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KILL**
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By **DALE
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**THE CASE OF
THE ASTRAL ASSASSIN**

A Complete Green Ghost Novel
By **G.T. FLEMING-ROBERTS**

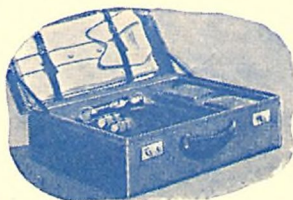
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and the Office of Civilian Defense



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2 WHEN STARTING A TRIP, don't toss your flashlight *loaded* into your suitcase, haversack or toolbox. Unscrew, or remove batteries—then switch can't "catch" and waste batteries.



3 KEEP FLASHLIGHT OUT OF CHILDREN'S REACH. It is not a toy—but a tool for your convenience and safety. *Know* where it is at all times—so you can put your hand on it quickly when you *need* it.



4 DON'T THROW AWAY A BROKEN FLASHLIGHT until you're sure it can't be fixed. Minor repairs can quickly be made, lens or bulb may be replaced.



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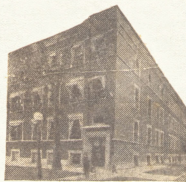


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THRILLING MYSTERY

Vol. XIX, No. 3

November, 1942

Price 10c

A Complete Green Ghost Mystery Novel



The Case of the **ASTRAL ASSASSIN**

By G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

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Turns the Tables on a Murderous Extor-
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MYSTERY-SCOPES - - - - - Chakra 8

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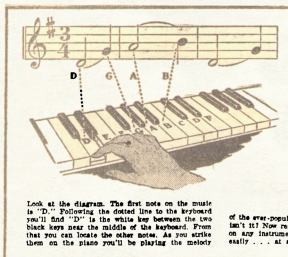
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No "ifs," "ands" or "maybes." Just tell me where you want hand-some, powerful muscles. Are you fat and labby? Or skinny and gawky? Are you short-winded, peepish? Do you hold back and let others walk off with the prettiest girls, best jobs, etc.? Then write for details

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Developed Man."
As he looks to-
day, from actual
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Send in Coupon on Page 112

THE WET GHOST

HORACE JAREMY, sometimes called "Old Scrooge" of his town in Tennessee, wanted to get his hands on the Travers Estate located on a lonely hill. Old man Travers had died recently, bequeathing the estate to his nephew, Clark Travers, who had left Tennessee some years previously and was now employed in Chicago. Clark was coming back to his home town to look over the place with the purpose of selling it for a good price.

So Horace Jaremy plotted with Ike Du-ber, a disreputable town character, to make it appear that the Travers estate was haunted. This would influence Clark to sell cheaply.

The day that Clark was to return, Ike went to the Travers place to prepare his act as a ghost. Clark arrived in the early evening.

Several hours later, Clark came back to town and called on Jaremy.

"You're right, Horace," said Clark. "The place is haunted. I'll stay in town tonight. Tomorrow you can arrange the papers—I'll sell at your price."

Curious, Jaremy asked what had happened. Clark then told this story:

"About eight o'clock I was sitting in the living room, when I turned around and saw a man standing in the corner near the side door. He couldn't have been alive, because his head was badly cut and his clothes were dripping water. I spoke to him and walked toward him, but he disappeared into thin air. It was a ghost all right—there was no water on the floor where he had stood."

Jaremy could hardly keep from grinning. The scheme had worked perfectly. Ike certainly was a good actor.

But the next morning, Jaremy's grin was wiped from his face, for Ike's old mother came in with the sheriff, demanding to know where Ike was. He hadn't come home all night. She knew that Ike was doing some secret job for Horace Jaremy. Ike had told her.

Then the truth came out. A search was made at once, bringing a startling discovery. Ike's dead body was found in the old well just outside the Travers house. Said the doctor:

"This man has been dead at least since yesterday afternoon."

Ike had performed his act as a ghost only too well; but he hadn't helped Horace Jaremy after all. Death had laughed last, and

(Continued on page 10)



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Send coupon—wear the Commander TEN DAYS AT OUR EXPENSE—if you do not get all the results you expect, return it and YOUR MONEY WILL BE REFUNDED!

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Name

Address
If \$2.98 is enclosed with order, we pay postage charges. ☐ Check here.

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1888 MILWAUKEE AVE., DEPT. B-52, CHICAGO, ILL.

MYSTERY-SCOPES

(Continued from page 8)

Jeremy had to make a big settlement to Ike's mother, losing nearly everything he owned. Said Clark Travers, later: "One cannot mock death, and get away with it."

POWER OF HATE

CAN intense hate kill? Can the vibrations generated by thoughts of revenge energize an inanimate mass of iron, causing it to slay the object of the hatred?

There are some who might say yes. And such people can be encouraged in their belief by the story that comes out of Czechoslovakia, reported by Gelva Pragman, a refugee who arrived in America recently, having escaped to Russia and thence to China.

Wilhelm Beckberg was the Nazi official in Pragman's village shortly after the Germans took charge of the life and death of those Czechs residing there. Pragman's cousin, Max, was a devout Catholic; but when Max saw his father shot before his own eyes, he became a thing of demonic hate aimed at Beckberg who had ordered the execution.

Max cursed the Nazi with his whole soul and every breath, even burning candles before a crude altar, calling for the death of Beckberg. It became a fixation in the young Czech's mind, occupying his every waking moment. He would stand by the window, look down at the iron gate in front of the house, willing sudden death to Beckberg when the Nazi passed by the house each day going to headquarters.

Day after day this hatred burned. Once

(Continued on page 12)

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MYSTERY-SCOPES

(Continued on page 10)

when Beckberg went by, the Nazi suddenly jumped as though someone had fired at him; but seeing no one, he continued on his way still apprehensive of some lurking enemy.

Finally, came an afternoon in November, 1941. Beckberg was walking past Max Pragman's house, followed by two bodyguards.

Had Max's hate reached the boiling point? No one will ever know; but Gelva Pragman, who was in the house with Max, saw what happened.

Beckberg was about three feet away from the gate when he seemed to choke. Gasping for breath, he reached for the gate for support. As he did so, the gate pulled loose and crashed upon the stricken Nazi as he fell in exhaustion.

Then Gelva Pragman plainly saw this: A large picket on that gate had entered Beckberg's abdomen as though an invisible hand had stabbed him with superhuman strength.

Beckberg's death was reported as heart-failure. During the attack he had leaned on the gate which in turn gave way by the weight of his large body.

But was it heart-failure in that sense? Gelva asks readers of this magazine to answer the question for him. All he knows is that his cousin Max had been avenged.

THE AUTOMATIC MESSAGE

THERE have been many cases reported concerning automatic writing—persons leisurely holding a pencil to a sheet of

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paper and with no muscular effort, allowing the pencil to move at will, until a message is received.

Claims have been made as to poems, stories and even drawings which come subconsciously; but rarely has a convincing psychic message been received—that is, one which indicates a consciousness beyond the mental capacity of the person holding the pencil.

But here is a case just reported and verified, concerning a Miss Sophie L. of Arkansas, who on May 4, 1941, experimented with automatic writing while visiting friends.

Several guests were able to show interesting markings of some sort by automatic writing, but this is what Sophie's paper revealed:

"Light cometh and light goeth—and no one knoweth when it shall come or go. The wise man prepareth for tomorrow—the fool procrastinates . . ."

And underneath this message was the signature "Aprilio."

Jokingly, guests said that Aprilio must be Sophie's guardian angel; and they advised her to go to a seance and maybe she could see him. They hoped he was a good-looking angel.

But the matter was forgotten in the course of the evening's entertainment, the hostess tossing all the messages into a bureau drawer.

A little less than a year later, this same hostess took out all those old messages, because the guests of the evening were talking about Sophie who had passed away suddenly, a few days previously. They recalled the night she had been there and had heard from Aprilio.

As one of the guests looked at the message Sophie had received, she gasped.

"Look!" she exclaimed. "We all thought that this was a signature, Aprilio—but don't you see what it really means? It means April tenth—the day Sophie died!"

THE SOAP CURSE

THIS story has just been verified by official court records.

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One day after such punishment, she cursed him. "I'll get even someday, with soap—and make you suffer."

Time passed. The husband announced
(Continued on page 111)



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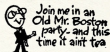
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Both the Green Ghost's legs shot out like pistons to ram the crook

The Case of the **ASTRAL ASSASSIN**

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The Voice of an Invisible Menace Demands Huge Sums from Men of Wealth, Until the Green Ghost Detective, Expert at Magic, Neatly Turns the Tables on a Murderous Extortionist!

CHAPTER I

The Invisible Ray

MR. MONTY FOLKSTONE entered the office of the New York Police Commissioner with all the serenity of a cyclone passing through a Kansas farm-house.

He flattened Commissioner Standish's secretary who had protested

his entrance. He slammed the door after him with such fury that some of the papers on the desk were fanned to the floor. He ignored the thin, blond man who was sitting in the visitor's chair beside Standish's desk, crossed to the commissioner himself, his cigar puffing like a locomotive under full steam.

"Look here"—his voice had the musical qualities of a fog-horn—"do

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you realize I've been waiting to see you for half an hour?"

Edward Standish leaned back in his chair. His close-set gray eyes coolly surveyed Monty Folkstone—a short, dark man somewhere in his fifties and carrying his years as lightly as he did his hat. Folkstone was a man of money. Also, it seemed, he had more than his share of brass.

Standish swiveled around to his lean, blond visitor of the past thirty minutes.

"We can count on an hour show from you for the Police Benefit Party then, George?"

George Chance took his eyes from Monty Folkstone's somewhat absurd figure.

"An hour or more, Ned," he said. "As long as the audience can take it, I'll dish it out. I think I'll run along now, since this gentleman's time seems to be a lot more valuable than mine."

Monty Folkstone was not in the least abashed. He sat down promptly in the seat vacated by George Chance and swiveled his cigar around to the other side of his wide mouth, preparatory to speaking.

"Benefit parties!" he snorted. "Time is money. And the money you're spending over such trivialities happens to be the taxpayers'. Otherwise, I'll wager you'd be more cautious with it!"

Commissioner Standish continued to ignore Monty Folkstone. Either he looked over him or through him, and toward George Chance who was retreating to the door.

"No need to run off, George," he said.

THE blond man paused, a whimsical smile playing about his finely formed lips. Mr. Folkstone had by this time reached a point where either he would blow up completely and at once, or gradually deflate.

Commissioner Standish was well-known for his ability to put a man in his place with a glance. Had he met Folkstone's bluster with something equally boorish, some furniture might have got broken in the resulting argument. As it was the storm blew over in a second and Mr. Folkstone had the

grace to apologize for his outburst.

"My nerves," he explained. "I'm at my wits end. If this sort of thing keeps up my next address will be a padded cell."

"I don't doubt it," Standish said. "You're Mr. Folkstone, aren't you? I recognize your voice from our conversation over the phone. You're troubled with—er—voices, I think you said. Voices that come out of thin air. And I recommended that you see a doctor, rather than the police."

George Chance came away from the door, sat down in a chair placed against the wall. Voices that came out of the air always interested him, for he was an accomplished ventriloquist. Not only that, but he was something of a magician—the world's greatest magician in everyone's opinion but his own.

"No, I don't want a doctor," Mr. Folkstone was saying. "That's what Peter Creighton is doing—going to a doctor of psychology. He's also hired a private detective."

Standish's bushy brows bunched.

"Does this Peter Creighton hear voices, too?"

"He does," Folkstone said. "Furthermore, he never sits down in his chair in the living room without first sifting flour all over the carpet. That is to catch Blackfore's footprints."

George Chance nodded gravely.

"One of the more primitive methods of catching a ghost," he observed.

"Who is Blackfore?" Standish asked. "Suppose, as long as you're here, you begin at the beginning, Mr. Folkstone."

"I'll lay my cards on the table as soon as we are alone," Folkstone said, glancing at Chance.

"On the contrary," the commissioner said, "I'm inclined to believe that Mr. Chance can be of more help to you than I can. This is Mr. George Chance, the magician. Perhaps you've heard of him."

Folkstone nodded.

"Seen him on the stage before he retired, as a matter of fact. And I don't think he can help me."

"I can assure you," the magician said, smiling, "that the voices I've heard coming from thin air have been

not only harmless but hardly worth taking seriously. You've been consulting some spirit medium, no doubt, Mr. Folkstone?"

"I have not," Folkstone replied harshly, wagging his cigar somewhat in the manner of an angry elephant waving its trunk.

"Mr. Chance can keep a secret better than anyone I know, if that's what is worrying you," Standish said.

is virtually a recluse. I've played golf a few times with David Hurley. I've met Creighton and Polk exactly once. No, we're not friends. We're victims of the same man—Herman Blackfore."

"A scientist, I believe, this Blackfore?" Chance asked. "I've seen his name mentioned in the papers in conjunction with some developments in radio remote control or something of the sort."



George Chance

Mr. Folkstone critically considered the lean magician for a few moments and finally came to a decision.

"Hang it!" he said. "Hang it all! I'll talk, and heaven help both of you if this gets out. And heaven help me if there's not something that can be done about it. There are five of us all in the same boat—myself, Peter Creighton, Kenneth Deene, David Hurley, and Charles Polk."

"All friends of yours?" Standish asked.

"We are scarcely more than acquaintances," Folkstone snapped. "Deene

"A genius," Folkstone said. "An unscrupulous genius. A thin, dark man with a nose like a hawk's beak, almost no lips, and eyes that dissect your brain. I'd like to see him right now. I hate him, but I'd rather hate him while seeing him than know he's around without being able to see him."

Chance and the commissioner exchanged glances.

"He's dead then?" the magician asked Folkstone. "His spirit's gone to the astral plane?"

"He's not dead," Folkstone snapped. "And I don't believe in spirits. But

I'm getting ahead of myself. David Hurley, Kenneth Deene, Charles Polk, Peter Creighton and I all invested money in Blackfore's most recent invention. I put fifty thousand dollars into the scheme myself, and the others may have spent more. That was over a month ago. Short while ago, Blackfore disappeared, literally vanished, our money vanishing with him."

"Why weren't the police notified at once?" Standish asked.

"Because we agreed to keep quiet about it," Folkstone replied. "We stand to make a great deal of money if we can find Blackfore and recover this invention which we were financing. The machine is of inestimable value. If the facts were given publicly, if others joined in the hunt, it might result in untold damage to the entire nation. Suppose Blackfore and his ray were to fall into hands of some persons unfriendly to our country?"

Standish smiled briefly.

"Don't tell me this Blackfore has invented a death ray?"

"Something more effective and less fictional than that," Folkstone snapped. "It's been proved that the supposed death ray is beyond possibility."

While Folkstone was speaking, George Chance had taken a fifty-cent piece from his pocket. He toyed with it while listening, and in his long fingers the coin seemed endowed with life. Now you saw it and now you didn't.

Folkstone paused in his narrative, fascinated by the magician's rapid passes.

"No," he continued, "it's not a death ray. It's an invisible ray. As Blackfore explained it to us laymen, it's something like an X-ray in operation. But Blackfore's ray goes a good deal further than the X-ray. It can render the human body so completely transparent as to become invisible."

COMMISSIONER STANDISH snorted.

"Why not just admit you've been taken in nicely by a fraud, Mr. Folkstone?"

"Blast it all!" Folkstone exploded. "I wasn't born yesterday. I've seen

the ray demonstrated in Blackfore's own laboratory! Blackfore simply stood in front of the contraption and slowly but surely faded into thin air. He walked among us unseen, moved objects in the room, talked to us. Can you imagine anything more invincible than an entire army of invisible men?"

"INVINCIBLE and impossible." Standish said. "However, go on with your story."

"To cut it short," Folkstone said, "Blackfore vanished, as I said. He vanished with our money. But actually he isn't gone. He's here in New York. He has been in my house, though I have not seen him. He has been there and he has spoken to me. And guess what he wants?"

Chance tossed the coin, caught it, closed his fist over it. When he opened his hand the coin had become a cigarette which he lighted. Mr. Folkstone was annoyed.

"I wish you wouldn't do things like that, Mr. Chance. Makes me nervous."

"Sorry," Chance said. "What does Mr. Blackfore want?"

"One hundred thousand dollars," Folkstone said. "My money or my life. That's what he always says, 'Your money or your life.'"

Commissioner Standish smoothed his black square mustache.

"A little plain and fancy extortion, I would say. But this invisible man business is a little hard to swallow."

Folkstone stood up, leaned across the desk so that his nose was no great distance from the commissioner's face.

"You think I'm mad, don't you? You think I'm a crackpot? What about Peter Creighton who sifts flour on his carpets and hires a private detective? I suppose he's a crackpot, too. Well, put this in your pipe and smoke it, Commissioner! Blackfore won't stop with the five of us who are convinced of the success of his invisible ray. When he's murdered us or milked us dry, he'll give New York the greatest one-man crime wave it has ever known. Don't say I haven't warned you, and at considerable personal risk. For all you know, Blackfore may be in this room right now!"

Monty Folkstone slammed his hat on his head, turned on his heel, and left the office. The commissioner turned to George Chance.

"Well?"

Chance shrugged. "They laughed at Edison. Maybe we shouldn't laugh at Blackfore."

Standish snorted. "But say, you could see Edison!"

"Maybe you could see Blackfore if your eyes were sharp enough."

"Think the eyes of the Green Ghost are sharp enough?" Standish asked, smiling.

He was one of the few persons who shared the vital secret that Magician George Chance and that famous crime fighter known as the Green Ghost were one and the same person.

"He could have a try at it, anyway," Chance said.

Hardly were the words out of his mouth than a clear voice spoke, seemingly from that portion of thin air to the right of the commissioner's desk:

"Ha-ha-ha, you can't catch me, but I'm right here, as you can't see!"

Standish spun around in his chair and goggled at nothingness. He opened his mouth, gulped. Then he looked at the magician, and broke out laughing.

"As a ventriloquist, you're tops," he said. "Go on—get out of here with your tricks."

"Well," Chance said soberly, "if you're quite sure that was one of my tricks, I will."

Alone in the office, Commissioner Standish stared into thin air and scowled. Finally, he grunted, turned to the report sheets that were spread out on his desk.

CHAPTER II

Enter—The Green Ghost

AT DUSK, George Chance entered his brownstone house on East Fifty-fourth Street and went directly to the basement. There was the little shop where many of his clever tricks

and illusions first took shape.

There was a light in the shop. A man worked at a bench, painting a Chinese production cabinet, his head wreathed in clouds of pipe smoke. He turned as Chance entered, took his briar from his mouth.

Only a few trusted friends were ever permitted to see George Chance and his assistant, Glenn Saunders, together. They were identical doubles—the same height and build, the same wavy red-gold hair, the same high cheek-bones, the same deeply-set eyes.

Years ago Chance had discovered Saunders sitting on a bench in Central Park, and had been struck by the similarity of their appearance. He had approached Glenn Saunders with the idea of becoming his double, and since Saunders was down and out he had promptly agreed.

Plastic surgery had augmented the general likeness between the two men, so that Saunders' briar pipe was practically the only habit to distinguish one of the men from the other. Saunders also had learned to ape Chance's voice and mannerism to a high degree of perfection.

On the stage, when Chance had traveled with his own magical revue, the double had been extremely valuable in certain illusions. But since the famous magician had become interested in crime detection, Saunders' worth to him had tripled. Without Glenn Saunders, the Green Ghost could never have been brought into existence.

The Green Ghost had brought fear of law and justice closer to the hearts of criminals than the police had ever done. Dozens of murderers who still remained at large had sworn to kill the Green Ghost on sight. What peace would George Chance have had if the secret of his dual identity had ever been brought to light?

In Glenn Saunders, the Green Ghost had a perfect alibi. For whenever the law required the services of the Ghost, Saunders could literally step into Chance's shoes. Saunders knew magic, too. In fact, part of the inducement held out to him if he would shuck his own identity and become Chance's

double had been Chance's promise to teach him all about the art.

That now worked to the advantage of both men. For since the Green Ghost employed magic in his terror tactics against criminals, it would have been no great guess for someone to conclude that the Green Ghost and Chance were one—except for Glenn Saunders.

"You can put the pipe down for quite a while," George Chance said to his double. "I've got to haunt a man, Glenn—a man nobody can see, if Mr. Monty Folkstone can be believed."

Glenn Saunders smiled. His voice, when he spoke, was like a recording of the famous magician's voice.

"The Green Ghost is at it again, uh?"

"Somebody's putting unholy pressure on a group of wealthy men," Chance explained enthusiastically. "A voice speaks out of thin air, saying, 'Your money or your life.' A clever inventor has vanished. Perhaps he has turned his scientific knowledge into a weapon with which to fleece honest men. Sounds like a recipe for excitement, doesn't it?"

"A shade too exciting for me," Saunders said. "But every man to his own likes. I'll go upstairs, put on a suit of your clothes and become Mr. George Chance."

AS SOON as Saunders had left, Chance went into a little dressing room which he kept under lock and key.

He had spent his early life in the circus where his parents had been star performers. Even as Commissioner Edward Standish had taught him crime detection, so had the folk of the circus taught him knife-throwing, tumbling, ventriloquism, make-up, and the rudiments of magic which were later to make his comfortable fortune.

It was make-up that he needed now. Under his skillful fingers, the Green Ghost was born again.

Ovals of wire inserted in his nostrils elongated them and tilted the tip of his nose. Brown eye-shadow deepened the pits of his eyes and empha-

sized the hollow of his cheeks. He covered his own gleaming teeth with shell teeth of yellow celluloid. His ghostly pallor came from a powder box.

Next he changed to a suit of dead black material that had certain amazing properties. Not only was the suit reversible, but the snapped-in lining contained many secret pockets holding an assortment of tricks that had proved their worth against the thundering guns of the underworld. His throwing knife was in the sleeve of the coat, and in his hands it was a far more dangerous weapon than the automatic which was clipped in a smooth-acting gimmick inside his coat.

A black crusher hat pulled over his eyes, and the Ghost could have passed unnoticed in a crowd. His make-up was simplicity in itself—and yet how tricky!

As he had frequently remarked to Standish, the Green Ghost was two-faced. He could be rather an obscure person, with nothing but night-club pallor to distinguish him, or he could instantly change into the laughing death's head which had brought terror to the underworld.

This change he accomplished through masterly control of facial muscles alone. His lips would peel back from the yellow shell teeth in a veritable skull's grin. A vacant deadpan stare would come into his hollow eyes.

As a final gruesome touch, he could illuminate his skull-like face by means of a tiny green lamp bulb cleverly mounted in the scarf pin he wore that was connected to flashlight battery and rheostat in his pocket. Criminals who once saw that ghastly face, surrounded by an aura of green light, never forgot it. Nor did they ever forget the graveyard laughter that came from behind those yellow teeth.

Leaving the dressing room, George Chance, now the Green Ghost, discovered Joe Harper looking over the stock of magical supplies that burdened the shelves against the wall. Harper was as much of a fixture in the Chance household as the plumb-ing. He had once found the magician's guest room a swell place to get

The knife had
lifted above the
corpse, and was
moving across the
room



over a hangover, and had liked it so well that he had forgotten to go away.

Harper was a bum, a gambler, and an arch chiseler who used Chance's money as freely as a politician spends taxes. He had been pitchman, book-maker, tout, and vaudeville booking agent. He knew Manhattan from top to bottom—with particular emphasis on the bottom.

He was a hungry-looking, wolfish man with eyes that gleamed like black beetles from beneath the brim of a sickeningly green hat. His taste in dress ran to wild checks, gaudy ties, and shirts that screamed.

HE STOOD looking at the Green Ghost, a cigarette dangling from his thin lips, his black beetle eyes expressing exactly nothing.

"I came down here looking for some dice you could talk to," he said in a nasal tone, "and saw the light under the door of your holy of holies. I figured you had something on the stove, so I am not surprised when you come out looking like something fit to be cremated."

The Ghost looked at Joe Harper and shuddered.

"Your presence didn't surprise me either," he said. "I heard your suit. Anyway, you're just the guy I want to see. I've got a job for you and Tiny Tim Terry."

"Listen," Harper said, his limp cigarette wobbling as he moved his lips, "not me and that midget. There isn't any job which Tim and I could do which I couldn't handle better alone."

"Well, if you want to put on short pants and trade your cigarette for a lollypop, you can have the job alone. Otherwise, we'd better ring in Tim."

Harper considered this a moment.

"Okay. We'll deal Tim in. What's my part in the act?"

"I want you to lay your sap affectionately behind the ear of a certain private detective who is acting as bodyguard for a man by the name of Peter Creighton. I was out at the Creighton house this afternoon and I wouldn't be surprised but what we can get on the inside of something there."

"With pleasure," Harper said. "Who's this peeper you want conked?"

The Ghost gave Joe Harper a stony stare.

"Do you have to have a formal introduction to somebody you're going to sock?"

That night, Peter Creighton sat in his living room and trembled. He was built somewhat along the lines of Casper Milquetoast and some of his acquaintances entertained the belief that this resemblance to the Timid Soul was definitely a lot more than just a physical one.

Like Monty Folkstone, he also had heard the voice of doom speaking from thin air. And like Folkstone, he had come to the conclusion that his unseen tormenter was Herman Blackfore, the inventor of the invisible ray machine in which Peter Creighton had invested money. Either it was Blackfore or he, Peter Creighton, was losing his mind.

THE voice had demanded money—much money, even in the eyes of Creighton who had been quite fortunate in his business dealings. Three times the Unseen had demanded, "Your money or your life," and yet Peter Creighton had not raised a finger to obtain the money. That was because he was not quite sure of his own senses.

To be sure, he had seen Blackfore demonstrate his marvelous machine. But might not the voice from nowhere be a figment of the imagination brought on by too much worry over the money he had already lost to Blackfore?

Dr. Leonard, a psychologist who had introduced himself to Creighton, was inclined to believe that Creighton suffered from a persecution complex. Perhaps that was so. Nevertheless, while taking Dr. Leonard's treatment Creighton was determined to take certain precautions. He had hired Steve Parkinson, a rather expensive private detective, as a bodyguard. And then there was the moat of flour around his chair.

The flour was Creighton's latest and most brilliant idea. The chair

in which he now sat was surrounded by a broad band of white—flour sifted onto the carpet. For even the invisible Blackfore could not have entered the room without leaving footprints in the flour. And wouldn't the footprints give Parkinson at least some idea of where to shoot?

The doorbell rang and Creighton bounced in his chair as though somebody had pricked him with a pin. He looked toward Parkinson who was on guard in the hall.

"See who it is," he ordered. "And don't let anybody in. Especially, don't let Nobody in."

Parkinson did not grasp the full meaning of the double negative. He held the private opinion that Mr. Creighton was off his nut. But since he was getting a nice retainer for doing practically nothing, he in no way discouraged Creighton's fear.

"It's a big load off my mind when I get out of the sight of you, Mr. Dimwit Creighton," Parkinson muttered to himself as he approached the door. "Siftin' flour on the carpets like you was making a pancake for the moths!"

He flicked on the porch light and opened the door. Outside was a chubby little boy in knee trousers, a lollypop in his mouth, and a huge stack of magazines under his arm.

"Hi, Mister," the boy piped. "How about buying a few magazines, huh?"

Parkinson was on the point of closing the door in the kid's face when it occurred to him that a magazine might at least while away some of the lonely hours in which he would be guarding Mr. Creighton against nobody. He said he would take a detective magazine and also one that dealt with the private lives of the movie stars.

"Okay, Mister," the boy said shrilly, struggling to pull two magazines from his stack. "Got a mag here with the prettiest gals in it."

"Now, sonny," Parkinson chuckled, "ain't you a little too young to know about such things?"

"Sonny" nearly gagged on his lollypop. Because in spite of his knee pants, the kid with the magazines was middle-aged. He was "Tiny Tim" Terry, formerly of the circus, and one of George Chance's oldest friends. All

of which would have enabled Parkinson to account for many strange things that were to happen had he only known the truth.

Though "kiddy rôles" annoyed Tiny Tim, he managed to hang on to his temper and carry out the Green Ghost's instructions. He had been told to drop the whole stack of magazines on the Creighton front porch, "accidentally on purpose."

There was a breeze and the magazines scattered. Steve Parkinson took pity on the little magazine merchant and left the front door open long enough to help Tim recover his books. That was when a somber figure, which had been lurking in the shadows beside the porch, vaulted the railing and passed through the front door, unseen by Parkinson.

When Parkinson had finally piled the magazines into Tim's arms and returned to the door, he found that it was closed. Furthermore, the night-latch seemed to be on, and Parkinson was locked out.

That figure in black which had entered the Creighton house was none other than the Green Ghost.

CHAPTER III

Psychological Fears

PARKINSON did not have a key, and he doubted whether Mr. Creighton would have nerve enough to answer the bell if he rang it. So as Tim left the porch, Parkinson started around the side of the house to see if he could get into the back door.

It was somewhere in the dark along the side of the house that a second dusky figure waited. This second figure came upon the private detective from behind and landed a sap directly behind Parkinson's ear. The technique was distinctly that of Joe Harper!

Inside the house, the Ghost, a living shadow among the inanimate shadows of the hall, moved soundlessly toward the door of the living room until he reached a point where he could see Creighton without being seen. He noticed the broad belt of flour which

surrounded Creighton's chair, and watched the nervous twichings of Creighton's fingers. He did not feel inclined to laugh. In fact, there was something infinitely sad about that lonely figure.

"Parkinson!" Creighton called. "Are you there?"

Since he had heard Parkinson talking to Tim, the Ghost knew pretty well how the detective's voice had sounded. His impersonation was perfection itself.

"Yes, Mr. Creighton. It was just some kid selling magazines at the door."

"Well," Creighton said, "telephone for a cab for me. I have an appointment with Dr. Leonard for nine o'clock tonight. You're going with me."

"Okay," the Ghost replied, in Parkinson's voice.

He moved off along the hall. Since he was similar in build to the private detective and Parkinson wore dark clothes, he was quite secure in the house as long as Creighton did not see his face.

He did not, however, immediately call a cab for Creighton. Instead, he went out the back door and to the garage at the rear of the yard. Tiny Tim Terry and Joe Harper were there, with the unconscious Steve Parkinson. The midget was sitting on Parkinson's chest, and he had traded his lollypop for an enormous cigar.

"Jack the Giant Killer," the Ghost said, as he entered.

Tim looked up and his round, babyish face was spoiled by an angry scowl.

"I could have handled this big palooka myself," he complained.

"Sure!" Joe Harper sneered. "You couldn't have reached any higher than the back of his lap. How'd you expect to sock him on top of the head?"

"I'd have tripped him first and cut him down to size," Tim said.

"Who socked him doesn't make much difference," the Ghost said, as he took out his pocket make-up kit. "The point is, will he stay socked while I impersonate him?"

"I'll renew the treatment any time he shows signs of insomnia," Harper

insisted, patting his leather sap.

USING the unconscious original on the floor as a model, the Ghost's fingers hurriedly achieved, on his own face, a remarkable likeness of Parkinson's coarse features. Harper and the midget watched in awed silence.

"And now what?" Tim asked, as he watched the Ghost add freckles across the bridge of his nose as a final touch.

"You two just sit tight. Just where I'm going, I'm not quite sure. But I'll meet you two and Merry White before morning at the usual place."

"If you're not there," Harper said cheerfully, "we'll order you a nice bouquet of lilies."

The Ghost, now in the rôle of Steve Parkinson, returned to the Creighton house and there phoned for a taxi. Then he went to the door of Creighton's living room to test out his disguise under Creighton's critical gaze.

"What took you so long?" Creighton whined. "I could have been murdered at least a half dozen times while you were gone."

"The telephone line was busy," the Ghost said. "The cab will be here any minute now."

"Then I'd better get my coat."

Creighton got up, walked on tiptoe across the floor. Half-way to the door, he paused and looked back at his footprints in the flour. He chuckled.

"I guess that will catch *him*!"

When Creighton and the Ghost got into the cab that shortly stopped in front of the house, Creighton carefully patted every vacant spot on the seat cushions.

"At least *he* isn't riding with us!" he said with considerable satisfaction.

The taxi stopped in front of an office building on east Forty-fourth Street just off Fifth Avenue. Creighton nudged the Ghost.

"You get out first, Parkinson. What do you suppose I've got you here for, eh?"

The Ghost got out, then helped Creighton to alight. The man's knees were quivering. Creighton suddenly grasped the Ghost's arm with fingers that were terror-taut.

"What's that sound?"

Creighton's frightened eyes searched frantically. Then he saw what had made the sound—small skate rollers rumbling on concrete. The Ghost looked over his shoulder and saw "Legs" Maloney, a familiar figure on the streets in the Grand Central district.

Maloney's nickname was sheer irony, because his legs had been amputated well above the knee. For locomotion, he depended upon a small wood platform on rollers. Strapped to this, he propelled himself along the sidewalk by means of two short, thick, rubber-tipped staffs which he gripped in each hand.

Legs Maloney rolled across the sidewalk to the curb, braked himself expertly with his two staffs. Maloney was a vender of various items—pencils, shoe laces, candy bars. He turned his dirty, twisted face up at the Ghost and Creighton.

"Pencils—candy, gentlemen?" he asked in a shrill, quivering voice. "Help yourself and help an unfortunate man."

Creighton paused, dipped into his pocket, and took out a fifty-cent piece which he handed to Legs Maloney.

"Here, my unfortunate friend," he said. "It's all profit. I never use pencils—prefer a fountain pen."

