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A
SPEED
MAGAZINE



CLEAN-UP KILL

by *Roger
Torrey*



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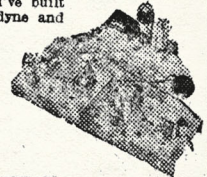
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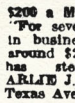
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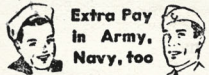
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SUPER-DETECTIVE



DEC., 1943

VOL. 5, NO. 2

Book-Length Novel—Complete In This Issue

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It was a job for a private detective and not for the army, but Kennedy felt he could be more comfortable if he had a couple of soldiers at hand.

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The woman's silence convinced Dailey that either the woman was crazy or she was concealing a lot.

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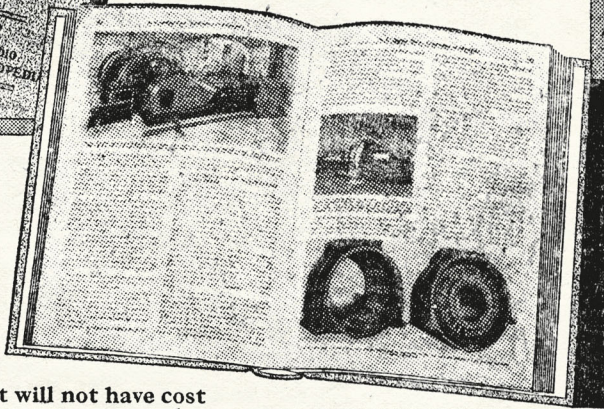
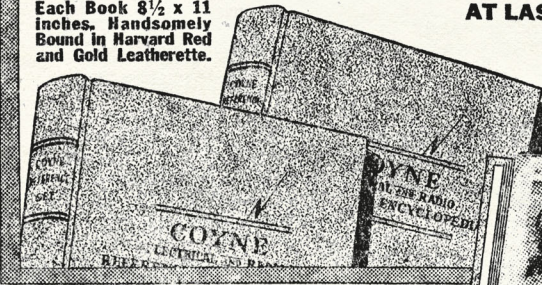
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MURDER AT

Taking a couple of soldiers along on a job cut out for a private detective may have seemed silly, but when the showdown came, it was the army that saved the day

That gun boomed out like a cannon, and it was too late to do anything more about it.



CHANTILLY

SERGEANT HERTZ put his glass on the table, in theory, but actually two inches from the side of it. He mopped at the beer on his trousers and then stared accusingly across at Corporal Moynahan and myself.

"Jostled my arm," he said. "For two cents I'd bat your ears down."

Moynahan said: "Sure, sarge, and you're the man can do it. Ain't you going out to Chantilly with us?"

"What for?"

"We got a bet on. Five bucks that you can beat me swimming. Remember? You said you was good."

The sergeant dived under the table for his beer glass and came up even redder in the face. "I said it and I can do it. Once a man learns how to swim why he never forgets."

"Like an elephant," said Moynahan.

"How's that?"

"Like an elephant. They don't forget, either."

"So now I'm like an elephant, hey?"

I stood and said: "Let's be going, boys. If nothing else, it'll be cooler out there. We'll stop at the State store and buy a crock and then go out and pick up that cabin. Then we can swim and take a snifter or two in peace and quiet."

"Sure, Mr. Kennedy," said the corporal.

"It's Danny, corporal."

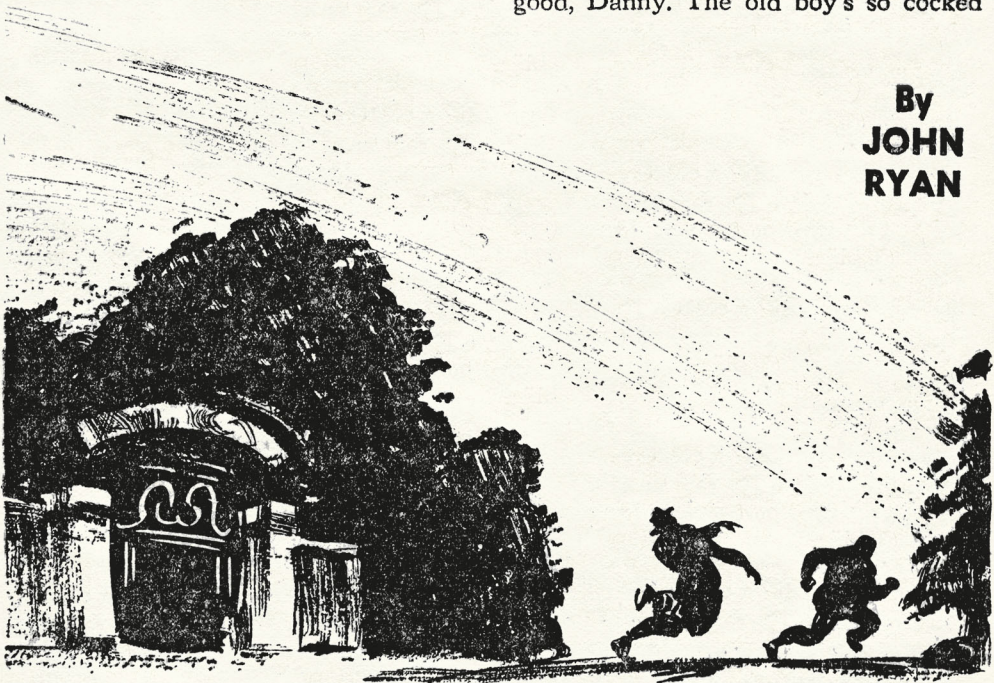
"Sure, Danny."

The sergeant got waveringly to his feet. "Sure, Danny." And then suspiciously: "You still holding them stakes?"

"You bet."

He staggered away from the booth toward the door and Moynahan winked at me and said: "This is going to be good, Danny. The old boy's so cocked

By
**JOHN
RYAN**



he knows nothing from nowhere. Let's get going."

It took the two of us to get the sergeant down to the cab stand.

CHANTILLY was a dine and dance and dinner place, combined with about fifty rent cabins and a sort of picnic grove and bathing beach. It was ten miles from town and on the river, just where it widened out into the Sound. Chantilly itself, that is, the pavillion where they sold the drinks and put nickels in the juke box, was a wide, open screened affair, and sat right at the base of the two hundred foot pier that pointed out into the river. A sandy shallow beach reached out at each side, and along the pier there were boats and fishing tackle to rent. There were diving platforms scattered the length of it as well as at the end, and the bath houses were under the pavillion.

The cabins were in the grove that opened as the drive way turned, set in a double row with room for parking by each one. The grove took up possibly three acres and was cleared of brush, but thick solid young pines were hemming it in from the sides and back.

It was under county law, which was congenial, and the shore patrol and military police let things well alone as long as their boys didn't fight with civilians. The county cops let everybody alone, but that was probably due to the string of slot machines that lined one side of the pavillion, and the pay-off on the cabins.

Moynahan and I loaded the sergeant from the cab and he headed for the pavillion and the bar like a homing pigeon. I didn't even have to hint. I paid the cab and marked down six bucks in the expense book, and the corporal and I still had time to catch him before he got to the place.

Which gave me a chance to pick the

booth I wanted. Right across from John B. Whettler, my boss.

And then I ordered set-ups and waited for John B. to pick up his cue, which he did before we got the first drink down.

The waitress, a fat and frowsy blonde, came waddling up, mopping stringy hair from a sweating forehead. She looked at me with no interest, at the sergeant with little more, but she brightened when she saw the corporal.

"Gent over here wants to buy you guys a drink," she said. "He's buying drinks for every service man that comes in. Has been, all afternoon."

Sergeant Hertz said: "He must be nuts."

"Don'tcha want it?"

"Sure we do," said Moynahan quickly. "Sure we do. So does the sarge—he ain't turned down a free drink since he's been in the army."

"Twenty-six years last month," said the sergeant. "I been soldiering twenty-six years and one month, sister. I seen China service and I put a hitch in in the Phillipines. I soldiered in Panama. I been in Alaska. I been in France and I was in Germany two years after the last war. Them German girls treated us swell."

The girl sniffed and said: "I seen old timers before."

MOYNAHAN said: "What time you through here, sister?"

She tried to look doubtful, but it wasn't a good attempt. "Twelve tonight. Only if there's a crowd, I got to stick longer."

"I'll be waiting," Moynahan said confidently. "My friends and I, we got a cabin. We can lift a few and have a moonlight swim or something. Or maybe we'll just lift a few, hunh?"

She did something that could have been a nod. It also could have been

the start of an old-fashioned cooch dance, because when she moved, she moved all over.

Moynahan said: "At twelve then, sister," and grinned at her. "And tell the fat guy that we'll have a drink with him as soon as we guzzle what we got in front of us. Hey?"

She giggled and went away. Moynahan said, "That's the way I like 'em. Rough and ready. You too, sarge?"

The sergeant said: "I been soldiering for twenty-six years and one month, and so help me, I never went out with a bum like that. Not never yet."

Moynahan made a raspberry that could have been heard six booths away. "Old age has got you," he said. "You'll be pulling out of the race, the first thing next."

Hertz finished his drink and wobbled to his feet. "Let's get that free one," he said. "Where's the way?"

I led him and the corporal over to John B. Whettler. Whettler was a cinch to be under observation, but the way we'd worked it nobody could spot me as anybody but a pal of two tight soldiers. With buying drinks for service men as he had all afternoon, my meeting him would pass for accidental—and that's the way I wanted it.

When you're fooling with a fifty thousand dollar pay off, it's a good thing to play safe.

CHAPTER II

Fireworks



WHETTLER wasn't alone. Tony Forbes, his secretary, was with him, and I said, so the soldiers couldn't hear it:

"Hi, Tony."

He grinned a scared little grin. I didn't blame him—he was

the contact man the way it was arranged. Whettler introduced himself to the soldiers and me, of course acting like he'd never met me in his life. He was his usual big blunt blustering self, but I could see the worry back of his eyes.

The sergeant just grunted at him, but Moynahan put it on like a proper soldier, asked over for drinks, should do.

He said: "This is a pleasure, Mr. Whettler. Us boys appreciate a thing like this. It isn't often that anybody treats us like we was human."

"I was in the service myself," Whettler told him. "Last war, of course."

"What outfit?" asked the sergeant, waking up from the almost stupor he was in. "What outfit, buddy?"

Whettler gave him some regimental number and the sergeant snorted: "A bunch of bums, them guys was. Wasn't a soldier among 'em. Me, now I was with the—th. We was men, buddy."

Whettler got red in the face. I don't suppose anybody had given him a crack like that since he'd *been* in the army.

Moynahan gasped as he saw free drinks possibly going by the board. He said hurriedly: "That was really a war, Mister Whettler. I'd like to hear about your experiences."

Whettler told him in detail. This was interrupted by Joe Tompkins, who drove for him. He came in and said meaningly:

"I brought the station wagon, Mr. Whettler. It's about seven o'clock, just like you wanted."

I looked at Tony Forbes and winked, so the soldiers couldn't see it. I said: "Look, men, I'd better go out and see about that cabin I made reservations for. If I'm too late, they may rent it to somebody else."

"I got one myself," Whettler said. "I'm in the mood for a little party. You'll be right back, eh, Mr. Kennedy?"

I said I would—and went out before Tony could get out of the booth.

And then I hung back, by the corner of the pavilion, and watched Tony go to the station wagon with *John B. Whittler—General Contracting* lettered on the door. I saw him take a padded looking brief case from the floor in the front of the car, and then head toward the first row of cabins, cutting across the park-like grove of trees to get there. He was plainly going toward one of the last in the row, so I swung to the left so that I'd hit the same row where the cabins began.

He was within twenty feet of the third cabin from the end when the first slug hit him, and I was running toward him with my gun in my hand when the second put him down.

Tony was on his face, kicking his feet and using both hands as if he was swimming, when I got to him. The brief case was ten feet in front of him, where he'd tossed it as he went down. I didn't stop—not even when I picked up the case. I bent and got it on the run, like a cowboy picks up a handkerchief from a running horse. I went into the woods—that thick clustered bunch of little pines that lined the grove—and I heard the gun crack again just as I had smashed into them.

I also heard a solid little smacking noise not a foot from my head, and one look showed me bark splintered away from a tree by me. I went down on my belly then. The gun had been a rifle from the whip-like crack it made, and I'm not playing Daniel Boone with a handgun against a rifle, even if it's small calibered as this one was from the sound.

I eased a few feet back, then walked, not ran, back to and between the twin rows of cottages. Clear down there was one much fancier, and I rightly took this to be the manager's, and I was on

the porch and reaching for the bell when the door opened in my face. It was a nice, gentle-looking old man who'd opened it, and he looked as startled as I must have to him.

I said: "Ugh—I'm looking for the manager."

"I'm him. Say, did you hear a shot?"

"Me?"

"I guess maybe it was a backfire. I—ugh—mister, I was in the bathroom. Only it sounded sort of like a shot to me."

"I heard something too," I said. "Like it came from over there." I gave him a wave that could have meant all of West and South. "Probably some dope with an old hack that's got too rich a mixture. I'm Kennedy—I phoned you for a cabin earlier this afternoon."

"Oh yes, Mr. Kennedy. I'm giving you forty-six. Right down the row. Want to see it, now?"

"Sure."

We went down and looked at forty-six. Two bedrooms with a bath between. A front room with enough ash trays. A kitchenette all fitted up with an electric refrigerator and with the ice trays full and a bowl of extras set and ready. Enough extra glasses for more company than a man could put in that size house.

The old man said: "He, he, he! I know what you boys want. You can get mixer over at the pavilion and you won't get no complaints from your neighbors as long as you don't make 'em against them. Only thing, I got to get my money in advance."

We talked a little more and I found that I could even buy a little hard stuff, of course not from the old gent but from a pal of his. And of course for three times what the state store sold it for. I sent him out to arrange this, and the minute he was gone, looked in the case.

And found nothing but blank paper in it instead of the fifty thousand bucks supposed to be there.

I had the case under the mattress in the second bedroom by the time the old man got back with the hootch. And I just had the liquor in the icebox and paid for when a county policeman walked in without knocking and spoke to the old man.

"Ho, dad!" he said. "I thought I saw you ducking in here. You got a murder over in front of twenty-seven."

"That was a shot I heard," the old boy said.

I said he must have been right.

MY boys were still with Whettler but that wasn't all with him. There was somebody named Tom Duffy; somebody named Horace Martins; and somebody named Prentice Sheeley. Duffy was fat, red-faced, and loud-mouthed. Martins was thin and precise, with a nose like a parrot's beak. Sheeley was short and the baldest man I'd yet to see—and also one of the drunkest.

Sergeant Hertz had his head on the table and was snoring happily. Moynahan had his arm around the frowsy waitress, who apparently was taking another order. And Whettler was blustering away merrily, and going batty with worry under the front.

I sat down and met the three strangers. Whettler ordered drinks around and the waitress went away to get them. Moynahan watched her go with loving eyes and commented on the way she walked—but there was no love in the comment.

I said: "Funny thing. I got a cabin, all right, but just as I was talking to the manager we heard a shot. It was some county cop that told us about it. I don't know what it was, but the cop said somebody was murdered."

"Who was it?" Whettler asked, with his eyes bugging out. "Was it . . . ?"

I cut him off fast. I said: "Dunno. I left right then. I didn't come out here to get mixed up in any murder, you can bet your life on that. Will you gentlemen excuse me."

Whettler started to get up but Moynahan beat him to the punch. The corporal said: "I gotta see a man about that same dog, Danny. I'll go with you—it's right in the back."

That broke my chance of telling Whettler about it—but the county cop and a pal were doing the job for me by the time Moynahan and I got back from the men's room. Or rather, they'd just started asking him the score.

The first one said. "You'd be John B. Whettler?"

"That's correct, officer."

"Man named Forbes work for you? Anthony Forbes?"

"Why, yes."

The second one said: "He's been shot. Killed."

"Impossible," John B. told him. "Why he was right here with us, not ten minutes ago."

"Where'd he go?"

"Why, I imagine to the cabin I've got for the night."

"Which one is it?"

"Twenty-seven, I believe."

"Don't you know, mister?" the first one said, making it ugly.

"It was twenty-seven."

"Funny you couldn't remember it."

"It wasn't important."

"No? The guy was killed right in front of it."

WHETTTLER opened up on him then. He told him he didn't like his attitude, his tone when he spoke to him, his looks, or the uniform he wore. He informed the cop and everybody else in wide ear shot that he was John



B. Whettler and that he was the man who was putting up fifteen hundred cottages for the war workers in the Indian Creek development. He said, and loudly, that he'd have proper respect from the county officers or he'd see there were new officers in the county. It took him five minutes for the speech and the two cops looked like whipped dogs when he was through with it.

The first one said: "Please, Mr.

Whettler, I'm just trying to find who murdered Mr. Forbes."

"I don't believe Tony was murdered. As I said, he was here with me not ten minutes ago. Tony's been with me for the last ten years and there's not a reason in the world why he *should* be murdered."

"Will you look at this man? We

There was no telling where the shots came from. The second one put him down, and the briefcase went flying.



went through his pockets to establish identification, of course, and found his card. That's all. Then we saw your sta-

tion wagon outside and asked who owned it. That's all."

I said: "I'm afraid, Mr. Whettler, the

officer is right. Of course I don't know who the victim is—I didn't see him—but the officer told the manager of the cabins and myself that there'd been a murder."

The cop hadn't remembered me. He said: "Hagh, it's you, eh? Where'd you go? Why'd you run out on me?"

"I didn't. I came straight here. I was with the manager when the shots were fired. We thought they were backfires."

The second cop said: "That's right, Harry. You remember the old boy said he was just talking to a guy that was renting a cabin, when he heard 'em."

I praised the stars that the old boy didn't want to be left out on a limb without an alibi any more than I did.

I said: "I came out here to have a good time. I didn't come out to be mixed up in a murder case. Of course, if it was Mr. Forbes, why, I met him when I met Mr. Whettler here."

"Stick around, fella," the first cop said. "You can come along with Mr. Whettler right now, and help him identify the body."

I told Corporal Moynahan: "I'll be right back, corporal. You keep track of the sergeant. When I get back, we'll go over to the cabin."

"And then I'll win that dough off the sarge," agreed Moynahan. "We'll put on that swimming race. 'I'm maybe gonna need a little dough tonight."

He was looking at the waitress then. And during all the talk, neither Duffy nor Martins or Sheeley had one thing to say. Nobody asked them anything and they volunteered nothing.

At the time I couldn't figure why.

WE WEREN'T long looking at Forbes' body, but I didn't have a chance to tell Whettler about what had happened. Nor about the brief case being empty, or for that matter, even that I had it. He identified Forbes, which

was just a formality, and I added my two cents worth to it, which wasn't even necessary. I'd just met the man, according to my story, which was backed up by witnesses.

And then we were through, though the two cops were standing by us. They were waiting for men from the sheriff's office, as well as for the state police.

I said: "I think, Mr. Whettler, that I'll go to my cabin for a minute or so. Maybe half an hour. Will you tell the boys to come over if they want? It's number forty-six."

"Certainly, Mr. Kennedy, certainly."

He looked at me anxiously to see if that was the office for him to tag along with me but I didn't give him the nod. I wanted a minute by myself to dope things out.

He went back toward the pavilion and I went to forty-six and dug the brief case out from under the mattress. I was in the front room, with both bedroom doors wide open, as was the door to the kitchenette. I hadn't tried the back door leading from it, for that matter. I'd only gone out there and taken ice from the refrigerator and started on a highball made from the bootleg hootch. I didn't even have soda for a mixer.

I had the glass in one hand and the paper from the brief case spread across my knees when it happened.

Somebody said, from behind me: "Lift those hands!"

It startled me and I did, spilling the highball all over myself. And spreading the blank paper from the case all over the room.

The voice said: "Give me that brief case."

I said: "Take it," and nodded toward where it was at my side. The guy hadn't told me not to turn around and he didn't have to. I didn't know which bedroom he was in or whether he was in

the kitchenette but he had time to plug me twice over if I turned to see who it was.

He said: "Just hold tight."

I said: "Okay, friend. But you're wasting your time. The thing's empty."

"Where's the fifty grand?"

"I don't know."

"You picked it up."

"It was empty when I did."

"Am I supposed to believe that?"

"Then don't."

Then there was a thud outside the front door and I heard Corporal Moynahan say: "Just stand up for a minute, sarge. On account of I got to open this door."

I HEARD one soft footstep behind me and a sort of grunt, and I slid off the chair. The gun he hit me with came raking down the side of my head instead of landing squarely, but it sprawled me out on the floor face down and still away from the man who'd hit me. And I couldn't move. The drinks I'd taken during the day were churning inside me and my head was spinning like a top. I heard Moynahan open the door and heard him struggling with Hertz, and then I heard him let Hertz drop.

Then he said: "My sainted mother!"

And then he picked me up and put me back in my chair and held me there until I could keep from going back to the floor again.

"Lord, Danny," he said. "Who slugged you, who was it?"

"I don't know."

"You're bleeding like a stuck hog."

I felt of my ear and my hand came away with blood on it. I asked him to get some ice for me—and to put some of it in a highball and some more on the ear.

Hertz was still on the floor, still snor-

ing as he was when I'd left him at the pavilion.

Moynahan came back with a drink for himself and another for me, and he'd taken a dishtowel and packed it with cracked ice for a bandage for the ear. It was broken on the top where the gun had slid down over it but it wasn't bad. Even the swelling would be out of it in a couple of days I thought after I looked at it in the bathroom mirror.

Moynahan said: "Who did it, Danny? I'll take the guy apart."

"Private argument, corporal."

"You got a date out here? That it, that why you wanted to come out?"

"I certainly didn't have a date with the guy that laid that one on me."

"I see something right now," Moynahan said, in an earnest voice. "I see you got the sarge and me out here with you because you was expecting trouble. The sarge shouldn't ought to've got so drunk. He ain't no good to himself or anybody else, not in the shape he's in."

Hertz said, from the floor and distinctly: "I heard that, Moynahan. Boy! What I'll do to you on the drill ground for that crack."

"He hears things he hadn't ought to," said Moynahan. "Listen, Danny! I'll sober him up, at least some, and we'll give you a hand. Where'd this guy that crowned you go, and who was he?"

"Out the bedroom window or out the back door. And I don't know who he was, I tell you."

"You wouldn't kid a soldier, would you?"

"I would, but I'm not kidding now."

The sergeant got up and stared at us bleakly. He said: "Listen, you guys. I been in the service for twenty-six years and a month on top of it, and I never hear such a silly line in my life. Never, not in twenty-six years. A guy

hits you and you don't know who he was. What the hell kind of story is that? Hey? I suppose the guy came up behind you."

"He did just that."

The sergeant opened his mouth and then closed it. He wanted to say something but he couldn't quite decide what. But finally he decided. He swallowed twice and looked at the glasses in our hands.

And then he said: "Well I'll be damned! I'll take a drink on that."

CHAPTER III

Who Is Harry Lewis?



I HAD Hertz passed out and on the bed in the second room and I had Moynahan over at the pavilion making advances at his waitress, and then all I had to do was wait for Whettler.

But this time I waited with my gun out and handy. I still didn't know the score, other than that Whettler had wired me to go down to Virginia City and to contact him at the Alexandria there by phone.

I'd done that in the morning, and all the ranikiboo came afterward. He told me he was being taken for fifty grand in blackmail and that he was paying off. That the pay-off was to be at Chantilly—and he told me where and what it was. We arranged then that I'd pick up a couple of service men—Virginia City was full of them with two big camps right near—and that I'd make the contact with him the way I'd worked it. Then he'd have a chance to go into detail about what the thing was all about.

I'd done my part of it okay. I'd worked for Whettler half a dozen times before and knew him fairly well, as I'd known Tony Forbes. For that matter, as I knew Whettler's wife, Marion. She'd been a showgirl and she'd had a little trouble about a guy she'd played around with before marrying Whettler, and I'd taken her out of it without Whettler knowing a thing.

Whettler was as crooked as a dog's hind leg, but he was smart and shrewd and he got things done in a hurry. He was building fifteen hundred houses for the government, on one of their war working projects, and he was the kind that would have them up in time in spite of hell and high water.

He was girl crazy, too. I'd taken him out of trouble a couple of times and thought that was what the fifty thousand would be for.

And thought him a fool to pay it.

I was turning this over in my mind when I heard his double knock on the door, and I turned the lights off so he wouldn't be outlined coming in.

He said: "Kennedy! Those police are still here. Along with half a dozen others."

"Well?"

"Well, I don't want them to know what I'm doing out here."

"I don't blame you. I wouldn't want anybody to know I was fool enough to pay blackmail, either."

"I'm stuck with that. But it wasn't all my money. Just twenty grand of it."

"Not girl trouble then?"

"Oh hell no! I'd have let it slide if it had just been that. Marion and I aren't doing so well, if you want to know it."

"I'm sorry, J. B."

He shrugged. "You don't have to be. It's been coming up. I'm too old for her, I guess."

When he said, "Lift those hands!" I did, and the papers from the briefcase went all over the place.



HE WAS sixty and she was less than half that so he was probably right. I didn't say that—I said I'd always liked them both and felt sorry there was trouble.

And then asked: "Who was in with you for thirty grand of it? And what was the pay off for, and who to?"

"You met 'em. Duffy and Martins and Sheeley. It's this damn' priority

stuff. I've got a clause in my contract on this housing thing that says I've got to have 'em up by next September. So many done each month in between. Get it? Well, the priority on lumber and the rest of the building stuff comes along. I go on the outside and get what I've got to have to fulfill my contract. I don't do it, Kennedy, before I go nuts trying to get it legally, but what they

let me have under the OPA isn't enough to complete the job. So I get it on the outside and pay extra for it, and the deal comes out in the open enough that some smart meddler noses it out. So we pay off."

"Go on. I might as well know how bad it is."

"That's it. I got lumber from Duffy. Plumbing supplies from Martins. Wiring and electrical stuff from Sheeley. Duffy got the most from me so he put in twenty grand, along with mine. Martins and Sheeley came in for five grand apiece. They all got to pay along with me—the government would close 'em up tighter than a drum if this thing came out. We'd all be facing Federal prison on top of it. You can't stall Uncle right now with a war going on."

"You were a fool to try it."

"I was a fool to take the contract. But I didn't think I'd have priority trouble on a government job."

"How come you made Tony Forbes your pay-off man?"

"They wanted it."

"Who's they?"

Whettler said: "Kennedy, if I knew, so help me, I'd do murder. This is one job I didn't take on for money. This is one piece of finagling I did with a clear heart. This Indian Creek project is behind, just because the workers haven't a place to live. It's needed—you know that. A man won't work in a place where he can't live except in a tent. He won't stick it for long, anyway. I took the contract thinking I could put it over faster than any man I know, and I took it on a cost plus basis that won't net me a third as much as I'd make on a private job half its size.

"It's my way of helping with the war, Kennedy, and I say it proudly. I've always been proud of being in the last war and I thought I'd be helping win this one, this way. I beat that priori-

ty ruling and I admit to to you, but I did it because it was the only answer I could see. I certainly don't want to go to jail for it."

"Maybe you could explain that to a court?"

He laughed bitterly. "With my reputation? You know better."

WELL, he was right on that. I believed him because I knew him, but any Federal judge would take one look at his past record on smart deals and then throw the book at him.

I said: "I saw Tony get it. I haven't had a chance to tell you."

"What happened to the money?"

I played a hunch and said: "What d'ya think he was shot for? Just for fun?"

"I've got to talk it over with Duffy and Martins and Sheeley."

"Why don't you?"

"With those cops sniffing around?"

"Meet 'em at the hotel."

"That's out. I'm too well known there. So are they. That's why we picked this place."

I said: "If you're afraid the cops would break in on a conference in your cabin, why, meet your pals here. I'll take your place and if they come in, tell 'em I'm just waiting for you."

He listened and heard Sergeant Hertz rip out an extra loud snore.

"What about him?"

"What about him? He won't hurt you."

"Won't he wake up?"

"If he does, just give him a couple more drinks and he'll go back to sleep. I'll go find those guys for you and tell 'em you're waiting for them here. And for them to come in one at a time and quietly. That all right?"

"I'll appreciate it, Kennedy."

"Has that driver of yours gone back with the station wagon yet?"

"Why, yes. Why?"

"I wanted a car."

"Take mine. Here's the keys. It's the Cadillac convertible right by the pavilion. You can tell it—it's a custom job."

"Just one thing more. How did you fix that pay-off money?"

"Why, Tony arranged for that. He got the money from Duffy and Martins and Sheeley, and my share of it from the local bank. I came out in my own car and Joe, my driver, brought out Tony in the wagon. Tony and I went in the pavilion, to wait for you, and Joe stayed and watched the money."

"Sure of that last?"

"That's what he was supposed to be doing."

I said: "If I ever had as much as fifty thousand dollars in my hands, all at once, I'd do more than just watch it. I'd take it to bed with me. I wouldn't trust it out of my hands. Hell, John B. I'd glue it all over me and never take a bath and wash it off."

"The boys aren't going to like losing their dough like that. I don't look ahead to telling them they'll have to put up more."

I said: "Don't tell 'em yet. Maybe it was the blackmailer who took it from Tony, after shooting him."

"You think that, Kennedy?"

I said: "I don't know what to think. Not yet, anyway. I'll see you later in the evening."

He was pouring a drink when I left and I had a notion to wake Sergeant Hertz up to share it with him.

IT WAS ten-thirty by that time and I drifted over to the pavilion and found Duffy and Martins and Sheeley, still together in the booth. Just the three of them. I gave 'em Whettler's message and told them the number of my cabin, and they all gave me funny

looks, as if to ask how did I enter into the thing.

I played it close. I said: "Mr. Whettler and I only met this afternoon, but he seemed to take to me right away. He told me that he and you gentlemen had a little deal on that depended on absolute secrecy and that he didn't want the police breaking in on it and asking him more questions about his secretary being shot. That was a shame—he seemed like a nice fella, too."

