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THRILLING MYSTERY, published every other month by Better Publications, Inc., at 11 East 59th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription ($1.25; single copies, $.10. Foreign postage extra. Entered as second-class matter July 12, 1935, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1943, by Better Publications, Inc. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and are submitted at the author's risk. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If a name of any living person or existing institution is used it is a coincidence.

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**THE GRATEFUL MASCOT**

This story will go down in history. The official data may not be reported until after the war.

Will Burden, a sailor, was about to return to his destroyer one night at a northwestern port, when a stranger approached him, leading a dog. It was a mongrel bird dog, something like a pointer—and affectionate.

The stranger spoke: “Please mister, take my dog. I can’t feed it any more and I don’t want to kill him. Some day he’ll pay you for saving his life.”

No sooner had the sailor taken the dog when the stranger ran to the edge of the pier and leaped in. The current had carried his body away before the sailor could reach him. The sailor reported the tragedy, but the body was never found.

The dog became a popular mascot on the destroyer. All the sailors loved him. Then came a foggy evening when the destroyer was approaching Jap-infested waters. All hands were alert although visibility was poor. The listening devices reported no sound of distant motors. The destroyer sailed slowly. All hands were on deck for any emergency.

Suddenly the dog rushed up from the galley and headed to the starboard railing. He stopped short—his hair bristling and he began to growl viciously. Sailors tried to call him but he continued his savage action. There was nothing beyond the railing but sea and fog.

So strange was the dog’s behavior that the Commander was called. He watched for a few moments and then he said: “Men—there’s something out there we can’t see—but we’ll investigate.”

Then he gave orders and the destroyer headed into the mystery, all hands ready for anything.

They all saw it at the same time—a Japanese submarine on the surface, drifting, evidently charging its batteries.

He who is forewarned, has the advantage—and before the submarine knew what had happened, shells from the destroyer

*(Continued on page 10)*
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MYSTERY-SCOPES
(Continued from page 8)
poured into it and it sank quickly to its watery grave as the dog on the destroyer barked the happy requiem.

The grateful mascot had repaid the sailor just as the stranger had predicted.

THE DREAM OF CROWS

A MURDER and robbery had been committed on the farm of Joshua Grant. The farmer had been killed, his wallet taken by the murderer, who ran to the fields before the hired helper could answer the screams of the dying man.

A posse was formed in a few minutes and the entire farm surrounded as bloodhounds followed the trail. The murderer must have known his plight, for he made one frantic dash to a near-by forest, but he was shot dead by the hired man just as he crossed the corn-field. But the wallet was not found on him. Where had he hidden it?

For days a search was made. Every square yard of the farm was examined. The murderer did not have time to bury the money very deeply, and searchers looked for any spot of fresh earth which might have been disturbed.

The farmer's wife needed that money badly. It was to pay debts for the entire year. The wallet contained several thousand dollars. All the money they had, and the mortgage was due soon.

A week passed and no trace of the stolen funds was found. The wife, now under doctor's care, was put to bed. Neighbors feared she could not survive the loss of her husband and the farm.

(Continued on page 12)

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By midnight the woman was delirious. Friends watched over her. Suddenly she rose up in bed, her eyes closed, and she screamed. "Joshua, Joshua—look out for the crows!"

The doctor was summoned and he brought the woman to consciousness by powerful stimulant. All she could say was that her dead husband had been attacked by crows as he stood in the corn field. Then she fell into a coma.

The doctor pondered for a moment. "Crows—crows—what can it mean?" He felt that this vision had some psychic significance. He had known of cases like this before.

Then his face lighted up. He turned to the hired man. "Did Joshua have trouble with crows?"

"Yes," said the hired man. "They have been worse this year than ever. Only the day before he died, Joshua made a huge scarecrow in the south field."

"Scarecrow? Did you look in that for the money?"

The hired man darted out of the room without answering. In a few moments he was back. He held the wallet in his hands.

"It was in the pocket of the scarecrow," he said.

The neighbors prayed in thanks-giving. The wife opened her eyes and soon grew well as she knew her farm was saved and her children would still have a home.

WHISPERING VOICE

CROOKS do not believe in anything psychic. If they did, they would not be crooks.