CREIGHTON grasped the Ghost's arm and together they hurried into the building.

"I suppose these beggars are all fake," Creighton said. "But then you never know, do you, when one of them might really need a hand-out."

"That one," the Ghost said, "isn't a fake. He just doesn't have any legs."

Creighton chuckled. "Then it was money well-spent."

His face sobered then, and once again that haunted expression came into his eyes.

They found Dr. Leonard seated in the reception room of his office on the twelfth floor. There was something about the psychologist that reminded the Ghost of one of those religious characters on an old Russian icon. His heavy growth of black beard seemed to have sapped the strength of his face like a parasite. His shaggy hair had



Poised on the top steps, the Green Ghost hurled the knife, and shot

not been touched by a comb in a long time, apparently.

But there his unkempt appearance ended. His tall, stooped figure was clad in a well-tailored suit, and his shoes were brightly polished.

Leonard shook hands gravely with the Ghost whom Creighton introduced as, "my bodyguard, Steve Parkinson." The doctor offered cigarettes and saw that both the Ghost and Creighton were comfortably seated.

"Feeling any better?" the doctor asked in a soft voice, which was intended to be soothing.

"No," Creighton complained. "In fact, I'm just a little bit more nervous."

"Nervousness is a state of mind," Leonard assured him. "I can help and advise you, but a complete cure depends upon yourself. There is no unseen presence haunting you, Mr. Creighton. Such a thing is impossible. You must grasp that firmly in your mind. You are a man of intelligence. Surely you do not believe in the impossible?"

"I try not," Creighton said. "But then, it's not impossible. Maybe the voices I've been hearing have been imagination. I do think I'm a little better that way since I've been seeing you. But then *somebody*, seen or unseen, is after me. And I can prove it!"

"Hush," Leonard said. "You must not permit yourself to speak in this way. You are only contributing to your illness. While I am bending every effort to prove that you are deluded, you insist on trying to prove that you are hearing voices, that someone actually does wish you bodily harm."

Dr. Leonard continued to talk in that soothing, almost hypnotic voice of his. But after about half an hour of this monologue, Creighton snapped to his feet.

"Stop it, stop it!" he demanded. "You don't know what you're talking about. Isn't there somewhere we can go where I can be certain I won't be overheard? I am going to prove my point to you."

The doctor indicated his private office.

"Perhaps you would care to go in there."

Creighton grasped the Ghost's arm and shoved him forward.

"You first, Parkinson. What do you think I am paying you for?"

THE consultation room contained a glass-topped desk, four chairs, a large steel filing cabinet placed against the wall in which the connecting door was situated. There was a second door which evidently opened on the hall, but this was closed.

Creighton followed the Ghost closely with Dr. Leonard bringing up the rear.

"Now, Mr. Creighton," Leonard said, "I shall give you an opportunity to prove your point. And then I shall proceed to prove mine—that all this is in your mind."

"Oh, is that so?" Creighton said. "How does it happen that I got a note in the mail this morning, demanding the sum of one hundred thousand dollars or I will forfeit my life!"

"A note?" Leonard said.

"Yes, a note. And the United States mail is not a state of mind, Dr. Leonard," Creighton said hotly. "The note referred to the repeated warnings which I have had from the voice, and said that this is my last chance. I still have no intention of paying this extortionist's demands, but what in the name of heaven can I do? What can anyone do against a man you cannot see?"

"Please!" Dr. Leonard said. "There is no such thing as a man you cannot see. Have you the note with you?"

Creighton shook his head. "I forgot to bring it."

Head on one side, Dr. Leonard eyed Creighton suspiciously.

"You're perfectly certain there is a note?"

"Wait a minute," the Ghost chimed in. "Can I ask a question? Have you heard this spook voice since I been with you, Mr. Creighton?"

Creighton shook his head.

"No. But that isn't any sign there isn't a voice that speaks out of thin air. It simply—"

Creighton stopped. Out of nowhere, from within the very room in which

they were standing, came a hollow voice.

"Hello, Creighton," it said.

Creighton's eyes became slightly glazed.

"You heard that?" he whispered.

Frowning, Dr. Leonard's eyes passed to the door connecting the two rooms of his suite. The mysterious voice came again.

"I'm right here, Creighton. Have you brought me the money?"

"He'll pay you," the Ghost said suddenly, speaking to the voice of the unseen. "You've got to give him a little more time to raise the money, Mr. Nobody from Nowhere."

"You keep out of this, Mr. Wise Guy," replied "Mr. Nobody's" voice. "He's had time enough."

Mr. Nobody's direct answer to the Ghost's statement immediately precluded the idea that Mr. Nobody could be a concealed phonograph device.

"It's somebody in the reception room!" Dr. Leonard exclaimed, and made a bound for the door.

CHAPTER IV

The Phantom Knife

THE Ghost was right on the doctor's heels, because it was certain that the consultation room contained nothing large enough to conceal a man. Leonard's lunge carried him to the middle of the reception room where he stopped unsteadily, stared around.

"It—he's not here!" Leonard exclaimed, running fingers through his long, shaggy hair.

The only possible place of concealment was the high-backed sofa on the hall side of the room. The Ghost crossed to it, was on the point of moving it out from the wall when he was interrupted by the sound of some heavy object falling to the floor.

He turned, his eyes traveling back toward the door of the private office. And then he saw Creighton—or rather he saw Creighton's arm, extended along the floor, the fingers clenching and unclenching.

The Ghost sprang back into the consultation room, pulling his gun as he ran. Creighton was on the floor—he saw that instantly—but refused to let horror fascination harness his eyes to the fallen man and the knife that was protruding from between his shoulder blades. The Ghost sprang across the room to the hall door. It was locked, the key in place on the inside. The window was entirely out of the question as a point of entry or exit, since it was a sheer drop of twelve stories to the street.

He returned to Creighton, who lay flat on his belly, his head twisted to one side. With a handkerchief over his fingers, the Ghost loosened the knife in the wound directly over Creighton's heart. Blood flowed out across the gray cloth of the suit coat. Creighton was dying. His glazed eyes stared and saw nothing. He breathed in shallow gasps, his lips moving feebly.

"Get him!" Creighton gasped. "Get—Blackfore. He's right here—"

And that was Creighton's last breath. The Green Ghost straightened, looked across to the door where Dr. Leonard stood clinging to the door frame.

"It—it isn't possible," Leonard was saying, staring at the knife in Creighton's back. "A murderer no one can see. It's not possible, I tell you!"

Three men stepped into Dr. Leonard's reception room—two uniformed police, and one private detective whose name was Steve Parkinson. The Green Ghost did not need a second glance to know that something had gone haywire back in the Creighton garage. Parkinson was on the loose and in a nice position to make a great deal of trouble for the Green Ghost.

The Ghost's flair for impersonation was well-known, and if the unseen murderer was present or within earshot he probably would come to the conclusion that the Ghost was on his trail. It was bad, very bad, indeed.

Dr. Leonard had turned to look at the men who had entered. He swallowed lumpily at the first glimpse of Parkinson, then glanced back at the Ghost. He uttered a most unscholarly

grunt. After all, he was seeing double.

Parkinson had evidently known of Creighton's intended visit to Dr. Leonard. On regaining consciousness and escaping from Joe and Tim—however he had managed that—he had discovered Creighton gone. His first natural move had been to locate his charge, which had undoubtedly brought him to Leonard's office.

JUST how it happened that he had two cops in tow was not clear to the Ghost. But there the cops were, big as life and twice as natural. They had to be dealt with.

The Green Ghost took every advantage of this moment of surprise by making a couple of fast moves which could not have excited a lot of suspicion. His left hand came from his coat pocket, rested for a moment high against the frame of the connecting door. Then he backed, stooped over the corpse of Creighton, his left hand describing a circular motion around the knife which stood loosely upright in the wound in Creighton's back.

He backed away from the body, and then there was little time to speculate on the immediate future.

Parkinson came across the reception room, and the Ghost saw that the private detective's arms were held by the two bluecoats. One of them said to Dr. Leonard:

"We found this guy trying to get into the front door of the building, Doc, just after it had been closed at nine-thirty. He said you would identify him. Says he's a private detective working for Mr. Creighton, but he also claims somebody swiped his papers that would prove it."

It was the Ghost who had taken Parkinson's papers in order to make his impersonation of the private detective complete. There was a chance now to further complicate the situation and stall for time by saying that the real Parkinson was an impersonator and that he, the Ghost, was the real Parkinson.

But he doubted if he could run such a bluff for any length of time. Since he knew little about the man he was impersonating, Parkinson would not

have much trouble proving his own claim.

No, there just was not any easy way out of the spot. Parkinson and the policemen had already glimpsed him and in another moment they would spot the murdered Creighton. They would quickly jump at the conclusion that no impersonator is ever up to any good and entertain the notion that the Ghost had killed Creighton.

But hardly had Parkinson and the two police officers laid eyes on the corpse on the floor than a voice spoke, seemingly out of mid-air:

"You cops can't stop a man you can't see, can you?"

The two policemen stiffened and exchanged glances.

"That's it!" Parkinson blurted. "That's what Mr. Creighton was always babbling about—voices talking out of thin air!"

"Get out of the way, will you?" the voice of the unseen said. "I want to go home."

Dr. Leonard hurriedly stepped away from the door. He shuddered.

"The—the invisible murderer!"

"The what?" one of the bluecoats asked.

"You—you can't see him," Leonard said. "But he's in this room. He killed Creighton."

Parkinson pointed to the Green Ghost who was standing with arms folded at the back of the room.

"If you ask me, *he's* got something to do with this. He knocked me out, impersonated me—"

"Will you get out of my way?" That was the voice again, coldly insistent.

And then the knife which protruded from the back of dead Mr. Creighton was lifted into the air by an unseen hand.

"Good lord!" The Green Ghost pointed at the knife with his right hand. "He's recovering his weapon. Look out! The invisible hellion is armed again! He may try to get the rest of us."

THE knife had now lifted to thirty inches above the corpse and was moving across the room, its point down. One of the policemen began to get ideas. Maybe he didn't believe

his eyes, but this was a time to act and reason with his senses later.

He launched himself in a flying tackle which would have just about caught the invisible killer around the knees—if there had been any knees to catch. The net result of his heroic move was that he slid all the way across the floor on his belly and rammed the wall of the room with his head.

The floating knife clattered to the floor. Parkinson and the second policeman waded into the attack against the man they couldn't see. Their tactics consisted almost entirely of kicking at the air in the vicinity of the fallen knife.

The Ghost did not wait to count how many times Parkinson and the bluecoat kicked each other. The way to the connecting door was clear except for Dr. Leonard, who was not any great obstacle. Leonard tried hard enough to stop him, but in his excitement he left his chin unguarded and directly in the path of a left hook to the beard.

The Ghost was out in the reception room before anybody in the consultation room knew about it. Entering the reception room door from the hall was a short, fat man with a nearly bald head.

He was carrying a large steel transfer file and apparently had just looked in to see what all the noise was about. He did not look much like anybody's secretary, nor did it seem likely that anybody's secretary would be working at this hour of the night.

"Stop him!" somebody in the reception room yelled. "Stop the mur-

derer! He's getting away, stop him!"

The fat man promptly heaved the transfer file at the Ghost, who backstepped, hurdled the file, and stiff-armed the fat man from the doorway. The Ghost gained the hall, knew that there would not be time to wait for an elevator. He headed for the stairs, reached them as bullets started popping from the door of Leonard's office. Parkinson and the police were hot on the trail.

The Ghost covered the first flight of steps in a leap and a couple of bounds. Glancing up, he saw one of the bluecoats looking down at him—but looking over the bead of a revolver. The Ghost knew that the stairway was going to be a pretty unhealthy spot for the next few seconds.

It was then that he got something of a break. Looking down the hall of the eleventh floor, he saw a man with a briefcase standing in front of the open door of the elevator. Both the man and the operator were looking in the Ghost's direction, wondering, no doubt, what all the shooting was about.

The Ghost raced to the elevator, his automatic in his hand.

"Step back from the car!" he warned.

Neither the man with the briefcase nor the elevator operator showed any inclination to argue. The Ghost sprang into the elevator, slammed the door, shoved the starting lever to the down position. Seconds later, his racing body lunged against the latch of the side door of the building. He was in the clear!

[Turn page]



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It looked like a set of football signals—but it helped Detective Thomas Brennan plenty when he took the trail of a vicious stock-switching gang in

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CHAPTER V

At the Haunted Rectory

IN SHORT order a cab took the Ghost, still in the Parkinson disguise, to East Fifty-fifth Street. From there, fifteen minutes of walking brought him within the shadows of an old church.

Beside the church was a square brick building of indeterminate age, which had formerly been used as a rectory. Now the windows were boarded, the rooms deserted, except for the ghosts which were reputed to haunt the place.

Actually, George Chance was the owner of this old rectory. He did nothing to discourage its bad reputation, and kept the rent so high that no one ever thought of leasing the place.

In the basement of the rectory he had fixed up a comfortable apartment—the secret sanctuary of the Green Ghost. There he and his assistants frequently met in the process of unraveling the web of mystery surrounding murder.

He entered the place by the basement door, and after unlocking a couple of doors came into a cheerfully lighted and furnished room. Joe Harper, Tiny Tim Terry, and Merry White were waiting for him.

He noticed immediately that Tim had a lump on his head and that Harper had a black eye. Only Merry White, who had once been the feminine interest in the George Chance magical revue, was her own charming self. The lovely little brunette skipped across the room, threw both arms around the Ghost's neck, and kissed him. Then she struggled out of his embrace, her eyes dancing as they examined his disguised face.

"Who am I kissing?" she demanded. "Sometime the ice-man is coming through that door and I'm going to give him a good smooch like that, thinking he's my own darlin' in make-up."

"I've heard that ice-men are nice men," the Ghost said in the natural



Joe Harper

voice of George Chance. "But then, fortunately for me, no ice-man has a key to this dump."

He looked over the soft waves of Merry's dark hair and fixed Tim and Joe Harper with a cold stare.

"If I thought you were the real Parkinson," Harper said, "I'd bust you one on the kisser, and I don't mean like Merry did."

"What happened, George?" Tiny Tim shrilled.

The midget had changed from his knee pants to a smartly tailored business suit, at the same time regaining a large portion of his self respect. Cigar tilted at a jaunty angle, he stood in front of the Ghost, his legs wide spread and his hands clasped behind him.

"You should ask what happened!" the Ghost scoffed. "Where did you get that goose egg on your head?"

Tim flicked his cigar ash airily.

"A mere scratch," he said. "That's where I hit Joe."

The Ghost frowned. "So the two of you got in a fight, and you let Parkinson get away. Parkinson mixed up my night's work beautifully, and whose fault do you suppose that was?"

"G. G., you do us a grave injustice," Joe Harper said, a pained expression on his ordinary wooden-Indian face. "Just like Tim said, the lump on Tim's

head is where he hit me—"

"And your black eye is where you hit Tim, I suppose. What kind of a tall story is this?"

"Parkinson hit me in the eye," Harper said. "Parkinson hit me with everything, up to and including the kitchen sink. You will recall that Tim was sitting on Parkinson's chest when you left? Parkinson came to, but he didn't announce his return to this life over any public address system. He just picked up Tim and threw him at me. After that—the fireworks."

MERRY WHITE laughed.

"But of course Parkinson wouldn't have caught you boys napping if you hadn't been indulging in a little sport to while away the time," the Ghost said. "African dominoes, huh?"

Joe Harper and Tim nodded sheepishly.

"We didn't have anything to do, so we did roll the dice a few times," Tim said.

"And you lost, little man," the Ghost said, "because as I remember it, Joe was down in my shop looking for a pair of dice which he could make behave."

Tim glared at Harper who insisted, so help him, that he had found no fixed dice in George Chance's magic shop.

"Anyway, that's not important," he concluded. "Suppose we hear G. G.'s story."

The Ghost went over to the couch and pulled Merry White down beside him. Merry reached out and playfully plucked a chunk of make-up putty from the Ghost's nose.

"Tell us all about it, darlin'," she murmured.

"Peter Creighton has been murdered," the magician-detective said quietly. "He was murdered by person or persons unseen."

"You mean unknown," Tim said, pacing the floor in front of the couch.

"I mean unseen, little man."

Rapidly, but omitting no detail, the Ghost told them all that had happened, including Standish's interview with Folkstone and also his adventure in

the office of Dr. Leonard. When he had concluded, Joe Harper fixed his black beetle eyes steadily on the Ghost.

"I think I see the fine hand of George Chance in that last demonstration of the unseen menace in Leonard's office. What about the voice that told the cops to get out of the way? What about the knife floating in the air?"

The Ghost laughed.

"I didn't see any other way out of my difficulties, so I did employ ventriloquism to get across the idea that the unseen killer was there among us. And I used a simple levitation trick to make it seem as though an unseen hand had picked up the knife from Creighton's corpse. I had pinned one end of a strong silk thread to the upper part of the frame of the connecting door. The thread was attached to my spring reel. I had previously loosened the knife in the wound.

"I stooped over the body long enough to loop the thread below the guard of the knife. Then I backed away, and when I wanted the knife to rise, I released the spring reel. Moving to one side or the other, the knife also moved. A little misdirection got Parkinson and the two cops busy trying to nail the unseen man who supposedly was holding the knife."

"And that was the trick that brought down the house," Merry said, laughing. "Especially when that cop tried tackling a great big chunk of air."

"We can skip your trivial comments, Frail," Tiny Tim said. "What's the explanation of Creighton's death, G.G.? There was no one in the room except Creighton at the time of the murder, you say. You and Dr. Leonard were in the other room chasing the phantom voice. When you turned around, Creighton had taken a knife in his back. Suicide seems out of the question, because it's just as hard to stick a knife in your back as it is to scratch a bite that's in the middle of your back."

THE Ghost nodded, and his shoulders shrugged.

"And you go 'round and 'round from

there," he said. "Discounting the invisible presence of this Blackfore, what's left?"

"You think Blackfore really has some sort of a ray that makes people invisible?" Joe Harper asked.

"At least Creighton did, and Folkstone does believe that. They and three other men invested money in Blackfore's device. The three others were David Hurley, Charles Polk, and Kenneth Deene. Now, apparently, they are all afraid that the invisible Blackfore is going to kill them unless they can buy immunity. After tonight they'll be sure of it."

"What about that guy lugging the transfer file who looked in Dr. Leonard's door?" Harper asked. "That was kind of a silly hour for anyone to be making a file clerk work."

"I thought of that," the Ghost said. "But with everybody taking pot shots at me I didn't have time to ask questions."

"Listen," Tim Terry said. "I think I've got something. What about the murder knife? If the killer was invisible, what about the knife? How come you could see the knife?"

"All you've got is a further complication," the Ghost said. "But the knife is worth some special consideration. I've seen a lot of knives and handled a lot, but none quite like this one. It had an unusual guard on it—a perfectly flat disk of metal about as thick as a silver dollar but not quite that big around. That disk guard would have ruined the balance of the knife for throwing. And it certainly wouldn't have aided particularly if the weapon was used to stab."

"Sounds gadgety," Harper commented.

"What about motive for Creighton's murder?" Merry asked.

"George said it was an extortion racket, Frail," Tim said disgustedly. "Why don't you keep your ears open?"

"But that's silly!" Merry said, her eyes dancing. "Why would an invisible man want money? Look—I am an invisible woman. I go into a store to buy a dress. Who's going to wait on me? Nobody can see me, can they?"

The Ghost considered this for a mo-

ment. Merry had the peculiar knack of making wild statements which when simmered down contained some of the world's best logic. Right now she was occupied with the absurdity of an invisible person trying to make a purchase in a store.

Actually, however, she had hit on something which had been pretty well obscured by the fast-moving events of the evening.

"That's pretty good," he commented.

Merry hung her head, then looked up at the Ghost.

"Did I say something awfully dumb, darlin'?"

"Not at all. What *would* an invisible person be doing, stooping to extortion to get money? All he would have to do would be to walk into a bank, go behind the teller's cage, pick up all he wanted, and run out before anybody could stop him with no one any the wiser."

"So what's the conclusion?"

"That there isn't any such thing as an invisible man," the Ghost said. "Blackfore isn't invisible. He's pulling a lot of legs, including ours."

Joe Harper laughed mirthlessly.

"That's a fine piece of reasoning," he said. "That brings us right back to where we started. Nobody was in that room besides Creighton. The hall door was locked on the inside. Dr. Leonard was in the other room, under G.G.'s eyes all the time. Heck, if there wasn't any invisible man in the room with Creighton, what's left?"

THERE was no answer to that. The four friends sat in silence a moment without moving, then Tiny Tim piped up.

"One thing sure, if the killer was present in that office at the same time the cops and Parkinson came in—if the killer was there, visible or invisible, or if any possible assistant of his was there—the Ghost will have to watch his step from here on out. Because Mr. Murderer couldn't help but know that the Ghost is on his trail. He'll try to rub you out sure as shooting, George."

Which was not the most pleasant prospect to look forward to.

CHAPTER VI

The Vanishing Man

ON THE following day, the Green Ghost spent a portion of his time at the Creighton house, which was now deserted. He searched the place from attic to cellar. In the afternoon, he went down to Police Headquarters, this time as red-haired Detective-sergeant Hammill, a disguise which he frequently employed to gain immediate audience with Commissioner Standish.

The police, he discovered, were as much in the dark as he was concerning the murder of Peter Creighton. The murder had forced Standish to divulge what Folkstone had told him about Herman Blackfore and the invisible ray. The police were combing the city in hope of turning up Blackfore, but so far there had been no results.

Inspector John Magnus of the Homicide Bureau, who had never had any great love for that mysterious amateur investigator known as the Green Ghost, was inclined to share Private Detective Parkinson's view—that the Green Ghost, who had impersonated Parkinson, had had something to do with the stabbing of Creighton.

"It could have been one of the Ghost's tricks," Magnus argued. "I've seen that guy pick a knife out of thin air, or even a gun for that matter."

What Magnus chose to ignore was that the Green Ghost had also demonstrated his abilities to pick a murderer, frequently at a time when Inspector Magnus was entirely in the dark as to where to look for the wanted man.

"Dr. Leonard's testimony sort of squelches Magnus's theory about the Green Ghost's guilt, though," Standish commented now to the Ghost. "Leonard said that Parkinson's impersonator was in the reception room with Leonard at the time of the kill."

The Ghost nodded.

"And it would have been a little difficult for me, or for Leonard either, to have tossed a knife backward and



Merry White

around the corner of the doorway, and land it in Creighton's heart."

"You say you looked over Creighton's house this morning?"

The Ghost nodded.

"I gave it a pretty thorough going over. I thought perhaps I would find something that would explain the mysterious voices which Creighton claimed to have heard coming out of thin air. But no go. Probably the trail is cold. There has been plenty of time for the criminal to have removed any apparatus he might have used for the voice stunt. Somebody had taken a soap impression of the back door lock, though, proving that our invisible killer hasn't yet acquired the knack of passing through a solid door without opening it."

"What's the next move?" Standish asked.

The Ghost shook his head.

"Don't know. I've got Joe, Merry, and Tim keeping an eye on the others who invested in Blackfore's machine—Folkstone, Charles Polk, David Hurley, and this Kenneth Deene. That means I've had to spread my little army pretty thin. But they may turn up something at that."

Shortly after dark, the Ghost returned to his haunted rectory, got out of the disguise which had identified him as Sergeant Hammill, and resumed the make-up which would have marked him as the Green Ghost. A

little later, the telephone in the basement of the rectory rang. It was Joe Harper calling.

"Folkstone just left in a taxi, G. G.," Harper reported. "He's headed for Kenneth Deene's place on Amsterdam. I heard him give the address to the driver. Two hours before that, he got a message sent by a Western Union boy."

"I'll head for the Deene house myself and see what's cooking," the Ghost said.

"And watch you don't get burned," Joe Harper warned.

JUST as the Ghost was preparing to leave, the phone rang a second time. It was Merry White.

"This funny little Charles Polk I'm supposed to be keeping an eye on—he got a telegraph message a while ago and now he's gone somewhere in a taxi. I tried to follow in another cab, but didn't make it. Are you mad at me about that, darlin'?"

George Chance assured Merry that he could never be mad at her about anything, and left the rectory wondering if Charles Polk's destination was the same as that of Monty Folkstone.

The Deene house turned out to be an aristocratic and thoroughly dismal pile of rock, ornamented by touches of wrought iron that in this decade only served to remind you of prison. A group of three cast-iron deer had neglected to crop the grass at their feet and as a result were almost hidden from view.

The iron gate across the drive was closed, but not locked. The Ghost opened it wide enough to slip through, and the hinges cursed him shrilly for disturbing their sleep.

The only light that came from the house seeped through drawn curtains. Folkstone had said that Kenneth Deene was a recluse. His house was certainly as uninviting as possible. Keeping well within the shadows, the Ghost walked around the house, looking for a means of entrance which would alarm no one in the house.

He came finally to the back porch which was shaded by an iron trellis strong enough to support a network

of vines that climbed upon it. Whether or not it would support the Ghost would have to be learned by experiment. The window above the porch had been raised high enough to insert one of those adjustable metal ventilator plates.

"Which might well be the bait that traps me into breaking my neck," the magician-detective thought, as he thrust black-gloved fingers through the vine to grasp the metal lattice.

The lattice creaked a little under the weight of his body, but seemed staunch enough. He gained the sheet-metal roof above, tiptoed to the window, and found that it was an easy matter to slide out the ventilator. He lifted the sash another twelve inches and soundlessly crept into the room.

Somebody's bedroom it was—a nice place for somebody's rich uncle to die in after having willed his money to a home for sick cats. Also a nice place for moths.

The Ghost located the door, switched off his flashlight, crossed the room. Beyond the door was a square hall with the stair-well in the center. A railing of carved oak surrounded the stair-well, except at the head of the steps themselves. The rail was a priceless dust catcher and also prevented a sleepwalker from pitching into the room below.

The Ghost tiptoed to the rail and looked down. There was light in a room below, into which he could see. Four men were seated stiffly on chairs that held little comfort.

Merry White had described Charles Polk as a "funny little man." That could apply only to the shriveled, gray-haired individual with the eyeglasses. Monty Folkstone was also present, a freshly lighted cigar firmly gripped in his wide mouth. Then there was a bluff, hearty-looking man with a florid face; and yet another who was tall, thin and dark, with delicately formed features.

CONVERSATION was lagging badly. Monty Folkstone brought up the subject of Peter Creighton's death. The red-faced man said it was a terrible thing.

"Ghastly," said little Mr. Polk.

The thin, dark man nodded, and remained silent.

Polk coughed nervously, took from the pocket of his coat a deck of cards which he cut and shuffled expertly by the forced dove-tail method. The Ghost thought that Mr. Polk handled the pasteboards pretty well. So, apparently, did Mr. Polk, for after an interval of silence he grinned and made a suggestion.

"Since we are all here, the four of us, why not gather around the bridge table for a few hands? Nothing like the bridge table to—er—sort of get acquainted, eh?"

"I wouldn't mind," said the florid man. "How about it, Deene? Got a card table here?"

"Yes," the tall, dark man said. "It hasn't been used for a while, and I may have difficulty finding cards."

"We'll use my deck," Polk said, "if you gentlemen have no objection."

No objection was made, and the four men followed the thin, dark-complexioned Kenneth Deene to the other end of the room which was entirely outside the range of the Ghost's vision from his present vantage point.

The magician-detective waited only long enough for the men to get seated at the card table, then went to the head of the stairs and quietly down. The landing at the half-way point was as large as a small room, and nearly as dark as the upstairs hall. But from there he could see the four men around the card table.

Deene's back was toward him. The florid-faced man was Deene's partner. Polk was on Deene's left, Folkstone on his right. Two hands were played in strained silence. Everyone seemed preoccupied except Charles Polk, who frequently pointed out mistakes made by the others.

It was through one of Polk's remarks that the Ghost was introduced to David Hurley. Hurley was the bluff man with the red face. They were all here, then—four of the five men who had invested in Blackfore's scheme. And playing bridge. It was silly.

The deal had started with David Hurley. At the beginning of the third hand, the deal passed to Kenneth Deene. That dark, quiet-spoken host

of this strange party had quite a time with the cards. He couldn't toss them where he wanted them. They slipped from his fingers to the floor.

"New deal," Charles Polk snapped. "You've misdealt, and I've seen the faces of three cards, Deene."

"What the dickens is the difference?" Folkstone's harsh voice cut in. "Just a minute, gentlemen. I'm sure Deene didn't ask us here to play bridge. We're not what you could call old friends. We've all been victimized by Blackfore. Yet we sit here like a bunch of dummies and play this fool game. Out with it, Deene. Why did you ask us here?"

Deene put down the remainder of the cards.

"I did not invite you here. I never invite anyone here. I much prefer solitude. But when the four of you knocked at my door, I could not very well tell you to go home."

The three men stared at Deene.

"You—you mean," Polk said, "you didn't send me this message by Western Union?"

HE took a yellow piece of paper from his pocket and showed it to Deene. Deene scarcely glanced at it.

"I did not send it. It is perfectly true that I did intend to contact each of you within the next two or three days, but I did not invite you here tonight. As long as you're here, though, I may as well tell you that I foresaw Herman Blackfore's treachery. I had a hunch he was going to doublecross us on that ray deal, and though I did not have time to save my own investment, I have saved something for us."

"What?" demanded Folkstone.

"The invisible ray machine," Deene said calmly. "I have it. I intend that you men shall have it after I have employed it for my own purposes."

"And just what are your own purposes?" demanded Hurley.

"To beat Blackfore at his own game," Deene continued coolly. "Blackfore hasn't skipped town. He's right here. For all I know he may be in this room with us."

Folkstone leaned across the table.

"You—you've heard his voice?"

The Ghost saw Deene's dark head nod.

"He's trying to work something unique in the way of extortion," Deene said. "I think that's why Creighton was killed—because he wouldn't pay Blackfore his price."

"I know that was it!" Folkstone roared. He thumped the table with his fist. "Blackfore has been after money from me, too!"

"And from me," Charles Polk whispered. "I've heard his voice, too."

"So have I," David Hurley said.

"And perhaps you have received a few notes such as this one," Deene said.

He reached into his pocket and brought out a folded sheet of paper which he handed to Polk. Polk opened it with trembling fingers and read aloud:

"This is to assure you that the little man who wasn't there *is* here. Since you cannot see me, I am in an excellent position to demand your money or your life. You will have the sum of one hundred thousand dollars in cash ready for me Thursday night, or pay me in blood."

"Say," Hurley said, "this is Thursday. Have you raised the money, Deene?"

"No," Deene said. "I don't believe I could raise that amount even if I were to sell this house. And a provision in my father's will prevents me from selling, so there's only one way out for me."

"What's that?" Folkstone demanded. "Maybe we can all use a suggestion along that line."

Deene shrugged. "What you do with the ray machine after I'm through with it is your own business. But it has occurred to me that Blackfore can see us while we cannot see him. But if I were to turn the invisible ray upon myself, Blackfore would no more be able to see me than I am to see him."

"But can you operate the ray machine?" Folkstone demanded. "Blackfore said it was pretty complicated. Suppose you vanish yourself and can't get back. Have you considered the risk you'll run?"

Hurley laughed shortly.

"A lot better to be invisible than dead, eh, Deene? Suppose you give us a look at this contraption we paid such a pretty penny for."

Deene got up from the table, and once more the four men were beyond the range of the Green Ghost's vision.

The magician-detective did not know whether or not Deene had a staff of servants. One thing was certain, if the Ghost meant to see this thing through, he would have to show himself in the light. So certain was he that Blackfore's invention was a hoax that he was looking forward to the dumbfounded expressions on the faces of the four men when they discovered they could not make the ray work.

CHAPTER VII

Mask of Blood

WAITING until Deene and his uninvited guests had gone into the next room and closed the door, the Green Ghost tiptoed down the rest of the stair flight. The four men were closeted in a room closed off by double sliding doors.

The Ghost crossed first to the light switch, turned out the illumination in the big hall. Then he went to the two sliding doors. With the point of his knife, he pried the twin doors just far enough apart so that he could see into the room beyond.

It was a long, barren room with a sort of alcove at one end. The alcove had a window in the exact center at the back. In front of the alcove, a little to the left of the center, stood the ray machine.

It was like nothing the Ghost had ever seen before. It seemed to be a black plastic cabinet supported by legs that were actually glass insulators. The cabinet itself was covered with knobs and indicators, and supported on the top was a series of metal disks and alternate plastic spacers. Backing this tower of disks was a concave reflector.

Deene had seated his three guests

on as many folding chairs pulled out into the center of the room. Deene had gone into the alcove and was sitting in a folding chair, approximately in the alcove's center. He was connected with the curious ray machine by means of a wire which was attached to a large black rubber handle, studded with switch buttons. Deene held the rubber handle in his two hands.

The ray machine was turned on. At first it emitted a low, mechanical growl which gradually rose to a high-pitched wail. Deene's audience sat tensely in its chairs, while the Green Ghost, nearly as tense, watched through the opening in the sliding doors.

Giant sparks of artificial lightning leaped and crackled across the series of spaced disks mounted on top of the machine, illuminating the room in weird blue light. And in the alcove where Deene sat a miracle was taking place. Deene's long thin body was gradually becoming transparent.

At first, the outline of the body only became indistinct. But in a few seconds the back of the chair in which Deene was sitting could be seen right through Deene's body. Only Deene's sallow face could be seen, until finally even that vanished.