They all said it was a terrible thing to have happen. All of them had sobered considerably, I noticed, too. And I also noticed that both Duffy and Martins carried guns, and that Sheeley didn't, or that if he did it was in a hip pocket instead of a shoulder rig. It startled me a little to see that bulge under Martins' arm and I'll admit it. He looked like a deacon, and I didn't think of him and concealed weapons as a pair.

I had one drink and Duffy wandered out, to go over to my cabin and Whettler, and I went out to find Moynahan.

And I found the guy. He was clear out at the end of the pier and he had one of the prettiest little gals with him I've yet to see.

I said: "Oh you, corporal! I was going into town. Thought maybe you'd like the ride."

He said to the girl: "You, honey? Would you like a little air?"

She told us she was out with another man and that she couldn't leave. I said: "It's the Caddy, parked up there by the pavilion."

"Can I drive it?" she asked.

I told her: "You can not."

"Then I won't go."

Moynahan said: "Why you little tramp! You know where you can go, don't you?"

He left her standing there, and he was talking all the way up to the car.

His theme was that any girl that would rather drive a car, than ride in one with the Moynahan arm around her, was a no-good bum and a dumb rabbit to boot. We passed the pavilion and he looked in and waved at the fat waitress.

And said: "I bet *she* wouldn't've turned me down like that."

I said: "We'll be back in time for you to find out, corporal. I'm just going into town to do a little checking on a guy."

"What guy?"

I didn't answer that one. I wasn't quite sure myself.

MARION WHETTLER was in—and in the best suite in the Alexandria. She would be—she was the type that wanted, and got, the best. She held out both her hands to me and acted as if I was Johnny just marching home.

"Why, Danny Kennedy," she said. "Why, Danny! I never thought you'd get out of the big town. I can hardly believe it's you."

I'd left the corporal downstairs in the tap room with unlimited credit and an eye on a gal that was sitting by herself. I didn't want Marion to spill a thing in front of him that might give him ideas. I didn't know just what was coming up, and the fewer people that knew of any connection between me and Whettler and his family and affairs the better, I thought.

I said: "I get around, kid. You ever have any kick-back on that mess?"

"Not a thing," she said. "You did fine, Danny. And d'ya know, John never did hear a thing about it. For a little while I was afraid you might have told him."

"I was working for you, not for John."

"And I appreciate it, Danny."

"But now I'm working for John."

"I don't understand."

"What about you and Tony Forbes?"

"Why, what about us?"

"Playing around?"

She reached back her hand to slap my face and then looked at me and changed her mind. She brought her hand back and looked at it as though it didn't belong to her.

"I don't like that, Danny. I don't like that at all."

"I told you this time I was working for John. I've heard things, Marion. About you and Tony."

She said: "Tony didn't mean a thing to me. I'll admit he made passes, but when I didn't pass back he let it go."

"Who told you about it?"

"About what?"

"Tony being killed."

"Are you crazy, Danny? What's this about Tony?"

I said: "You said 'Tony didn't mean a thing' instead of 'Tony doesn't mean a thing'. How'd you know what happened?"

"Why—why, John called and told me."

"No he didn't. Who did?"

"Well, Joe."

"Joe?"

"Joe Tompkins. John's driver."

"Is he the guy instead of Tony?"

This time she slapped my face—and I slapped hers in return. She'd cuffed me hard and I cuffed her harder. She drew back, putting a hand up to her cheek and staring at me.

I said: "I'm not fooling, Marion. I'm working for John, and he's in this up to his neck. It's murder, and I don't go for it."

"There's nothing between Joe Tompkins and me."

"Then who's the guy?"

"It makes no difference. He's in the city."

"What's his name?"

This time she slapped my face,
but I slapped back harder.



“Harry Lewis. Henry Lewis, to be exact.”

She gave me an address in the East

Fifties, and I put the name and address down in my note-book.

“Harry had nothing to do with this.

But—well—you know that John and I are about ready to break up. He must have told you.”

“He did.”

“John—well, John thinks nothing should come between him and business and this government business in particular. He insists I stay down here. I can’t stand it; there’s nothing to do down here.”

“John’s trying to help win the war, kid. What d’ya know about the pay-off tonight?”

“I don’t understand that either, Danny. Has John been playing around with some girl again?”

“You know better, Marion.”

“But I don’t. Please, Danny, give me a break on this. I’ve told you about Harry. Give me a break.”

I said: “Anything you told me, you told me because you thought I’d find it out, anyway. I know you, kid, better than John does. Even if not in the same way.”

She made her eyes big and soft and it was as if she’d taken a couple of steps toward me and fallen in my arms. She didn’t say a word; she didn’t have to.

I said: “I’ll be going. I hope, kid, that you haven’t been lying.”

“I wouldn’t lie to you, Danny.”

I went down in the lobby and sent a two hundred word night letter to the big town, to a friend of mine that was in the same business. I wanted to know things about Harry Lewis and I wanted to know them in a hurry. And then I went in the tap room.

Corporal Moynahan was sitting with the girl he’d spotted, but from the expression on his face I could see he was wasting his time. He looked mad, rather than disappointed, though, which would be the Moynahan reaction to indifference, I thought.

I said: “You ready, corporal? We might as well be getting back.”

He slid away from the table as though his chair was hot. Then I took him upstairs and to my room and dug out my spare gun from my bag.

I said: “I guess maybe we’d better take this along. Can you tuck it under your shirt, in the waistband of those trousers?”

He was in just shirt and trousers—regulation Summer stuff.

He put the gun away and grinned. And then looked startled. “Hey!” he said. “You gotta give me time to ditch the big girl, out there. She’s supposed to be waiting for me at twelve.”

I told him that if he had any occasion to use the gun that night it would come after his big girl had given him the gate.

“Not her,” he said, grinning widely. “I got her just like this.”

He held his hand palm up, then slowly closed it. I thought it a shame that I couldn’t get the answers to a few questions as easily as he’d taken over the wench. Or thought he’d taken over.

I LEFT the Caddy parked where I’d found it and went in the pavilion with Moynahan. He headed for the big girl, who was looking restless, and I saw Whettler and his three partners in crime in the same booth they’d had before. Whettler saw me coming before the others did, and nodded.

I said: “Here’s your car key, Mr. Whettler. That was certainly nice of you. It was a swell drive—a swell car. If I ever get in the money, I’d like to have one just like it.”

He said, just loud enough for the others to hear: “And I appreciate the use of your cabin, Mr. Kennedy. It was a favor I appreciate.”

“No trouble, eh?”

“Everything was fine. The police, if

they wanted to speak to me, didn't think of looking for me there."

"The sergeant all right?"

"Snoring, when we left."

Everybody laughed merrily. All just pals together. Then Whettler said: "This place is starting to close, if I can tell anything by the looks that big waitress is giving us. We're the only customers left."

"The corporal's got a date with her."

"I guess we'd better go, then."

Duffy said: "We'll go back to town, J. B. If anything comes up, get in touch with us. We can meet out here again, if necessary."

"Why not come over to my cabin and play a little cards? Oh, oh! I'd forgotten. The police might still want to ask questions."

I said: "I didn't see 'em around when I came in. All their cars were gone."

Duffy and his two pals said they wouldn't mind a little game if the stakes were right. They all looked pretty sore—and worried, as well. I didn't blame 'em. A Federal charge hanging over a man would be bound to worry him.

They all stood, and both the big waitress, and Corporal Moynahan, who were watching, looked happy. I said to Whettler: "You got a gun, J. B.?"

"Lord, no!"

"Meet me in the men's room then."

I got out and went to the corporal and told him what I wanted, and he passed me my spare gun with the big girl knowing nothing about it. She was watching that last booth in a fever of impatience. She wanted to clean up the empty glasses and mop it up and get out and find out about the corporal. I told him I'd be in our own cabin when he or she or both of them got tired of the moonlight and the mosquitoes, and followed Whettler into the men's room. I handed over the gun and

watched him tuck it into his pants, under his shirt, and warned him.

I said: "Both Duffy and Martins are heeled, and maybe Sheeley's carrying iron in his pants pocket. I'd watch 'em, J. B. They're as crooked as snakes."

"No more than I am, Danny."

"They're scared though, and you're not."

"The hell I'm not!"

We both laughed.

He said earnestly: "Do you any good on the trip to town?"

"I don't know. Ever hear of a man named Lewis? Harry Lewis?"

He shook his head.

I said: "I never did either. Personally, I don't think anybody else ever did."

He looked puzzled and I told him I'd know more about it some time the next afternoon.

And then I went back to forty-six and Sergeant Hertz.

CHAPTER IV

The Wrong Man



HE sergeant was up and around and at it again. I'd figured he would be if he was awake. He beamed at me when I came in with the soda I'd brought from the pavilion and waved the water glass he had half full of straight liquor at me.

"Hagh, Danny, my friend," he said. "This is hot stuff to take straight on a hot night. Your friends were here and they left. A bunch of thieves, Danny boy. What I could tell you about them guys would put your hair in curls."

I remembered what Moynahan had told me about the sergeant hearing

things he shouldn't. It put me in a spot where there was just one out. I made a drink for each of us and then took out my identification card and my private license.

I said: "I'm working for Whettler, sarge. He's on a spot."

"I heard the spot," Hertz said. "A guy that'll chisel on the government in war time should ought to be hung. That's what I say."

I told him true enough. And then explained the thing the way Whettler had explained it to me. I said: "I know the guy. This is the one decent thing he's ever done. He's the one guy that could put that construction job through in the time the government had to have it. I don't like the way he's taking to do it, but I can look the other way when the result is worth it. And so can you."

I'd figured him drunk, but not too drunk to understand. I was mistaken—he was sober enough to use his head in addition.

He said: "What you getting out of it yourself, Kennedy?"

"Day wages and a bonus if I crack it. And expenses, of course. This liquor we're drinking comes under that last heading."

"That all?"

"That's all."

"What's Whettler getting out of it?"

"Cost plus, that's all. And the extra price he's paying for this stuff he's getting off the priority list is coming out of his profit on the contract. He'll make little on it if anything. Certainly nothing like he could make on any civilian job."

"You know that for a fact?"

I said: "Listen, sarge. I know the man. He'd lie if it would help him. But not to me. Because I couldn't help him unless I knew the truth."

"Couldn't or wouldn't?"

"Let's say both. Both are true."

HE THOUGHT it over while he finished his drink and watched me make another. And then he said: "I'll go along. I was going to tell my C. O. what I heard and let him get in touch with the right people on it. That would mean the F.B.I. and all the rest of them piling on your boss. But I'll stick around. I'll make sure he's playing it decent. I'll stick until it breaks, one way or the other."

"Can you and Moynahan get leave?"

He laughed at me. He said: "Twenty six years in this man's army and you ask me that. Hell, Danny, I know what to do. The duty sergeant owes me three months pay, right now. He's new—he's only got two hitches in. He thinks he knows what spots on the dice mean. Ha, ha, ha! I'm teaching him, the hard way. I get leave when I need it and so does Moynahan if I want it for him. Sometimes the D. S. has to call it special duty or something, but we get out and that's the answer, ain't it?"

I said that seemed to be what the troops required.

THE sergeant and I took the back bedroom, leaving the front door and front bedroom open for Moynahan. As well as the whiskey out in sight in case he brought his big girl in for a drink. I took off my coat and shoulder rig and took the gun from it and put it on the table between the twin beds in our room. We also had some whiskey on it along with ice and soda, that just in case the sergeant woke up thirsty in the night. He assured me he might well do that thing.

And then I stripped down to undershirt and shorts and rolled in, leaving the sergeant looking over my gun with a drink standing by waiting.

The gun was a .357 S. & W. Magnum, with a four inch barrel and more power than any commercial hand gun made.

And also, and particularly with that short barrel, more muzzle blast and recoil to go along with the smash.

The sergeant thought it was a dilly and said so. He'd taken the loads out of it and was dry firing it as I dozed off, but I knew he'd leave it hot before he put it away.

He was too old a head to think an unloaded gun was worth two cents to anybody. And also he was too old a head to forget there was a gun on hand when the going got tough. But it wasn't until about three that night that I was sorry about the last.

In the first place, Corporal Moynahan came in about one-thirty, grumbling and swearing. It seemed he was too fast a worker for a country girl, and she'd given him the gate, at least for the evening. I took it he had a date for the following night, though, so she couldn't have been too upset about his tactics. He woke us up and Hertz got up and went out to have a night cap with him. I was just dozing off when Hertz tip-toed in and took our bottle from the bed table, but I dimly heard him say he'd stay in the other room with Moynahan, so his snoring wouldn't keep me awake.

Apparently the sergeant had been told, in the past, that he had both endurance and volume in the bed music.

THE next I heard was my window creak open, but I opened my eyes with a flashlight glaring in them. Also there was a gun gleaming alongside of the flashlight, and I laid quiet as I was told to do.

I couldn't see a thing except somebody outlined against the window. There was a moon, but that light in my eyes had dazzled me.

The same voice I'd heard earlier in the evening said: "Okay, Kennedy!

This time I'm not fooling. What did you do with the money?"

"The case was empty. I told you that."

"I didn't believe you."

"You can believe me now," I said, raising my voice and hoping that the boys in the bedroom would hear me and make enough noise to scare my prowler away. "You saw that paper in the front room. That was all there was in the case."

"You're lying."

"You're nuts."

He was all the way in the room by then. The window wasn't three feet from the ground and all he had to do was step over the sill. But he came over close to me and that was a mistake.

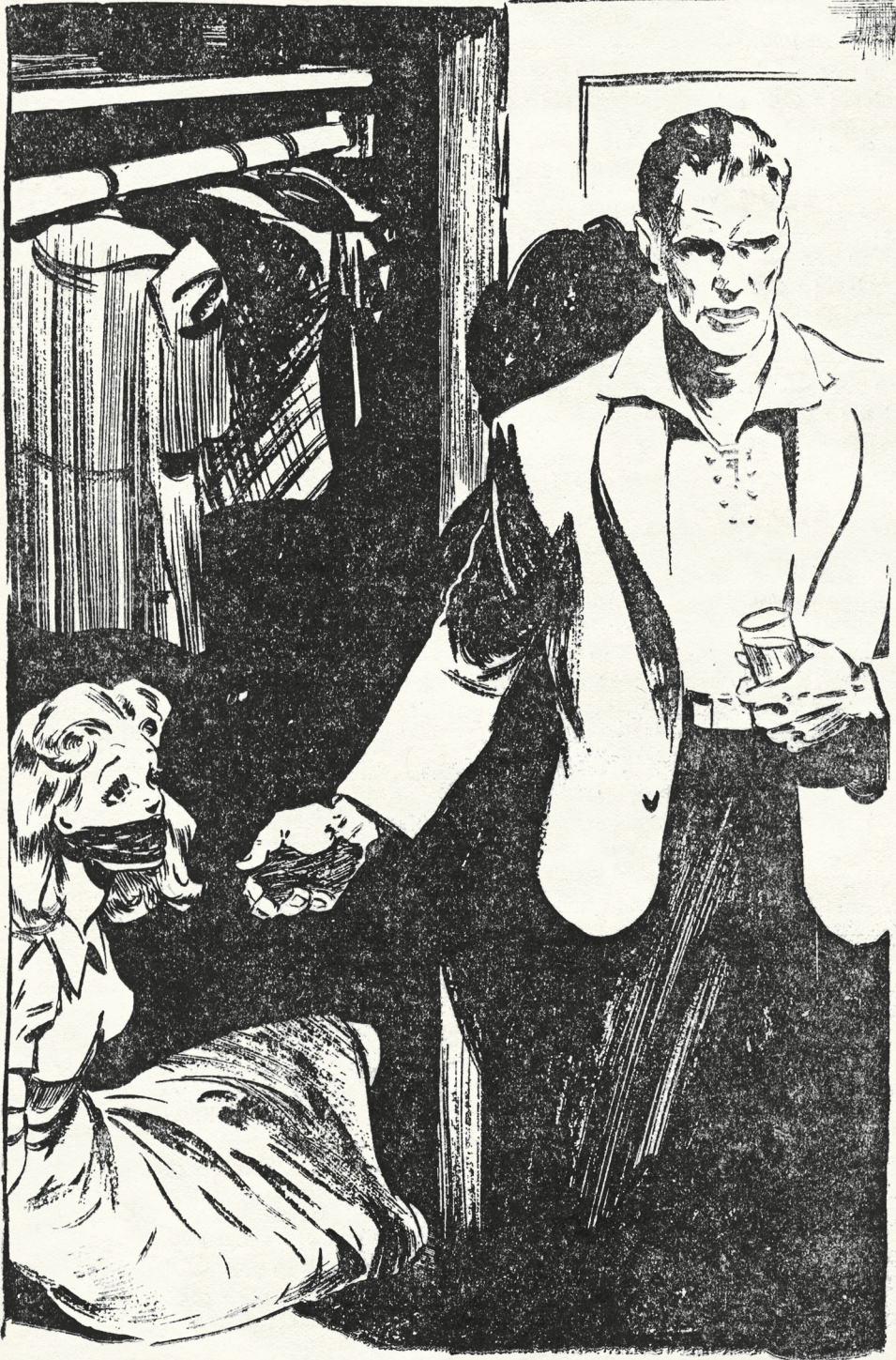
I'd closed my eyes so much that I could barely see him. He had the flash still in them, but the effect had died away and I could see his hand with the gun stretching out like the hand with the flash was.

That was silly. If he'd held the gun against his hip, I wouldn't have had a chance for it. Or if he'd kept a distance, he'd have been safe enough. As it was, he was in as much danger as I was or more, because I knew the tricks and he didn't. He'd proved it getting in distance like that.

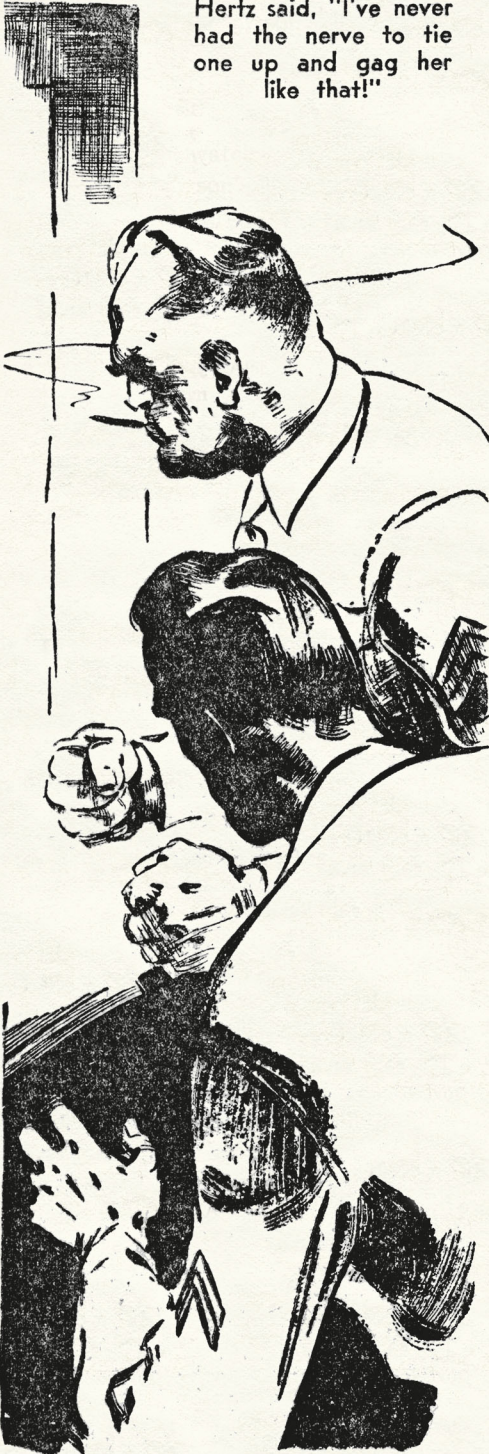
He said again: "I'm not fooling. I want that money."

"You won't get it from me," I said, and grabbed the gun.

I caught it with my right hand and got it by the cylinder. If he'd had it on full cock, he still could have shot, but if he was planning on using it either double action or as a threat, I had him stymied. But I didn't take any chances. I turned it down and away from him and at the same time caught the wrist of his flash light arm with my left hand.



Hertz said, "I've never had the nerve to tie one up and gag her like that!"



And then I jerked him toward me, rolling back on the bed as I did.

And I shouted: "Hey, boys! Help! Help!"

My man was on top of me, trying to get both gun and flashlight back in control. He wasn't making a sound. He was as strong as an ox and I wasn't holding him five cents worth. He broke his wrist free from me and flailed down at me with the flash, and it hurt like the devil even if it only got me on the shoulder. He was wrenching at the gun at the same time and it was only a question of seconds before he had that free, too. I was on my back and at a disadvantage. I was wide awake by that time and all that, but a man isn't right going into battle as fast as that.

I kept shouting and then I heard the sergeant bawl out: "Hold 'em, Danny!"

My man got away then. He slugged me with the flash and got me a glancing blow across the chin, and I let go with everything. I went back on the bed, dropping the hold I had on the gun, and he jerked that away and slugged me with that, too. It hit me on the forearm—I'd got that up in front of my face as protection—so it didn't do much damage.

Then he was out the window.

I DIDN'T see much but I saw a gleam in the moonlight that wasn't from a gun. That was all. I heard two sets of feet pounding away from the building, though, and then the sergeant was in with me. I could just see his white shadow as it came through my bedroom door—he was in shirts and shorts like I was.

I heard Moynahan coming behind him, and then the sergeant shouted: "Where is he, Danny? You hurt, boy?" all in a breath.

I said: "Out the window!"

He came up to me and leaned out, and then I heard him grunt. I realized what he was going to do and said. "Hey! No!" But I was too late. That Magnum of mine boomed out like a cannon, and then the sergeant was out of the window.

I was out of bed and at the window at the same time Moynahan made it from the bedroom door. We saw the sergeant, crouching like an ape, over something on the ground.

He called back: "I got him, Danny boy. Right center. I got him in the back of the neck. That gun of yours shoots high."

Like a fool I said: "You're not used to it, that's all."

And then: "Who is it?"

It was still bright moonlight and I could see him turn the man over. He said: "Dunno! Nobody I ever seen before."

Moynahan and I went out the window then. We got to the sergeant about the same time people from some cabins down the line got there, but they were dressed. For that matter, I remembered the noise they'd been making about the time I'd gone to sleep.

Then I looked at the man on the ground, and saw the sergeant had got the wrong one. The man who'd battled me had gone out the window, but there'd been two of them who'd run from there. This was the other. He was nobody I'd ever seen before—a thin young fellow of maybe twenty-eight or thirty. Thick black hair that showed because his hat had fallen from his head. A mean squinty face that looked vicious even in death.

And he was as dead as a man could be. The whole front of his throat had gone with the Magnum slug.

The drunks from down the line were with us then and a couple of them were

pretty sad about it. I said to the soberest one of the rest:

"Would you mind calling the cops, mister?"

He said: "Hell, no! I'm a cop myself."

I looked closer and saw he was the same county cop who'd been there earlier. He'd just put his county car out of sight and started on a party.

Chantilly's that kind of place.

IT WAS cut and dried and I had two witnesses. Both the sergeant and the corporal swore up and down that they were awake and heard the entire thing. They claimed they heard a man come through the window and that then they heard me ask him what he thought he was doing. Then they heard the man tell me to quiet down or he'd fill me full of lead. Then they heard a short struggle and heard me shout for help. They'd come running, then.

They'd asked me where the man went and I'd told them he'd escaped through the window. The sergeant had picked up my gun and shouted to the man to halt, and had fired when the man kept running.

And he'd connected and there was the proof on the ground in front of them for everybody to see.

I went along with the gag. The sergeant spoke first and when it came Moynahan's turn at bat he held the same yarn right to the line.

The cop and his pal, who it turned out was on the same party, finally let us go back in the cabin, but they warned us to stay right there until morning when they'd have help. They made a lot of talk about getting the sheriff out there right then but the sergeant stepped on that.

He said: "He'll love that, boys. If you wake him up and tell him a man was shot and killed while you were

putting on a party while you were supposed to be investigating a murder case, he'll just love it. He won't like it in the morning but he'll like it a damn' sight less tonight."

We sent the cabin manager for more whiskey and spent the rest of the night sitting up and talking it over. I kept my state gun permit out, also, but I hid my private license and police cards under the rug in the front room. The cops had asked me for my permit but that was all, and I couldn't see any reason for letting them know who I was at that stage in the game.

It was just getting good by that time.

CHAPTER V

The Race



BY THAT time I had an idea who was after the money that was supposed to have been in the brief case, but there was no way to prove the thought. And it didn't make sense, not the way it held together. And it didn't make any more in the morning, when law and order in great bunches descended on us. There were even military police and the sergeant and corporal's C. O. This last was a major named Johnson, and a swell guy. The sergeant had got himself a razor from somewhere and he and Moynahan were all spruced up, and outside of slight signs of bloodshot eyes and unsteady hands, both of them looked fine.

The major said: "You boys are mixed up with the civil authorities now, it seems. I imagine you'll want an extension of leave."

They both said that that was the

idea, but they said it in a military manner. He said, very sternly:

"Very well! But I'm taking this time out on your records. And, sergeant!"

Sergeant Hertz said: "Yes, sir."

"I wouldn't be so handy with a friend's gun the next time. I imagine Mr. Kennedy is well able to handle his own battles."

"Yes, sir."

The major kept looking at me as if he was waiting for me to speak. He looked familiar but I couldn't place him.

Then he said: "And you, Mr. Kennedy! Don't you recognize me?"

"I don't, major."

He said: "I'm the man who you appealed to, when your enlistment was turned down. I was in charge of recruiting for that district at the time."

I remembered then. The doctors had said a lot about my having a heart murmur and too old for active service and a lot of things like that, and I'd gone to the head man and tried to go over them. I'd got exactly nowhere, but the man in charge had been interested in the detective business and we'd had quite a chat about it. It was just one of those things that happen—running into somebody you'd met before when you least expect it.

I said: "I'm unofficial down here, major."

"I quite understand," he told me, looking over at the police. "I quite understand. Anything I can do to help, why, let me know."

I gave him thanks.

He left, and the sergeant looked at me bug-eyed. "You know him, hunh?"

"Just met him, like he said."

"A swell guy."

I said: "If the doctors were like him, I'd be in the army now."

"I'd like to have you in my platoon, Danny. Ho, ho."

"Thanks, sarge."

"I'd drill the pants right off you."

Moynahan said: "That taking the pants off makes me think. When these cops get through with us, we'd better take our pants off and put on bathing suits and go swimming. We still got that bet, sarge."

"What bet?"

"That you'd beat me swimming. Remember?"

"What the hell you talking about?"

"That's right, sarge," I said. "You and the corporal have got five bucks apiece down on it. I'm holding stakes."

"Oh sure, sure," he said hastily. And if the look he gave me meant a thing I'd have hated to have been in his squad right then. He'd been trying to forget the bet, that was plain, and he'd been hoping we would too.

It was ten before they let us go and we went over to the pavilion to have a little rest, before calling a cab to go back to town. And it was there that Joe Tompkins found us.

He said: "You'd be Mr. Kennedy, sir."

"That's right."

"And these are the two men with you?"

"What difference does it make?"

He said: "I'm sorry," but the look on his face said he meant he was sore. "I'm sorry, Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Whettler sent me out for you in the station agon. My orders were to take you and your friends where you wanted to go."

"That'll be in town."

Moynahan said: "Hey! We can't go yet. What about that bet?"

Hertz said: "We can do the rest of our partying in where the lights are bright, kid. Why not leave that bet ride 'til next time?"

I'd been thinking. There'd been two attempts already at getting the fifty

thousand dollars that hadn't been in the brief case, and Chantilly was a better spot for a third to be made than the town itself.

I said: "That's right, mister. You thank Mr. Whettler and tell him we're going to stay out here a while longer."

"In that case I'm to leave the station wagon for you. It's nothing but one of the company cars, you understand."

"Where'll I leave it when I go back to town?"

He said: "Oh no doubt you'll contact Mr. Whettler, sir. He'll tell you what to do with it."

He left, and left me puzzling over the dirty grin he'd left with me before going. And then I got it. Marion Whettler had told him about my calling on her the evening before, and he was sore because I'd accused her of playing around with him.

I thought that was the answer but I wasn't too sure.

WE WERE deciding the conditions of the race when the next caller came. Marion Whettler, no less. She came to our booth before I saw her, and Moynahan looked up and almost upset the table getting to his feet.

"'tis an angel," he said.

Marion did look like a dream. She had the walk that a girl who ever worked in a show never forgets. She was slim and blonde and pretty. She wore clothes that cost a small fortune and the rings and bracelet she wore cost one that wasn't small.

She said: "Danny! I want to speak to you."

I said: "Sure, Marion. Sit down."

"Privately."

Her eyes were snapping and I knew her temper. I slid out of the booth and took her to one across the way.

I said: "Now give it to me slow, kid."



"You told me he was having you get divorce evidence against me."

"I did not."

"You led me to believe that."

"Maybe you just took it that way, kid. Think back. Did I say a word about getting divorce evidence against you?"

I couldn't see a thing but that silhouette and that gun.

"I'll give it to you any way I please," she told me. "You told me last night you were working for John."

"Well?"

"You asked me about Tony Forbes."

"Well?"

"You asked me, or you cracked wise, about Joe Tompkins."

"Well?"

"Don't just sit there and say 'well' at me, you rat. I want to know the truth."

"You're asking the questions, kid. I'm just answering 'em. I told you I was working for John and I am. That's all."

"You asked me about Harry Lewis."

"I did not. I asked you who you were playing around with and you gave me that name. I'll know more about that this afternoon, too, Marion."

"You just the same as said that you were trying to get evidence against me."

"I did not. I'm working for John on a different matter."

"How am I concerned in that?"

"I don't know, kid. Maybe you're not. I'm not passing any bets, that's all."

SHE started to cry. She reached out, took my hand and said: "Danny, Danny! Why do you do things like this to me? I went to John this morning, when he came back from here and asked him about it. He as much as told me he wasn't planning on divorcing me."