Still, many a murderer has been brought to justice because he was frightened by what he believed was a voice from the dead.

In one of the largest electrical companies of America, there is a young wizard (Continued on page 110)
FREE OFFER FOR FALSE TEETH

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With the speed of light the Green Ghost had a knife at the doctor's throat

The Case of

THE CLUMSY CAT

By G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

CHAPTER I

Dead Man's Lady

Mrs. Lionel Gravens had found that black became her. She had discovered that even before Lionel had died. It had also occurred to her that same dark day that at thirty-eight she was still an attractive woman. She didn't look to be the mother of a fifteen-year-old daughter.

Black became her, but not tear-scalded eyes. Yet this afternoon, two weeks since Lionel's funeral, she was crying. Not because Dorothy had returned to New York to resume her

A COMPLETE GREEN GHOST MYSTERY NOVEL

15
When Ghouls Gather, the Green Ghost Arrives

schooling. Not because she was alone. She had become used to being alone shortly after she had married Lionel. His work had kept him away from her during the day and frequently at night. Besides, he had been fifteen years older than she.

She had loved and respected him as a woman must a good provider, a gentleman, and the father of an adored daughter. But as for companionship, she had found none with Lionel.

That warm golden afternoon there was a high, dry wind and Harmony House, as her home was called, creaked and groaned in the blast.

Harmony House! The name was a mockery. The century-old farmhouse on the outskirts of the city of Edgerton had been remodeled into comfortable apartments, and the age of the place, the well-kept lawn, the great shade trees, suggested peace. But there was none in the heart of Edna Gravens.

When the wind blew the house had a voice for Edna Gravens, a voice like the croak of a malicious old crone. She heard it now as the dry hot wind swept out of the west.

"There is no way out," it said, "You must stay here until you die. No way out . . ."

EDNA GRAVENS dried her eyes, then blinked at the envelope that lay on the drop-leaf table beside her chair. The envelope was as blank and empty as her future. Her purse lay in her lap and inside it was the five hundred dollars she had withdrawn from the bank that morning.

She sighed as she opened her purse. There was, of course, nothing for her to do but go on, just as Lionel had, month after month. She must, for Dorothy's sake. Perhaps some day Dorothy would make a fortunate marriage. Then it might be possible to end all this—this life within a prison that had neither locks nor bars.

She took the five hundred dollars out of her purse, wrapped it in blank note paper and enclosed it in the envelope. She wrote on it—a name and address she would never be permitted to forget.

A knock came at the door of her living room, and before the ink on the envelope could have dried, she thrust the envelope beneath the Chinese embroidered cover of the drop-leaf table.

"Who is it, please?" she called, trying to steady her voice.

"I, Harry Coy, Mrs. Gravens."

Edna Gravens smiled a little. As she got up, she glanced at the mirror. The weeping had not done her eyes any good, but they did not look as bad as they might have.

Harry Coy had one of the two rear rooms at the back of Harmony House, on the second floor. He was perhaps fifty, of slight build, and hollow-chested. He seemed to be a near-sighted man, though Edna had never seen him wear glasses. His shaggy black brows might have been borrowed from somebody else, for his large brown eyes lacked the fierce fire that ought to have gone with beetling brows, and his features were delicate. His thin hair was like silver wire.

"Won't you step in, Mr. Coy?" Edna Gravens invited.

Harry Coy coughed quietly behind three fingers.

"No, thank you. The mail man came. I thought I would save you a trip down the stairs."

He handed her a yellow envelope, coughed quietly again. His cough always seemed to Mrs. Gravens to be an apology for something. Maybe for living. He was so mild-mannered—soft-spoken, soft-footed.

"Thank you so much," Edna Gravens said.

"Not at all." He backed away from the door, into the center of the dark, high-ceilinged corridor. "Must get

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back to my writing. I have six articles to do this afternoon.”
Mr. Coy wrote short articles for trade journals, he had once explained. And he had told Mrs. Gravens that a man had to write a lot of articles for trade journals to make a living.
Edna Gravens closed her door and walked to a window of the small living room. She looked at the yellow envelope. It bore a New York City postmark, a three cent stamp, but there was no return address. She opened it, removed the sheet of paper it contained. The letterhead design was an impressionistic drawing of a man in evening clothes who had removed his top hat and was in the act of pulling a rabbit from it. An East Fifty-fourth Street, New York City, address was given and the letter had been written the night before.

