes wide and startled.

She said, "Martin Hale!" and her voice wasn't too friendly, was almost hostile.

"Sure, Kathleen. Huh? What's wrong?"

Most of his smile faded.

She pushed back her chair, stood up. "Nothing's wrong. I haven't been called that for years. You jolted me, Sergeant." Her voice still wasn't too friendly.

Hale looked at the girl curiously. She was Kathleen Conner, but the Little Captain to Hale because her father—the Big Captain—had called her so. Ten years ago, though, that was; when Marty Hale himself was a rookie being licked into shape by the hard-fisted, grizzled police veteran. There were few things on earth the sergeant ever revered, and Conner came first in the few.

His stare hardened, a flush crawling into his lean cheeks. He hadn't seen Kathleen Conner for a long time, the Big Captain was dead now, and Kathleen had this swell job at the Capitol. She was the Governor's personal secretary, she was used to meeting the big shots. Naturally she didn't care to be gladhanded by a derby-hatted downtown dick. Naturally, but Hale still didn't like it.

He spoke slowly. "I got a date with the boss, Kathleen."

"Yes, I know. Governor Bellair will see you at once. This way, Sergeant."

SHE walked along the office enclosure railing ahead of him, didn't glance around once, either. Her shoulders stayed stiffly squared; she was colder

than a mint julep. The Little Captain—gone highhat! It was hard to believe. She'd been a pretty sweet youngster, if he remembered her right.

"In here, officer."

Officer! Big Conner's kid calling him officer, like that! Marty Hale said, "Thanks," and said it bleakly, and went into the big paneled office.

"One minute, Miss Conner."—The Governor said that. "I want these things mailed at once. Special delivery."

The sergeant had entered with his hat in his hand, sat down now with his hat hung on his knee when the Governor waved a thin white hand. Bellair bent his silver mane over some papers on the desk, was signing the papers, and kept shooting quick little glances at Marty Hale. He was sizing up the detective, and Hale knew it, but looked straight ahead at Kathleen Conner.

Kathleen seemed nervous. Her slim body leaned slightly toward the desk. Her blue eyes fixed on three pink slips that lay on the glass top; she leaned a little farther, and it looked like she might be trying to read what was written on those slips.

Suddenly she sensed Hale's watchful stare. She straightened, looked at him hard. The sergeant sat steel-faced while she tried to read his eyes. Hale had blunt features, as if moulded in metal; he looked rough and tough and fearless. His eyes could not be read at all. They were glitters of obsidian, black as anthracite, shrewd, and bold. Peering into them was not unlike peering into the double barrels of a shotgun.

Kathleen blushed. "Here," the Governor said. The girl took the papers, went out quickly.

Now the Governor leaned back in his chair, looked Marty Hale over, and did not have any better luck than the girl had when it came to reading Hale's stare.



He began carefully. "The District Attorney recommended you, Hale."

The detective grunted.

"He said you had brains and—ah—guts," Bellair went on. "I asked for an officer to handle a particularly tough assignment. Ah—uh, a special job. You're experienced on that kind of thing, are you?"

Marty Hale kept his lips straight.

"Yeah! I'm used to dirty work!"

This was true. On every metropolitan Force are certain men who draw the riskiest jobs. These men go after the ward bosses, who will break a cop unless he can break them first; they fight the shysters who know all the angles to a frame-up. Marty Hale was that kind of a cop.

"I'm not asking you to—" the Governor started to say. Then he caught the gleam in Hale's cold eyes, and changed it to:

"I see what you mean. You mean you're not afraid of dirt." His white mane bobbed thoughtfully. "I need a man like that. I need a man who can't be influenced or bribed or got to in any way. I want to swear you in as a special state investigator. Will you raise your right hand?"

Marty Hale stood up, and raised his right hand, and took the oath. He swore that he would enforce the laws of the state, so help him God. Governor Bellair reached into the top drawer of his desk, got out a document, wrote upon it, and blotted the writing.

"Here's your appointment, your commission," he said, handing the paper to Hale. "Now I'll tell you what it's about. I'll call Perth in with his books. I'd better go myself, he's probably peeved about waiting this long." He turned at the door, smiled, "Frankly, I wanted to see for myself what you were like."

THE moment he was alone, Sergeant Hale bent over the desk and exam-

ined the three pink slips. They were bank checks, each for fifteen hundred dollars, dated July 1st, July 15th, and August 1st; each was made out to the Bellair For Governor Club, and signed by Joseph Vanderpoint. Hale turned them over, examined the endorsements.

The checks were endorsed with a rubber stamp bearing the Club's name. The August 1st check was further endorsed, per Albert Cloud, *Sec'y*. The July 15th slip was per W. C. Perth, *Treas*. The other had been endorsed per Thomas Bellair, per "K.C."

K.C. meant Kathleen Conner, Hale guessed.

He was replacing the checks on the desk when he heard the shot—

He jerked around, threw back his head, listened. The shot seemed to come from *everywhere*, was echoed from half a dozen sources. The acoustics of the Capitol multiplied it, broadcast the single crash.

Hale threw a startled glance around, leaped forward, plunged toward the heavy door.

There was no one at all in the next office—Kathleen Conner's. He ran along the railing, stopped at the first open door. He looked into a room that was empty of everything except a long table and chairs pushed back to the wall. Hale plunged on, came to the reception room door, punched that open, and came to another stop behind Governor Bellair.

He said, "Uh-h-h!"

The bald man with the sandy moustache sprawled over the sofa's end. Blood ran from his temple, ran onto the carpet and pooled there. He was as dead as a man could be.

Kathleen Conner whimpered, one hand crushed to her lips and stifling the sound. She braced herself to the wall just inside the outer, hall door. The other hand clutched a half dozen white envelopes.



Marty Hale gusted, "Perth—?"

"Yes-s," the Governor shivered.

Kathleen Conner wailed thinly.

Hale strode to the sofa. His black stare reached the police positive on the floor at the dead man's feet. A thin trickle of almost colorless gas still fumed from the weapon's snout.

The sergeant knelt, wrenched a clip pencil from his breast pocket, thrust that into the barrel. He lifted the gun, saw that it's number had been filed.

He stood up. His stare shifted along the sofa, stopped on the typed note atop the little stack of ledgers.

*Dear Governor Bellair: (it read)*

*I am responsible for the Club shortage. I needed the money and I took it. I am willing to sign this confession in the presence of you and other witnesses.*

THE Governor had come up to the sofa, too, more slowly than Hale. He bowed his white-maned head over the note; said, in a shaken voice:

"Good God! I'm responsible for this!"

Twin V's stamped the corners of Hale's mouth. "You—?"

"Yes. I phoned him to bring over the records. I told him that Mr. Vanderpoint had discovered a shortage in the funds. He was caught, and he intended to give himself up. But I kept him waiting out here, and I suppose he lost courage; he killed himself."

Bellair sighed heavily, shook his head.

The hall door jarred open, showed the uniformed guard who was posted in front of the elevator gate.

"Call the police!" Marty Hale told the man. "Call the Homo Bureau!"

Kathleen Conner started at the words, and Bellair said:

"But it's a clear case of suicide."

"Huh! He never shot himself!"

The exclamation had stunning effect. The Governor gasped, and Kathleen Conner abruptly stopped whimpering. Hale spoke gratingly into the dead calm:

"Look! Look here!" He pointed at the sofa's plush top. "That's a powder burn! Somebody sneaked up behind the sofa, aimed the gun right over the edge of it, *murdered* him!"

Bellair bent his white mane, studied the sofa, and said slowly, "But surely Perth could have held the gun there—"

"No! It'd dropped back of the sofa! The gat couldn't be laying in front of him!"

This was terribly obvious. The Governor slowly lifted his head, slowly wet his lips. His stare fumbled in a stunned way from Kathleen Conner to the sergeant.

He said, "But she was here—when I came in—"

"She *what?*" cried Hale.

His dark eyes gripped the Little Captain. Hale saw the little shiver that wrenched her body. Then she steeled herself, and her voice was strained, careful:

"That's true. I was in the hall outside when the shot was fired, just turning from the main corridor. I rushed in here at once—a fraction of a second before the Governor did."

Bellair spoke. "I was in Miss Conner's office when I heard it. The sound seemed to come from the committee room. I looked in there first."

"Good God!" Marty Hale's lips twisted. "One of you outside each door, and yet the murderer escaped unseen?"

He strode past Kathleen, his eyes fixed ahead and foggy with grim doubt. The sentry box in the hall was empty. He stepped past it, looked around. No one could have fled toward the main corridor—that was under the elevator guard's observation. He turned the other way, found a steel door at the



end of the side hall. Hale sprang to that, wrenched it open.

He peered into hazy gloom. Iron steps climbed upward through the tangled structure of dome supports, went down to the main floor.

Hale shook his head, went back into the reception room. Governor Bellair had walked to the fire, and stood at the mantel with a fresh, unlighted cigar clutched in his teeth. Kathleen Conner had sunk into the chair behind the receptionist's desk.

Hale walked toward her, studied the girl's white face.

"What were you doing out in the corridor, Miss Conner?"

"I had just given the out-going mail to Ringling—"

"Who's he?"

"THE door guard," she said. "You see, sergeant, this old building has no mail chutes, and the postmen don't make pickups on the upper floors after noon on Saturday because the offices are closed then—as a rule. Therefore I give the mail to the guard and he drops it in the collection box downstairs."

"But you've got the mail in your hand!"

"Yes, I know. After I gave Ringling the mail, I remembered some of the letters were to go special delivery. I ran after him and caught him in front of the elevators. Then I sorted out the envelopes which needed special delivery stamps. I was coming back with those letters when I heard the shot."

Her hand trembled as she gave him the letters. "You can see for yourself."

"I can see the letters, yeah! But I don't see how anybody could get out of here while you were right in the hall!" A skeptical frown tightened on his lean face. "It's a cinch nobody got out the other way—past both Bellair and me."

"I can't understand either," her voice failed.

Marty Hale turned on his heel, began to pace about the room. His moody stare roved along the bookshelves. He jerked open the drawers of the receptionist's desks, heard Kathleen Conner's breathing checked as he did so. He prowled into her office, came back to say:

"*Damn* funny!"

There were hurried, heavy steps in the corridor, then two well dressed men pressed into the room.

"Perth is dead—" the Governor began.

"Yes, the guard told us." Marty Hale recognized the speaker—Joe Vanderpoint, one of the state's wealthiest distillers. He looked like what he had once been—a fat, hard drinking saloon-keeper. His broad red face topped off a barrel-sized body. A flowing white moustache jerked with his words.

"I thought it was suicide," Bellair continued, "but the sergeant here says he was murdered."

The other man—it was State Senator Cloud—frankly stared at the body. He gulped, his prominent Adam's apple bobbing. The Senator was lank and gaunt, and his face looked foxy under its thatch of carrotty hair.

"Why in hell should anyone kill Perth?" he asked dubiously. "*He* never harmed anybody—except himself. He was too free and easy for his own good, maybe, but he never hurt a fly."

"All right! Stand back, all of you! Don't touch anything there!" Hale crossed the room, urged the men back from the sofa, and then said:

"What's that note mean? What shortage?"

Vanderpoint pulled his white moustache, looked the sergeant up and down, decided: "That's our affair, young man. We don't need any help from the police on that."

In turn, then, Marty Hale looked the distiller up and down, and said: "Oh,



yeah? Well, I got a special agent's commission to help out in your affairs!"

"A what? What the hell does he mean?" Cloud turned to the Governor.

Bellair made coughing sounds. "I gave him a commission, yes. It's all right. Go ahead, tell him."

VANDERPOINT sighed, pulled his moustache again, and said: "I'll tell him. I'm the one that found it out. You know"—he turned to Hale—"we organized the Bellair For Governor Club last year. We raised a lot of money for the campaign that way; I chipped in forty-five hundred myself, in three different checks. Naturally I took that off my income tax return, and Uncle Sam raised hell."

His cheeks flushed and his voice got a little louder. "The Government checks up on that stuff—plenty! All political organizations have to file financial statements. The Club put in ours—and, hell! Some of our money didn't show on it! Either we're trying to crook the Government, or somebody's been holding out on us. And, by God! I got my checks to show for my share!"

"How could somebody hold out on you?" Hale asked.

"By putting through the checks! That's how!"

"Who could do that?"

Senator Cloud snapped: "Any of the officers! I could, myself! I endorsed some of those checks that came in."

"Who else?"

"Perth. He was treasurer, he handled most of it," said the Governor.

"Why didn't he handle all of it?"

Bellair chewed his cigar, answered slowly. "He was running for Assemblyman down in his own district. He had to get out and make speeches. When he wasn't in town, naturally somebody else—like Cloud—did the banking."

Cloud said, "Sure. You did some of

it yourself, Governor."

Hale looked at the Governor, and Bellair flushed slowly. "Yes, I did. People would send in checks with my name on them instead of the Club's—I had to endorse those."

"That ain't all you endorsed," Vanderpoint said.

Cloud laughed.

"You were president of the club, Joe," he told Vanderpoint. "You put through a few yourself, huh?"

The big man gave his moustache a savage tug. "Hell, yes! I get up a collection among the business crowd down home, and I'd cash their checks, and just send in one big bank draft."

They were glaring at each other, and it would have been funny—only murder was never funny to Hale.

Bellair made his coughing sound again. "Matter of fact, I didn't cash so many. My secretary handled a lot of that detail. Her initials were just as good as my signature at the bank."

Marty Hale narrowed his eyes. "Miss Conner? She could get cash at the bank?"

Cloud gave a mirthless giggle.

"We all got cash," he said. "It was a political campaign. Hell, you don't win elections with certified checks!"

"We drew cash," the Governor said stiffly. "But we accounted for it on the books. I can show where every nickel went—"

Hale wasn't listening. He turned, walked around the sofa, stared again at the dead man. He bent over, peered at the note. Then his jaw clicked shut and choked a cry that rumbled up in his throat. His flat cheeks showed pads of tightened muscle.

He whipped out a handkerchief and his blazing eyes flung a glance around the room. The three men were disputing among themselves. Hale protected thumb and forefinger with the handkerchief, picked up the note that way, and



walked heavily to the desk where Kathleen Conner huddled.

"This here!" he said in a low, harsh voice.

"What?"

"It was written on your typewriter!"

THE girl drew back, shrank as if from a physical blow. A thin cry formed on her lips.

"It wasn't—couldn't be—"

She was the Little Captain. Big Conner's kid! He remembered that all right. It drained his face white.

"Look! Those crooked 'l's! Look at those special delivery envelopes!! It's the same on both!" he exclaimed.

She shuddered. The blue eyes were smoky lamps lit with dread. Her whisper dragged.

"Perth could have gone in the office after I left—I was out several minutes—"

"Yeah! He could! But he didn't shoot himself!"

"Marty Hale, you don't think—" she stopped, bit off the words, looked away from him.

"My God! I don't know what I think!"

Her lips moved. It was scarcely a whisper:

"Governor Bellair—can type—had time to—"

Marty Hale growled. "You got to do better than that! What about the green book?"

A shiver jerked her slim shoulders. "I don't know what you mean? What green book?"

"You'll find out."

The Homicide Bureau men were spilling into the room. Hale swung around, carried the note back to the sofa. Slattery, the Bureau lieutenant, watched him do that—and asked sardonically:

"Is that the way everything was?"

Sergeant Hale answered loudly. "No!

There was a green book on top of those ledgers when I came through here this afternoon!"

Slattery scowled. "Well, where is it?"

"Ask whoever killed him!" Hale cried. "It was gone when I found him dead."

Governor Bellair said, "But that clears both Miss Conner and myself. Neither of us had time to hide anything like that after he was shot."

Behind a grimly masked face, Sergeant Hale thought fast and hard. It cleared the Governor, yeah. But not Kathleen Conner! He knew how she *could* have done it.

Before the shot was fired! That was the clue. Perth had been half asleep, dozing there in front of the fire. And Kathleen had come through this room. It would have been easy to slip the green book from the pile.

"It ties up the Club shortage, see?" Hale growled. "The evidence was in there to convict someone of stealing that dough. And the killer knew it."

BUT he didn't say the rest of it. He didn't explain how Kathleen might have gotten Ringling away from his sentry box so she could slip out with the fat green book. He was the toughest cop in town, but he wasn't tough enough yet to call the Little Captain a thief and a murderess.

Senator Cloud walked around the sofa, glanced into the fire. "Could it have been destroyed here?"

"No. Not unless a person stood over it with a poker for half an hour!" Hale grated. "A book isn't so easy to burn."

His stare went to Kathleen Conner. "It was carried out of here. It was hidden."

Vanderpoint growled, "Are you dead sure there was any such a book?"

"Hell! I noticed it in particular!" Hale shot back. "There was an envel-



ope almost falling out of the end of it. An envelope so big!"—He built its size with his hands in front of him.

The fingerprint man looked up from his task. "Nothing on the gat."

"Not a smudge, even?" Slattery asked.

"No. It was *wiped!*"

Slattery said, "*He* didn't wipe it!" and Hale growled:

"It's murder! I said that from the start!"

But his growl was unhappy.

Slattery nodded, and said something about chasing all these representatives and senators and governors into the next room and locking them up there. Hale nudged him, said softly:

"Let 'em go! You come with me!"

Slattery looked puzzled, but he followed Hale into the corridor. The sergeant headed straight for the elevators, walking fast. "We got to hurry! Come on!"

"What's the crazy idea?"

"Lieutenant, whoever killed Perth is going to show his cards in a hurry!"

The elevator didn't go down fast enough to suit Hale. He broke into a run across the first floor corridor, ran out of the Executive Wing of the building, into the foyer under the dome.

"Hell! You are crazy!"

Slattery jerked that out as Hale started up the steep iron steps. Hale didn't reply, just kept going fast. They climbed up into gloom, above the high ceiling, and still Hale kept going in desperate haste. He ran up four floors.

They were back of the Governor's chambers, now, and Hale made a gesture to Slattery. The lieutenant nodded. Both men scrambled off the steps, sheltered themselves in the thicket of girders and joists.

Slattery was no dumb flatfoot. His eyes jerked around the dome, and he said, "Hide-and-seek, huh?"

"Yeah. That green book's around

here somewheres."

"You don't sound very happy about it."

They said these things jerkily, panting for breath. Now Hale squeezed Slattery's arm, and both filled their lungs and held their wind.

What they saw first was a sliver of light when the door opened. It opened and shut quickly. They heard feet going down the stairs. Marty Hale rose up.

HE stared dully, without hope. It was the girl, all right. He'd known all along it would be. Only he hadn't the heart to turn her in, break her with questions. This way she turned herself in.

She stopped, looked around, and her eyes weren't used to the gloom. She didn't see Slattery and Hale above her. She stooped, picked up the yellow envelope that lay on the step at her feet.

Hale muttered, "Go ahead, Lieutenant," and he didn't want any part of this arrest for himself.

Slattery nodded, went out onto the stairs. Hale turned away. Then he heard the crash.

Hale whirled around, bumped his head on a girder, and swore. He swore again as he saw Slattery fall, saw the other man go crashing past. Kathleen Conner screamed thinly. The man leaped at her, leaped down four stairs at once, and crashed into the girl. Marty Hale swore again, made heavy weather of crawling out over Slattery's sagging frame. The other man had one hand clapped to the Little Captain's mouth, used the other hand to wrench the envelope out of her fingers.

Hale started down the steps. The two struggled below him. They weaved to and fro, the man pushing Kathleen farther out onto the girders. The girders stopped at the bulwark of an ornamental facade.



Over the facade was nothing but space—a hundred feet of space dropping to the granite floor under the dome.

Hale thought of that, and thought of his gun. He didn't go for it. He couldn't shoot the man without hitting the girl.

He hurdled four steps, grabbed a girder, swung himself out into the structure. Kathleen managed to scream once more, clawing the top of the facade.

Hale dropped one hand on the man's shoulder, spun him half-around.

He said:

"Why, Senator! You — —!" and drove his fist into Cloud's fox-face.

When Marty Hale hit them, they stayed that way.

Kathleen Conner swayed, wavered behind hysteria and tears, and decided on a laugh.

"Marty Hale, you swear just like my father!"

"Huh! He taught me how! Among a lot of things—" He stopped.

"What are you doing out here, Kathleen?"

"I realized just a minute ago how he did it," the girl said. "He must have come up these stairs to avoid the newspaper reporters downstairs. Bellair used to give them the slip that way. He came up while I was out, and went in the office, and typed that note. Then he shot Perth—"

"Yeah? But who's the cop, me or you?" Hale grunted. "He shot Perth and made a bee-line out the door and ducked into the sentry box while you ran into that room. Then he lammed along the hall and out here. But that doesn't explain why you come out here now."

She said, "I thought I might find the green book—"

"*I found it!*" Slattery came poking through the girders toward them. "Talk about falling in a gutter and coming up with a red rose—the thing was right under my hand where he knocked me!"

HALE snatched the book, braced it on the facade where the light fell from the dome. "Sure! It's the Day-Book! It shows the cash receipts." He flipped the pages. "August 1st he endorsed that check of Vanderpoint's. But there's no entry here! He put the dough in his pocket—that's why he had to get this book, killed Perth to do it!"