"I don't know that he is. He's probably figuring a separation allowance as better for you. That way he can keep some hold on you. Money's the only thing that'll hold you and you and I know it. John isn't the man to hold you when you want to go. He as much as told me you weren't getting along and that he'd let you go, but we both know he'll do it in his own way."

"I thought you were on my side, Danny."

I said: "Look, kid. If you're playing with Joe Tompkins, drop him and fast. That's a tip. Here's another one. If you're interested in that pay-off that was made last night, get out and get out fast. Go to South America or some place. Some place where you'll be hard

to find and hard to extradite. If I wasn't a pal, I wouldn't tell you this."

"I don't understand, Danny."

"I hope you don't."

"Why—what has Joe Tompkins got to do with me?"

I said: "He was supposed to guard fifty thousand dollars that was in a brief case. The pay-off money. When the pay-off was made, the case was empty. It puts Joe Tompkins in the honey spot, that's all."

"You mean he took the money out?"

"That's it."

"I can't believe that."

"Forbes got the money from the banks, kid. He wouldn't go to make a contact with no money to pay off with. I can tell you that. I might be fool enough to try a caper like that but not Forbes."

"If Joe didn't take it, who did?"

I SAID: "Well, it was left unguarded while he went in and gave a message to John B. That was all. Forbes went right out and picked up the case from the floor of the car, and when he did, it was empty."

"But how do you know that, Danny? John told me about it this morning. He said the blackmailers killed Tony and ran away with the brief case, before you could get near enough to stop them."

I said: "Sometimes John doesn't know just everything in the book, kid. Maybe it wasn't quite that way."

She said: "Maybe it was this way, Danny. And maybe I'll tell John this and see what he thinks of it. Maybe you got there in time and took the case and took the money? What will John think of that?"

"He wouldn't believe it."

"He would if I told him."

I said: "Listen, Marion, you'd better run along. John would have be-

lieved, you a while back, but not now. John isn't stupid, kid, and you've played him that way. Do I make sense or not?"

"Not to me."

"You think it over. And tell the bald-headed guy that the next time he comes around to come with help. That mean anything, either?"

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

Again I told her I hoped she was telling the truth. It was about an even bet, at that, that she was. She said she'd see me again and left, and I went back to my two soldiers and the plans for the contest.

Moynahan said: "My God, Danny! Why didn't you tell me you knew people like that?"

"You never asked me."

"When I get out of the army I'm getting into your racket. If there's women like that in it, that's where I belong."

Sergeant Hertz said: "What about this big blonde right here? The waitress? The dream girl? The fat one? The lotsa momma, you been raving about?"

"Oh, her!" said Moynahan.

I said: "Let's get on with the race."

WE FINALLY decided it was to be out to a mooring buoy about a hundred yards from the end of the pier and once around it and back to the pier itself. The sergeant held out for a shorter distance and the corporal wanted it for a half mile, so that seemed a fair average. The sergeant would have dropped the whole idea in a second, but he couldn't. He'd have been kidded crazy when he went back to the post and he knew it.

He did make one condition that was fair, and I held him up on it.

He said: "Now, listen! I haven't swum since I been in the army and that's been twenty-six years and over."

"One month over," Moynahan agreed.

"So it's only fair that I get a chance to sort of practice. That's only right."

"If I don't practice, you hadn't ought to," Moynahan objected.

I said: "That's fair, Moynahan. What the hell! D'ya want a cinch?"

"Certainly."

I ordered another drink and we argued it and decided the sergeant was within his rights. Moynahan could also practice if he wanted to do it—that was the decision.

And then I said: "And we'd better get at it. Or you guys will be too drunk to see the buoy. I don't want to have to chase you clear across the river to declare one of you the winner."

We had another drink while we discussed the proper time for the race to be held and I looked up from the table to see the old gentleman who'd rented us the cabin. He was so mad he was hopping up and down, and he had the same county cop who'd been so much in my hair along with him.

"You owe me sixty dollars," the old boy said. "I rent my cabins to decent people. I don't rent 'em to have 'em torn apart."

"Are you nuts, pop?" I asked.

The cop said: "Now listen, Kennedy. You're in the wrong this time. You've been mixed up in two killings since you been out here. You had an out on each of them, or you have up to this time. But you raised hell with that cabin and you're going to pay for it if I have to swear out a charge of malicious destruction against you myself."

I said I didn't know what he was talking about and he suggested that we all go and take a look. That all we had

to do was look and that we'd see soon what he was talking about.

So we all trooped over to forty-six.

AND the place was a wreck. I was surprised the old man was only wanting sixty dollars for the damage. The mattresses in both bedrooms had been slit in a dozen places, and the stuffing was over the floors. The rugs and carpets were completely up, and where they'd been tacked down, they'd been ripped loose from the floor. The woodwork in the kitchenette—the built-in stuff that could have concealed a hiding place, was pulled free of the walls. The floor in the bathroom was torn up around the basin, and I remembered there was a little hole in the floor there where money might have been stuffed down and hidden.

The chairs and davenport in the front room were overstuffed, but they hadn't been damaged as much as they could have been. They were just tipped on their face, with their springs and upholstery torn loose. All in all there wasn't a possible hiding place in the house that hadn't been ripped open and searched, and I wouldn't have tried to repair the damage for three times what the old man wanted.

And I said so. He explained with: "I got insurance against ordinary damage, Mr. Kennedy, but it won't cover all of this. That's why I set that figure."

"And you're going to pay it, mister," said the county man.

"I'm going to do better than that," I said. "I'm going to not only pay the sixty asked but I'm going to tack another hundred with it. How's that? Fair enough?"

I thought for a while the old boy was going to kiss me. He didn't know it was going on John B. Whettler's bill.

CHAPTER VI

A Fair Verdict



"DIDN'T know who'd done the prowling but I knew it had been done before Marion Whettler had talked to me. The job had taken a couple of hours, and she hadn't been gone more than half that.

Of course I still had ideas about my bald-headed man and I was about ready to name him.

The sergeant got into a bathing suit, and while he had swell arms and legs and shoulders, his paunch was going to be a handicap. I was too polite to say anything, but not so Corporal Moynahan.

He snickered and said: "I should give you odds, sarge. You shouldn't ought to have to tote a watermelon with you."

"Watermelon?"

"What you ate, I mean."

The sergeant reddened and snarled something under his breath. And then dived off one of the boards, with one of the damndest belly whoppers I ever saw. He almost drowned before he got his breath back, and then he started swimming in the style my old Aunt Emma used. Dog fashion, trying to hold his head a foot above the water. If Moynahan could swim at all he had a cinch, that was out and open. The sergeant paddled around a bit and came out to rest—he said he came out for a drink—and we and about a dozen small boys were all at the end of the pier when I heard somebody shouting my name and turned and saw John B. bearing down on me.

He said: "I've got another note.

We've got to put up fifty thousand more, and we've got to do it and make the pay-off tonight."

"Have you told the other guys?"

"I have. They're sore as hell. So am I."

"I don't blame you."

The sergeant started toward us and John B.'s eyes bugged out. "Is—is that the sergeant?"

"Sure."

"Hell's bells," said John B. "I thought I was putting on a pod, but that man can give me cards and spades."

"I bet you could beat him swimming, too. We're just starting to put on the race."

"Why fool around, Danny? This thing has got to stop. Why fool around with damn' fool swimming races."

The sergeant and Moynahan were with us then. I said: "The boys have got a bet on it. And I'm still waiting for a wire."

"I brought that out to you. I asked at the desk if there was anything for you."

I opened the wire and read: NO HENRY LEWIS AT ADDRESS GIVEN. KNOW NOTHING OF HIM THERE. MANY IN CITY DIRECTORY. SHALL I CHECK THESE? FIFTY DOLLARS FOUND FOR YOU THAT WOMAN NAMED HAS ACCOUNT IN EXCESS HUNDRED THOUSAND IN BANK NAMED. GLAD TO OBLIGE AND AM CHARGING YOU. HELP AGAIN IF NEEDED.

I said: "It's broken, J. B. All that's left is putting the pieces together."

"Do it then," he said. "I'm not going to put good money after bad if I can stop it. And neither are Duffy or Martins or Sheeley."

I said: "I'm glad of one thing."

"What's that, Danny?"

I SAID: "That something besides a gun shines in the moonlight. Get your gang together and get 'em out here, say at eight, tonight. It started here and it'll be a lot better if it's settled here. And get that fifty grand together."

"I thought you were breaking it."

"You'll need it to pay off the cops, maybe," I told him. "If it goes wrong, and there's a bad break, you've got a chance of buying off the county boys where you couldn't buy off in town. I've got a notion that one lad, the one that's been in your hair and mine, would sell his soul for the price of a good dinner."

"Danny! Handle it so there'll be no fuss."

I said: "I'm only one man, J. B. I'll do the best I can."

I wasn't hoping for much at that. I knew then what I had to deal with.

HERTZ had geared himself up with two good slugs of whiskey and Moynahan was getting into a bathing suit. I took a handful of quarters and got together with half a dozen of the kids that hung around the pier—the fanciest swimmers of the lot. The bunch of them were like little mink in the water.

I said: "I want to play a joke on my pals. Get the idea?"

They grinned and agreed. They knew about the race—they'd watched the sergeant work out for it and they'd all heard us talk it over.

I said: "Just slow the corporal up. Play games with the guy. I don't want you to drown him, but you do everything but that. Get it?"

This time they did more than grin. They clutched a quarter apiece and told me for twice that they would drown him.

Then Moynahan came out, and he

was a nice built guy in a bathing suit. Even if he couldn't swim a lick, he was a cinch to beat poor Hertz. He slid into the water and splashed around a bit and I gave my kids their final orders. "Don't make it too open," I said. "I want a close finish. But I want the guy with the bay window to win. That's all."

They all nodded and swam out a little way from the pier and deployed for interference. And I got Moynahan and Hertz together at the end of the pier.

And shouted "Go!"

Moynahan went off with a splash that almost washed the sergeant under. He was ten feet ahead by the time the sergeant got under way, but I didn't worry too much when I saw his style. He didn't swim like my Aunt Emma—dog fashion, or the sergeant style. He took it like my Aunt Katie used to—breast stroke, with his feet splashing like a stern wheeler on the river. He covered territory but not fast. He made about three feet to the sergeant's two, and I decided my crew of kids would have no trouble in slowing him down.

By that time we had an audience. Moynahan had been talking up the race since we'd been there the night before, and a lot of people were out at the end of the pier watching them. Then I heard Moynahan give a strangled sort of sound and saw him go clear under, but in retreat. His splashing feet went out of sight, and he came back toward the pier as he followed them under water. The sergeant was even with him when he came up, and he lost another fifteen feet by starting swimming the wrong way, back toward the pier.

One of the audience, a sour looking old gal, said: "I do believe those men are drunk. What can they be thinking of?"

I had an idea that Moynahan was

thinking of murder and that the sergeant was thinking of whether he could last the distance. I said nothing though, because right at that time Marion Whettler came steaming through the crowd.

She said: "Danny! Danny! Never mind what foolishness you're doing. I've got to talk to you. Right now."

I said: "Shut up now! This is the battle of the ages. This is sheer drama, kid."

"Danny! Please! You've got to help me."

HER voice sounded as if she meant it and I looked away from my racers. "What's the matter now?"

"It's Joe! I can't find him."

"Joe Tompkins?"

"Of course, you fool."

She saw me grin and caught herself. "You knew it was Joe all the time."

"I suspected it."

"But where is he?"

I said: "I imagine your bald-headed pal got a notion I was telling him the truth, finally. That's all."

"Danny!"

"Let me alone for now. I'll talk to you a little later."

She was grabbing at my arm but I let that go by the board. I turned just in time to see Moynahan rounding the pier ten feet in front of the sergeant—and then to see Moynahan do his underwater trick again. The kids had got him by the feet and hauled down. The sergeant made it around the pier before Moynahan came up, ten feet behind where he'd gone under, and this time Moynahan was groggy. He splashed around and a couple of my kids swam in and held him up until he recovered enough to carry on by his own. The sergeant was twenty feet away from the buoy by then, on the home stretch and

coming, not strong but steady.

I was really admiring the kids' technique. You couldn't put the finger on the one that did a thing at any time. They were all whooping and yelling and diving and swimming under water, and they were as much around the sergeant as they were around Moynahan. They'd have given the sergeant a tow if I hadn't told them not to make it too apparent.

Then Marion swung me around again and said: "I want to know what you're going to do?"

"Nothing now."

"But Joe may be in trouble."

"He is."

"But Danny!"

I said: "But Danny hell! Leave me alone. I'm the referee in this. I'll talk to you as soon as this is done. I promise you. I'll take you over to my cabin and we'll have a heart to heart talk about it. You and me. And now take your hands off me and let me watch this."

Moynahan was coming up behind the sergeant like a river boat coming up to a scow. And then the sergeant's wild foot work came to the front. He kicked his legs every which way as he swam, anyway, and I don't think what he did was intentional—but it was effective. He lashed out with one big foot just as Moynahan gave a big sweep with his arms that put him ahead a foot or more, and that foot caught Moynahan right in the face.

DOWN he went and that time the kids really had to hold him up. I'll always think he was out cold for a minute. But when he came out of it, he was really sore. He'd been taking it like the joke it was before—he'd even been laughing with the kids—but he thought the sergeant was playing against the rules. The kick was out of bounds.

He raised himself in the water and shouted: "You brats keep away from me or I'll drown the all of you."

And started out again. And he'd scared the kids. They kept away.

It was a fair race by that time. The sergeant was about twenty yards from the pier end and Moynahan was half that far again in back. It made their handicap about even. The sergeant was red in the face and blowing like a leaky boiler, but Moynahan's duckings hadn't done him any good and that kick in the puss had slowed him. It was really exciting, but I'd have enjoyed it a whole lot more if Marion Whettler hadn't been hanging onto my arm and trying to twist me around to talk with her. They came in and they were neck and neck at the finish. Moynahan was coming up fast and the sergeant's eyes were popping from his head. I was bending over the end of the pier, just a couple of feet above the water, and they reached up for it at the same time. Then the sergeant, who was all in from that last sprint, went under the water just as Moynahan caught the edge of the pier.

He said: "I win."

The sergeant came up, weak and spluttering, and when he'd taken hold I gave them the verdict.

"A fair tie," I said. "And boy! What a contest."

"Tie hell!" said Moynahan. "He was under water when I finished."

"He touched the planking of the pier at the same time you did," I said. "There was nothing in the rules that said he had to finish on top, was there?"

"I been jobbed," said Moynahan. But my God, if it comes to that, I guess I was under water more time than I was on top, all through the race."

Then he looked up and saw Marion Whettler, still holding to my arm. He said: "Lady, I'll be right with you. I

got to change back to my working clothes."

The sergeant hadn't said a word until that time. He hadn't breath enough left to speak. He looked up at me and said:

"A fair verdict, Danny boy. And a fair verdict deserves fair treatment."

I said: "I know. You guys get dressed and then come over to the cabin. The old man's had time to replace the stuff that was damaged and to put the rest of it together."

"I'll be right over," said Moynahan.

The sergeant said nothing, but nothing was needed. After what he'd gone through, he'd head for a drink like a homing pigeon.

The Truth At Last

CHAPTER VII



MARION said, as we went through the door: "Now Danny! I demand to know what you're going to do."

"Wait a minute," I said, and went through the place, closing windows and pulling down shades. I took a clothes-line which somebody had thoughtfully left hanging in the kitchenette and then went back in the front room.

"Want a drink first?" I asked.

"First?"

"Sure. Before."

"Before what?"

"Before I tie you up with this piece of rope and put you away where you'll be safe."

"Have you lost your mind, Danny Kennedy?"

I caught her arm and twisted it behind her so she faced the davenport.

I heaved her down on that, fast, so she wouldn't have a chance to sing out for help. I got a twist of the rope around her wrists and then got a hand up and slid it between her face and the pillow and I dragged it back just in time to keep her from sinking her teeth in it.

I said: "Marion! I'll sure as hell lay you cold if you make me do it."

I let up the pressure on her for a second to see if she'd learned reason and she started to scream. But it was just a start. I caught her by the hair and twisted her head and clipped her on the chin, not hard but hard enough to put her out for a minute or two.

And by that time I had her feet tied together and had part of a pillow case wadded into her mouth and tied with the rest of it.

She woke up looking anything but like the pretty kid she'd been when I'd started the rough house.

I said: "You asked for it, kid, and you got it. I told you I wasn't fooling and I meant it. Now here we go."

She rolled her eyes and I didn't bother to answer the question she was asking, silently, because she couldn't talk over the gag. I put her in the closet in the back bedroom, sitting her on the floor and making her as comfortable as I could.

I said: "You're going to have a long wait until eight o'clock, kid, but you asked for it. You wouldn't take a tip—you wanted to bull it through. So you take it the hard way."

I'd have died that second if looks could kill; and I didn't much care. I'd liked Marion and roughing her around wasn't my idea of fun.

I GOT my tie, which was under my ear from the struggle, straightened, and I had the davenport looking as

though nothing had happened, when the boys came in.

Hertz steaming through to the kitchenette for the drink he'd certainly earned, and Moynahan with both eyes open for Marion.

"The kid, Danny," he said. "Where's the angel child?"

"Wait a minute," I told him.

Hertz bawled out: "You guys want one, too?"

I said: "Sure."

I took 'em into the back bedroom when we had a drink in our hands and opened the closet door. Marion glared up at us. I didn't say a word, just closed the door and led the way back into the front room. And watched Moynahan, who I was afraid might fancy himself as the defender of American womanhood.

Hertz said: "My God, Danny! There's been a lot of 'em I'd have liked to've tied up and gagged but I never had the nerve to do it."

Moynahan had made fists of his hand and was breathing hard. He said: "Gun or no gun, Danny, I can take you. Let that woman loose."

I said: "Moynahan, that girl stays like that. She's got three men killed so far, and one of them happened to be a good guy. If I keep her locked in and handy, it may stop more trouble. It's only until eight—we'll have the blow-off then."

"Are you crazy?"

"You've seen me up to now. Do I act like I don't know what I'm doing?"

Hertz said: "He's right, Moynahan. I know more about this set-up than you do. He's playing it this way because he thinks it's best."

"But you can't leave her like that. Suppose she promised she'd be good or something like that?"

I laughed and let it go at that, and he stared at me for a moment and said:

"I guess you know what you're doing. But I'll be damned if I like it, mister."

"It used to be Danny."

He waited for a second and then grinned. He said: "Okay, Danny! I'll play along."

I sent him down to the cabin manager to promote more liquor while the sergeant went over to the pavilion for soda to mix it with. In spite of what they'd said, I thought it best to stick around and see that a kind heart didn't free the lady.

THE four of them came in together, Whettler, Duffy, Martins, and Sheeley. The two soldiers and I were in the front room, and I'd put the boys where I wanted them to stay that way. I had a notion there was going to be rough stuff, and they were both husky men who'd be a help if they were set right.

I said hello to the company and asked Whettler if he'd help me tend bar, and we went out in the kitchenette and I closed the door behind us.

I said: "Still got that gun, J. B.?"

"Why, sure."

"Give it to me."

He handed it over without a word and I put it on the drainboard and started making the drinks. I said: "This is going to hurt, J. B. I'm telling you now. No matter what happens, play it my way. It's your only out."

"What d'ya mean, Danny?"

"I'm going to stick your pals. I'm going to try and throw you clear."

"On the priority business, you mean? Because we worked that beating the priority thing?"

"Partly because of that. I'm going to try and stick 'em on murder and keep the priority angle out of it. I don't know that I can."

"I'll go down with 'em, Danny boy. Can't you see that?"

I said: "You beat the priority thing

to build houses the government needed. It was one time in your life you weren't working for John B. Whettler. These guys were working for themselves. For a profit. It makes a difference. And you can't smooth murder down in any way that I can take it and like it. You're not in that part of it, though it stems from the priority racket."

He started to say something else but I handed him the tray and picked up the gun he'd given me.

"You serve the drinks," I told him.

He did, and while he did I went to Moynahan. "Take this," I said, handing him the gun. "Don't use it unless you have to and remember who's on our side."

He started to put it away and I said: "Keep it handy. If you need it, you'll need it fast."

I was making no attempt at being quiet about the gun business, and Duffy and Martins and Sheeley were staring at me. They were holding glasses, though, which was as I'd planned it. It kept them anchored—kept a hand away from a gun. Because a man will usually hold a glass with the same hand he shoots with.

I said: "That's right, gentlemen. Here's the pay-off. Sergeant, will you go in and bring out what I've got in the closet?"

HERTZ lumbered into the other room scuffling back with Marion. He had to hold her—she was cramped from sitting in the closet for so long.

I said: "Just dump her on the floor, sarge. She's as safe there as anywhere."

Whettler had his mouth open and his face had turned from red to purple. He finally managed to say:

"Kennedy! That's Marion! What's the reason for this?"

I said: "Play along, mister, until you hear the rest of it. You, Sheeley, were

the guy that came in and tried to get the brief case away from me. I saw you the second time, when you came through my bedroom window. The moon was bright and that bald top of yours stuck out like a sore thumb. You've either killed Joe Tompkins or you've got him hidden some place. I'll find out. Martins and Duffy were in it with you. The guy the sergeant killed worked for Duffy, and I've found that you and Martins are pals. I've got no proof that he's in it, yet, but that'll come along with the rest of it."

Whettler blurted out: "But Marion! But my wife! What . . . ?"

I said: "She's in it, too. She's the one that double-crossed 'em all. Even Tompkins. She's been playing around with Tompkins, but you told me yourself that Tompkins knew nothing of the pay-off out here. She did. You didn't tell her, so she learned it from one of these pals of yours. She'll spit it out now, because they got away with her precious Joe and she's ready to turn on them. And besides, it'll get her an easier rap, if she turns state's evidence and she's smart enough girl to know it."

I didn't—that was something I was just hoping for.

Sheeley, the bald-headed one, said: "This is ridiculous. There is no proof. Why, my own money was in that brief case."

I said: "Hell! It was just a way to get another twenty thousand from Whettler. More, if there was another pay-off. And I'll bank right now that it was Mrs. Whettler that gave you the idea. You can't tell me she didn't know about the priority deal. Did she know about it, J. B.?"

"I—I guess I told her," he said.

I said: "That's all. I'm prepared to prove, Sheeley, that you were the guy that broke in this cabin. Three of us saw you. The two soldiers and myself.

Mrs. Whettler will turn state's evidence against you. You can go down by yourself but I don't think so. The man the sergeant killed worked for Duffy—the county cops found that out. I haven't had time to work Martins in it but I will."

I WAS banking on Martins and I was right. He was the kind that would turn on his own brother if it paid off.

He said shrilly: "I had nothing to do with it. I knew about it, yes. But I had nothing to do with it. I will testify to that in court."

Sheeley used more brains than I gave him credit for. He tossed his glass of whiskey at Moynahan, who was the only one with a gun in sight. Moynahan ducked, naturally, and Sheeley reached for his hip pocket and had his gun out and swinging before I got my own gun in the clear. I shot, and the big Magnum slug caught him in the side and spun him, and whether he meant to pull the trigger or whether it was shock that tightened his finger I'll never know.

Anyway, his bullet caught Martins in the face and right above his left eye. Duffy had his gun out and was shooting, and Moynahan was mopping at the whiskey in his eyes and shooting back. Whettler stood up and started toward Marion, who was on the floor in the middle of things. He was getting into the line of fire and I did the only thing I could do to stop him in time. I shot him below the knee, figuring a shattered leg was better for him than a couple of slugs through the middle, and he was a cinch for those if he kept on coming.

He went down and started to crawl toward Marion, but then Duffy slammed his free hand around his belly, where one or more of Moynahan's shots had been aimed, and started to bend over.

And he was a bad one. Whettler was up and across Marion's lower body, trying to shield her, but her head and shoulders were in the open. Duffy deliberately put the muzzle of his gun against her head and pulled the trigger and then Duffy fell from his chair and across both Whettler and Marion.

I looked for the sergeant and saw him by the door, where he'd stepped back after dropping Marion. He still hadn't realized it had happened. Moynahan was leaning against the back of his chair, looking as though he was going to be sick at any minute.

I said: "You hit, fella?"

He nodded and made a motion toward his right shoulder, and the sergeant was over him like a mother hen over a chick.

"Now boy, now boy," he said. "Show it to me. We'll take care of you."

I pulled Duffy, or what was left of him, from Whettler and Marion. Whettler had his arms around her and was crying.

I said: "It's better this way, J. B. She'd have done twenty to life for murder at the best, and she may have got the rope. Remember this. It was over a blackmail scheme and they confessed. All three of them. We're all witnesses to that."

He said: "I'll tell the truth. It was over that priority thing and I'll say so. I'll tell the truth."

I said: "Well, maybe it's for the best at that."

IT WORKED out. Moynahan had a bullet through the fleshy part of the shoulder. It didn't touch a bone and it was a small calibered, so it didn't bother him hardly at all.

Whettler had a leg that would make him hobble for the rest of his life, but he agreed with me that a slug there was better than a couple in the mid-

dle, and he'd have taken them there if he'd walked into that cross fire.

The others were dead—which was fair enough for me.

And Joe Tompkins was locked in Sheeley's basement, and they'd tortured him a bit to make him tell where the missing fifty thousand was.

Of course Marion had it. She'd been with him in the station wagon while he was waiting outside for Forbes to make the pay-off. During the time when the boys and I were getting acquainted, supposedly, with Whettler and Forbes and his pals. She'd driven out and met him there, and she'd switched brief cases when he went in to give Forbes his cue.

We found the money in the bottom of one of her dresser drawers—she hadn't had time to send it up to her city bank. She'd been holding out dough right and left against the time Whettler would divorce her—fifty dollars had found that out from a bank clerk up there. She'd tried to stall me with a false name for a sweetheart, trying to keep suspicion away from Joe Tompkins. She'd known Sheeley and Duffy and Martins from the times they'd done business with Whettler, and she'd framed the play all through, or I'll always think she did.

At least Tompkins told us that what little he'd done had been under her instructions.

The man that the sergeant had killed from my window had been the one who'd done for Forbes. He'd shot him with a twenty-two rifle from the underbrush siding the grove, and he'd been acting under orders from Duffy and the crowd. He and Sheeley had tried to get the money back from me—not knowing Mrs. Whettler already had it.

It was a nice mix-up and practically nobody won.

WHETTLETT did as he said he'd do. He pled guilty to evasion of the priority thing and took two years for it, but he got his contract through before the thing came up to trial. He blamed himself for everything—which is something I didn't.

He didn't blame me, which did surprise me. Anything but. Nor did he blame the boys. He gave both of them a thousand dollars and he paid my bill without a protest.

And, it made me feel a little rotten about the way I'd handled it, just before he went to jail he gave me the convertible.

He said: "Danny! You said you always wanted a car like that so take it. I won't need it where I'm going."

I said I was sorry.

He said: "It's just as well. It'll be a lesson to a bunch of others, anyway. And with Marion turning out that way, I don't much care."

I figured he'd get over that part of it. He wasn't the first to be fooled by a woman, nor would he be the last.

Moynahan expressed the last thought perfectly. He and the sergeant and I were sitting in the Caddy, drinking up part of their thousand dollars a piece.

He said: "Y'know, Danny! Sometimes I think I'm better off with the bums I manage to run down. They ain't pretty and they know it. They're grateful when a guy like me gives 'em a play. But the pretty ones, that's different. They act like they're doing you a favor instead of you doing them one."

"I pick mine in between," Sergeant Hertz stated grandly. Not good, not bad. That way I don't get in no trouble."

Moynahan said: "I may be better off picking the homely ones but I'll break down and admit something. I'd rather have a pretty one and trouble than a homely one and not."

AMERICA'S FIRST PHONY CURRENCY

THE Civil War was occupying the minds of most people when the first counterfeit greenback in the United States made its appearance. Up until then, the citizenry had looked askance upon folding money and had preferred to deal in cartwheels and gold coin-of-the-realm.

Perhaps this was in the minds of members of the notorious Johnson family, who perpetrated the forgery. The bill was one imitating the \$10 issue of 1862 and was circulated in the same year. The forgery escaped immediate detection, because nobody seemed to care much about inspecting currency closely.

By an odd quirk of Fate, the queer makers exposed themselves, by bringing their internecine fights to light. Here's how it happened:

The Johnson family, as tricky an outfit of thieves as ever jostled with authorities, resided in Lawrence, Indiana. They were so tricky that they tried to unload their backers, one Pete McCartney, after the spurious \$10 plate had been made.

But McCartney became suspicious and one evening stole the plate. The next morning it was back in its accustomed place in the Johnson hideaway, and none of the Johnsons was the wiser. McCartney had had an electrotype of the plate made!

And luck had more than been with him. Believe it or not—and McCartney had trouble believing it himself—the electrotype proved to be an improvement over the original plate. McCartney was quick to employ this advantage. He bade goodbye to the Johnsons and, without telling them of his plans, set up shop in Indianapolis, where he work-

ed off his own series. Over \$100,000 in spurious \$10 bills was placed in circulation within a short time.

However, word got around of McCartney's trick and, as so much of that type of information does, it reached the ears of the Secret Service where the authorities, led by Major Woods swung into action.

A raid was staged on the Johnsons in Lawrence. They were caught red-handed. Or should it be greenback-handed? Giving up without a struggle, the Johnsons were taken into custody while another group of Secret Service men sought the wily McCartney.

That he had always been smarter than the Johnsons was proven by the fact that the Secret Service was unable to track him to his hideout. However, he was picked up in the Indianapolis post office, reputedly carrying some of the fake money in his jeans.

Meanwhile, the Johnsons had been brought to Indianapolis and now they, as well as McCartney, were placed under strong escort for a trip to the military prison in Washington, D. C.

Luck favored McCartney, though. While the train was crossing the mountains, the elusive counterfeiter managed to slip his bonds—and he had been shackled and handcuffed at that—and make his escape. Within two weeks this will-o-the-wisp had returned to Indianapolis, made his way to the hideout and obtained the precious electrotype. The Secret Service of the day almost went crazy trying to nail him. It cost the Government thousands upon thousands of dollars, in a vast manhunt, before they finally snapped the cuffs again on McCartney. This time he didn't get away.