The invisible ray machine stopped its unholy racket. The three men in the chairs sat there and stared at the empty alcove.

"It works just like it did for Blackfore," Charles Polk whispered finally.

"Of course it works," Folkstone said. "It's the most marvelous invention of the age. And it's ours—all ours!"

"You're forgetting Blackfore," David Hurley said.

"Who cares about Blackfore!" Folkstone shouted. "Say, Deene, can you hear us talking?"

Folkstone's eyes searched the emptiness of the alcove and the room proper. There was no answer.

"That's funny," Hurley said. "Just because he's invisible is no reason why he shouldn't answer."

"Deene!" Folkstone shouted. "Where are you?"

The big room echoed Folkstone's cry. The three men seated on the

folding chairs looked at one another. "You don't suppose—" Charles Polk began.

"Suppose what?" Folkstone demanded.

"You don't suppose Blackfore is here—I mean, in this house?"

"Whatever gave you that crazy notion? Why should he be here?"

"Why shouldn't he?" Polk persisted. "It seems to me—"

HE STOPPED. From the alcove came a sound—a choking, gagging sound. And then a half-strangled cry that was unmistakably Kenneth Deene's voice:

"He's got me! *Blackfore!*"

David Hurley got to his feet. Some of the color had ebbed from his face, but his lower jaw had a determined set about it.

"We've got to help," he muttered, taking cautious steps toward the alcove.

The Green Ghost opened the sliding doors further, slipped into the room. His alert gaze jumped from the figure of Hurley to a small oval-topped table that stood near the opening into the alcove. That table was moving, apparently of its own volition.

Hurley noticed it now, came to a stop. The table was lifted from the floor as though held by unseen hands, and was tossed in the general direction of David Hurley.

Hurley ducked as the table crashed a few feet away. There was a hoarse cry from Folkstone who was pointing a tremulous finger toward the alcove. In the chair which had been occupied by Kenneth Deene the vague outlines of a man's figure developed from thin air, became the long, lank body of Kenneth Deene.

"Good lord!" Folkstone gasped. "Look at his face!"

From the roots of his dark hair to the collar of his shirt, the face of the man in the chair was a mask of blood that completely obliterated the features. Then slowly the figure slumped forward to collapse on the floor.

"Blackfore killed Deene!" Charles Polk cried. "Blackfore's here. Run for your lives, men!"

That was when the lights went out. The Green Ghost did not know whether Polk, Folkstone or Hurley had sighted him before that sudden blackout. He simply stepped to one side, heard the three men as they rushed pell-mell past him.

While they were stumbling over furniture in the room outside, beating a hasty retreat, the Ghost advanced steadily, cautiously, moving through the dark and toward the alcove where the body lay. The sudden darkness had a peculiar significance, he thought. If Blackfore were invisible, why had the lights been turned out?

The Ghost stopped, listened to the sound of a door being quietly opened. Footsteps whispered. The piercing beam of a flashlight jabbed through the darkness, coming from the left side of the room. The beam fingered nervously through the gloom, pointed out the limp body and bloody face of the corpse in the alcove. Then it darted into a corner of the room and began a careful clockwise search.

The Ghost moved soundlessly toward the source of light, heart hammering excitedly, his sensitive fingers thrust out before him to warn him against any piece of furniture that might be in his path. If he could only keep ahead in that path which the searching ray of light was taking! If he could just get to the person who held the light!

The ray moved more swiftly now, hurrying the Ghost's steps, crowding him from behind. But as he kept ahead of the light he also bored steadily toward the hand that held it.

SOME sixth sense warned the man with the light. The beam jumped, and so did the Ghost. He was behind the man now, his left arm looping about the man's neck while his right hand put the point of his knife against the man's back.

"Not a peep out of you!" the Ghost whispered.

The man dropped his flash, but the light remained on. There was sudden swift motion behind the Ghost. Too late he realized that the man with the light had been a decoy to occupy his

attention while others struck from behind. The Ghost flung his captive to one side, tripping him over an extended foot. He twisted around to meet the savage rush from the rear. He slashed with his knife, heard the rip of cloth.

They closed in on him from all sides. He never knew just how many had attacked him, for even as he was locked in a struggle with one, something landed on his head like a truckload of brick. And suddenly he was alone in the silent halls of oblivion. . . .

It would have been difficult for the Green Ghost to record the exact moment when he returned to consciousness. Oblivion was hardly less dark. He was weighted down with a sense of complete helplessness so that he found himself actually trying to return to the land of dreamless sleep from which he had emerged. His first thought was a particularly ugly one:

"Someone has buried me alive!"

He was in some sort of a packing box that might have been a coffin, but as yet the box had not been planted in the earth. It was standing at an angle of about forty-five degrees. The Ghost could hear the steady thrum of a motor, feel the easy bounce of well-oiled car springs.

His hands were tied behind him. Rope around his ankles had shut off the circulation in his feet. Legs sagging, his knees pressed numbly against the top of the box which was formed by two wide boards not too closely joined.

Through the crack in the top, he could see the yellow cones of light from the head-lamps and the broad ribbon of concrete that extended in front of him. His eyes dropped and he discovered that he could see the steering wheel of the car.

His heart thumbed wildly, driving blood into his brain clearing his mind of the last trace of cobweb brought on by his sudden sleep. For there was no visible person in the driver's seat of the car, no visible hands on the steering wheel!

For a moment, he struggled with the idea that an invisible Blackfore did exist. Ever since the matter of the invisible ray had been brought to

his attention, he had privately entertained the notion that Blackfore was more of a trickster than a bona-fide scientific genius as he had made Folkstone, Deene, and the others believe. But here, on the face of it, seemed to be absolute proof that the invisible killer did exist.

He listened. There were no sounds in the car that might have indicated any other occupant than himself. He watched, as unseen hands manipulated the wheel to bring the car smoothly and expertly around a curve in the turnpike.

And then the truth hit him with overwhelming force, and was even more terrifying than fanciful fears. He had first heard the name Blackfore in conjunction with experiments revolving around radio remote control. That was it! The car in which he was being carried was operated by radio remote control from a car that followed.

Which could mean only one thing. The remotely controlled car would be deliberately wrecked! It would be driven into the path of a train or plunged over some embankment, spelling *finis* for the Green Ghost. Once and for all would be removed the greatest obstacle in the road of the ruthless extortionist who had already taken two lives to impress the public with his powers to collect money—or else!

CHAPTER VIII

A Piece of String

HELPLESSLY bound, the muscles of the Green Ghost's arms strained against the ropes that bound his wrists. But there was not the slightest play, since the Ghost had been tied up while he was unconscious. His efforts could only result in tightening the knots.

The long fingers of his right hand felt the left cuff of his coat sleeve. What would have seemed to be some sort of tailor's stiffening beneath the surface of the cloth was actually a narrow blade of thin, flexible steel.

Right now it represented his single ray of hope.

His fingers worked feverishly, forcing the end of the thin blade through the lining of the sleeve. As soon as he had drawn it free, he brought the razor edge of the steel up against the rope that bound his hands. He could move it up and down only a short distance, but the blade had been designed to cut tough fibers like melted butter.

The last strand snapped, and the Ghost's wrists were free. He brought his hands around in front of him, flexed his fingers. Through the crack in the top of the box, he could see the long stretch of highway unfold before the headlights of the driverless car. Any moment now and the car might reach that particular spot which had been chosen to end the Ghost's career.

He reached his left hand into the inner pocket of his coat, pulled out what appeared to be an oversize fountain pen. Thank heaven his searchers had overlooked this! He unscrewed the cap, pulled out the nib. From the barrel of the pen a collapsible steel jimmy dropped into his fingers.

When he had screwed the three joints together, he had a strong, finely tempered tool ten inches in length. With this he set to work on the two boards that had been nailed to the box to form a top. The ray of hope widened.

Prying, gouging, he raised the two boards mere fractions of an inch at a time. He could hear the squeal of nails pulled in their holes above the steady purr of the motor. Now and then he would hold his tool in his left hand, pound at the boards with the heel of his right hand.

Not yet. The nails were long, the wood closely grained.

More prying and gouging. Then he could move the boards with his hand. Another minute now, and he would be free except for the ropes that bound his ankles.

The car was picking up speed. Through the ever-widening crack between the boards, he could see that the road rose steeply. The car was approaching a high bridge over an un-

derpass. Was this the spot?

He attacked his job with renewed vigor, lagging muscles spurred on by sheer desperation. The driverless car had pulled sharply to the extreme right of the wide stretch of concrete. It accelerated as it climbed.

This was the spot! At the very summit of the rise, the steering wheel whipped to the left. The Ghost dropped his jimmy as the car swerved. His clenched fists drove forward like twin hammers against the loosened boards.

And as the speeding car rocketed across the road toward the concrete railing of the bridge, the Green Ghost exploded from what had been intended for his coffin. He did not so much as look ahead. He didn't have to. He knew how short would be his immediate future if he faltered an instant.

HIS lean body dived over the back of the front seat. One hand cut the ignition. The other went to the hand brake. Then, as the motor died, he got both hands on the brake and hauled back on the lever. He closed his eyes.

The scream of rubber on concrete, the howl of brake lining burning against brake shoes, the grinding clash of bumper metal and grill work against the rail—all were parts of the next split second. And then abruptly there was silence, and the Green Ghost opened his eyes.

Part of the bridge rail had broken away under the terrific impact. The right front wheel of the car jutted crazily out over the abyss. But the car had stopped.

The Green Ghost took a long breath, groped on the bottom of the box in which he had been confined, found the flexible steel blade with which he had cut the ropes that had bound his wrists. Swiftly he slashed the cords that held his ankles.

Even as he did, the radio control car which had been bent on steering him into an early grave made a loop turn and headed back toward the wreckage. Evidently the control car had shot past when the driverless car had started for its scheduled crack-up.

The Green Ghost had neither knife

nor gun. His hand closed on the steel jimmy to which he owed his existence at this moment. He crouched in the bottom of the car and waited.

The control car had come to a stop; its motor idled. A door opened and slammed, and hard heels clattered across the pavement. The footsteps became less swift, and more cautious.

The Ghost huddled and waited. Everything depended on his ability to simulate death or at least a state of unconsciousness.

The door of the wrecked car was opened. Through lowered lids the Green Ghost dimly saw the full moon of a pale, round face, saw the glint of narrow eyes staring down at him over the barrel of an automatic.

The man with the gun stooped forward, prodded the Ghost cruelly in the middle. The Ghost did not move. The man with the gun reached out to hook fingers in the lapel of the Ghost's black coat. He lifted the limp form a little.

"So you got out of this mess, Wise Guy," the man muttered. "There's one mess you won't get out of—the one the Chief shoulda used in the first place. Lead in the head—that's the trick that will fix your wagon."

He hauled the Ghost to a sitting position, propped him against the back of the front seat. The Ghost raised his eyelids slightly, saw the glint of gun metal as the crook raised his weapon toward the Ghost's temple.

The Green Ghost came to life then. Both legs shot out like pistons through the open door of the car to ram the crook at the belt line. The man reeled backward and the Ghost shot from the open door, the jimmy raised above his head.

Two wild shots from the crook's gun slammed into the silence of the night. The Ghost hacked down with the jimmy, connected with the crown of the hood's hat. The man stumbled backward, both hands going out in a frantic effort to grasp something that would check his fall.

But there was nothing to grasp. A long section of the bridge rail had been torn out when the driverless car had struck it. The crook plunged backward into dark nothingness. His

scream of terror made the night hideous.

THE Ghost stood on the brink a moment, his body trembling. Then he turned quickly and walked to the idling control car. He got in under the wheel.

On the way back to the city, he stopped at a filling station and telephoned Commissioner Standish, to learn that the police had already taken over at the Deene house. Kenneth Deene's murder had been reported by Monty Folkstone.

The Ghost made no effort to tell the commissioner of his adventures. He hung up, went back to the car, and headed for his sanctuary, the haunted rectory. . . .

The following morning Kenneth Deene's death was on the front page. The headline read:

SECOND VICTIM OF ASTRAL ASSASSIN

Folkstone, David Hurley, and Charles Polk had been questioned by the police, and the entire story of Blackfore and the invisible ray had been made public. A columnist with imagination speculated wildly on just what an invisible man could do in the heart of Manhattan. According to him there was a terrible possibility that the unseen menace would loot all the wealth and snuff out half of the lives in the city before he was caught.

A news-wise book stall sold out all of its copies of H. G. Wells' "The Invisible Man" an hour after opening. Several small merchants in various parts of the city applied white wash powder and flour to their floors in hope of catching the astral assassin's footprints. And at noon Police Commissioner Edward Standish and the mayor both issued radio appeals to the public not to become panic-stricken.

Truly, the unseen menace had got a hold on the city that it would be hard to break. He would be able to collect tribute from just about anybody—newsboys and millionaires, bakers and bankers. Only one thing was not entirely in his favor. The Green Ghost was still alive.

Before nine o'clock of that same morning, the Ghost arrived in front of the building in which Dr. Leonard, the psychologist, had his office.

For the work ahead of him he had once more chosen the identity of Detective-sergeant Hammill. He wore a toupé of coarse red hair and he had broadened his face by means of "plumpers" inside his cheeks. He had widened his nose with putty, and seemed shorter and heavier in a suit of tweed with padded shoulders.

At the door of the building, Legs Maloney squatted on his roller platform, whining out his wares to the various office employees who entered the building. The Ghost approached the legless beggar.

"What's selling today, Legs?" he inquired in a bluff voice which exactly suited his present appearance.

"It's pencils, and they ain't selling so well, Mister," Maloney complained. "You'd think nobody is going to write anything any more."

"A lot of people will be writing their wills if this panic about an invisible killer keeps up," the Ghost said.

He took a couple of pencils from the legless man and handed him a quarter.

"Anything to that, you think?" Legs asked. "I ain't read the papers, but I heard folks talking."

"About three-quarters of what you hear is rumor," the Ghost said. "Personally, I'd have to see an invisible man before I'd believe in one."

HHE LAUGHED at his own joke and then asked:

"You know Dr. Leonard who has an office on the twelfth floor of this building?"

Legs nodded. "With whiskers. Sure, I know him. One of those crackpot doctors for crackpots."

"Has he arrived yet this morning?"

"What's it worth?" Maloney asked, his sharp little eyes studying the Ghost's face.

"Two bits," the Ghost said. "And I could find out for myself by telephoning his office."

"He hasn't gone in yet. Usually don't arrive till late."

The Ghost tossed the legless man

another quarter and went into the building. He got into the elevator and traveled to the twelfth floor. The doctor's office was locked, but there were few locks which a magician of George Chance's ability could not handle in short order. And fortunately the hands of George Chance were always hanging out of the sleeves of the Green Ghost.

A moment later, he was crossing the doctor's reception room to the private office. There he turned to the big steel file cabinet that stood against the wall. He pulled open the big roller drawers, thumbed through cards and papers.

Finally, he removed the drawers entirely and examined the interior of the cabinet itself. On the cross brace of the roller track which would have supported the second drawer from the top, he saw a short length of dark colored string—a piece of fishline, on closer examination, and it was knotted to the brace. The fishline had been broken off within a few inches of the brace.

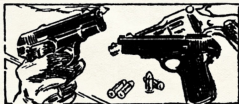
He returned the drawers to the cabinet, went over to the doctor's desk, and picked up the phone. He called Joe Harper at the Chance house on East Fifty-fourth Street. Harper had just got out of bed.

"Joe," the Ghost said quietly, his eyes on the office door, "do you know a legless gent named Maloney?"

"Sure," Harper yawned. "What about him?"

"I don't know what about him. That's your job. You're to beat it down here to the Leighton Building and keep Legs within sight. That's all—just keep track of the guy. And report where he goes and what he does."

Hanging up, the Ghost gave Dr. Leonard's office a quick going-over without finding anything to excite suspicion. Then he left for Commissioner Standish's office.



CHAPTER IX

The Voice Speaks Again

STANDISH carefully closed and locked the door to prevent any possible interruption, as soon as the Ghost arrived at his office.

"Have you heard about the Deene killing last night?" the commissioner demanded.

"I was there," the Ghost said coolly. "I saw Deene demonstrate Blackfore's ray machine."

"And he really faded into thin air—became invisible?"

"Apparently so," the Ghost said. "And then he came back again, this time as a corpse with his face beaten to an unrecognizable pulp. Only I'm wondering if the corpse was really that of Kenneth Deene. Whenever the features are obliterated, I'm suspicious."

Standish went over to his swivel chair and dropped into it. He stroked his black square of mustache thoughtfully.

"You can discard your suspicions then," he finally said. "Because it was Kenneth Deene. It seems that Folkstone, Deene, Polk, and Hurley had played some bridge previous to the demonstration of the ray. We printed Folkstone, Polk, and Hurley, as well as the corpse without a face. The four sets of prints we took corresponded with the prints on those playing cards. There were no other prints on the cards, because it was a comparatively fresh deck and Polk had only used it to play solitaire a few times."

"You've talked to Polk, then?"

"Hurley and Folkstone, too." The commissioner nodded. "Polk had already paid the sum of one hundred grand to this invisible killer, so I guess he's comparatively safe."

"How did he pay it? Did he tell you that?"

"Simply left it on his library table and went to bed. When he got up it was gone. He assumes that Blackfore got it."

"Blackfore's the invisible menace

then?" the Ghost asked quickly.

"Who else? He invented the ray machine, didn't he?"

"I just wondered. I'm beginning to be convinced myself, after what happened to me last night. Somebody took me for a ride in a remote-controlled car. The idea was to eliminate me. Now, while Blackfore at one time created quite a sensation with a car which he could control remotely by radio, it wasn't Blackfore who was running the remote control car last night."

"So you're the guy who was mixed up in that business on the highway last night!" Standish exclaimed. "I heard about that."

"Well, don't nose it around," the Ghost cautioned, "because I don't want to be investigated in connection with the self-defense killing of my would-be murderer."

He told Standish of his adventure in greater detail. When the commissioner had concluded congratulating him on his fortunate escape, Standish steered the conversation back to the killing at the Deene house.

"Have you any idea what became of this remarkable ray machine after Deene was murdered?"

THE Ghost stared at Standish a moment.

"You mean the police didn't find it there?"

"They did not. Further, they found nothing that would account for men vanishing into thin air. Nothing to explain tables that go flying through space. The devil of it was that Folkstone, Polk, and Hurley left the house in such a state that I don't think they stopped running until they reached Jersey. Folkstone didn't call us until about an hour after the show was over."

"So you inherited a cold trail," the Ghost said. "Which always makes it tough. I tried my hand at picking up a cold trail this morning. The night of Peter Creighton's murder in Dr. Leonard's office, I was forced to leave in a bit of a hurry. Otherwise, I might have had the sense enough to grab Creighton's murderer."

Standish's close-set eyes brightened.

"You've picked up something?"

"Only a piece of string and a hunch," the Ghost said. "The former bears out the later."

"What's the hunch?" Standish asked. "Or do you feel inclined to give it away without a struggle?"

"The hunch is—the man who knifed Peter Creighton was lying in one of those drawers in Leonard's filing cabinet."

Standish snorted. "That's wonderful!"

"But I'm serious. Those drawers are for legal size paper. Three separate and distinct classifications of human beings could have managed to get into one of those drawers."

"A child or a midget maybe," Standish said.

"Or a man without legs," the Ghost added. "And there was a legless man hanging around the building that night. I had talk with him a while ago and there's a distinct similarity between the voice of the unseen killer who knifed Creighton and the voice of Legs Maloney."

"Maloney!" Standish gasped. "I know that beggar. But good lord, man, how would Maloney climb into one of Leonard's file drawers?"

"I think a certain fat man who was carrying a transfer file might have explained that better than I can," the Ghost said. "On my way out of the office—and I was in something of a hurry—I ran into this fat person lugging the transfer file. It struck me as rather an odd hour for a filing clerk to be working."

"Suppose the fat file clerk—who probably wasn't a file clerk at all—carried Maloney in the transfer file into Leonard's private office while Creighton, the doctor, and I were in the reception room. He then could have switched the drawer from the transfer for one in the cabinet, thus getting Maloney into the filing cabinet."

"The fat man went out by the hall door. The key was on the inside of the lock, but he could have locked the door from the outside by grasping the ward end of the key through the lock in the jaws of an outitti. He took with him the transfer file which now

contained a drawer from Leonard's cabinet. After the killing, he was supposed to come back and work the switch act in reverse before the cops came to investigate the murder. That's how he happened to be standing in Leonard's door when I went out."

"But Parkinson and two cops were there," Standish said. "How the devil did Maloney get out of the file?"

"Parkinson and the two cops weren't there while they were chasing me, were they?" the Ghost said. "And we don't know where Leonard was. So Fatso still could have made the switch."

STANDISH shook his head.

"I still can't picture Legs Maloney getting that file drawer open, throwing a knife with such amazing accuracy, and then closing the drawer before you and Leonard could turn around."

"He couldn't have thrown the knife," the Ghost said. "That knife didn't have the proper balance. I think he *shot* the knife from some sort of a device. As to his getting the drawer open, all he would have had to do would be to push against the back of the cabinet with something—say one of those staffs he uses to push himself along the sidewalk. Getting it closed again would have been a cinch if he'd had a piece of string tied to a brace at the back of the cabinet. He'd just have given the string a jerk and the drawer would have rolled closed."

"You mentioned something about a piece of string."

"A piece of fishline had been tied to a track brace at the back," the Ghost explained. "I found a portion of it still in place."

"We'd better pick up Maloney and give him a thorough going-over," Standish said. "It looks like you've hit on something."

The Ghost shook his head.

"I haven't a thing against Maloney. I've merely pointed out that Creighton's murderer had to be concealed in that filing cabinet in Leonard's office, because there wasn't any place else to hide him. Maloney fits as a possibility, and that's all. Joe Harper is watching

Maloney, and that may lead to something bigger."

"Maloney is probably a small cog in the murder machine, eh?"

"If he's in it at all, he's a small cog," the Ghost agreed. "I'm going to give Tiny Tim Terry and Merry White the job of watching Folkstone and Hurley. Charles Polk has paid up to the killer, so probably he's eliminated from danger."

"And what are your plans?"

The Ghost was thoughtful a moment.

"I may have a look at the Deene house, just to make sure your police didn't miss something. . . ."

That evening, Merry White found Monty Folkstone's apartment without difficulty, but she had scarcely located it before Folkstone came out of his door, dressed to go out. Mr. Folkstone, she decided, would look a lot like Edward G. Robinson, if the movie actor's hair were gray.

She went down in the same elevator with Mr. Folkstone and his ever-present cigar. Her waiting cabby was willing enough to keep Folkstone's car in sight for the double fare which Merry offered.

She was much surprised when her trail led her to the suburban house of David Hurley. Hurley had his name and house number in wrought-iron dangling from a bracket on his gate post.

"What with Tiny Tim spying on Mr. Hurley," she thought, "this ought to be quite a convention."

And she could not say that she was sorry that her midget friend was near at hand. Perhaps she had seen Edward G. Robinson in too many unsympathetic rôles, but she had tagged Monty Folkstone as a pretty dangerous person, gray hair or not. . . .

TINY TIM had arrived at the Hurley house several minutes ahead of Merry. He had entered the house through a coal-chute window that would have hardly admitted an adult of normal size. It was while he was trying to move quietly around in the basement in search of the stairway that Tim heard a voice. It seemed to be coming from somewhere on the

floor above directly over his head.

"I'm here again, David Hurley," the voice said.

To Tim's ears came the sound of Mr. Hurley getting out of a chair in a good deal of hurry.

"Wh—what? W—who?" Hurley stammered. "Where are you?"

"Right here in this room," the voice said. "You can't see me, but I'm here. I want your money or your life!"

It dawned on Tim that the owner of the voice was the same invisible menace that had done for two men already. Tim had a great deal more courage than his size indicated, but invisible killers were a little out of his line. The hair on the back of his neck prickled up and the cold sweat broke out on his body.

"Just the same," he thought, "I'm not going to stand here and not turn a hand to help Mr. Hurley!"

Clenching his teeth, he struck a match, found the stairs and started up. He had taken exactly three steps when his courage failed him. For the voice of the unseen spoke again.

"I will give you one more chance, Hurley. Tomorrow night at ten o'clock you will put one hundred thousand dollars in bills of large denomination in a packet on the dining table. If you do not do this, I shall certainly kill you."

"I—I agree," Hurley gasped. "I promise!"

"And I'll be watching—watching all the time."

That was when Monty Folkstone rang the front door bell. And the voice of the invisible killer spoke again.

"Don't let my presence prevent you from answering the door, Hurley. You must go right about your little household tasks as though I were not here!"

"Yah—yes," Hurley stammered, and Tim heard him walking toward the front of the house.

Tiny Tim drew a long breath and continued up the steps. Near the top, he stopped, his heart hammering against his ribs. Footsteps in the dark behind him! Sudden panic flooded over Tim. He scrambled up the remaining steps, pushed open a

door, and dived into the kitchen.

The only light in the kitchen came from the dining-room door. Tim sent a frightened glance behind him, then headed for the door of the nearest cupboard. He opened it, ducked inside, knocking over several bottles. He pulled the door closed behind him just as the footsteps sounded at the top of the basement stair.

Footsteps whispered across the kitchen floor, moving swiftly, surely, toward the cabinet in which Tim was hiding. In the dark of his narrow confines, Tim closed his eyes and breathed a prayer. Close to his ear he heard a metallic *snick*. His eyelids sprang open, though there was nothing but darkness to see. He waited for a moment.

And then he heard the footsteps again, moving away—thank heaven! A door opened and closed.

It was not until some moments later that Tim realized that in his hurry to find a hiding place he had picked the one cabinet that had a lock, the one in which Hurley kept his liquor. And whoever it was who had followed Tim up the steps had turned the key in the lock of the cupboard door!

TIM heard David Hurley's footsteps returning from the front door. He was speaking excitedly to the man he had just admitted.

"I tell you, Folkstone, there isn't any way out! You can't fight something you can't see. And after last night when we saw what happened to poor Deene . . . Well, I'm going to pay Blackfore what he asks and get it over with."

"You heard his voice again?" Folkstone asked.

"As though he was standing right beside my chair. For all I know, he may be here yet!"

"This calls for a drink!" Folkstone said.

"I could do with a nip myself," Hurley agreed. "Come out into the kitchen. I've got some pretty fair Scotch in the cupboard."

"And some pretty fair Irish, too!" Tiny Tim thought. "Half-pint of Irish named Terry!"

CHAPTER X

In the Cards

FORTUNATELY for Tiny Tim, someone besides the man from the basement had seen him get into that cabinet. Merry White, prowling on the outside of the house had peaked through the kitchen window just as Tim was scampering for his hiding place. Merry had also seen Tim's follower—a tall, gaunt man whose head was bent so low that his hat had hid his face.

The man had carried something in his hand. It looked to be a small suitcase to which a length of wire and some strange round gadget was attached. As far as Merry was concerned, the device might have been an invisible ray machine.

A moment later, she heard the back door of the house open. And then the tall gaunt figure moved silently across the back of the lot, to disappear in the shadows.

Merry's heart was beating in her throat, threatening to stifle her. Tim was in trouble! She didn't know just how bad that trouble was. Perhaps the tall man had used his invisible ray on Tiny Tim. She shuddered at the thought. It was tough enough on Tim Terry to be so small—but what if he couldn't be seen at all!

Merry hesitated only a moment, then ran around to the front of the house and rang the door bell. This, incidentally, checked Hurley and Folkstone just as they were entering the kitchen.

Both Hurley and Folkstone answered Merry's summons. Probably both had a horror of being left alone in the presence of the unseen person the papers had dubbed "The Astral Assassin." When the two men opened the door, Merry looked from Folkstone to Hurley, then uttered a faint moan and collapsed into Hurley's arms.

"For heaven's sakes, what's that?" Folkstone demanded, staring at Merry.

Hurley held the girl awkwardly, his

face flushed from nervous strain.

"Isn't it obvious?" he snapped. "A girl. What did you think it was? The poor thing's fainted! Possibly some poor starved waif of the streets."

"She doesn't look like any waif to me," Folkstone said. "In fact, it seems to me I saw her coming down in the elevator when I left the apartment."

"Well, don't stand there gaping! What the poor girl needs is a glass of brandy."

In the liquor cupboard, Tiny Tim heard this last remark and vowed that if he ever got out of this mess he was going to advocate the return of prohibition.

Hurley and Folkstone carried Merry out into the kitchen and propped her up in a chair. Folkstone kept at her side while Hurley started toward the cupboard that concealed Tiny Tim. Tim drew a long breath, summoned all his courage, and called out in as deep a voice as he could muster:

"I'm watching you, David Hurley!"

Hurley stopped in his tracks. He looked over his shoulder at Folkstone. Folkstone's mouth was open. More than that, Merry White's eyes were open. She was sitting bolt upright on the chair.

"He is still in here," Hurley whispered, apparently completely taken in by Tim's trick.

"Don't bother to whisper," Tim said from the cupboard. "I'm closer to you than Folkstone is. I could conveniently stick a knife in you or maybe mash in your face."

"I—I think I'm going to faint again," Merry said.

Folkstone gulped. "G-get her some brandy. Maybe we'd better all have a drink."

"No, no!" Merry said. "Liquor makes me sick. Just some smelling salts or maybe an aspirin tablet."

"I'll get some aspirin," Hurley volunteered, and left the room, walking cautiously as though he feared he might fall over the invisible killer.

MERRY turned her appealing eyes on Folkstone.

"Will you please call my husband?"

She opened her purse, fumbled inside, pulled out a slip of paper. The

paper carried the phone number of a dress shop which she patronized. The shop would be closed at this time of night.

"You may have to let the phone ring quite a while," she explained, "because he's apt to be down in the basement working in his wood-shop. But you call him and he'll drive out and pick me up."

"All right," Folkstone agreed, and Merry was left alone in the kitchen.

"Tim," she whispered, "you—you're all right? You're not invisible?"

"I'm locked in here with this gold-rummed brandy!" Tim snapped. "Get me out and be quick about it!"

Merry went to the liquor cabinet, twisted the key. Tiny Tim popped out, his face smudged with coal dust.

"We got to scram," Merry said. "They'll be back in a minute."

"And we can't get out of here too quick to suit me!" Tim said.

He led the way to the back door. The Ghost would be plenty eager to hear about this, especially about the invisible killer's purposed visit to the Hurley house on the following night. . . .

It was not the following night, but the following afternoon that the Ghost, alias red-haired Sergeant Ham-mill, sauntered into Commissioner Standish's office, grinning broadly. Standish looked up from his desk and nodded wisely.

"You've got something, haven't you?"

"Maybe so, Ned, maybe so."

The Ghost dropped into a chair, took a cigarette out of the box on the commissioner's desk and lighted it.

"Anything on Legs Maloney?" Standish asked.

"Nope," the Ghost said, shaking his head. "Joe Harper continues to watch Maloney's every move, and up to now there's nothing to get excited about. Tim and Merry had quite a time of it last night with David Hurley and Monty Folkstone and our invisible killer who seems to haunt basements. But I'll tell you about that later. First, I gave the old Deene house a going-over, and I discovered something."

"What?"

"That Deene's mother was Madame LaStrange, a medium active in spiritualistic circles, a generation ago. Doubtless she held many a seance in that gloomy old mansion, which would account for the fact that underneath the room in which Deene demonstrated the invisible ray machine there's another, and secret room."

"In the basement?" Standish asked. "The police searched the basement."

THE Ghost shook his head in the negative.

"This isn't in the basement. Where your men slipped up was in failing to compare the height of the basement ceiling with the height of the stairway leading into the basement. There's six and a half feet difference, indicating the presence of another room between the ground floor and the basement ceiling.

"The only entrance I could find to this room is in the stairway to the basement. Three stair treads and risers are joined and hinged so that they can be raised like a trap-door. On the level you'd have noticed it at once, but built into the stairway like that, it was pretty hard to find."

"And what was in that room?" Standish asked.

"Several things. One was a big electromagnet such as spirit mediums use for the levitation of so-called 'spirit trumpets.' Another thing was an oval-topped table that closely matched the mahogany table the police found in the room where the killing took place. The difference between the two tables was that the one in the secret room was made out of feather-weight composition and had an aluminum plate under the top, and the other was of mahogany.

"Because of the propulsion effect of electromagnetic force on aluminum, a heavy jolt from the electromagnet under the floor would have kicked that composition table right up into the air—so it was the one that most probably was there. That, too, is one of the tricks the fake spirit mediums employ."

"But Deene must have known about all that," Standish said.

"Wait," the Ghost said. "I'm not

out of the secret room yet. It contained a few more things. There was a heavy blood-stained hammer which had been used to batter in the face and skull of the murder victim. Also quite a few blood-stains on the floor. And the invisible ray machine, which unaccountably disappeared, was also stashed in that room. It's quite a gadget on close examination—covered with dials and knobs that don't mean a thing."

"You mean it's a fake?" the commissioner gasped.

"Exactly. It's an ordinary static generating machine. Start it up and it will give out current with high voltage and low amperage, shoot off deadly looking sparks, make a lot of noise—but is quite harmless and incapable of making anybody vanish or become transparent."

The commissioner raised his bushy eyebrows.

"Say—"

"Suggests some interesting possibilities, doesn't it?" the Ghost said.

"Deene must have known about the machine. And the electromagnet, too."