Slattery nodded. "Yeah! But why did *he* come out here?"

"Because he didn't notice any yellow envelope when he glommed onto this volume," retorted Hale. "I said it was falling out of the book, and he had to retrace his steps and find that before some blame fool found it. He didn't know what was in the envelope."

"Well, let's see what is!" Slattery reached down, got the envelope out of the Senator's very limp hand. He opened it. "Nuts! Why, this is—"

"My commission as a state special agent," said Hale. "I dropped it there. That's why we had to hurry. I figured whoever killed Perth would come looking for it, and I hoped the search might lead us to the green book, too. Only I figured—well—"

He stared at the girl. "Kathleen! What was the idea of that high-hat act? Were you afraid of me or what? You had me worse than guessing—you had me guessing wrong!"

She flushed. "When you came?"

"Sure! Why did you?"

"I knew that money was missing," she said slowly. "I'd cashed checks for Bellair, and—well—Vanderpoint said outright he suspected me along with everyone else. I—well—I didn't want to act as if you should give me a break because my father—" She hesitated, started over again: "I *was* deliberately high-hat. I didn't want you to think I expected any favors."

Marty Hale grinned, and his eyes joined in the grin. "Yeah! Sure! You're still the Little Captain!"





*He recoiled quickly as  
the man lunged toward  
him*

# THE STAR SHORT SHORT STORY

by JAMES HALL  
*Author of "A Corpse for Steve," etc.*

## *Death's Last Detail*

*Can a dead*



*witness talk?*

JARRET sighed softly, and the tense expression on his lean face relaxed as he closed the rear door of the Citizens Bank and, from the alleyway, stared out into the dark little main street. It seemed deserted. A swift glance at the glowing hands of his watch showed one o'clock. He clutched the black briefcase, now comfortably filled with currency, closer to his side.

"That was easy," he chuckled to himself. "Just like rolling off a log. It took me five years to become one of the town's trusted citizens, but it was worth

it. When the village wakes up in the morning, they'll be short fifty grand in cash and one bank clerk."

He stood back in the heavier shadows of the alleyway, and mentally checked the details of his plan. Nothing had been left to chance. He had told Mrs. Spencer, his gossipy landlady, that he was planning on driving over to Dexter City to a dance and that he wouldn't be home until late. This would allay suspicion against him if the robbery happened to be discovered before morning. He had been careful to make the



same statement to the service-station attendants who had filled his car with gas earlier in the evening.

It was all over now but jumping in the car and heading West. In two days he would be on the coast, where he would lose himself under a different name.

He stepped jauntily out of the alleyway and collided heavily with a man. He recoiled quickly as the man lunged toward him. He whipped a revolver from his pocket. His mind swept to the consequences if he was caught and, in a split second, his forefinger jerked three times on the trigger. The man crumpled to the sidewalk, and lay still.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jarret whirled, his eyes searching the darkness. There was no one in sight. He threw the beam of his flashlight on the man's face. He was a stranger whom he had seen selling woven baskets on the street.

A sudden idea came to Jarret. Clutching his briefcase, he ran toward his coupe, parked in a nearby alley. The law would be there in a few minutes. Someone was bound to have heard the shots. He raised the cushion of the car's seat and shoved the briefcase under it. The starter whirled and the coupe, with its lights out, sprang into life.

As the car left the alley and swung onto the paved highway at the bank corner, Jarret slammed on the brakes and shut off the motor. He hopped out and ran to the prone figure on the sidewalk.

His ears caught the sound of running feet and, the next moment, he was facing Sheriff Boshier and his deputy.

"What's the shootin' about, Jarret? Somebody bustin' in the bank?" Boshier asked.

Jarret pointed to the man on the sidewalk.

"Three fellows were robbing the bank. I got this one, but the others made a run for their car and got away.

I'd probably have got them, too, if my gun hadn't jammed after my third shot."

The sheriff was carefully examining the man on the sidewalk while Jarret was talking.

"He's done for," he stated quietly, then rose and faced Jarret. "We only heard three shots. It's funny they didn't return your fire."

"Yes, it is," the bank clerk admitted. "But they didn't. I guess they saw that I had already got their buddy and figured their best chance was to make a run for it. They headed east. Before this guy passed out, I tried to see if I could get him to squeal on the others."

"Did he?" Boshier asked abruptly.

"No. He was tight as a clam. Told me to go to the devil, but that was all I got out of him."

The sheriff nodded, and motioned to his deputy. "Let's go in and take a look at the bank. Come along, Jarret."

They made a brief examination. The old-style vault, which was an easy mark for a professional, had been opened, and the inside thoroughly ransacked.

"They don't seem to have left their calling cards," Boshier laughed mirthlessly. "Ed," he addressed his deputy, "use the bank telephone here and call the coroner. Then call Murdock and have him pick up the body and take it to the undertaking parlor. Jarret and I will go over to the jail and he can make a written statement about this affair."

HE and Jarret walked silently to the two-story brick building that served as a jail and also as living quarters for the sheriff and his family.

"Now, Jarret, just sit down there," Boshier motioned toward a battered desk in the corner of his office. "Write down exactly what you've told me. Here's some paper. And you'd better let me have that gun. We'll have to have it to show that it was the one that



killed that fellow."

Jarret handed it to him quickly. "Sure. I just carry it along in my car. Never needed it until tonight, but it sure came in handy then!"

Bosher watched him write the report and sign it carefully.

"There, how's that?" Jarret stood up. "I guess I'll run along if that's all."

"Wait a minute," said the sheriff, "until I read it over. The law's fussy about details and we want to be sure it's all right."

He read through the statement, then pointed to the last paragraph.

"It sure wasn't very polite for a guy

who was kicking out to tell you to go to the devil, was it?" he remarked.

"Not very, but he said it, and then passed out just like that." Jarret snapped his fingers.

Bosher suddenly swung round—and clapped a pair of handcuffs on Jarret's wrists.

"I'm arresting you for murder and bank robbery. You tried to make the last detail of your story too convincing. I issued a peddler's license yesterday to the man you killed. I don't see how he could tell you to go to the devil. He had papers from the State institution stating that he was deaf and dumb."

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*(Continued from page 6)*

in smiles as she went out to meet Franz for that last ride. Neither he nor anyone else knew that secreted in the pocket of her dress was a pearl-handled revolver.

It was shortly afterwards that the farmer saw a motorcycle with a girl on the tandem saddle behind a man roar up a hill near Belgrade. It swerved on the crest just in time to miss the two-horse wagon that the farmer was driving to market.

"I jerked my horses aside," the peasant later testified, "just as the wind ripped a cry from the girl's mouth."

"'Faster, Franz, faster. You know we always speed,' she shouted."

"I was mad enough to fight. I shook my fist at that dare-devil couple who had no better sense than to go riding at such terrific speed on that narrow, winding dirt road. They were going sixty, seventy miles on hour."

"Then I got a shock so terrible that I could not even move my arms. They were paralyzed in mid-air, frozen to the reins. That girl whipped something from her pocket. My eyesight is good and I saw that it was a pistol. Then they were out of sight. But only for a moment."

"The motorcycle careened around a hairpin turn. You may doubt it when I tell you that I saw the deed which froze

me with horror, but I swear that I did."

"Hanging to the saddle with one hand, the girl raised the other and thrust it forward until the muzzle of the pistol was just behind the driver's right ear. There was a desperate look on her face as I glimpsed her riding in the valley below."

"She shouted like seven devils, 'Faster, faster, Franz.'"

"I cried out to her, 'Stop, stop, stop,' but the roar of the motorcycle drowned my voice. Even if she could have heard me I doubt if she would have heeded."

"I saw smoke trailing back from this girl's hand. The man lurched forward. He slumped down with his head over the handlebars, his arms dangling."

FOR a few seconds longer, the machine careened down the road, at its terrific pace with a dead man at the handlebars.

The girl leaned back. She held on with one hand. With the other she still held the pistol. The farmer thought she intended to use the weapon on herself, but fascinated as she was with the ride of death, she failed in her purpose.

Perhaps she clung a little longer to life, he told me. At any rate, she gave one piercing scream and flung the gun far away into a ditch. The motorcycle

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*(Concluded on page 69)*



# Gun Trap for a Money-Killer

by **ROGER TORREY**

*Author of "Money Makes Trouble," etc.*

O'MALLEY was waiting for the light to change at Sixth and Oak when they got the call. The radio announcer's calm and stolid voice said: "CALLING CAR THIRTEEN. CAR ONE THREE. MEN FIGHTING AT CORNER OF EIGHTH AND OAK STREETS."

CAR ONE THREE. EIGHTH AND OAK STREETS."

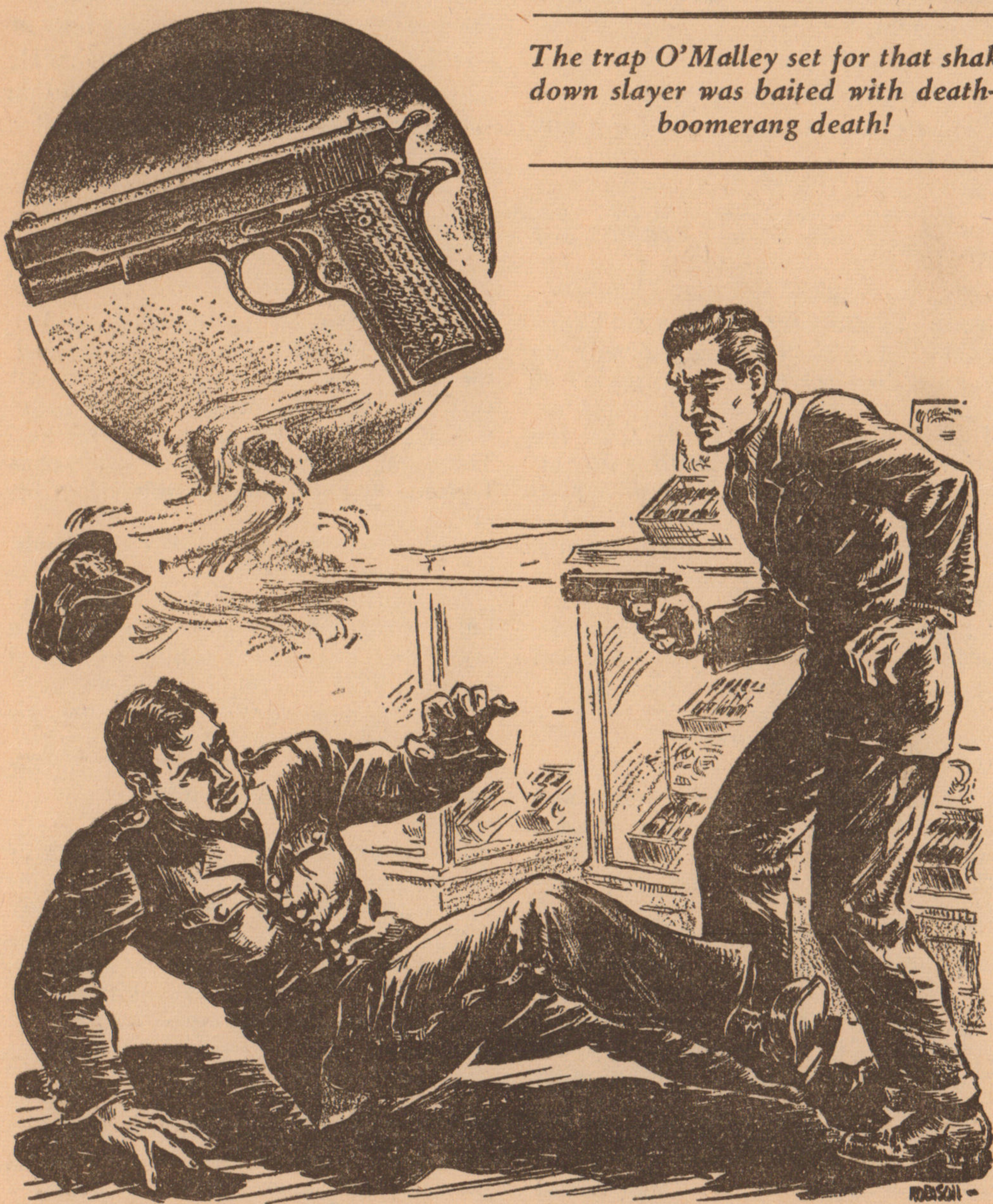
O'Malley swung the radio car around the corner, and Hitchcock, at his side, said: "That's us. Roll her, kid."

"How am I doing?" O'Malley grunted. He was half-way down the block toward Seventh by then, and the

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*The trap O'Malley set for that shake-down slayer was baited with death—boomerang death!*

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O'Malley dropped toward him feet first, falling away from the gun.



little police coupe was doing forty in second. O'Malley's young red Irish face was tight, tense, and his heavy, lumpy shoulders were bunched over the wheel. One big foot had the accelerator down to the floor, and he gave quick, darting glances at side streets as the coupe whipped along.

He said, in a complaining voice: "If I put my foot down any harder it'll go through the floor boards. They shouldn't be able to hurt each other much by the time we get there."

Hitchcock said: "First call tonight. That's the way they start. Easy."

The corner of Eighth and Oak was outlined by a street lamp, and O'Malley swung the squad car into the curb, his approach heralded by screaming brakes. He saw a still figure on the sidewalk, full in the glare of the lamp, swung from behind the wheel and heard running footsteps racing away down the street. He cried out to Hitchcock:

"There he goes!" and started in the same direction. He heard Hitchcock's big feet pounding along behind him, saw a dim figure ahead, and shouted:

"Hey, you! Stop! Stop!"

The dim figure seemed to put on an added burst of speed, and O'Malley, still running, unbuttoned his holster flap and yanked out his heavy service gun. He shouted again: "Stop!" and then shot.

Not at the running figure; at the sidewalk ahead of his own feet. Police work didn't demand his killing a sidewalk roisterer and police training had taught him the danger of shooting in no particular direction.

The gun shot did what it was supposed to do. It stopped the running man in his tracks. O'Malley dashed up to him, saw he was facing a badly frightened boy of not over eighteen, and demanded:

"Hey! Didn't you hear me telling you to stop? What's the idea of running

from the cops? Hey!"

The boy said: "I . . . ugh . . . I was scared."

"Why?"

HITCHCOCK turned his flash in the boy's face right then, and O'Malley saw the boy looked sick and white. He also saw a heavy bruise under the boy's right eye and another at the corner of his jaw. And the boy blurted out:

"Harry! It's Harry! He's dead."

O'Malley said: "Hunh!" reached out and gripped the boy by the shoulder. He pulled him back with him, toward the corner, and said:

"Dead, eh? We'll look into this, kid."

The boy spoke so fast the words almost tumbled out. "We . . . ugh . . . we was fighting and Harry clipped me on the jaw. When I come to we both was lying there. Harry's dead. His head is smashed in. I saw it in the light."

Hitchcock's heavy voice snapped: "What did you smack him with, guy? What did you beat his head in with? You might as well tell us; we'll find it anyway."

"We was just fighting . . . with our fists that's all. He was like that when I come to."

"We'll see, kid, we'll see," O'Malley said. If you didn't do it, you're okay. If you did we'll find out how and why. Agh . . . here he is."

The boy hadn't lied. Harry, whoever Harry was, was still lying where he'd been when the two policemen had passed him. Under the light. He was flat on the sidewalk, arms and legs stretched out as though he'd been crawling ahead when he'd died. His neck was twisted, his right cheek up in sight, and the right temple was smashed in. His face looked oddly mis-shapen because of this. O'Malley said: "Take him, Hitchy!" and turned the prisoner over to Hitchcock, then knelt by the



body. His big blunt fingers found a wrist and no pulse; found the big neck artery without the tell-tale throb that meant life. He looked up, said:

"Dead, all right! Just now; he's bled some but the blood hasn't set. He's still warm and limp."

The boy, almost hysterically, repeated his story of the fight, and Hitchcock grunted and said to O'Malley: "There's a phone in the apartment house down the next door. I'll call in and report. What was his name, kid?"

"Harry Wise," the boy told him.

"And yours?"

"Billy . . . ugh . . . William Fisher. He . . . ugh . . . he was my brother-in-law."

Hitchcock repeated the two names and started away. He wasn't out of the circle of light made by the street lamp, however, before a woman flashed past him and threw herself on the dead man. She was crying: "*HARRY! HARRY! HARRY!*" while she did this, but she suddenly realized the man was dead and turned her head toward the boy that O'Malley still held. She said:

"Billy! You did it. You said you would."

"I didn't, sis! I come to and he was like this."

The woman held her accusing pose for another second, then slumped down over the dead man in a faint. O'Malley said:

"A nice mess! We just walked into a messy family murder is all."

He sounded half-sick, sorry, and very sympathetic. Hitchcock said: "If we'd got here half a minute before, we'd have been in time to stop it."

"We was that much late," O'Malley said.

THEY didn't book the boy on a murder charge that night; just held him on a suspicion charge. His sister was under a police matron's care, but a

police doctor had worked over her for two hours before that. O'Malley, off shift at four o'clock, ran into this same doctor, and the doctor said:

"Hey, guy! You brought me in a funny one tonight. A new one on me and I thought I'd seen them all."

O'Malley asked what this meant.

"That stiff, the one named Harry Wise, had a compound fracture that stopped him in his tracks. But I can't figure the blunt instrument that did him in." The doctor made motions with his hands. "It was like this. His temple . . . here . . . was crushed in, but there was a dent in the middle of the wound. As though whatever he was hit with had something fastened on it. It wasn't a hammer and it wasn't a sap and it wasn't a club. I can't figure what it was."

"What you going to call it?"

"Death caused by the blow of a blunt instrument, of course. The Grand Jury's going to call it death by a blunt instrument but they're going to tack on that the blunt instrument was held by the kid you caught there. What's his name; William Fisher?"

O'Malley said that was the name of the boy they'd caught there and that it was a shame; that family murders had always seemed a more sordid thing to him than the average killing. And that the boy had seemed a nice kid. The doctor shook his head, said:

"As I understand it, they'd had trouble before. This Wise hadn't treated the kid's sister any too well and the kid resented it. Even though the sister hadn't seemed to mind this treatment. He'd made threats and all that. Wise ran a cigar store on Tenth Avenue, and didn't have too good a reputation. The whole thing's a shame."

O'Malley agreed with this thought and went on to the squad room where he changed into civilian clothes. And then he stopped at the desk and asked



the Sergeant in charge:

"About that killing we walked into. When the Homicide boys checked up, did they find anything the guy could have been smacked with? It must have been right there close; we caught the kid not over a hundred yards down the street."

The Sergeant said: "Not a thing. They looked, and they're going to look some more when they've got daylight to do it in. He must have given whatever it was a heave. They'll find it, all right."

O'Malley said he had no doubt of this and left . . . but this wasn't quite the truth. He had serious doubts about the murder weapon being found near the scene of the crime; and equally doubted the boy guilty of this crime. The boy had been honest, straight-forward in his story and his story had impressed O'Malley as being the truth.

O'Malley believed in these first impressions.

THE cigar store was typical of the neighborhood; run down and shoddy, both in fixtures and stock. A defaced sign read: *HARRY WISE—CIGARS*, and a pale-eyed clerk received the news of Wise's death with little surprise. He said to O'Malley:

"I knew it was coming sometime; I always told him it was. You can't get away with what he was doing, not and keep healthy."

O'Malley knew the neighborhood and had a notion of what Wise had been doing. What like places in like neighborhoods were doing and had always done. He looked at four slot machines banked against the wall, at the door that led into quarters at the back of the store, and said:

"Didn't he pay off his bets?"

The clerk shrugged. "He paid anybody that could catch him and scare him into paying. And that's all. I al-

ways said like this: 'Harry, you can't run a business like this that way. If you take their money when they lose; you got to pay 'em off when they win.' Harry couldn't see that. See where Harry ended up. He even owed me. Almost two grand."

O'Malley said this was right and asked whether Wise kept any record of the money he'd owed. He took the small red notebook the clerk handed him, looked it over, then he looked back of the counter and his face brightened. He pointed at a shelf under the cash register, asked:

"Hey! Ain't that an Army Colt? One of the old .17 models? I'm carrying one myself."

"Yes," the clerk said. "Some of the boys that couldn't get automatics used to get 'em issued to 'em. It's a better gun, I'll always think."

O'Malley said that in his opinion, a .17 model Army Colt, .45 calibre and big and heavy, was one of the finest guns ever made, and wandered out and to the traffic man stationed on the corner. He introduced himself and asked:

"Any idea who hangs around that place of Wise's? The guy got knocked off last night and I got ideas."

The traffic man laughed and said: "Good riddance. A bum, that guy Wise was. He wouldn't pay his bets."

"Who did he owe?"

"Who didn't he owe? Everybody that bet with him and won. Horse players; number players, and anybody that beat the crap game he ran in the back room. He was smart about it; the vice squad has raided that place a dozen times and never found a thing. I know the gossip around here, though, and I know. The guy was a bum. He's won a bunch of big bets lately, but he hasn't paid anybody off."