DETECTIVE,

According to the detective's notion, a woman who has been robbed will raise a row that can be heard for blocks. Either Mrs. Bowes was crazy, he decided, or there was a lot more to her story than she'd told



PRIVATE...

By T. V. FAULKNER

ELLA, the office girl, said: "Where've you been? The mister's been going around in circles, waiting for you."

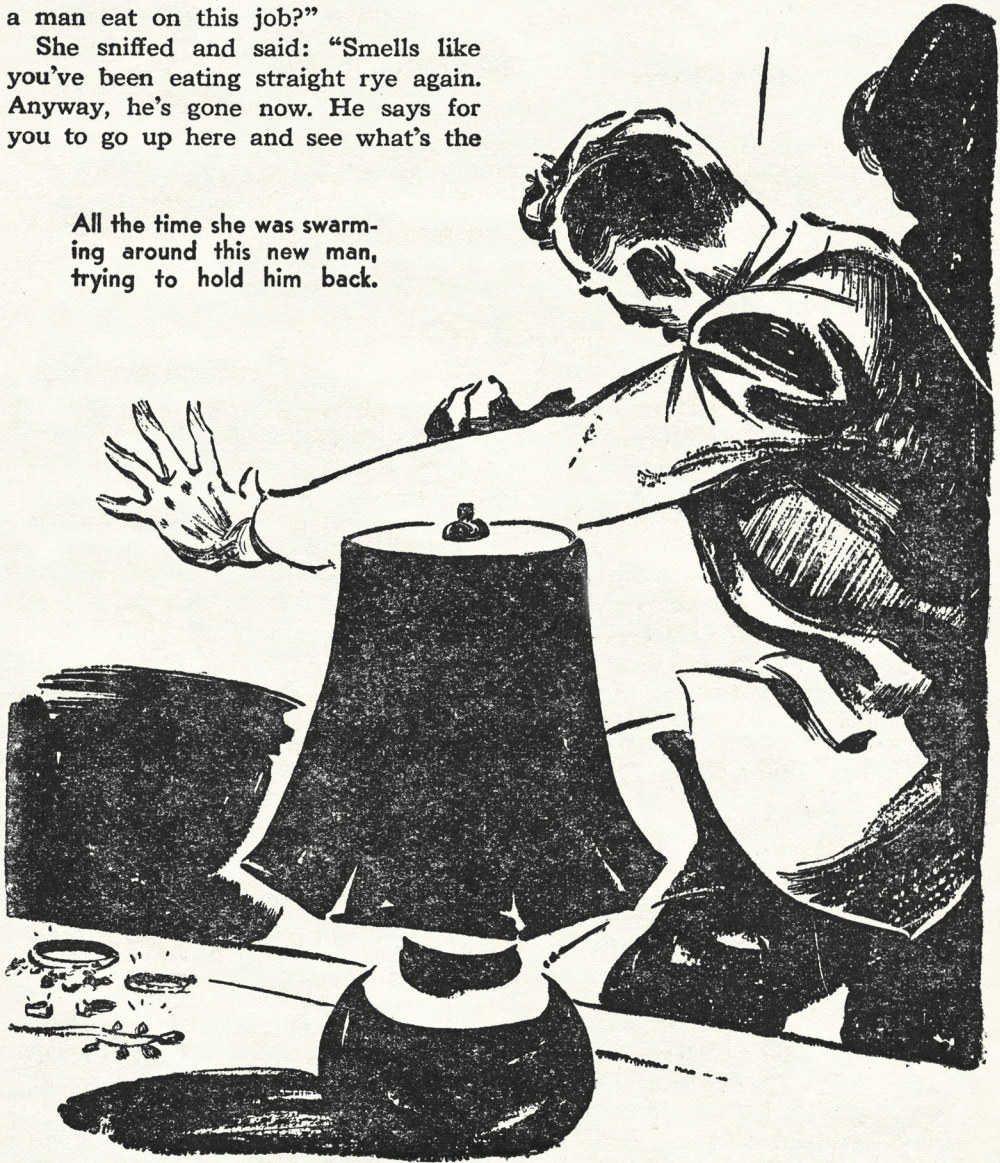
"Out to lunch," I told her. "Can't a man eat on this job?"

She sniffed and said: "Smells like you've been eating straight rye again. Anyway, he's gone now. He says for you to go up here and see what's the

matter." She handed me a slip with an East Eighties address on it and I asked:

"What's it all about? What am I supposed to do?"

All the time she was swarming around this new man, trying to hold him back.



She said honestly: "I listened in and didn't learn a thing. All the gal said was that she wanted a man sent up. You know as much as the boss does."

THE apartment house was nice—and in a nice section. Not big—not too expensive—but class. There was a very gentlemanly looking little duck behind the desk, and I went to him and said:

"I'm looking for Mrs. Arthur Bowes. Am I in the right place?"

He said: "Oh, yes sir," and looked me over and giggled. He had a lovely little contralto voice. "Is she expecting you, might I ask?"

"Sure."

He didn't believe me. He got her on the phone and then turned to me and arched his eyebrows in a question and I said:

"Tell her it's the man from the Apex."

He told her this and then told me: "It's 17-B. You're to go right up. Are you—are you an officer?"

"Private, is all."

He said: "I've *always* wanted to know a policeman. *You* know."

I said: "I'll meet you around the corner at six, toots. *I* know."

He was blushing when I started to the elevator.

The cutest maid I ever saw in my life let me into 17-B. She said she'd take my hat and I asked her if I'd get it back if I gave it to her and that started things off. I got a big grin in place of the hat and a "like to see you some more" look that made me think of a lot of things. Among others, just why a gal like that should be holding a maid's job instead of being in a front line show. She led me inside and said:

"Mrs. Bowes, this is the man from the agency."

Mrs. Bowes said she was glad I called. She wasn't alone. There was

another gal with her as good looking and of the same type. This last one said to Mrs. Bowes:

"I'll run along, Martha. It's been nice seeing you."

They gushed and gurgled over each other and away she went. Mrs. Bowes explained: "An old friend of mine. What am I to call you—just the man from the agency?"

More kittenish stuff and it came as a surprise. She was about thirty and pretty, but she didn't look like the kittenish type. She looked too calm and self-contained. I said:

"It's John Dailey, Mrs. Bowes."

"I'll just call you Jack, then."

IHAD a notion to ask if I should call her Martha—but didn't. It was a temptation. I told her the office had sent me to see what was the matter, and she said:

"Sit down. I can tell you just as well while we're having a drink. Oh, Beth!"

Beth, who was the maid, came in and was told to make us a drink. Beth grinned at me again as she went out—but was careful to see Mrs. Bowes didn't catch it. Mrs. Bowes said:

"It's about a robbery, Jack. I've been robbed—I heard your agency was quiet and confidential and that's why I called you."

I said: "We've got ethics—of a certain kind. It's good business to protect your clients, we think. What did the police think about this robbery?"

"I didn't report it. That's why I called you—I don't intend to have the police involved at all."

Things were looking up I thought. The first thing any woman does, when she's been robbed, is raise a row that can be heard all over the block. She usually makes enough noise that the

neighbors will call the police to stop the racket. I said:

"Well, they really should be notified. They have ways and means of recovering stolen property that a private agency lacks."

Beth came in with a tray and drinks and passed them. She stood between me and Mrs. Bowes and drooped one eyelid a little and I wondered if maybe I'd landed in a bunch of crazy women. Mrs. Bowes said, very calmly:

"This is much better, don't you think, Jack? You see I didn't call the police because I couldn't very well. My husband is serving a five-year sentence for jewel theft and it was jewelry that I lost. The police would ask so many embarrassing questions, you see."

I took about half my drink and said: "You mean the stuff that was taken was hot? We can't touch anything like that, Mrs. Bowes."

She said: "It's Martha. You might as well start calling me that because we're going to be good friends. Very good friends, Jack. The stuff wasn't hot—if it had been I wouldn't have called you. There's more to it than that. I know who took it—and I can't have the police in it on that account."

"Who took it?" I asked. It was making less sense every minute. "And what difference does it make if the stuff wasn't stolen? Why not the cops?"

"Do you happen to know Adrian Fessares?"

"I know he's supposed to be a jewel thief but he's never been proved to be one."

She nodded and said thoughtfully: "I found that out. You see I had . . . well, sort of played around with Adrian. I'm inclined to believe Adrian's interest was in my jewels rather than a personal one—but I didn't realize it at the time. If the police got hold of this that would be published—Adrian

would see that it was. And my husband would surely do something about it."

"I thought you said he was in jail?"

"He won't be there forever. He'd take it out on me when he got out. I'm afraid of him, Jack. I can't take a chance on having the business with Adrian known."

"Does Adrian know that?"

"I'm afraid so."

I said: "Lady, I mean Martha, you're in a mess."

Then the bell rang and in a moment Beth came running in and said: "It's the manager, Mrs. Bowes. Come quick! Mrs. Aren has been hurt."

THERE was everybody and his brother out in the hall. All crowded around the woman who had been visiting Mrs. Bowes. She was lying flat on her back, arms and legs sprawled out at all angles, and there was a knot on the side of her jaw that spelled black-jack as if it had been written there.

She'd been searched and no mistake. Her clothes were about torn off her and there was no doubt about her not having anything concealed around her person. The manager was bleating:

"Nobody touch her! Nobody touch her! Wait for the police!"

I could see she was breathing and didn't think there was anything wrong with her but the slam on the jaw. I said to Mrs. Bowes:

"Lady, straighten out her clothes. She's going to feel right bad if she snaps out of it and sees this crowd and how she looks."

Mrs. Bowes started to do this and the manager shoved her away. I picked him away and held him and said: "You dope! The gal's just knocked out."

The house doctor came struggling through the mob and looked her over and said the same thing. Mrs. Bowes had us lug her into her apartment and

then followed me out into the front room and said:

"Oh, my! Why should they do that to her?"

I said: "As a safe guess, I'd say they were looking for something."

She looked me right in the eye and said: "Are you going to help me recover my jewelry?"

"I guess so."

She smiled at me and didn't look near as calm and collected when she did. She swayed up against me and whispered: "I'm glad! I like you, Jack!"

Then she went back to see how her friend was getting along and I went looking for Beth.

I always did go for the particular sort of bad eye she'd given me—and I wanted to see if she really meant it.

She was in the kitchen—and I found out that apparently she did.

IT WAS a dopey set-up and only part of it made sense. I could see why Mrs. Bowes didn't want the cops in it. In spite of what she said, I figured the jewelry she'd lost was hotter than a cook-stove, that it was part of some loot her theiving husband had stolen at some time before he went to jail. She was making a play for me and I could see sense in that—whoever helped her was fooling around with stolen property and she probably thought her sex appeal would surely make the difference on whether she got help or not.

But already I was going head over heels for Beth, the maid.

Adrian Fessares was easy to figure out. He'd found Mrs. Bowes had jewelry and an ugly husband and made a play for the jewelry and Mrs. Bowes along with it. He was relying on her being afraid to report the theft both because of her husband's record and because of the possibility of the jewelry

being stolen. And was also thinking she'd be afraid to say anything because of her husband. I knew of him—and nothing good about him. He was an absolute no good and playing the women for their jewelry was his steady business.

He always picked the kind that couldn't afford to squawk and so he'd never been held.

But picking a man from a reputable agency to break the thing up wasn't right—but I finally decided Mrs. Bowes was doing it so she'd be protected against the jewelry being stolen by the agency itself. Some of the yeggs that work for the cheaper agencies would take gold out of a client's mouth if he was fool enough to sleep with his mouth open.

They packed Mrs. Aren away in a cab after awhile and Beth chased me out of the kitchen and away and I found that Mrs. Bowes was thoroughly convinced Fessares had the jewelry safely hid away in his apartment. This was while we were getting very chummy on the front room sofa. I said: "I guess there's only one thing to do—and I hate housebreaking. That's a felony in itself."

She said: "You won't have to break in. I have a key to his place."

"D'ya think you can get him out of the place while I shake it down?"

"I think so. I can scare him into meeting me, if I can't do it anyway else. I can tell him my husband's getting paroled."

"Is your husband that tough?"

She said he was. I asked if there was any chance of him *being* paroled and she told me not to be silly and to think of her instead of her husband.

So we decided to try the play the next afternoon and I tried to take my mind from her husband and put it on her.

I got it away from the husband all right—but it insisted on thinking about Beth.

I left the place about ten that evening and the cute little clerk was still on duty. I stopped by the desk to light a cigarette and he said:

"Just around the corner, friend," he said. "Be nice. Be very nice. The dame didn't slip you anything?"



"My! My! The trouble we've had with that woman. First her apartment was torn up and now a woman is prac-

tically killed in front of her door. Women are *such* trouble."

I said: "How do you know, Anastasia?"

And went out.

I got outside the door and an ugly looking mugg fell in step with me and jabbed whatever he held in his pocket hard against my side and said:

"Just around the corner, friend! Be nice, be nice."

I said: "I'm nice. I've got seven dollars and forty cents in my pants. I can't shake down for a dime more'n that."

He said: "Maybe, maybe," and jammed on the gun and I walked around the corner and down the block to an alley. He looked me over, leaving me my seven-forty, and then said:

"The dame didn't slip you anything, then?"

"Slip me what and what dame?"

He said: "Oh nuts!" and slapped at my chin with his gun barrel and I rolled with the smack but acted as though I was out.

Then he went away, taking my gun with him, and I wondered if everybody that called on Mrs. Bowes got slugged when they left the apartment. It wasn't making any rhyme or reason—first the Aren woman and then me.

MR. BOWES, or Martha, as I should call her, phoned me at three and said: "Any time after four. I'm supposed to meet him at the Arlington for cocktails. I can keep him busy for an hour at least."

I said: "You keep him away from home if you have to slug him with something. Don't hesitate if you have to—everybody's doing it."

"Jack honey! I don't understand."

I said I didn't understand it either and eased over to Adrian Fessares' place and waited for him to come out. I knew him by sight and spotted him leaving a half hour later and, after giving him ten minutes to come back for anything he might have forgotten I went up. I walked in with Mrs. Bowes' key, and a very black little Filipino boy said:

"Hi! What you want?"

He was standing across a good sized room from me, right in a doorway. I had to chase him clear to the kitchen door before I could catch him, but then I laid one across his jaw and caught him before he hit the floor. I put him in Fessares' bed and took adhesive tape from the medicine chest and fixed him up with it.

And then went to work.

It was a five room apartment and it took an hour and better to cover it and it looked a wreck when it was covered. Everything was out in the middle of the floors. I even had the rugs rolled up. I even had the Filipino out in the middle of the room and the bed taken apart.

I found six hundred odd dollars in bills, a bunch of personal letters which I took along for good luck and to keep Fessares from using them to blackmail with, and that was all.

I had the pictures off the walls looking for a wall safe behind them and I had the drapes down on the chance of something being on their tops. I even had the light fixtures unfastened.

Altogether as good a job as I've ever done.

Except for not finding what I was looking for. And I got through just in time, because when I walked out of the building Adrian Fessares was just climbing out of a cab. He was looking worried, I noticed, and I figured that as soon as I got a chance at him along some side street I'd give him something more to bother him.

My jaw, where his thug had slugged me the night before, was still sore.

And besides that—I don't like gigolos.

MR. BOWES, or Martha, was waiting for me but I got in a word with Beth first and foremost. I said:

"When d'ya get through?"

"After you do. I've got to stay around while you talk to the old lady."

"It's a job, honey. That's all. I'd rather be out with you. I've got to do it because it's part of the job."

She said: "I bet you love your work. In case you've still got the same idea, I walk out the back and down Eighty First. That's after you leave by the front."

"You've got a date. I'll bust away early."

She shook her head as though she didn't believe this and said: "I've got used to your habits."

That was another hurdle surmounted. I went in and told Martha about the shakedown, and she said, in a discouraged way:

"He *must* have them. I had them in the lower drawer in the dressing table, and it was out on the floor when I discovered they'd been taken. The house was a wreck. I can't understand about you and Lucy Aren getting in trouble. The man just walked up to her in the hall and said: 'Put up your hands.' She did and then he hit her on the chin. Then he must have searched her."

"You're not lying to me about any of this, are you, sugar?"

She moved up close to me, till I felt her breath in my ear, and whispered: "I couldn't lie to you, Jack, honey. You know I couldn't."

I PICKED Beth up on Eighty First and she was laughing. She said: "Hah, Casanova, I've got a T. L. for you."

"Give," I said. "The cute little dickens back of the desk told me you were divine. Now where'd my T. L. come from?"

She shook her head and said: "Peter Pan's little friend never looked at a girl in his life but it was a good lie.

Mrs. Bowes said that she almost died tonight—that she thought you'd never go home. She said a woman has to put up with an awful lot of trouble in this world."

"Don't kid me. I wanted to get away for the last three hours."

"Don't kid me. You weren't tied down to that sofa with her."

I'd figured Mrs. Bowes was playing around with me because of wanting me to work on her dopey deal—but knowing it for sure made me more than half sore. I had my own reasons for playing around—and Mrs. Bowes wasn't the main one. I said:

"The matter with you is that you're jealous."

She tossed her head. "I should be jealous of that big tramp. I could have taken any man she's ever gone after away from her—and that takes in a lot of territory. Even this last one, this Fessares."

"He make a play for you?"

"Every time her back was turned."

"I can't blame him for that."

She said: "Oh you!" and gave me a little shove toward the edge of the sidewalk. She was as friendly as a kitten. We had a bite to eat and a few drinks and then she said:

"I'd better go home."

I found out where home was and climbed in the taxi with her.

AND so for three days. I told Mrs. Bowes that I was using contacts with the underworld to find out what I could and that it would take time to trace her stuff—and that gave me time for Beth.

The fourth night I took her home and when I said: "Can't I come in?" she said:

"Why not?"

I followed her up two flights of stairs and into a sitting room proposition. She

had a wardrobe trunk in one corner of the room and when she opened the closet to put her coat away I noticed it was just about bare. I hated to do it, but I said:

"What's it, kitten? Ready to go?"

She swung around to me and said: "What does *that* mean?"

I said: "It didn't take three days to figure it out. I've spent 'em some way trying to figure you *out* of it. Fessares didn't get the stuff because he's still looking for it. I know that—he proved it when he slugged that woman and me. He thought we might have been carrying it out for her. She really lost the stuff—she'd have never called for help if she really hadn't been robbed, and the last three days have made it sure. She couldn't fool me any longer than that."

She curled her lip at me and said: "She could fool you as long as she wanted to."

I said: "I was playing along to make sure. Now I'm sure. Where've you got 'em hid, baby?"

She didn't mean to do it but her eyes flashed toward the bed.

"I hate to do it, but I've got to take both you and them, honey."

She did what I thought she'd do. She came close to me and said: "Jack! You wouldn't arrest me."

"What can I do? You're here and this stuff is here in the room. I had you tagged for it the minute I saw you—you were too much glamour girl to be working as a maid. There had to be some reason for your being there and the jewels were a natural. What did you do—take 'em just before Fessares shook down the place?"

SHE nodded and her shoulders slumped. I said: "Of course if I should get you a break, why . . ."

She looked up at me and said: "I'd

do anything for you, Jack, I mean it. I—I thought if maybe you liked me, and then did find the things, you'd, well, maybe *give* me a break."

She came over and put her head on my chest and her arms around me and started crying—and I gave her the break. She didn't know it but it was no break at all. Mrs. Bowes couldn't report her stealing the jewelry to the cops any more than she could have reported Fessares . . . and if the kid had had any brains she'd have realized it. But it wasn't my place to tell her that—all I was supposed to do was recover the jewelry, which was under the mattress.

I took it and started back to Mrs. Bowes with it.

MRS. BOWES had been in bed but when I phoned her from the lobby she came wide awake. She almost shouted: "Oh Jack! Come right up! Oh, hurry."

I went up but I didn't hurry. I wasn't looking ahead to what was going to happen. She let me in and I showed her the stuff and put it on the table, and she squealed and said:

"Oh honey! Tell me about it. Oh, I just knew you'd get them."

She kissed me about twenty times, so fast I lost all track, and then somebody grabbed me by the shoulder and spun me around and then smacked me fair in the mouth. I landed over against the wall and on the floor, and I dragged my gun out and pointed it at the big moose that had hit me and said:

"Hold it, buddy! I'll play rough too."

Mrs. Bowes was jumping around this new man and trying to hug him and screaming: "Mack! Mack!" at the top of her voice, but he just stood there looking like the heavy in an old-fashion-

ed melodrama. He said, finally, in a big voice:

"Put that gun away, you yellow coward. This is my wife."

I said: "I know it and I'm not putting the gun away. You're both pinched for possession of stolen property. I checked up on you, Bowes, and found you were getting an out from the parole board. What was the idea, trying to surprise her? You should have let her know."

He gave her a dirty look and said: "I surprised her, all right. The dirty—!"

She started to cry and I figured I'd do her a good turn. After all, she was going to jail and it might make both of them feel better. I lied with:

"You've got the wrong idea. I got that stuff back and she helped me do it. She didn't know I knew it was stolen. That's all there was to it—she was excited about getting it back and kissed me for it."

He sneered something about her seeming to take an interest in the kissing but I could see he about half believed the gag. He was crazy about her—that was sticking out all over him. So I made him call the cops and, when they came, sat back and took a lot of

praise about recovering the jewelry, which, it seemed, had been stolen three years before.

I didn't deserve the praise—when Mrs. Bowes had first described the jewelry to me I'd checked it with the stolen property list and found the job it matched. I checked on when Bowes was to be released as a matter of routine—and I wanted him right where the jewelry was so he'd do time for taking it. And any woman as flighty as Mrs. Bowes was, was better off in jail than out. Nobody was hurt except the Bowes family and they had it coming for stealing the stuff in the first place. Fessares hadn't made a dime and he'd lost a lot of time trying. And Beth hadn't done anything much—she'd stolen already stolen property, but there's lots of people who'll tell you that that's no crime at all.

I told the cops all this, leaving Beth carefully out of the picture, and rode down on the elevator with them when they took the Bowes away. Hennessy, of the Robbery Detail, said:

"Give you a lift to any place you like, Dailey."

I said: "Not any. I've got a date."

I didn't have right then but I soon did. I called Beth. Then I had a date.

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Death Rides

By HAL NORTON



IT was the first time I'd ever guarded a herd of horses but I was having fun. In the first place, the herd was small. Only four nags—a driving team and two riding horses. In the second place there was B. J. Bransom, the man who owned the horses, and he was a kick in anybody's pants. He'd only hired me as a gag against his pet enemy and admitted it. He spent his days drinking Collins and his evenings drinking rickys, and you could tell he was coming a block away by the smell of the gin that preceded him.

He didn't like to drink alone, either, and that and the salary he paid was reason enough to like him. I would have anyway, though—he was the kind of old gentleman that is caricatured in the English comic books. Red faced, big paunched, and with just a fringe of white hair around a shiny head.

The third reason for liking the job was Tommy Harris. Harris was supposed to be the stable boy but he actually acted as a trainer. That because Bransom was grooming Patsy, one of the riding horses, for the race of the century. Harris was an ex-jock, a bit crippled from a track fall. He was about sixty and no bigger than a minute, and the worst liar I'd ever met.



A Horse . . .

It was a grudge fight, that horse race, but the two old feudists loved it. They'd been battling for years, just good, clean fun, but now murder was to enter the picture and give an ugly twist to every practical joke they'd ever played

Tommy hit the jock with almost the same movement that dragged him from the mare.



It was an education to listen to him and I was getting a liberal one.

There was also Red Painter, who was going to ride Patsy in the race, but I had him picked for a rat from the time I met him. As did everybody but Bransom. The race was to be between Bransom's Patsy and Horace Wilverton's High Boy. It was to be the first Sunday in September—the distance was between the First Methodist Church and Sixth and Main, which made it six short blocks—and the riders could use any saddles and come in at any weight.

THE town was Mill Falls, one of the better suburbs, and the stake was ten thousand, this last to be donated to the Red Cross, no matter the winner. Half had been put up by Bransom and the other by Wilverton.

There were side bets galore and it was anybody's guess how high they'd run. I knew Bransom was in it heavy, but the town had taken sides and I don't think there was anybody except the Methodist minister that didn't have a few dimes on the result.

And the reason for the excitement was the old feud between Bransom and Wilverton. They'd been partners a good many years back, and they'd spent the time since then just lawing back and forth. First one would sue the other for any cause at all, and the other would come back with a counter-suit. Both of them had plenty of money and that was their main sport . . . their object in life.

A good hobby but expensive.

I'd found out this dope the first week I'd been there and I was well into the second and sitting on the front porch with Bransom when the next development came up. It was the next development and also the constable. A fat old boy with droopy white mustaches that

had the ends all stained with tobacco juice.

He ambled up and Bransom said: "Hi, Saul! Come on up on the porch and have a Collins. Good weather for it. Any time's good weather for a good drink, though. Ha, ha, ha."

Saul, the constable, shook his head. "Can't do it, B. J.. I'm here on official business."

"That right?"

Saul nodded and turned to me. "Your name John Ryan, young fella?"

"You know it is, Mr. Eblinger. I've met you half a dozen times this past week."

"Got to make it official. You are held under a five hundred dollar peace bond, starting from this date on. You are officially notified."

Bransom said: "Now what is this foolishness?"

"And you, B. J., are also held under the same amount. You ready to put it up for you and Mr. Ryan?"

"Is Horace Wilverton back of this?"

"He swore out the complaint. Yes, sir, B. J."

Bransom swore and did very well for a man of his years. He said: "You sit down, Saul, and I'll make you out a check."

"Can't take a check, B. J.. Ain't allowed to take checks on a bond. That's the law."

Bransom swore even louder and got up and lumbered in to a phone. He came back in a moment and said: "Saul, the judge is on the phone for you. He's going to tell you to take my check. It's the first time it's ever been refused in Mill Falls."

"I'm trying to make it legal, B. J.," the constable said, going in the house and to the phone. He came back, scratching his head. "The judge he says to take it so I got no choice. Make her

out. And you, young fella, d'ya know what it means?"

I said: "Sure."

"You know if you commit assault on either Horace Wilverton or anybody working for him, B. J.'s got to lose his five hundred dollars?"

"Sure."

"See't you remember it."

Bransom was waving the check in the air to dry it. He flared out with: "What is the matter with you, Saul. This man is here to see there's nothing goes wrong with Patsy, before the race. Just to make sure there's no monkey business. That's his business."

Saul Eblinger said stiffly: "This fella is a city tough, come up here to raise hell with Horace Wilverton and the boys that are working for him. You ain't fooling me, B. J.. I might as well tell you that I got money on Horace's horse, and there's a good many others in this town that has the same. We won't tolerate any foolishness, B. J.. This is going to be a fair race or there's going to be trouble."

"I thought you and I were friends, Saul."

Saul said: "There's no friendship when there's money being wagered. I'll say good day."

He waddled out to his rickety old car and Bransom said: "Well, I'll be damned."

I said: "I wonder just how much is on this contest?"

"Probably close to fifty thousand," said Bransom absently. "There's money around here and both Horace and I have friends."

I whistled. "And this Wilverton, now. Has he other enemies besides you?"

"Lord love you, yes. Many of 'em. You either like Horace or you hate him."

I'd thought the peace bond thing was a joke. Just another chance for one of

the old codgers to make trouble for the other. But I started thinking about a horse race with fifty grand riding along with the jockeys as side bets and the idea of being under a bond didn't set so well.

If anything happened, that bond thing might just put me in the middle.

RACING day dawned bright and clear and B. J. Bransom was at the stables early. So early, in fact, that he caught both Tommy Harris and me still in our cots. Both of us were sleeping by Patsy's stall, though I was paid to do it and Tommy was doing it as habit.

Bransom came in saying: "Nice day, boys. Nice day for the slaughter. Ha, ha, ha."

Patsy turned around in her stall and almost looked like she was smiling at him. She had that friendly look. For that matter she was a friendly little horse. Neither she nor High Boy, the Wilverton entry was a race horse, anyway. They were both little saddle ponies with a turn for speed. There was no chance for either side to work in a ring because both horses were pets of the town.

I said: "Tommy was just telling me how he lost out riding Man O' War in the big race. It was certainly a shame he couldn't make the weight."

"Sure was," Tommy said stoutly. "Riddle and I both felt mighty bad about that."

He'd been off the track for twenty-five years before Man O' War was foaled and we all knew it. It was a good story, though.

Tommy went on with: "I'm going to walk the little mare down to the village about noon, B. J.. That'll give her a chance to get good and rested up before she runs."

As the village wasn't more than a half

a mile down the road I couldn't see whether it would make any difference if he took her down at a gallop, ten minutes before the race, but both he and Bransom were treating the matter as a serious thing. They talked over their tactics while Tommy and I dressed, and about that time Red Painter strolled in. He was a louse for anybody's dough. He had on a pair of pants so dirty they smelled and the same shirt he'd been wearing the past week. He already smelled of bad whiskey. Bransom had put him up at Mill Falls' best hotel and it was a good one, but Painter acted as if it was one of the flop houses he was used to.

He said: "All set for the big day, eh? And if I boot her in ahead, I get that thousand buck bonus. Eh, Bransom?"

"I've told you that," said Bransom.

"Just wanted to hear you say it before witnesses," Painter said airily. "A man's got to protect himself."

"Get the hell out of this stable until it's time to go to the track," said Harris. "I'll be damned if I stand here and listen to a crack like that. And if you run out, so help me, I'll beat your dumb head off."

Painter grinned and said: "I'll see you in front of the Methodist Church, boys. At two, sharp. You can depend on me."

We watched him swagger away and Bransom said: "I don't understand how that young man feels about life. I can understand his natural desire to make money out of his profession, that of riding—but he seems to have missed all the glory of the contest itself."

"Strictly louse," I said.

Bransom said: "There's good in every man, my boy," and wandered back to the house, for his early morning snifter.

And Harris said: "The old man'd see good in a rattlesnake that struck

him without warning. He'd probably say the snake was blind."

I said: "This Painter snake isn't blind, Tommy. He's got good eyes, if you ask me."