Mrs. Gravens read:

Dear Mrs. Gravens:
May I see you Tuesday evening after eight o’clock?
Very truly yours,
George Chance.

Edna puzzled over the name and the brief note that asked a favor and yet gave her no opportunity to refuse.

Then she remembered. She had seen that name before in newspapers and, years ago, in the bright lights along Broadway.

George Chance was an actor. No, a professional magician. Why, it must have been ten years ago that she and Lionel had seen him on the stage with an elaborate show called “It Happens By Chance—a Magical Musical Review.”
She had seen the same name in the papers recently — "George Chance, unofficial adviser to Police Commissioner Standish," or "George Chance, amateur criminologist."

Criminologist? A strange, haunted expression came into Edna Graves' beautiful face. She sat down slowly in the wing chair beside the window, looked distantly across Harmony House's rolling lawn and out into the quiet suburban street.

The dry hot wind creaked the timbers of the old house. Harmony House croaked for Edna Graves' ears alone.

"There is no way out. You must stay here until you die. There is no way out. . . ."

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CHAPTER II
The Dead Don't Care

It was Police Commissioner Edward Standish who first got word about the cat. But if George Chance had not been in the commissioner's office that morning, Standish might have filed the information in the waste basket.

For the matter was entirely beyond his province. It was none of his business.

It was none of Chance's business either, but almost as soon as Standish had showed him the note, which he had taken from a wire basket containing "crank mail," George Chance began to have one of his famous hunches.

There was nothing supernatural about the hunch, either. It was born of wishful thinking. Chance had been hoping that something would turn up to furnish him with the dangerous entertainment which he constantly craved. So when Standish read him two notes, both posted from the suburban city of Edgerton, the famous magician-detective's outlook on life immediately brightened.

The first of these notes had been from a man named William Philmore, of the Philmore Construction Company. He seemed to be under the impression that the Police Commissioner of New York ran an employment agency for private detectives in his spare time. Mr. Philmore wanted Standish to recommend a private detective who would "sort of look after things at night at this factory building I'm putting up."

This note from Philmore certainly would have received no response from George Chance if it hadn't been for the other note from Edgerton — the one about the cat. It was printed on a single sheet of note paper with a pencil the point of which must have been so wide that the letters had been shaded. It read:

"Did you ever see a clumsy cat? There's one in Edgerton that says Lionel Graves' death is from poison."

There was no signature, but coupled with Mr. Philmore's request for a private detective, it meant something.

"I'm not at all sure what," Chance had told the commissioner, "but there's the possibility that the Green Ghost could find out, if he wanted to."

The following afternoon George Chance entered the lobby of the Edgerton Hotel and asked the clerk where he might find Mr. William Philmore, "who's building some sort of a factory around here."

"You mean the plant he's building for the Wayland Synthetics Corporation of New York?" the clerk said. "It started out a secret, but I guess the whole town knows about it now. It's a rubber plant—and not the kind you can put in a pot, either."

"Oh." Chance raised red-gold eyebrows. "Synthetic rubber? Is Mr. Philmore superintending construction?"

"Most of the time he is," the clerk informed him. "But I think, sir, I saw him pass the hotel just before you came in—a big, strapping fellow with a partially bald head. He was wearing a tan Palm Beach suit with his trousers stuffed in the top of leather boots."

Chance had not noticed.

"Well—" the clerk pointed with his pen—"go out this side door and turn to your left. First door down is the office of the Philmore Construction
Harper was bathed in cold sweat as he heard the Ghost's voice from the grave
Company. I think you’ll find him in now.”

A S CHANCE went out the side door he nearly fell over the legs of a man who was sitting in a sidewalk chair, pushed back against the wall. The man had his legs wrapped up in a woolen robe in spite of the heat. He wore an Oxford gray smoking jacket and a silk stock. His face was thin, colorless, and his eyes were hidden behind black-lensed glasses. He wore a wide-brimmed straw hat and held a black cane across his lap.