"Exactly."

"Then he was in cahoots with Blackfore. He put on that show to impress Polk, Folkstone, and Hurley. But he must have had a falling out with Blackfore. Or maybe Blackfore didn't want to share the profits of his extortion racket with anybody, and decided to kill Deene."

"Interesting conjectures," the Ghost said. "But what say we go to the lab and have a look at your fingerprint evidence. I mean particularly that deck of cards belonging to Charles Polk, the cards used in the bridge game which preceded the murder."

A FEW moments later, the commissioner and "Sergeant Hammill" were closeted in a little room of the police laboratory, with the fingerprint evidence which had been collected at the murder scene in the Deene house. There was the deck of cards with Charles Polk's monogram on the back; print photographs; complete fingerprints of Polk, Folkstone, Hurley, and the murdered man; the threat note

which Kenneth Deene had received, as well as a photostat of the same showing developed fingerprints.

The Ghost's first move was to examine several of the cards beneath the low power lens of a microscope. After a few moments, he raised his eyes from the instrument.

"That's a queer thing, Ned. These cards have square edges, which of course all playing cards do have when they are new."

"Nothing queer about that. Polk told us that the deck was comparatively new. That he had used it only a few times playing solitaire."

"But Polk uses the forced dove-tail method of shuffling," the Ghost said. "I watched him shuffle the cards that night prior to starting the bridge game. Do you know what the forced dove-tail shuffle is? It's a little difficult until you get the hang of it. You divide the deck into halves, square up the halves and place flat on some surface. Then by sheer force you dove-tail the two halves, sliding one into the other. It is especially hard with a brand new deck, but after you've shuffled the new deck three or four times by that method, it becomes easier."

"Well, so what?" Standish objected. "Polk would have shuffled the cards that way several times in playing solitaire."

"Exactly. And the reason the forced dove-tail method becomes increasingly easy with a new deck, is that the end edges of the cards break-down a little. That is, they become knife-edged rather than square-edged. Yet this deck of cards is square-edged, clearly indicating that the forced dove-tail shuffle had not been used with these cards. That night, only three hands of bridge were played. The deal stopped before Polk got a chance at it."

"What are you getting at?" Standish frowned.

"Simply that this deck of cards is not the one Polk was carrying in his pocket. It's the one used in the bridge game undoubtedly, but it was not Polk's deck. Anybody can buy cards of that pattern and could have the 'C.P.' monogram printed on the back.

The point is, somebody switched the deck. And why—that's the point. Why was the switch made?"

"You've got me," Standish admitted.

The Ghost next turned his attention to the examination of the print photographs which had been taken from developed prints on the cards. The commissioner pointed out the prints of Folkstone, Polk, Hurley and Deene.

"You'll find Deene's thumb print especially easy to recognize," he said. "The right thumb, that is. Notice the crescent-shaped scar."

The Ghost nodded. "And the prints of Folkstone, Polk, Hurley, and Deene appear on the playing cards. The ones designated as Deene's correspond with the prints of the murdered man. Well, that's logical. And what's this?"

HE PICKED up the threat letter which Deene had received, using a pair of thongs to do so.

"What prints on this, Ned?"

"Those are Polk's prints," the commissioner explained. "Questioned about that, Polk admitted that he had handled the note."

The Ghost nodded. "I remember he did. He read it aloud to the others. But where are our villain's prints?"

Standish snorted.

"He's too smart a man to leave prints around. Naturally he must have worn gloves when he wrote the note."

"Of course." The Ghost grinned. "Well, Ned, tonight we'll get our hands on the astral assassin, hold him up to the light, and see what makes him tick, eh? Merry and Tim discovered that he is going to come to the Hurley house and collect one hundred thousand dollars. You know, one of the methods he uses to make his voice come out of nowhere—besides hiding legless people in file cabinet—is the old one employing a microphone, amplifier, and reproducer."

"Where did you pick that up?"

"From Merry's description of a man who came out of the Hurley basement last night. She didn't get a look at his face, but she did see what he was carrying. For a reproducer he uses one

of those gadgets the radio shops used to sell to screw against the sounding board of your piano. With a device like that, all our extortionist would have to do is hold the gadget against the joists in the basement ceiling, and the sound of his voice would seem to come from the room above."

"One thing sure," the commissioner said, "we've got to grab this killer and give the public a look at him before the whole town gets in a panic."

"Oh, we'll get him tonight," the Ghost said confidently.

"You know who he is?"

"Of course. Don't you?"

CHAPTER XI

Money Flies

BEFORE ten o'clock that night, the Ghost, complete with skull-face make-up and dead black suit, knocked at the door of David Hurley's house. Hurley opened the door a crack, beheld the green-glowing death's head, and was so completely upset that the Ghost had no trouble at all in wedging his way into the hall.

The Ghost said nothing. He stared at Hurley with those deep-set eyes of his and motioned with the blunt muzzle of his automatic. Hurley went ahead of him, through the living room, to the French doors of the dining room. In the dining room, the Ghost met Monty Folkstone who took one look, then jerked the cigar out of his mouth.

"Great balls of fire, what's that?"

Folkstone became a little green about the gills as he stared at the faintly illuminated face of the Green Ghost.

The magician-detective bowed slightly.

"At your service, gentlemen. I'm the Green Ghost. Have you tried my pest control methods? Moths and termites removed at low cost. Invisible men and astral assassins cheerfully poisoned. Pests don't die in the house."

His eyes fell on the fat package of money that lay on the dining room ta-

ble. He picked the money up, looked at it, tossed it back onto the table.

"It takes big bait to catch big fish," he commented.

He returned to the French doors and pushed them shut, noticing that the catch did not work. He went to the dining room window and pulled down the shade. Then he dropped into a chair and looked at Hurley and Folkstone.

"We may as well wait for our invisible friend," he said. "He probably won't knock, for from what I hear of the goings-on around this house, he's got a pass key."

"What is it you want of me?" David Hurley demanded, some of the color returning to his usually florid face.

"Not a thing. I'm here to help you. Let's just wait and see what the extortionist's next move will be."

Hurley and Folkstone sat down uneasily, their eyes on the Ghost. They had not long to wait before the Astral Assassin indicated his presence. The French doors between the living room and dining room swung open slowly. A cool draft passed through the empty doorway.

"He—he's here!" Folkstone whispered.

The Ghost was inclined to blame the breeze on the mysteriously opened doors. He had noticed one of those noiseless electric fans standing on the living room table, undoubtedly Hurley's own fan.

But anyone who had prowled in the Hurley basement could have readily discovered the circuit that controlled the particular outlet to which the fan was attached. There were a number of simple methods which an electrically minded man could have employed to switch the fan on remotely from the basement. That could have been done by the insertion of a temporary switch, or merely meddling with the fuse of that circuit would have accomplished the trick.

But these possibilities had apparently escaped Hurley and Folkstone who stared in terrified fascination at the opening doors. And then came the Astral Assassin's footsteps, pounding deliberately across the floor, moving toward the dining room table

where the hundred thousand dollars lay within reach of his unseen fingers. Hurley and Folkstone stared at empty space, mentally calculating the progress of the footsteps.

TO THE Ghost, the most remarkable thing about the footsteps of the unseen menace was that they sounded just as loud when crossing a rug as they did on the bare floor. Which led him to believe that the genius in the basement was simply knocking on the underside of the flooring with something to produce the effect of footsteps.

To Hurley and Folkstone, the unseen criminal must have seemed within a couple of yards of the money. Their eyes kept jerking from the spot where they supposed the assassin to be back to the money on the table.

But all this was nothing but misdirection produced by the sound effects man in the basement. Accordingly, the Ghost anticipated the real danger to come from the kitchen door, and not from the conspicuously open dining room doors.

The Ghost got to his feet. Neither Hurley nor Folkstone noticed this. But they did notice that the packet of money on the table suddenly acquired wings. In the swift moving course of events that followed, they had no way of knowing that the Ghost's silent-acting spring windlass, with its invisible black thread, had jerked the money beneath the Ghost's black coat.

The Ghost whirled through the door connecting kitchen and dining room, his automatic in his hand. The door to the back yard was standing open, and in the dim night glow he saw the figure of a man. There was nothing transparent or invisible about the man. He was just an ordinary human being with a lust for killing and robbing, and something of a genius for tricking people.

Probably, because of the light, he saw the Ghost more clearly than the Ghost saw him. He forgot that he had come to collect a vast amount of money. He wheeled, ducked back through the door just as the Ghost's little automatic barked.

The Ghost plunged to the back door, and that was about the time that the sound-effects man, formerly of the basement, came barging out of the cellar door. The sound-effects man butted the Ghost in his lean middle, upsetting the magician-detective and at the same time spoiling the bead he had drawn on the escaping criminal.

The Ghost practically bounced to his feet. His automatic was in his right hand, his knife in the left. Poised on the top of the short flight of steps that led into the yard, he hurled his knife at one of the two fleeing figures in the yard, shooting at the same time. The shorter of the two was hit. He stumbled, fell, and did not get up as the Ghost approached.

The Ghost stopped only long enough to pull his knife out of the man's back and get a glimpse of his face. It was the same fat man whom he had met before—the man with the transfer file who had been standing outside the door of Dr. Leonard's office.

At the back of the lot was a brief flurry of gunfire. That would be Commissioner Standish who had taken up a position at the rear of the yard. The Ghost sprinted, joined Standish as the commissioner sprang from a clump of shrubbery.

"Missed the devil!" Standish panted. "He's sneaked over the fence, and I think there's a car waiting for him up the alley."

"Nose pointing which way?" the Ghost demanded.

"South. We'll get around in front and try to head him off in my car."

THE two men pelted back toward the house, around the side, and out into the street where half-way down the block the commissioner's car was parked.

The Ghost was the first to reach the car. Opening the right-hand door of the big black sedan, he was about to get into the front compartment when a quiet oath burst from his lips. In the back seat of the car slumped the body of a man.

The Ghost switched on the dome light, stared at the man in the back seat. There was a bluish lump on the

man's forehead. He was not dead. He had been knocked out.

"Who the devil?" Standish cried, as he reached the car.

"Looks like Legs Maloney—if Maloney had a shave and had suddenly grown a pair of legs. Get in and drive, Ned. I'll hop in back and look this bird over."

Standish hurried around the front of the car, got in under the wheel. The Ghost was already seated in the back of the car beside the unconscious man. The commissioner's car started, rocketed from the curb and turned left at the end of the block, to brake to a stop at the mouth of the alley.

"No car in the alley, blast it!" Standish growled.

"Straight ahead," the Ghost urged. "That car going like a house afire. Maybe it's the wrong one, but we've got to chance it."

While the commissioner was busy following the fast-moving car ahead, the Ghost turned his attention to the unconscious man beside him. He pulled up one trouser leg, discovered a cork leg beneath. In fact, both of the man's legs were artificial.

It was Legs Maloney, no doubt of that. Who had conked him on the head, and why he had been stowed in the commissioner's car was not clear at the moment.

It was while he was examining the man's artificial leg that he discovered a circular hole on the bottom of one shoe. This hole extended up into the hollow of the leg. Held in this by means of a small spring catch was a hollow tube of metal about a foot and a half in length. When the Ghost had removed this tube, it resolved itself into one of those rubber-tipped staffs which Maloney had used to propel himself when strapped to his roller platform.

Closer examination of the tube revealed that it contained a strong spring. And the Ghost knew instantly that he had discovered the weapon which had been used to shoot that peculiar knife into the body of Peter Creighton. The disk-shaped hilt of the knife had served as a guide when propelled through the hollow tube. That gave Maloney a dangerous and

deadly weapon which he could carry without arousing suspicion whether he was walking on his artificial legs or rolling along on his platform.

The Ghost tried to explain all this to Standish, but the commissioner had all he could do to keep the car ahead in sight.

"Whoever is driving that car has a pretty nervous foot on the brake pedal," the commissioner growled. "Look at him flashing his stop light, will you!"

LEANING across the back of the front seat, the Ghost looked through the windshield at the flashing light ahead.

"I believe he's signaling us in Morse code!" Standish said. "He just spelled out an 'H' and an 'A' sure as shooting!"

The Ghost watched, translating the long and short flashes from the stop light of the car ahead.

H-A-R-P-E-R A-T W-H-E-E-L
F-O-L-L-O-W M-E.

"Joe Harper?" Standish asked.

"Must be," the Ghost said. "Joe was following Legs Maloney, remember? Legs must have been driving our erstwhile invisible killer's car. He could manage that with those artificial legs. Joe's knocked Maloney out and he's stepped into Maloney's job as chauffeur for the killer!"

CHAPTER XII

From Nowhere

JOE HARPER was in that car ahead, and as it came to a stop in back of a big garage building, Joe Harper knew that the show-down was near. He was wearing the hat which he had taken from Legs Maloney, but that was his only disguise. He had kept the dashlights of the car turned off so that his face would not be illuminated.

The chief criminal was riding in the back seat and had paid more attention to the car which had been persistently following them that he had to

Joe Harper. But Harper knew his luck could not hold out forever.

The criminal sprang from the car as soon as it had come to a stop. He ran to the door of the building.

"Come on down the basement, Legs," he said to Joe. "I'll pay you for your part in killing Creighton, and then we'll separate for a few days until that darnation Ghost gets off our trail."

The killer went through the back door, left it open for Joe Harper to follow. Harper took his time. He knew that as soon as the killer got a look at him, the song and dance was over.

He wished that the Ghost would show up. He didn't like tackling this bird alone.

Just inside the door were stairs leading down into the basement. Joe Harper, with his right hand on the butt of his automatic, went down the steps into a long room which was apparently some sort of laboratory. Radio apparatus, motor parts, and numerous other things he couldn't name littered the end near the stairs.

The other end of the room was comparatively empty. It was toward this vacant end that the killer was walking, his back toward Harper.

Joe Harper pulled out his gun. Any moment now, the killer would turn around and—

Harper's lower jaw dropped. If he had been smoking his usual cigarette, it would have fallen unnoticed from his lips. Because right before his eyes, the killer had vanished! The man had been walking along the side of the room, had taken a sudden side step toward the middle of the room, and immediately had disappeared into thin air.

Harper pulled his gun clear of his pocket. What he was going to shoot at he didn't know, but he was going to lace the air with shots until he hit something, or died in the attempt.

But even before he could pull the trigger, the sound of gunfire rattled at the other end of the room. Harper did not see any flashes, but then maybe the killer's gun was invisible, too. Harper raised his gun, pointed it at the section of thin air which had swal-

lowed the killer, and let go.

The results were far greater than he could have possibly anticipated. There was a shattering sound such as collapsing a green-house might have made. A vast sheet of plate glass heretofore invisible because of its transparency was smashed into a thousand bits by Joe Harper's shot.

The glass had curtained almost all of the end of the room, and now that it lay in glistening heaps on the floor. Harper could see not only the one-time invisible menace, but also the Green Ghost and Commissioner Edward Standish! The Ghost and Standish were standing at the end of the room, and the Astral Assassin was stretched out on the floor.

HARPER dropped his gun into his pocket and ran toward the others. The Ghost looked at him and shook his head.

"That shot of yours, Joe—never go around shooting at invisible men. You came awfully close to winging Standish."

"How was I to know you were fighting it out back of a sheet of glass?" Joe Harper asked. "I couldn't see you."

"Of course you couldn't," the Ghost said. "This is apparently the laboratory where Blackfore first demonstrated his marvelous invisible ray to Deene, Polk, Hurley, Folkstone, and Creighton. Of course, the ray was a hoax on the part of Blackfore to get the others to invest money in his scheme—money which he intended to run out with."

"But why couldn't Joe see us?" Standish asked.

"Because the plate of glass was set out in front, placed at an angle. Notice this large opening in the side of the wall through which you and I came. Notice that beyond that big doorway is another room."

"Sure, sure, but what of it. It's just exactly like the end of this laboratory."

"That's the point. It is like it in every way—the same appointment and the same size. But you'll find that the back wall of the room is illuminated indirectly and with powerful lights,

while this wall here has no illumination at all. Because of the lighting and the angle of the glass, Joe didn't see this end of the room at all. He saw the back wall of that empty room over there, reflected in the plate glass. If you want to go into the subject deeper, consult Ottokar Fischer's explanation of the stage illusion known as 'The Room of Mortality.' You'll find it in his book, 'Illustrated Magic.'"

"And that's all there is to the invisible ray?" Joe Harper asked.

"That's all, except for the static machine and other trimmings, unnecessary to the illusion itself," the Ghost explained. "Deene worked the same thing in that alcove in his own house, I discovered. The police missed the fact that the alcove extended out quite a way on the south side, and that that south wall was identical in every respect to the back of the alcove. They also missed the sliding plate of glass which was hidden in a groove in the wall which apparently had once been occupied by a sliding door to cut off the alcove from the rest of the room."

"Wait a minute," Harper objected. "You said Deene worked the trick. Deene's dead, remember?"

The Ghost shook his head. "He's unconscious, with a couple of Ned's bullets in him, but I don't think he's dead."

Standish and Joe looked at the man on the floor. He was tall and thin. He had shaggy black hair and a heavy black beard.

"He looks like Dr. Leonard to me," Standish said gruffly.

But the commissioner walked over to the unconscious man who resembled the psychologist. He knelt, gave the doctor's beard a jerk. The spirit gum that held it in place gave way. The false beard came off in Standish's hands. The shaggy hair became a wig and close examination revealed an ample quantity of nose putty which had been used to change the shape of Kenneth Deene's nose.

Standish wheeled on the Green Ghost.

"You said you saw Deene murdered."

"I did not," the Ghost contradicted. "If I remember right, I asked you if you were certain the faceless corpse in the Deene house was really Deene. I said I was always suspicious when the features of a corpse were obliterated. You and I both heard Folkstone's description of Herman Blackfore. Blackfore was tall, thin and dark. So was Deene. It was Blackfore's corpse you found in the Deene house, not Deene's corpse.

"You see, Standish, that secret room in the Deene house covered a multitude of sins. The way I figure it, Deene had decided that Blackfore's invisible ray was a fraud, and had decided that he could put on the same demonstration that Blackfore did by using a sheet of glass and some artistic lighting.

"Deene decided that Blackfore was hoaxing Deene, Folkstone and the others out of a lot of money. So Deene snares Blackfore, brings him to his house, keeps him a prisoner in that secret room. He also steals Blackfore's fake ray machine and Blackfore's remote control automobile. Possibly Deene intended using the radio controlled car for some more 'invisible man' stunts to further the threat of his extortion scheme. And then, knowing he had to get Blackfore out of the way, Deene hit upon a plan for giving himself an alibi.

"Deene was already living a double life. He was working the psychology racket in the disguise of Dr. Leonard. He was a fake psychologist, just as his mother had been a fake spirit medium. There's a certain similarity between the two rackets, you'll agree. So it occurred to Deene that he could pan off Blackfore's corpse as the corpse of Kenneth Deene, while Deene himself would go his way as Dr. Leonard after he had worked the extortion business to the limit."

"I get it," Standish said. "One of Deene's henchmen, possibly Legs Maloney or the fat guy, killed Blackfore in the secret room while Deene was doing his vanishing act. Then, behind the illuminated plate of glass in the alcove, the corpse of Blackfore was substituted for that of Deene. Blackfore's features had been nicely

mangled with a hammer. But . . . Hey, wait a minute. You can't get away with that, Ghost. What about those fingerprints?"

"What about them?" the Ghost asked, smiling. "Do I have to go into all that? Wouldn't you rather know something else? For instance, how the lights in the alcove were dimmed and brightened gradually to make the vanishing illusion a gradual sort of dissolving view—"

"I don't give a hoot about your magic," Standish said. "The fingerprints on those playing cards matched the finger prints of the corpse. You can't tell me that Blackfore was sitting there at the card table, playing bridge with Polk, Folkstone, and Hurley."

THE Green Ghost smiled slowly, and shook his head.

"I'm not telling you that," he said. "No, Deene played at the bridge game, all right. But he had covered his finger-tips with clear lacquer or maybe nail polish. Which would account for the fact that he had a lot of trouble handling the cards. I watched him deal, you know, and he frequently dropped them. Whatever he had on his finger-tips prevented him from getting any prints on the cards. But Polk, Hurley, and Folkstone left prints on the cards.

"As I explained to you previously, somebody had switched card decks. Deene was the boy who had done the switching. He had bought a deck just like the cards Polk used, knowing that when he got his guests assembled, Polk would suggest bridge. And of course Deene did invite Folkstone, Polk and Hurley to his house, even though he denied it.

"But the point I'm making is this: Deene switched to a deck of cards which he had previously prepared. He had compelled Blackfore, who was his prisoner, to plant his fingerprints all over the cards in that deck. Since Deene's fingers left no prints, that's how you were fooled into identifying the corpse of Blackfore as that of Kenneth Deene."

"All right, pal," Joe Harper said. "I'll take your word for it."

"And another mystery to me," Stan-dish said, "is how you hit on Deene as our criminal. You told me at Headquarters this afternoon that you knew who he was."

"It's like this," the Ghost explained. "Down at Headquarters, you showed me that extortion note which Deene claimed to have received. Actually, he wrote that to himself to impress Folkstone and the others. Your men developed the fingerprints on that note, discovered that they were Polk's prints. Since Polk had handled the note, that wasn't so odd. But I watched Deene take that note from his pocket and hand it to Polk. How come Deene's prints were not on it?"

"From that, I deduced that Deene had some invisible covering on the

tips of his fingers, which would account for him dropping the cards. He had made the mistake of not putting Blackfore's prints on the note.

"As for how I figured the supposed Dr. Leonard into the business—well, where was Leonard when the cops and Parkinson were chasing me? I knew I hadn't hit him hard enough to knock him out. So either he helped Legs Maloney out of that filing cabinet, or he saw his fat pal do it. In either case, Dr. Leonard was involved."

"Okay," Joe Harper said. "Let's leave the commissioner to his glorious triumph and go home. You realize I've been tailing that legless Legs Maloney for about forty-eight hours? I could sleep in a corner—but I much prefer a bed."

Coming Next Issue

THE LAST MOBSMAN

A Gripping Mystery Novelet by ARTHUR J. BURKS

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GRIT THAT DULLS SHAVING EDGES



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SHAVING CREAM WHILE FACE IS
WET. IF LATHER IS USED, WORK IT
IN WELL WITH BRUSH OR FINGERS



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EDGES, ENABLING YOU TO OBTAIN
EQUAL USE AND GET BETTER SHAVE



4. CLEAN BLADE IN RAZOR BY
LOCKING HANDLE, THEN RINSING IN
HOT WATER AND BRUSHING. WIPING THE
BLADE IS LIKELY TO DAMAGE THE EDGE



He swarmed into the heavier man throwing his fists as fast as he could

MURDER TAKES NERVE

By WILLIAM MORRISON

Everybody Thought Dick Meade Was a Coward, but When His Friend Was in Trouble He Surprised Even Himself

RICHARD MEADE, riding home in the subway, stared at the large photograph that adorned the second page of the late afternoon paper. "Dare-Devil Criminal Released On Parole," ran the headline on the accompanying story. But in his mind, Richard Meade supplied another headline: "Boyhood Hero Released On Parole."

The subway swayed around a curve, and Meade almost fell into the lap of

a fat woman sitting in front of him. The fat woman gave him a dirty look, and he hastily apologized.

To tell the truth, he was afraid of her. He was afraid of truck drivers, of his boss, of dogs, and of a lot of other things. But Paul Durland, whom the papers called a daredevil criminal, even when he was a kid, had possessed none of these fears. No wonder Meade had made him his hero.

It wasn't true that Durland had

been entirely fearless. Meade knew one or two things that had frightened him. He had been afraid, for instance, for his younger brother, when the latter got into bad company. Meade had always suspected that Paul Durland had gone to jail in place of his younger brother, who was really guilty of robbery. But he had no way of knowing for sure, and by now it didn't matter.

A man reading the paper over his shoulder said, "That crook's a tough baby."

"What crook?" asked Meade, indignant that anybody should refer to Durland by that name.

The man pointed to the photograph. "He had nerve. The way he took on a half dozen cops that time in the courtroom showed it."

"That was when one of the cops said his brother was involved in the robbery."

"I don't remember what caused the rumpus, but he certainly fought like a wildcat."

The subway swayed again, and once more Meade descended ungracefully into the lap of the fat woman. She pushed him to his feet with disdain, and once more he stammered an apology.

What wouldn't he have given not to be afraid of her! If only he could have been as brave as Paul Durland! He'd even have been willing to go to jail, the way Durland had done, and not be sorry. But there was no use day-dreaming about it. He was a coward, and he would stay a coward.

That was the way he felt before he knew what excitement the future held in store for him.

Friday was payday at the McCarthy Machine Company. At ten-thirty in the morning, Richard Meade looked up from the rows of figures on which he had been working, took off his glasses, and rubbed his eyes.

He wasn't thirsty, but he had been sitting for an hour and a half, and he was tired of it, so he got up, filled a paper cup with water, and drank a few drops before throwing the cup away.

Mr. Gladden, head of the accounting department, suddenly yelled, "Meade!"

MEADE jumped. He wondered if he was going to be bawled out for loafing. "Yes, Mr. Gladden."

"Take those figures you compiled yesterday down to Q. T." Q. T. was Quentin Trumbull, treasurer of the company. "Show him how you got your results."

"Yes, Mr. Gladden."

"The treasurer's office is locked today, so you'll have to identify yourself before they let you in."

"Yes, Mr. Gladden," repeated Meade, and hurried away, pleased to have a few minutes of respite from those accounts.

The building he was in was used for offices exclusively. The machine works themselves were a few blocks away, where the noise and smoke wouldn't annoy the office workers.

He walked down a long corridor, which was lined with private offices of all kinds. In them the vice-presidents of the company as well as other big shots did their work. Most of them were known to Meade only by sight. Around a bend in the corner was the treasurer's office.

Ordinarily it was kept open, but on paydays Q. T. kept a supply of cash on hand, and the door was locked. The McCarthy Machine Company had never been robbed, and old Q. T. thought it was silly to hire a guard for just that one day. Besides, the office was on the third floor, and a crook would have had to get past two floors full of people without arousing any suspicion if he wanted to steal the money.

Then he'd have to get past the locked door. And finally he'd have to get past old Q. T., who kept a loaded revolver beside the payroll.

So Q. T. thought the money was pretty safe. And so did Richard Meade, as he started on his walk down the long corridor.

At the first vice-president's door, Meade paused. Actually, by pausing he was saving his life, but he didn't know that.

He was only thinking that the first vice-president's office was beautifully furnished, and that the first vice-president's stenographer was beautiful no matter how she was furnished. He

was wondering if he'd ever get to be a first vice-president when he didn't even have nerve enough to ask for a raise.

He stared at the name on the door, "Arthur W. Cantrell," and sighed. Cantrell was only a few years older than himself, but he was energetic, pushing, and fearless, and he had got places. He played polo, he was seen in important night spots with movie stars, and he even owned several race horses. He was somebody.

While these thoughts passed through Meade's mind, a shot rang out. Then a man screamed. Next a woman screamed. And a few seconds later a masked man stopped momentarily at the bend in the corridor.

He had a revolver in his hand, and he looked ready to shoot anybody he saw. If Meade hadn't stopped to envy the first vice-president he would have met the masked man at the bend in the corridor and had a bullet in his heart by now.

Meade's heart pounded furiously. He pushed open the vice-president's door and slammed it shut behind him.

"Well, what's the meaning of this?" a girl's voice exclaimed.

"There's a man out there," explained Meade wildly. "He's a robber, a murderer! He's got a gun—"

"You needn't be afraid, he isn't coming in here," said the girl coolly.

RICHARD MEADE looked at her and was ashamed of himself. She was Miss Carroll, Cantrell's beautiful stenographer. He, a man, had been frightened almost to death, while she, a mere girl, had been completely unafraid.

"Your name's Meade, isn't it?" she said. "I think I've seen you in the accounting department."

"Yes, Miss Carroll," said Meade, and blushed. He hadn't known that she had even noticed him.

"Perhaps we'd better go out and learn what's happening."

From the noise outside, plenty was happening. Evidently the masked man hadn't run down the corridor at all. That would only have led to his being trapped. He had run downstairs to get away. He had probably

slipped off his mask after getting out of the building.

Meade and Miss Carroll mingled with the crowd. "They say he probably had another man waiting for him in a car to help make his getaway," observed Miss Carroll.

Meade shuddered again as he thought of his narrow escape. But he was curious to learn how the robbery had been carried out. Then he realized happily that he had a perfect right to go into the treasurer's office and find out exactly what had happened. After all, he had something to deliver to Q. T.

He left Miss Carroll and shouldered his way through the mob of clerks and stenographers standing between himself and the treasurer's office. Then suddenly he overheard a man's remark. He swallowed hard and felt sick.

He wasn't going to deliver anything to old Q. T. For old Q. T. was dead, murdered by the robber, and his corpse wasn't interested in any explanations about accounts.

One of the lower vice-presidents was talking, explaining to Mr. Cantrell what had happened, and everybody else listened eagerly, including a policeman who had just arrived.

"The thief was a man of considerable coolness and daring. He must also have had luck to be able to slip up to the third floor without being seen. Or else he knew enough about the habits of the office staff to pick his time well."

"But once on the third floor, the locked door would have stopped him," objected Cantrell.

"It did, but not for long. He went around the locked door."

"He climbed out of the window and walked along this ledge you can see here. It's only four inches wide, and he had practically nothing to hang on to. A fall would have meant serious injury or death. So you can see what I mean by coolness and daring."

"Once inside, he shot old Q. T. and scooped up the money. No, he didn't have to climb back along the ledge. He opened the door from the inside, ran out, and got away."

"It was a daring crime, perfectly

executed. Unfortunately for him, however, the criminal made a single mistake."

They were all listening intently.

"As he opened the door, his mask slipped off. He put it back in place hurriedly, but in that fraction of a second, Miss Jimson, Trumbull's secretary, caught a glimpse of his face. You're sure you recognized him, Miss Jimson?"

"It's the same man whose picture was in the papers the other day. The one they call the daredevil criminal."

MEADE'S heart suddenly seemed to drop inside his body with a bump. His old boyhood hero, Paul Durland, a murderer? He didn't believe it!

The policeman asked, "You'd swear in court to seeing him?"

"I'm positive of the identification."

The vice-president who had been doing the talking said, "Here's Mr. Curry who was also in the office at the time. He also saw the criminal's face."

"He looked like Durland," agreed Curry.

The policeman frowned. "Durland happens to live right in this neighborhood. Unless he knows he's been recognized, there won't be any trouble picking him up."

"If he lives in this neighborhood, then it's all the more possible that he knows about our office habits. He could have learned that the door would be locked, and prepared his plan in advance."

"We'll see," said the policeman. "He hasn't been out of jail long. But it would be just like him to pull a fast one like this. And that climbing over the ledge sounds like him too. He's a nervy devil."

Cantrell was moving away. "We'd better get back to work, Miss Carroll," he said to his stenographer, who had edged through the crowd close to Richard Meade.

"Yes, Mr. Cantrell." She said to Meade, "Good-by. It was a pleasure to have you drop in."

"Good-by," answered Meade mechanically.

But he wasn't thinking of her. He was thinking of Paul Durland.

Paul was not a murderer. Whatever the others might say, Meade was sure of that. Meade was positive that Paul could never have committed this crime. Because this murder took a kind of nerve that Paul didn't have.

They talked of his being daredevil, afraid of nothing. It took a boyhood friend of his to know that Paul was afraid of high places!

Even a height of twenty feet had scared him. And as he grew older, his fear, instead of decreasing, had grown worse. He couldn't have crossed that ledge to save his life.

Meade was in a daze as he walked back to his own office. Paul Durland was not a murderer. But any alibi of his would be laughed at. After all, he was a convicted crook out on parole, wasn't he? He was a daredevil, wasn't he? With two witnesses to identify him as the man who had killed Q. T., he would be convicted and sent to the chair.

And it was up to his old friend, Dick Meade, to save him, to prove him not guilty.

As he reached his own office, Mr. Gladden roared, "Meade!"

"Yes, Mr. Gladden!"

"What are you loafing for? Get back to work!"

"Yes, Mr. Gladden."

He bent over his accounts once more. He would never find the evidence to free Paul Durland that way. But after all, he had a job to hold on to—

He sat up suddenly. Did he? What did he want his job for? He had money in the bank and in defense bonds. He didn't have any wife to support. He didn't have any relatives to take care of. He could live without the job. Let Gladden fire him if he wanted to. He had to save Paul Durland.

He threw down his pen and stood up. His heart was in his shoes, but he had decided that it was his time to roar. "Mr. Gladden!" he bellowed.

AT FIRST Mr. Gladden looked stunned. Then he got angry.

"What's wrong with you, Meade? What's the idea of disturbing the whole office?"

"Nothing's wrong with me. I just want to tell you that I'm taking a few hours off. Maybe the whole day."

"What?"

"Maybe tomorrow too. Good-by, Mr. Gladden. Don't let anybody else touch those accounts, or they'll get all balled up."

Everybody stared as he closed the door behind him. He went downstairs to the locker room to get his hat and coat.

Then he walked out into the open air, a little scared of himself.

It was strange to be loafing in the middle of the day. After all, that was what he was doing, loafing. His time was his own. Nobody was standing over him, giving him orders.

He knew where Paul Durland's mother lived, and he walked there first. She was a gray-haired old woman who had suffered a lot, and she grew angry when she saw him. She started to slam the door in his face, and he had to put his foot in the way to keep it open.