"He gives me lip and I'll close 'em for him," Tommy said. "Did I ever tell you the time I fought Young Joe Gans for the lightweight championship of the world? That was back around ought six, Johnny. We went forty four rounds for a non-decision verdict."

I said I didn't remember reading that one in the record books, but Tommy slid out very gracefully.

He said: "The fight was stopped in the U. S. A. so we had it out in Mexico. You know how them guys are about records, Johnny. Just plain careless."

I knew he'd never been in the ring in his life, but he certainly sounded convincing.

MILL FALLS was usually a sleepy little place but not that Sunday afternoon. The whole country around was mostly big and little estates—most of them owned by retired business men like my boss Bransom, and the town was a community affair with everyone knowing everybody else. That was the trouble. They knew each other well enough to have a lot of differences, and the horse race apparently had seemed like a good time to settle 'em once and for all.

Tommy and I were standing by Patsy about an hour before the race when a tall lean young lad who I'd never seen before tapped me on the shoulder.

"You're Ryan?"

"That's right."

"I'm Joe Beaming."

He waited for me to say something and I finally did. I said: "I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Beaming. Was there something?"

"I'm Horace Wliverton's son-in-law."

"Enemy camp, eh? Looking us over?"

He'd been shot in the side of the head and there was no doubt that he was dead.



He grinned cheerfully. "That's funny, isn't it? Here's my father-in-law and old Bransom fighting like cats and dogs, and if the battle ever stopped, it'd break both their hearts. It's all they've got to live for."

"You're not in it then? That it?"

"Lord, no. Neither me or Millie. That's my wife—Horace's daughter. That's why I'm here. Millie and I want to buy you a drink and tell you how that screwy peace bond came up. We both think you've got an apology coming, being drawn into the family battle like that."

I looked at Tommy Harris and he grinned and said: "I can take care of the mare, Johnny. Take a long cold

one and think of me while it's sliding down."

SO I went along with Joe Beaming. I met his wife, a pretty little dark girl and she pointed out her father to me, where he was standing by his entry. Horace Wilverton was a thin, bushy haired old duck, with a nose like an eagle's beak. He was stooped like he had rheumatism but his eyes were keen enough because he saw us and waved.

Beaming said: "He had that peace bond put out as a joke. He knew it would burn old Bransom up. It didn't miss, did it?"

"Not with me," I said. "Bransom seemed to take it right in his stride."

They both laughed and the girl said: "He'd have done it if dad hadn't thought of it first. I think everybody in the country's turned out for the match."

We were turning into the hotel bar then. I said: "That'd be fine, but they're all putting up their money on the race. That's not so bad for the people around, who can afford it, but I don't like to see the town people get mixed up. I hear they're really going to town on their gambling."

Both the Beamings laughed and that was all of that. We had a couple of drinks around and I got back to Patsy just as Bransom showed up with Red Painter, who was half drunk but well able to ride. He was his usual quarrelsome self and I had a hard time to keep from slapping him two different times before the race. Once when he patted me on the back and told me to bet him to win and the other when he made too many remarks in too loud a voice about one of the local gals that happened to stroll by.

Then the Mayor, who was also the starter, came up and Harris and Wilver-

ton's stable man led their horses to the cross street in front of the church.

I hurried down to the finish line with Bransom—and we were almost side by side with Wilverton and his son-in-law and daughter.

Both these last waved gaily at us, but Wilverton just gave us a frozen stare.

And Bransom gave it back.

We heard the pop of the blank cartridge the mayor started 'em off with just as we reached the finish line at Sixth and Main. These last blocks were empty of business houses with just a few scattered residences, but the streets at the sides were blocked solid with the good citizens, waiting to see if they'd made a good bet or not.

And those on our side hadn't. The two nags came down toward us, running the way saddle horses do. Bumpety-bumpety, instead of stretched out low to the ground. They were even, but Bransom was shouting at the top of his voice that Patsy was ahead. The judges—who were also the city Council—were straining their eyes to see which horse was going to cross that intersection first.

And then Patsy tossed up her head, almost throwing Red Painter, and she lost her stride and the race, right then and there.

I was looking right at her and I couldn't see how Red Painter had thrown the race. I wanted to believe it of him but I couldn't see it. The horse tossed her head as though somebody had slugged her across the nose, and he couldn't have done that from his seat in the saddle.

Bransom said: "What happened to her, Ryan?"

I said I didn't know. The city fathers gave the race to Wilverton's High Boy, and Bransom gave him a stiff little nod as he went over to Patsy. Red Painter

was still in the saddle and he was using talk that shouldn't have been allowed in a stable. He said to Bransom:

"I had that race in my hand. The mare was good for a little spurt in that last few feet and I was just lifting her into it. Then zowie! She quits cold on me."

THEN Tommy Harris came running down from where the race had started, and he dragged Painter from the mare and hit him with the same movement. And the jock went down. By the time Bransom had bailed Tommy out, on the assault charge Painter laid against him, the crowd had gone home—and I stayed in town rather than going back to the place with Bransom.

I had a hunch and I wanted to verify it—and I knew the center of the town gossip was the hotel bar.

And by ten that evening I'd found where Red Painter had laid more than two grand on Wilverton's High Boy, against himself and the horse he was riding. He'd spread it out no more than he had to, and he'd tried to keep it quiet, but you can't hush-hush a little town. There were too many people who thought it funny the way the mare had tossed up her head and broken stride—and those that had their money on her were investigating right along with me.

The hell of it was there was nothing to be done. It wasn't like it had happened on a track. The purse went for charity, regardless of the result, and the side bets had no standing in a court.

So they were bearing it, even if they weren't grinning about it. At the time I started home, there was some talk about lynching Painter, but it was nothing but talk. Of course there was a school of thought that held Wilverton had bribed Painter to throw the race, and this bunch advocated lynching both

Painter and Wilverton from the same tree.

I wasn't worrying about any lynching parties at the time I left the bar, but that was before I turned from the road and started into Bransom's place.

That was because it was there I found Wilverton's body.

HE was in his car and it was heading out away from Bransom's, toward the highway. Wilverton was behind the wheel with his head slumped forward on it. He'd been shot in the side of the head and he'd bled all over the place. The floor of the car was sticky with it and a lot more had dribbled down the front of his clothes.

It was only the second time I'd seen him but I couldn't mistake that eagle beak of his, even with his face all blotched with blood.

I'd opened the door to make sure the man was dead—the car window on that side was open but I couldn't reach in far enough through it to tell a thing. I closed the door and wiped the door handle with my handkerchief, and then decided that was a foolish thing to do. I was going to call the cops, anyway—there'd be no harm in opening the door. It just shows what panic will do to a man, even if he's seen murder before. It wasn't over two hundred yards up to the house and I made it on the run, and when I broke in on Bransom, I found the old boy taking a lime rickey, just the same as usual.

He looked up and said: "Goodness, Johnny. You're in a hurry. Is there news?"

"There is."

"Were you right? Did Painter throw the race?"

"He did. I don't know how he did it but he did."

Bransom looked happy. "That's not too bad, except for the people who lost

money betting on my entry. A lot of them will think Horace bribed young Painter to do it and they'll hold it against him. He may have done it at that—that old goat would stop at nothing."

"He's stopped now."

"What's that?"

"Was he here?"

"Horace? Horace hasn't been in my home for twenty odd years."

"Can you prove that?"

"Should I?"

I nodded.

"Well, because of the race and all, cook took the day and evening off. There's a cold lunch for you in the ice box, incidentally, Johnny. I suppose Tommy is in that low bar he frequents up toward Martinsville. No, Johnny, I'm afraid I'm quite alone. I'm glad you came back, my boy."

"Horace Wilverton is down the road, almost to the highway. He's been shot and killed."

"Horace!"

"That's right."

"But—but. . ."

"And his car is facing away from here, as though he'd called and was on his way home from here. Think fast, Mr. Bransom."

"Why, I heard a car—or thought I heard a car, about half an hour ago. It seemed to come up to my drive-around, but when I went out on the porch I saw no one. I supposed it was somebody that had made a mistake on the road in—somebody who'd taken the wrong turning. That often happens, particularly in the evening."

"You don't realize, Mr. Bransom. You're going to be blamed for this. So am I."

"But I wouldn't hurt Horace. Nor would Horace hurt me. I think that's understood around here. This feud of ours started and we've just carried it

on for lack of something else to do."

I said: "You're going to have a hard time making the state police believe that, mister. They're the guys I'm calling now."

I didn't miss. The state police didn't believe a thing about anything. They went straight down the line, through the old old story of the feud and right up to the race that day. Bransom told them part of it and I gave them the rest.

The Sergeant in charge glared at me and said: "This story of yours about being hired to come up here and body-guard a race horse is ridiculous. If you were hired to protect Mr. Bransom, why don't you say so."

Bransom said: "He's telling you the truth, Sergeant. Not that the horse needed protection. I just hired Johnny so I could tell people that I hired a man to watch the horse so that Horace couldn't tamper with it before the race. I knew that would make him furious."

All the old boy was doing was put a rope around his neck. He pulled it tighter when he went on with: "That's why Horace had Ryan and me put under a peace bond. He knew he was in no danger from us—he just wanted to get even with me for the guard idea."

"Just a couple of kids playing games, eh," the sergeant snarled. "Now tell me this. What was Wilverton doing up here? What was he up here to see you about?"

"He didn't come here. I told you that."

"If he wasn't coming to see you, who was he calling on?"

"That I don't know."

I'd been doing a lot of thinking, ever since the race. I said: "One thing, sergeant. If we pick it apart, a little at a time, maybe we can get the answers.

"It wasn't her fault she lost the race," he said. "That jock never gave her a ride."



Did Wilverton have much dough, Mr. Bransom?"

"He was comfortably off, Johnny. Not rich, not poor. I'd say half a million, maybe a little more than that. Not rich, not poor."

Both the sergeant and I gasped and looked at each other. Five hundred bucks would have been a fortune for either of us.

"And who'll get it now?"

"His daughter, undoubtedly. Horace was very fond of her. And of young Beaming, the boy she married."

"Beaming got dough?"

"I believe so. Not a great deal."

"Not rich, not poor," said the sergeant, bitterly. "I don't suppose the guy's got more than two or three hundred thousand, eh?"

"About that, I imagine."

The sergeant snorted.

I said: "No matter now. But maybe we can clean up one thing right now. I've doped out what was wrong in that race. Can we go out to the stables, sergeant?"

He nodded and we all went out. Tommy Harris was fussing around his beaten racer, who was trying to eat her hay and be left in peace, and when he saw the trooper's uniform he got fiery red in the face and began.

"I suppose I'm under arrest again," he said. "I should think you guys could spend your time locking up crooked jocks, rather than go around and annoy decent people. I got a good mind to . . ."

"Cut it, cut it," the sergeant said. "If you keep it up, I'll have a good mind to throw you in the can and that's what I'll do."

Tommy spluttered but shut up.

I said: "Look, Tommy, I've got ideas. Did you look Patsy over after the race?"

"I certainly did," he said, bristling

up. "I curried every inch of her hide. It wasn't her fault she lost that race. That - - - never gave her a ride."

"I think so too," I said. I went in the stall and up to Patsy's head, and it didn't take two minutes to find what I was looking for. Just a little lump under the skin, just up from her black silky nose.

"This is it," I said. "Somebody from one of those houses along the route popped her with an air rifle. The damn things are accurate at a distance like that and they'll shoot through half an inch or more of pine. You can feel the pellet right here, where it punctured the mare's hide and made her throw up her head. It must have stung her plenty."

"That—Painter," Harris said. "He did it. Wait till I get my hands on him."

"He didn't do it but somebody working with him did. He'll tell who, when you find him, sergeant. Everybody in those houses would be out looking at the race, and anybody could have sneaked in one of them and gone to an upper window to do the shooting. The gun will probably be a Crossman—they're accurate and powerful. They're more than a plaything when they're pumped right up."

"You seem to know a lot about 'em," said the sergeant, suspiciously.

"I should," I told him. "I had one when I was a kid. But my old man took it away when I plugged an old geezer that was bending down and tying his shoe."

"Where'd you hit him?" asked Harris, with interest.

"Center, you dope. He was facing away."

"This may be," the sergeant said. "This has got nothing to do with Wilverton being killed."

"It's got everything to do with it," I said. "The killer figured that now would be a good time because people

would think Wilverton was coming up to complain about Bransom telling around that Wilverton foxed up the horse race. A lot of them think that, right now. That would be an excuse for an argument and Wilverton would be supposed to be killed during the course of it."

The sergeant said: "That's pretty weak."

I said: "That's better than just a murder with no explanation at all. A lot of people think the Bransom-Wilverton feud was serious, rather than a joke."

Bransom said: "I'm going to miss old Horace."

BEAMING and his wife were up, and they had a lot of neighbors with them. Mrs. Beaming had gone through hysterics but had quieted down, and some of her women friends were keeping her that way. Beaming and a half dozen cronies were in the kitchen, making highballs as fast as they could drink them. He let us in and led us back to the kitchen and offered us a drink, but he looked startled at the way we both refused them.

"Here all evening, Beaming?" the sergeant asked.

"Why, certainly. Dad was with us until he left to go over and talk to Bransom."

"Just the three of you? You and your wife and Mr. Wilverton?"

"Why, yes. We sat around and had a few drinks and talked about the race."

Everybody was listening to and watching the sergeant, Beaming harder than the rest. I moved to the side of him. He was wearing a wrist watch instead of a fob watch, so I had to cut that thought away. But his wallet was in his back pocket and I got my fingers around it and jerked it up when he

straightened and took the strain off the pocket. I moved back to the sergeant and passed it to him quietly and he gave it one quick glance to make sure what he had.

"You didn't leave the house after him?"

"I did not. Mrs. Beaming and I were together every minute after that time."

"Careful now. You sure of that?"

"Why, positive. Oh, now wait a minute. I did go downstairs and fix the oil burner. It turned cool and I turned it on tonight for the first time this season. But that was all."

"Take you long?"

"Maybe half an hour. As I say, it was the first time I'd used it this year. I had to check the settings and make sure it was working all right."

"It's only about a quarter of a mile over to Bransom's place, across the fields, and it's at least four miles by the way the road goes, Beaming."

"What of it?"

The sergeant held up Beaming's wallet. He said: "Then how come your wallet was laying on top of the blood that covered the floor board of the car? You dropped it after you stopped him on that road and killed him, Beaming. Your furnace alibi ain't worth a damn."

Beaming argued even then, but the sergeant broke him down in less than ten minutes. The wallet was the pay-off—he really thought he'd dropped it. And when Mrs. Beaming turned against him and admitted he was in a bad way financially, and that her father had turned him down a short time before on a business loan, he cracked wide open.

The wallet bluff was one that worked, but it wasn't original. The same stunt's been pulled in half the police stations in the country.

(Continued on page 102)

DON'T DO IT,

IF he wanted to bother, Lewis Kimball could enumerate more than seven hundred fifty-one reasons for murdering his wife.

At the same time, he did not possess the honesty of mind to admit his original and egregious blunder in marrying Eleanor Russell. She was a wonderfully beautiful girl with inky black hair and smiling red lips, and he had married her deliberately because she was dumb. She was a nitwit. Didn't have a brain in her head. All he wanted in a wife was a lass whom he could kiss when he felt like it, who was ornamental, and would otherwise leave him alone.

He worked at a desk in Manhattan and had a secretary, but he lived in Brooklyn because he liked it better there. Consequently, he generally took a couple of drinks on leaving his office, with one on the house, at a bar on Fourteenth Street. He had pursued this custom for quite a while, having found that it anaesthetized him to subway jitters.

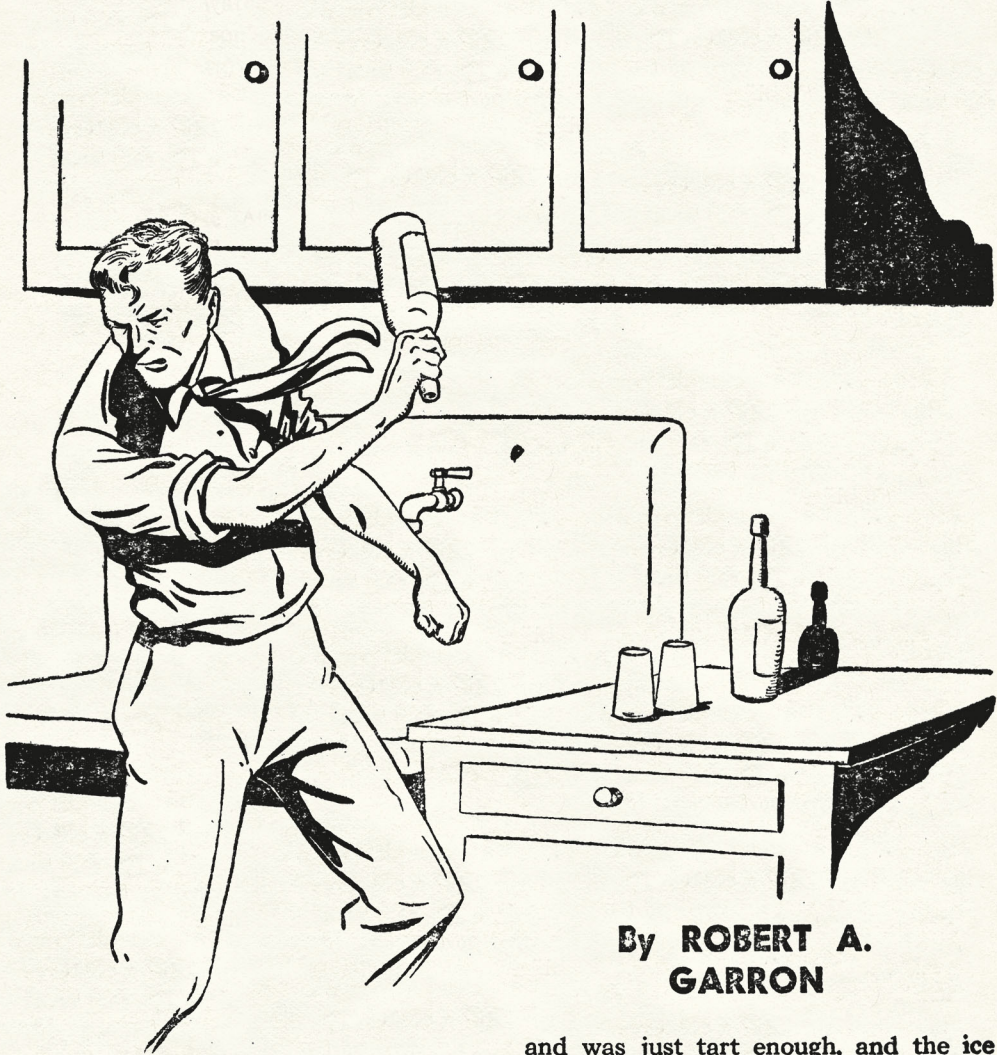
Right now he wasn't entertaining the idea of murder. He had something else in mind, and it made him tingle a little. The train had to make a number of stops—Sixth Avenue, Union Square, Third Avenue, First, then under the

He had to hit her hard because her hair was so thick. He couldn't fool around with half-way measures.



MISTER!

He'd married Eleanor because she was so dumb!
He'd really wanted a dumb wife. And now for
that same reason he wanted to murder her!



By **ROBERT A.
GARRON**

river to Bedford, Lorimer

When he emerged from the subway, he had another drink at a small modern bar as usual. It was the important drink of the day. This was a tall Tom Collins,

and was just tart enough, and the ice was very, very cold ice. It was the best ice in the borough, and was chopped, not cubed.

Then he went home.

Methodically he kissed Ellie, remov-

ed a wallet from his pocket, and repaired to a chifferobe in the bedroom. There was a drawer which contained stationery, packs of letters, paper clips, and so on, and from it he removed a squarish book bound in green leather.

Sitting on the foot of Eleanor's bed, he opened his wallet. From one of the compartments in it he drew a small envelope. The envelope contained an oblong of pasteboard. On the left of the card a stamp was affixed with a "hinge" of gummed paper. On the right was an "O. K." signed underneath by three experts.

The stamp was genuine. It was nearly square, printed in black, and around the frame in longhand print ran a legend which read in part: "Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1853 . . ." There was more, a name that looked like "MacKettring (clerk)", but the remainder of the engraving was too fine to read even with the thick glasses that Lewie wore. He needed a microscope. The important thing was that the postage stamp was genuine and uncatalogued. It might be worth anything between the five dollars he paid for it and five thousand dollars.

The green book was something he had kept since childhood. He had bound it himself, and done a good job of it. The pages were unique, being of unusually heavy rag paper; there were horizontal cross-strips forming shallow pockets in which were inserted the stamps he had been collecting all his life.

They were arranged in sets, though not necessarily by year of issue. All were U. S. The collection was far from complete, for he wouldn't own a specimen that was imperfect. In stamp lingo, he wouldn't have an item that was off-center, straightedged, thin - spotted, creased, nor wrong in any way.

HIS way of keeping the book was somewhat loose, but he knew where every item was. In one department were canceled stamps. He had the same stamps, unused, in another section, likewise the same ones imperforate if any had been issued, and the same babies in blocks, strips, and pairs.

In the rear were the revenue and documentary stamps. He kept up with the new issues, too—the commemoratives—though this strained his finances until his tongue hung out. There was one small section on the last page. Here were a number of prize locals, and in one of the flaps he slipped his new acquisition.

Then he paged through the book backward, more and more slowly, while a look of astonishment spread over his round countenance. His eyes goggled, and he breathed with short little hot sighs of panic. From page after page, row on row, some thief had pinched his beauties by the dozen. The idea of some stranger handling those rare, fragile bits of paper made him physically sick, so that his stomach trembled. Corners bent. . . . Perforations rubbed. . . . Maybe a few stuck together by moist hands. Those things were rare, and were not to be handled except gently with tweezers made especially for the purpose.

Who could have done such a thing? And why not take the whole book? It was like the stunt of a small boy—snitching small change from his mother's purse because the old lady never knew exactly how much dough she had.

There were plenty of kids in the neighborhood, and access would be easy because Ellie had a habit of going to matinees and leaving the house open.

There was one window always open because she said she'd stifle in the shower otherwise. Kimball walked in there; it took only a glance, for there wasn't a mark on the dusty ledge. He dusted

it, and just as absent-mindedly brushed his teeth and gargled. After washing his hands, he returned to the living room walking with a kind of rotund, unconsciously feminine swagger.

His wife was smoking a cigarette in an unnatural way, and seemed to be in some kind of pout. A little-girl pout, with the lower lip pushed forward, moist and red.

He looked at her helplessly, making a little gesture with the hands hanging at his sides. The tremor continued up to his shoulders, and then he was quiet, thinking about nothing in particular. Regarding her, he wondered why he had ever married her. Because she was just a shapely thing, just something to have around. That was it. Just as he would pay too much for a stamp he wanted badly, he obtained her. Met her in a department store. Bought her lunch.

She was so naive, so marvelously *dumb*, and she liked him, that he thought, here is one that I can have around and she'll never bother me. Of course, he was much better looking then. He had more hair, was tidier, and not spread out from sitting behind a desk. No worries. He used to go swimming back then. Jones Beach. His bouyancy as a comber lifted him.

There was something wrong with him, because his wife was talking and he couldn't hear her—just see the red lips shaping words as though she were whispering to someone standing behind him who could read lips.

That damned ocean roaring in his head, and the blinding stabs of light on the water.

At last he pulled in a slow breath and asked, "What did you say, Ellie?"

"What's the matter with you? Can't you hear?" she asked irritably. "I asked you if you didn't notice anything."

"Oh. No; no, I really didn't when I came in," he said. He looked at her

carefully, and nodded. "A new dress, isn't it?"

"Of course it is. Don't you like it?"

"It's very becoming," he said. "But then, you look well in almost anything."

SHE frowned, then showed her pleased smile. "If you didn't like it, I'd take it back. It cost so much."

"Did it really cost a lot?" he asked with an interested smile. He chuckled a little. "Say, a few thousand dollars?"

She didn't like that smile of his; she could never tell what he was thinking. Sometimes she thought he was a shade batty.

Answering, she said in her usual impatient way, "Don't be silly! . . ." She thought about what to say next. "This was priced at a hundred and thirty-nine dollars. It was marked down to forty-nine ninety-five." She told him where she got the dress.

"I see that you have a new hair-do, too," he remarked. "Did you get anything else?"

"Well, a new bag," she admitted, "and some Tabu, and stockings and shoes, and a few other things. I really needed them."

She didn't.

"It must have taken most of the afternoon," he suggested.

"It certainly did. Gee, were my feet burning!"

He felt like the cat stealing toward the grounded bird, and noticed that old expression of uncertainty in her eyes.

"You must have saved a lot out of your household money."

"Gee, Lewie, you know better than that," she complained. "I'm always running short, and I can't help it. You don't know what it's like to be a girl."

"I must admit that I don't," he said. "But I don't like the idea of your charging all that stuff."

"But I didn't!" she protested. "You

always get so mad about the monthly bills. Don't you remember what day this is? It's the day we met each other."

"Oh." And he thought, "I haven't bought a new suit for two years, nor a pair of shoes. My God."

"Is there something wrong?" she asked. "You look so queer."

"How much have you got left?"

"Why, not anything," she said, "except for a few dollars from the household money."

He hesitated, making his lips moist. His eyes felt too big for their sockets.

"What," he asked, swallowing, "what dealer did you go to?"

"What dealer did I go to?" she repeated. "I don't know what you mean."

"Didn't you go to a stamp dealer?" He held his breath.

"Why should I do that?" she asked. "The store takes stamps just the same as cash."

There wasn't any doubt about it, then.

"The store takes stamps at face value?"

"Why, yes, Lewie." What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing, nothing." He could hardly get his breath. "What happens to the stamps after that?"

"For heaven's sake, Lewie! What does anyone do with stamps?" she asked, mystified. "You stick them on envelopes and packages. That's what the store does."

"Is there any way of getting them back?"

She was more mystified than ever. "Why don't you just buy some more at the post office? But you've got plenty left in the book. I don't see why . . ."

"Is there any way of getting those particular stamps back?"

She stared at him in amazement. "Lewie, I think you've gotten yourself drunk. How in the world are you go-

ing to get them back when they're in the mail already? My golly! That's why the store takes stamps for merchandise. They have a heavy mail. Or didn't you know?"

THE sarcasm didn't touch him; for the first time she was getting mad and showing it, out of a sense of guilt for what she had done. She knew that she had spent a lot more than she should have, whether in stamps or cash. He was always buying stamps. She had found them in his wallet a lot of times, in funny glass envelopes. During a year—she knew her arithmetic—his hobby deprived her of a lot of money. That was in the back of her head when she decided to go on a buying spree, when she saw that ad and the dress in the newspaper. But it was the most she had ever spent for a dress. She knew she was wrong, so she got mad.

His curiosity wasn't satisfied. "Have you been using those stamps right along?"

"No! I glue pennies onto the envelopes!" she snapped. "Of course I've been using them! They're stamps, aren't they?"

One stamp missing here and there, picked at random. No, he wouldn't miss an occasional specimen. The five brown horsemen gone. . . . The three cent blue locomotives of the same issue. The Victories, the Hardings imperf.' the Alaska-Yukon, Jamestown, Parcel Post series, specials, the complete Columbian, the air-mails, including the twenty-four center with the inverted blue insert. His grief was enough to make another man burst into tears openly.

And this woman had been slapping them on letters and packages to her brother and sister and cousins and aunts, who were probably just as bee-brained as she was, and tossed them into the waste basket.



"I'm going to count up to three," she threatened. "Then you'll see if I mean it."

And she had never said anything about it to him. She was sneaky, and secretive. When he asked her where she had been during the day, it apparently gave her some sort of mean little pleasure or sense of triumph to say "Out." Making it important, making him suspicious or jealous for no reason. They just lived together. His pigeons had come home to roost. Dumb. She was so dumb.

She had nothing to do, and didn't

do anything. She left the caps off bottles of lotion and perfume, and toothpaste, and she never put anything back where it was supposed to be. She didn't dust. Usually she forgot something, so that he had to do the real marketing. All she cared about was herself, malted milks, movies, clothes, buying, buying, buying, gabbing with persons like herself, exchanging intimacies with the grocer or butcher as though these guys were members of the family.

"Where did you come from?" he had asked her once.

"From a very good family," she answered. "From Milwaukee, in Illinois. What difference does it make?"

A lot of towns have the same name. There are Springfields—good old Springfields—and Camptons, and Canyons, and Oakdales, and Riversides numerous enough. But Lewie had looked at an atlas; there were three Milwaukees, and none of them was in Illinois.

He had let that one go, and found out by devious means that she had come from a town in Carolina, though she had little accent.

"Didn't it ever occur to you that those stamps were part of a collection?" he asked.

"For God's sake, what of it!" she railed. "You've been collecting them all the time. I'm not blind! Stamps, stamps, stamps! Go buy some more, if you love the things so much."

"One of those stamps, just one, mind you," he said, "I could have sold for nearly two thousand dollars."

"Oh, go to hell!" She was nearly shouting, and the blue veins stood out on her slim white throat. "I'm not that dumb!"

"Don't you know anything at all about stamps?" he asked. "Why do you think that people like me collect them?"

"I . . . wouldn't . . . know," she said emphatically, separating the words. "It just looks crazy and childish to me. Only little boys collect stamps, as far as I know. You got a hangover from childhood. It's prackly crazy the way you nurse those stamps. You don't write that many letters, that I know about."

"Take it easy," he cautioned. "You don't know anything about stamps, then. It doesn't make any difference if the president of the United States and the king of England collect stamps.

What do they do it for? To mail letters to your bonehead sister Inez?"

"You better be careful what you say about my family. I told you before."

"I'm not talking about your family. I'm trying to get across to you the information that most of those stamps were rare. You can't get them any more. Collectors want them, and pay high prices. For example, one of those two-cent brown horsemen was worth sixty dollars the last time I looked at a catalogue, and I'm not kidding."

"You're a liar. What do you mean—catalogue? What do you want to catalogue stamps for?"