O'Malley agreed that this seemed to be the general opinion and went home. He spent some hours reading the red



notebook and made a list of the men named there . . . and the list contained several names of men who rated high on the City's list of public enemies. The clerk's name, Enright, wasn't on the list and O'Malley wondered about this. He remembered Enright had claimed the dead man, Wise, had owed him two thousand dollars.

THEY got the trouble on the fourth call that night. They'd straightened out a little spat between a man and his wife, in which the neighbors had taken an undue interest; had driven a confirmed alcoholic to a receiving hospital and a waiting strait-jacket; and had arrested a suspicious looking prowler who had no explanation for being where he'd been found. And then the radio burst forth with:

CAR THIRTEEN. CAR ONE THREE. GO TO THE APARTMENT HOUSE AT THE CORNER OF EIGHTH AND OAK STREETS. WOMAN SCREAMING IN APARTMENT. INVESTIGATE THIS. CAR ONE THREE. THAT IS ALL.

Hitchcock grumbled: "I'd say that was plenty. Some gal probably dreamed she's seen a burglar."

"That's where Mrs. Wise lives," O'Malley said. "It may not be any dream." He put a heavy foot on the gas and skidded their coupe around the corner.

The apartment house was the second house from the corner and O'Malley braked to a stop directly in front of it. He was out of the car before Hitchcock was and probably ten feet in the lead when he entered the place. He saw a long narrow hall, saw a sign reading MANAGER and started toward it. He heard a dull thumping sound from behind him, turned in time to see Hitchcock sliding to the floor and in time to see a short, heavy man swinging a black jack toward his head. He dodged it, see-

ing another man jumping over Hitchcock's body and out the apartment house door, and then the short, heavy man swung the sap again.

O'Malley didn't do as well with this one. The sap took him a glancing blow across the jaw and he went to his knees. He looked up, half-dazed, and the short man swung the sap again. And that was the last O'Malley knew until the following morning.

It was a male nurse that woke him. O'Malley came out of his coma, barely aware of light in his eyes, and he heard a cheerily professional voice say:

"Well, how goes it this morning? I see you finally know what it's all about."

O'Malley moved his head on the pillow and it felt lumpy and mis-shapen. And like one solid ache. He put up a hand and felt it gingerly, found it swathed in bandages, and asked:

The white-coated nurse said: "You got slugged, that's all. We thought you had a fracture at first, but it was just a concussion. You'll be out of here tomorrow."

"What about that call we were on?"

"The screaming was from a woman named Wise. She claimed she was frightened by two men, but that she knew neither of them. They were probably the two men that slugged you and your partner."

"What happened to Hitchcock?"

The white-coated man lost his smile. "He didn't do as well. Compound fracture and he isn't out of danger and won't be for some time. A funny wound, too. The bone is smashed in, and inside this wound there's another dent. It's very peculiar."

O'Malley closed his eyes and thought this over. And he dropped back to sleep still thinking about it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Wise said to O'Malley: "But I tell you I don't know either of the men. They were both strangers." She was



looking O'Malley directly in the eyes, but her mouth was twitching and her voice wasn't steady. He said:

"Okey, Mrs. Wise. If you won't tell me and let me help you, you won't. Suppose I guess. Your husband owed them money and they wanted to collect it from you. They got a little rough and you screamed. They told you to keep your mouth shut and you're doing it. Isn't that it?"

SHE said stubbornly: "No. I tell you I didn't know either of them. They were burglars. What are they going to do about Billy?"

"We're holding him for the Grand Jury. I'm sorry about it. I've got a notion the boy didn't have a thing to do with it."

"If he did it they should hold him," she said. "Even if he's my own brother. I'm sorry, but if he did it he should be in jail."

"Tell me one thing. Did you give the two men any money?"

She said she hadn't; that the two men hadn't asked for money. O'Malley sighed and said: "All right. But I'm trying to help you and it would make it easier if you'd tell me the truth."

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Wise's apartment number was 3-B and O'Malley luckily managed to rent 3-D . . . just across and down the hall. And he was in this apartment at nine the following evening . . . sitting by his front door and with this open a crack. He was in shirt sleeves and his gun was on the floor by his chair. He heard heavy feet tramp down the hall and stop in front of 3-B, heard a knock on that door, and then Mrs. Wise's startled:

"You again."

O'Malley tightened and scooped his gun from the floor. He heard a man's heavy voice say:

"Yeah, me. You got that dough, sister?", then heard a little scuffling sound and heard the apartment door slam. He got to his feet, tip-toed out in the hall and to the door of 3-B, put his ear against the door and heard Mrs. Wise say:

"But I tell you I haven't got that much money. I can't get it; Harry didn't leave anything."

O'Malley heard the same voice say: "Tough, sister, tough," then heard a slapping sound. And then a muffled little scream and a man's laugh.

With this he threw the door wide open.

The next moment was full of flashing action and left no time for thought. He saw three men, all moving, and saw the gun one of them held swing toward him. He shot first, almost automatically, saw the man fall, and saw one of the other two dash out of a door at the side of the room. The third and last man was dragging at a pocket, and O'Malley stopped this with a: "HOLD IT!" and a movement of the gun. The man stood, sullenly holding his hands at shoulder height, and O'Malley said:

"Who're you? What's the idea of the gun play?"

The man said: "I ain't made a gun play. You came in and started it, copper."

"And I finished it," O'Malley said. "What are you here for?"

The man glanced past O'Malley and said: "We just came to see Mrs. Wise. Ain't that right, Mrs. Wise?" His voice held warning, and O'Malley wasn't surprised when Mrs. Wise said meekly from behind him:

"That's right."

O'Malley took a .32 automatic from the groaning man on the floor, and a stubby barreled .38 revolver from the prisoner. He looked at both guns as if disappointed, said: "Mrs. Wise, will



you call the station and tell them about this. Tell 'em to hurry up here." And then, to his prisoner:

"Who was the guy that ran out of here?"

"You try and find out."

O'Malley grinned and said: "I'll tell you now, just who it was. It was that clerk from the store. It isn't him on the floor, and he's in the picture, so it'll be him. He was going too fast to be recognized, but it'll be him. That right, guy?"

The prisoner said nothing, and O'Malley added: "And it'll be him that sapped my partner on the head. It'll be him that killed Wise. And I got a notion he'll burn for it."

THE pale-eyed clerk at the cigar store was just coming out from the back room when O'Malley got there. O'Malley, looking big and grim with his taped head, said:

"Okey, Jack! You got it on you?"

The clerk asked what this meant. O'Malley said: "I mean that gun of yours. Make a move for it, if you think it's smart."

"I ain't got a gun on me."

O'Malley looked at the shelf under the register, then at the door to the back room and said: "Just ditched it, eh? Okey, okey. It'll have your prints on it and it'll hang you. Get in that back room ahead of me."

He followed the clerk into the room, and the clerk spun around holding the heavy gun lined on O'Malley's middle. He snapped out:

"Stand still, cop. I didn't ditch it; you're looking at it."

O'Malley switched his gaze to the gun the clerk held. He said: "Did Wise really owe you any money or was you just shaking down his wife on general principles? The two guys with you will crack; they won't keep quiet and stand a murder rap. That gun will hang you, mister. And if my partner dies, I'll beat

you to death myself."

The clerk laughed, a thin vicious sound, and O'Malley went into action. The clerk was possibly eight feet away, holding his big gun trained on O'Malley's middle, but O'Malley dropped toward him feet first, falling away from the gun as he did. The gun roared out, deafeningly in the confined room, and O'Malley got the full effect of the muzzle blast in the face. But the bullet took plaster from the wall above and behind him.

He landed flat on the floor on his back, brought himself up on his hands as the clerk turned the gun down toward him. And then, braced on his hands, he lunged ahead again. He caught one big foot in front of the clerk's ankles, the other behind him and at knee level, then swung over to his face and scissored his legs together with all his strength.

The clerk went to the floor with a thud, and the gun he held sailed out of his hand and against the farther wall. O'Malley slid up and over him, held him with one hand and hit him with the other, and the clerk went limp and lax. And then O'Malley got to his feet, breathing gustily, and said:

"The right one, finally."

Hitchcock said, from his hospital bed: "I don't quite get it, guy. What was it all about? Of course I'm glad they turned the kid out, if he didn't do it, but how did you know who did?"

O'MALLEY said: "I didn't, at first. But that clerk was a natural for a shake-down. They kept trying to get dough from Mrs. Wise so I staked out her place and ran into them. I got the wrong two men; the clerk was the killer. I was after him all the time; but I had to get him with that gun on him."

"It was a money kill all the time, then?"

"Sure. It had to be. Wise had welched on bets and they killed him trying to col-



lect on them. The clerk was the brains behind the deal as well as the finger man. He and his two pals came along right after Wise had knocked out his brother-in-law in a family fight, and they killed Wise on that corner. Mrs. Wise really thought her brother had done it; the brother and husband had trouble before. If the kid didn't kill him, somebody else must have, and all I had to do was find out who it was. The clerk's name, Enright, wasn't on that list of names Wise kept of guys he owed money to, so I figured he'd maybe cut it out so I wouldn't suspect him. And then I knew he had the murder weapon right handy and that made him a natural. So when I got his two pals, I kept going after him. I got him with the gun, even if he got the drop on me with it."

"How did you know it was him that slugged me and killed Wise?"

"You remember that hole in Wise's head? One dent inside another. You got the same kind of smash in that hallway. It was made by a .17 model Army Colt and I knew it. They've got a swivel on the butt, so they can be hung

around your neck with a lanyard, and that swivel made that second dent. There was one in the cigar store; the clerk's trick was coming down with the butt of it on somebody's head."

"It seems funny that Mrs. Wise would blame her brother for killing Wise, instead of blaming this clerk."

O'Malley laughed. "She didn't know the clerk was a killer; didn't even know he was in the mess until I got his two pals in her apartment. They had her scared, then. Her brother was in her mind as the killer right along. If the clerk's pal hadn't cracked, I doubt if she'd believe her brother innocent right now."

Hitchcock said wearily: "But I still don't see how you knew about this gun having a swivel and that it would make a dent like that in somebody's head."

O'Malley said proudly: "I got one myself. Before you and I teamed up, I smacked a guy in a street fight with mine and it made the same sort of dent. All I had to do was tie up the clerk with the gun in the store. I knew those dents had been made with it."

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*(Continued from page 61)*

veered from the road, shot across a field and smashed into a stone wall.

Two bodies were hurled high in the air. When the farmer reached them, he saw that there was not one but two death riders. On the other side of the wall lay

the crushed figures of Franz and Angelina.

She must have caressed the man she loved before she died, for resting on the shoulder of Franz was the lifeless arm of Angelina.





# Hot Cars

by NORMAN A. DANIELS

Author of "The Devil's Highway," etc.

He saw Lannigan, tried to raise his gun, but Lannigan fired first



A WHOOP of derisive laughter followed Sergeant Bill Lannigan as he stalked out of the big garage. On the street he turned to look back at the flashing neon sign.

"Decker Used Cars," he muttered and sniffed in contempt. "Should read Stolen Cars instead of used ones."

"Hey — flatfoot," someone yelled from the doorway of the salesroom. "Better go back on a beat. Just because you're on the Auto Theft Squad don't mean everybody swipes cars."

Lannigan almost thought the same thing himself as he started away from the garage. For four months costly cars had vanished at the rate of twenty a day and not once had the Auto Theft

Squad uncovered a single lead.

Lannigan stepped from the curb to cross the street. A sleek, rakish looking sedan slid by him so close that he had to jump back. The irate yell that arose on his lips was stifled when he saw the driver.

"Wilson," Lannigan cried. "That cheap crook couldn't afford a car like that. If he only turns into Decker's garage."

Wilson did. He jerked the wheel and

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*Sergeant Lannigan rode a couple of clues into that hot-car mob's lead-filling station—and got parked in the jaws of death!*

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the car stopped across the sidewalk while he waited for the garage doors to open. Lannigan broke into a run. He grabbed the door handle of the car, yanked it open and slid into the seat.

"Hello, Wilson," he said quietly. "I haven't seen you since they let you out. How come you're driving a bus like this? Let's see your owner's card—and your license."

The pasty-faced crook behind the wheel gulped and tugged at a collar already a full size too small for his scrawny neck.

"Aw lemme alone," he whined. "I'm just deliverin' this crate for Decker. Hell, I dunno if there's a owner's card in it."

"Well ain't that just too bad," Lannigan grinned. "An ex-con, without a nickle in his jeans, driving a three thousand dollar wagon that he says belongs to Decker. Back up, Wilson, and turn around. We're going to Headquarters."

The garage doors swung open and two men hurried out. One was Decker, a squat, red-faced gorilla who was waving his hands excitedly.

"You ain't got no business taking that bus," he half screamed. "Wilson works for me and he can drive that wagon all he wants. You cops are gettin' too damned fresh."

"Can you prove it's your car?" Lannigan said coolly. "Wilson says he hasn't got a card and driving a car without a registration happens to be against the law. I happen to be a cop so—Wilson goes downtown. Come on, you punk, back out of here."

DECKER stood watching as Wilson maneuvered the car back to the street. Suddenly the used car dealer turned on his heel and ran back into the garage. Lannigan smiled. He had Decker on the run now. If only he'd get a break—if Decker would slip, or Wilson talk, the entire Auto Theft

Squad would breathe a sigh of relief.

Wilson clamped his lips together and refused to say a word on the ride to Headquarters. Lannigan shrugged when his attempts to pump the ex-convict fell flat. There would be a different story once Wilson was bathed in the white lights of the line-up and tasted of steel bars again.

He grabbed the little crook firmly by the arm when they reached Headquarters and piloted him across the sidewalk and up the wide steps. As he walked through the main office, a slender, dapper man arose from a bench and hurried toward him.

Lannigan swore.

"You know who I am," the little man said. "I'm Marty Grofman, Attorney, and this man is my client. I demand that he be charged and admitted to bail at once."

Lannigan's grasp on his prisoner never relaxed. He pushed the lawyer aside, grinned in his face and said: "Sorry—this is my bad day. Rheumatism in my ears."

Grofman shrilled threats on the detective's shoulders, but Lannigan slammed his office door in the attorney's face and turned the key. He shoved Wilson into a chair, bent over him and began to search the man. In one pocket he found nine hundred dollars in twenties. In another, neatly folded, he discovered two bills of sale for old used cars.

"How come," he asked Wilson, "that you carry nine hundred bucks in your pants and what the hell are you buying used cars for?"

Wilson started to open his mouth, but he closed it suddenly, lowered his eyes and studied his dirty finger-nails. For ten minutes Lannigan berated him, but the little crook never moved a muscle.

"Lannigan—open the door!" Captain Connors was outside.

Lannigan let him in and calmly



pushed the excited Grofman back into the hall when he attempted to squeeze through. But Grofman managed to get in a word of advice.

"Don't talk, Wilson! They got nothing on you."

Captain Connors straddled a chair. "What is it, Lannigan? Grofman is raising particular hell out there."

"I looked over Decker's used car joint," Lannigan explained. "I was damned sure we'd find some of those stolen Cadillacs there. He had plenty of big cars on the floor, but—"

Connors nodded listlessly. "I know. He had a bill of sale and a registration for each one. They're not forged either. We checked up through the Motor Vehicle Department often enough. But why pick up this little rat?"

"He was just turning into Decker's place with a nice new shiny car that could be one of the two or three hundred stolen during the last few weeks. He couldn't show an owner's card and he had nine hundred dollars in his kick. So I dragged him down. Decker knew I put a pinch on Wilson and Grofman came at Decker's orders. We've got him worried anyway."

"Captain," someone tapped on the door. "Got to see you a minute. It's about Wilson."

LANNIGAN opened the door and a desk sergeant came in with a white envelope in his hands.

"Grofman phoned Decker's garage. Then he asked me to come outside with him. We searched the bus Wilson was driving and I found this shoved down back of the front seat. It's the owner's card and it's okay in every way."

"Damn!" Lannigan grunted. "But that still doesn't tell us how an ex-con, out of stir three weeks, could have nine hundred dollars in his pockets. Going to talk, Wilson, or do I throw you in a cell for a couple of days?"

"I don't know nuthin'," Wilson grumbled. "I got rights and you gotta let me outa this dump. I ain't done nuthin'. You can't pinch me for not havin' an owner's card because I had one. Just didn't know where it was."

Lannigan sighed. "All right—you can beat it," he told the crook. "But every time I spot you driving a car, I'm going to haul you down here, Wilson. The first slip you make and it's back into prison for you to finish out the rest of your sentence. Now get out—you make my office smell bad."

Wilson paused at the door to deliver a juicy razzberry. Grofman grabbed his arm and pulled him away. Lannigan sat down.

"It's got to be Decker," he told Connors. "But we can't pin it on him. He sends out spotters who pick out a car. Then one of his men gets back of the wheel, puts a piece of fine wire down the ignition key hole and there's your connection with the battery. On the Mattson job last week, the car was locked. It was parked on a quiet street and I saw marks of truck tires just in front of it. The crooks backed up a van used a block and tackle and lifted the car right into the truck. If they know their business, that can be done in twenty seconds."

"I know," Connors passed a hand wearily across his face, "but how can we prove it? Decker may be the brains behind this sudden epidemic of stolen cars, but however he does it, we can't puncture his story or those owners cards and bills of sale. We've raided his garage ten times in three months and got nothing but a lot of bad publicity."

Lannigan arose. "Just the same, Wilson knows plenty and I'm going to have a talk with the little squirt just as soon as Grofman lets him go. I know where Wilson lives and I'm going there. See you later, Captain."

Lannigan used a squad car to drive



deep into the slums of the great city. He parked the car a couple of blocks away and walked to the cheap hotel where Wilson lived. He didn't go through the lobby, but used a dirty service entrance at the rear and he climbed back stairs to the fifth floor. As he stepped into the hall off which Wilson's room led, Lannigan was aware that things didn't seem just right. For one thing, two electric light bulbs in the hallway were out and he heard a door slam shut to be followed by a scuffling.

Lannigan hauled out his gun and walked softly toward Wilson's room. He listened a moment and heard nothing. Carefully he reached for the door knob and turned it gently.

Then things happened with an unexpected fury that put Lannigan on the wrong end of the battle. The door was flung wide and three men barged out, guns swinging. One blow hit Lannigan on the shoulder. Another raked across his cheek, drawing blood and the third collided squarely with the back of his neck. He swayed, trying to coordinate muscles and nerves to pull the trigger of his gun. Someone inserted a foot between his legs and pushed him over. Lannigan hit the floor with a thud. He felt a white hot piece of steel burrow its way between his ribs. Once more a gun collided with his skull. A shrill voice, terror crammed, grated on his already outraged nerves.

"Don't—please don't!"

THE toe of a man's shoe connected with Lannigan's jaw and he lost all further interest.

He woke up bathed in white light. Looking down at him was Captain Connors and a horde of detectives were pressed into the tiny room. Connors was sympathetic.

"You'll be all right. The ambulance surgeon fixed up that knife wound in your ribs and Wilson is stone dead."

"What?" Lannigan sat up, supporting himself against the wall. His eyes roved about Wilson's room. The little crook was sprawled on the floor. In his hand was a knife and the blade of it was bloody. There was an ugly wound in the crook's forehead.

"How come you let him pull a knife on you?" Connors asked. "The little rat might have bumped you."

"But I didn't shoot him," Lannigan rubbed his forehead and winced as the wound in his side twitched. "He didn't knife me either—at least I don't think he did. The whole floor was dark. I started to open Wilson's door and at least three mugs barged out. I didn't have a chance to even fire my gun."

Connors frowned. "It was a slug from your thirty-eight that killed Wilson," he said. "You don't have to worry about it, Lannigan. The evidence shows that Wilson tried to kill you with the knife first. You were within your rights in shooting him."

"But I didn't do it," Lannigan struggled to his feet and steadied his spinning senses. "I know whether or not I pulled the trigger of my gun. It's a frame—to get rid of Wilson. They were afraid he'd talk."

Connors shrugged. "Maybe so. I'm not disputing your word, but I think you ought to go to the hospital, Lannigan. Things might get clearer after awhile. You're hurt, man, badly wounded."

"Hurt nothing. Let me borrow your gun, Captain. Keep mine in case we need it for evidence. I'm going to see Decker. And I'd like to look around this room too."

Connors shrugged. "Whatever you wish. We're finished. You can stick around until the dead wagon shows up. The finger-print boys have another job on the west side and I'm going there too. Don't try any crazy stunts, Lannigan. You're not fit to tackle Decker and his



bunch of mugs. If you get anything, call for help."

Lannigan shoved his borrowed gun into his holster and began a search of Wilson's room. The ex-convict's body lay huddled on the floor. Lannigan bent over it and searched him. There was no trace of the bills of sale Wilson had in his pocket when searched at Headquarters. He rolled the body over to search a hip pocket. Rigor mortis hadn't set in yet and Wilson's mouth opened slightly. Lannigan's eyes clicked wide open. He knelt and gently pulled an object from the dead man's mouth.

Carefully he straightened it out. It was half of a one thousand dollar bill, torn across the middle, wadded into a compact mass and stuffed far into Wilson's mouth. Did it mean that Wilson was trying to hide this—or was it some grim gesture of the murderers to show that Wilson was a squealer?