"I've got nothing to say to you," she stormed. "You reporters make Paul out to be a tough criminal, a murderer. He's a good boy. He's always been one."

"I know, Mrs. Durland. I'm not a reporter. I'm Dick Meade. I was Paul's friend when we were kids. Don't you remember me?"

She took a good look at him, and then she started to cry.

"I know it looks bad, Mrs. Durland," Meade said helplessly, "but Paul's innocent. I'm sure he is. And maybe I can help him prove it. That's why I want to talk to you."

She was willing to talk now, but there wasn't much help in what she told him. Paul had been out that morning, looking for work. The police had arrested him just after he got home.

That made it look as if Paul would have a hard time proving an alibi. Meade tried to find out from her where the police had taken Paul, but she didn't know.

He left her, and without even stopping for lunch, picked up a phone book and began to make one call after another. There were a great many

police stations listed, and it took him almost an hour to discover the one where they were keeping Paul Durland in a cell.

At each station, the policeman who answered the phone was suspicious, and Meade had to explain that he was calling in behalf of Durland's mother before the policeman would answer any questions.

It took him another half hour to get to the station, and then he had a long wait before he could see Durland. It was the middle of the afternoon by the time he was finally led to Paul's cell.

Durland looked up in surprise. "Dick Meade! I thought they were crazy when they told me you wanted to see me."

"It's quite a while since I saw you last, Paul."

"A lot's happened since then. I've been to jail, and now they've got me for murder," said Durland bitterly.

"They haven't got you yet, Paul. I know you're innocent."

"You and my mother are the only ones."

Meade hesitated. "You're still afraid of high places, aren't you, Paul?"

DURLAND was astonished. "Do you still remember that?" he exclaimed.

"I remember plenty. I remember that you weren't afraid of anything else but what might happen to your brother. And the minute I heard the story of the murder at the McCarthy Machine Company, I knew you didn't do it. I work there, and I heard the way they figured out that you killed Trumbull. You were supposed to have climbed out on a ledge on the third floor."

"I wouldn't do it for any money."

"Suppose you could prove you were afraid—"

Durland shook his head. "I can't. If that's what you came here for, Dick, you wasted your time."

"The only people who knew about it were the fellows in our gang when we were kids. I don't know what's become of them, and it's even possible that they've forgotten about it. The

cops and the newspapers wouldn't believe it. They've got me labelled as a daredevil. And here I am with no alibi, and a couple of witnesses who swear they saw me in a place where I never was."

"Wouldn't my word count?"

"It would be you and me against those witnesses. I haven't got a chance."

Meade didn't answer at first, but after a while he said, "Its funny about those witnesses. We know you weren't there. Why should they claim they saw you?"

"Well, my picture was in the paper the other day. Maybe those witnesses got a good imagination, and the minute somebody suggested I was the murderer, they imagined they recognized me."

It was Meade's turn to shake his head. "It's more than that. The secretary, Miss Jimson, was positive it was you."

Durland shrugged. "I've been in court before. Most witnesses don't know what they're talking about."

"This one did. I've got an idea, Paul. I'm going to go back and talk to her."

It was an hour before quitting time when Meade got back to the McCarthy Machine Company. Mr. Gladden gave him a look that had so much dirt on it he could have planted a garden.

"So you decided to drop in again, Meade. Well, you're lucky. We happen to be short-handed right now. Otherwise, you'd be out of a job."

For a minute Meade had a feeling of panic. Then he reminded himself that he really didn't need the job.

"The company can't fire me, Mr. Gladden," he said. "I'm too valuable a man."

"Oh, you are?" The words, "You're fired!" seemed to be trembling on Mr. Gladden's lips. Then he ordered, "Run down and help Miss Jimson check up on what's been stolen."

"Sure, Mr. Gladden."

It was exactly what Meade wanted to do. He found Miss Jimson sad and sniffing in the office where old Q. T. had been killed. The body had been removed. Miss Jimson had worked with Q. T. for twenty years, and she

hadn't liked him much, but all the same she didn't enjoy seeing him shot. Meade found her doing very little work. She just wanted to sit and talk about the crime.

"Why are you so sure it was this daredevil criminal you saw, Miss Jimson?" he asked her.

"Oh, I couldn't make a mistake. I caught a glimpse of his face for just a second, but the instant I saw his nose it flashed through my mind who he was. And he had high cheek bones, and there was a strawberry mark below his right eye. Just like in the picture and his description."

IT WAS chiefly Durland's nose that had given him away. That, and the strawberry mark. Meade remembered a great many years back, when Paul Durland had been twelve, and had been hit in the face by a rock somebody had thrown in a fight between two gangs of kids. Since then his nose had been a little squashed, not ugly, but easy to notice.

Meade asked another question. "Did you see the crook come in through the window, Miss Jimson?"

"Oh, no. Nobody saw him come in. But he must have got in through the window. He didn't have any key to the door."

Meade threw down a bunch of papers he had been holding, and said, "Excuse me, Miss Jimson." He walked back down the corridor till he came to Mr. Cantrell's door. He knocked, and a voice said, "Come in." He pushed the door open.

Miss Carroll was a little surprised to see him, but not apparently sorry. She looked more beautiful than ever, and for a minute Dick Meade just stared at her.

"Am I as funny-looking as all that?" she asked.

"Funny-looking? You're—" Meade blushed. "I won't tell you now. Because I didn't come here just to see you. I wanted to see Mr. Cantrell, too."

"He's in conference in one of the other offices."

"Just like he was this morning?"

"Well, yes." She seemed surprised. "What's on your mind about him?"

"Nothing much." He turned to gaze at the wall. There was a picture of Cantrell and some other people hung near the desk. "Ah, I thought I saw that here this morning."

Her eyes followed his. "That was Mr. Cantrell in his college dramatic group. He played the leading lady. The whole chorus was made up of football players."

Meade nodded excitedly. Things were beginning to shape up in his mind. He backed hurriedly towards the door.

"I'll see you later, Miss Carroll," he said.

Then he ran downstairs to the basement. Everybody in the whole building had a locker here, from the president of the company on down. The officers didn't use the lockers much, usually keeping a pair of overalls or something of the kind to change into for the rare occasions when they went into the plant and monkeyed around the greasy machinery.

Dick knew where the officers' lockers were, but he wasn't sure which one belonged to Mr. Cantrell. He went looking for Mr. Haley, the old janitor. He found him tinkering with a steam pipe.

"Mr. Haley," he said, "I lost my locker key. Could I borrow your master key?"

"Sure. I guess you won't steal anything."

Haley tossed him a bunch of keys, and began to hammer at the pipe. Meade hurried to the row of lockers, his heart beating excitedly. If he was caught at what he was going to do now, there was no question about his being out of a job.

The first locker he opened had nothing in it but a half empty bottle of whiskey. He closed it and went on to the next. Here he found a surprise, a reddish toupee. He remembered that Mr. Gladden was red-haired, and hastened to close that locker too.

It was at the sixth one that he finally came across what he was looking for.

And then suddenly a hard voice said, "So we have a thief in the building."

HE TURNED around to find Cantrell glaring at him.

For a minute his throat seemed so choked that he couldn't talk. He just nodded, his face pale with fright. There was certainly a thief in the building.

"I saw you leaving my office. On thinking it over, I became curious to know just what business you wanted to talk over with me, and why you've been snooping around."

Meade succeeded in swallowing, and his voice came back to him.

"Nothing, Mr. Cantrell, nothing. I just figured that if I looked hard enough, I'd find this. There's a mask and some make-up paint and a bag with money in it."

His knees were shaking, and as Cantrell swung savagely at him, Dick Meade almost dropped into the floor.

Cantrell weighed a hundred and ninety pounds, which was some thirty pounds heavier than Meade, and Cantrell had been on his boxing team in college. Meade knew that, and didn't even try to fight back. He just stood there waiting for the punch to land on him.

But there was something both he and Cantrell had overlooked. The ceiling of the basement was low, and near the row of lockers, an insulated steam pipe ran from one end to the other. You had to duck to get past it. Cantrell forgot to duck, and Meade could hear the thump of his head against the pipe, as the heavy fist swung harmlessly close to his chin.

Cantrell cursed dazedly, and Meade tried to slip past him. Then he stumbled on something that Haley had left lying around. It was a mop, and as he lost his balance and staggered over a bench, the mop handle flew up and hit Cantrell on the jaw.

Dick Meade picked himself off from the bench and stared at Cantrell. The company's first vice-president had a glazed look in his eyes and was holding his jaw. And then Dick Meade got sore.

He was sore not at Cantrell, but at himself. Here he was, trying to help Paul Durland, and the first time he came across danger he started to run away. He was really nothing better

than what he had called himself the other day, a coward. He had no nerve. He was afraid of being fired. He was afraid of being hit. He was just afraid—

And with that last thought he stepped up and punched Cantrell on the nose.

Cantrell, still dizzy, struck back at him now, but Meade didn't feel anything. So he was a coward, was he? All right, he'd show everybody.

He swarmed into Cantrell, throwing his fists one after the other as fast as

excitement, so he couldn't see which one of them it was that said:

"Say, he's knocked out Cantrell! Some tough baby, this Meade!"

Meade pointed. "He's the murderer. He shot old Q. T. The evidence is in there."

And then he felt dizzy and sat down. He was scared. What would Mr. Gladden say to him when he learned what had happened?

GLADDEN said nothing. He just opened his mouth like a fish and



*Rupert Doll, Gangster Gorilla, Switches
to the Right Side of the Law—and
Finally Learns that He Likes It, After
a Series of Risky Exploits that Pack
Thrill-a-Minute Punch*

IN

THE LAST MOBSMAN

A Gripping Mystery Novelet

BY ARTHUR J. BURKS

ONE OF THE MOST THRILLING
YARNS OF THE YEAR—AND IT'S
ONLY ONE OF THE HEADLINERS
COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE!



he could. Cantrell tried to cover his face, and Meade began to pump punches into his stomach. Then Cantrell dropped his guard, and Meade hit him on the jaw, with his whole body behind the punch.

This time Cantrell went down. Meade breathed heavily. So he was a coward, was he?

Then he heard old Haley yelling in amazement. "Hey, what's going on here?"

Behind Haley there were other men. Meade's own eyes were blurred with

listened while Dick Meade explained modestly just how he had caught the murderer.

"Because of knowing about Durlands fear of high places, I realized from the beginning that it wasn't Durland. It looked to me more like an inside job. The murderer seemed to know everything about the place. For instance, he knew that old Q. T. had a revolver beside him, so he shot Q. T. right away.

"What's more, he'd have been crazy to take a risk like walking on the

ledge. I was convinced of that when Miss Jimson said she didn't actually see him come in through the window. Miss Jimson and the other witness were off to the side, behind wooden partitions, so they didn't see the murderer come in at all. They didn't wake up to what was going on until they heard the shooting. The murderer knew that too.

"So I figured he must have had a key to the office. Well, the only people who had keys to the treasurer's office were high officers of the company."

Meade paused impressively, cleared his throat, and began again. "Nevertheless, I remembered how positive Miss Jimson had been that the murderer was Durland. There was no question that the murderer looked like him.

"Why? Because he was made up to look like him! He put some wax or putty on the end of his nose to make it resemble Durland's. I don't know much about make-up, but I don't think it was hard to imitate high cheek bones, or that little strawberry mark.

"When the mask slipped, it wasn't an accident. The murderer wanted to be seen for just a second.

"He had prepared his plan probably from the day he saw Durland's picture in the newspapers. And he knew that when a man has already been convicted of being a crook, and is out on parole, he starts out in court next time with a couple of strikes on him.

"When I got that far, I had to figure out who the murderer actually was. I thought of Cantrell right away.

"I knew he spent a lot of money. Race horses and polo ponies cost plenty, even for a first vice-president. So I figured that maybe he was hard up and couldn't afford to let anybody know it. And I had a vague memory of that picture in his office.

"I went back to look at it and make sure. He had gone in for acting, and knew something about make-up. And there was something else. I knew he hadn't been in his office during the holdup. He was supposed to be in

some sort of a conference.

"I put everything together. He had gone down to the locker room, changed into his disguise, staged the robbery and murder, and then come back to show himself, because staying away too long would be suspicious.

"He wanted to do away with the evidence, but I think he didn't find a chance during the day. He had made appointments to meet people here. Besides, he was afraid of Haley wondering what he was doing in the locker room. I guess he hoped to come down here afterwards, when everybody else had gone.

"I figured the evidence would probably still be in the locker. The mask, the make-up kit, the money he stole, P. T.'s gun—everything."

MEADE sighed happily. Paul Durland was going to be free. And he himself was not a coward. He had nerve, lots of it.

For instance, he had the nerve to say, "Mr. Gladden thinks the company owes a great debt to me. So he says I'm going to get a raise, and be promoted, and have an office and secretary of my own."

Everybody cheered, and Mr. Gladden, who didn't know what else to do, nodded weakly, and admitted, "That's right."

And the second vice-president, who was going to be first vice-president now, chimed in, "Absolutely. The company appreciates a man like that."

Later on, Dick Meade said to Miss Carroll, "I need a secretary, and I've put you out of a job, so you're elected. Besides, I got to celebrate tonight, after I see Paul Durland to tell him what's happened. You'll come along with me, and we'll go places. And seeing as I'm going to get a raise, and I don't need the money for myself, I'm thinking of getting married. We'll talk that over."

She put her arm in his. "Well," she said, "you've certainly got an awful lot of nerve!"

"Yes," admitted Richard Meade. "I have. That's always been the trouble with me!"

"Are you
just plain
zombies?" I
ask my two
new pals



MURDERERS ARE DUMB

BY DONALD BAYNE HOBART

*"Mugs" Kelly, Tough-Minded Sleuth, Puts a New Face
on the Problem When He Tackles a Slight Case of Death!*

WHEN you sit on a bench just outside a cemetery at midnight in the full of the moon, maybe it's best to carry a rabbit foot, or something, just in case. But I have to sit myself down on that bench without even crossing my fingers. As for the rabbit's foot, that never struck me as being lucky for the rabbit.

"Mugs" Kelly is the name, and they do say that I'm big, tough and repulsive. Can I help it if I've got a face that would make a gargoyle gargle? I've found that looking like something that's been carved out of a mountain doesn't hurt business in the

least, when you're a private detective like I am.

Anyway, I'm sitting there on the bench, wondering why I decided to take a walk on the outskirts of Clearview, when two guys loom out of the shadows and sit down on the bench on either side of me. They don't say anything, and I start wondering if I'm palling around with a couple of ghosts.

"Werewolves?" I ask. "Or just plain zombies?"

"He goes to the movies, Joe," says the guy on my right. The man is wearing a derby and smoking a cigar, and he looks like a race-track bookie.

"And ain't he ugly?"

"Yeah." Joe is a thin-faced lug who looks like a gunman to me, and he doesn't waste words. "Tough, maybe."

I'm starting a slow burn. I don't like either one of these guys, but I decided to be nice about it and just get up and walk away. I start to rise, and then sit down again when I discover they both have me covered with guns they've got in their pockets.

"That's better," says the guy wearing the derby. "I'm Jim Doyle and he is Joe Martin."

"And tomorrow I'm to be Queen of the May," I says, cracking wise.

"Too bad we seen you bump off the old man and bury him in that fresh grave, up in the cemetery," says Doyle. "They don't like murderers in this town." He sounds as casual as though he is talking about the weather.

"Yeah, tough," says Martin.

I just sit there with my arms folded across my chest. I try to look disdainful, but my brain is working fast. From the casual chatter of my two pals, it looks like I'm to be the head man in some kind of a murder frame—and I don't want to be the goat. The bench kind of rocks and is not fastened to the ground, and that gives me an idea.

ALL of a sudden I lean back and push hard against the ground with both feet. At the same time I let both arms fly out. My right slaps Doyle across the face and my left socks Martin across the chest. All three of us have our weight against the back of the bench, so it turns over.

I hit the ground so hard that I feel like I've broken my back. But when I find I can still move, I don't waste time checking up on minor casualties. I roll over and scramble away out of reach of those other two lugs, then drag out my automatic from my shoulder holster.

Doyle and Martin are using a lot of colorful language that wouldn't look pretty in print, as they get painfully to their feet. Then they see I have them covered with the automatic.

They become too unhappy for words.

"The next time you try to find a victim for a murder frame," I says in a nasty voice, "don't pick on Mugs Kelly."

"Murder frame?" says Jim Doyle. "What are you talking about, Kelly? We weren't trying to frame you with anything! We did see a big man that looked like you run away from that grave—so we dug it open and found Jasper Heatherington's body. We were going to hold you on suspicion, that's all."

"Hold me on suspicion?" I says. "What are you guys, anyway?"

"Cops," says Martin. "I'm a detective, and this is the Clearview chief of police." He flashes a badge and Doyle does likewise. "Take a good look."

I do, and then have a funny kind of feeling. I've got a hunch that these two guys are telling the truth, and I've stuck my neck out way up to there. Socking a couple of cops, knocking them off a bench and then pulling a gun on them doesn't look like I'm a Boy Scout doing my daily good deed.

"Who is this Jasper Heatherington, and why would I bump him off and then bury him?" I ask.

"That's what's puzzling me," says Doyle. "Your name is Mugs Kelly, you are a registered private detective with an office in New York City. You arrived in Clearview on the ten fifty-seven train yesterday morning, took a taxi to the Clearview Hotel and got a room there."

"Maybe you guys know what I had for lunch yesterday," I says dazedly.

"Hot roast beef sandwich, apple pie and a cup of coffee," says Martin. "What are you doing in Clearview, Kelly?"

"A guy sends me a wire," I tell him. "It reads be in Clearview on July twenty-sixth. Need aid of private detective—willing to pay usual fee, and it's signed John Craig. So I arrived yesterday, figuring on meeting this Craig and learning what it was all about—but no one in town had ever even heard of the name."

"And the Clearview police get tipped off to be on the lookout for a

man answering your description," says Chief Doyle. "Nice!"

"Well, not too utterly," I says, shoving my automatic back into the holster. "I still smell a frame and it looks like it is all for my benefit."

"I think you're right, Kelly," says the chief. "Maybe we'd better talk this thing over."

We pick up the bench and set it back the way it was before I got impulsive. Then we sit down again, kind of gingerly, and get to talking. Doyle and Martin are nice guys, and I feel good knowing that I have a couple of the local police willing to string along with me, especially when one of them is the chief.

I learn that this Jasper Heatherington was quite a big shot in Clearview. He was a millionaire and owned a big tire plant that has been converted for war work. Heatherington was a widower, whose closest relations were a niece and a nephew. He lived alone in a big house not far from the Clearview Cemetery, with the exception of four servants he had working for him.

THE street is not more than twenty yards from the bench on which I'm sitting with Martin and the chief. While we're talking I hear the sound of a horse's hoofs, the rumble of wagon wheels and the jangle of cowbells.

I watch, and one of those old-fashioned junk wagons comes along the street. It's loaded down with junk, and the moonlight is bright enough for me to see there is a big man on the driver's seat.

"Tell him to stop those cowbells jangling, Martin," orders the chief. "He knows better than to make that much noise in a residential section after midnight."

"Yeah." Martin gets to his feet and walks down so that he is standing on the curb as the junk wagon draws closer.

The chief and I watch and see the detective say something to the driver. The big guy reaches behind him to unfasten the string of cowbells hanging across the wagon from one side to the other. The noise of the cow-

bells has stopped as the junk wagon goes on. I see there are a lot of iron pipes sticking out the back.

Joe Martin stands watching the wagon as it goes on down the street. Suddenly the detective staggers like he has been shot, and then drops to the ground and sprawls there motionless.

"Come on!" shouts Chief Doyle. "Something has happened to Martin!"

He runs to the man lying on the ground at the edge of the sidewalk. Just as he reaches Martin, the chief also staggers and drops. I'm feeling kind of sick. It looks to me like somebody picked off both those guys with a rifle with a silencer on it, and I don't want to be the third victim. So I stay right where I am for a few minutes.

A police patrol car rolls along the street. The officers in it see Martin and the chief lying there and stop fast, then get out and go to take a good look. A sedan appears suddenly from the opposite direction. When the car reaches the spot where the police are, it turns into the curb and two men get out. The junk wagon has disappeared around a corner.

I happen to be standing in the shadows beneath the branches of a big tree, which is probably why the guy with the silenced rifle didn't try to get me, too. None of the new arrivals has seen me there.

"My mammy done told me this is no place for Mugs Kelly," I mutter, and I know I am right.

If Doyle and Martin are dead, and I suspect they are, then the police will want to ask me a lot of questions. I can just see myself saying that the chief and the detective had been questioning me about murdered old man Heatherington and burying the body, when all of a sudden somebody shot Doyle and Martin. Even I would be gagged by a story like that, and I've swallowed some whoppers in my time.

It looks like all I have to do is find the real murderer, pin a motive on him and let it go at that. That is all—one of those nice easy jobs that can be handled by seventy-two men and a boy.

I play Indian and get away from there without being spotted. I am heading in the direction that the junk wagon has gone. The big guy who had been driving the wagon hadn't even looked back when Martin dropped. So if the junkman did the shooting, it was done with mirrors. Yet I felt that junk wagon had something to do with it.

"All I got to do is figure out where I would go if I was a junkman," I decide. "But then maybe that guy has original ideas."

Two blocks away I find the junk wagon standing at the curb, the horse tied to a telegraph post by one rein and the driver missing. So I look the wagon over. There's a lot of red iron rust on the floor beneath the driver's seat, and big footprints in it, but I don't pay much attention to that.

What interests me is the junk that is piled up in the bed of the wagon. There's old iron, lead and paper and some busted furniture, and I can see how a guy with a silenced rifle could stretch out beneath the whole mess, and not be seen. I search around in the junk and find the rifle.

MRS. KELLY didn't raise any foolish children, though you'd never believe it to hear her tell it, so I don't go pawing that rifle and getting my fingerprints all over it. I know that I'm taking the bulls by the horns, but I unfasten the horse and drive the junk wagon to the police station. I've located the place while wandering around the town, so I know where to go.

The chief and Martin have been brought in—and I learn they aren't dead. Those guys were smart. Joe Martin only got a bullet in the arm. He dropped and made it look like he was dead, so he wouldn't stop another bullet. The chief got shot in the leg. When he fell, he hit his head and it knocked him out for a few minutes.

"Hello, Kelly," says Doyle when he sees me come barging into the police station. "I've been wondering what happened to you. I have men out looking for you and that junk wagon. It was stolen from old Zack Fenton's

barn. He's one of our local junkmen."

"I got the wagon outside," I says. "Found it on Maple Street with the driver missing. There's a rifle with a silencer on it in the wagon."

"A rifle!" shouts Chief Doyle excitedly. "Why didn't you bring it in with you, Kelly?"

"And get my prints all over the gun?" I grin. "Not me—that's cooking with the electric chair."

I see there are two guys with the police. One of them is about the same size that I am. He has kind of a rugged face. The other lug is thin and young and wears glasses.

"This is Jasper Heatherington's nephew, Jefferson Clark," says the chief, nodding to the young guy with the glasses. "And this is William Lake, Mr. Heatherington's chauffeur."

Both guys give me a curt look, like I don't mean anything in their lives. I've already decided that if I had my choice of people I'd take with me to a desert island, Clark and Lake wouldn't be in the party.

William Lake yawns and drops into a chair, crossing one leg over the other and waving one big foot around. He sure has an ugly face. I look at the sole of his shoe and then light dawns.

"What I'd like to know," I says, "is why you two guys killed the old man and then buried him in that fresh-dug grave in the cemetery?"

Clark's face turns a dirty gray.

"No use trying to blame us for what you did, Kelly," snapped Clark. "You killed my uncle with that knife—and you know it!"

"I didn't even know he was murdered with a knife, Mr. Craig," I says quietly.

When Clark doesn't even protest, as I call him by the name signed to the telegram that brought me to Clearview, I know I'm getting some place.

"I've never seen Mr. Heatherington, dead or alive," I go on. "So why should I kill him?"

"For the money!" Jefferson Clark cries. "Someone must have tipped you off that Uncle Jasper had a hundred thousand dollars in cash hidden in the house. You went to him tonight, of-

ferred your services as a private detective. He hired you; and then as soon as you discovered where the money was hidden, you killed him and stole it."

"Did I?" I ask, looking at the chief.

"No," says Doyle. "At seven tonight you had dinner in the hotel dining room. At seven-thirty you came out into the hotel lobby and sat there until eight-forty. At eight-forty you went to the movies across the street from the hotel—and remained there until eleven-ten. Then you went for a walk and finally reached the cemetery."

"That's where we lost you," says Martin. "You looked like the guy who was fooling around that brand-new grave, so the chief decided we would question you."

CLARK and Lake have been listening, looking kind of goggle-eyed as they heard the chief account for all of my time, when I should have been murdering Jasper Heatherington, according to Clark's version. They don't seem pleased.

"Nice going, boys," I tell them. "But you were too smart for your own good. You must have seen me somewhere and learned I was close to being Lake's double. So you send me a wire asking me to come to Clearview today."

"Clark himself probably sent the wire and signed it John Craig. Why do guys always pick the same initials when they change a name—"

"You're crazy!" Clark shouts excitedly. "I had nothing to do with it!"

"Be quiet and let Kelly finish," orders the chief. "Go on, Kelly."

"You try to play smart by tipping off the Clearview police to keep watch on a man answering to my description," I says. "And do they do a job of it! You guys think you have me framed nice when you see Chief Doyle and Detective Martin with me at the cemetery. But you're not satisfied."

"You swipe the junk wagon. Lake drives the horse and Clark hides under the junk in back. He shoots Martin and Doyle with the silenced rifle. Then you drive away a couple of blocks, leave the wagon and come back in the car you have parked somewhere close by, to see if I'm not accused of killing the chief and Martin."

"It's a lie!" says William Lake flatly. "We ain't been near any junk wagon!"

"Then how did you get the red rust that's on the floor of the wagon all over the soles of your shoes?" I ask the chauffeur. Lake gasps and his ugly face becomes very pale indeed.

"That's all we need, Kelly!" says the chief heartily. "I'm glad that they tried to frame you with Mr. Heatherington's murder. If they had just killed him and stolen the money, we might never have learned who did it."

"Yeah," I says. "Murderers are always dumb!" Then I frown, as I look at Lake. "Say, does that lug really look much like me?"

"Somewhat," says the chief. "But to be frank, you are much uglier, Kelly."

I just smiled, feeling pleased. Ain't it funny, the way a guy can be kind of vain about his looks?



Jerry Grant was working his way through college by being night attendant at the morgue—and he got an amazing education in the ways of criminals!

THE SPHERICAL GHOUL

A Baffling Complete Novelet

By **FREDRIC BROWN**

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BIG GAME KILL

By DALE CLARK

*When Murder Stalks the Sidelines of a Rose Bowl Game,
It's Up to Tommy Martin to Score a Goal for Justice!*

CHAPTER I

All-American Detective



OMMY MARTIN fought his way across the sidewalk into the Hotel Del Plata.

There was a crowd in the lobby, too, though it was only a Class B riot compared to the one in the street. Tommy Martin inhaled a

breath of relief, tucked his tie inside his vest again, removed his felt hat in order to punch it into a semblance of its former fashionable shape.

Alternate pillars around the hotel lobby wore windings of blue-and-gold bunting, then of scarlet-and-black. A huge blue-and-gold banner hanging at one end of the lobby said: *Sierra U*. The same-sized banner, but done in scarlet-and-black, hung at the other end and advertised: *Tecumseh*.

"Where East meets West," Tommy Martin thought. "At the Bowl game. . . ."

It was easy to tell East from West—as far as the eye could reach. The Easterners were bleached white, clad in optimistic summer weight clothes, and had rosettes of scarlet-and-black ribbon pinned on their chests.

The Westerners ran to suntanned features, carried sensibly thick topcoats, and wore the colors of Sierra University.

Neither side seemed to have made any New Year's resolutions against bottles and fat black cigars.

Tommy Martin started to pick his way through the noisy human swarm, like a halfback side-stepping through a broken field in slow motion.

"Mr. Martin. Calling Mr. Martin." He stopped, flagged the bellhop.

"Tecumseh by two touchdowns! I betcha!" a voice proclaimed at Tommy Martin's elbow.

"Boy, but are you nuts? Sa-a-ay, Steve Warner is gonna pass the ears off you monkeys! I'll take that bet. . . ."

Tommy saw the money waved. Five ten-dollar greenbacks. Betting commissioners handled the really large wagers. There were supposed to be two commissioners domiciled in this very hotel. The odds, quoted in the morning papers, were 7-5 on Tecumseh; and you could lay a hundred dollars at that price, or ten thousand.

The money dizzied Tommy Martin when he stopped to think about it. A million dollars scooting across the Bowl grass on a blocked punt. A million dollars on the shoulders of eleven college kids fighting to hold that last white-chalked line. On the fingertips of one tired, twenty-year-old boy juggling a fourth-quarter forward pass on the dead run. A million bucks!

"It's all wrong," he thought helplessly. "They're making it the sport of klunks—like horse racing."

"Mr. Martin?" The bellhop wriggled through a marching, middle-aged quartet singing *See, Sierra* at the top of their lungs. "Are you Thomas Martin?"

"Uh-huh. Six-eleven, son."

"Right. Thanks a lot, Mr. Martin."

He'd traded his two-bit tip for a sheaf of the hotel's printed forms,

AN EXCITING COMPLETE MYSTERY NOVELET

"Steve Warner's going into
that ball game, or you ain't
coming back alive," Lada-
han's lips writhed



neatly filled in. Mr. Gaylord had called twenty, fifteen, ten, and five minutes ago. Phone Mr. Gaylord at the Hotel Cassannes. Parkside 7000, extension 331, and very urgent.

C. T. GAYLORD was Special Commissioner of the Pacific Coast States Conference. "Football Czar," the newspapers called him.

Tommy Martin was the commissioner's first assistant and in charge of investigations.

He shot a look at the public phone booths, ranked three deep with waiting nickel clutched. Well, he could put in the call from Jean's room upstairs.

There was a small-sized riot in front of the elevators—thrusting bodies and highly Bourbonized breaths. A hand clapped Tommy's shoulders.

"Hi," the voice said. "Twinkle-Toes Tommy, isn't it? Let's see, you played here in the Bowl back in 'thirty-seven."

The man had a smooth voice that wasn't quite silky. He had oversized eyebrows and hard agate eyes, and he was wearing a tuxedo—which was his favorite garb.

"No," Tommy Martin said. "The name's Smith, and I never got inside the Bowl without paying my way."

"But I never forget an All-American face," the agate-eyed man said. "I'd have bet you were Twinkle-Toes Tommy."

"No, you wouldn't," Tommy said. "You only bet on the sure things, Ladahan." He slid sidewise past the closing elevator door and caught a final glimpse of Ladahan's frowning brows and unconvinced agate eyes.

"Three," he muttered.

He went along the corridor to 346; knocked gently. A very nice soprano voice called, "Come in," and the girl turned around from the open window as he did.

She had fine, shining gray eyes, generous red lips, and lovely, wavy black hair. She had lots of suntan, and a few tiny freckles. She was Jean Warner and the sister of that Steve Warner who was going to pass the ears off those Tecumseh monkeys.

"All fixed?" she asked.

Jean and her cousin, Bill Warner, had driven down yesterday, with tickets Steve had sent them. The cousin had turned up this morning with his pockets picked, and the tickets gone.

"Not on the fifty-yard line," Tommy Martin told the girl. "Even the commissioner's first assistant can't get ducats on the fifty-yard line, an hour and a half before the game. I got Press Box passes, though." He pointed at the window. "Did you see me down there? The guy that got knocked down, and four fat women climbed his frame so they could see better? That was me."

She laughed.

"I was watching the parade."

"So were the four fat women." He picked up the room phone. "Operator, get me Parkside seven thousand."

"Tommy," Jean Warner called over one slim shoulder, "look out here. Isn't it too sweet?"

"I'm phoning."

"Tommy, please."

And a very pretty way she had of saying please. He came over, hauling the phone to the end of its wire. The switchboard seemed to be swamped, anyway.

He looked down, marveling.

"Good Lord! Did I get through that jungle, and without a machete?"

There was a solid mass of humanity along the sidewalks; some standing on tiptoe, others standing on rented boxes, and a few fortunates equipped with periscopes to peer over their neighbors' heads.

"The float, silly," Jean Warner smiled.

A million animated blossoms crawled up the street, hauled by a tractor under a canopy of roses.

"Yeah, Donald Duck," Tommy Martin said. "Hello . . . three-thirty-one, please." He backed away from the window. "That you, C. T.?"

The voice was sharp-edged.

"Martin? He's right here. Just a moment."

And then C. T. Gaylord's booming tones:

"Martin? Where've you been?"

Never mind—don't tell me now. There isn't time. Martin, I want you to hop right over to the Bowl. Gate B. We'll meet you there. Fast as you can!"

"What's wrong, C. T.?"

TOMMY heard Gaylord's fingers drumming on the side of his face, making a knocking sound in the phone.

"Plenty! The worst that—what?"

The other voice said something, just what Tommy couldn't make out.

But the fingers were drumming a faster *rat-a-tat-tat* on C. T. Gaylord's cheek.

"Elliot says we'd better not discuss anything on the phone. You know—hotel operators. You understand?"

Elliot was Director of Athletics at Sierra U.