“I’m sorry!” Chance apologized.

The man nodded.

“Nice day,” he said. “Little cool, but nice enough.”

Then his head dropped onto his chest as though he were in a hurry to resume his doze.

Chance reflected that the man looked like somebody who was sick from living too long. Except for his hands that clasped the black cane. They were smooth, well-sinewed, and capable.

Chance smiled. He was suddenly glad he had come to Edgerton.

The voice that came from the open door of the construction company office was a fine imitation of a fog horn, both in pitch and carrying power. Nobody in the quiet block could have missed any of the words.

“I’ve got a plenty good idea what you’re doing around here, Stuart. You’re a labor pirate! You think you can hire men away from me and leave me short-handed. You think you’ll prevent me from making that time limit in the Wayland contract. Well, I’m going to make it! Now get out of here—do you hear me?”

Chance, standing in front of the door, saw the man with the fog-horn voice and knew from the hotel clerk’s description that he must be William Philmore. The man addressed as “Stuart” was slighter, broad-shouldered, obviously younger.

“Calm yourself, Philmore,” he protested in a quiet voice. “When Stuart, Wynn and Company need extra hands, they don’t have to resort to piracy. We’ve always paid better wages than your outfit. I really came here to offer you help on the Wayland job. I don’t think you’ve got a large enough organization to push it through.”

The scowl on Philmore’s face was like a gathering storm. Then came the thunder and the lightning. What he said was not important, but what he did was to wade into Stuart with his huge fists working like trip-hammers. Stuart backed, but not quickly enough. One blow caught him on the head, and if Chance hadn’t been outside, Stuart would certainly have landed on his ear in the street.

The door of the construction company office slammed shut, and Chance steadied Stuart. There was a bruise under Stuart’s eye, but aside from that he seemed uninjured.

“That crazy fool will kill somebody one of these days,” he said to Chance.

“You’re rivals, I take it?” Chance asked.

“We’re both in the construction business,” Stuart snapped. “But hardly rivals. Philmore isn’t big enough to be our rival.” His stony eyes looked Chance up and down.

“Well,” he said lamely, “thanks for catching me on the fly.”

HE LAUGHED shortly, walked past the man in the dark glasses, and entered the hotel.

The man in the sidewalk chair had not so much as raised his head in spite of the commotion.

Chance opened the door of Philmore’s office and walked in. The contractor was pacing off his rage, but he had not paced long enough. There were two other men in the office—a dark-haired, heavy-jawed individual who looked Irish; and a large-featured, red-faced elderly man who belted his pants around his paunch and also wore wide blue suspenders.

The dark-featured man had his left hand bandaged, and this injured member was evidently the subject of Philmore’s present discourse.

“I don’t give a hang if it is infected!” Philmore was shouting. “You get back on the job and lay bricks, Lannagan.”

Lannagan gave the contractor a sullen look.
"But Doc Roy Lex says I ought to lay off."
"You get back on the job!" Philmore yelled.

The man with the suspenders and a belt laughed.

"He'll be busy as the one-armed paper hanger with the hives, he will!"
As Lannagan stepped past George Chance, Philmore saw Chance.

"Didn't I tell you to get out?" he roared.

Chance shook his red-gold head.

"Not me. Possibly six or seven other guys, but not me. I haven't been in here before. Anyway, you want to talk to me. I'm the private detective you wrote to Commissioner Standish about."

This was, of course, a bare-faced lie. George Chance had never been issued a private investigator's license. Though in his own identity, but more frequently as that particularly menacing man-hunter known as the Green Ghost, he had been mixed up in many a mystery and had brought numerous criminals to book.

William Philmore regarded him a moment, then shook his head.

"Private detective, huh? Not for my money. Too skinny." He turned his back and shook a thick finger at the man in suspenders. "What kind of a hardware dealer do you call yourself, Jasper Maynard? You get me those nails, do you hear? And get them fast!"

Jasper Maynard loaded a cob pipe from a tin of tobacco.

"Directly, Philmore. You don't need to yell at me. I'll have them nails on the truck right off."