Lannigan waited until the morgue men came and watched as Wilson's body was carried out. Then he prowled the room for ten minutes longer. Finally he walked out. The cool night air revived him and while the wound in his side hurt like a galloping toothache, he clenched his jaws together and walked to where his car was parked.

**I**T was after midnight, but the neon sign over Decker's garage still glowed and inside a small night shift was working. Decker was smart enough to operate a legitimate garage business along with the stolen car racket.

Being an Auto Theft Squad detective wasn't all it was cracked up to be. Many of the men on the force considered it an easy assignment and most of the work consisted of trying to find clues on cars stolen and later abandoned. But there came times when cars vanished and never appeared again. Some of these were discovered when fortune favored the police and motor numbers failed to

jibe with the registration certificate. But nothing as crude as that exposed any of the cars Decker had stolen and later on sold as expensive used models. Decker had a finesse all his own, but unless he was caught red handed, other crooks would discover that same method and there would be merry hell to pay in the Auto Theft Squad.

Lannigan watched the garage intently from a well concealed position across the street. He reflected on the number of times he had raided the place and found nothing. Yet he knew that Decker was behind this wholesale thieving of cars.

He walked around the block, plunged down a dark alley and came out in back of Decker's big garage. There was a spacious yard behind it and every inch of space was piled high with discarded auto parts. Decker junked a lot of old cars.

Lannigan stumbled over what was left of a motor. He cursed and rubbed his injured foot against the shank of his other leg. Then he hauled out his flash, covered the lens with his fingers so only a tiny stream of light would emanate and bent down to examine the motor. His eyes lit up in excitement. Where the motor number was usually raised on the block there was nothing except a spot rusted more than the adjoining surface. He ran his finger over the spot. It was smooth, almost too smooth.

He carefully avoided the rest of the piled radiator shells, fenders and motors. There should be a rear entrance to the garage, although Lannigan couldn't ever remember seeing one. He stepped close to the rear wall of the building and felt his way along. He avoided a huge ash bin, paused and stroked his chin thoughtfully. He had searched the cellar of the garage a dozen times and there was a modern oil burner installed there. Why then, the ash bin?

He returned to the projecting bin,



lifted the lid and turned the ray of his flash into it. The thing was banked with ashes. His light swept the ground in front of the bin. There he saw tire marks, hundreds of them, but no signs of ashes.

On all fours, heedless of the wound that gave him frequent stitches of pain, Lannigan began to examine the bin. He found that the outer wall of it was slightly raised above the ground and the tire marks went right on under. He inserted his hand, found a foot latch usual to garage door hardware and almost gave vent to his exultation with a whoop of joy.

He prowled around the junked cars until he found a thin, flexible bit of metal and returned to the ash bin. He tried to insert the strip of metal between the pieces of wood. After five minutes of this, his improvised lock picker wedged itself deep into the wood. Lannigan manipulated it upward until he felt the tongue of a lock. He worked the metal strip carefully until the tongue was forced back and the huge ash bin broke in the middle.

It was really two big swinging doors with a bottom nailed to them and this covered with ashes. The doors could swing out, carrying the ashes with them.

LANNIGAN slipped through the aperture and not once did he remember Connor's warning that he was too weak to cope with a gang of killers. They would be desperate now for Wilson's death might be placed squarely on their shoulders and that meant something more than just a few years in prison.

He closed the doors after him, cutting off all hope of quick retreat. Another door faced him and he used his flash to find the latch. He pressed it carefully, listening all the time. The second set of doors swung wide and he stepped into a comparatively small

room that reeked of lacquer and grease.

There was a big car on blocks in the middle of the room. The hood was off and the motor bared. Lannigan looked keenly at the block. There were numbers there all right, but they were fresh, newly cast in the metal. He was on the right trail at last.

Another door, too small for a car to be rolled through led into the garage proper. Lannigan recalled the layout of the garage. Unless his memory was very wrong, this room he was in should be a supply room, not a repair room. He pressed an ear against the door and heard voices.

Decker, smug and sure, was speaking. "Maybe that wise dick didn't croak, but nobody will believe Wilson didn't use a shiv on him and was shot by the dick. Lannigan will be in the hospital for weeks anyway and by that time we can move the stuff out of here. This place is getting too hot. We fooled the cops swell until Lannigan came along. He's damned sure we're in this racket and he won't stop until he uncovers something."

"You oughta made sure he was croaked," another man grunted. "Hell, I saw him walkin' around that room like he wasn't hurt at all. He even frisked Wilson."

"And what did he find?" Decker snorted. "Nothing! If Wilson hadn't been such a sap, he'd be alive today, but he had to show a white feather. When I offered him a thousand bucks to scam, he wanted five grand. That's gratitude for you, and what he done was on the level, too. No cop coulda pinched him if they did find out."

Lannigan drew his gun, pulled back the hammer and caressed the trigger while he slowly opened the door. Decker had his back toward the door, but two of his men saw it open. They shouted a warning. There were five men huddled near a desk at the end of the big



garage. Like a flash they separated and flattened themselves against the wall so that Lannigan would have to step out into the open to get them.

"It's Lannigan—sure it is. That damned dick spotted the assembly room."

"Come on out, Lannigan!" Decker called softly. "Come out and get it! This time it won't be a knife."

Lannigan grinned. He was safe. All he had to do was back out of this secret room, emerge at the rear of the garage and give a warning. Decker would have to move mighty fast to get away.

There was a whir of machinery. Lannigan became aware that he was moving. Amazed, he turned around. The entire room was rising. It was built on the platform of a huge elevator. Already the rear exit was blocked.

Decker laughed harshly. The mechanism stopped halfway between floors.

"Three of you mugs go upstairs. Dump a couple of tear gas bombs down on that wise dick. He'll come out and when he does—let him have it. Martin, stand a couple of cars out front. If the cops think they hear shots, tell 'em the cars were back firing."

LANNIGAN was trapped just as certainly as though he was in a cell in murderer's row. Halfway between floors the small door leading into the garage proper was partly blocked. To climb through it would be suicide. In a moment tear gas would be dumped down on him. He knew he couldn't stand those fumes and he would be easy prey to Decker and his mob.

Lannigan waited no longer. A quick search showed him a capable looking axe. He grabbed it, surveyed the room and by pressing his ear against the wall could hear the slap of the elevator cables. He swung the axe and cut a hole in the wall. Above him he could

hear another axe being used. They were cutting a hole in the ceiling to hurl down the gas bombs. He raised his gun and fired twice. The axeman above stopped abruptly.

In two minutes Lannigan had a section of wall cut away to reveal the cables. Outside he could hear Decker growling impatiently. At any moment the ceiling would go through, a bomb would be flipped down and that would be the end.

Lannigan lifted the axe above his head, measured the distance to the cables and swung. As he did so, he heard a plop and the room became filled with the fumes of a gas bomb.

He let go again with the axe. The room seemed to rock wildly a moment as though an earthquake had struck it. Then it crashed down.

He knew that he was in the cellar of the garage. Using his flash, Lannigan found the door. He stepped into the dank cellar, heard running steps and dodged behind a projecting bit of wall. Two men, guns in hands, rushed toward the elevator. Lannigan stepped out.

"Reach!" he ordered crisply.

One of the men fired. The bullet whizzed by Lannigan's head. His own gun barked and the crook pitched forward. The second man, taking advantage of the distraction, turned and fled. Lannigan went after him, running softly.

"He's down here," the crook shouted as he started up the stairs to the first floor. "Somebody get the tommy gun."

Lannigan let him get that much out before he sprinted up the stairs, grabbed the crook by the leg and pulled him down. He swung once and the crook dropped like a poled steer.

"Come on up here," Decker yelled from above. "We'll smoke the rat out."

Lannigan grinned, took a firm hold on his gun and went up the stairs. At the top, Decker, believing it was his own



man who was coming, opened the door. He saw Lannigan, tried to raise his gun, but Lannigan fired first. Decker was hurled backward by the slug. He stood for a moment as if he couldn't realize what had happened. Then, with a sigh, he doubled up and collapsed.

Two of his men barged into the room, stopped abruptly and raised their hands while their guns thudded to the floor.

"And keep 'em there!" Lannigan snapped. "You—with the greasy paws—walk over to that phone and call police headquarters. Yeah—that's it—ask for the wagon—for yourself."

Captain Connors came with the squad. Decker was alive and wouldn't die—until strapped in the chair. Lannigan sat down and was suddenly aware that his wounded side ached and a sense of giddiness was stealing over him.

"Decker is our man," he told Connors. "He worked it this way. He sent out men, like Wilson, to buy used cars from private individuals. They were old crates. He got bills of sale and a transfer of registration on each car. Then he junked them, stole cars of similar make but later model. He filled in the motor numbers on the block and created new ones to match the old cars he junked. With only a very small piece of forgery, he changed the year model on the bills of sale and the registration. He sold the

stolen cars and they had legitimate numbers and apparently real bills of sale."

"I see that," Connors said, "but why did they kill Wilson?"

"BECAUSE he got wise to their scheme and held out for plenty of dough. Decker and two of his men visited Wilson. Decker gave him half of a thousand dollar bill and told him he'd mail the other half to a point plenty far from here. Then I barged in and Decker saw a chance to dispose of me and Wilson too—only his knife slipped and I'm still here. He framed the job to look as though Wilson had knifed me and I shot Wilson."

"Can you prove it?" Connors asked eagerly. "We'll break up this gang and discourage wholesale auto thievery for months."

"In Decker's pocket you'll find half of a thousand dollar bill. Wilson, when he knew he was going to be murdered, stuffed the other half in his mouth. Decker tried to find the bill, but didn't. He figured he was safe anyway."

Captain Connors looked around the garage. "And Decker tricked us every time we raided this place. That assembly room on an elevator platform could be raised or lowered and a supply room put on any floor level. No wonder we couldn't find any hot cars."

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by H. C. BROKMEYER

# Bullet Bait

*"All right, do what I say this time—it's your only chance!"*



*It was Martin Rand's grim job to snag The Phantom—with that mad killer's own death-hook!*

"ALL right! Let that phone alone! Raise your hands, slowly, now! Walk to the wall there . . . easy!"

Detective Martin Rand started convulsively at the impact of the crisp, cold voice. Then, after that instant of shock, his mind whirled.

Knock the phone over, spin suddenly and attack? No; this voice was behind him, probably with a gun, and if this was the Phantom, he was a killer. So Rand let the French type phone rest in its cradle, raised his hands slowly to about the level of his shoulders, paced to the wall.



"Good." Light fingers frisked him expertly, deftly lifted his Police Positive from its shoulder holster. "All right, turn around now."

Rand turned. Ah, the man the papers headlined as the Phantom, the Clueless Killer, stood so close that Rand could have touched him. A man almost as tall as the detective himself, broad shouldered and rangily built. Dark eyes, as menacing as the single eye of the heavy Luger that glared at Rand's stomach, glittered from between the visor of a low-pulled leather cap and the top of a bandanna fascinator. A corduroy reefer jacket, blue denim trousers, skin tight black gloves. And those shoes; what was there wrong with the feet? The lightning scrutiny of Rand's trained eyes focused on those feet, almost hidden in the nap of a costly patch of Persian rug.

"A copper, eh? Well, well," the voice sneered. "And not a bad idea at that, a plant like this joint. And phoning the chief all about it just now; yes, very nice. You've fixed everything just the way I'm supposed to like it; a swell dump three stories up, windows open, but no trees near; doors locked, yes, and bolted on the inside, I see. A nice setup, yeah! Just like all those other places I got into. Thought you'd find out how I did it, eh? Well, well!"

THE eyes glinted, the Phantom nodded slightly, chuckled behind the fascinator.

"Posing as a bond salesman, too, so the negotiable bands and the cash in that little hole-in-the-wall safe over there would bring me here. Well, here I am!"

The Luger levelled.

"And I hope you like it, copper—because this is your last go 'round!" Rand heard death in the flat hiss of the voice behind the mask. This man had killed Miles Arnleigh, robbed half a dozen

luxurious apartments and homes without leaving a trace, without leaving a clue.

What had this devil done with his Positive? Rand kept his eyes on the rug, but noticed the bulge in one of the huge pockets of the corduroy jacket.

Risking all, Rand ducked suddenly, kicked backward, felt the edge of his heel bite into the rug, then give. His left hand slashed down for the Luger, his right fist drove in a straight smash.

But the polished hardwood floor was first ally, then traitor to Rand. When the detective jerked the rug, the Phantom toppled and the muzzle of the Luger snapped upward. But Rand also slipped. His hard driving right lunged harmlessly over the other's shoulder, and Rand smashed into him even as the Phantom fell, twisting, lithely catlike. As they thudded to the floor, Rand's long fingers closed about the wrist of the bandit's gun hand.

He had seized a wild cat. A hard left hook cracked his head on the floor so that he saw whirling points of light. Long legs kicked over his thighs, tried to clamp his waist in a scissors, a gouging thumb raked a long furrow on his cheek, missing his eye by a fraction of an inch. Steel talons hooked into his throat.

Rand rolled, kicked desperately, jabbed at that muscularly tense arm with his elbow. His knee bumped something and he heard a clatter.

Rand's chest burned, felt swollen to bursting, spots and shadows whirled before his eyes, sharp pains shot through his temples, tore through his throat. He tried to knee, but the Phantom was firmly astride him now, clamping his throat against the floor with a steel hand.

Desperately, he chopped again with his elbow, struck the inside joint of the Phantom's elbow, and the arm pinioning Rand's head to the floor collapsed like



a broken twig. The Phantom gave a snarling grunt as his head snapped down into Rand's chest.

Rand's fingers raked off the leather cap, clawed into the thick, curly hair and twisted.

The Phantom's dark eyes were pulled out of focus in a terrible leer; he snarled like a cat as his throat grip was wrenched free. Rand rolled as the Phantom lost his balance, toppled. The detective twisted downward and inward on the gun wrist and the Luger flopped to the floor. Then, in that desperate scramble of kicking, hitting, twisting, a kick sent the gun spinning over the polished floor into a corner.

THE Phantom tore free, rolled, leaped to his feet as lithely as a cat. Rand lunged after him, slipped again, sprawled, half kneeling, and looked up helplessly while the Phantom's hand streaked for that bulge in his pocket.

That fraction of a second seemed years to Rand.

Crash! Thunder and lightning. Rand felt as though some huge fist had slammed him on the ridge of his collar bone, twisted him, hurled him backward. The room, the shaded lights, the Phantom, the thin rack of blue smoke, reeled, vanished into nothingness.

He fought back to consciousness through gradually lightening zones of grayness to the crinkle of stiffly starched sheets, a white room, the stalely clean smell of antiseptics, and a clumsy, bundled feeling; his left arm in a sling, and a bulky padding bulging just below his neck.

The great square form of Captain Harding, his gray eyes serious under his stiff brush of silvery hair, was beside the bed.

"Hey! Rand! Hear me? Can you understand? How you feel?"

"Like Hell," Rand admitted, with a grimace, as he shifted the bulky arm.

"Didja get him?"

Harding shook his head. "Gone. Completely."

Rand frowned incredulously. His level dark brows met above his bright brown eyes. "And he didn't get out through the door?"

"He didn't come in through the door, did he? No; Clanahan was outside the main entrance, handy, but keeping out of sight, as we told him. Just after you phoned me, your signal flashed on the board again, and when no one answered . . ."

"We must've knocked down the phone, rolling around."

"Yes; we found it on the floor. Well, the girl got her wind up and told the manager, and he got hold of Clanahan just as the shot was fired. The door was bolted and locked."

"Just like the others," Rand growled, "just like they found things when this devil did for poor Arnleigh, that jewel salesman."

"Yes," Harding nodded. "But Clanahan didn't wait for someone to pick the lock and saw the bolt; he shot his way in, and found you."

"Well, we've at least got a clue," Rand smiled ruefully. "That Luger."

"Luger? What Luger?"

"Why, the one he had with him! I twisted it away from him just before he shot me with my own gun."

"Too bad, but we didn't find any. He must've picked up that gun when he lammed. You're shot with your own gun, and we found that. No more clues than there ever are, with this fellow. My God!" Harding clawed his hair with a huge hand. "Same as the Caxton place, the Pemberton Apartments, the Carling home, where poor Arnleigh was staying. Doors locked, and some bolted, windows open, but three or four stories up—the Pemberton Place, where the Arnetts lost that silver, was five, wasn't it?—no trees, ropes, scaffolds, ladders



handy, no marks on the wall, no traces on the sill. How does he do it? What does this devil do, fly in?—And out?"

"I KNOW the rest by heart," Rand sighed, slumping down into the rattling sheets. "No molls, no fences, no fellow workers, nothing from the stoolies, nothing on the guy at all, anywhere, anyhow! He's got us all buffaloed."

"He hasn't got the newspapers buffaloed," the captain growled. "They know just what to say—and do: everything from calling in the G-men to help the helpless city force, to sacking us all."

"That's all right!" Rand pushed himself to a sitting position with his sound arm; golden flecks glowed in his bright brown eyes. "I'll get this bird! This decoy idea is no good, any more; our friend will be leary of anything that looks like it was too good, from now on, but he'll keep on at his work. He has the ego, like they all have; thinks he can keep right on winning. But he won't! I'll get him!"

Harding shook his head, then gazed for a moment at Rand out of the corner of his eyes, noted the expression in the sharp-planed, lean face, the set of the wide, thin mouth and lantern jaw.

"Well, go to it. Damn it, man, no one can kill, and steal, without leaving some trace! Take it easy for a bit, get patched up, and then go get this fellow!"

Rand obeyed all his captain's orders save the one to "take it easy." He was not entirely "patched" when he dressed (in spite of the nurse who cackled like an indignant hen) eased his coat gingerly over the padding of bandage, and started on his search.

Over and over the ground he trudged repeatedly, questioning patrolmen, private watchmen, taxi drivers, with the same repetitious questions. The Caxton place, the Pemberton Apartments, the

Carling home, in Grosse Pointe, the Riverview, where the Phantom had escaped from him, the Caxton place, the Pemberton Apartments, the Carling home in Grosse Pointe, the Riverview, where the Phantom had escaped from him, the Caxton place, the Pemberton—Front, rear, sides, doormen, managers, phone girls; the Ainsleys, who had been robbed in the Caxton apartment hotel, the Schulyers, who had lost \$15,000 in negotiable bonds from their suite in the Hotel Caxton; all of them, tenants, bell-boys, valets, servants, till they all became exasperated with his persistent repetition. And why hadn't the police done something?

Rand plugged on; his tall frame, already lean, became skeleton-like; he slept fitfully, here and there, in flop houses, dubious hotels, auto camps. He merged with the great stream of humanity, flowing endlessly through the city; visited the gyp joints, the cheap grifters. He swam far in the strange currents, that ran, unseen, in the great river of action and life that was the city; the higher-toned gambling houses, the cheap smoke-stifled joints out on the highways, honkytonks, waiters, waitresses. He bumped against the egg delivery racket, the laundry shakedown, the river pirates, boxcar thieves. He grilled repeaters at headquarters, listened to the furtive mumbling of stoolies.

"AND all I've learned is what I read in the papers," he grouched to Harding, across the Captain's desk at headquarters, late one night. "I've covered this damned town from the River front to Ten Mile Road, and beyond; from Hamtramck to the swellest dump in Grosse Pointe, and haven't raised a sniff. Just what we knew before. But listen." Rand leaned forward, tapped a long forefinger on Harding's desk, "did the uniformity of the general layouts



our friend chooses, ever hit your eyes? All about of a height—three to five storeys?"

"Of course," Harding growled. "Do you believe that means anything? I mentioned that the time you were in the hospital, remember?"

"Sure. Well, its' not much, but I do believe it's something, a lead, maybe."

And it was "not much," but a "something," that finally gave Rand a tip. He had listed and begun a systematic inspection of all the apartments, hotels or homes in the city that would, because of their location or build, be particularly tempting to the Phantom. And finally a clue came at last; a clue to the Clueless Killer.

Early one morning, under the frosty light of a street globe, Rand questioned Daniels, No. 912, rookie patrolman whose night shift beat covered a river-front section wherein were located several exclusive apartment hotels.

"But hasn't there been anything out of the way, anything?" Rand insisted, frowning. It was the question that he had asked hundreds of times within the last few days. "We're really after this fellow; any little thing might help. You haven't seen or heard anything unusual?"

Daniels peered at him keenly a moment, with sharp blue eyes, a peculiar look. Rand was puzzled for a second, then chuckled.

"C'mon! I don't care if you are a rookie; I won't laugh. You can tell it to me; it might lead to something."

Daniels, too, relaxed and smiled, won by Rand's bit of insight. "Well, it is foolish enough. Just simply that I've noticed a fellow, several times, goes fishing, early, about this time, three o'clock or so, in the morning, and he goes in a taxi—always."

"Hmph!?" Rand scowled. "That's a queer stunt, with the River right at his back door."

"Yes, sir, what I thought, too. He seems to live in back of the St. Clair Arms here, perhaps a chauffeur, or someone of the sort, living in the garage apartments of the place. He's gone several times that way, with a rod and minnow bucket. I've talked with the taxi drivers; most of 'em who've hauled this fellow don't know much about him."