"That sounds serious," Tommy Martin said.

"Yes. Hurry, Martin. Hurry as if your life depended on it! Don't waste any more time talking. But get started!"

"Yeah." He dropped the phone into its cradle, took a step toward the window. "Jean, I'm afraid I've got to go now."

She turned, gray eyes puzzling.

"An hour and a half before the kick-off? And the Bowl not a mile from here?"

Apparently she'd been too interested in the Donald Duck float to have paid the least heed to the phone conversation. He had to come out with it:

"That was C. T., Jean. It's official, I'm afraid."

Being Steve Warner's sister, she knew what it meant. There'd been a scandal brewing these last few years about proselyting of players—practically hiring the football talent out of the high schools and junior colleges.

The big schools weren't actually involved, officially. It was the alumni, the football-crazed old grads. In their enthusiasm, they'd done everything except bid in the open market for promising players. Sports writers had begun to say that the colleges might just as well hire professional teams.

The Conference authorities had appealed to C. T. Gaylord to clean up the scandal. C. T.'s reputation guaranteed reform. He represented wealth, influence, political power. He belonged to boards of directors by the dozen, and to civic betterment committees by the hundred.

He was a bright, shining front—and he hardly knew a goal post from a water bucket. But he'd been smart enough to hire a private detective to handle the actual undercover investigations. And he'd picked Tommy Martin as being the only private dick on the West Coast who'd ever been named on anybody's All-American.

Jean Warner knew all about Tommy Martin's job, too. As a matter of fact, that was how they'd met. Because somebody had registered a charge of professionalism against Steve; accused him of playing baseball, for a salary, during the summer vacation.

There had been nothing to it—the baseball playing Warner was the cousin, Bill. He resembled Steve closely enough to explain the mistake. But Tommy had to check the facts, gathering affidavits in Steve's home town, which was a town so small he couldn't have avoided meeting the girl.

"That means trouble," Jean said. She whipped across the hotel room, snatched her cloak from a chair, caught up her room-key and purse. "I'll go with you, Tommy."

"What about Bill?"

"I'll leave a note downstairs. He can meet us at the Bowl."

Tommy nodded. The gambler, Ladahan, would be less suspicious if he noticed Tommy Martin leaving the hotel with a pretty girl. It wouldn't look so businesslike that way, or as if trouble were in the air.

If Ladahan suspected anything, there might be an abrupt change in the betting odds.

"We'll slip out the back way—faster," Tommy decided.

They did; hurried up the alley; caught a cab on the far side of the block.

Jean Warner studied his preoccupied frown.

"What's it all about, Tommy?"

"I don't know. Yet."

He was more worried about Ladahan than he cared to admit. It'd be bad if the gambler hadn't been watching all the time in the lobby, if he'd been standing close enough to catch a glimpse of those phone call memos.

Ladahan undoubtedly knew that the Sierra team was stopping at the Hotel Cassannes. A rush message from Commissioner Gaylord to Tommy Martin might be enough to make Ladahan bet a bale of money against Sierra today.

Tommy Martin tried to shake off the worry.

"Probably it's just a false alarm. . . ."

The girl shook her head.

"No, there must be something to it. Gaylord is sure, or he wouldn't be going into action at the very last minute. He must have been handed almost irrefragable evidence."

And it could be only one kind of evidence. The one kind the commissioner could be interested in. Professionalism.

"Think what it means," Jean Warner sighed. "Somebody on the team won't be allowed to play today."

"It's tough." Tommy Martin knew how tough. Any man who'd ever pulled on shoulder pads and a helmet would understand what it meant to be put off his team an hour and a half before the Bowl game. . . .

"Thank Heaven, Steve has a clean bill of health from the commissioner's office," the girl said. Her eyes were warm with sympathy. "But I feel sorry for the poor, heartbroken kid, whichever one of them it is."

CHAPTER II

A Bowlful of Murder

A PLANE wrote the name of a five cent soft drink over the gray concrete, pennant-decorated Bowl. The pilot had a nice day for smoke-writing: crisp, still, with a sky of ultramarine. It was a nice day for football, too, Tommy Martin thought.

So did eighty thousand other fans. Early arrivals, fearful of last minute traffic jams, already swarmed the en-

trance gates. Ticket windows were shuttered; there hadn't been a ticket on sale for weeks. But a furtive scalper or two prowled through the crowd, offering admission pasteboards at five times their printed price.

The scene rang shrilly with the shouts of newsboys and program vendors, the staccato barking of salesmen peddling souvenirs and seat cushions.

"Better wait here, Jean," Tommy said. "You can catch Bill when he comes. I'll see how long this is going to take."

He strode ahead, found the way barred by a bluecoat. The cop's eye estimated Tommy.

"Whoa-a. This is the players' entrance." He disregarded the width of Tommy's shoulders, decided Tommy looked a little too old to belong on any college squad. "Where ya going? Trying to crash the gate?"

Tommy flashed credentials, the photostated identity card which proved him a Conference official.

"Well, I hadda be careful," the cop said. "Y' know, I almost didn't let Steve Warner in, either. Until he showed me his picture in the paper."

Tommy found that curious.

"He didn't come in with the rest of the team?"

"Ain't I telling ya, he didn't?"

"That's funny," Tommy said. His shoes scuffed on the abrupt curve of a cement ramp that floored a tunnel under the Bowl's grandstand. In the wan half-light, dangling electric bulbs were as bleak-eyed as all-night revelers seen at dawn.

Two youths emerged out of a phone cubicle in the lower depths—young lads in the blue-and-gold garb of Sierra U bandsmen, looking seven feet tall in their chin-strapped shakos.

"It's a date," one of them said. "Her sister is cute, too."

"Five minutes," the other said. "Step on it."

They grabbed their instrument cases from the floor, hurried up another ramp toward a distant rectangle of daylight.

IT WAS very quiet in the tunnel, with the sound of the crowd filling the grandstand a muted, far-off hum.

The silence hit Tommy Martin hard, with memories. He knew it so well—the thin, strained, high-key silence before a really big game.

In the dressingrooms ahead, he knew, the Sierra trainers were already taping bandages onto lame ankles and bruised shoulders. It'd take half an hour before the last shoelace was tied. Fifteen minutes more, while Big Ed Bradshaw gave them the pre-game fight talk. And then, with Steve Warner leading, they'd race out to warm up on the field.

Tommy Martin felt his throat tightening, his fists clenching. He knew it so well.

"Relax," he told himself. "You're just another Monday morning quarterback now."

He'd reached the door, anyway. The door with the temporary cardboard sign tacked to it:

SIERRA U
ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT
OFFICIALS ONLY

Tommy opened the door.

"Well, C. T.?" he said.

Commissioner C. T. Gaylord bulked large in a chair. He had one elbow propped on the wooden table, one thumb hooked under his chin. The fleshy fingers of that hand went *rat-a-tat-tat* on the cheekbone above. He looked as if every bank and business he owned a share in had gone crash.

"Well, Martin. It's about time."

Tommy closed the door. "In time for what, C. T.?"

Gaylord drummed a devil's tattoo on the side of his face before replying.

"The big blow-up," he said. "It's a devilish mess, Martin. I curse the day I let myself be wheedled into accepting this position."

Another door, this one at the side of the room, swung open. Frank Elliot, Director of Athletics at Sierra U, came in. Elliot had a long, harassed face and a jumpy, nervous step.

"Here's Bradshaw," he said, unnecessarily.

Big Ed Bradshaw, the highly successful and highly paid Sierra football coach, wore a complexion the color of champagne.

"What am I supposed to do?" Bradshaw said. He glared at C. T. Gaylord.

GAYLORD sat there drumming his cheek.

"The game is bigger than any individual player," he said. "You'll have to manage without Warner, that's all."

Tommy Martin stared.

"Warner? Steve Warner?"

He couldn't believe his ears. All he felt was a numbed, incredulous amazement.

On the other side of the table, Elliot said nervously:

"The public won't like this a bit. Eighty thousand people are paying to see this game, and we're dropping the main attraction."

"The public? We have to keep faith with them," C. T. rumbled. "Why do they come to the Bowl at all? They could see better football and bigger stars than young Warner at any professional match. It's *their* faith. Faith in college sportsmanship—the absolute, unquestioned integrity of it."

Tommy Martin's heart hammered.

"Quit making speeches, C. T.!" he blurted. "What about Steve Warner?"

"Bribery," the commissioner jerked out. "That's what about him. The boy is a bare-faced crook."

"Bribery? A crook?" Tommy laughed at the idea. Steve Warner wasn't just another football player. Steve was Jean's brother, and Tommy Martin knew him personally.

"I'll bet you're being sucked into something, C. T.," he said. "The wise money is on Tecumseh today. Plenty of gamblers would feel a lot safer if Steve isn't in there slinging his passes."

He thought of Ladahan as he said it.

Across the table, though, Elliot was shaking his head.

"No. I'm afraid not. George Tuthill is involved, too."

"That's the devil of it," Big Ed Bradshaw growled, as if to himself.

Tommy swallowed. He knew that George Tuthill was Sierra U's wealthiest, most influential old grad. Tut-

hill was rich enough to have given a cold, round two hundred thousand dollars for Sierra's new gymnasium. They'd named the building after him.

"What happened?" Tommy Martin moistened his lips. This sounded worse than anything he could have dreamed. No gambling interests could have touched George Tuthill with a ten foot pole, and Tommy knew it.

Elliot was sorrowful.

"It's a nasty story. Tuthill met Steve Warner in the lobby at the Cas-sannes. He made some little joke about having a friendly bet on the game, and asked Warner how he was feeling.

"Warner said he wasn't feeling so good. He explained he had financial worries. He said he'd be able to play a lot better football if somebody slipped him five hundred dollars in a plain white envelope before the game today."

The silence was cut by Gaylord's *rat-a-tat-tat* finger exercises.

"Kidding," Big Ed Bradshaw breathed. "Steve was only kidding."

"George Tuthill doesn't think so," Elliot continued. "He's convinced young Warner tried to shake him down for that five hundred dollars."

"But where is Tuthill?" Tommy Martin asked. "If he's so sure it was a shakedown, why isn't he here to confront Steve with that story?"

"He wants to," Elliot snapped. "He'll be here any minute. The question is, where's Steve Warner?"

Big Ed Bradshaw's face grew redder.

"He had a little private errand to run. I told him it'd be all right, if he caught a cab instead of coming to the Bowl in the bus."

"Steve's here," Tommy Martin said impatiently. "He came in before I did. The gate cop told me so."

"Then he's getting dressed with the others." Bradshaw looked relieved. "I'll get him in here."

ELLIOT'S long face worked.

"Coach." He cleared his throat. "Talk to him first. Make young Warner understand. Tuthill is very upset, very indignant about this disgraceful

episode. The old gentleman's temper is up. We don't want any hard words from Steve Warner, any quarreling between them." He clawed at his lapels nervously. "We've got to protect Mr. Tuthill from any—ah—unpleasant feelings with regard to the University."

A smelly thing, Tom Martin thought. A football player was a football player. But a rich old grad was the donor of two hundred thousand dollar gymnasiums.

He wondered if anybody besides himself had the guts to battle that kind of injustice. He waited, gave them a chance.

"Just take Tuthill's word for everything, eh?" Big Ed Bradshaw asked, slowly. Sierra U paid him ten thousand dollars a year, and there'd been talk of boosting the ante when his contract ran out this year. There weren't a dozen jobs like it in the country.

He made up his mind, abruptly.

"The devil with you! I won't crucify one of my boys because some half-deaf old duffer can't take a joke, even if he heard it right."

Tommy Martin felt like shaking Big Ed's hand.

"No," C. T. Gaylord shook his head. "George Tuthill is a personal friend of mine. There's nothing wrong with his hearing."

"He's got one foot in the grave," Bradshaw shot back. "Steve Warner's whole life is ahead of him. I'll be darned if I'll sacrifice that boy to any goat-glanded millionaire's senile delusions."

"It's out of your hands, Bradshaw." C. T. Gaylord spoke firmly. "There's no reason George Tuthill, as loyal an alumnus of Sierra as ever lived, would invent such a story. If he says it's so, it is so."

"All cut and dried?" Tommy Martin gibed. "What made you so darned anxious to get me here, then?"

Gaylord's fingers *rat-a-tat-tatted*.

"I'll have to face newspaper criticisms. A lot of sob-sister sports writers raving that I condemned Warner at an hour's notice. I want to release the full story." He peered at Tommy. "You'll have to dig it up.

Find out about Steve Warner's financial troubles. Why he had to have five hundred dollars right away."

The door behind Tommy Martin jarred open. Its jamb framed a white-faced Steve Warner. He could rifle off a bullet-accurate pass in the split instant before a two hundred pound tackler smashed him down, but Steve Warner was a very scared kid now.

Sound barely trickled out of his throat.

"Tuthill . . . it's George Tuthill . . . he . . ."

Big Ed Bradshaw gulped.

"You've talked to him already?"

"Talked . . . No," Steve Warner managed. "He—he's out here. You'd better take a look, coach."

Everybody surged out of the room.

It was up the tunnel at the foot of the C Gate ramp. From a distance, it looked like a bundle of rags swept into a gloomy corner of the place. Then Tommy Martin caught the faint glimmer of eyeglasses, the sunken gray patch of a face, and last of all, the dark-colored glimpse of blood.

There lay Sierra U's wealthiest, most influential old grad, with both his feet in the grave now. Outside, in the sunshine, the band was striking up a discordantly gay college song.

CHAPTER III

"Football Is a Racket!"

McNULTY of the homicide squad dusted off his hands, gazed grimly through horn-rimmed specs at Steve Warner. "Where'd you hide the knife, halfback?" he said.

Steve Warner had gray eyes like his sister, and the same wavy black hair. His face had angles where hers was finely curved. He was a shocked, unbelieving white under his coat of tan.

"Who? Me?" he gulped.

"Yeah. You. The football hero," McNulty observed, in the tone of a man who didn't like football heroes. "The campus darling. The idol of the gaga co-eds. I hear you've even got movie stars chasing you for your

autograph. Well, I'm chasing you for it, too—on a murder confession."

Steve braced himself.

"I don't know how you can figure me in on this."

A scared kid, Tommy Martin thought. Give him a football, and he could go places, go through eleven other college kids for a touchdown. But Steve Warner had never been up against anything like the bleak, bitter, sardonic Sergeant McNulty.

McNulty was taunting him cruelly, trying to badger him into anger and thoughtless speech. Get 'em off balance, was McNulty's method, and then knock them for a loop.

"The football hero," McNulty said. "So dumb I gotta diagram his whole play for him."

He seemed to think that was funny. He waited for a laugh from Tommy Martin or C. T. Gaylord or Elliot. Bradshaw had gone back to the dressing room.

The only one who laughed was the police photographer.

"Diagram one," McNulty said. "The hotel lobby. The old boy tells you he has a bet on the game. Being a millionaire, you think it's a big bet. You see your chance to clip him for half a grand on the threat of throwing the game today."

Steve Warner burned.

"I've told you three times already, I didn't ask him for any five hundred dollars!"

"Let's say, you hinted at the idea," McNulty said. "Jokingly. So you could laugh it off in case he didn't take the hint."

"I'm getting tired of telling you," Steve moistened his lips. "I don't know anything about that money."

McNulty shrugged.

"Diagram two," he said. "Right here. You ran into old man Tuthill. He gave you the works. He was kicking up a mess. He told you you were out on your tail. So you whipped out your knife and slipped him the shiv."

Tommy Martin stood there shaking his head.

"Why?" he demanded. "Just to play in the Bowl game? That's a crazy motive for murder."

McNulty grinned a wise-guy grin. He had it all figured out.

"Come off your perch, Martin. You've been around. You know as well as I do, this football thing is a racket."

"Not at the Sierra, it's not," Elliot bristled.

"Afterward," McNulty said. "It pays off afterward. It pays off in heavy sugar coaching jobs, or in nice fat pro football contracts."

"Steve Warner here is a big shot. He could write his own ticket next year, based on his college reputation. But not if he wound up his college career by being kicked out of the Bowl, in a shakedown scandal. He killed George Tuthill to protect his own financial future."

"Darn tooting," the photographer said. "Look at the dough they paid Red Grange. And Whizzer White."

"Warner didn't know that Tuthill had already beefed to Elliot," McNulty said, "or that Commissioner Gaylord's office was hot on the trail. He thought all he had to do was shut up one helpless old man. And get rid of the knife, so it couldn't be traced to him."

The knife irked McNulty. He had half a dozen men hunting for it. "That wouldn't be so hard, losing a knife amongst a crowd of eighty thousand people. Go up in the grandstand and slip it into some guy's overcoat pocket would be one easy way."

STEVE WARNER'S lips cracked apart, suddenly eager.

"When?"

"After you killed him," McNulty shrugged. "Not before, naturally."

He thought that was funny, too. So did the police photographer.

Steve Warner came up on his toes. His gray eyes gleamed. He poised himself, as if for a headlong shot where he'd suddenly seen a hole in the other line.

"I'll prove you're wrong, Sergeant! If I make you admit it, will you let me get dressed for the game?"

"If," McNulty emphasized.

"Here it is. I got Coach Bradshaw's permission to run a little errand. I had to meet my cousin Bill Warner,

in the lobby at the Del Plata. His tickets had been stolen. He'd asked me to dig up two more for him."

Tommy Martin looked startled.

"Did you?"

"Yes, a fellow I knew—Jim Gladwin—his parents couldn't come at the last minute. You can ask Jim. You can ask Bill. There'd be a triple-check, through my sister, only she'd left the Del Plata with Martin, here."

Tommy wished Steve hadn't said that. It wasn't true, in the first place, and in the second it gave McNulty ideas.

McNulty glared at Tommy Martin.

"So that's why you've been throwing your weight against the law. Making a play for the sister. I get it."

"I had some time to kill after I gave Bill the tickets," Steve said. "I watched the parade passing the hotel for awhile, before I took a cab for the Bowl."

"Did you see Donald Duck in the parade?" Tommy asked.

The photographer thought that was a funny one, too. He laughed. He stopped laughing abruptly as McNulty glared.

"I'm trying to fix the time you left the hotel," Tommy told Steve Warner.

"That's it." The youth grinned. "I can fix the time I got here. To the minute. You see, I came in through the C Gate because that's the entrance to the cheering section, and the student ticket-taker would recognize me."

"A girl just ahead of me asked how long before the kick-off and the ticket-taker told her. He'll remember. You ask him, and then check the time Tommy Martin called police headquarters about this murder, after I showed the others where I found Tuthill's body."

Steve's grin became positively exuberant.

"There won't be two minutes' difference. Get it, Sarge? I couldn't possibly have come down the C ramp, met Tuthill, quarreled with him, killed him, and hid the knife—all in two minutes. Besides calling the others and showing them the body."

McNulty didn't look crestfallen. On the contrary, he looked queerly pleased. He wasn't a bad guy, after

all. He had a job to do, was all.

"I hope you're right, halfback," McNulty said.

The warning *rat-a-tat-tat* came from C. T. Gaylord's fingers drumming on the concrete wall.

"Martin," the commissioner said. "Martin, you told us young Warner came in ahead of you at the B Gate. Remember?"

Sergeant McNulty spilled an acrid oath.

"The policeman told Martin all about it," Gaylord continued blandly.

"So, halfback?" McNulty raved. "The hidden ball play!" He was twice as savage, thinking how nearly he'd come to being tricked. "You came in the first time at the B Gate. That's when you killed the old man and got rid of the knife! Then you sneaked out and came in again. Thought you'd fix yourself an alibi, huh?"

He had Steve Warner off-balance at last. The kid's eyes reeled. He was dizzy, groping, bewildered. He cracked wide open, yelling:

"No! It's a lie! It's a frame-up! Tommy. Tommy. . ."

TOMMY MARTIN had spun on his heel, was loping up the long slope of the B Gate ramp. Tommy Martin had an idea. He could be wrong. He'd keep it to himself until he found out for sure. He'd seen Steve Warner's face when one false hope crashed, and he wasn't going to hold out another hope until he was sure.

"Check it," he thought. "Fast. Darned fast."

He bunted his way through the turnstile, past the bluecoated cop.

"Jean!" He seized the girl's arm. "Has Bill showed up yet?"

"No." Her gray eyes were worried. "I wonder what's happened to him."

"I don't think he will," Tommy said, "Steve got a couple of tickets for him."

"Steve?"

He nodded.

"Bill must have left one of those tickets at the hotel for you. By this time he's probably inside the Bowl with the other. Simple, isn't it? So you just run on up to the Press Box. Don't wait for him."

The worry stayed in her gray eyes. "Tommy, how does it happen you saw Steve?"

He couldn't tell her. Maybe he wouldn't have to, ever. If his hunch was right.

"I ran into him," Tommy Martin said. He changed the subject fast. "Jean, do you remember those tickets—the first ones he got for you?"

"On the forty-yard line," she nodded. "The numbers were HB-twenty-two and twenty-four. Why?"

"There's been some scalping of stolen tickets. That's what I'm working on now. It may take a little time yet. I'll be up in the Press Box soon's I can."

He called that last over his shoulder as he darted off through the turnstile again. He raced through the level passageway, out into the Bowl.

That plane was back, writing the five cent soft drink across the sky again. Down on the field, rows of blue-and-gold clad bandmen spelled back something for the pilot to read. Tecumseh—a tribute to the Eastern team.

The grandstand was almost a solid mass of humanity now. Gala humanity, a-flutter with waving pennants and colored balloons that would be released at the first touchdown. Tommy Martin twisted and sidestepped along the aisles. HA . . . HB . . . this one.

He bent over the couple, the man a little bit drunk, the woman much younger than he. Tommy had his credential card in his hand, and urgency in his voice.

"Pardon, folks. But where'd you get your tickets?"

The drunk looked startled, then crafty.

"I bought 'em, so what?"

"You bought them *where*?"

"A friend. Fellow called out of town suddenly, so he sold 'em to us."

It was the woman who saw the distress on Tommy Martin's face. He was young, clean-cut, not a bit bad looking. She made up her mind suddenly.

"No, that's not true. We bought our tickets from a scalper."

"Ella!" the drunk wailed. "You wanta get run out?"

"There won't be any trouble for you folks," Tommy Martin reassured the woman. "The scalper was a young fellow, college age, gray eyes, black hair?"

"Yes, that's him!" Ella nodded. "Nice built boy. Athletic."

The description would have fitted either Steve Warner, or his cousin Bill. Ella would be able to tell which, if you showed them both to her.

Tommy Martin headed along his way. The band was going off the field now, just in time. The mouth of a concrete tunnel spewed blue-and-gold uniformed figures, the Sierra team racing out into the sunshine. Steve Warner's "55" sweater wasn't leading the rest, but the crowd hadn't noticed that yet. The eighty thousand fans were on their feet, yelling their eighty thousand throats hoarse.

HALF a dozen practice footballs lobbed up into the sky as Tommy Martin swung over the guard rail and dropped to the grass. He darted into the gloom of the tunnel.

A massive shape detached itself from the semi-darkness in the runway. Big shoulders blocked Tommy, slammed him hard against the cement wall. The shoulders pulled back, and instead Tommy's ribs felt the gouging pressure of a steel ring. A voice yelled through the uproar of eighty thousand voices:

"Take it easy, Twinkle-Toes! I could blast you and nobody'd even hear the gun go off!" Ladahan's eyes were coals under his overdeveloped brows. "Get going, if you know what's good for you!"

He shoved Tommy along the wall, and stayed close behind. He kept the gun shoved into Tommy's ribs.

"What's the idea?" Tommy protested. That first minute roar of the crowd had subsided. Besides, deep down in the tunnel, concrete thick-nesses blanketed out sound.

"Why ain't Steve Warner in uniform?" Ladahan grated. "Tell me that!"

It blazed clear in Tommy Martin's brain. Ladahan wasn't betting the sure thing, after all. He must have bet his money on the short end, on

the Sierra team. He'd been suspicious ever since that episode in the hotel lobby, no doubt.

"Am I supposed to know?" Tommy asked. "He was stalling. He had to make sure."

The gun prodded into his ribs harder.

"Answer out, Twinkle-Toes! The kid ain't playing? He's been scratched? You guys ruled him off the track, huh?"

This was all it needed, Tommy thought. This was the thing that'd make the world agree with McNulty on the subject of collegiate football. Murder in the Bowl. Star player arrested. And then this to top everything else off. An underworld gambler being wise to the whole thing, throwing his big money bets into reverse minutes ahead of the kick-off.

"I'm right, huh?" Ladahan's breath fanned hot on Tommy's neck. "I know darn well I am."

Tommy Martin ducked under the gun, whirled in a pivoting crouch. He didn't try to get away at all but stayed in close, driving his knee between Ladahan's knees. He whacked with his elbow into the middle of Ladahan's arrested bulk. It was an Indian block—a very sweet Indian block.

Whistling breath jarred out of him, Ladahan shot over Tommy Martin's knee and did a face-slide along the runway.

Tommy Martin sprinted. Ladahan had been looking at something—must have been; he'd seen Tommy coming.

CHAPTER IV

Found—One Scalper

OUTSIDE, the student section was sending up the *See-Sierra-Go* yell. White-trousered cheerleaders in blue-and-gold blazer jackets were exploding like firecrackers in front of the stands. A girl cheerleader seemed suspended like a brief-skirted, bare-legged exclamation point in mid-air. A news photographer pointed a camera at the girl.

Other photographers, press badges

stuck in their hat bands, patrolled the sidelines. Three blue-and-gold Sierra teams signal-practiced up and down this end of the field. At the other end, a tiger-striped, scarlet-and-black Tecumseh man methodically sent drop-kicks spinning through the goal posts.

Tommy Martin's stare hunted the scene vainly. He couldn't find whatever it was that Ladahan had been watching. He ran out to the players' bench, finally. Big Ed Bradshaw, gloomily chewing three grass blades, was watching the Tecumseh goalposts as if he expected to be hanged from them. Tommy grasped his arm.

"You've got a kid named Jim Gladwin on the squad?"

"Why don't you buy yourself a program?" the head coach grated. "Sixty-seven. Third string guard."

Tommy turned on a burst of sideline speed.

"You! Sixty-seven! Gladwin, come over here!"

The figure behind the 67-numerals looked big enough to take on the entire Tecumseh eleven, singlehanded. He lumbered over.

"Yeah, what?"

"The seats you let Steve Warner take—where are they?"

"Gosh. Le'see. I'm trying to think." He pounded ham-sized hands on his thigh guards. The blue eyes were helpless in a wafflework frown. The third string guard was paralyzed in pre-game funk.

"Snap out of it, benchwarmer!" Tommy Martin yelled. "Give!"

It worked. Gladwin remembered he was going to spend the game inside a blanket and he relaxed visibly. "GK," he recited. "Sixty-two and sixty-four."

Tommy ran into the stands again. GK—that meant a section nearly at the top of the Bowl. Delay ensued as he sought to wriggle his way up flights of steps past people being ushered to their seats. He found the right row, finally, and counted off heads.

Sixty-two and sixty-four were occupied by Easterners, pale-faced aliens in the suntanned sea of Sierra fans.

Tommy Martin wondered whether to waste time asking questions when he already knew the answers. Blared

sound from the public address system decided it.

"Attention! Attention, everybody! The Police Department requests your cooperation!"

A sinking hunch told Tommy this wasn't the routine, drive-carefully-as-you-leave announcement.

"A knife has been lost," the voice blared. "Its description is unknown, except that the blade may be blood-stained. The weapon may have been thrown away in the stands or dropped into someone's pocket. Anyone finding this knife is requested not to handle it unnecessarily. Fingerprints on it may be of the utmost value. Report your information to the nearest usher. That is all."

The fine hand of McNulty, Tommy thought grimly. The stands were buzzing with excited comment. A drunk in the GK section created a diversion by shouting that he had found it—and incidentally, wasted another two minutes of Tommy's time.

HE WAS shaking his head, discouraged, as he started down toward the field again.

"Tickets. Show your tickets, folks."

Tommy gulped, "Well I'll be!" and dived for the usher, grabbed his shoulder, spun him around.

He was a big young fellow, athletic looking. He had a suntan, gray eyes, and wavy strands of black hair. Bill Warner could have been mistaken for Steve Warner, by someone who didn't know Steve well.

"Scalper!" Tommy threw at him.

"Ah-h, be a good guy. Let it ride," Bill grinned.

He was pretty dumb, Tommy Martin recalled. Small-town, home-town gossip had it that he was probably a better athlete than Steve Warner—from the neck on down. But Bill had never finished high school. He was a poolroom sport who'd never settled down to any occupation more arduous than pitching summertime, Sunday semi-pro ball.

Tommy put the accusation in simple language.

"Your tickets weren't stolen from you last night. You sold them, didn't you?"

Bill Warner admitted it cheerfully. "Yeah. When I found out seats on the forty-yard line were bringing twenty bucks a throw, I couldn't let it cost me twenty dollars to see a football game."

"Forty dollars," Tommy pointed out. "You sold Jean's ticket, too."

"I hadda. The guy wanted to buy two tickets, both together, for him and his wife. I figured, heck, Steve could easy scrape her up another ticket."

"Two tickets. And you sold those, too."

"Shucks. You'd get *her* into the game. I knew that."

"But you didn't tell Steve. You even told him Jean had left the hotel with me so he wouldn't find out the truth."

Bill Warner seemed surprised that there should be any fuss.

"What harm's done?" he asked. "Jean's here, ain't she? And I'm here. Nobody's out anything, and I'm ahead by eighty fish."

"You crashed the gate," Tommy Martin said.

"Uh-huh." He was proud of it. Felt that he was the smartest guy in the whole Bowl, no doubt. Getting in free—together with his eighty dollar profit.

"You crashed the B Gate, Bill. You told the cop there you were Steve Warner. You showed him a sports page photo of Steve that looked enough like you to prove it. Then, because you didn't have a ticket stub entitling you to a seat, you decided to play usher."

"Yeah," Bill Warner stared. "But how'd you find all that out?"

Tommy Martin shot the works.

"Trying to save Steve from a murder rap. That's how!"

The cousin's eyes bugged as big as silver half-dollars.

"You're kidding me!"

"It's no joke. A man was killed at the foot of the C ramp just about the time you crashed the gate. You didn't see anything?"

Bill Warner decided Tommy wasn't kidding. He moistened his lips, scared serious.

"So help me Hannah, not a thing!"

"There was no one in the tunnel?"

"Two band kids in a phone booth. I noticed them—thinking you could crash a game by dressing up in a band uniform."

"Well, come on," Tommy sighed, "at least you can tell the cops this much."

AMBULANCE men were lifting George Tuthill's shrunken form into a casket-sized basket.

"Inside!" snapped McNulty. He gestured them into the Athletic Department's temporary headquarters. He paced as he listened, grinding his shoe leather into the concrete floor at every turn.

Commissioner C. T. Gaylord sat drumming his fingers on the table. Elliot, the Athletic Director, looked as if he wanted to silence C. T.'s finger exercises with a sledgehammer.

"How the devil do I know?" McNulty flashed. He picked up a pencilled card from the table, snapped it back and forth. "Martin, you're battling for Steve Warner. In love with his sister, ain't you? And this other guy—he's Warner's blood cousin. Maybe you two framed this gate-crasher yarn between you to give Steve an alibi."

"You can ask the Gate B cop, can't you?" Tommy Martin argued.

"Even that wouldn't prove it," McNulty said. "There are a dozen different entrances to the Bowl. Steve could have come in through any of them, at any time, on a ticket. He could still be guilty, no matter if you two are telling the truth."

"Be a human being, Sarge," Tommy said wearily. "Let Steve play today. It's his last college game—and what can you lose? A star halfback isn't going to disappear, with eighty thousand people watching every move he makes."

McNulty hesitated. He was weakening. He knew he'd be in a really tough spot if Steve Warner turned out to be innocent, after all.

"Okay," McNulty said.

"No!" C. T. Gaylord sprang up. "I don't care what the police say. There's still a charge of a five hundred dollar shakedown against young Warner. I

forbid him to take part in any athletic contest sanctioned by this Conference."

Tommy Martin peered wonderingly at C. T. Tuthill must have been a closer personal friend of the Commissioner than Tommy had thought. He couldn't explain C. T.'s action in any other way.

He stared glumly at Elliot's long face, then at McNulty, and then at the card in McNulty's hand.

"What's that?" he asked.

"From Tuthill's pocket." The homicide officer passed it over. "Maybe you can make head or tail of it. I can't."

"Spirit of Sierra," was scrawled across the card in the old man's shaky handwriting. "Last whistle blows. Remember '97. Never say die." The rest of it didn't make any more sense.

A thin, crisp knife-edge of sound shrilled into the concrete depths of the Bowl. Eighty thousand voices yelled, a howled burst of jungle-sound.

"The kick-off," Tommy Martin said dully.

Elliot lifted his long face.

"Yes. You'll excuse me. My professional duty."

He brushed past. Tommy Martin's eyes were riveted on the card again. He tried desperately to find the meaning that must be hidden in the murdered man's pinched handwriting. . . .

The dressingroom door opened. Jean Warner stood there half-blinded with tears.

"Tommy!" She didn't try to hide the panicky fright. "Tommy, what's happened to Steve?"

Tommy Martin tried to find the right words. If there were any right words to tell a girl her brother was suspected of foul murder.

"It's okay." Cousin Bill tried to be consoling. "It's a mistake. All gonna be cleared up pretty quick."