Jasper Maynard's blood-shot blue eyes gave George Chance a thorough going over. Then he stuck his pipe in his mouth and went into the room back of the office. Chance heard a door at the back close.

Philmore's attention once more returned to the magician-detective, and Chance smiled as he watched that thunder-cap scowl gathering on Philmore's wide face.

"You still here? I thought I told you to get out?"

Chance reached into an inner pocket for a letter he had there. Philmore hauled back a huge right fist, sent it shooting out at Chance's head. The magician simply sat down in a chair behind him and the blow went harmlessly over his head. Coolly, he continued searching for the letter.

"Windy today, aren't you?" he said, without looking at Philmore. He found the letter and handed it to the somewhat deflated contractor. "Read it," he said, smiling. "If you can see black and white as well as you can see red."

The letter was one of recommendation which Commissioner Standish had written for him, and while Philmore read, Mr. Chance made a steeple out of his fingers.

Philmore looked up, his eyes narrow. A bright red thimble was crowning the forefinger of Chance's right hand, and as the contractor watched, a second and third finger became similarly capped. Under Chance's effortless manipulation, the thimbles changed to yellow, then to green. Philmore snorted.

"I've heard about you," Philmore snapped. "You're a magician and a fancy detective. What I want is a dependable night watchman."

The thimbles went away as mysteriously as they had come. Chance's blue eyes glinted pleasantly.

"I know. You've a time limit for constructing this synthetic rubber plant. If you don't get it completed according to contract, you lose your shirt."

Philmore nodded. "And if I make the grade, there will be other jobs from Wayland. Certain persons, notably Arthur Stuart"—he sneered— "would like to see me without a shirt. That's why I need a watchman who can handle a gun and use his brains."

"I'll do," Chance decided. "Besides, I'll work for nothing."

Money was no object to Chance. His skyrocket career that had taken him out of the circus and up to the top of the entertainment world had given him a chance to accumulate wealth. The sale of magical apparatus of his own invention and also the fees charged by his famous magic school gave him a more than ample income.
"I'll be on the job tomorrow night," he went on, "and you'll have a little trouble firing a man you haven't hired."

"You can have the job, but—" Philmore eyed him narrowly. "I'll bet you've some other reason for being here. And just want that job to front for you."

"Maybe." Chance shrugged. "I might be interested in a clumsy cat and a man whose death was from poison."

If this meant anything to Philmore, his broad face gave no indication. "Who's dead?" he asked.

"Lionel Gravens."

"As though I didn't know that!" Philmore snorted. "He was my right arm—chief engineer, foreman, just about everything. He was worth ten thousand dollars a year, and that's what I paid him. Right in the middle of the Wayland Synthetics job, he died. High blood pressure, according to Dr. Roy Lex. Nobody said anything about poison."

Chance's brows lifted. Gravens' death was an obstacle to the completion of the Wayland job. There was a murder motive ready-made. The magician-detective began fishing in deeper water.

"I've tried to get some of the city officials interested in a post-mortem of Lionel Gravens' body. But disinterment requires an order from the D. A. and you don't get that without plenty of evidence. If you had any suspicions that—"

"I haven't," Philmore cut in. "Dr. Lex said it was high blood-pressure. Gravens had a tobacco heart. He worked too hard and too much. He went"—Philmore snapped his fingers—"like that."

"You don't think it was murder?"

"I've no reason to think so. Anyway, disinterment be blown. The dead don't care how they died."

Chance seemed deep in thought. "Did Gravens have a cat?" he asked abruptly.

"He did not. Of course, there's a cat over there at Harmony House where the Gravenses lived. But it belongs to a woman named Hillhouse—Roma Hillhouse—a buyer for some big store in New York. If you're interested in her, you ought to have asked those two men who were in here when you came—Lannagan and Maynard. Lannagan works for me, and Maynard's the local hardware merchant. They live at Harmony House."

"Let's see, that's one hardware merchant, one brick-layer, one big-time department store buyer, and—if you count Lionel Gravens—one ten-thousand-dollar-a-year engineer. Harmony House must be quite a place."

Philmore nodded. "Add a doctor. Dr. Roy Lex, best physician around here, lives there. And Harry Coy who writes articles for trade journals. Pretty good stuff, judging by the article of his I saw in Builders' Guide."