"The taxi boys are mostly Checker fellows, 'round here. I should get something from them," Rand commented.

"Yes. One of them kidded this fellow, once, about not having any fish. But the guy never said a thing. And another one of 'em, Roberts, told me that he took this bird out Clevendon one morning." Daniels' blue eyes burned; he had forgotten that his discovery might sound foolish or prove to be only a trivial incident.

RAND straightened. "Why, that's out near the Pemberton Apartments!"

"Yes!" Daniels pursued, keenly, "and that was Tuesday, a month ago, when the place was robbed by this Phantom—before he had killed that Arnleigh fellow."

"Fisherman, eh?" Rand mused. "Well, I don't know whether or not this is anything, Daniels, but much obliged. I'll find out all there is to know about this fisherman of yours. Still round here, eh?"

"You bet; saw him just yesterday morning. But wait. Roberts told me more. He said that this guy sort of held up the rod, as he paid his fare, and told him—Roberts—that he had gone out Clevendon there to pick up a friend who was going fishing with him. Roberts naturally asked if he should wait, but the bird told him to scram."

Within a few minutes, Rand had hastily scribbled names, addresses in his notebook, promised Daniels to let him



in on anything if—or when—something did come of this bizzarre tip, and was on his way.

After a third visit to the Pemberton Apartments, and well before noon, Rand had become, according to the signed snapshot above the rear vision of his Checker cab, "A. Logan—This Is the Driver of This Cab."

But A. Logan spent little time searching for fares. He rolled swiftly to the Checker stand near Waterworks Park, talked with the driver Roberts, spent the remainder of the day talking with this driver, chatting with that one. And the last thing before evening, he drove out to the Pemberton Apartments and gave them a thorough going over for the third time.

About three o'clock the next morning, he rolled out of bed, popped hastily into his clothes, yawning, cocked his badged visor cap jauntily over one ear and went down to his cab, whistling tunelessly under his breath.

He waded through the fog to Jefferson, then on down the River street, stopping when he estimated that he was near the St. Clair Arms. He left the almost noiseless engine of the taxi ticking over, dropped his cap onto the seat and stepped onto the damp sidewalk. He could not afford to risk the chance of cruising up and down until he picked up this mysterious early-rising fisherman. He must make sure.

In the chill and the darkness, reaction and doubt pounced on Rand. Was this all a wild goose chase? Would the Clueless Killer, the Phantom who robbed through locked and bolted doors, without leaving traces on bare walls, be so cocksure or so careless that he left as many clues as Rand had found within these last few hours?

Rand shrugged, stuck his hands in his pockets, turned up the collar of his coat and affected a slouch, the impersonation of a homeless, sleepless bum.

ANOTHER taxi, invisible save for the smudged rainbow of its neon sign gliding through the fog, sizzled by. Rand's heart leaped; his fisherman might flag this newcomer. But the other car purred away into the fog, and Rand slouched on, straining his ears as well as his eyes. The indefinite, sleepy early morning noises of the city came to him, seemingly from nowhere and everywhere about him, out of the fog: The distant bass hoot of a lake boat, the almost inaudible rumble of a distant street car.

Ah! At last! The iron grille fence of the St. Clair grounds had appeared on his right, barely visible, when Rand heard steps approaching him, not furtive but quickly purposeful. In the weak silvery glow of a fog-shrouded street light a shadow loomed, a shadow that became a tall figure, marching toward Rand, head turned to peer into the fog of Jefferson Avenue. Rand took the inside of the walk, slouched past. His brief glimpse showed him that the man carried a long, limber casting rod balanced in his right hand, a round bucket gripped in his left.

The detective shuffled on into the fog, until he could no longer hear the footsteps. Then he swung into the street for about twenty feet, and loped silently back toward his waiting car. He slid as noiselessly as possible behind the wheel, cocked his cap once more over one ear, and sucking in a deep breath to quiet the panting caused by the exertion of his jog, put the cab in gear and rolled slowly along close to the curb.

He had gone scarcely fifty yards when he heard a low whistle and a tall figure loomed out of the mist. Rand flung slammed the door, set the bucket on the brakes.

"Yes, sir!—Where to? A bit chilly this morning, ain't it?"

Rand's fare did not speak until he had settled himself into the rear seat,



slammed the door, set the bucket on the floor with a thump.

"Near Waterworks Park?"

"Going to try your luck this morning?" Rand pursued cheerily.

"Mmmm."

After this attempt at early morning conversation, Rand and his fare rolled along with only the sizzle of the tires to break the silence, until the detective-taxi driver was startled by a sudden command.

"All right; stop right about here."

"But this ain't quite to the Park, mister; I thought . . ."

"Near enough. Wait just a few minutes. I'll pay for the waiting, if that's what's worrying you."

The car was almost pitch dark; Rand's fare had remained only a shadow to him, but the voice was firmly clear and hard—and terribly familiar to Rand! The voice that had snapped commands that night in the apartment trap, the voice that had railed at the efforts of the police to nab the Clueless Killer!

RAND frowned, worriedly. What did this waiting mean? A confederate, a gang, in spite of all investigation to the contrary? Had there been a sinister double meaning to that promise to "pay for the waiting, if that's what's worrying you?"

Then Rand had his answer—too late.

Regular, leisurely footfalls sounded; another figure appeared, a badge glimmering dully in the silver gloaming of a street light. Daniels! This was his beat. He . . .

"All right, copper!" That familiar, venomous whisper behind Rand; he started rigidly as something chill and blunt pressed into the flesh of his neck. "Get those hands up, off the wheel—again . . . That's it!"

The pistol rammed into the detective's neck while that same deft hand

slipped under the lapel of his coat, drawing his Positive from its shoulder holster.

"All right, do what I say this time—it's your only chance!" the chill voice commanded. "Back up until you come alongside this other copper, then call him to the car. And—you'd better make it good!"

An emphasizing jab in the neck. Rand shifted the taxi into reverse, backed slowly, thought swiftly. How could Daniels be warned?

The car crept backward till Rand saw the dim shadow of the strolling patrolman loom on the sidewalk. A jab in the back of his neck prompted him.

"Daniels! Oh, Daniels! C'mere a minute!"

The young patrolman turned to look at the taxi. "What's that?" boomed out of the fog.

Rand sucked in his breath, and, as he had done at the apartment, took a sudden and desperate chance. This Phantom might know the right name of the driver of his taxi, or the detective he had fought in the apartment—and he might not.

"This is Logan," Rand called, emphasizing the 'Logan' ever so little. "Logan, you remember. I want to talk with you about that thing we talked over yesterday. Remember?"

As Rand made his desperate effort to warn Daniels, he softly let in his clutch, eased the gear lever into second as he watched Daniels take a halting step toward the machine.

"Logan?" Daniels queried, uncertainly.

"Yes, me, Logan," Rand repeated, desperately. "Didn't recognize you back there—want to see you a minute."

Daniels stepped down beside the taxi, bent to peer within.

"Look out!"

Rand sensed that his captor would be watching the patrolman, too, at just



this instant. He shouted, ducked side-wise.

The pistol slipped off his neck, pushed past his ear.

RAND jabbed backward with his elbow, heard a grunt as he struck something solid. His left toe shot down, let the clutch pedal slam upward as his right foot tromped the accelerator. The car leaped forward with a jerk.

Blinding lightning. A point blank flash of flame and sound blasted Daniels, reeling, back into the obscurity of the fog. The other gun exploded right at Rand's ear.

He ducked lower, twisting in the seat.

Thwack! A ringing explosion within his temples. The darkened, confused lights and shadows, the distant silver of a street light, whirled, exploded into nothingness, and Rand fell.

But this time Rand did not regain consciousness to find himself in the anti-septic but safe confines of a hospital room. Instead, there was a roaring, a rush of wind in his face. He shook his head groggily as a strong light flashed in his eyes, then disappeared.

He was in a car, in the taxi, rocketing down a white tunnel of road, trees and inky sky. A small light bobbed far ahead of him, grew to be twin beams of car lights, shot past as the other driver careened widely to clear Rand's rushing death car.

He was being taken for a ride.

An inert weight slumped against him; he saw, in that flash of light, the form of Daniels, almost in his lap, limp as a sack. Then a quick glance to his left; the dark profile of the fisherman, the Phantom.

He found, when he tugged, that his arms were in his lap, and felt the cool seizure of his own handcuffs; he felt, too, a prod in the side. The dim glow of the dash light showed him that his maniacal chauffeur was piloting the

car with one hand; the other jammed a pistol against Rand's side.

As the detective's mind cleared, he recognized the road as the Lake Shore drive out beyond Grosse Pointe. Mile after mile the car roared into the darkness; the speedometer needle flickered between seventy, seventy-five, and eighty.

Handcuffed, a gun jabbed into his side, the helpless form of Daniels jammed against him, dead or badly wounded, Rand could only wait. . . .

The chill thought nerved Rand; his aching, ringing head cleared of the last vestiges of grogginess and dizziness. His muscles tensed.

Then it came, a few minutes but several miles after the last car had passed them.

THE roar of the motor died, the rush of wind through the partly opened wind screen slackened. The car crouched as the killer jammed on the brakes, swerved. The lights flashed on trees and bush, then two sandy wheel tracks leading off into a closing tunnel of whitened foliage. The taxi bumped several yards down the sand ruts, stopped. Rand could smell the mucky dampness of the lake shore, hear the lap of wavelets in the sudden silence as the Phantom switched off the motor. The lights shone on reeds now a few feet ahead, and Rand sensed the lonely vastness of the great lake beyond.

"All right, copper!" A jab in his side. "This is the end of the line."

"Oh, no! We've got you!" Rand tried to make his tone convincing and triumphant. "Daniels and I worked it all out—and reported our find to the chief. We're just a part of a great network, now, spread to catch you. You haven't got a chance!"

"That's a poor bluff, copper—and it wouldn't help you any!"

He was going to fire. Rand knew it,



then.

Rand bent forward, twisted, slashed upward and sideward with his manacled wrists.

Whang!

He jerked to the blow, the searing burn of pain as the pistol crashed, but his hands smashed on.

"Yeee!" he snarled, with pain and exultation, as the handcuffs crashed so solidly against the Phantom's head that they cut into his own wrist bones.

The head jerked; the figure sat tense an instant, then slumped away against the door of the car. Hard heels drummed on the floorboard in the sudden silence.

How he got the key, freed his hands, started the car and got it back to the highway, with a burning in his side and a great spot spreading on the clothing against his skin, damp and warmly sticky, he never knew.

Once again Rand was recuperating, and Daniels, his bright blue eyes large and dark against a pillow scarcely whiter than his face, lay in the bed beside him. Captain Harding sat between the two, his great blue bulk solid and healthful and comforting.

"Sure, we found the line in the car," Harding boomed, "but I still can't figure how this fellow did it. There were no traces on the walls."

"Not on the walls *below* the windows," Rand grinned, "But I looked *above*, after I got Daniels' tip about the fisherman. Got the evidence, too, marks on the walls at the Pemberton place, and fibers from one of the chimneys; they'll match the line you found in the bucket. Didn't want to carry the lines around with him early mornings, see? So he got up the minnow bucket gag. He must've been a steeplejack, or something; high wire worker, maybe. . . ."

"Yes, we found those spurs, sort of grippers, like linemen use, in his tackle

box."

"OKE; he gets the lay of a place, makes sure of there being money, spots the patrolmen, watchmen, and so on, then appears a few mornings with his fishing outfit, so that he won't arouse suspicion. When he actually gets to doing the job—or, when he did," Rand grinned, "he uses the fishing line, the light cord, for a starter; maybe he casts it with the rod and a light weight, maybe with cork on it. . . ."

"He had a sinker cut into a solid rubber ball," Harding nodded.

"Or maybe he takes it off the rod and gives it a whirl, then lets it sail. Anyhow, he gets it clear over the top of the building. Then he rushes around to the back, hauls his heavier line over with the light line. First, though, he'd tied the heavier line somewhere in the front, where it wouldn't be seen. But he climbs up the back of the building, see? . . . then onto the roof. . . ."

"No wonder we couldn't find marks on the front of the places."

"Yeah. Well, he snubbed his line on a chimney or something on the roof. If his line from the front was handy to the place he wanted to rob, I imagine he used that; if not, he probably had enough line so that he could haul up the end of the line that was over the back of the building, and let it dangle down in front of the window of the place he wanted to rob. Then all he had to do was slide down, swing in without even touching the sill, grab the stuff, jump out onto the rope, and up again with his grippers, or, if he thought he wouldn't be seen, slide right down the front again, without touching the building. A sort of slipknot hitch would let him get his rope free again from the top."

"Well, no such thing as a clueless crime, I guess," Harding grinned.

"Not if you fish long enough for clues," Daniels put in, with a grin.



# Something Shocking

by OMAR GWINN

*Author of "One Night in Hades," etc.*

**P**RATT planned it carefully. When it was done, no one would suspect that he had done it. Was he not Pratt, the perfect English secretary to old Justin Fuld? Was he not known to Fuld's friends as the perfect loyal servant whom old Fuld commended to all?

Perhaps if anyone were to suspect it was murder, there would be some slight suspicion of him, Pratt.

*Pratt couldn't wait any longer. Tonight was the night!*



ROBISON

*But no one was ever going to suspect it was murder! It would seem purely and simply an accident. Lying there in his bed thinking about it, Pratt went over the plan in his efficient secretarial mind. Everything was in his favor. For one thing, old Fuld, his rich Amer-*

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*The violent murder methods American criminals used sent chilling fear up Pratt's spine . . . so he, being British, stuck to a safe, sure device. . . .*

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ican employer, had been doing considerable drinking since his wife had died a year ago. That would help most to make it look like an accident.

The old man was naturally robust and it would take years of heavy drinking to kill him—and Pratt wanted the money now. For ten years Pratt had been in America, working as private secretary; eight of those years he had worked for old Justin Fuld. None knew that prior to coming to America Pratt had been a smooth English robber who had preyed on the rich once too often. England had become too warm for him with Scotland Yard hot on his trail. And America had sounded like easy pickings so he had crossed the ocean.

But once here he had been appalled at the dangerous methods of American criminals. The horrible deaths some of them met had sent chilling fear up his spine. It had given him a complex. He had become afraid. So he had waited, bided his time for an easy job which would be safe and would at the same time net him enough to retire to the banks of the Avon and live the independent life of a country squire, for which he had so long yearned.

This was *the* chance.

Only a week ago old Justin Fuld had confided in a sentimental moment of drunkenness that he was leaving half his wealth to Pratt for his loyal services. Fuld had no near relatives.

He had even shown Pratt the will. Pratt's share would amount to several hundred thousand dollars. . . .

**P**RATT had a careful and methodical English mind. He lay there thinking it all out. People would be shocked to hear of old Fuld's unfortunate accident. It would be a shocking death.

The phrase appealed to Pratt's British sense of the droll. Shocking, indeed!

First he would have to fix the elec-

tric heater so it would work the way he wanted it. And then all there'd be was the other servants. They wouldn't be difficult to avoid; for Pratt, in addition to being Justin Fuld's secretary, was also a sort of unofficial night servant. All the other servants would have retired when it happened.

Tomorrow night would be right. By midnight tomorrow night all Pratt's troubles would be over. So, too, by the same circumstances, would Fuld's. . . .

It was nearly midnight of the following day when Pratt went calmly into Justin Fuld's study. Pratt paused and studied his employer for a moment, with satisfaction. Old Justin Fuld was a big man. In the last year, haggard lines had come into his face and grey into his hair. His wife's death had hit him hard. He was quite drunk again tonight—but he was the sort of man who could drink for years without its killing him. Pratt couldn't wait. He had already waited ten years. He wouldn't wait another possible ten. Tonight was the night.

"Did you call, sir?"

"No," Justin Fuld said blurrily. "But now you're here—I want bath—want to go to bed. Sleepy."

"Yes, sir."

"Want sleep. Need bath and sleep."

"Yes, sir. If you'll take my arm—"

The old man arose and Pratt guided him down the hall toward the bathroom. The heater was ready. Inwardly Pratt was gloating that he had once studied electricity, that he knew all about it.

He'd left the bathroom windows open, so cold air was pouring in. The heater was near the bathtub on a stand. When he got into the tub, into the water, the old man would feel chilly and he'd reach to turn on the heater as was his custom. He'd been having chills lately.

While the old man undressed, Pratt started the water running into the tub at what he judged to be Fuld's favorite temperature.



Then Justin Fuld motioned for Pratt to leave, as he always did. The old gent liked privacy for bathing, as do nearly all Americans—who differ in this respect from upper-class English people.

"If you feel cold, sir—" Pratt motioned toward the electric heater to remind the old man. Then Pratt left.

It still seemed ideal to Pratt. Of course, he might have drowned the old man in the tub. But Pratt had always recoiled from the thought of murdering with his own bare hands. The thought sickened him. This way, it wouldn't be direct. In a way, it wouldn't even be murder, he told himself.

The house servants were in their own wing, abed. But not wanting to take the risk of being seen waiting too expectantly outside the bathroom door, Pratt went back to the study. It would be only a matter of a few minutes. The old man had been trembling with a chill—and with the cold air Pratt had let into the bathroom, it was a certainty he would reach for the electric heater. . . .

AFTER a long wait, Pratt became mildly impatient. He walked down toward the bathroom. And as he approached, he felt a glow of elation. By this time the old man would have reached for that cleverly fixed electric heater switch—so arranged that the full current would pass through the old man's wet body, killing him instantly. Accidents like this electrocuted dozens of people every year. Defective insulation, or a switch too near the bathtub—and the water multiplied the shock to killing intensity. It was a common occurrence and *this* could be explained the same way. Just an unfortunate accident. . . . That's what the coroner would say.

Yes, he'd be dead in there now. If he weren't, well, he, Pratt, would personally see that the old man turned on that electrified switch.

Pratt turned the doorknob, opened the door, started to go in.

And then, in the last split-second of his life, Pratt's horrified eyes saw the water flowing gently over the edge of the tub, saw that the old man, in turning on the switch and receiving the shock, had pulled the heater half into the tub with him in his last convulsive effort.

And Pratt, stiffening in death within that split second, felt with horror the wetness under his shoes. Then he stiffened, slumped to the floor, his heart action stopped instantly, a weird and terrified amazement frozen into his face!

For the one thing Pratt had overlooked, ironically, had finished him. He had forgotten the possibility that the old man would neglect to turn off the water. Pratt had filled the tub within a few inches of the top and turned it off. But he evidently hadn't made it hot enough, and the old man, feeling the chill, had turned it on again—and then the heater.

And the water overflowing from the tub, carrying the current with it, flooded the floor an inch deep. So when Pratt put his foot in that water—well, the lavatory pipes were touching that electrified water too, on the floor, and they completed the deadly circuit. Pratt got the full current. It was irony nobody ever knew about:

For it was nearly dawn before the cook, arising, saw water dripping through the ceiling to the first floor and ran upstairs to Justin Fuld's bathroom. By that time the house's electricity had long been short circuited.

The coroner, puzzled, said:

"I don't see how it could have happened to 'em both—this way. It's mighty peculiar."

"And a shocking tragedy," murmured the medical examiner, not meaning any pun.

Pratt should have heard that. He might have thought it droll.



# Horror in the Ravine

by BRENT NORTH

Author of "Death of the Strip-tease Queen," etc.