"Then it's true!" she gulped. "What that man said about Steve being ineligible—that he can't play today?"

"A man in a tuxedo?" Tommy Martin asked. "A big man, agate-eyed?"

Jean nodded.

"That's the one. He said *you* were

responsible, Tommy. He wanted to know what Steve had done to get in wrong."

"Ladahan," Tommy parried. "I suppose he gave you a big pep talk about wanting to help. . . ." Tommy stopped short with his heart pounding in his throat. He'd hit it! Pep talk! That must be the answer.

"Ladahan?" McNulty scowled. "What next? How many more angles have I got to check on?"

Too many, Tommy Martin thought swiftly. It would take McNulty hours to canvass all the aspects of the case. The game would be over before he got around to the crazy-sounding theory that formed in Tommy's mind now.

He gulped one question.

"Tuthill was staying at the Casannes?"

"No, the Saint Clair." McNulty, absent-minded, stood studying Jean Warner. "Ladahan wants cards in the game, huh? You better tell me all about that, young lady." Tommy Martin ducked through the open door. He caught a cab, cursing Tuthill's choice of the old-fashioned downtown hostelry.

CHAPTER V

Touchdown!

THE first quarter of the game was over by the time Tommy piled into the St. Clair drugstore. According to the drugstore radio, Tecumseh had second down on Sierra's thirty-one yard line. It was the third and two to go by the time he'd wedged into a phone booth.

He dialed the St. Clair.

"Connect me with Mr. George Tuthill's suite, please."

The radio continued to blare its report.

"Tecumseh ran a wide end reverse to the eleven yard line. . . ."

"You're sure you called the right suite?" Tommy demanded of the operator who insisted Mr. Tuthill didn't answer.

"Yes, sir. Eight twenty-six," she assured him.

"The Tecumseh fullback made four yards through the middle of the line." The frenzied radio voice followed Tommy as he ran through the store into the St. Clair lobby. There was a radio there, too.

"Touchdown!" the broadcaster raved. "No! Wait— There's a pile-up down there. A fumble on the play." "Eight-twenty-six," Tommy said casually.

The clerk, hypnotized eyes glued on the radio outlet, mechanically slid out the key.

By then Sierra had recovered the fumble on the one yard line.

"Punt," muttered Tommy as he rushed into the elevator.

He entered 826, switched on its radio, and looked around. George Tutthill had been as neat as an old maid. The very cigar ashes were mathematically disposed of in the glass tray.

The radio announced Tecumseh had taken the punt at mid-field. They passed all the way to Sierra's eighteen. It was called back, and the Easterners penalized for backfield-in-motion. The broadcaster commented that Sierra U seemed to be getting all the breaks—it couldn't keep up.

"They ain't got a ghost's chance without Warner in there."

Tommy spun around. That last voice hadn't issued from the radio outlet.

Ladahan was in 826, too. The gambler's eyes were those of an arch-backed, spitting cat. The tip of his nose was scraped raw, where he'd landed on it in the dressingroom runway, and he held his gun as if he didn't intend to let anything like that happen again.

"Aren't you a little late?" Tommy Martin asked. "An hour ago the information might have been money in your pocket. Not now. Those radio broadcasters have eyes. They've noticed Steve didn't warm up with the team. They've been wondering why—aloud, on nation-wide hook-ups. You can't protect your bets now, gambler."

"Yeah?" Ladahan breathed noisily.

"Yeah. So what does this big, bad gunman act get you?"

"Warner's gonna play," Ladahan said. "I ain't kidding. I'm desperate.

You or twenty devils can't stop me this time."

He used his free hand to fumble in his jacket pocket, extracting a stub pencil and a scrap torn off a Bowl program.

"Here . . . write!" He motioned Tommy toward Tutthill's massive desk next to a brick fireplace.

"What the—?" Tommy stared.

"It's a snatch! You've been grabbed. You're sending Mr. Commissioner Gaylord a note." Ladahan's lips writhed. "He's gonna let Steve Warner go in that ball game, or you ain't coming back alive! Write that down, Twinkle-Toes!"

HE WAS crazy—stark mad with the thought of his money bet at 7-5, when the odds should have been 10-1. He'd been trying to run down angles like a demented lunatic. Trailing Jean to the Athletic Department temporary office, picking up Tommy's trail there. He was so insane that he really meant every word of it, Tommy decided.

"You think it'd do any good," Tommy Martin gibed, "to send such a note to the cops?" He edged slowly around the desk. "They're holding Steve Warner for murder."

He was all set now, knees flexed under him, fingers balled hard around the stub of pencil.

Nothing happened. Tommy had heard about the iron self-control of professional gamblers and never believed the legend. He marveled at Ladahan's icy composure, the gun-hand which didn't waver by the millionth of an inch. He'd never seen calm like it in his life.

But it wasn't calm—just stunned shock. For suddenly Ladahan blew out a spray of astounded breath. His eyes blinked, blurred.

"Cops?" he mumbled. "Murder . . . Steve?"

Tommy hit him.

Ladahan careened into the writing desk, bounced off the wall, rolled over twice after he hit the floor. Tommy swooped, twisted the gun out of the gambler's fist.

"Get going—tinhorn!"

Tommy slammed the door after the

disconsolate, jaw-rubbing gambler. He snatched up George Tuthill's briefcase—a big one stuffed with papers. Tecumseh was down to the twenty-three yard line. They made four yards, two yards, eight. They were inches inside the ten-yard line. It would take a miracle to stave off this touchdown. The fools were throwing crazy passes. Tommy wondered why. The gun ended the first half.

It didn't seem possible. The score was 0-0. Sierra's punts had averaged forty-six yards. But Tecumseh had made all the first downs, gained 112 yards to a mere nineteen. Tecumseh didn't have to worry about Steve Warner's passes, and they were pulling the secondary, stopping the running plays in their tracks.

Tommy twisted the radio into silence, frowning over an analysis of structural steel specifications. Somebody had saved up to thirty percent on the endowment by changing the specifications very slightly. There was a differential in concrete construction.

He strained his eyes over a dozen intricately calculated pages before he got the idea. These savings referred to the Sierra U gymnasium. It hadn't cost two hundred thousand dollars at all, but close to a hundred and fifty thousand.

Knuckles drummed a tattoo on the door.

It was Elliot, his long face smile-wreathed.

"Ah, two minds with a single thought."

"What's your thought?"

"Bill Warner. He resembles Steve so closely that Mr. Tuthill didn't realize he was being accosted by the wrong young man. It was Bill who asked for the five hundred dollars."

"You're sure it wasn't a fifty thousand dollar shakedown instead?" Tommy Martin asked.

"Fifty? I don't understand. What do you mean?" The long face wrinkled.

"Somebody knocked down fifty grand by changing the specifications of your new gymnasium, cheapening the construction throughout!" Tom-

my said. "Tuthill suspected a crooked contractor. But it could have been a slime-trail drawn across the scared campus of Sierra U."

"Let me see." Elliot scanned the copy swiftly. "No, you're wrong. These are simply the alternative estimates—earlier plans. Mr. Tuthill rejected them months ago."

"But he was still carrying them around in his briefcase?"

"He must have been." Elliot stepped over, fiddled with the radio button. "He'd retired from active business. He would have used the briefcase only infrequently. The papers might have been there for months."

"Is this thing plugged in?" Elliot's hands fumbled with the inlet wire. "What you're thinking is impossible. Martin. The gymnasium was built under my personal supervision. Give that knob a twist, will you?"

He knelt, fumbled with the wire. Tommy stepped by him and Elliot straightened. The inlet wire became a flying noose. It brushed Tommy Martin's haircut, fell around Tommy's neck.

"You young snooping fool!"

"Don't," Tommy was saying. "I've got a gun. Do you want your living daylight shot out?"

He pivoted, pounded the gun barrel across Elliot's long murderously contorted face. The wire left a red, burning mark as it fell loose from Tommy's throat.

TOMMY ran to the phone on the desk.

"Operator!" he yelled. "Get me the Bowl. The Sierra Athletic Department's office there. I don't know the number. Ask Information. And, send up your house dick . . . He's gone to the game? Well, call a cop! . . . No, no, the other call first!"

He danced with impatience. It seemed to take ages.

"McNulty!" C. T. Gaylord had answered instead. "Well, get him on the phone!"

McNulty's voice, at long last.

"Elliot!" Tommy Martin cried. "No, I don't want to talk to him. He's here. He killed Tuthill. He just tried to kill me."

Tommy shouted explanations.

"There never was any five hundred dollar attempted shakedown! Elliot made that up. He had to explain what Tuthill was doing down in the tunnel. He'd tricked the old man into meeting him there. Tuthill thought he was being honored . . . Old grad invited to give pep talk to the team before the big game—get it?

"That's what the card means. Tuthill had made a few notes. The spirit of Sierra, fight to the last whistle, that sort of thing."

"Can you prove it?" McNulty asked.

"It's here. Right in my hands. Elliot had stolen at least fifty thousand dollars of the old man's gift to the University. So he framed Steve Warner—the biggest red herring he could drag across the trail. He had to divert attention from himself, so he'd have a chance to destroy these papers in Tuthill's hotel room."

"Yeah?"

"Elliot had lunch with the old man, remember? Tuthill undoubtedly told him he'd uncovered crookedness in the contracting. As Athletic Director, Elliot was in close enough touch to know that Steve wouldn't arrive at the Bowl with the rest of the team.

"Don't forget that Elliot left commissioner Gaylord alone in the office. Elliot said he was going to fetch Bradshaw—in reality, to waylay Tuthill at the foot of the C ramp. Tuthill was one of those old maid types, and he could be relied on to arrive at the exact moment Elliot had told him to—"

"Hold on," McNulty said. "You've got Elliot there? Ask him what he did with the knife."

Tommy Martin stared at Elliot. The man was as cold as an ice cube.

"It's the whole case," McNulty's voice hammered. "I searched Elliot along with everybody else. You can't hang a thing on him until and unless you produce that weapon."

Elliot hadn't twitched yet. He'd be smart enough not to talk, anyway. Tommy Martin's brain raced along a labyrinth—a concrete tunnel of a labyrinth. The knife was there. It had to be. It—

"Those band kids!" he gasped. "McNulty! Two members of the band were having a long-winded gabfest in the phone booth, from the time Bill Warner crashed the gate. Elliot hid the knife in one of their instrument cases. . . ."

Tommy had to wait for McNulty to call him back. "It wasn't a knife at all," McNulty reported back. "An old-fashioned lacing needle. They don't use them any more. This one had been kicking around in the bottom of the trainer's equipment bags for years, I guess. You know I had to practically search the whole band?"

"It took you long enough."

BUT the cop called by the hotel operator took longer. He seemed to think he could gain a promotion by solving the case, from the questions he fired at Tommy Martin.

Tommy got into a cab, somewhere about the end of the third quarter. It was a cab without a radio, and in the bargain, the hackie had been handed a ticket recently, and regarded any speed over twenty-five miles an hour as excessive.

Tommy saw a lot of balloons floating away over the Bowl wall as he leaped out of the cab. He heard a lot of cheering as he dived through the B Gate turnstiles. He ran up a flight of steps toward the Press Box. People standing up on their seats barred any view of the field along the way.

He saw Jean Warner standing on a chair in the press section.

"What happened?"

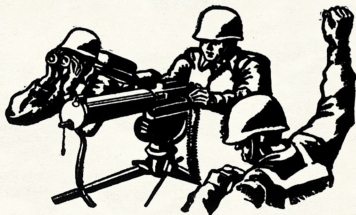
"Steve threw a pass—forty yards—a touchdown!" Her eyes rounded at him. "Oh, Tommy, do you mean you missed it?"

He nodded. "Think that chair will hold two of us?"

He was just in time to see the last play of the game—a beautiful thing. Steve Warner took the ball snappily, wrapped his arms around it, and fell down on his face. He didn't gain an inch.

"Never mind, Tommy," Jean Warner said. "Steve threw the ball. But you won the game for us."

She turned up her face . . . It wasn't one of those sisterly kisses.



“ATTACK AT 0600!”

In the Army, that simple order means action! Excitement! It means American troops are going ahead against the enemy!

Before that order can be transmitted by the Signal Corps, it means that plans must have been made for months in advance, troops must have been moved into position, hundreds of reconnaissance flights must have been made, thousands of tons of supplies and munitions prepared.

It means that in America millions of men and women in factories and mills, on farms and in the homes, in shipyards and steel mills, in logging camps and mines, have been working day and night for weeks and months.

You, no matter who you are nor what you do, have your part in making that order possible so that we may smash our enemies!

“Attack at 0600!”

DAWSON OLMSTEAD
MAJOR GENERAL
CHIEF SIGNAL OFFICER
U. S. ARMY





THE TAPPA TREE

By JOHN H. KNOX

WHEN Enos Penwell came back from the far places of the earth, he brought the little tree with him. He brought other things too—a livid scar across his coffee-brown face and his usual look of wise rascality. Staid brother Elmer Penwell sighed and shrugged, and Enos settled down in the guest room of the big old Penwell house. He planted his little tree in the garden and proceeded to spellbind the villagers with his tales.

It was an ugly little tree, if you could call it that. It was only about eighteen inches high, with a thick, dark-green stem and a glossy bark. The leaves, too, were glossy, but of a lighter green and sharp as daggers.

Old Lige Baldridge, the nursery man, came to see it.

"I swan!" he exclaimed. "I never seen nothin' like it. Looks like some member of the agave fambly, but 'tain't

the right shape. How'd you come by it, Enos?"

"In the same way," Enos replied, "that I got this scar on my cheek—by gettin' curious about things that didn't concern me."

"What's the blame thing called?"

"Well, in the South Seas they call it a Tappa Tree. Guess that's as good a name for it as any."

Strangest of all was the way the tree grew. In a month it stood four feet high. In three months it towered over a man's head, sapping the earth around it and killing the nearby plants and flowers. The glossy bark began to look like an alligator's hide, making it seem centuries old instead of only a few months. The edges of those shiny leaves grew as sharp as the daggers they resembled.

Elmer, a cautious, conservative man, began to hate the brash intruder in his garden, but Enos wouldn't hear of

*When Enos Penwell Brings
Home a Strange Plant from the
South Seas Death and Madness
Uproot a Small American Town!*



A dark, crawling shape was flowing liquidly out of the sinister shadows

getting rid of it. Since Elmer was a little afraid of Enos, the tree stayed.

After about six months, when the top of the monster was already visible above the high garden wall, it put out its flowers. After that, no bird, animal or insect would come inside the garden. It wasn't that the flowers were exactly unpleasant. They were big, lush, orchidlike blossoms with a fantastic splotching of garish colors and an odor that everyone said resembled the smell of rattlesnakes.

Elmer complained of feeling queer after smelling it, and there could be no doubt that it made him more suspicious and quarrelsome than usual. He insisted that he would cut it down, whether Enos liked it or not. But the blooms faded away and the fruit began to appear.

Since it had almost no smell at all, Elmer lost his chief excuse and again the tree was saved.

NO one thought anything of it at first when Amelia Harwood began to spend a lot of time around the Penwell house while Elmer was busy as district judge. Amelia was an attractive, wealthy young widow whom Elmer had been courting for three years. Everyone considered it a good match, for she was a handsome woman and Elmer was the leading man of the town.

She was going to marry him, anyhow, so why shouldn't she be friendly with Enos and laugh and listen to the wild stories he could spin by the hour?

But Elmer was torn with jealousy. His severe lean face would darken when he saw them. Then he would put on his conventional smile and force himself to be casual. But one evening he heard a peal of Amelia's warm, throaty laughter while he was still a good way down the street, and found them setting together in the hammock on the lawn. He was embarrassed by the over-eager greeting that Amelia gave him.

"You'll stay for supper?" he asked to hide his hurt.

"Oh, good gracious, no," Amelia said. "I must be getting home. Enos was telling me a wild story about how

he got that tree, and I forgot all about the time."

"Oh, the tree?" Elmer responded grimly.

"Yes. Of course I don't believe a word of it—all that nonsense about a strange cult on a forgotten island, with weird priests guarding a sacred grove hundreds of centuries old. Enos reads those lies in books and then tells them as his own experiences."

"I never read two books in my life," said Enos almost truthfully. "Life is the only book to study. Ask Elmer. He's read books all his life, and every time he has to decide a case, he lies awake all night trying to figure out the right and wrong of it."

"You laugh at serious matters," Elmer replied angrily. "Nothing is worth too much pain and worry, if it helps justice."

"But does it? Don't the books just confuse you? How do you really judge what's right and what's wrong?"

Elmer had pondered that question many times.

"From the philosophical standpoint," he said cautiously, "rightness or wrongness is determined by the ultimate effect on life and the world."

"Right," agreed Enos, "but can you ever determine that?"

"If one could, the world would be perfect."

"I wonder." For a moment Enos' face was dark, brooding. But he came out of it and slapped Elmer on the back. "Well, suppose we forget that stuff and see a movie tonight."

"I've got an appeal to go over. You two run along if you like."

But Elmer knew he had spoken like a hypocrite. He hated Enos enough to kill him.

A few days later, though, Enos came to him and said:

"I may as well tell you. Amelia and I are going to get married."

Elmer swallowed. "I expected it. Well, you have my best wishes."

He offered Enos his hand. Enos took it but he didn't press it firmly.

"I'm not going to say I'm sorry, Elmer. It would be a lie. Of course I hate hurting you, but I'd fight you tooth and nail for her. I just hope you won't feel too bitter toward me."

"I won't," Elmer promised, and that was a lie, too.

So Enos and Amelia got married, and Enos moved into Amelia's comfortable house. Tongues wagged about the matter for awhile, and then people grew tired of the subject and forgot it. Only Elmer could not forget.

ALONE in the big old house, he brooded. He wanted to hurt Enos, but he forced the thought from his mind. Instead he began to think more and more often of the Tappa Tree, and whenever he did, he grew furious.

It had become a monstrous thing now, overshadowing the whole garden. It sucked the soil dry of nourishment, while the other plants died. More than that, with its sharp, brittle leaves and flamboyant flowers, it had become a symbol of Enos himself.

But Elmer told himself that, in destroying the tree, he was not really striking at Enos. It had become a nuisance and a pest, and one man at least had used the tree as an excuse for crime.

Casey Binns was the man's name. He had suddenly run amuck and killed his family. Dragged in by the police he had had the effrontery to defend his action. His wife, he said, had been fatally ill with cancer. His two boys were vicious little thieves, warped in mind and body. His daughter was a weak-minded creature who had more than once been picked up on vagrancy charges.

"I got to thinking about it one night," Binns explained. "All at once I could see clearly how things were headed. My poor wife was bound to die after months of torture. My boys were headed for the pen or the chair, my daughter for worse. Wasn't it better to just put them outa their misery?"

Judge Penwell reminded him that he himself might have been responsible to a degree. Binns readily admitted it.

"Sure, but it was true just the same, wasn't it?"

"Such things are not for us to decide," Elmer told him sternly. "What made you begin thinking like that?"

Binns scratched his head.

"Why, I dunno. I'd passed by yore house that night. Some of the fruit from that there Tappa Tree had fell over the fence. I hadn't ate all day, so I picked one up and ate it. It was right afterward that I come to my decision."

"Why, you vicious, murdering scoundrell!" Elmer burst out, forgetting his role of impartial judge. "Are you pretending you were temporarily insane?"

"I ain't pleading insanity at all."

He didn't. They sentenced him to the electric chair, but he beat them to it. He hanged himself in his jail cell, leaving a note which read:

I'm glad to save the state the expense of a just execution. I deserve it—not for killing them—but for the same reason they did.

Elmer now felt perfectly justified in getting rid of the tree and he wanted the pleasure of doing it himself. So, with a sharp ax and an eagerness he could hardly restrain, he went into the garden one night.

He stood for awhile and stared at the tree. He hated it more than ever. He began to imagine a dark, crawling shape flowing liquidly out of the sinister shadows and stare at him with unblinking greenish eyes.

The impression lasted only a moment, but it was enough to make Elmer swear under his breath. He swung the ax savagely against the great trunk. The leathery bark seemed to close on it like the jaws of a vise.

Elmer wrenched until he was sweat-covered before he could get the blade out. He swung viciously again and this time dislodged a chip. That encouraged him, and he took another swing at the exposed spot, gleaming like bare flesh. The ax dug in, but now, around the edges of the blade, a sticky sap flowed out and covered the whole blade.

It took him fifteen minutes to get it free. By now he was so shaken with a cold, sweaty rage that he flung the ax angrily away. He'd get a couple of husky woodcutters tomorrow and they'd have the monstrosity down in no time.

HE went back into the house and tried to concentrate on a difficult case that was coming up before him tomorrow. But he couldn't get the tree out of his mind. Finally he flung his papers down and went back into the darkened and brooding garden.

He began to speculate about the strange fruit. One lay on the ground near him and he picked it up. He did not like the touch of it. It seemed warm and yielding, like flesh, and for a moment he thought it pulsed and throbbed gently in his hands. To cure himself of a fear he despised, he bit into it almost as ferociously as a glutton.

A thick, sweetish juice ran out over his lips, rolled soothingly against his tongue. Mastering a panicky impulse to spit, he took a gulping swallow. It had a slightly sickish taste, but he felt a strange quickening of his faculties. His brain seemed shot through with a bright, cold clarity.

Instantly the tangled problem of his court case came to mind. He began to glimpse new angles, to see an amazingly simple superstructure behind the maze of conflicting facts. He hurried back into the house and took the sheaf of documents from his briefcase. Nothing about them now presented questions.

It was an amazing thing that happened next day in court. The case was the trial of a sawmill worker who had killed a strike-breaker. It had looked simply as though the young worker had provoked a quarrel and then shot the strike-breaker in cold blood. But the session had scarcely been opened when Judge Penwell, with a look of suppressed fury on his face, declared a mistrial.

Dumbfounded, the special prosecutor began to stammer:

"But, your honor, this is incredible!"

"It won't be," Elmer Penwell thundered, "when the sheriff starts issuing warrants for perjury, bribery and conspiracy to defeat justice. You have been bribed to perpetrate a fraud in this court of justice, and I propose to unmask it!" He turned to the witnesses and jury. His long, bony fin-

ger pointed. "You, and you, and you!"

Certain jurors and witnesses were seen to wilt and cringe.

They said he had gone mad, but only until the special investigators drove straight into a maze of corruption and dragged it into the light. Then the trials and convictions became a sensation throughout every county in the state.

A month later, at the party convention, Elmer was nominated for attorney general of the state. A landslide swept him into office and his supporters began to wish they had nominated him for governor.

As for Elmer himself, a queer change had come over him. The more he was publicized, the more he retreated into himself. He even began to wear smoked glasses, complaining that his eyes were strained. As he shuffled along the street, his glance was downcast, avoiding the faces of his fellow-men. But his career of miracles continued. Before he gave up the office of district judge, he had put through more reforms than the town had seen in its whole hundred years of history.

There was but one place where Elmer seemed to relax from the terrific inner force that drove him now. Painful as those surroundings were to him, it seemed that only in the presence of shiftless, laughing Enos and his carefree wife was Elmer able to take off his glasses and become human.

Right after that first sensational trial, Elmer had paid them a visit. He talked of one thing and another until he and Enos were alone, and then he suddenly blurted:

"About that Tappa Tree, Enos—" He paused.

"Well, what about it? You didn't cut it down, I notice."

"No. . . ." A longer pause. "Where did you get the thing?"

"Why, just where I told Amelia—a little atoll in the Pacific. People there had this queer tree cult."

"You don't know what it is, though, do you?"

Enos looked at him, frowning.

"What it is? Why, some funny sort of tree they claimed had been brought there from a long way off.

They had a flood story, like most of those islanders have, and the tree was in some way connected with it."

"I see. And that's all you know about it?"

"Yeah. Why?"

"But why did you steal it?"

Enos laughed and shrugged.

"Just for the fun of it."

Elmer said no more, but after he had gone home, Enos remarked to Amelia:

"I'm worried about old Elmer. He's overworking, acting peculiarly. He'll get over it, I hope, when he goes to the capital to take office."

But before he went away, Elmer had his garden wall built higher. Such a wall had never been seen in the town. It was fifteen feet high, and they said that the wires strung along its top were electrified. There was a guard stationed in the house, too, a big ugly brute who always wore a revolver, but even he didn't have a key to the garden.

Enos shook his head at all this mystification. But, since he and Amelia were so completely absorbed by their happy-go-lucky lives, he dismissed all questions with a joke. If he had any real ideas about the matter, he kept them to himself.

The career of Attorney General Elmer Penwell was the most spectacular ever seen in the state. He created more enemies than all the other politicians combined. A dozen attempts were made on his life, yet none of them succeeded.

Once an assassin got past all the guards with excellent credentials but, as he walked into the office, the attorney general happened to be sitting with his glasses off. Elmer jumped up suddenly and knocked his startled visitor to the floor with a blow of his fist. In the scuffle that followed, the small, deadly gun was found. The man was unmasked, his employers exposed, and he was tried and convicted with breath-taking rapidity.

A parade of grafting contractors, bribe-taking legislators and judges, racketeering political bosses, black-mailers and terrorists passed under the attorney general's dreaded shadow and into the penitentiary gates. Fear

and trembling smote the world of crime and shady politics. And the legend of Elmer Penwell swept like a tide across the country.

And all the while a stooped, unhappy man remained buried in his work, his eyes hidden by black glasses. He shuffled about his office and made as frequent trips as possible to his home town. There was about him a chill air so uncompromising that people felt uncomfortable and guilty in his presence. All, that is, except brother Enos.

Enos, unchanged and unawed, jeered good-naturedly about Elmer's fame and laughed off the frequent lectures that his brother addressed to him. For Elmer, grimmer and with the mantle of power on him, openly upbraided Enos for his shiftless ways.

"With all the wrongs on earth to be righted," he accused, "with all the evil to be uprooted and destroyed, you trifle your life away!"

And Enos would laugh and Elmer would grow doubly angry, because he could not disapprove of Enos as much as he wanted to. Enos had ruined his life, had made all his success seem dust and ashes. For Amelia, Elmer would have traded his fame and wealth and all the world.

So Elmer would go to the old home and hide there, refusing all visitors. He walked in his garden, under the shadow of the great tree, and let the pain gnaw at his heart. Then he would think of his great secret and turn his thoughts back to the career that lay ahead.

After these trips home, Elmer always returned to his work with renewed vigor, with faculties doubly keen. He made the trips often, driving his high-powered car like a rocket along the lonely roads.

AFTER a long and tiring drive one night, Elmer swung his big car into the grounds of the old house. He told the stony-faced servant who greeted him that he was going straight to bed. Ordinarily he would have dropped by to see Enos, but tonight he was too tired. His eyes were aching. He had been driving without his dark glasses, as he often did when he

was alone particularly in the car.

In a nearby town he had met a politician acquaintance who had missed his train and wanted a lift. The fellow was intoxicated and Elmer had taken him in. But, as he continued the drive, he kept seeing his snoring companion in the rear-view mirror. The sodden, brutal face revolted him. Though he tried to ignore it, he finally became almost physically sick, so he put his dark glasses on for the last lap of the trip. This made driving difficult and dangerous, yet without them he felt that he would have to throw the man out of the car.

Since his great change, it had become difficult enough for Elmer Penwell to look into the faces of sober men. To see this bloated visage, however was beyond enduring.

Elmer shuddered at the memory and buried his face in his pillow. He was lying there when the noise awakened him. It was his servant, Albert, hammering on the door.

"Judge!" he shouted. "Your brother Enos has killed a man!"

Elmer could not believe his ears, but he sprang out of bed and opened the door. Gradually Albert's stammered story grew clear. He sent the man to get the car out and began throwing on his clothes.

Moving as if by habit, Elmer went to one of his suitcases, opened it and took out a thermos bottle. He unscrewed the top quickly and poured into his palm a couple of the strange, dark-reddish fruits that came from the tree in the garden. Mechanically he lifted one of them to his mouth, then suddenly stopped.

A shiver shook his frame. A look of horrible indecision wrenched his thin features. When they set, they had assumed an unfamiliar look of hardness, slyness, guilt. Slowly Elmer replaced the fruit in the bottle, shut the case and went out.

Driving to police headquarters, Albert said diffidently:

"I want to tell you how much I hate this, Judge. I mean the effect it will have on your career, a brother getting into this sort of jam. With them talking about you for the Supreme Court and all—"

"Don't bother yourself about it, Albert," Elmer snapped. "Justice will be done, regardless."

HE found Enos considerably shaken, but really more bewildered than scared. He soon learned that Enos had stopped at a tavern on the outskirts of town to drink a glass of beer with friends. A drunk had annoyed him. Enos had called him down and angry words had passed.

Later, after Enos had left the tavern to go to his car, a bartender had heard sounds of a quarrel in the dark down the road. He had thought nothing of it until the drunk had been found at the side of the road, his face beaten to a pulp and his skull crushed by a heavy blow. It was the man who had quarreled with Enos, and Enos admitted the fight.

"But I didn't kill him," he protested. "He had sobered up by the time he met me out there, or I wouldn't have hit him at all. But he was pretty insulting and put up a stiff fight. I gave him a good thrashing and then went on to my car."

"You left him lying on the ground?"

"Well, no. He was crawling to his feet when I left him."

"But his skull was crushed by something heavier than a fist," the police chief pointed out.

"My fists were all I struck him with," Enos swore.

Still, no one had heard of the man having had another fight that night. The idea that anyone else could have done it seemed preposterous. Enos himself admitted that it looked bad.

As Elmer walked away with the police chief and the district attorney, the latter said:

"I don't see how we can make anything less than manslaughter of it. It's the fact that the skull was crushed that's incriminating. I'm sorry, Judge. Of course with your influence, you might—"

Elmer glared. "Are you suggesting that I might use my influence to defeat justice?"

He escorted Amelia home. She cried on his shoulder and he consoled her.

"I warned him about drinking," he said sadly.

"But he wasn't drunk, Elmer! Everybody says that. And it wouldn't be like Enos to use anything but his fists."

"It was an unfortunate accident," Elmer evaded. "Sober, Enos would never have done such a thing. Naturally I'm going to do all I can, short of dishonor, to save him."

Amelia kissed him when he left. Elmer went home with his blood tingling. Unable to sleep, he went out and walked in the garden. Twice he passed a low limb of the tree which bore among its daggerlike leaves a cluster of fruit. Twice Elmer reached for it. Twice, with his fingers almost touching the fruit, he drew them away.

Next day he went back to the capital.

ENOS' arrest created a furore in the papers. Pity for the famous Elmer Penwell was universal. Elmer himself refused to make any comment. Enemies watched gleefully, friends fearfully, to see what would happen at the trial.

They were all surprised, for Elmer did not attend. He pleaded the urgency of a difficult case and stayed away. He hired the best lawyer available to defend Enos, yet aside from that he exerted no influence on the case.

A breathless and startled public heard the news that Enos Penwell had been sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary.

"Poor Judge Penwell!" was the reaction. "But what a Spartan! Nothing on earth sways him from justice."

It was noticed, however, that during the period of Enos' trial, Elmer lost his first big case. Somehow, after his return to the capital, the whole carefully built up mass of evidence in this case collapsed. It was put down to the strain of worry over his brother and did no serious damage to his record. Besides, his term was nearly up and he had already announced his candidacy as United States senator. He left his office in charge of assistants and went home for a rest.

Amelia came to see him. Her face was sad and pale, yet none the less

lovely than it had been before. They sat on the lawn and talked. Elmer was glad when dusk fell, for then she could not see the guilty longing in his eyes. He had left off wearing his dark glasses since Enos' trial.

"I know you did the best you could," Amelia said. "I'm not reproaching you. But, Elmer, he'll never live out those ten years!"

"We'll get him a parole in a couple of years," Elmer said shortly.

"But even two years," Amelia answered, "may be too long. Enos has been free all his life. It's like caging a wild bird. It will kill him."

That night Elmer was again unable to sleep. He paced the garden.

Next day a matter came up to distract his mind. His assistants needed him badly at the capital. But Elmer wrote that his health would not permit him to come and sent instead a detailed analysis of the case and his advice for proceeding. They followed his instructions and lost the case.

Still Elmer stayed at home. He walked under the Tappa Tree, looked frequently at the fruit, but he did not touch it.

Enemies claimed that the attorney general's great mind and powers were failing. Friends laughed it off, claimed he needed rest for his forthcoming campaign for the Senate.

On the very night when news of the party nomination came, Amelia called on Elmer with the strange message from Enos. She led up to it by talking about how Enos' health was failing. Then she said hesitantly:

"Elmer, he feels that you ought to do something for him."

Elmer bridled. "Does he blame me?"

"No, no!" she said quickly. "Only he feels that you might—"

"Tell me exactly what he said," Elmer demanded.

With trembling fingers Amelia took a little envelope from her purse and handed it to him. He tore it open. It contained only a few lines, but as Elmer stared at it, the blood drained from his face. He wadded the paper in an angry fist, looked suspiciously at Amelia, then got control of himself and asked:

"Did you read this?"

She shook her head.

Elmer seemed relieved.

"Write Enos," he said, "that I will follow his advice and do everything in my power for him."

But after she had gone, Elmer read the paper again and threw it into the fire.

"I'll be hanged if I will!" he swore.

A wire went out to the party convention that Elmer Penwell was declining the nomination. Another wire to the capital tendered his resignation as attorney general. Reporters and friends, hurrying to the Penwell house, found the gates locked and armed guards barring their entry.