"A lot of those stamps are irreplaceable. Money can't buy them!"

"Go away; I know you. You're always doing this to me for fun because you think I'm dumb. I'm not. You can go to the post office and buy those stamps any time you feel like it."

He couldn't resist saying, "They passed a law against it."

"Look," she said. Now she was really mad, and her eyes had a shine that he had never seen before. "I'm going to tear my clothes off and cut them up with a scissors. Then I won't have my dress and you won't have your stamps either."

He stared at her, numb and shocked.

She continued, "And if you keep looking at me like that I'm going to go out on the street stark naked and make a fool out of you."

"You've done that already," he assured her.

THERE is a fine but strong thread which snaps under too much strain. In Kimball's head was one of those filaments, and it snapped. For an instant he was blind, seeing nothing. But all the cogs and gears and clicks and detents were in working order, and he was thinking: Imaginably it's a hell of

a reason for committing murder—your wife stealing most of your stamp collection and going on a shopping binge—but I have stood for more than enough of this boneheadedness. She has squandered several thousand dollars on a dress, in effect. She is even more stupid than I thought. The only thing to do with her is . . . away.

He was standing as though hypnotized, and must have looked a little silly and spiffoed, because he had a habit of swinging his shoulders gently when he was with thought, pondering.

"I'm going to count up to three," she said, "and then I'm going to tear this dress right in front of you. One . . ."

He was still with thought.

"Two . . ."

He kept blinking his eyes, and she got ready to rip open the dress.

"Three . . ."

Nothing happened for a few seconds, until he focused his eyes on her and asked, "Huh?"

"I said I was going to count up to three."

"What the devil for?" he asked. He was most meticulous in his language. "I was merely concerned with where in consternation that mess of stamps went to."

"Oh." The anger died in her eyes, and her red lips softened, as though she had plans ahead. Her weight was on one leg, and it made her hips pretty. "I thought you were mad at me again."

"No, hardly. No, I'm not mad at you in the least." Doom was descending on him, and he knew it as he watched her smoothing the dress to herself. "Let's go to the kitchen."

"Go to the kitchen?" she asked. "Are you hungry?"

"Moderately," he answered. "But what I had in mind was a drink. This is the anniversary of the day we met each other."

She inhaled deeply. She said, "I knew you would see it my way, Lewie. Most of the time a guy just doesn't understand a girl." She followed him into the kitchen. "Joanne Kraczyk fights with her husband all the time, all day, because he works at home, like. He gets so mad that he does the laundry all by himself and keeps on swearing while he's doing it. And she swears back at him because he doesn't do it right. Men don't know how to do laundry, at all."

Kimball's interest was coming back. He asked, "Don't they? Haven't you ever heard of Chinamen? They do laundry, some of them."

"Yes, I know they do. But if you give them some fine linen or lace they'll send back something inferior or lose it. I know."

"Yeah-ah. I know, too. Some wormy fool in the Botham," said Lewie, "snatched that blue linen hanky that my mother sent me. For her husband or sweetheart, no doubt. Try to get it back. They put so much starch in the shirts that the collars crack off."

"Well," she said, covering everything.

Lew was busy making drinks, and thinking of all sorts of things that murderers think of.

HE asked himself two questions. First, am I going to do it? Second, how am I going to do it? Naturally, it had to be done in such a way that he wouldn't get caught. As a longtime reader of fact and fiction detective stories, Lewie had developed his own theories. Essentially, the simpler the crime, the safer. Make the crime an everyday occurrence, which it is, and mortally avoid complications.

As a matter of fact, he had considered writing stories for extra income. But during the day he didn't have enough time, and in the evening he was too tired or had something else to do.

In liquidating his wife he did not see any serious problem, and he was quite right. What was more, even if there was suspicion of murder, the police would not be able to establish any motive. The theft of the stamps was a secret of his own. Even if Ellie returned from the dead, she wouldn't be able to tell the cops anything, because she was too dumb to know what she had done. A man doesn't slay his wife just because she has gone on a buying spree.

No; he had his home, a most attractive wife, and she had no boy friends. Or had she? For an instant a grain of doubt fretted in his mind. But no; he knew her.

Having finished his drink, he washed his glass and rinsed it, putting it among other dishes on the drainboard.

"What's that on the stove?" he asked.

Obediently Ellie turned around to look. From behind, Lewie slugged her over the head with an empty soda bottle so hard that he heard her skull crack. He had to bludgeon her to make sure, because her hair was so thick.

The sight of her crumpling to the floor pitifully did not affect him very much, possibly because he was anaesthetized somewhat by drink. Now that he had started, he had to keep on going, because she was so badly hurt that he could never bring her back.

Her drink had shattered on the floor, and he avoided it because of the danger of leaving footprints.

Her dress was a long one. He lifted her skirt, raised her foot, and forcibly drove her high heel through the fabric, leaving her with her leg doubled. Conceivably she might have stooped, stepped on her skirt, tripped herself and knocked herself cold against the stove.

The stove was never cleared. On it now were four pots containing various things. After blowing out the pilot light, this being the kind of stove that lit

automatically, he turned on all four burners.

He gave one last look at her. He shouldn't have, because it gave him the most horrible twinge he had ever experienced, and it was going to haunt him, and haunt him, and he would be a prisoner of his folly the remainder of his life. The memory of her would waken him groaning in the night. There was nothing to do about it now. The smell of gas reached him, and he made his departure hastily.

The kitchen door was tight except for the slim crack at the bottom. If he knew anything about gas, it would rise to the ceiling. Then the level of concentration would descend rapidly because the kitchen wasn't large. When it reached the refrigerator pilot, which was gas operated—*whoom!*

When he reached the living room, the thrilling sound of the doorbell ringing in the kitchen stopped him in his tracks.

"My God," he whispered, "what could that be?"

There was nothing for him to do but wait. But he couldn't wait long, either, unless he went back there and turned off the gas. His indecision cost him his margin of safety. If he returned to the kitchen now, the chances were good that he would arrive just when the gas went *boom*. His clothes would reek of gas, too, if it didn't go off. No, he had to go through with this.

He opened the front door.

There was no one there on the step, and for an instant fear made him sick. This was no time for such things to happen. For he had certainly heard that bell ring, so someone must have pushed the button.

THERE was no time to linger. Shutting the door behind, he glanced around for small boys, and went down the street without too much hurry. **A**

couple of houses down, he saw a door close as someone entered a house. He never did find out who or what had rung his bell. He could only assume that someone had discovered that he was calling at the wrong address. But he realized that he was already in the toils of the unpredictable, the long arm of coincidence, or what will you have? He was so upset by the inexplicable ringing in his ears. It was something imagined.

At any rate, his heart beat fast with apprehension as he waited for the roar of the explosion. A lot of gas must be escaping, because it was taking a long time.

Or suppose he hadn't struck Ellie as hard as he thought, and she had gotten up and turned the gas off. . . .

He had forgotten whether he had bought a newspaper, so he bought one at a stand and took it with him to that bar which used the very, very cold ice in the Tom Collinses. He walked along behind the backs of people who were imbibing, looking for a place to crowd in.

A girl with a red mouth looked at him, and he thought that her smile stopped because of something that she had seen in his face.

He found a place at the bar, and the barman saw something in his face, too. Because he asked, "Have you been sick, Mac?"

"Why do you ask that?" Lewie inquired.

"You been in the Gents' Room for a long time," said Tom, the barman. "You sure you're all right?"

"Sure; I'm all right," said Lewie. "I guess it was the fish I had for lunch. Another Collins."

"I don't eat no fish on hot days. Especially lobster," said Tom. "You didn't finish the last Collins. You have one on me."

Here was a perfect alibi to help him along in case the cops started asking frightening questions. Tom thought that he had been in the bar all this time. Lewie didn't remember whether he had left a drink or not. It didn't matter; he was safe.

No doubt Lewie Kimball *did* look appreciably ill. He was pale, and beads of perspiration covered his face and even the backs of his hands with a shine. His mouth had a bluish tinge, as though he had heart trouble.

After he paid for his drink, he took down nearly a quarter of it in one swallow. He had been looked at briefly, but then no one paid any attention to him any further. He looked to the right of him and to the left of him, but the guys were engaged in oblivious conversation with the gals. The girls were extremely fresh and pretty; when they smiled, they seemed to introduce perfume into the air. The men were a mixture of soldiers and sailors. There were girls. And there were middle-aged people sitting at tables.

The explosion came.

It was a dull, long detonation that boomed through the streets. There was an instant of quiet in the bar while most of the people turned their heads to listen. When nothing else happened, the loud conversation went on again. A sailor slapped a girl hard on the back, and she sat still and smiled at him.

Near him Lewie heard a soldier say, "I'll be damned. That certainly sounded like a bomb to me. Something must have gone off."

His girl said, "C'mon. Let's have a drink."

Lewie took a slow sip of his drink. His eyes were riveted on a calendar pad behind the bar. It was Thursday, the 15th of the month.

He left his drink temporarily and

(Continued on page 102)

RATION COUPON # 18

Maybe what John Lister did with his ration book was not within the letter of the law. But he knew what he was doing, and he felt no sense of guilt. And he never realized that he was doing himself a bigger favor than he was to the woman in the restaurant



EVEN when the telephone rang, and he reached for the receiver with a trembling hand, John Lister told himself that this wouldn't be the message that would save his life. Luck had been against him too long to have it break in his favor now, he thought bitterly.

He was right. It wasn't Harley Nickerson, calling from Washington. It was Prentiss Morgan, the man he had robbed and betrayed, as the other had phrased it, after years of faithful employment.

"Any word from your friend as yet, John?" asked Morgan in his precise and rather rasping voice.

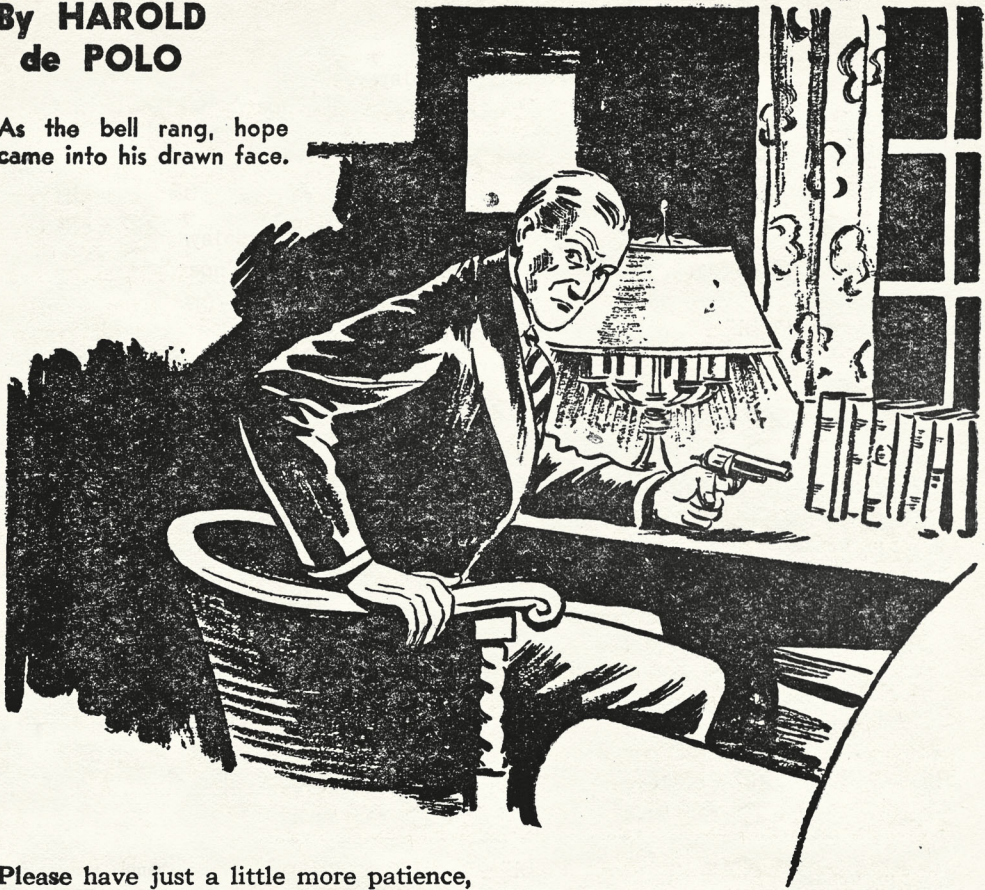
"No, sir. I'm sorry. He couldn't have seen my letter yet. He'd have called me, I'm sure."

"You've told me that at least ten times in the last two days, John," accused Morgan sternly.

"I know I have, and it's the truth," said Lister. "My letter is waiting for him on his desk in his office. His secretary told me she had herself signed for it. I sent it airmail, special delivery, registered. He's a busy man, with his war work. He's pretty close to the President, you know. I've even tried calling him at his home as well as at his office. I just can't get him. I'm sure he'll call me and help me before morning.

By HAROLD
de POLO

As the bell rang, hope
came into his drawn face.



Please have just a little more patience, sir."

"I have had patience. I have had much more patience than most people have with thieves, John."

Lister winced. In all his forty-three years, except for these last two days, he had never been called that. He didn't like it. It hurt him and seared right into his soul, largely because it was true. But he kept his voice even—a very mild and tired voice—and replied:

"I know, sir. I'm grateful. I *know* that Harley will help me out, when he reads my letter. Harley has millions, I don't have to tell you. We roomed together our last two years in college. He—well, he thought I helped him then—I mean with his studies—and he's always said he'd be glad to do

anything he could for me. I'm positive he'll lend me the fourteen thousand dollars I—I stole from you."

"I don't trust those childish college friendships. *I* never went to college. You did. Look what's happened. I want that money returned by the morning or you go to jail."

"If—perhaps if you'd allow me to go to Washington myself, sir, the way I wanted to when you discovered my books were short, I might have it by now," said Lister sadly.

"Men who gamble on horses can't be trusted. *I* never gambled on a horse. Probably you'd never come back if I'd given you permission to go."

"I could have gone anyway, and I haven't run away yet," said Lister, feel-

ing himself flush. "I promised you I wouldn't, and I promised you I'd make good in forty-eight hours or—or—well, you could do what you wanted. I still have until morning. I'm sure Harley—"

"Make good by the morning or you will be arrested, that's all I have to say. Good-night."

"Just a minute, sir, please. I'm sure Harley will call me, the minute he reads my letter. He—he offered me that job as his confidential secretary, remember, when he went to Washington right after Pearl Harbor. I wanted—well, you didn't want me to accept. You said I owed my loyalty to you. He offered me twice the money, more if I needed it, than—"

"You *did* owe your loyalty to me, John Lister, and this is the way you've shown it—by being a thief. I'll be generous and wait until the morning."

Then he heard the other receiver snap sharply down.

AS John Lister replaced the receiver of his own telephone, very slowly, one of the very few smiles of irony that had ever come to his lips played over them now. He was thinking, somewhat grimly, that if for some inexplicable reason Harley Nickerson didn't call him, didn't help him, Prentiss Morgan would never send him to jail. Then, just as slowly, as deliberately, yet with his smile gone, he pulled out a drawer of his desk and removed a cheap, nickel-plated revolver. It was very cold, rather rusty, yet it worked. He knew that. He had tested it, and it would take only one of the bullets in it to end his life.

He had decided that he would do that if he didn't hear from Harley, at midnight sharp. He couldn't stand the strain of waiting until morning, especially as he had begun to have doubts about Harley. The secretary, on his last call to Washington, had seemed evasive.

It was odd, as Morgan had previously remarked, that a man of Nickerson's importance, heading one of the vitally important war boards, couldn't be located. But he couldn't, somehow, lose his faith in Harley. Harley would call him, he kept telling himself. He and Harley had been very close, in college, and even through the intervening years, when they had lunched together on the other's occasional visits to New York, his old roommate had always urged him to "quit that damned Morgan skinflint" and let him, Harley, get him a *real* job.

Now, a bit wistfully, John Lister wished that he had heeded those words. It was that same sense of loyalty that had kept him from doing so. He was a timid man, a gentle one, who had always carried gratitude almost to the point of ridiculousness. When he and Harley had graduated—the latter to step into millions and an assured position in the world—he himself, who had worked his way through college, had married the librarian with whom he had been in love since his sophomore year. He had had great independence and refused all offers from friends, and had taken the job as bookkeeper with Prentiss Morgan after having answered an advertisement in the Sunday paper.

The job, of course, was to have been the start to much bigger things, but Ronnie had come along, and then Ethel, and young Prentiss, and his wife, May, had never been too well in health. He had stayed on with Morgan, had been forced to stay on, whether he had wanted to or not. On the salary of a bookkeeper, even though he had finally become head one, a man cannot do much in New York about saving money when he is supporting a wife and three children. Then Prentiss had died, during an influenza epidemic, and that had taken all his scant savings. Then he had lost Ethel, just as she had been about

to enter the university on a scholarship. That had taken the added savings he had accumulated, and it had also taken something more from his heart.

HE shook his head, now, hopelessly. Ethel's death had broken May up pretty badly, and she had been a semi-invalid from then on. They had both struggled to see that Ronnie might be kept in college—his dad's college—and get the start in the world that would give him a good future. Harley, in fact, had promised to take him on in one of his corporations. The rumblings of war had sounded at the start of Ronnie's senior year, and the boy had promptly enlisted in the aviation corps. He was a captain now—an ace, a decorated and famous American flier—and that was one more reason, perhaps the culminating one, why John Lister felt he had to kill himself rather than be sent to jail as a—a *thief*. An American officer could not, should not, have a father serving a prison sentence for *stealing*.

Poor May. How proud she would have been, could she have known of Ronnie. May hadn't lived that long, though. May had become a complete invalid, finally, with operation after operation, all of them futile, and that was what had caused him to become the "horse gambler" of which Morgan had accused him of being. He had never seen a horse race in his life—had never wanted to—but one day, knowing of his financial worry, his assistant had suggested he might come in with him on a parlay. He had. He had put up five precious dollars, and he had been rewarded by getting back two hundred and forty. It had paid a hospital bill, a few household expenses, something to the doctor, a—yes, it had paid, he remembered now, the overdue telephone account.

John Lister laughed, when he thought of that, when he looked at the instrument. He had not wanted a telephone, he had not needed one, in this modest little apartment in Greenwich Village on one of the less pretentious side streets off lower Fifth Avenue. But Prentiss Morgan, a few years ago, had decided that as "important an employee" as John Lister should "be obtainable at any hour of the day or night." Consequently, he had had the telephone installed, although the few paltry dollars it cost him a month had been a formidable liability. There it was, though, there it was.

He looked at it almost with hate. From the day it had been connected, he told himself, his bad luck had commenced. Another parlay had gone wrong, another, still another, until it had become the old, old story of which he had read and heard so much. He had first taken three hundred dollars, and falsified the books, sure that he could replace it the next day. That horse had lost—lost by a nose. So it had gone on, and on and on. Finally, two days ago, Prentiss Morgan had discovered the shortage, and had given him these forty-eight hours in which to make good. Two days in which to get fourteen thousand dollars. That was when he had written Harley, after having been refused permission to go to Washington to attempt to see his old friend.

HE fingered the revolver he held in his hand, but with loathing. He didn't like revolvers, he didn't like killing himself, yet it was the only thing he could do. He felt that he had *lied* to Prentiss Morgan—and this hurt him, deeply—for apparently Harley Nickerson *wasn't* going to call him. He didn't know why. He couldn't understand it, unless Harley, after reading his letter,

couldn't fathom why an ordinarily decent fellow might become a—a thief. That, probably, was the reason why the wire from Washington was silent. There could be no other reason. His secretary—who had seemed so thoughtful—*must* have gotten hold of him by this time.

John Lister, looking again at the weapon he held, felt a shudder go through him. Hastily, he replaced it in the drawer. It was eight o'clock, his inexpensive wrist watch told him, and he suddenly realized he hadn't eaten in two whole days. No wonder he felt weak, and a little sick. He wouldn't, feeling the way he was, even have the strength or courage to shoot himself, he thought with a wry smile. He realized, this time with a short laugh that verged on the hysterical, that all condemned men were allowed one last meal. Usually, he had gathered from his newspaper and fiction reading, they could order what they wanted, all their favorite dishes.

He put his hand in his pocket and

pulled out a two dollar bill, all he had left in the world. He might as well spend it and get some strength, some courage, to shoot himself if Harley didn't call by midnight. He would walk over to the Longview restaurant on Fifth Avenue, where he and May had gone on very gala occasions—to celebrate an anniversary, a rise in pay, occasionally a birthday when they had been alone. He would order the creamed chicken in casserole that he and May had always liked so much. It was

"Please accept this," he said. "It would please my wife, were she alive."





the specialty of the restaurant chain today, at \$1.35, he had happened to notice in their daily advertisement in the morning paper. With hot rolls and butter, a French pastry, a cup of coffee, his two dollars would just about cover the bill and leave him enough for a modest tip.

He reached for the telephone, abruptly, and asked for the long distance operator. He explained, painstakingly, that he was expecting a call from Washington, but that he was forced to be absent for—yes, for about an hour. He would be home after that, and Mr. Nickerson was to be given this message if he called in the meantime. Then, al-

most eagerly, he rose and got his hat. He was a wan man in a shabby pepper-and-salt suit, but he walked springily, almost gaily, as he went out the door. He was thinking of the glorious times he had enjoyed with May when they had gone to Longview on their infrequent and memorable sprees.

HE was lucky enough, when he got there, to be given the little table in the corner where he and May had always liked to sit. That might be a good omen, he tried to assure himself. It might mean that Harley *would* call, before midnight.

As he was served his creamed chicken, as he started to somewhat ceremoniously eat it, he happened to notice two women at an adjoining table. Lister, ordinarily, didn't notice women, didn't pay any attention to them whatsoever. One of them, however—the one

whose profile he could see so clearly—reminded him of May, of his Ethel. She had the same eager light in her violet eyes that his wife had always had and that no tribulation had ever been able to dim, the same sort luster to her soft brown hair that reminded him of his daughter. He liked her voice, too, when he heard her speaking to her companion. Somehow, it was pleasant to have her near him, during his last meal.

He could hear snatches of their conversation, and he found himself striving to hear all of it. He didn't quite know why he did this, for he had never been an inquisitive person, except that he remembered that he and May, when dining here, had often played the foolish game of trying to decide what sort of lives the people about them led. May, had she been here with him tonight, would probably have been interested in these two women at the nearby table. May might have noticed—surely would have noticed—that the hair of the younger woman was like their Ethel's, curled up at the nape of the neck in the same way. May would have been happy, had this been while Ethel had been alive; she would have been sad, yet somehow pleased, had it been after her death.

"Poor Jim," Lister heard the woman say to her companion. "He'll really be broken-hearted. Jim's so proud of me at the yearly ball. He thinks I'm the best dancer there, and he always wanted me to have the best slippers."

"Sure you can't use your old ones, Gwen?"

"They're hopeless, Helen. One of the straps is worn through. I wouldn't mind, but Jim would. I'd hoped to save out a number eighteen coupon for myself, but the children go through their shoes so fast I should have ten or twelve coupons a year for each of them."

"Wish I could help you, Gwen, but

I've used my last one. You wear a four and I wear a six, remember. I can't lend you anything."

"I don't mind. I could mend the old ones, I suppose. It's just that Jim will mind. Jim's so good, Helen, and this is the one big moment of his life, every year. He— . . ."

John Lister found himself smiling, wistfully. The woman who reminded him of May, and Ethel, was apparently going to some ball with her husband, and she didn't have Shoe Coupon #18 with which to buy a pair of dancing slippers for the event. It brought back memories of May, when they had come here to this same place, sat at this same table, on the occasion of his first raise. His children had needed shoes, then, and they had already bought them. May had needed a pair, too, badly, and they had debated, for a long hour or so, whether to buy them or to come here to celebrate his good fortune. May had won, and she had gone without shoes so that they might splurge on their dinner.

FINISHING his chicken, ordering his pastry and coffee, he continued listening to their talk. The lack of the slippers, to Gwen, was almost a dire catastrophe. She kept telling her friend Helen how sorry she was for *Jim*, just as he knew May had frequently felt sorry for *him* when she had been ashamed, dear girl, about her outmoded clothes. Then, as he took the first sip of his coffee, as he saw the women were getting ready to pay their check, a sudden and happy inspiration came to John Lister. Pulling out his wallet, he got his War Ration Book One. He rose from his table, hurriedly, nervously, and went over to the adjoining one. He said, in an apologetic and kindly and even humble voice:

"I—I beg your pardon, madam. I am

not a flirt, I do not mean to offend you. I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. You remind me of my wife, my daughter. They are both dead. I—I don't need my number eighteen shoe coupon. I don't need any of my ration book, where I am going. I mean, I won't be here in this—this country, after tonight. I don't think it is too illegal, madam, to ask you to accept my book. I understand stores are not too—too punctilious about such things, as long as they get the coupon. . . . Will you please accept this book? It would please me, and please my wife were she alive, I think," he ended simply. He then added, with a short sigh and a shake of his head: "Don't be offended, madam."

She wasn't. He liked the clear, straight way in which her eyes met his own. Her gaze was as direct as May's had been, and there was the same little flicker of appreciative amusement in them. She told him, in a voice as honest as May's, or Ronnie's:

"No, I'm not offended. I'm grateful. And I *don't* think it unfair to accept, especially as you're leaving the country and won't need the coupon. I—besides, I think Jim's doing his share, and I like to make him happy. He's my husband, as you probably know. I— . . . You're sure you're leaving the country? You're sure you won't need this ration book?"

"I am very, very sure, madam," said John Lister, with a polite bow.

JOHN LISTER, for a man who was to go back to his home to kill himself, went there almost happily. It had given him really acute joy to give his Shoe Coupon #18 to the woman called Gwen. It was the sort of thing that May would have liked. Once back in his somewhat shoddy apartment, though, his nerves got hold of him again. He picked up the telephone receiver with a hand that trembled pathetically, and

inquired if there had been a call from Washington while he had been away.

There hadn't.

John Lister still had close to three hours before the time he had set for his death if Harley didn't call. He took out pencil and paper, from his desk, and started to write to Ronnie. He wanted to explain, to his son, why he had become a thief. Perhaps—no, he was sure—the boy would understand. He wrote page after page, his thin, facile fingers pouring out all his inmost thoughts in his legible, spencerian hand. When he had finished the letter, when he had put it into an envelope addressed to Captain Ronald Lister, it was exactly seven minutes of twelve.

He again reached into the desk drawer for his gun, but just as he did so the doorbell rang.

John Lister sprang up, hope on his drawn face. It might be a telegram, from Harley. Harley might not have been able, for some reason, to get him on the 'phone. Somehow, he had a wild intuition, that this ringing of the bell might save his life. He walked, a bit shakily, to the button in the hallway near the kitchen that would release the lock on the downstairs door. Then he hurried back to the living room, into the narrow hall of his railroad apartment, and opened the door.

He saw someone in uniform coming up the stairs, and his heart soared elatedly with the hope that it might be a Western Union boy. It wasn't. It was a man in the blue of the New York Police Department, with the stripes on his sleeve that denoted he was a sergeant.

"I—I didn't think Mr. Morgan would send you after me so soon," John Lister said. "I—he had said he would wait until morning. Come in, officer."

"Sorry to bother you at this hour, sir,

(Continued on page 100)

By ROGER TORREY



GEORGE ENSLOW owned the *Tribune* but that was just a side line and a club. He was a politician and he used the papers only to whip his opponents into line. I didn't like him and I didn't like his paper and I didn't care whether he knew it.

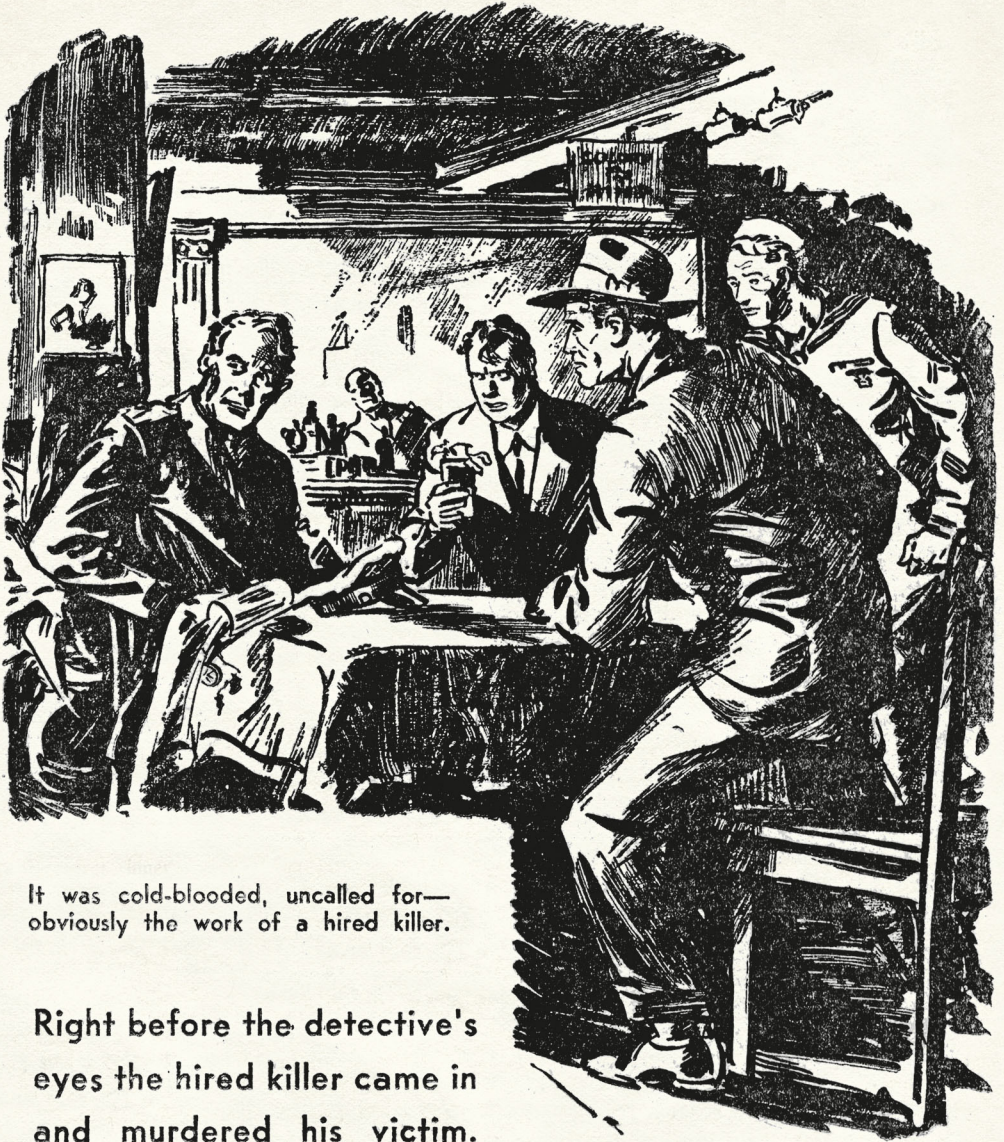
I said: "Then you want me to prowl around and investigate vice conditions in the bay district? That it?"