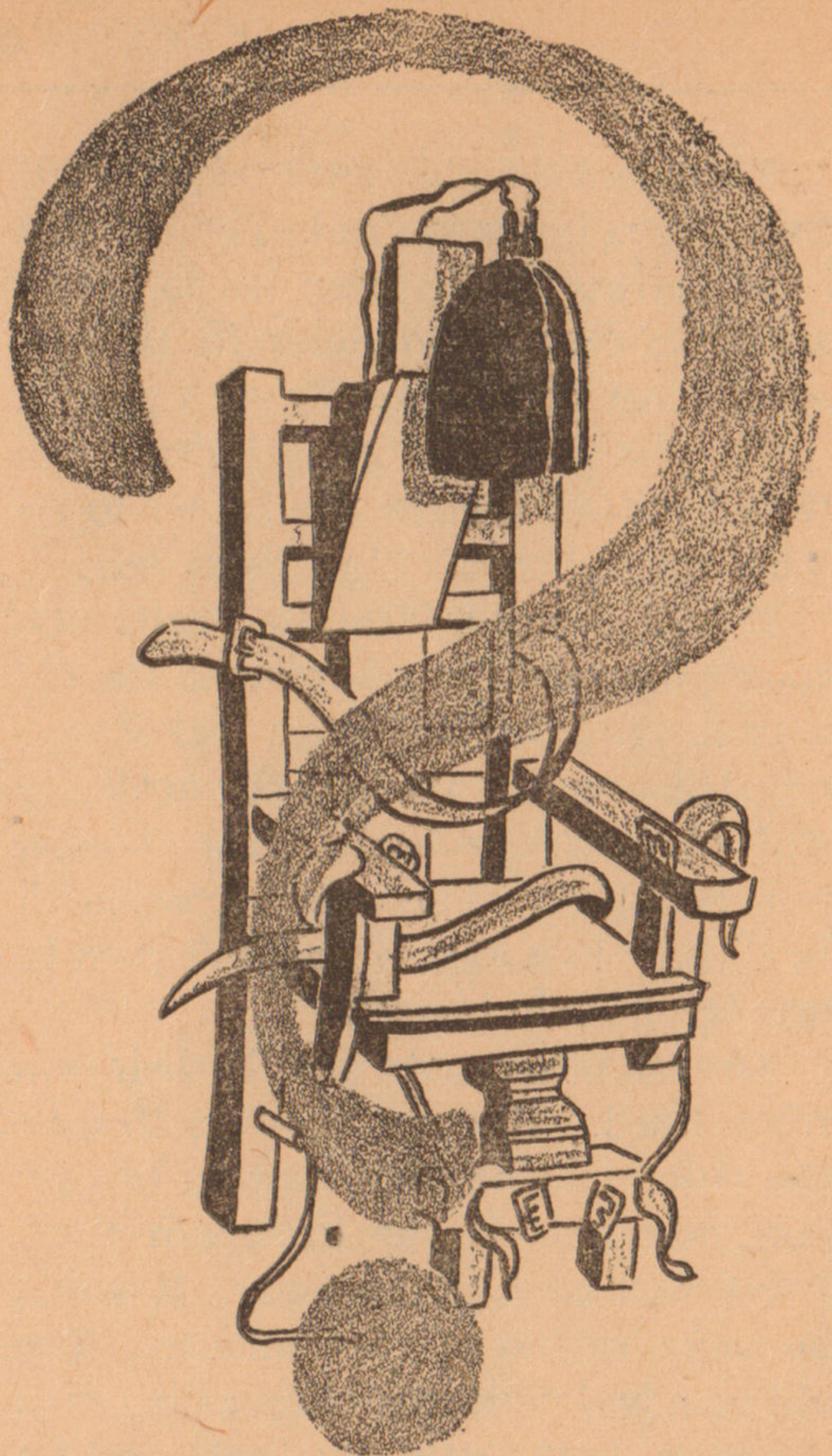
THE ravine that borders the north side of Toronto's Gerard Street, East, is dark and deep. Even by day it is a place of repellent shadows, mysterious whisperings of trees and other weird sounds.

At night—midnight—with a howling storm raging, even the most hardy soul would quicken his pace if forced by chance or circumstance to pass the black abyss.

Such a night was Monday eve of November 4th, 1935. For hours a wind-lashed gale had buffeted the city, tearing at windows, rattling at shutters, driving the rain in blinding sheets of icy pellets. With each passing minute the fury of the storm increased and deep in the Gerard Street ravine the trees groaned and moaned as they leaned to the blast of the storm.

Midnight—and a lone slip of a girl braved the storm as she hurried down Gerard Street, East. Only partially protected by her umbrella, her slender body was bent forward as she fought against the gusty force of the wind. An impish wind, too. It plucked at a stray, damp lock of her hair; it tore at the coat wrapped tightly about her. And

**SPINE-CRAWLING,  
TRUE FACT FEA-  
TURE LENGTH  
DETECTIVE-  
HORROR  
NOVELETTE**



---

*How thwart the lust-maddened fiend  
who left a young girl's nude body  
covered with his bestial teeth marks in  
that weird storm-lashed ravine?*

---

then in boisterous glee it whipped back the skirt of her dress revealing shapely, silk-clad legs.

But the girl did not mind. She had only a little way more to go—and her thoughts were on home—a steaming cup of tea—and bed.

There came a momentary lull in the storm. Suddenly the girl stiffened and her heart skipped a beat. Were those footsteps behind her—hurried, yet furtive? Swiftly she glanced up from under her umbrella and hurriedly scanned the stretch of rain-swept street before her.

It was deserted. Not even a stray cat lurked in the shadows. No single



light burned in the few houses, far-spaced that lined the street.

She increased her pace and strained her ears for any sound that came from behind her. Then her heart leaped again as for the second time she heard the crunch of feet. There was no mistaking them. They were hard behind her now and there was a sinister something about them that flooded her brain with a sudden, unreasoning panic.

SHE tried to reason away her fear. It was nothing. Another wayfarer caught in the storm like herself. She essayed a laugh that didn't quite come off.

But the nameless fear that had seized her could be neither reasoned nor laughed away.

Still hurrying along blindly she turned her head and peered back from beneath her dripping umbrella. Yes, there it was, a dark shadow moving swiftly along some twenty paces behind her. A man's shadow!

Some psychic sixth sense flashed a dire warning to her brain. Acting on blind impulse, she stepped from the sidewalk and crossed the street to the far side—the side that directly bordered the ravine. And by that impulsive act she sealed her doom.

She was almost running now. Her heart beat a trip-hammer tattoo in her breast. A sudden thought came to her and she snapped her umbrella shut. Thus she would be better able to see and she could use the umbrella as a weapon if need be.

She cast a quick glance to the far side of the street. Nothing—nobody, and she breathed a tiny sigh of relief. Maybe she was a foolish, skittish girl after all. Maybe she was imagining things, maybe. . . .

She shot another glance across the street. Its entire length was deserted. But she failed to glance *behind her*.

She hurried on. The rain lashed at her; the wind tore at her. But she wasn't aware of these things. She was intent only on reaching her home in the shortest time possible. Home—and safety.

She had reached the exact center of the ravine when the attack came. It was swift, sudden, savage. From behind her a bulky shadow materialized out of the storm, and leaped upon her back.

One crooked arm hooked beneath her chin and tightened about her throat. Savagely she was swept from her feet.

A nameless horror and fear seized the girl, gave her a superhuman strength. Still clinging to the umbrella she strove to fight off her attacker. But she was helpless in the cruel embrace of the man.

A scream trembled on her lips, was stifled almost as it was born as the arm around her throat tightened.

The man cursed, leaped from the sidewalk down the steep bank of the ravine dragging the girl with him. She struggled furiously, lashed out with her feet, clawed impotently with her hands.

But by the time she had been dragged to the bottom of the ravine her pitiful struggles had ceased.

Roughly the man threw her to the ground. From straddled legs he stared down at her white face, let his gaze stray over her unprotected body. His features were distorted, his lips worked. And as he gazed wolfishly at the trim figure of the girl lying on the wet ground beneath him, an insane lust possessed him.

The girl stirred, moaned. With a monstrous brutality the man ripped the flesh-colored slip from her and knotted it about her throat.

And above him in the towering trees the cold wind moaned ghoulishly and the rain beat down—and down—and down.



**I**N her bedroom on the second floor of her home that faced the ravine from the south side of Gerard Street, Mrs. Mary Richleau suddenly sat bolt upright in her bed. With a thousand screaming tongues the fury of the storm assailed her ears. But it was not that, that had snapped her back to consciousness from a sound sleep; it was not that that had sent her heart fluttering to her throat.

She listened—wide-eyed.

Then it came again—an eerie sound that made the blood run cold in her veins. It might have been a trick of the wind, but she was far more sure that it had been a scream—a woman's scream of mortal fear and agony.

Swiftly Mrs. Richleau slipped from bed, threw a wrapper around her shoulders and hurried to the window of her bedroom. Parting the curtains she strained her eyes through the rain-lashed window pane, striving in vain to pierce the abysmal gloom that shrouded the ravine directly across the street from her home.

So deep was the Stygian blackness that she could see nothing. To attune her ears the better she closed her eyes and listened—listened for a repetition of that unearthly cry that had first startled her from her sleep.

She heard nothing; nothing save the boisterous voice of the storm. For five minutes Mrs. Richleau stood there by the window, strained and tense. Then slowly she relaxed, laughed at herself a little uncertainly. Maybe she had been deceived by the storm, after all. Undoubtedly it had been some trick of the wind that had startled her.

She tried to believe that; she wanted to believe it. Still a little frightened, a little startled, she crept back to bed. A troubled sleep came at last.

And whatever the stark tragedy that was transpiring in the ravine, it was effectively covered by the storm.

Morning came and with it clear skies and bright sunshine. Mrs. Richleau forgot her fears of the night and went about her daily duties. Early in the afternoon she left her home intent on a round of shopping. However, on reaching the sidewalk before the house, she noted a group of young schoolboys on the far side of the street, joyously throwing stones at something white that lay sprawled far down the ravine.

Impelled by something more than curiosity, Mrs. Richleau decided to investigate. She hurried across the street, stopped by the side of the youngsters just as one of them shouted gleefully: "I hit it! I hit it!"

Mrs. Richleau leaned far over and stared down the sombre depths of the ravine. What she saw drained the color from her face.

"Boys—please!" she said in a hushed tone. "Don't throw any more stones!"

"Aw," said one, resentful that his sport had been spoiled, "It's only a dummy."

"It's not a dummy," said Mrs. Richleau. "It's a body!"

The jaws of the youngsters sagged and their round eyes bulged. Mrs. Richleau stepped to the curb and hailed the first car that passed.

"Call the police at once," she urged. "There's a body down there in the ravine."

**A** SHORT fifteen minutes later, in response to the urgent summons of the motorist, Patrol Sergeant Robert Dunlop and Constable Frederick Rapley of the Toronto Police, pulled up to the ravine in a squad car. One glance at the grotesque object sprawled at the bottom of the ravine assured them that they had not been called on any fools' errand.

Ordering the youngsters, who were still gathered in an excited group at the top of the ravine, to stay where they



were, the two officers began a swift and perilous descent down the precipitate bank of the ravine.

Halfway down Dunlop, who was in the lead, found a woman's silk umbrella which was closed. A few feet further on he picked up a woman's black felt hat, decorated by a handful of white feathers. It was Rapley who spotted a long tatter of the umbrella cloth and then together they pounced on a dainty, high-heeled woman's slipper. It was encrusted with mud.

The two officers spent but a fleeting moment over their various finds, plunged down instead for the macabre thing that lay at the bottom of the ravine.

They slid to a halt before it at last. And there, in all its pitiful appeal, with all its tale of savage brutality, they saw it for what it was—the body of a girl.

Brown silk stockings enmeshed the girl's legs to her knees. A flesh-colored slip was knotted about her throat. And over her head, hiding her face, was a blue wool sweater and a black-and-white tweed coat. From the top of the stockings at the knees to the slender throat, the body was nude.

All night long the cruel rain had beaten down on that cold and naked torso.

"Lord!" said Dunlop in a shocked voice. "Hold everything. Don't let anyone get near her or touch anything. I'm going to call Headquarters."

Swiftly he fought his way up the steep bank of the ravine and from the nearest telephone flashed the news of the crime, that was to shock all Toronto, to Inspector Chisholm, Chief of the City Detectives.

Sure of, yet dreading the motive that lay behind the savage murder of the girl, Inspector Chisholm picked up Chief Constable Draper and Chief Coroner H. M. Crawford and hurried to the scene of the crime.

There is something peculiarly repellent, peculiarly savage and brutal about a sex crime and the three officers were driven to the scene of the tragedy in silence. Each one of them knew that if a rapist, a ravisher of women, was loose in the city, he would very probably strike again. They had to strike first—and strike faster.

When they arrived at the ravine they found a squad of local police holding back the throng of morbidly curious who had already gathered at the top of the steep gully. Shouldering their way through the crowd the three officers hurriedly descended the steep bank to where Dunlop and Rapley stood guard over the mute evidence of murder.

SWIFTLY Coroner Crawford dropped down beside the girl. He looked up a moment later, nodded sombrely. "The worst," he said heavily. "She's been attacked, criminally assaulted by a rapist." Tenderly he unknotted the silken slip from around the girl's throat, lifted back the black tweed coat and the blue sweater.

Without a word, the five officers stared down into a young and exquisitely lovely face, cold and serene in death. Only the dilated eyes showed the horror of the dead girl's last few minutes of life.

The Coroner swore beneath his breath. "Beastly. She's no more than a girl. No more than twenty or twenty-two at the most." He parted the bedraggled brown hair that clung close to the girl's head, examined her skull closely, then straightened up. He plucked a few burrs from his coat sleeve. "Killed by the usual blunt instrument," he announced. "Her skull is badly fractured."

Inspector Chisholm rumbled something unintelligible in his throat, then pointed to a series of crescent-shaped welts that disfigured the nude body



from knees to throat.

"What do you make of those, doctor?" he asked.

Coroner Crawford looked at him from hard, bleak eyes. "Her attacker left those. They're teeth marks. They were made while she was still alive." He sighed wearily. "Cover her up. When you're finished here send the body down to the morgue and I'll finish the autopsy there."

Dr. Crawford left then, promising to send an ambulance from the morgue to remove the body. Inspector Chisholm definitely took over the case, determined to leave no stone unturned to capture the savage sex-fiend who had stalked the ravine a few short hours before.

There were no marks of identification on the girl's clothing, so Chisholm ordered his men to scatter to make a minute search of the neighborhood for any possible clue leading to the identity of the murdered girl. A few minutes later a cry went up from Detective Sergeant James J. McIlraith that brought Inspector Chisholm on the run.

A short eighteen feet from the body McIlraith had found a blood-stained girdle. Still dangling from its garter hooks were tattered bits of brown silk stockings, attesting to the stark ferocity with which the rapist had ripped the clothes from his victim.

Chisholm examined this new find, then followed a trail of dried blood that ran in a wavering line to the top of the ravine. Here the trail vanished, but looking closely about he espied several strands of blue wool. They were but mere wisps but appeared to be of the same color and texture as the blue sweater that had been thrown over the dead girl's face.

Chisholm gathered them all carefully and stowed them away in an envelope.

A few minutes later, the car from the mortuary pulled up. The body of the

girl was placed on a stretcher and with the officers forming a human chain to the top of the ravine, the pitiful burden was brought up to the street level. With the body safely installed in the car and on its way to the morgue, Inspector Chisholm turned to the crowd that was still milling about on Gerard Street and asked for volunteers to search the lonely stretches of the ravine.

"We're looking for something—a clue—by which we will be able to establish the identity of the girl," he concluded. "A pocket-book, maybe—a card . . ."

ONE of the small boys who had originally made the grisly discovery, piped up in a shrill voice. "I seen a pocket-book, Mister. It's over there. It's lying against a tree."

Chisholm followed the direction of his outstretched hand and sure enough, propped against a tree where it had probably fallen, and half-buried in leaves, he made out a black leather pocket-book. He crossed to it hurriedly, picked it up eagerly and opened it. Inside he found the usual feminine accessories—a mirror, lipstick, powder-puff, a small silver ring, two cents and a small card on which was neatly printed: *Ruth Taylor, 25½ Norwood Road, Toronto.*

The Inspector's eyes brightened with interest. The swift and sure identification of the murdered girl would forward his investigation immensely.

Taking the purse with him he made his way to the nearest telephone. At a word from him and at the mention of his official position, the telephone operator connected him swiftly with the phone located at Number 25½ Norwood Road.

An anxious and worried male voice answered the Inspector. The man identified himself as Edgar Taylor.

"Is Ruth there?" asked the Inspector.



"No. She didn't come home last night. I'm afraid something has happened to her."

"Are you her husband?"

"No. I'm her father. Has anything happened to Ruth?"

Inspector Chisholm swallowed at a lump in his throat. He couldn't find the courage to tell that distraught father the blunt and brutal facts of the case. He compromised. "I'm afraid something has. A bad accident. Wait at home and I'll send someone for you. This is Inspector Chisholm speaking."

Without waiting to hear the flood of anguished questions that came over the wire to him, he left the booth and emerged onto the sidewalk where Detective Sergeant Harold Waterhouse was waiting.

"Go to 25½ Norwood Road, pick up the girl's father and take him to the morgue. Find out what you can about the girl, her friends, her habits and where she worked. Especially about her boy friends. The last is important."

Edgar Taylor was a gray-haired, middle-aged man and as he greeted Sergeant Waterhouse his face was etched deep with worry. A hundred questions trembled on his lips but he saved them until he was seated in the police car beside the officer.

"What—what happened?" he asked.

Waterhouse countered his questions with a few of his own and learned that Ruth Taylor was twenty-two years old and employed as a stenographer.

"She was working last night until eleven o'clock," continued Taylor. "When she didn't come home we thought that she was staying with a friend on account of the storm. But I called her office this morning and she hadn't reported for work. Tell me—what's happened to her?"

Still Waterhouse did not answer the direct question. "Has she many boy

friends?" he parried. "Has she been out on many dates lately?"

MR. TAYLOR shook his head emphatically. "She has no men friends that I know of and she has been working every night at the office for months."

Waterhouse said nothing to this but thought a great deal. Ruth Taylor had been very beautiful, indeed. It seemed altogether improbable and unlikely that a girl should have attained her age without having had a score of masculine admirers. Had she been hiding this side of her life from her family or was the father's statement, in fact, true?

At the morgue, Coroner Crawford ceased in his autopsy long enough to cover the ravished body of Ruth Taylor with a sheet. White of face, trembling, Edgar Taylor moved to the head of the marble slab. Crawford pulled back the sheet from the dead girl's face. There was no need for Edgar Taylor to speak. From the unspeakable look of agony that crawled over his face it was apparent to all that the broken beauty on the morgue slab—that lovely girl who had been raped and murdered—was his daughter, Ruth.

The identity of the dead girl definitely established, Inspector Chisholm drove his men with relentless energy, fearful that the sex-fiend might strike again before he was apprehended. A squad of men were immediately detailed to question the dead girl's friends and neighbors in an effort to get a line on any or all of her men friends. In his office, Chisholm pondered over some of the more baffling aspects of the case.

How, for instance, did Ruth Taylor get to the ravine? It was a full mile distant from her home and even more than that from her office. With the storm at its height and she foolishly accepted the invitation of a lift from a passing motorist—only to end up on a



cold slab in the morgue? Or had she been dragged from the sidewalk into a passing car and driven back to the place where she had been attacked?

From the reports of her family and neighbors she had invariably arrived home by street car, which ran a few yards from her house. If, on the fatal night in question, she had followed this usual procedure—how did she get to the ravine a mile distant?

There were no immediate answers to the questions. As his most likely lead the Inspector concentrated his attention on a possible rendezvous, ending with ravishment and death. But as carefully as he questioned the dead girl's family and friends, he was unable to uncover the faintest suggestion of any man in the girl's life.

However, with the neighbors he had better luck. A woman living a few doors removed from the Taylor home told him that two weeks before she had seen Ruth with a man.

"I was surprised and paid particular attention," she said, "for never before had I seen Ruth with a boy friend."

"What did he look like?" asked the Inspector.

"He was wearing a light gray topcoat and gray hat," replied his informant. "I'm sorry, but I didn't see his face."

Chisholm pondered this bit of information carefully. Was it possible the dead girl had been carrying on a secret affair with a man? If so, had she been with that man on the preceding night? Questions, questions—but no answers.

Chisholm next went for information to the office where Ruth had been employed. There the records showed that she had checked out the preceding night at eleven p. m. with another employee.

THIS woman, who was visibly shaken by the tragedy, said that she and Ruth had left the office together at the height of the storm and had walked to

the corner of King and Bay Streets. There they had separated, she continuing on her way home while Ruth waited on the corner, presumably to catch a Carlton Avenue car which ran past her home.

"Did you see her get on the car?" asked the Inspector.

"No," replied the woman. "I never saw her after we said goodbye on the corner. It was raining very heavily and I never looked back."

Chisholm ran a gnarled hand around his chin, tried a shot in the dark. "Do you know," he began, "if Ruth had a date last night—whether she was going to meet anyone?"

The girl's eyes lit up. "Why—why, maybe," she said. "That is funny!"

"What is funny?" said Chisholm sharply.

"Why, last night while we were working, Ruth had a phone call. From a man."

"How did you know it was a man?"

"On answering, she said: 'Hello, Bill.'"

This lead put an entirely new complexion on the case. Despite the family's denial there evidently was a man in Ruth's life. Had this man called her the night before, made an appointment with her which she kept and subsequently carried her off to her death? Was this man—this mysterious Bill—the one who had sported the gray topcoat and hat two weeks before?

More questions, mused Chisholm bitterly. But there was at least one he could get the answer to. Calling a council of his men in his office he told them of the mysterious phone call from "Bill."

"I want you men," he continued, "to get down to the car-barn and question every motorman who had a car on the streets last night, from eleven o'clock on. What with the storm, there were few people aboard last night. They



surely would have noticed a girl as pretty as Ruth, if she had boarded one of their cars. If she did board one, find out where she got off—and when—and with whom.”

He shrugged, continued wearily: “If she didn’t board one of the street cars we’ve got to assume that she was picked up by someone in an automobile. Maybe this ‘Bill’ who phoned her.”

Armed with photographs of the dead girl, Chisholm’s men circulated amongst the motormen at the car-barn that night, asking questions. They met with no success until they approached Motorman Charles B. Cox. Then they heard a story that was startling in its implications but which left them still as baffled as before.

“Sure,” said Cox, viewing the lovely face of the dead girl. “Sure I know her. She’s been traveling on my car every night for years.”

THE detectives pounced on him eagerly with questions. “Fine! Did she travel on your car last night?”

“She did that,” said Cox. “Picked her up at the height of the storm at the corner of King and Bay Street.”