"Elmer Penwell is retiring from public life because of ill health," was the only message they could get.

Nothing else was heard of him until that terrible night of tragedy when the sheriff and the chief of police, summoned by Albert, found the body of Elmer Penwell in his garden.

The great tree, with its massive trunk cut halfway through, had fallen. Elmer Penwell lay beneath it, an ax still clutched in his fists. His feet were mired to the ankles in the thick sap that had flowed out. Obviously he had been cutting the tree down and had been unable to get out of the way when it started to fall. His body was pierced in a dozen places by the sword-like leaves.

"But what," demanded the sheriff, "made him do it?"

Albert tapped his temple with a finger. "Judge Penwell was outa his head ever since the night of the nomination. I just couldn't tell anyone about it."

"But what happened tonight?"

"I wasn't here," Albert said. "He sent me away. When I came back, I found him just like this."

THE news went out that Elmer Penwell had died in a sad accident, but the police chief and the sheriff were not satisfied. Then Elmer's will was read, and it was found that a tidy sum had been left to the hard-faced Albert. They brought him in for a long session behind locked doors. After several hours Albert,

sweating and cringing limply under a glaring light, was gasping:

"All right, I'll tell! I know what drove him crazy."

"What?"

"He killed the man that Enos was sent up for murdering."

"You fool, what do you mean by a statement like that?"

"It's a fact," Albert whined. "The judge drove home, wearing his dark glasses that night. He passed that tavern and the place where Enos and the man had fought. It was his car that hit the man when he was crawling to his feet after Enos beat him up."

"Preposterous! What basis have you for such a wild tale?"

"Evidence," said Albert, and his eyes narrowed craftily. "I used to be a private detective. After I heard all the evidence against Enos that night and remembered that the judge had been driving with his dark glasses on, I got a hunch. I examined the bumper of his car and scraped off some blood and a few matted hairs. I managed to get some hairs from the dead man's head and sent them to a laboratory. They matched, but I didn't say anything about it."

"You meant to blackmail Elmer Penwell?"

"Of course."

"And when you did, it drove him out of his mind?"

"Oh, no. I wanted to wait until he had gone as high as he could go and was ripe for a real cleaning."

"You scoundrel! But you must have told Enos."

"I didn't tell no one."

"But you said that on the night of Elmer's nomination, a message came from Enos. That must have been what started his—derangement."

"Yeah, only that message didn't say nothin' about the killing. He threw it into the fire, but it fell to the back and wasn't burnt. All it said was 'I've been wondering why you've quit eating the fruit of the tree.' And it was signed 'Enos.'"

The sheriff and the police chief started in anger.

"Are you trying to imply a code message told Elmer that Enos suspected him of killing the man?"

Albert shook his head. "I don't think Enos ever suspected the judge doing it. All he thought was that the judge didn't really want to help him. And as for having killed the man, the judge didn't know he had done that, either. At least he didn't know it then."

"And how did he come to know it?"

"I wouldn't know, but I'm guessing it was when he finally started eating the Tappa fruit again."

GRIM-FACED the chief and the sheriff exchanged glances.

"Go on."

"After the night he got the message from Enos," Albert said, "the judge went into the garden. He paced up and down and seemed to be talking to himself. I was worried about him and watched. He'd pluck one of the fruit and stare at it, muttering and trembling, then throw it away. I went back into the house and pretty soon he came rushing in. He was shaking all over, holding a bitten piece of fruit in his hand. He stops in front of a mirror, gazes at his own face, then screams and smashes the mirror.

"He goes to another mirror and does the same thing there. He busts three mirrors. Then he tells me to carry all the other mirrors out of the house. After that he wore his dark glasses all the time, but it didn't help. He'd be passing the glass front of a cabinet, or some shiny surface, and he'd see a reflection of his face. So he took to wearing a blindfold and acting like a madman. And every night he'd go into the garden, and that's when I heard him talking—to the devil."

"The devil!"

"I don't know." Albert swallowed. "There was another voice, a sort of hissing voice that would torment him with taunts and jibes. I never could make out the words clearly, but the judge would end up in a rage, threatening to cut the tree down."

"But you didn't see anyone—anything—in there with him?"

Albert hesitated. "I did and I didn't. I ain't sure it wasn't imagination, but several times, spying through into the garden, I'd see the judge lyin' on the grass. Then I'd see a

long, snaky shadow come gliding toward him across the grass. It would come up to him sort of friendly-like and snuggle against him. He'd jump up, cursing, and go to another place. The thing would follow him there, like it was trying to make friends. Then the screaming and the mocking hisses would start." He paused. "But like I said, maybe it was imagination, like the angel."

"The angel?"

Albert squirmed and looked around in wild appeal.

"I didn't mean to say that. It was nothin' but my imagination. I came in through the gate and found the tree on him that night. The moon was shining and the wind was whipping those glassy leaves. It looked for a minute like swords flashing—angels' swords."

That ended Albert's testimony. They locked him up while they investigated the hairs and the blood, which matched, as Albert had claimed. But what proof was there that Albert had really taken the blood-matted hairs from the bumper of Elmer Penwell's car? There was none at all. He might have concocted the whole story and, with his blackmail threat, have terrified Elmer into insanity.

The rest of the story they dismissed as a palpable lie, aimed at the credulous people who were already fearful of that queer tree. But the testimony was presented at a secret session of the Pardons Board and Enos was released on parole, ostensibly because of his failing health.

When Enos came home, the sheriff and the police chief put the whole matter before him. Enos professed to understand nothing at all about it. That cryptic message he had sent? Why, he had simply been playing on Elmer's superstition. Yes, Elmer had been superstitious about the tree. There was no denying that. As for Enos himself, he had told all he knew about the tree.

But the police chief was still not satisfied with the case. Some days later he called on the pastor of Elmer's church. The two of them went to the garden where the big, ugly tree was being cleared away by workmen.

It had withered and shriveled remarkably fast in that short time. The flowing out of its sap seemed to have left only a pulpy shell, covered with dry, cracking skin. Even the dagger-like leaves broke and crumbled when touched. The little pastor seemed to avoid the tree even with his eyes.

"The thing that keeps troubling me," said the chief, "isn't so much Albert's wild story. It's the facts we know—about Elmer's eyes, for instance, wearing those dark glasses and all. I remember how he used to glance at a man with a sort of sick look on his face and grab his glasses to hide the sight, as if—"

"As if," the pastor finished for him, "he were seeing some terrible abyss of evil."

"That's right. He was never that way before the tree was planted here."

"Nor," said the pastor, "did he ever have such an astonishing knowledge

of good and evil. Oh, come now! We mustn't let our imaginations run off with us. We can't really know—"

"But you got some idea about that Tappa Tree, haven't you, Reverend?"

"Of course. For one thing, the word's not 'Tappa,' but 'Tapu.' It's the native word for 'Taboo' in the South Sea Islands. Only they don't pronounce it as we do. They place the accent on the first syllable and it sounds like 'Tappa.' It means, of course, 'forbidden.'"

"And you think Enos got it where he said he did?"

"Yes, I think he got this tree there. But I believe that if you could ever pin Enos down, he'd admit that the natives were more specific about where its original ancestor came from."

"You mean—"

The pastor nodded. "Eastward in Eden would be my guess."

Headliners in Our Next Issue



WITH a name like that he should have been a little panty-waist with patent leather hair and clothes like a tailor's dummy. Instead, Rupert Doll stood six feet two in his bare feet, weighed well over two hundred pounds, and had a face as rugged as an unfinished stone statue.

His only claim to distinction was that he was the last of Nat Warner's gorillas. The sole survivor of the bloodiest gang war in New York's turbulent history. When the last shot had been fired, and the smoke had lifted, there just had not been anybody left to boss Rupe Doll around.

So—he called on Police Headquarters and made a blunt, direct proposition to the sergeant.

"My name's Rupe Doll, flatfoot," he said without preamble. "I aim to be a flatfoot myself."

How Rupe Doll turned cop, and how he learned to like it, are told in one of the year's most exciting detective yarns—**THE LAST MOBSMAN**, a complete novelet by Arthur J. Burks in the next issue. For suspense, action and a swell character, **THE LAST MOBSMAN** is the last word! It will keep you guessing from start to

finish and Doll's perilous exploits will amaze you!

Another headliner next issue is **BONDS OF MURDER**, by Owen Fox Jerome—a novelet packed with excitement and entertainment. Thomas Brennan, two-fisted plainclothes detective, wrecks a restaurant and gets a powerful smack on the head that knocks him haywire—and this mad escape leads him to the threshold of the most baffling mystery he has ever had to solve.

Brennan's superior officer has always told him to use his head rather than his fists—and in **BONDS OF MURDER** he certainly must employ his cranium, or else. You'll enjoy every bit of **BONDS OF MURDER** as Brennan tracks down a diabolical stock-switching scheme that spells death.

Also in the next issue—**THE SPHERICAL GHOUL**, a complete novelet by Fredric Brown that takes place in the morgue and has all the elements of mystery and weirdness generally associated with that sombre place.

In addition to these grand headliners, many other stories of crime and detection will be included in the next issue—a gala issue that we confidently expect will meet with your full approval.

See you then, and thanks for listening.

—THE EDITOR.

P.S. Please write and tell me what you think of the stories in this issue. Address all letters and postcards to The Editor, **THRILLING MYSTERY**, 11 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y.



A hard, clawing hand fastened on Slade's throat

DEATH FOR SABOTEURS

By LEW MARTIN

*Clever Axis Spies Have a Fine Scheme to Lift the Plans
for an American War Weapon—Only to Find the
F.B.I. is a Bit More Clever, and Distinctly on the Job*

IT WAS hot in the telephone booth, but the moment Jeff Slade heard Gail Mason's musical voice he forgot all about his discomfort.

"Hello, darling," he said, his heart thumping a little more rapidly. "I'm afraid I've got to break our date."

Gail Mason's tone immediately mirrored her disappointment.

"Jeff! And I've been looking forward to seeing you. Why can't you make it?"

"It's those plans," he murmured. "The Navy wants to see them again and I've got to fly to Washington in morning. That means I'll have to do

some last-minute work on the specifications tonight."

"It's always those plans!" she said. "For the last few weeks I've hardly seen you on account of them. And just tonight when we've been invited to Carl Buehler's party. Won't you try to make it?"

"I'll try," he said, "but don't count on it."

After promising to phone Gail later in the evening, Jeff hung up and walked out of the drug-store.

He was a tall, good-looking young man with a deceptive depth and breadth to his chest and shoulders.

Now as he flagged a cab and gave the driver the address of the rooming house where he lived, he was thinking of the work ahead of him and of how much he would have liked to spend the evening with Gail.

In a small satchel at his feet were plans and specifications for a revolutionary type of submarine, designed as a troop and cargo-carrying unit. Larger than any undersea boat ever conceived, it offered an almost fool-proof method of transporting soldiers or supplies across great distances of ocean.

An independent young inventor, Jeff Slade had managed to interest the Navy in his plan. The Navy, in turn, had ordered the Northern Marine Shipbuilding Company to put all its construction data and files at Jeff's disposal to facilitate his work.

The company, headed by Carl Buehler, had cooperated fully and had shown tremendous interest in Jeff Slade's ideas. Buehler and one of the other directors, Frank Dahn, had questioned Slade closely on several occasions regarding his invention.

He had given them some information, but when their queries required answers that would have necessitated revealing important construction secrets, he told them the Navy had bound him to silence on those details.

ONCE or twice Slade had found himself feeling a little suspicious of Buehler, with his almost Teutonic features, his arrogant manner, his long flat lips, his shaven head—which he explained was an experiment to make his hair grow in faster—and the hard blue eyes, the left one decorated by a monocle.

He wondered if Buehler were a Nazi or had Axis sympathies. Then he would shrug those suspicions aside when he remembered that Buehler had been in America for many years as president of the Northern Marine Shipbuilding Company.

In fact, when Slade broached his feelings to Gail Mason, who had been Buehler's confidential secretary for three years, she laughed at him. And now tonight they had both been invited to Buehler's party, though Gail

would have to attend it alone.

Paying off the cab driver in front of his rooming house, Jeff mounted the steps and went immediately to the second floor. Night had fallen outside and the corridor was gloomy. He opened the door with his key and walked in.

At the same moment the lights flipped on in the room and a cold wave of warning rippled along his nerves. His eyes blinked, then focused on a tall, pale-cheeked man with glittering eyes who faced him with a drawn automatic.

"Take it easy," the man said, in a flat-toned voice, "and you won't get hurt."

Slade's throat went dry and his breathing definitely quickened. There was a sudden tumult under his ribs. He felt the palm of the hand which gripped the little satchel grow moist with sweat. He didn't need a blueprint to realize what this gunman wanted. Those submarine plans of his would be worth a fortune to enemies of the United States, and some men would not hesitate to kill to get them.

The door remained half-open as Slade took two slow steps forward. All his muscles were pressing against his skin and he was gauging his chances for making a break. His eyes slid to the pale-faced man. There was something faintly, hauntingly familiar about those features, but at the moment Jeff could not place the fellow.

"I'll take those plans you're carrying," grunted the man.

Jeff Slade glared balefully, started to let his arm slide forward. Without warning, he leaped to one side, swung the satchel in an arc against the man's gun-wrist.

The blow knocked the weapon to the floor. Jeff dropped the satchel to hook his knuckled fist against the man's jaw.

A scuffling sound drilled the taut silence. Slade whirled. Another man charged from his hiding place behind the door. Hard knuckles cracked against Slade's face and he went down clutching at the man's coat and ripping away a pocket. They threshed

across the floor, wedging up against the foot of the bed.

A hard, clawing hand fastened on Slade's throat. Pressure was exerted while he fought to break that hold. A blow thudded into his face. Then the first man returned to the fight and slammed his gun-butt against Jeff Slade's head. Blackness crowded in over Slade's mind and he went limp. . . .

When Jeff Slade finally regained consciousness the room was in darkness and the door was closed. He rose slowly, staggered to the wall, and flipped the light switch.

There was a dull, throbbing ache in his skull and anger had its harsh way with his feelings. One sweeping glance about the room revealed that the satchel with his valuable plans was gone. Now into his mind came the haunting picture of the pale-cheeked man who had appeared familiar.

ABRUPTLY he remembered! Three weeks ago the newspapers had headlined the news that another party of Nazi saboteurs had been landed on Long Island shores by a U-boat.

Several people had remembered seeing the men near the beach and later in some Long Island taverns. From those descriptions the newspapers had managed to have their staff artists draw up close likenesses which had been printed in all editions. And the pale-faced man who had attacked Slade was one of those men! His accomplice was undoubtedly another.

Fear made a hollow stirring along Slade's nerves. With three of those Nazis still on the loose, hunted by G-men, state and city police, and Navy Intelligence, there was no telling what might happen. A few men working in secret with high explosives could do untold damage to Eastern war industries.

But more than that, if the plans for Slade's troop-carrying submarine fell into enemy hands it would be a severe blow to America and her allies!

Slade was striding to the door, intent on notifying the F.B.I. of his loss, when he noticed a small square of paper sticking out from under the bed. Near it was a square of suit fabric.

[Turn page]

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He remembered that in his fight with the second attacker, he had ripped the man's pocket. This paper had evidently fallen out then.

Bending down, Slade picked it up. On its wrinkled surface was an address scrawled in pencil. It was:

3329 Midland Drive

Slade read that address twice before it occurred to him that it was the address of Carl Buehler's pretentious city home! Immediately his blood began to boil. Did finding this address on the saboteurs mean that Buehler was working with the Nazis?

Slade didn't know, but it looked that way. And now he could understand Buehler's intense interest in his invention, those prying questions that had been constantly thrown at him. Then Slade thought of Gail and of Buehler's party, and he suddenly had a premonition of peril.

If Buehler were a Nazi, or working with them, then Gail might be in danger this very moment. Grimly Jeff Slade raced out of his room and hailed another cab down in the street.

It occurred to him that he ought to notify the F.B.I., get their aid, but he was too angry, too worried, too anxious to get to the bottom of the business without further delay.

He dismissed the cab two blocks from Buehler's residence and walked the rest of the way under low-hanging trees. His nerves were jumpy and he didn't know what he was running into, but nothing on earth could have made him turn back now.

As he neared the big house which was set back a big distance from the street and surrounded by trees and shrubbery, he saw the big limousines that were parked along the curb. He turned into the driveway and ducked into the bushes, intending to circle around the house and look into the windows to see if he could spot Gail.

He had just reached a long blank wall on the east side when the hard bore of a gun was jammed into his back.

"Walk around to the rear, friend!" hissed a voice in his ear. "And don't try any tricks."

Slade swore savagely under his breath at being caught flat-footed.

He felt the man's hand explore his clothes, find his automatic in a shoulder holster, and swiftly remove it. Then he was marched through the dense shrubbery to a rear entrance.

He found himself in a dark hallway. Dimly, from the front of the dwelling, came sounds of music and laughter. Then he was herded to a stairway that led to a spacious cellar.

IT WAS well-lighted and, with the gun still prodding his back, he walked behind a huge new oil-burning furnace unit. It was the largest he had ever seen.

To his surprise his captor pushed his hand against the rear blank panel and it opened inward to reveal another stairway leading down.

"Keep going!" directed the man with the gun whom Slade now saw to be the pale-cheeked man who had attacked him in his own room. "I don't know how you happened to come here, but you certainly made a mistake."

At the bottom of the steep stairway Slade found himself in a huge sub-cellar divided into several rooms. The walls were constructed of great square blocks of stone. In the second of these rooms which was separated from another chamber by a high wall in which there was a square aperture about shoulder high, Jeff found himself confronting three men.

Two of them were escaped Nazi saboteurs whom he recognized from newspaper drawings. The third was Frank Dahn, one of the directors of the Northern Marine Shipbuilding Company.

"Dahn!" exclaimed Jeff Slade as he was thrown roughly against the wall.

"Yes, my friend," said the director smoothly. He was a sleek, dark-haired man with gray-green eyes, and there was a hint of malicious amusement in his face. He gestured to Slade's satchel and to some blue-prints which he held in his own hand. "Your plans are interesting, Slade. That troop-carrying submarine should be a big success — in Germany when *der Fuehrer* gets these specifications."

"You dirty traitor!" growled Slade as he lunged forward.

His swinging left fist glanced off Dahn's jaw, then he was overwhelmed by two of the Nazis who gripped him

firmly by the arms.

"It will do no good to fight," taunted Dahn. "Just as it was useless to be so secretive about your plans when I questioned you."

Rage sent a scarlet tide flushing into Slade's rugged cheeks. His fists clenched and unclenched spasmodically.

"So this is the hide-out for those blasted Nazis that U-boat landed two weeks ago!" he snapped. "Well, you'll never get away with it. I notified the F.B.I. of my loss of the plans, told them about this slip of paper which I found in my room after I had been attacked." He showed the address. "In a little while this place will be surrounded."

Dahn laughed and it was not a pleasant sound to hear.

"You are bluffing, Slade."

"Do you think I'd be fool enough to come here alone?"

"I do. You American pigs are all stupid fools." A sudden flare of anger thickened Dahn's words. "And even if your G-men come they will find nothing. They will not think to look for a sub-cellar beneath a furnace."

Something in Slade's face, in the way futile remorse hit him, narrowing his glance, gave him away and Dahn taunted him again.

"Of course, you realize you must die," he resumed. "You know too much. But it will not hurt to tell you that soon many American factories in the East will be sabotaged by men operating from this room. In fact, tonight another U-boat will land more men. The plans for your troop-carrying submarine will go back to Germany on that boat."

Jeff Slade's lips set in a thin, solid wedge across his bronzed skin. Death was imminent and its frigid blast blew against him. He was trapped and so was America unless he could do something to get away. But how? Without a gun and facing four armed men, any break now would only hasten his death and accomplish nothing.

Yet even while he was conscious of his own slim chance of survival, he found himself thinking of Gail. If anything had happened to her! He couldn't stand that. She had to be all right!

[Turn page]

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AT A gesture from Dahn, the Nazi who had captured Slade was dismissed and the man went upstairs. Then while the other two men led Slade into the deep shadows Dahn walked into the room behind Slade with the blue-prints, followed by the third Nazi. They were in no hurry to kill him, no doubt relishing the mental torment he was enduring.

Ten minutes later the Nazi returned and this time Saruki, Buehler's Japanese houseboy, was with him. The Jap was short, with olive-colored skin, black hair. He was wearing large glasses and his mouth was filled with crooked teeth. He wore tuxedo trousers, a white shirt and waistcoat and a black bow tie.

Saruki approached Dahn, then whirled at a light tapping sound along the concrete floor. Still closely watched by his captors, Jeff Slade jerked his head back toward the front of the sub-cellar and uttered a startled exclamation.

"Gail! Be careful. It's Jeff!"

Even as he spoke Gail Mason darted forward, an automatic held rigidly in her slender hand.

"Put up your hands!" she commanded Saruki and his Nazi companion, her eyes peering into the gloom where Slade was held.

Gail Mason was a strikingly beautiful girl. Always, on seeing her, Slade felt his blood race. He had known long ago there could never be anyone for him but Gail and he was hopelessly gone. Now in one fleeting instant of time he again marveled at her beauty. She had creamy white skin, and a green satin evening gown clung to the molded contours of her body. Her eyes were blue and wide-spaced, and her hair made a golden, glorious shower above her smooth features.

Slade watched Gail stride forward until she was opposite the aperture in the wall. Her gun never wavered from the men in front of her, and her rounded chin was lifted in a gesture of defiant courage.

Saruki let out a faint, hissing sound between his teeth and his hand crept to the lapel of his white waistcoat. Behind Slade his two captors started to slide stealthily forward.

Suddenly a shaven head appeared in

the wall opening.

"Look out, Gail!" Slade yelled as he leaped forward.

But he was too late. One of the Nazis thrust out a foot and tripped him. He sprawled on the concrete floor as he saw Buehler's snarling face at the wall opening, watched him flick a heavy coil of rope about Gail's throat and drag her backward. She dropped her gun.

Saruki rushed forward while Gail clawed frantically at the rope.

"So nice going, Mr. Buehler," said the Jap.

"Looks like I got here just in time, Manuel," grunted Buehler. He relinquished the rope slightly and his voice turned harsh as he addressed Gail. "We seem to have caught a female Nazi spy. Where are your friends, Miss Mason? Or are you alone?"

There was an abrupt scuffling sound in the shadows. Jeff Slade came racing forward. A gun flamed and he went down with two men leaping at him. Behind them stalked Dahn and another Nazi.

Rigid shock showed on Buehler's features. His eyes widened so that his monocle dropped and splintered against the concrete. Then the Jap's gun was out and centered on Buehler's chest.

"So sorry," he hissed. "Not Manuel, but Saruki is the name—Mr. Corgan, G-man." The Jap motioned to one of the Nazis. "Bring Mr. Corgan around into this room and watch him carefully."

"Jeff, what are you doing here?" Gail asked, her lower lip trembling as the remaining two Nazis kept their drawn guns on them.

BRIEFLY he explained all that had happened since he had phoned her.

"We're in a nice mess," he stated wearily. "These blasted Krauts have my plans. They're going to sneak them out of the country by way of a sub that's landing more saboteurs on Long Island. But you—?"

Gail smiled weakly, though it took a tremendous effort of will.

"I was tired of dancing so I wandered out of the main room and started looking at the rest of the house. I

saw this man"—she pointed to one of the Nazis—"come out of the library. I recognized him from his picture in the paper and I knew he was one of the escaped Nazis. I wondered what he was doing here and was suspicious.

"I was foolish not to go for help. However, I followed the man down into the sub-cellar and found they had you a prisoner. Buehler—or whatever his name is—must have seen me leave and followed me down."

Gail halted as the man she had taken to be Buehler was led in, and stood in front of the smirking Jap. Buehler had a resigned, hopeless look about him. He glanced at Slade.

"Slade! I didn't see you in the shadows at the end of the room. I just noticed Miss Mason here and she held a gun on Manuel whom I took to be a loyal agent. I figured she was a spy of some kind."

"Yes, friend Martin Corgan," hissed Saruki. "You were smart but not smart enough. At first, you fooled us with your masquerade. Then you made a few slips—never mind what they were—and today while you were out I found enough evidence in your room to convince me who you really were."

"A G-man?" Slade queried, his face bewildered.

"Yes," was Buehler's reply. "And my name is Corgan as this spy has told you. I'm afraid we have all blundered."

"But how did you—?"

Corgan broke in before Slade could complete his question.

"For a long time we have been suspecting that some of the directors of the Northern Marine Shipbuilding Company were affiliated with the Nazis, but we had no proof. Buehler and Dahn were the men we were particularly after since we had learned they had both spent many years in Germany and were high up in the Bundist organizations in this country.

"When one of the Nazi spies whom the F.B.I. captured three weeks ago implicated Buehler, admitted being contacted by the man, we decided on a daring plan. We suspected the Nazis would try to land more saboteurs and that Buehler might be

[Turn page]

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"Very clever, Corgan," rasped Dahn with a malicious grin. "But where did it get you?"

Corgan's stern face stiffened and his eyes flashed.

"This game isn't over yet," he retorted hotly. His glance returned to Slade, whose eyes were carefully studying his captors, watching for their vigilance to relax. "I have been living in Buehler's house, waiting to be contacted by the Nazis. But all the while I was unaware of this secret sub-cellar. I was working with Saruki whom I took to be a loyal Filipino special agent. We had learned that more Nazis were expected, that they would be sheltered here, but I had not been told just when the new arrivals would be contacted."

"That was because I did not quite trust you, Corgan," said Saruki, his crooked teeth flashing. "As for Manuel, your loyal agent, his body is at the bottom of the river."

"But why did you give this party?" Gail demanded of Corgan.

CORGAN shrugged, his eyes narrowed.

"Buehler had already sent out invitations for it before he was arrested, so I had to follow through to keep his Nazi associates from becoming wary."

Saruki suddenly came forward. His eyes were hard gimlets in his swarthy face.

"Enough talking," said the Jap. "Now we must dispose of our American friends and prepare to meet the U-boat. Dahn, you will help guard Corgan. The others will help me and watch the girl. We'll go out the back way through the secret passage."

Pressure knotted all of Jeff Slade's stomach muscles. This was it. He and Gail and Corgan were at the end of the trail. There was no mercy in

Saruki's face. In a moment they would all be dead. The knowledge that he had nothing to lose turned Slade reckless and desperate.

Saruki came close to him, gesturing for Slade to walk past him. Slade took three steps, started to pass him, then whirled savagely. His left arm chopped down on Saruki's gun arm while the bunched knuckles of his right hand exploded against the Jap's jaw.

The Jap collapsed as if someone had cut his legs from under him. His gun spilled from his fingers and skidded along the floor. Slade dived for it, his yell echoing against the stone walls.

"Gail, get down!"

The girl, her eyes alive and eager, rushed away from her captors and fell flat near the aperture in the wall. At the same moment Corgan broke the hold two Nazi saboteurs had on him. One of them tried to club him with a gun, but Corgan slammed him with a solid punch.

Jeff Slade sprawled on the floor, made a lunge for Saruki's automatic and pumped a fast shot at the other Nazi who had been holding Corgan. His bullet took the man in the fore-

[Turn page]

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head just as the latter was about to fire point-blank at Corgan.

Then Saruki was stirring and Slade whirled around to slash at the Jap with the automatic barrel. A bullet whined off the stone floor close to his head as Dahn drew an automatic from a shoulder holster.

Corgan uttered a cry of pain when one of the other Nazis drilled him in the shoulder. He dropped to one knee and fired a shot that missed. Dahn, cursing savagely, slammed another shot at Slade and the man beside him did likewise.

Suddenly Gail jumped up behind Dahn. She rushed forward, her arms lifted high. Then the same length of rope which Corgan had used on her dropped over Dahn's head and circled his windpipe.

She tugged hard, dragging Dahn backward while his gun slammed thundering shots across the room. That brief respite was all the chance Slade and Corgan needed. Slade killed the Nazi beside Dahn with one well-placed shot, and Corgan took care of the remaining spy.

Then it was all over. Jeff Slade clubbed Dahn into unconsciousness and Gail relinquished the rope. She was suddenly weak, but she was smiling.

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ing and her eyes were warm and bright and full of courage.

"Nice going, Gail," Slade said admiringly.

While Gail guarded the Nazis with an automatic, Corgan located some rope and trussed up all the prisoners who had not been killed.

Saruki was coming around and Jeff Slade bent over the Jap. There was sheer murder in the Jap's black eyes, but Slade's features were equally hard and uncompromising.

"Saruki, you're goin' to talk and tell us where that U-boat is expected to land," he declared savagely.

THE Jap hissed his denial, so Slade tapped him gently on the head with his gun. Then he grabbed him by the ears and began to bang Saruki's head on the stone floor rhythmically. He kept it up for several minutes until the Jap started to scream.

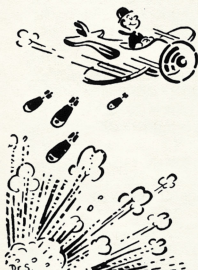
"I talk—I talk."

"I knew you back-stabbing skunks couldn't take it," said Slade. "All right, spill it."

"U-boat will surface off Greenport at two o'clock. Eight men come ashore."

Corgan uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

[Turn page]



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Slade glanced at Gail, deeply stirred by her loveliness, by the warmth in her eyes and grinned.

"I think Gail and I will get married so we can take care of each other." His smile at Gail broadened. "I've been wanting to pop the question a long while. This may not be the time—"

"Don't talk so much, Jeff," she whispered, and walked into his arms.



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(Continued from page 13)

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O'Neal and Donegan had often talked about ghosts. O'Neal was a believer in occultism. Donegan was skeptical. O'Neal had claimed that a ghost is merely a consciousness that uses a higher frequency than a human body—a frequency perhaps a little higher than X-ray vibrations.

One night Donegan got a hunch. He confided in a doctor who had an X-ray machine. Donegan arranged to make an X-ray picture of each of the five suspects from photographs that he had. As the experiment was made, Donegan called upon the spirit of Tim O'Neal to point out his killer.

It was a very serious moment. Donegan placed all the pictures on the table before him and examined them carefully with a magnifying glass.

As he looked at one he was startled. There was a visible x on the forehead of the man. When the doctor was later asked to look at it, he said: "It is probably due to a flaw in the developing, but I can see it plainly under the glass."

Acting on this hunch, Donegan and two deputies called upon this man. As soon as

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the door opened, Donegan snapped: "Where did you hide O'Neal's nuggets?"

The man was startled and unconsciously glanced at the fireplace, then quickly denied knowing anything about the robbery.

But that was enough for the sheriff. He fairly tore the fireplace apart—but he found the nuggets. The man later confessed, not knowing how Donegan had suspected him. The killer was convicted.

People congratulated Donegan on his lucky break, not knowing of the X-ray experiment. But the sheriff has a different definition for the word, hunch. He has told this story only to those few friends who do not scoff.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Dear Chakra: Has it been proved that the human body is really an electric battery?

—Nels Jordan.

Dear Mr. Jordan: Dr. George Crile of Cleveland has demonstrated that the cells of a man's body have positive electrical charges in the nuclei and a negative charge in the cytoplasm. These charges provide driving power.

Dear Chakra: I have been told that there is an old magic formula to make a discerning mirror. What is it?

G. W. Knobbs.

Dear Mr. Knobbs: The old Egyptian formula reads: "Stand on a crossroads at eleven o'clock on a moonlight night and write on a mirror in blood: S. Solam, S. Tattler, S. Echogardner Gematar. Hide the mirror for three days. On the third night at the same time and place uncover it and let a black cat gaze into it first."

Dear Chakra: Were the slabs on Mayan temples cemented by human blood?

—Dorothy Weklnr.

Dear Miss Weklnr: Maldens were supposed to have been crushed to death between the slabs, their blood mixing with the mortar.

Dear Chakra: Have you ever seen any material object that was supposed to have been produced by spirits and which cannot be scientifically duplicated?

—Jessica Muller.

Dear Miss Muller: Yes, I have seen a perfect string of beads so small that it could be observed only under a microscope. Duplication is impossible by the present scientific world.

—CHAKRA.

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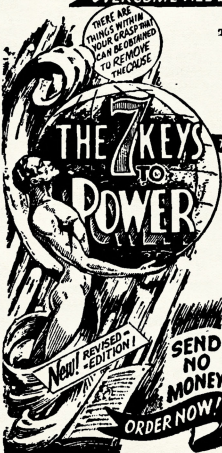
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1.

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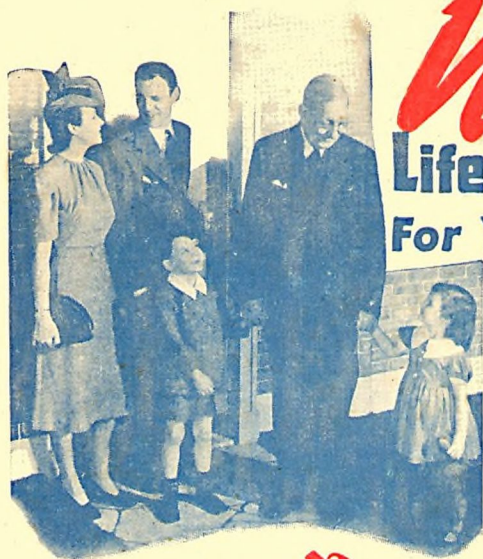
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