"That's it."

"What are you gunning for Hardesty for?"

Hardesty was the police captain for that district, and a good guy and a friend of mine.

"Nothing personal," Enslow said. "The conditions in that section are deplorable. Our sailor and soldier boys are faced with open vice when they



It was cold-blooded, uncalled for—
obviously the work of a hired killer.

Right before the detective's
eyes the hired killer came in
and murdered his victim.

And, because he was unarmed, there was nothing the
detective could do just then. But he didn't forget

CLEAN-UP KILL

enter that region. The bars do not close at legal hours. I have—ahem—heard there are hotels in that neighborhood who do not insist on proper registration.”

“D’ya expect a man and wife to show their marriage certificate?” I asked.

“Hardly that. But our boys are not getting the protection there they are entitled to. I want an investigation made. The *Tribune* will run a series of articles, dictated by you and rewritten by one of our reporters. It will appear under your name, of course.”

“Not under mine, mister,” I said. “If you want Hardesty’s scalp, you’ll have to get another boy to play Indian. I want no part of it.”

He smiled sadly at me and I went out of his office and hurried to the nearest bar to get the taste of him out of my mouth.

That had been two weeks before, and for the last week the newspaper had been blossoming out with snide articles signed by Wilford Davis, a competitor of mine.

Though not a serious one. Davis would take stuff a buzzard would turn up its beak at. He and Enslow made a perfect team.

IT was the first time I’d been in the harbor district since I’d talked with Enslow and I was there on a job for my oldest and favorite client. A routine job—the work I’d always done for him. I was looking for young Mike Boggs, who’d busted loose again, and I’d headed for the harbor because Mike always ended there. Mike was a boat fiend—he ran everything from outboard skiffs to a three masted schooner rigged yacht—and he always ended at the water front, talking boats and buying drinks for any sailor that would listen to him.

Old man Boggs had plenty of money

and didn’t care what young Mike did as long as he reported back at the house once in a while, but when Mike would put on a three week bender, the old man would hire me to find and bring in what was left of the kid.

Not that Mike was vicious or even a bad drunk. He’d just get started and have so much fun at it he wouldn’t stop.

So I went to the precinct station, thinking that Hardesty or his men might have seen the kid around.

Hardesty had a cigar in his mouth and a worried look on his face. He talked to me around the cigar, rolling it back and forth in his mouth.

“Young Mike? Sure! Last I seen him he was in the Golden Hind, telling a couple of Navy boys his idea of the proper rig for a thirty foot yawl.”

“Tight?”

“Tighter than a tick.”

“The kid takes it pretty bad, captain. The Navy turned him down first. Then he offered himself and that power cruiser of his to the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard turned him down but took the boat. He’s got flat feet and a heart murmur and the hearing’s bad in one ear. He went off a high board in a swimming tank once and landed on that side, and it ruptured that ear drum.”

“Tough,” said Hardesty, not paying the least attention.

“What’s wrong, captain?”

“Oh nothing.”

“You wouldn’t kid a pal, would you?”

Hardesty said: “Look, chum,” and slammed a heavy fist down on his desk. “I run this district the best I can. There’s some gambling and some after hour whiskey sold, but there’s damn’ little of it figuring the size of the territory and the boys I have to deal with. They come off the boats after a tough trip, and they’ve got their pockets full of money and a yen to spend it fast. They figure that if they don’t spend it

then, it may go down with them their next trip out. If I don't let 'em blow off steam down here, they'll go uptown and dynamite the town. So what do I get? A snooping private cop. A bunch of write-ups in that stinking *Tribune*. To read 'em you'd think I was running another Barbary Coast and taking a cut from every joint that's open."

"Davis in your hair, eh?"

"With Enslow back of him. Since I closed up a bunch of places that were backed with Enslow money, he's been riding me with spurs."

"Why'd you close 'em?"

"Too rough. I'll let the boys go a little, when I think it's best, but I'm damned if I'll put up with open bare-faced robbery. The boys were short changed in the bars and they were rolled in the alleys by the same bartenders that short changed 'em. If there was trouble and I arrested the thieves, it was Enslow money that made bail for 'em and an Enslow lawyer that pleaded their cases. I closed 'em up to protect myself and the district."

I said it was a problem, and Hardesty snorted and said: "I get the dead wood on that Enslow, and I'll hang him higher than Haaman. I mean it, John."

I said I'd help haul on the ropes and that I'd see the captain again. And then I went down the street to the Golden Hind.

YOUNG Mike Boggs was at a back table, nice and mellow and having himself a time. He was with a C. P. O. who had seven hash marks down his sleeve and with a sailor who had a service ribbon four inches long across his jumper. They were on Planters PUNCHES, which meant Mike hadn't run out of his allowance money as yet.

I eased up to the table and Mike looked up at me and grinned. "Comes now the old watch dog," he told the

sailors. "Every time I break loose, old Johnny smells me out. Sit down and have a drink, Johnny."

I sat down and ordered one of the same. Mike said: "The chief, here, was on the China Coast for a while, and he's been telling me about how the boys over there use those matting sails on those junks. It beats me. They steer 'em to a certain extent, but how they can do it, with as much weight and wind resistance above water line, is something I'll never know."

I said: "Your old man wants you to report, Mike. He says that if you come home now, you can turn around and come right back."

"He knows if I go home, I'll go to bed and sleep for the next three days."

"He may have thought of that," I admitted.

"If I go, I'll take my friends with me."

"Your old man would like 'em, Mike. Why not? Why don't you guys go home with him? He and his old man have got a guy working for 'em that can mix better drinks than any bartender in town."

"That's why the old man's got him," young Mike said. "How's about it? You guys both got liberty?"

Both the boys were feeling good and both thought it was a good idea. We were discussing whether to leave right then or have another drink when I looked up and saw Wilford Davis coming in. He was trying to act as if he wasn't a private detective, but not doing well at it, because by that time every joint man in the section knew him and all about him.

I shouted: "Hi, Willie! How's the gum-shoe acket these days?"

Davis looked over and raised a hand and gave me a pained look.

And the look stayed right on his face

because right then the first of three slugs took him in the belly.

THE shooter was a short, dark, foreign looking guy. He was using a .45 revolver, but it had the barrel cut off two inches in front of the cylinder. Also the trigger guard was cut away and the hammer spur was filed completely off. It was strictly a belly gun, with everything off it that could hang in a man's pocket. It had to be used double-action, of course, but the guy was an artist at it. He ripped off two more on the string so fast that the third caught Davis before he was half way to the floor from the effect of the first.

Then he turned and went out the front door like a bat out of hell—and I sat at the table and watched him go.

Young Mike said: "My God, Johnny! Aren't you going after him?"

I patted the left shoulder of my coat and said: "I'm clean. I was looking for you, not gun play."

"But my God, Johnny. That was murder."

"And hired murder."

The C. P. O. said: "I've been up and down this world for fifty some years and that's the first time I ever seen anything like that. By the Lord. I think I'm going to lose my cookies."

He made a bee-line for the men's room with that. The sailor, who couldn't have been over twenty, hadn't batted an eye.

He said: "These old guys can't take it. That was a slick piece of work."

I tossed him a card and said: "Collect the chief and meet me at my office. You guys can maybe make some dough for yourself on this leave. At least you can have some fun. That is, if you want it."

"We're with Mike, here," he objected.

I said: "Mike'll be along, won't you, Mike?"

"Sure Johnny."

"Then come on right now. We don't want to be here when Hardesty starts to collect witnesses. Meet me at the office, eh, sailor?"

The kid said: "You couldn't lose us, mister."

I parked young Mike in a Turkish Bath and told them to give him the works. I wanted him sober, even if he sported a hang-over. That, because I knew he'd be doing some drinking in the course of business and I didn't want him passing out half way around the track. And then I went up to the office and got his old man on the phone.

I said: "This is Conlon. I've got the boy."

"He home?"

"I've got a couple of guys sweating the liquor out of him."

"He in that bad shape?"

"Hell, no! But I want to use him. We saw a killing that I'd like to break. I need Mike to help me on it."

"Why?"

"It's too long a story to tell over the phone. Mind if I use him?"

"Lord, no. It'll take his mind off raising hell, maybe. Anything I can do, you call me."

"Sure."

"And, Conlon! Ugh—you sort of keep your eye on him, will you? Ugh—you know Mike. He gets excited."

I said: "I'll look after him," and hung up the phone, grinning. Old man Boggs didn't waste any words because he hated to use them. What he meant was that young Mike was the apple of his eye and that he'd raise hell if anything happened to the kid. And that he knew the kid was a hell-cat in a fight and would go a mile out of his way to get in one. Calling him excitable was the old man's way of recognizing that.

I sent Sarah, my office girl, down to

the corner for a bottle of whiskey and sat back and waited for the two sailors . . . and they were in the office before Sarah was back with the purchase.



Just as the bruiser grabbed the girl, Georgie took a smack at him.

I said: "Look, chief! I'm getting young Mike boiled out, so he'll have an even start. What did you think of the shooting?"

"Cold-blooded murder. Damnedest thing I ever seen."

"Want to work on it with me?"

"Sure."

"You, sailor?"

The young one said: "Sure."

He looked like a baby but he weighed at least two hundred and I wasn't forgetting those service stripes he wore.

"Then here's the set-up. That guy that got killed has been snooping that district and having what he found printed in one of the papers. He's been raising merry hell in that section.

Enough so that there's talk about the governor, who's a stuffed shirt, may send help down to the town to clear it up. Got that?"

"Sure," the chief said. "You think the guy got in somebody's hair and that they had him killed to get him out of the way."

"That's wrong. That's the way it's supposed to look, that's all. Think of it this way. Everybody in that section knew this Davis, the man who was killed. He couldn't find out a thing they didn't want him to know. They were wise to him. They know that if they had him knocked off, there'd be another man put in there they couldn't spot for awhile. They'd rather have Davis fooling around alive, then Davis dead and a stranger on the job."

"That sounds reasonable," the chief admitted.

"So there's something else behind it. That's what I want to find out."

"Any ideas?" asked the sailor.

"Not as yet."

HE grinned. He said: "It sounds like it'd be fun finding out. Just one thing, Mister Conlon. I'm sending most of my dough home to be saved for me. I'm going to buy a farm after this war's over. So I'm short. Do the chief and I get expense money?"

"You do. And you get a cut in anything I can collect."

"Any chance of you collecting?"

I said: "Any time a man's shot down in plain sight, in a crowded bar, there's a reason for it. If he's looking into vice conditions and so on, there's money behind the reason. And if there's money, I should collect some of it."

"Then this guy that was killed wasn't a pal of yours? He was in the same business, wasn't he?"

"He was. But I hated his guts."

"Just in for the money?"

"That, and because it don't look well for a guy in my business to be shot down like that. It might give people ideas about me. I might be the next one on the list if this killing goes over."

It was then that Sarah came back with the whiskey, and she'd remembered to pick up a couple of bottles of seltzer water along with it, this without being told. I had the ice in the office water cooler.

The sailor took one long look at her and sighed. He said: "Mister Conlon, after seeing that, I'll even pay my own expenses. Just to stick around with you."

He meant that Sarah was a pretty girl.

Young Mike got there just as we were going into our second round.

I didn't think it would be hard to pick up Wilford Davis' trail but I knew it would be a wearing one to follow. For that reason I sent the two sailors on it—they could crowd the joints and ask a few questions as well as I could, and I had other things to do.

The first thing was to go to the Harlequin Bar which was the unofficial newspaper headquarters. I took young Mike with me, more to keep him out of trouble than anything else, but I found him a help. He knew every reporter in town—he'd talked to most of them while he was getting in and out of scrapes.

We went in and bellied up to the bar and ordered drinks, and I asked the bar man: "Seen Joe Henson in today?"

He gave me a funny look I couldn't figure. "He was in earlier," he said.

"Any idea where he'd be, besides at the *Tribune*?"

"You trying to rib me, Conlon?"

I knew the guy but not too well. "Hell, no! Why should I?"

"You'll find him at the morgue."

I must have looked the way I felt

because he added: "Some guy gunned him out at Second and Broad, about half an hour ago. That's why none of the boys are in here. They're back to their jobs, writing it up."

"I knew Joe Henson," young Mike volunteered.

"He was the guy that was writing up the dirt that Davis dug up."

The bar man said darkly: "This ties it, too. Any time a newsman is killed, the lid blows off. They'll clean up that harbor section and plenty, right now."

"Figure it ties in with that, hunh?"

"Of course. First Davis got it and then Henson. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

I paid for the drinks and we walked out. I said: "It's getting bigger and better, Mike. There goes our chance of finding out from Henson just what Davis had dug up that was so hot."

"Henson wouldn't have told you anyway, Johnny. He'd have used it in the paper."

"Not if I paid more for it than the paper would," I said. "I don't like to speak ill of the dead, but Henson was strictly rat. The *Tribune* don't pay wages enough to get a legitimate newspaper man on the staff, and the guys they've got would sell out their own mothers for a little ough-day. It just means we've got to start from scratch."

"The chief and Georgie may have found out something," young Mike said.

"Georgie?"

"That's the sailor. There's so many sailors on his ship that are named George that they call this one Georgie. It's because he's just a kid."

I thought of Georgie's two hundred pounds and said: "Georgie's going to be quite a boy when he gets his growth."

HARDESTY was in the Golden Hind when we walked in. He'd been in and out he told me, and that wasn't all.

He said: "Why'd you run out, Johnny? I know you were in here and saw the shooting. Why didn't you stick around?"

"I knew I'd see you, captain."

"Did you know the shooter?"

"I did not."

"Young Mike know him?"

"He does not."

Mike said thoughtfully: "Now wait a minute, Johnny. I've been thinking. I've seen the guy but I can't place him. He's a sailor, I know that. He's off a merchant ship, I can tell you, that, too. But what one or where I saw him I don't know."

"Were you drunk when you saw him?" Hardesty demanded.

"I must have been. It would have been down here around the harbor, and I don't hang around here unless I'm on a bender."

Hardesty snorted something and sailed out, and we sat down and waited for the chief and Georgie. We'd fixed the Golden Hind as the meeting place because it was about the center of things.

And we were sitting there when the wharf rat sidled up to us.

He was wearing clothes that I wouldn't have given to the rag man, and he was half seas over. He'd got that way on canned heat, if the smell that went along with him meant a thing. He was little and all crippled up, and he walked like a crab, making as much distance to the side as he did ahead.

He said: "You'll be Conlon, hey?"

"That's right."

"I got a message for you."

"Okay. What is it?"

He stood there waiting and I finally caught wise and passed him over a dollar bill. He said: "It's some young kid of a sailor. A big lad, that one. He says for you to come to Big May's place."

It's the Mars—a rooming house. Two blocks down the street and half up the side street there."

"I know the place."

"And so do I," said young Mike. "And how. I got touted into it once and lost six hundred and forty bucks before I could figure out the dice were shaved. And then I went to jail."

"What for?" asked the messenger service.

"I hit Big May's boy friend over the head with a chair," Mike said. "He sort of got sore about it and hit me back with a table lamp. Then the cops came and took us all away."

"You should have killed the fink," the messenger service told us and hobbled away.

I said: "That'll be Georgie and he's maybe found something out."

"Where'll the chief be?"

"Finding out something else, I hope," I told him, leading the way out of the place.

THE Mars was a typical water front flop house. The stairs led straight up the street to the second floor and at the top of them there was a table with a dog-eared entry book and one chair. There was a bell with a sign over it reading *Manager*, and that was the office. There were three stories to it and there was a bath on every floor. As there were about forty rooms, or cubbies, to the floor, the bath percentage wasn't high—but then, most of the customers were up there to sleep off a drunk, and the twenty-five cents a bed cost was a fair price for the privilege.

Strictly a joint.

We got to the office and stood staring at the bell, with no idea where Georgie might be, and then Big May came waddling out from her apartment down the hall.

She said: "Agh, you, Johnny Con-

lon," to me, and gave me a grin with it. Then she saw young Mike and lost the smile. "And it's you, you scut," she told him. "You up here to raise hell with a decent house or are you up here in peace."

"Peace, peace, it's wonderful," young Mike told her, and she turned her grin back on.

"And what will you boys be wanting?" she asked. "There's no game running at this hour of the day, if that's what you're looking for. And every girl in the place is a decent working girl that wouldn't let either of you scuts in her room with the door open and a copper on guard in the hall."

All three of us laughed. Then Georgie stuck his head out from a room down the hall and bawled out:

"Hey, men! Front and center."

"You with that lad?" May asked.

"He's young Mike's pal," I told her.

"A fine boy," May said, and actually sighed. "You can believe it or not, Johnny, but I've never robbed a service man yet. At least not since the war started."

I didn't believe her but I didn't say so.

"If I had a boy of my own, that's where I'd want him to be."

"The spirit does you credit, May," I said.

Georgie bawled out again: "Hey! You guys coming?"

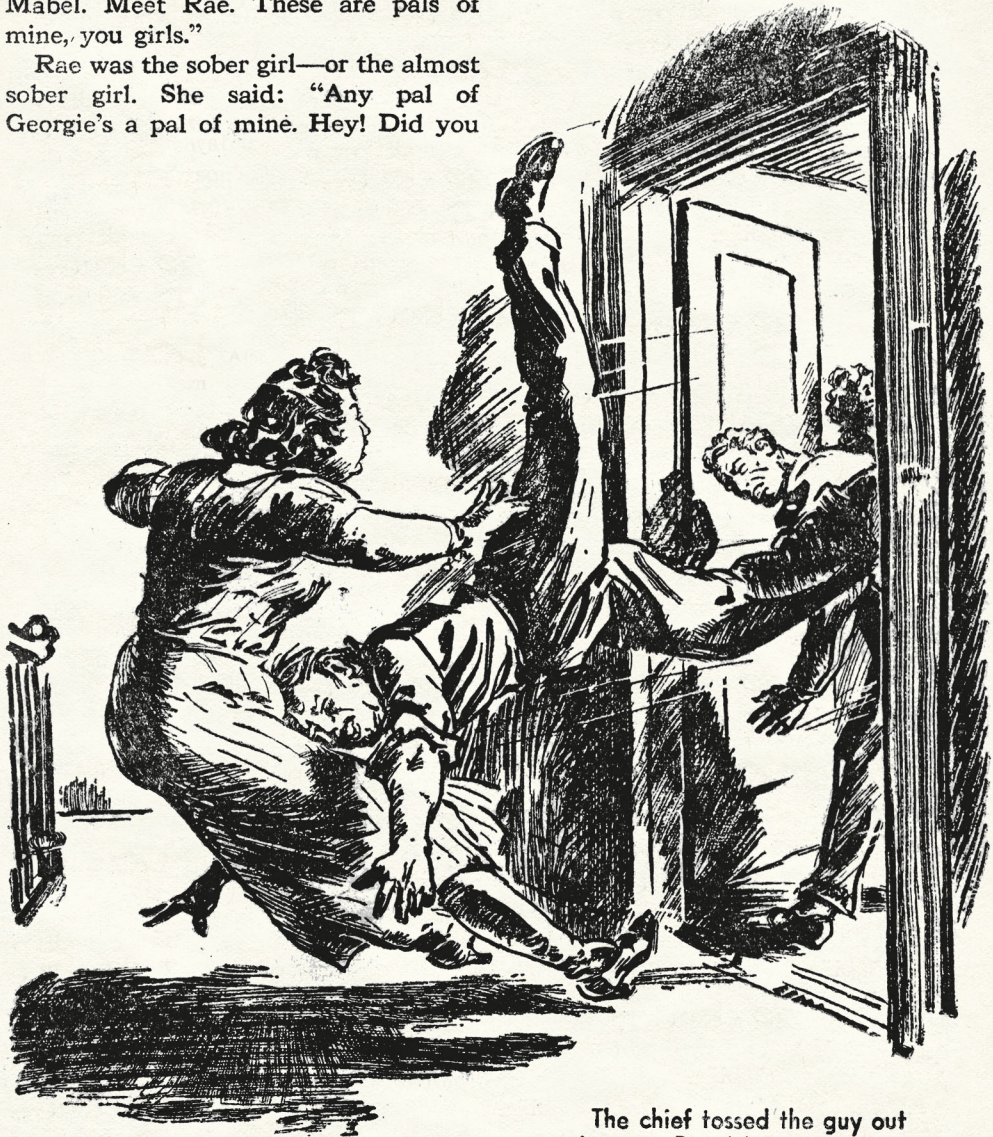
We said goodbye to May and went down to Georgie. May just stood in the hall and watched us go.

Georgie was in a room with three girls and at least six quarts of assorted liquor. There was gin, whiskey, and rum—the only thing the hootch had in common was that it was the cheapest stuff sold in stores. Two of the girls were higher than kites, but Georgie and the third girl were almost sober.

Georgie said: "Meet Josie. Meet

Mabel. Meet Rae. These are pals of mine, you girls."

Rae was the sober girl—or the almost sober girl. She said: "Any pal of Georgie's a pal of minè. Hey! Did you



The chief tossed the guy out just as Big May came in.

happen to know that guy that got killed a little while ago? Hey?"

I looked blank and said: "Why, no! I heard there'd been a shooting, though."

"Believe it or not, the guy's been making a play for me. Absolutely. Every night he's been around. This

whiskey that I'm drinking, and that you're going to drink, was what he give me with his own hands. What you think of that, hey?"

I said it was very interesting. She poured us a drink—two waterglasses full of that rot gut, and I almost strangled with the swallow I took.

Georgie took his full shot down and didn't blink an eye, and I decided the Navy really raised men out of boys. He said: "I got a notion to send back word to the chief. What d'ya say, Johnny?"

I said it was a good idea. He went out in the hall, probably to look for the crippled messenger he'd sent after us, and Mabel, who was the drunkest girl, came over and sat in my lap. She wasn't being affectionate—she was just lonesome, and she proved it by starting crying about some sailor she'd known who'd gone down on a tanker. The other one made a half hearted pass at young Mike but he fended her away with no trouble—and Rae took another drink of whiskey and told us all that Georgie was the cutest sailor she'd ever met.

Then Georgie came back and told us he'd sent Limpy for the chief. I'd been right—Limpy was the messenger who'd gone for us.

THE chief and the rest of our company got there together, or practically so. First was the company—three big bruisers I didn't know, and with the mechanized division to back them up. This last was the shooter who'd killed Wilford Davis. He was the boss, but he stood in the background with his hand tucked under his coat.

They came in without knocking and they left the door open. The first of the bruisers said: "Okay, Rae, you fink—! You better get some street clothes on or come the way you are now. Somebody wants to see you."

Rae was wearing a house dress—one of the kind that sweep the floor and fasten with a zipper down the front. It must have been a sort of drinking uniform because the other two girls were wearing the same sort of thing. She stared and said: "Hell with you! I'm not going any place. I'm staying right here."

"Get her on her feet," the gun man snarled, from the back.

The bruiser reached out and caught her under the arms, and it was then that Georgie took a smack at the guy and knocked him into the wall. He started to follow it up, but the shooter brought out that cutdown .45. He didn't say a word—he didn't have to. He just brought the gun in sight, and Georgie stopped as though he'd run into a steel fence.

He was no fool kid and I was liking him more by the minute. If he'd chumped it on, he'd have got a belly full of lead and he knew it.

Then I looked past the shooter and saw the chief, just standing there in the doorway looking the situation over. The shooter waved the gun he held out to the side, so the chief could see it.

He said to Mike and Georgie and me: "Over by the wall, guys. Face it and reach up for it. Move, now."

He had an accent but he spoke clear enough for us to follow him and no mistake.

And then the chief reached out a big hand and clamped it on the gun, holding the cylinder so it couldn't turn. It puts a revolver out of action absolutely—that cylinder has to revolve as the gun goes to full cock, and if it's blocked, the gun is harmless.

I GOT my own gun clear as this happened, and both Mike and Georgie sailed into action with a bang. I slammed my gun against the jaw of the big guy facing me and Georgie took it up with the first one right where he'd left off. Mike was having his hands full with the third of the muscle men because he was giving away at least forty pounds, but I saw he was holding his own and turned to see what the chief was doing.

He wasn't doing badly either. He

was no chicken, but he'd had training and he was as hard as nails. Just as I looked he took the gun away from the shooter, and in the next second he had him over his hip and shoulder in a flying mare. He was taking him right back through the open door, and he tossed him through it just as Big May appeared there. The shooter landed full center on her and they went down in a pile.

Then I slid to the side of Mike's man and clipped him across the jaw with the barrel of my gun and he went down to join the first one I'd smacked on the floor. And Georgie made it a hundred per cent by laying one on his opponent's whiskers that landed so hard the guy's home folks must have felt it.

I got out in the hall in time to see Big May's old man just high-tailing it down the hall. I shouted for him to halt, but he just put on another burst of speed.

Even then I didn't shoot him. I put a slug right over him, though, and he braked to a halt so fast he skidded up the matting on the hall floor.

And then we waited for Hardesty—and spent the time getting Rae and her two drunken pals into clothes fit to wear at a respectable police station.

That is, Georgie and Mike and I did this. The chief spent his time holding a gun on our collection and telling 'em what he'd do to 'em if he ever got 'em aboard his ship.

I took it the brig would look like Heaven to 'em, after he'd put 'em through the ropes.

IT was simple enough and Hardesty didn't take much time to work it out. Enslow, the *Tribune* owner, was the brains behind it. In the first place, he was sore because Hardesty had closed the places he was backing. And he saw a chance to make a fortune, if that dis-

trict was run wide open under his protection.

He wanted Hardesty out—either kicked off the force in disgrace or transferred. Then he intended to pull wires and have some yes man put in as captain, and take the section over through this front.

Big May was to have charge of the vice angle and she'd have made a honey of a job. She'd called Enslow when young Mike and I had come looking for Georgie. She'd smelled trouble then, because Wilford Davis had been pumping Rae for all she knew of the set-up. Big May had known we were after the same dope, and she'd taken steps to have Rae put out of the way, so she couldn't talk to us about it.

She just hadn't moved in time. She should have taken care of Rae right after Davis had been taken care of.

The rest of the district had been, or was going to be, split the same way. Another thief was to handle illegal whiskey sales. Another one was to operate all the gambling.

And of course Enslow was to take his cut from everything and use his paper and influence to protect the entire operation.

This was going along nicely until Davis had stumbled onto the main plot, through Rae. Of course he'd told the reporter who was working with him, Henson, about the thing, and the two of them had decided they'd shake Enslow down for a share of the graft. They were as bad as the thieves and Enslow—they were blackmailing, is all, where the others were using more direct methods.

Enslow wouldn't play and hired 'em both put out of the way, and the man he'd hired was the one we'd seen in action. A guy named Rocco Strombolgni, an imported hot-shot from Chicago. Hardesty had a murder rap against him

ten minutes after he had him in the station, and he had Enslow down there sweating inside of half an hour.

Of course they all turned on Enslow right then and there. They gave names and dates. They spilled the whole thing in detail, and Enslow listened to them and got sicker by the minute. Hardesty ended by having the D. A. down at the conference, and the D. A. just looked through the book and charged him with all and everything. From second-degree murder on down the line.

Rae and her two pals went free on the promise of being State's witnesses, as did half a dozen other smaller fry who knew the scheme.

And that was that. Mike and Georgie and the chief and me all ended back at Mike's house, drinking Planters Punches made by the Boggs' bartending expert and waiting for Mike's father to come home and see his wayward son. Everybody was happy and feeling fine.

Mike and Georgie had had a good battle for themselves, and the old chief was in his prime, telling us how he'd have handled it if it had happened on the China Coast.

Then Georgie said: "But hey! What about some dough out of this. Who you going to collect from, Mr. Conlon, now the way it's gone?"

I said: "You call me Johnny, sailor, like I've been telling you. Don't worry, I'll collect?"

"But from who?"

I nodded at Mike. "From his old man, of course. He's interested in things like this and he's got money and he's willing to pay for results."

The kid looked unconvinced and I looked over at Mike for verification. And Mike gave it to me.

He said: "The old man's the mayor. Get the angle now?"

Georgie said he understood.

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“**H**ELP! Police! Thieves!” The frightened cry broke the night silences of quiet One Hundred and First Avenue in the Richmond Hill section of Queens, Long Island. The man who uttered the cry, a small businessman, ran out of his store, a bit too bewildered to think coherently, as is usually the case with a person who has been held-up.

The words barely floated away in the nocturnal air when two young men, dressed in what at first appeared to be the garb of the Military Police, ran across the street and confronted the businessman.

“I’ve been held up,” the businessman gasped. “They ran down that way, two of them. The cops—I’ve got to call the cops!” He rushed back into his store, to sound the alarm that a moment later would put three radio prowler cars into motion.

Consequently, he did not see the two slightly-built, Army-garbed figures swing into action. In his worryment, the merchant had overlooked the fact that he was already talking to the police—the auxiliary police! Or, as it is officially named, The New York City Patrol Corps.

And now the two auxiliary policemen, Private William A. Sharot and Private Irving O. Lippert, of Company C in Queens, who had been assigned to

the post they were patrolling, were running down the street, nightsticks clenched firmly in their fists.