“And she got off at the corner of Norwood Road?”

Cox shook his head. “No.”

“What?” asked one of the detectives sharply.

“You see,” explained Cox, “my car was a ‘Hockey Special.’ It was routed only as far as Coxwell Avenue and from there to the barns.”

“That’s the answer,” said one of the detectives. “Coxwell Avenue is only a short way from the ravine. So the girl got off there, eh?”

“Yes,” said Cox. “Asked for a transfer.” He extracted a black leather book from his pocket and thumbed the pages. “It was a transfer point and I put down the time I got there, in this book here, according to regulations. It was 11:37.”

“Was the girl alone?” shot one of the officers.

Cox screwed up his face in a frown and scratched his chin. “She was that. But now that you ask me, there’s something funny about it.”

“About what?”

“Well, the girl asks for a transfer and leaves by the front door. I was just about to start up when a man jumped up hurriedly and left by the center door. I didn’t think anything of it at the time, but now that you . . .”

“Yes, yes,” cut in one of the detectives hurriedly. “This man that got off after her—what did he look like?”

The officers waited eagerly for his words but Cox was slow to answer. “Well,” he began, “he was short and heavy—powerful—built like me. Full, round face. Had a moustache, I think, and wore a cap.”

“Ever see him before?”

“Not that I know of.”

“Would you recognize him again if you saw him?”

“That I would,” said Cox.

“Good,” said one of the officers. “Go out tonight on the same route. One of our men will ride with you. This man might be keeping regular hours and catch your car again.”

Until the last car had rolled into the barn for the night, Chisholm’s men were inconspicuous passengers aboard them. But waiting impatiently in his office for results, Inspector Chisholm received not one word concerning the powerful man with the moustache.

The Inspector would have given a year’s pay to have questioned him for five minutes; for the few scanty clues he had to work on pointed to this man as the ravisher—the murderer—of Ruth Taylor.

However, the weary hours dragged on with no break in the case. Checking up on the car schedules, Chisholm discovered that the murderer had had but



four minutes in which to attack the girl and drag her down into the ravine. For, four minutes after she had alighted from Cox' car another tram had passed.

"The way I reconstruct the crime," said Chisholm to Chief Constable Draper, "is this: Ruth started to walk from Coxwell Avenue to her home. Halfway past the ravine, at the spot where we picked up the strands of blue wool, the killer attacked her and dragged her, struggling frantically, down into the gully."

"That's probably correct," agreed Draper. "The next question is—was she walking with a friend or was she attacked by this man who jumped off Cox' car at the last minute?"

THEY were still discussing the case a half hour later when Sergeant Dunlop hurriedly entered the office. From his appearance it was obvious he had news of importance.

"Well, what is it?" asked the Inspector eagerly.

"I've just been talking to Mrs. Richleau," said Dunlop. "She's the woman who caught the kids throwing stones down the gully. She lives on Gerard Street directly opposite the ravine."

"Well?" snapped Chisholm.

"She says," said Dunlop, "that she heard a scream last night. Two of them, in fact—a woman's screams. One woke her up and the other followed a minute after. She got up out of bed, went to the window and looked and listened. She saw or heard nothing else and she thought at the time that what she had heard was a trick of the storm. Now she knows—differently."

Chisholm's face was gray and his eyes granite-hard. The line of his jaw stood out in sharp relief from ear to chin. "That's probably why he killed her," he said slowly. "To keep her from screaming. Mad. Lost his head. There's no criminal more desperate

than a sex-fiend in the midst of the commission of a crime." Then shortly: "Dunlop!"

"Yes, sir?"

"What time did this Mrs. Richleau hear the screams?"

"Just at midnight, sir."

"What?"

"That's right. Mrs. Richleau was positive of that. That puzzled me, too."

Chisholm pursed his lips, drummed thoughtfully on the table. "What do you make of that, Draper? Twenty-three minutes passed from the time she left the car till the screams."

Draper ran a hand through his hair. "Just another mystery. The case is full of them. Why, for instance, was the girl walking on the north side of the street—the side that edges the ravine—when her car would come along on the south side?"

Chisholm shrugged. "And it doesn't seem logical to me that with another car due to come along in another four minutes, that she would start out on foot in the midst of a storm for her home a mile away. And while we're at it—that umbrella of hers that was found in the ravine—was that umbrella open or shut?"

Draper referred to the sheaf of official reports on his desk. "It was closed," he announced after a moment. "Fit that in, if you can."

"She might have been picked up by an automobile," began Chisholm. "But that won't explain the twenty-three minutes that elapsed from the time she left the tram till the time her scream was heard. Damn it all! It's only a five minute walk from the car stop to the ravine." He assaulted the desk with his fist. "Tell me what transpired in those twenty-three minutes and I'll crack this case for you."

But unfortunately, Draper could not tell him.



DAYLIGHT saw a squad of officers going over the ravine with fine-tooth combs—in this case, rakes. Chisholm was more than anxious to find the murder weapon on the possibility that it might yield him a telltale fingerprint or some other clue that would lead him to the murderer.

The rakes of the men turned up the usual assortment of junk—broken bottles, rusted tin cans, an ancient and rusted bolt—but not the “blunt weapon” that had crushed in the skull of beautiful Ruth Taylor.

Suddenly, in the midst of the searching, a shout went up from one of the officers. Some 250 yards distant from the spot where the body had been found, he had stumbled across a man's topcoat. Its color was gray. Instantly the men recalled the story told by a neighbor of the Taylors, of having seen Ruth two weeks before with a man in a gray coat and hat.

Was this the coat? Did it fit into the picture?

Inspector Chisholm was immediately notified of the find and rushed to the ravine. Examining the coat he found in one of the pockets a copy of the highway regulations and a Toronto street guide.

These details lent strength to the theory that Ruth had been picked up by a passing motorist. And if that motorist saw fit to carry a Toronto street guide in his pocket, the obvious conclusion was that he was from out of town.

Inspector Chisholm frowned darkly to himself as he considered these matters. If his conclusions were correct his case had become increasingly difficult. In the past 36 hours, since the time of the crime, a man in a car could have put many miles between himself and the scene of the slaying.

Still frowning he examined the garment further. And then he made a startling find. In the inside pocket of the

coat his probing fingers came upon a thin and worn leather wallet. It was empty but stamped in gold leaf upon the inside was the name *Ralph James* and a Toronto address.

Chisholm could not believe his good luck. With a startled oath he slammed the bill-fold shut, stuffed it into his pocket and then with the topcoat over his arm, scrambled hurriedly up the ravine. Vaulting behind the wheel of his car he sped swiftly through the city.

A half hour later, with a harsh grinding of brakes, he pulled up before a modest, two-story house on East Orchard Street. A young man was just leaving as he vaulted clear of the wheel.

“Just a minute,” said Chisholm, laying a restraining hand on the other's arm. “Are you Ralph James?”

The man hardly heard the question, for he was staring at the gray topcoat hung over the Inspector's arm. “Yes,” he admitted. “So you found it already.” He noted the official police car. “I was just going down to report it to you.”

“Report what?” asked Chisholm suspiciously.

“A robbery. My room was broken into last night. My money and some of my clothes were taken. That coat, there, is one of the items.”

“You know where that coat was found?” asked Chisholm sternly.

James shook his head in bewilderment. “Why, no, I haven't the slightest idea.”

“It was found in the ravine on Gerard Street,” said the Inspector heavily. “A short distance from the spot where the body of Ruth Taylor was found.”

James paled slightly and protested that he knew nothing about the brutal crime other than what he had read in the papers; that he had not been within a mile of the ravine in years.

CHISHOLM took him to Headquarters, however, and there questioned



him at length. James answered all questions fully and in a straightforward manner, giving a detailed account of his movements during the past three days. He was held pending the investigation of his alibis and released later when they proved absolutely iron-clad.

He was entirely eliminated from the case a few days later when a gang of housebreakers were caught. They admitted that they had rifled James' home the night after the murder of Ruth Taylor and had divided the loot in the ravine.

And thus it was that the most promising lead Inspector Chisholm had, evaporated into thin air. A short time later he received a second jolt. A long distance telephone call came through for him from Kitchener, Ontario, from a traveling salesman named "Bill." He had read in the papers the police theories concerning the mysterious phone call Ruth Taylor had received a few short hours before her death, and he wanted to clear himself.

He admitted that he knew the girl casually and that it was he who had called her. However, he had been in Kitchener for the past week and could not possibly have any connection with her brutal slaying.

His story was verified in every detail by the Kitchener police.

With a heavy sigh Inspector Chisholm turned from the telephone. "Every hot lead we get goes up in smoke," he said ruefully.

"Well," consoled Draper sympathetically, "At least we know where we stand. What do we do now?"

Chisholm paced the width of his office a few times without answering. "From the evidence at hand," he said at last, "I think we can safely eliminate the possibility of some man friend of Ruth's having committed the crime. That means we have to look for a degenerate close to home."

"What about the man Cox saw on his street car—the one who jumped off after the girl?"

"Keep your men on that assignment. We've got to locate him if possible. In the meantime we'll check up on the cleaning establishments for blood-stained clothes. And we'll look through the files now for records of known degenerates with convictions for sex offenses against them."

He turned to a filing cabinet at the far side of his office, removed a section of cards and distributed them amongst a half dozen subordinates.

"Get busy, boys," he ordered. "Don't pass up any bets."

A few minutes later Detective Waterhouse looked up with a grunt, waving a yellow card in his hand. "Here's one that looks interesting, Chief," he said. "Man by the name of Harry O'Donnell. Sex offense against a married woman. Sentenced to three years in Kingston Penitentiary on October 14th, 1929."

"Where does he live?" asked Chisholm.

"That's what makes it hot," said Waterhouse. "On Hollywood Crescent. That street runs along the eastern edge of the ravine."

"Look him up," snapped Chisholm. "I'll keep on with the rest of the cards."

ACCOMPANIED by Detectives McIlraith, Munro and Mosher, Waterhouse started immediately for the house on Hollywood Crescent. There, not wishing to attract any undue attention, the three officers remained on the sidewalk while Waterhouse rang the bell of the O'Donnell apartment. No answer. He rang again, longer this time. Still no answer.

Impatient, Waterhouse pressed the bell push of another apartment and was answered by an elderly woman.

"Where are the O'Donnell's?" asked the detective.



The woman smiled, gushed. "Mrs. O'Donnell gave birth to a son early Saturday morning. She's been at the Riverdale Maternity home since Friday night."

"And where's her husband?"

"Oh, I think he's staying with his father while his wife is in the hospital."

"I see," said Waterhouse. "Do you know where he works?"

"Why, yes," replied the woman. "At a gas station at Woodfield Road and Gerard Street." A frown crossed her face. "Is there anything wrong?"

Waterhouse smiled reassuringly. "Just a little matter of a traffic violation," he lied. "Thanks for the information."

He returned to the three officers on the street and told them what he had learned. The most significant point established was the fact that O'Donnell worked at a gas station on Gerard Street, only a short distance from the ravine where Ruth Taylor had been so brutally murdered.

"You men go down to the gas station and pick up O'Donnell," he concluded. "I'll stick here. Bring him back with you."

As McIlraith pulled up to a halt at the gas station on Gerard Street, he was approached by a stocky, powerful man whose upper lip was adorned by a small moustache.

"Gas?" he inquired politely.

"Hold it," replied McIlraith. "Are you O'Donnell?"

The man smiled, nodded. "That's me."

"We're police officers," said McIlraith, showing his badge. "We want you to come with us."

O'Donnell showed no undue excitement at the words. "Sure," he agreed readily. "Wait till I get my coat."

McIlraith accompanied him into the station, waited patiently while O'Donnell put on a leather windbreaker. As

they were leaving the suspect turned to two mechanics who were working on a wrecked car. "I'll be back in a little while," he said cheerfully. "They want to see me about that ravine job."

McIlraith eyed him narrowly. O'Donnell had pulled a boner. For in the conversation thus far, no mention had been made of the reason the officers wanted to question him.

In the police car, headed back for the O'Donnell residence, the suspect was questioned closely as to his movements Monday afternoon and night. In his favor, he answered all questions freely and fully without hesitation.

"Monday afternoon?" he repeated. "Why, I had Monday afternoon off. But I worked Monday night."

"Till what time?"

"I closed the station at 11:30."

"Ah," said McIlraith. "And then what?"

O'Donnell smiled. "I walked home."

"By any chance did you pass the ravine?"

"Sure," said O'Donnell. "About fifteen minutes later. I been thinking about that, you know. Halfway past the ravine I saw a girl and two men walking on the other side of the street. It was raining so hard I didn't pay much attention to them. Now with what's happened . . ." His voice trailed off.

"Sure," grunted McIlraith. "Plenty has happened. Two men, you say? We never figured on that."

A MOMENT later the car pulled up before the O'Donnell home. "We'll have to give your place the once-over," continued McIlraith. "Just routine stuff. No objections, I suppose?"

If O'Donnell had any objections he did not mention them. The party alighted from the car, was joined by Waterhouse and ascended immediately to the O'Donnell apartment on the sec-



ond floor of the house.

Sergeant McIlraith glanced curiously about the living room. Its furnishings were commonplace enough, as commonplace as the appearance of the man himself. There was nothing in the face of stocky O'Donnell that hinted of a warped brain hiding behind his thatch of wavy blond hair. Yet O'Donnell had already been convicted of committing an abnormal sex crime and if their suspicions were correct, he had recently committed a far more ghastly one.

McIlraith noticed that O'Donnell wore his work clothes—a blue flannel shirt, black breeches and leggings. "Where are your best clothes?" he asked abruptly.

O'Donnell answered readily enough. "Out in the hall, in the closet. Here."

He led the way and McIlraith watched him covertly as he followed. But if O'Donnell was uneasy, no hint of it showed in his manner. He stepped aside as McIlraith opened the closet and took out a dark suit and an overcoat.

Waterhouse came up to join them. Together he and McIlraith subjected the garments to a swift but searching scrutiny. Their backs were turned to O'Donnell when they exchanged a sober and significant glance a moment later.

The cloth of the garments was slightly damp. Dried mud clung to the cuffs of the trousers. Bits of burrs had worked their prongs deep into the material. Picking them out, McIlraith remembered that there had been plenty of burrs in the ravine . . .

On the crease of the trousers were little, red-brown flecks of some substance that seemed very familiar to the eyes of the men from Headquarters. Saying nothing as yet, they turned from the trousers to the overcoat. And there they found something that drew McIlraith's forehead into a frowning V between his eyes. Hairs—scores of them.

Blue hairs. Rabbit-fur hairs. The fabric of the overcoat was covered with them.

Slowly the detective straightened, turned to O'Donnell. He held out the coat and picked up one of the soft blue hairs with thumb and forefinger.

"Maybe," he said slowly, "you could explain these?"

O'Donnell's eyes opened a trifle wider. He leaned forward to look closer at the object in McIlraith's fingers, then shook his head slowly from side to side.

"That's funny," he said. He scratched his head thoughtfully, then brightened. "Oh, I guess they must have come from my wife's bedjacket. Or maybe from the baby's mittens."

Waterhouse took a turn. "And the mud stains here on your trouser cuffs?"

O'Donnell's shrug was a masterpiece of nonchalance. "Had to fix a flat the other night. It was pretty muddy."

Plausible? Of course. But neither of the officers was satisfied. McIlraith draped the garments over his arm. The police laboratory would be able to tell them what they wanted to know about the mud stains, the reddish-brown flecks and the blue hairs.

MEANWHILE, Munro and Mosher had been looking over the rest of the apartment. In the kitchen they found that a trail of muddy blotches extended across the linoleum-covered floor. It ended at the sink and beneath the sink itself, were several burrs that had been crushed by a heavy foot.

They all gathered at last in the living room. O'Donnell was still unperturbed and still seemingly frank and straightforward.

"If you don't mind," said McIlraith, "we'd like to look you over. Will you strip?"

O'Donnell looked puzzled, but with a shrug he answered: "Sure. Why not?"



Swiftly he peeled off his clothing. The officers looked over his fair-skinned, muscular body. Apparently there was no mark on him, but suddenly Waterhouse grasped his right hand and turned it over. There was a purpling bruise on the back, between the middle and the fourth finger.

In answer to his curt question, O'Donnell had a ready answer for that one, too. "Got that at work. Caught my hand between the handle and the gas pump," he explained.

McIlraith rubbed his chin. "Maybe," he said. "Maybe everything you've told us is the truth. But just as a matter of form, we're taking you down to Headquarters to see the Inspector."

O'Donnell's easy assurance left him at last. His face flushed a warm red. "You're making a bad mistake. I told you my wife's in the hospital. I've just become a father. What makes you think—especially at a time like this—that I'd go drag a girl into the bushes?"

McIlraith did not answer. He rolled O'Donnell's good clothes carefully into a neat bundle while the man once more donned those he had been wearing. Then together they left the house and made the journey to Headquarters in silence—a thoughtful silence on the part of the officers and a sullen, moody one on the part of their suspect.

With O'Donnell in Chisholm's office and the bundle of clothing in the hands of the laboratory experts, Waterhouse was dispatched on another mission. This time he made the trip out to the maternity hospital where Mrs. O'Donnell was a patient.

He was soon closeted with the Superintendent of the hospital in the latter's office. She was a capable woman and conscientious about her patients. When Waterhouse explained his identity, she was frankly worried.

"I really don't think Mrs. O'Donnell should see you yet," she said. "Perhaps I can tell you what you want to know without disturbing her."

"Very likely," agreed Waterhouse. "First, when did Mrs. O'Donnell's husband visit her last?"

The Superintendent drew a book across her desk, thumbed through the pages and then glanced down a list of entries. "On Monday. He was here twice that day—at three in the afternoon and at eight in the evening."

"I see," answered Waterhouse. "Now can you tell me whether she was wearing a blue bedjacket at either of those times? Has she such a garment?"

The Superintendent rose. "I'll get her grip."

She left the office and returned a few minutes later with a black handbag. Together they opened it and emptied its contents on the desk top. There were a bonnet and baby blankets, boot-ees and blue wool mittens, two night gowns and folded at the very bottom, a blue bedjacket.

SERGEANT WATERHOUSE picked up this last item and the pair of mittens. He crushed the soft materials in his big hands. Were they barking up the wrong tree again? Had O'Donnell been telling the truth after all? Here were the bedjacket and the mittens—both of blue wool.

"If you don't mind," he told the Superintendent, "I'll just take these things along to Headquarters with me."

Slowly she replaced the other garments in the handbag. "It's a trifle irregular," she said doubtfully. "But I guess it will be all right."

"It'll either be all right," said Waterhouse grimly, "or all wrong."

The Superintendent followed him to the door. "What is it all about, Sergeant?" she asked. "That poor woman hasn't done anything, has she?"



Waterhouse shook his head. "No. But we're questioning her husband—about the murder in the ravine."

The woman recoiled, gasped. "No!" she exclaimed horrified. "Why, only this morning Mrs. O'Donnell was reading the papers and said she hoped they'd get the murderer and hang him for his fiendish crime. If she hears this—about *her own husband* . . ."

"Don't tell her," advised Waterhouse kindly. "Don't let her see any more papers. Maybe he didn't do it. We'll soon know if he's clear, he'll be released right away."

Police officers are human, too. It was with a heavy heart that Waterhouse made his way back to Headquarters, thinking of the woman lying back there on a hospital bed. Mrs. O'Donnell was perhaps the most tragic figure in this tragic case—denouncing the mad rapist who had committed the ravine murder—not knowing that her own husband was even then being questioned about the crime.

Like the overcoat and the suit belonging to O'Donnell, the blue bed-jacket and baby mittens were in turn handed over to Doctor I. H. Erb and Professor Joslyn Rogers, the laboratory experts. And while they were conducting their exhaustive tests, Inspector Chisholm was still busy with O'Donnell.

But it was in vain that he asked his countless questions. O'Donnell insisted that he had never seen Ruth Taylor, that he was innocent of any complicity in the slaying and refused to change a word of the story that he had already told.

In the midst of the inquiry, the telephone on Inspector Chisholm's desk buzzed shrilly. He picked up the receiver.

Doctor Erb's voice drifted to him over the wire. His report was brief, terse—damning. "We found 264 rab-

bit hairs on the overcoat, Inspector. To all tests, they show the same reaction as samples from the girl's sweater."

"And the bedjacket? And the mittens?" asked Chisholm.

"Radically different," came the response. "The stains on the trousers are beyond all doubt human blood. That was all, wasn't it, Inspector?"

"That's all—and that's plenty," answered Chisholm grimly.

HE hung up the receiver and turned to O'Donnell. "That was the laboratory report, O'Donnell," he said slowly. "Want to know what they said?"

O'Donnell did not. Futilely, desperately, he insisted that no matter what the experts had said, he was an innocent man. Still protesting volubly, he was led away.

Pending trial, the police continued to round out their case. Microscope and test tube were used on every possible bit of evidence. From a clothesbrush found in O'Donnell's home officers brought more of the telltale blue hairs. The laboratory experts declared them likewise identical with the material of Ruth Taylor's sweater. Samples of the caked mud found on O'Donnell's trousers, and in the kitchen of his house, were analyzed and found to be identical with the soil of the ravine.

The ravine itself was once more gone over, inch by inch. And the day came when a searching officer, brushing aside a heap of leaves, made a startling and important find. It was a heavy iron wrench — undoubtedly the murder weapon.

He called to his fellow searchers as he picked it up. They gathered around him as he turned it over in his hands and all saw, stamped in plainly readable letters on it, an "O" and a "D."

A hasty trip to the gas station on Gerard Street and they soon learned



that all of O'Donnell's tool were similarly marked. And if there was any further doubt whether the wrench found in the ravine belonged to the suspect, it was shortly afterward dispelled in the police laboratory. For the initials on the wrench and those on the tools obtained at the gas station had all been cut by the same die.

his wife's bedjacket.

But in rebuttal, Crown witnesses established the fact that the jacket had never been worn. And it was definitely shown that the bruise on the back of his hand could not have been received from the gasoline pump, as he maintained.

It was February 14th when the case was at last given to the jury. The verdict was not a hasty one. It was only after long deliberation and weighing of the testimony that the solemn pronouncement was made. Guilty. Guilty of what is probably the most heinous crime that stains the police blotter—the rape and murder of an innocent girl by a sex-depraved maniac.

Harry O'Donnell heard himself sentenced to hang.

It was at 8 o'clock on the morning of May 5th, 1936, within the grim walls of the Toronto Prison, that the trap was sprung. Fifteen minutes later O'Donnell was pronounced dead. The bestial slaying of lovely Ruth Taylor had been legally atoned by the death of her murderer.

**I**T was on Monday, February 3, 1936, that Harry O'Donnell went on trial for his life. Justice Jeffery presided and the courtroom was crowded with interested spectators. City Crown Attorney McFadden and J. C. McRuer handled the prosecution for the Crown and though the evidence against the prisoner was mainly circumstantial, in their capable hands it was damaging indeed. The laboratory experts were their chief witnesses and the testimony they gave was as effective as it was terse.

In contrast, O'Donnell's defense was voluble as he continued to maintain his innocence. He still insisted that the hairs found on his coat had come from

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# *A Cop Breaks the Law*

by JOHN DOUGLAS STOLP

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*Mike Vaughn certainly needed killing, but Flaugherty was a cop, and cops don't kill just because they feel like it. . . .*

---

OFFICER FLAUGHERTY'S feet hurt. Not an unusual thing, they were lately very apt to commence their dull aching at a much earlier hour than of old. Twenty years of steady pavement pounding had done them no good, especially in view of the fact that Officer Flaugherty was no small load.

It was his way to ignore their complaints, but tonight they refused to be ignored, and his face held an even grimmer expression than usual. He longed for a vagrant to vent his ire on. Not that his was a mean nature; it was just that he needed an outlet. He wanted the feel of his tight grasp on a submissive shoulders; he went as far as to vaguely hope for one who would offer resistance.

His were vain hopes, however, for he tramped the sidewalks several hours with no sign of even the most trivial deviation from the law. At precisely eleven he made his report to headquarters and then stepped into Joe's for a cup of coffee. As he entered Joe instinctively glanced at his clock. Officer Flaugherty, still painfully aware of his feet, sat down heavily at the counter.

"Right on time, Officer," said Joe, exactly as he had done every night for longer than he was interested in remembering.

"Coffee, Joe." Officer Flaugherty's voice was the surprising tenor peculiar to large Irishmen.

"Pretty quiet tonight."

"Yeah."

"I guess all the bums traveled south.

Gettin' kinda cold for 'em."

"Yeah."

Joe leaned back against his greasy stove, one foot up on a box under the counter. He considered the other thoughtfully.

"I see Mike Vaughn this mornin'," Joe's voice was faintly hopeful.

"Yeah?" The officer's eyes opened a little wider.

"Yeah. He was in; looked kinda pale."

"Say anything?"

"Not much—claims you made a mistake when you only nicked him. Says his aim ain't gonna leave room for argument—next time."

"Hmph." Officer Flaugherty stood up reluctantly and dropped a dime on the counter. Joe picked it up and watched him as he left.

"Think you'll see him?" Joe asked as he reached the door.

"Yeah." The door swung shut.

Officer Flaugherty's feet still hurt, but he no longer noticed the pain. Mike Vaughn was an effective pain-alleviator. Why in hell hadn't he killed him? He certainly needed killing, and it would have been so utterly simple to have brought the gun in on him the barest of fractions. Then it would have ripped through his rotten heart, instead of merely cutting the muscle of his arm. It would have been no weight in Officer Flaugherty's mind—not after he knew about Mike and Theresa Mentelli. He growled in his throat as he thought of the dark eyes of her, and the laugh that was ever on her lips. It



had been an infectious laugh, and Officer Flaugherty found little in the world to laugh at. His tough shell had daunted her not in the least, and she had laughed at him so much he had finally found himself laughing with her. Then Mike had found her and laughed with her, his white teeth gleaming in his too-handsome face. He had probably laughed when they dragged her poor water-soaked body, mutely incriminating evidence, out of the bay. He was that kind. Officer Flaugherty did not need the proof the law demanded. He knew.

HOW many times he had regretted letting that chance slip through his fingers! After all, Mike was a fugitive from the law; and killing would have been as easy as winging him. Easier, in fact.

But he hadn't, and now after a few months Mike was free again. Free; and openly defiant. And Theresa was dead.

This time he'd get him—the damned rat! He'd get him in the guts, where it would be slow and painful. Mike could writhe and moan and swear, and Flaugherty could laugh at his agony.

But he had to be careful. Mike's way would be a dark street and the crack of a gun from a shuttered window.

Anger grew in Officer Flaugherty, anger that was a slow burning fire. He was out to get Mike, within the law, or, if necessary, without. . . .

Mike, he knew, would be keeping himself well out of circulation for a few days. Time enough for the fact of his release to cease to be news. A man fresh out of stir is always a man under suspicion. The question was, where could he be found? There were invisible sources of information easily accessible to Flaugherty whereby he could find out. A cop gets to know

many people and many things over a period of fifteen years. Even a straight cop like Officer Flaugherty. There are those to whom any slight, even questionable "in" with the law is desirable.

Tramping through the suspicious quiet of the dim streets that were his beat, Officer Flaugherty, probably for the first time in his methodical life, was struck by a flash of imagination. It came with the thought of one Sam Volenti, a henchman of Vaughn's, who was at the present time being held by the law—for an old crime Volenti was suspected of having been an accomplice to; a crime that Officer Flaugherty knew; without proof, had been committed by Mike and Volenti.

Slowly Flaugherty's brain, unaccustomed to the strain of imagination, began to shape a plan. It bothered him not at all that the evidence holding Volenti was in truth almost non-existent. Nor did it occur to his conscience that his plan was a deliberate frame-up. All that mattered was that he must get Mike Vaughn.

Those words were echoing in his mind when he re-entered Joe's for another coffee a few hours later. He grunted in his usual manner to Joe's greeting. The first few sips of his coffee were noisy in the lack of conversation. Then Officer Flaugherty offered a casual bit of information.

"They got Sam Volenti down at the station."

Joe's interest was plainly evident. "Yeah?"

"Yeah. Guess they'll let him go, though; nothing to hold him on. But he sure fixed Mike up. We're looking for him now."

Joe, as always, asked a few questions, all of which Flaugherty answered with his non-communicative monosyllables. He knew that before even hours had passed, the information that Volenti had squealed would be com-



mon knowledge in the district. He was smart enough to realize, too, that coming from him, no one would even stop to consider it a frame. Officer Flaugherty was not one to participate in anything of that sort. He smiled grimly to himself, and proceeded to finish out his beat.

The Captain at headquarters greeted Flaugherty in the manner of all Irishmen when he turned in his report.

"Things pretty quiet, eh, Tim?"

"Yeah; pretty quiet. Say, Cap, get anything out of Volenti today?"

"Hell, no. Not even enough to hold him on. We had to let him go."

"Too bad. He was in on that job."

"Sure—him and Vaughn; but what can you do about it?"

Flaugherty shrugged, grunted an incoherent farewell, and left. Satisfaction in the succession of events upon which his scheme depended was pleasant, and he went home to a sound sleep.

THE following evening Joe glanced quickly at his clock when Officer Flaugherty entered, and then back to the officer, as though he didn't believe his eyes. The Officer was ten minutes ahead of his usual time.

Reaching for a heavy coffee mug, Joe's eyes were wide with wonder and expectancy.

"I see you guys let Volenti go," he said.

"You see him?" Flaugherty looked up with a celerity unusual to him.

"No—but I heard."

"Umph." It was a sound of disappointment.

"Butch seen him," Joe offered, "told me he talked with him. Didn't give out nothing, though."

"Umph." Flaugherty drank the last of his coffee.

"Still after Mike?"

"Yeah."

The officer tendered his dime and

left without further comment. Little erratic worries were beginning to gnaw at him. So far his plans were perfect, but the rest was dependent to a great extent on chance, and luck. He knew that by this time his statement that Volenti had talked had reached Mike. He knew that Volenti would be unaware of it, because naturally, no one would tell him. He expected Mike to go straight to Volenti, who would see no reason for hiding. Flaugherty knew where Volenti would be, but the success of his plans depended on just when Mike would seek the other out. He figured it would be rather late in the evening, both to escape notice, and to be sure of Volenti being there. His whole plan depended on Mike being there. Whether he got him within the law, or just got him, made no difference to Officer Flaugherty, just so he did get him. The possible consequences did not disturb him in the least.

With a deliberate calm that belied his tense nerves he turned into a dark alley. It was a passageway back of an old and decrepit hotel. Officer Flaugherty was intimately familiar with the alley, having used it before in the apprehension of a good many petty crooks. It extended along the back of the hotel, and two fire escapes dropped into it. His eyes scaled the dim wall, searching the windows. One of them, he knew, was the window of Volenti's room. With a few minutes of study, he knew which one it was. It was on the second floor, and the fact that it was lighted, and the shade drawn, raised his hopes to a degree that was, for a moment stunning. Squinting his pale eyes he strained to see through the gloom. Officer Flaugherty's eyes were trained eyes; experience had taught them to recognize things that an ordinary man would never have noticed. There was a profile on the drawn shade, a black



silhouette cast on the lighted square. Flagherty stopped dead still, his gaze glued on the window. The man whose shadow was outlined in the small square was apparently sitting down, engaged in conversation with another. He was seated a few inches from the window, and the profile was unmistakable. It etched itself clearly in Officer Flagherty's mind. It was Mike Vaughn!

He felt the short hairs on the nape of his neck rise with an accompanying flash that ran sharply down his spine.

His plan had worked; the rumor had reached Mike, and Mike was there, with Volenti. It did not occur to Flagherty that something was bound to come of Mike's presence in Volenti's room. His only thought was wrapped up in his own hatred for Mike. How easy it would be to aim the gun and finish the job then and there. It would be pleasant, no matter how high the cost. In the end it was not the thought of possible unfortunate outcome for Officer Flagherty that caused him to creep, with amazing quiet for a man of his bulk, up the ramshackle fire-escape. It was something else; a cruel desire to see the hated man suffer more than a quick snuffing out from a well placed bullet. Nor did it bother him that it was not ordinary procedure for a policeman to climb up fire-escapes. He knew what would happen were he to go in by way of the front door. He would find but an empty room. And a shifty-eyed clerk who would be blandly innocent.

Officer Flagherty wasn't to be fooled. A grim smile froze on his features as he caught the low murmur of voices from within. On impulse he bent closer in an endeavor to grasp the essence of the conversation. He could catch nothing more than an inarticulate muttering, broken by an occasional sharper expletive.

WHILE Officer Flagherty crouched silently forming a plan of action, he grew aware of a change in the nature of the voices. Their pitch was becoming lower, and more tense; there was a threatening quality in one, and evident anxiety in the other. A crescendo in the bitter deadliness of the one led up to a harsh curse, then there was a muffled spat, and the sound of an inert body's falling. After a long moment's silence the lights went out, and quick footsteps came in guarded quiet toward the window. Flagherty moved to the farthest corner of the small platform as he heard the window being opened. His mind a perfect calm he squeezed himself against the wall as a head and shoulders protruded and invisible eyes swept quickly about in all directions. His calm was in no way affected by definite recognition of his quarry. He waited, scarcely breathing, while the other maneuvered his slim form out the window with feline agility. When Mike was fully outside and standing he stepped forward, and for a rigid second the two confronted each other.

Both moved at the exact same instant. The fact that Officer Flagherty reached for Mike and Mike reached for his gun was to the officer's advantage. The feel of his fingers on the solid flesh of the man he hated brought out unknown strength in the officer. Silently they stood, each with muscles straining in all the power they could gather. Several seconds passed while neither seemed able to move the barest fraction of an inch. Then the bulk of the officer began to tell against the wiry strength of the other, and Mike was forced slowly back against the railing, the long drop to the pavement directly back of him. Knowing well that it was his life he was fighting for, Mike in a final effort brought his gun closer in. It was a second gun, unsilenced, and the report



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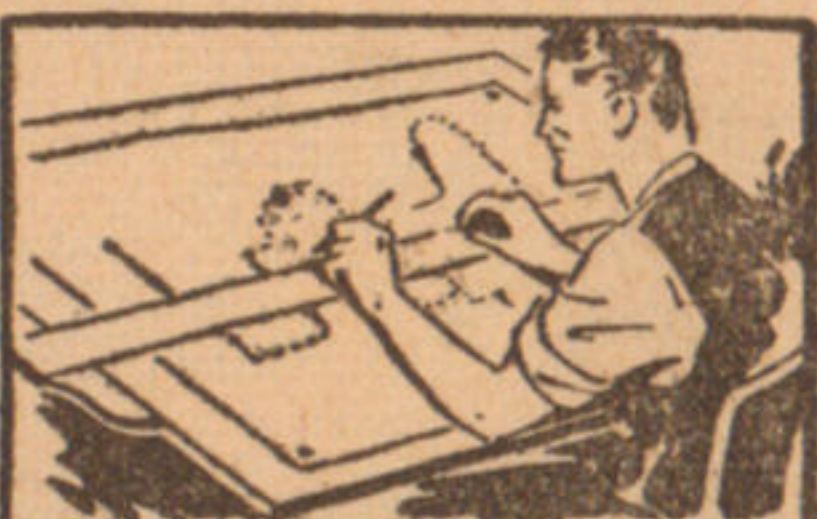


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was a deafening roar. Officer Flaugherty gasped suddenly at the burst of red-hot pain in his chest. With the last atom of strength from a rapidly draining reservoir he heaved mightily upward. He was conscious only that he was falling, and vaguely wondered if he really was, or if it was the effect of the shot. Then he felt a dim shock, and dropped into a blackness that all the noise of police whistles and sirens that arose presently could not penetrate.

Officer Flaugherty waked with the unpleasant smell of ether in his nostrils. He seemingly had no body at first, then slowly he did have, and a very painful one it was. Raising his eyes upward along a blue coat he found it topped by a familiar face it took him some time to place as belonging to his captain.

"How do you feel, Tim? Okay?"

The voice of the captain was far away, but this time his effort to speak was rewarded.

"Yeah," he said, a hoarse whisper. Then he strained forward amid a burst of pain. "Mike—" he grated, "where is he?"

"Mike's all right," said the captain, putting a square hand on Officer Flaugherty's shoulder. "He's in the next room. You landed on him—his ribs are all caved in. Hasn't a Chinaman's chance. Take it easy, Tim; you'll be okay." The Captain gazed at him a moment, and then went on, almost to himself, "When you are, I want to find out how you caught a murder just as it happened. Volenti was in that room, with a bullet in his heart."

Officer Flaugherty relaxed against his pillow. The dull pain was still there, but he didn't seem to care.

The small room was filled dimly with a harsh grating sound that issued from the still form on the bed. It caused the nurse to rise with a mixture of fear and alarm on her face.

Officer Flaugherty was laughing.



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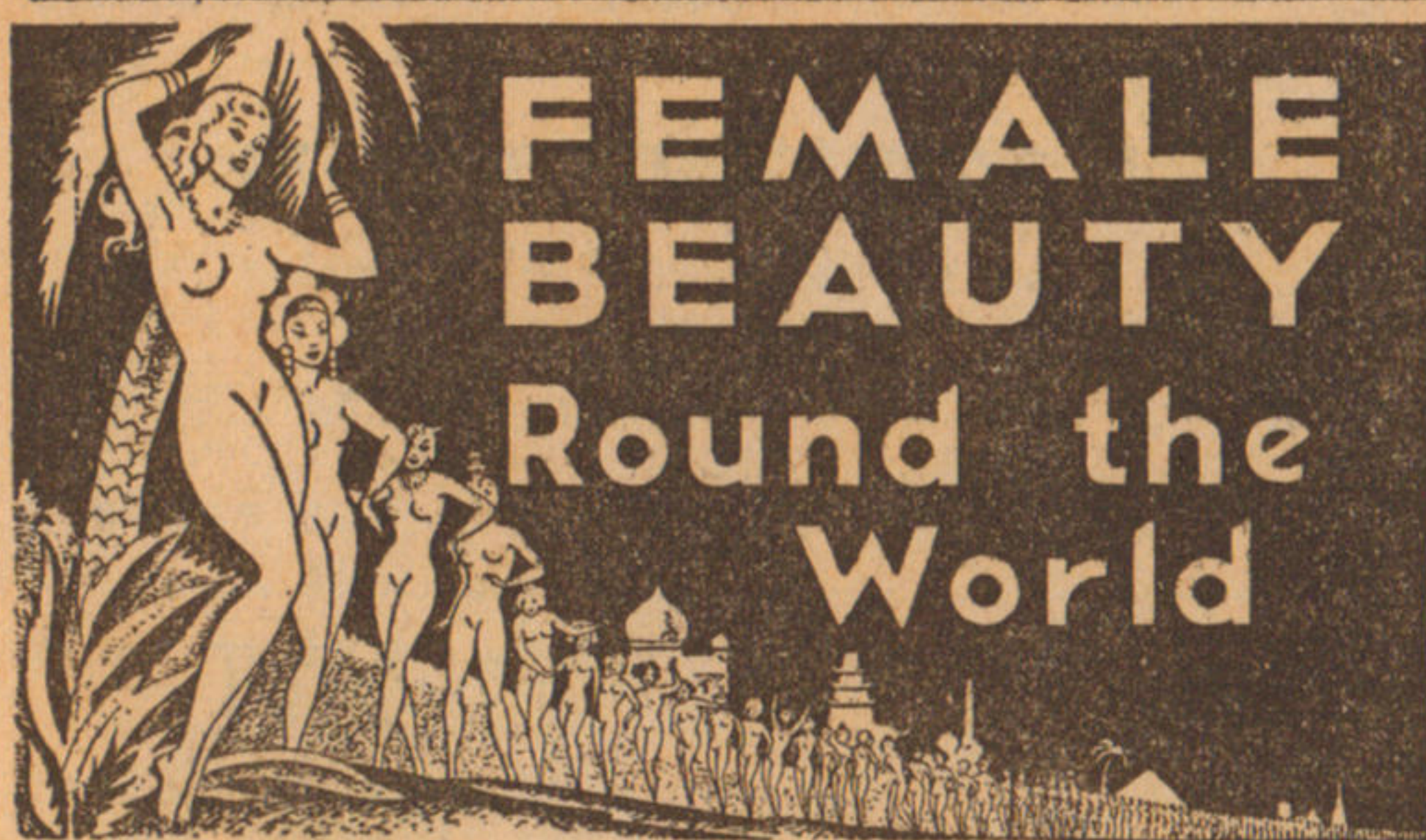
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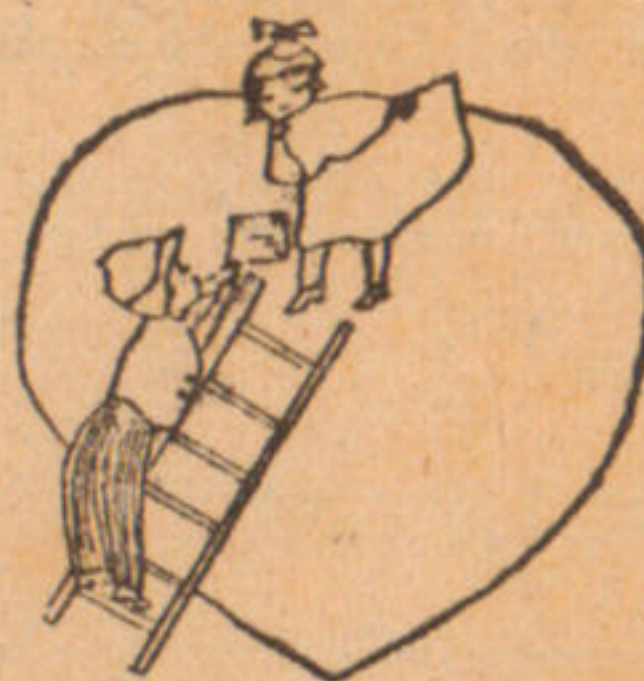
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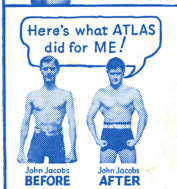
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