Suddenly, the figures of the two hold-up men became visible in the darkness, striving to reach the corner and duck out of sight.

Sharot and Lippert accelerated their pace. They were unarmed except for their nightsticks, stout hearts, and a set of wrist “nippers” which dangled from Sharot’s belt.

“Halt!” Sharot’s cry rang through the night as he gauged the distance between himself and his quarry. Windows opened, although the night was icy cold. Heads popped out. Cries of “What’s the matter?” “What’s going on?” filled the air. Hallowe’en parties broke off as revelers rushed to the windows.

Now, Sharot was gaining on his prey. Behind him came Lippert. Sharot drew back his arm. His nightstick whizzed through the air. It missed one of the hold-up men, but it had hurled with such force that upon contact with the sidewalk it split in half.

The sound of the club behind them swerved the hold-up men from their goal. Close by was an alley, and behind that a fence, somebody’s backyard. If they could attain that there was a chance of escape. They ducked into the alley.

In a moment, the two auxiliary po-

licemen were at the mouth of the alley. Their appearance once again seemed to upset the hold-up men and, instead of vaulting the fence, they crouched in the darkness, guns ready to belch death.

Fortunately, their pursuers realized in time that it would be certain death to go into that ominous darkness unarmed. They paused at the mouth of the alley, called upon the thieves to surrender.

It was a dangerous moment.

Suddenly, out of the darkness came a familiar voice. It said: "Hands up. Drop those guns!"

THERE was no argument, no resistance. Unseen, another auxiliary policeman, Sergeant Alexander C. Ward, a former cop, had, as part of the radio police's plan, worked his way behind the stick-up men. They were trapped cold and they knew it. Hands in the air, they stepped outside, straight into the hands of the prowler car officers, who had surrounded them.

In a few minutes, the stick-up men were in the 102nd Precinct station house, where a cell was ready for them. Then, after making their reports, Sergeant Ward and Privates Lippert and Sharot went back to their jobs as members of New York's own City Patrol Corps. They had a tour to finish.

Today, as a result of excellent work as crime preventers, the uniform of the members of the City Patrol corps is as well known as the blue of the regular force. True, it is similar to that of the United States Army, distinguished only by a shield in the New York City colors, blue and orange, worn on the cap and left shoulder, but it is, nevertheless, a police outfit.

The City Patrol Corps recently celebrated its first birthday. It has grown

today to almost seven thousand citizens from all walks of life. Bakers, deliverymen, butchers, tailors, hat makers, writers, accountants, milkmen and bank guards are but some of the trades and professions represented in this volunteer corps. There is no salary attached to the job, although the men, like the Air Raid Wardens and auxiliary firemen, are protected against accident, death, and disability by a huge blanket insurance policy. The men—and the women—who are in the City Patrol Corps are there solely because they want to preserve law and order, protect their homes and their businesses in these abnormal times.

The formation of the City Patrol corps by Mayor Fiorella H. La Guardia was actuated by the shortage of policemen called to the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, and the extra burdens that thereby fell upon the shoulders of the remaining peace officers.

In wartime, the police do double, even triple duty. If it were possible for them to be on more than the twenty-four hours call that the wartime emergency requires, they'd be doing it. A darkened city requires added vigilance; for it is then that the worst saboteurs of all, the saboteurs of society, flourish—the young kids with guns, out for a thrill; the "muggers" and the case-hardened criminals. The police must handle all these and, in addition, bridges, reservoirs, communications buildings, and other targets of darkness-working enemies must be guarded. With fewer policemen to do much more work, the situation loomed desperate until the City Patrol Corps was formed.

Today, augmenting the work of the police, members of the City Patrol Corps on foot, on horseback, and on motorcycles contribute to the prevention of crime and sabotage.

But what kind of policemen are they? Untrained? Unorganized? Unarmed?

No, they are none of that. Today, from a humble beginning, the City Patrol Corps, under command of General Robert Danford, former commandant of West Point, is a fighting, courageous organization. Like the police whom they assist, members of the City Patrol are on call twenty-four hours a day. And for the duration, as they swore under oath, when they entered the Corps. Once a man gets in, he doesn't quit.

But let's take the case of a man named Jones and see what happens to him after he decides to join the City Patrol Corps.

JONES applies for admission at one of the five borough headquarters, usually the one nearest his home. He fills out a questionnaire giving his age, birthplace, draft status, family status, and business. This questionnaire, after fingerprints have been taken, is then sent to the police department, which investigates the statements made therein.

If Jones qualifies, he is then told to report for a free physical examination, and, if he passes that, he moves as another cog into the smooth machinery of the City Patrol. For eight weeks, Jones receives a course of training that combines police work with military discipline and courtesy. He attends lectures, gets police drill with nightstick, learns gas-mask use and the application of first aid, as well as instruction in chemical warfare. He is also taught how to use a pistol and you may be sure that when he steps out on patrol with a gun strapped to his side, that he knows how to use it.

But before Jones is allowed on a post alone he must, during the two month training period, accompany an

experienced Corpsman or a regular policeman. In this way he gains firsthand experience.

At last, the day arrives when Jones is ready for his final step. In company with rookies who have trained with him, he is sworn in as a special patrolman of the City of New York. This oath is administered only by a Deputy Police Commissioner of New York City.

So, finally sworn in, Jones is ready for work. He is equipped with a nightstick, steel helmet, police whistle, and electric torch. His .38 police positive hangs from his belt. In his pocket is his processed identification card, containing his picture and verifying his status as a special patrolman empowered to make arrests.

From then on, Jones is on his own and ready for anything that might happen.

And plenty of it does happen as the records of the Corps shows. For example, take the case of Benjamin Bragman, in private life owner of a smoke-fish company. On assignment in Brooklyn as a rookie, one night last Summer, Bragman completed his evening patrol and started home.

Suddenly, he heard a commotion and ran in the direction of the noise. There, to his amazement, he saw a man slashing at a policeman with a knife. Bragman's fist crashed into the assailant's face, sending the latter reeling, just as the knife cut into the policeman. Overpowering the knife wielder, Bragman placed him under arrest and managed to get the policeman to a hospital—then he went home, wondering, perhaps, if every first day of a rookie City Patrolman was like this one.

Fortunately, it isn't. But another City Patrolman who saw action also got his first taste of it while off duty.

He's John Stern, Bellevue Hospital employee, and a sergeant in the City Patrol. Five feet three inches, Stern walking along Eighteenth Street, answered a cry for help by a drugstore clerk: a big six footer had just held up the store! Sighting the thief dashing for the Third Avenue El, Stern gave chase. A flying tackle executed at the bottom of the steps brought the fugitive down and placed him in custody of the police.

STILL another assist credited to quick action by the City Patrol Corps concerned the breaking up of a ring of 'teen age boys operating on Jamaica Avenue in Queens. Two members of the ring had doped out the neat trick of snatching women's purses while they sat beneath driers in a beauty parlor. This particular afternoon, the young Fagins were observed by the proprietor, who rushed to the door and called a City Patrolman doing an afternoon tour from four to eight p.m.

But the young thieves had disappeared. Nevertheless, the City Patrolman loitered around the vicinity of the crime. A short while later, he observed a group of boys acting suspiciously. He questioned them cleverly with the result that the stolen purses were recovered and the ring broken. Unwittingly, the criminals had returned to the scene of their crime.

These examples of courageous police work have not gone unrewarded by the City of New York. Last November, its Mayor decorated five members of the Corps for distinguished services beyond the line of duty, bestowing upon them the medal of the City of New York. Two of the decorated men, Corporal James P. Barber, a millworker, and Private Samuel O. Sears, a shipyard worker, are colored members of a Manhattan company. They saved a woman from

drowning. The exploits of the other three men, Sergeant Alexander C. Ward, and Privates Lippert and Sharot, have already been related.

Promotion within the Corps is rapid, and each step up is made on merit. Many of the present officers started as privates. A non-commissioned officer's school is conducted for the purpose of making privates into non-comms and later fitting them for officership. Among the Corps are members of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Catholic War Veterans, and Jewish War Veterans, and almost all of them wear ribbons denoting medals earned in battle.

Although discipline is strict, being run along military lines—each borough has a division commanded by a colonel and subdivided into companies with a captain in command—the men, nevertheless, find time to have their own company newspaper, their own platoon funds, and annual company parties.

Each man in the Corps contributes eight hours weekly and many of them volunteer for special details. Since nearly all of the members have regular jobs, hours are usually adjusted to fit a man's work. Bank guards usually accept the afternoon assignments as do night watchmen. In one company, there are three milkmen who do an eight to midnight stint and then report for their deliveries.

Secrecy shrouds the giving out of posts. No man knows beforehand to what patrol he will be assigned. More than 300 posts are regularly covered—police and residential beats, reservoirs, fire control centers, defense plants, bridges, and railroad terminals—and efforts are made to rotate the posts so that a man will not become bored with the same beat.

NEW assignments are not infrequent. Citizens have petitioned the Police Department, requesting that certain areas be covered and these requests usually have been handed over to the Patrol Corps. In Queens County, the Borough commander, Colonel E. G. Riekert, assigned a prowl car to patrol an area where "muggers" had been threatening. It didn't happen there!

In the matter of "mugging", Police Commissioner Valentine recently concentrated one hundred of his men in an area where the nefarious practice had gained a foothold. The Commissioner, in a remarkably short time, stopped what could have developed into a full-grown crime wave. The City Patrol filled the temporary breach caused by the regular patrolmen being taken from their usual posts.

A great deal has been written and related about the importance of the work done by this citizen's army, but little has been said of the cumulative hours of service that result from steady night-after-night patrolling and special assignments. A good example upon which to base statistics is Company C of Queens, an honor company commanded by Captain James Coughlin.

Although the men patrol only four hours, a full tour of duty usually consumes five hours, since most men report thirty to forty-five minutes before starting to patrol and are not dismissed until fifteen or thirty minutes after being relieved from the post. This fifth hour is important, being devoted to preparation for duty, learning assignments, receiving instructions, studying bulletins, and otherwise absorbing information necessary to the proper fulfillment of duty, according to Pvt. V. E. McDonnell, who bases his figures on the period of May 1942-1943.

Serving five hours every fourth night,

Pvt. McDonnell estimates, based on a year's service, a Corps man puts in 455 hours. During that time, special details were furnished by Company C at such functions as parades, bond rallies, memorial services, park concerts, baseball games, boxing matches, skating rings, and civilian defense demonstrations, totaling another fifty hours of service per man. Add to this fifteen extra hours served on Hallowe'en (when pranksters cut up), Election Day, and New Year's Eve and you'll get a grand total of 520 hours service annually per man.

However, to break it down these 520 hours of service are equal to thirteen weeks of forty hours per week; and given voluntarily. As a matter of fact, Pvt. McDonnell estimates that each four City Patrolmen contribute time equal to one full time employee working forty hours per week fifty-two weeks of the year!

And how they love it!

But the males can't grab all the credit. Working in the background, just as do the WAACS, WAAVES, and SPARS is a distaff division of more than 800 women in the Corps. These members, given special training, relieve the men of clerical duties; they handle patrol jobs in railroad stations, and do transportation and canteen assignments. In between they manage to find time to police skating rinks and dances, when requested to do so.

Before the end of this year, the City Patrol hopes to have 10,000 members on its roster, despite depletions caused by members going into the Armed Services. That they'll get them seems to be a foregone conclusion because it's a swell chance to be a cop and a soldier at the same time in New York's Citizen Army!

Step this way, Johnny, and get your gun!

RATION COUPON No. 18

(Continued from page 81)

but I just couldn't help it. Didn't think I'd wake you up, anyway. My wife said you were leaving the country. Saw your light on from the street, too. You're John Lister, aren't you?"

"Yes—yes. Come in."

As the policeman followed him into the living room, John Lister was in somewhat of a daze, and he was groping to try and think what it was all about.

The face of the police sergeant wasn't in a daze. It was a fine young face—between the latter twenties and early thirties—such as New York's Finest are able to boast. There was chagrin on it now, and apology, as well as intense gratitude and friendliness. There was much warmth in the voice, too:

"The Lord forgive me for bothering you at this hour, sir, but I just couldn't help it, as I said. I'm Jim McGuire. I'm going on duty and I felt I had to stop in and thank you before you left the country. You gave my wife your War Ration Book One, over in the Longview a few hours ago. You don't know how much that means to us. You have been a married man yourself, so maybe you'll understand. You know, I like to see Gwen dressed up, all right, but I think she likes it as much as I do. She'd set her heart on some new slippers, and we couldn't get hold of a pair for love or money. I think taking this coupon is square, and I'm honestly not a cheater.

"We're going to the yearly ball of the Police Benevolent Association tomorrow night—I'm the secretary of it, sir—and she's always been the best dressed woman there. She will be tomorrow, too, thanks to you. . . . I—I understand your wife is dead, Mr. Lister—Gwen told me—and I'm sorry to hear it. Maybe it will please you to

know you've made Gwen happy. She—she reminded you of your wife, sir, Gwen said."

JOHAN LISTER, with a deep sigh, nodded his head. He happened to glance at his watch, at the same time, and saw it was two minutes past twelve. But he had always been a courteous and kindly man, and he said now:

"Thank you, Sergeant McGuire. I am very, very glad that I have been able to be of some small help."

The telephone rang, then, and John Lister picked up the receiver abruptly. He didn't stay so for long. Harley Nickerson's booming, comradely voice came charging over the wire—the same vital voice that John, on the sidelines, had heard leading their college football team to many a victory:

"John? That you, John? . . . Great. Swell. . . . Damn your eyes, I just read your letter. Just came back from Lisbon by plane. One of those crazy missions. . . . To hell with that old Morgan skinflint. Glad you did what you did so you can get away from him. . . . Sure. We'll have that lousy fourteen thousand for him as fast as a plane can get it there. . . . You? . . . You cockeyed old son of a gun, where do you think I'd be if it hadn't been for you? Who helped me get through those tough math courses so I could keep on playing football? . . . I'll jail you, you reprobate, if you don't jump the next train and come down here and take a job with me. . . . Sorry—mighty sorry I was a little late in calling, Johnnie Boy," the vociferous voice ended almost softly.

John Lister, before putting his head down on his arms and weeping, said to the man in uniform:

"God bless you for keeping me alive for a few minutes, Sergeant McGuire."

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DON'T DO IT, MISTER

(Continued from page 73)

went to one of the telephone booths, and dialed a number. He was thinking that he had met Ellie when she was working in a department store, while he waited for his ring to be answered.

He got the switchboard, and asked for the dress department.

Then he heard a light, distinct voice that was enthusiastic and rang with silver:

"MR. LEWIS KIMBALL? Yes, we have an envelope of yours here, addressed to you. We thought there must be some mistake, because, obviously, the stamps are part of a collection. You might not have known anything about it.

"I'm sorry if I sound as though I'm reading from a memorandum, but I am. The president of the store, Mr. Mac-

Ilvaine, wants you to call on him in his office. He collects stamps and wishes to speak to you. You may redeem the stamps, of course; but will you make an appointment with Mr. MacIlvaine within the next ten days?"

"I will," said Lewie, and hung up.

He opened the door of the booth.

There were sirens in the street, and cars going to his burning house. His jaws ached. He went back to his drink at the bar, and drank it. He looked at the calendar on the shelf behind the bar.

Thursday. The stores were open, and he could have gotten the stamps back. The whole ruin of the evening was unnecessary. There wasn't much for him to do, so he headed toward home to see just what had happened to his house, an old man.

DEATH RIDES A HORSE

(Continued from page 63)

BRANSOM and Harris both seemed sorry to see me go. In fact, Bransom asked me to stay right on with him and help him with his drinking. Harris was along with this because I'd been the one that found what had made Patsy lose the race.

The cops had caught Red Painter and a pal of his a couple hundred miles down the road, and the pal had told them where he'd hidden the air rifle. The cops made Painter pay back his bets and they'd charged him with fraud, but they didn't think they could make it stick.

Nor did Bransom. He said: "That young man Painter will continue his wicked course until he's barred from every track in the country. And from all other decent elements of society."

I took it the old boy approved of horse racing.

I said: "Well, I'll be going. If I'm up this way, I'll stop in and say hello."

"Do that, Johnny," said Bransom. "There's one thing. I thought Joe Beaming a fine young fellow."

"Well, so did I," I said.

"Then why did you suspect him of killing poor old Horace?"

I said: "Why he was the only one that stood to gain. You didn't—you just lost a playmate, even if the games were funny."

"I miss Horace at that," he admitted sadly. "It was actually a pleasure to think up ways to annoy him. Life will be dull from now on."

I've often wondered just what he's found to take Horace's place in life.



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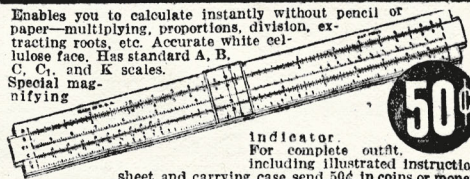
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YOU CAN'T OUTSMART THE COPS

A RETIRED member of a metropolitan police force once made the remark that more than one-half of the reports received by the police of robberies and assaults were fakes. Time, and the police records, have attested the truth of this rather startling statement and proved it to have a good foundation of fact. Nevertheless, a certain segment of the citizenry still thinks it can outsmart the cops; this despite the fact that the law is considerably older and wiser than they.

The old Black Hand terrorism wave disclosed a number of instances where wrong-doers tried to fool the police. One such case was that of an Italian shot down in cold blood.

The man's assassin had carefully prepared for the crime by writing threatening letters to himself and exhibiting them to the police. At last, he said, as they brought him into the station house with the smoking revolver in his hand, the extortioner (now a fatality) had met him face to face and demanded the money under pain of instant death. The victim of the extortioner had shot to defend himself, and, thank God, *la Mano Nera* had lost one member at least.

His story didn't fool the police. Within three days the "self-defense" pleader was in jail, charged with murder.

CASES of people robbing themselves and then calling in the police are very common. Usually the thing is bungled and the police see at once that it is an inside job, but it is another to get evidence enough to warrant an arrest. Sometimes an East Side (N. Y.) factory will be cleaned out at night. The police are asked to believe that while the watchman ducked around the

corner for a cup of hot coffee, a large stock of merchandise was carried down three stories and carted off in a truck. Some cup of coffee!

Or perhaps a store is looted of a lot of clothing that had been bought on credit and not paid for. In one robbery of this kind a big hole had been chopped in the wall between the store and the hallway. The detectives who were assigned to the case saw in about half a glance that the hole had been made from the inside!

A somewhat similar occurrence was the burglarizing of the post-office of a New England college town, before the days of the FBI. The burglars were supposed to have gained entrance to the building by breaking a pane of glass in the window, but the county sheriff could not understand why the glass had fallen outward instead of inward! They discovered the answer when, routine quizzing an employee, the man broke down and confessed that he was the thief.

Sometimes the police are severely criticized in the newspapers for failing to make an arrest in a case where no arrest is required. An incident which occurred years ago in a West Side precinct of New York is a good illustration of this.

A wealthy citizen reported at the station house one night that a fifteen-year-old boy in his household had been shot in the arm while trying to defend the family valuables against the burglar. He had heard the footsteps of the intruder in the house, crept down the stairs to the dining room and there discovered the thief.

Challenged by the brave lad, the burglar fired, then ran panic-stricken,

dropping his weapon, leaving the boy wounded.

AFTER hearing this story, the captain of the precinct asked for permission to see the boy, but was told the latter's condition was too serious. His relatives were glad, however, to show the police how the thief had gotten into the house. The chain which fastened the double front doors had been sawed in two. The alert captain was quick to notice that the place where the chain had been cut was about a foot from the opening, a point which could not possibly have been reached from the outside. That aroused his suspicions, but he made no comment.

The newspapers secured the boy's picture and played him up as a hero. Day after day they criticized the police for their apparent inactivity in the matter. Meanwhile, the captain kept on trying to see the boy and question him, but he was always met with the statement that the young hero was too ill to be interviewed.

Finally, the captain's persistence broke down the family. A member of the household finally went around to the station house to tell the real facts. It turned out to be the silly act of a peevish youth.

The boy had quarreled with his cousin, a girl of seventeen. He was determined to make her feel sorry, particularly if she should see him lying wounded on the floor. So he shot himself, and did not reveal the truth of the matter to his parents until later. Frightened, they determined to keep quiet until the matter should have blown over. The only difficulty was that the police captain was becoming more and more insistent about quizzing the boy. Afraid that the police might find out the facts themselves and arrest the pre-

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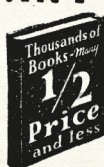
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cious hero, they kept quiet until fear compelled the confession. It turned out, however, that their fears were groundless because in the eyes of the law the boy had committed no offense.

You can't fool the cops. Not for long. No captain wants his precinct to get

the reputation of being a safe place for crooks to work in, and every patrol knows he will be brought up before the commissioner on charges if he fails to discover a burglary on his post. So don't get mad if it looks like a cop is doubting your word—he's had experience!

SPYING IS BIG BUSINESS

SPYING must be as old as war itself, but well organized intelligence systems are of comparatively recent invention. Espionage is today a vast, secret international business and its scope is realized now with the story of the Pearl Harbor debacle. The Japs, we have learned, are no slouches at gathering information.

Of course, the Axis got a stiff jolt with our recent intelligence coupe when Major Clark managed to land in North Africa and swing a deal with Darlan. Today, it is no military secret, that our Army and Navy Intelligence are operating all over the face of the globe.

The first feat of spying of which we have any record was that of Yelui Chutsai, the extraordinarily-gifted Chinese mandarin who acted as Prime Minister to Ghengis Khan, and was the real creator of the ancient Mongol Empire. Ghengis Khan knew little of the lands he overran with his barbaric hordes of Tartar horsemen. Yelui Chutsai sent trusted lieutenants, disguised as merchants and pilgrims, into practically every country of Europe and Asia. Upon the information thus supplied by his Prime Minister, Ghengis Khan planned his great campaigns of the 13th Century.

The next phase of espionage arrived only with the coming of modern weapons, when a new or improved implement of warfare enables a smaller but better equipped force to defeat a larger one. It became essential, then, that each country should keep itself well-informed about the progress of death-dealing inventions being used or tried out by its neighbors. In the beginning, spying was looked upon as dirty work. Today it is an important part of any nation's military equipment. But to some it is still dirty work, particularly in peace time.

Officers seldom volunteer to soil their hands with such matters when their country is not at war. In consequence, governments have had to hire men of dubious character, crooks, ne'er-do-wells, and other men and women who live by their wits, and who are willing to risk freedom for money.

There is, however, a different type of spy and one which we all honor. This is the volunteer—a Nathan Hale, for instance—who realizes how absolutely essential it is that his government should possess the fullest possible facts about the intention and, in war time, about the operations of the enemy.

If such a man speaks a foreign language with fluency, and has nerves

of steel, by photographing a single piece of paper, a fortress, a harbor, a munitions' plant, he may alter the course of an entire campaign—he may even turn defeat into victory. Again—remember Pearl Harbor!

DURING the World War, spying for patriotic reasons grew to immense proportions. This growth is expected to be even greater before this war is finished. The underground movements of conquered countries has doubtless helped the United Nations immensely and will continue to do so.

The start of this war proved that Germany and Japan had flung invisible spy nets here. The extent to which the Nazis will take chances was shown in the capture of spies who had been landed by U-boat off Amagansett, Long Island. The newspapers are full of accounts of spies caught and convicted in this country.

The espionage system is run by shrewd men. They use tremendous card-index systems where millions of facts are checked and collated for instant use. The Reich, for instance, is said to have a dossier on every German in America, to say nothing of pertinent facts on plenty of people and places in the public eye. The Nazis are claimed to run even to counter-espionage, where the duty of one spy is to check on the work of another. But then, that's the Nazis. They don't trust anyone; not even themselves!

Uncle Sam's Federal Bureau of Investigation is doing a bang-up job today of wiping out spy nests. Scarcely a day goes by when reports of the extermination of such rat holes are not made. The Feds are up to every trick and can even add a few of their own. And, when they receive the co-operation of the public, they're unbeatable!



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WHAT happens when an American, trained in the sport of boxing, is matched against a Jap schooled in the underhand methods of jiu-jitsu? The Japs will tell you that the science of jiu-jitsu makes the average pint-sized son of heaven the equal, if not the better, of any heavyweight American boxer. As a matter of fact, some years ago a bout was staged between an American, who knew only how to box, and a Jap who knew all the killing, maiming tricks of jiu-jitsu.

Captain Warren Clear, then a young military attache at our embassy in Tokyo, was asked whether he would care to give a demonstration of the effectiveness of boxing against an opponent who used all the sneaky jiu-jitsu tricks. He agreed, and a match was held which has since become legendary.

On the day of the match, Clear was introduced to his opponent, a Captain Kitamura, jiu-jitsu champion of the Imperial Japanese Army. Kitamura turned out to be a giant of a man, six-foot-one, and weighing two hundred pounds stripped. With shoulders like Jack Dempsey's and hands hard as iron, conditioned by years of breaking boards with the side of the palm, Kitamura was the last person on earth Clear expected to meet. Clear, as he stated later, was just an average amateur boxer, weighing one hundred and eighty-five pounds, six-foot tall, but with that priceless ingredient, "American guts".

It took quite a while before Clear caught on to Kitamura's style. In fact, not until he had been thrown over the Jap's back, and, flying through the air,

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had landed with a crash, headfirst, on the heavy planks of the floor, did he formulate in his mind the strategy that must win for him. It would have to be the classic "one-two". But how to apply it? The melancholy Jap voice, intoning "Ichi, Ni, San"—one . . . two . . . three—was still ringing in Clear's head, when the opportunity came.

Kitamura was rushing in, and Clear let go with his cocked right a fraction of a second after he had feinted with his left. The impact shook the Jap to his toes. A thin red foam was oozing out from between smashed front teeth. Then again the same fist. With a crash of paralyzing destruction, it had landed squarely on the point of the Jap's jaw. Kitamura, fallen like a log, had completely disintegrated.

There was no need for "Ichi, Ni, San". The Jap was through, finished. He had thought, like those who came after him, that his kind of trickery and deceit could beat clean American sportsmanship. And, as it did then, American methods are once more triumphing over Japanese barbarism.

CITIZEN VS. COP

WITH this nation at war, crimes of violence, as in England, seem to have lessened. But with so much money floating around from defense plants, ship yards, and other sites of war endeavor, arrests for minor infractions of the law seem to have increased. A lot of these cases are subsequently discharged with a reprimand, and the bewildered defendant goes away. However, it wouldn't have hurt him to have learned just what protection he has when arrested. It might have saved him a lot of needless worry.

The greatest weapon a citizen has today is the Bill of Rights, a part of

both the Federal and State Constitutions.

This country does not operate, as do so many of the Continental countries on the old Napoleonic law that a man is guilty until proven innocent. Here, the defendant is assumed to be blameless until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

However, a policeman may question any suspect and confront the latter with any available witnesses. The citizen may refuse to answer questions, if he wishes; and, he should not permit himself to be intimidated or coerced into saying or signing anything untrue which might possibly be used against him later.

A citizen cannot be held for an indefinite period of time on mere suspicion or guesswork. He has a right to insist on being "booked" for the alleged crime or misdemeanor, charged, and released on fair bail.

If a policeman holds a citizen indefinitely, without some degree of justification, the citizen is entitled to sue for false imprisonment. And there are plenty of cases on record where John Q. Citizen has collected. But plenty!

Every accused person is entitled to counsel. The court is required to select one for him, who will act without compensation, if the citizen cannot pay. Usually, the lawyer can smooth things out, if there has been a mistake made, before the case gets to court.

The court must also, if it holds a citizen, provide him with food and lodging. A person who has not been found guilty; is entitled to wear his street clothes. He cannot be forced to wear prison garb.

Things that are taken from him—as a matter of prison procedure—his belt, money, and other means of escape, suicide, or bribery, must be returned upon his release. The accused must submit

to fingerprinting and photographing. In some States, these are later returned to him, upon request, if he is held blameless. Other States hold them.

The arrested citizen does not have to submit to a search of his home, unless a warrant is shown. A badge, gun, or a uniform do not mean a thing, and the citizen has a right to defend his possessions if unlawful entry is attempted.

However, a word of warning: don't be caught in the act of committing a crime, because then nothing will help. Anyone can arrest a law-breaker. The ordinary citizen, in a case like this, has the same power as a policeman. So maybe you'd better be the kind of citizen who arrests, and not the kind who is arrested!

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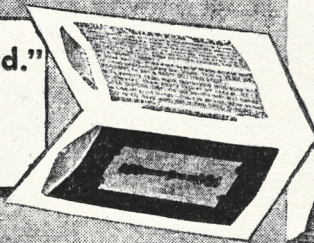
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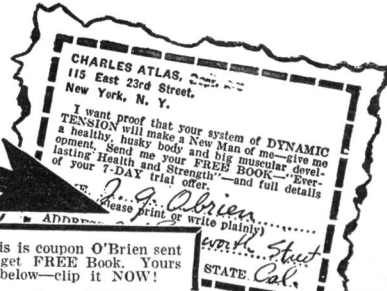
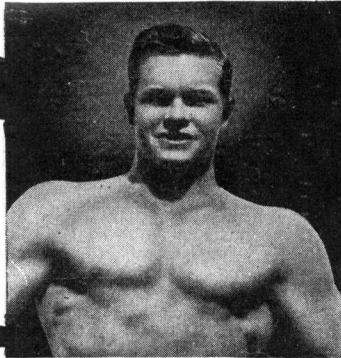
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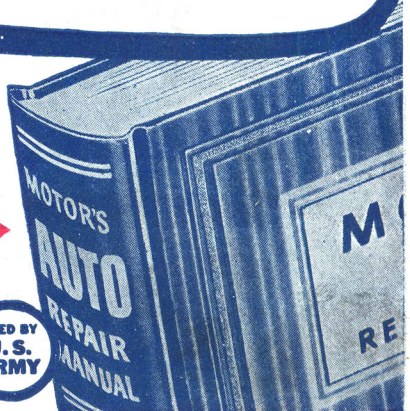
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