"Quite a place," Chance repeated.

"It was built over a hundred years ago, and before I remodeled the interior to make a sort of apartment hotel out of it, there were thirty-five rooms. It's owned by a man named Annaman, though Jasper Maynard manages all the affairs."

"You know Annaman?"

"No—don't even know where he lives. Maynard has always done the dickering. Even he says that Annaman is just a voice on the phone. He's never met Annaman either!"

George Chance left Philmore's office with an idea that all Harmony House needed to complete the picture was a ghost to haunt it. Perhaps he could provide that little detail.

CHAPTER III

Harmony House

HARMONY House might have undergone complete alteration on the inside, but outside it was still a huge farmhouse, one of the type which expanded gradually with the growth of the family. It must once have accommodated at least three generations.

At dusk, Chance crossed the spacious porch. The door was open and he looked into a sort of community
living room. He could hear the clatter of a typewriter.

Chance walked in. The big room was comfortable and cool. A middle-aged man with silvery hair was hunched over a portable typewriter on a mahogany writing desk. Beside the typewriter were six or seven magazines.

The man paused in his work as Chance entered. He had a pale, delicate-featured face with dark, gentle-looking eyes surmounted by bushy black eyebrows.

"Good evening," he said pleasantly.

Chance nodded. He took a step nearer the writing desk, noted that one of the magazines beside the typewriter was a shoe dealer's trade journal. The man at the desk was evidently Harry Coy.

"Someone you wish to see?" Coy inquired.

"Mrs. Gravens," Chance said. "I believe she is expecting me."

Harry Coy waved toward the stairway. "The front apartment to your right. Just knock."

As he went to the stairway, Chance looked through an open door into a large dining room where a maid was clearing away dishes. It was evident that Harmony House served meals to its tenants.

Jasper Maynard was seated at one of the tables, smoking, and talking to a man whose back was toward Chance—a man whose head was small and whose black hair was sleekly plastered down. Maynard didn't seem to care about formalities. He was in shirt sleeves, his wide blue suspenders much in evidence.

In a narrow corridor above Chance found the door marked with Edna Gravens' card, knocked, and his summons was immediately answered.

Mrs. Gravens was above average height, beautifully proportioned. The coiffure of her long, naturally blond hair gave a regal aspect to her small head. Her features were almost too regular, her face too smooth to give any indication of character depth. Her large, long-lashed blue eyes examined the lean magician carefully.

"I'm Mr. Chance," he said. "May I come in a moment, Mrs. Gravens?"

His smile was contagious, for Mrs. Gravens was suddenly smiling, too. She asked him to step in and sit down. She seated herself in a wing chair beside the window.

Chance allowed his gaze to wander around the room. There was rich carpeting, well-chosen furniture, walls painted one of those rare shades of green that go well with everything.

"You certainly have a comfortable apartment here in Harmony House," he said.

"Thank you," she said. "We—I have three rooms. An extra bedroom for my daughter when she is with us—with me. The other apartments are simply living room, bedroom, and bath arrangements, except for the two single rooms at the end of the hall. Mr. Coy has a single room; so has Mr. Lannagan. It's rather well laid out considering what the contractor had to start with when the place was remodeled... But you didn't come to talk to me about Harmony House, did you?"

SMILING, he shook his head.

"Cigarette?"

Before she could reply, he reached into the air and produced a lighted cigarette. Mrs. Gravens smiled, shook her head. Chance became serious.

"I came to talk about a subject which may be painful to you, Mrs. Gravens. About the death of your husband, which I believe occurred just two weeks and two days ago."

He paused. The breeze from an electric fan was blowing up the edge of the Chinese embroidered mat on the drop-leaf table. Mrs. Gravens got up hastily, placed an ash tray on the edge of the mat and within convenient distance of Chance. She faced him, standing.

"Yes," she said quietly. "Go on."

"Would it be a great shock to you if I told you that someone in Edger-ton believes that your husband was murdered?"

She turned suddenly and returned to the wing chair. If she had lost her composure she had regained it by the time she was seated.

"Perhaps not," she said, her voice hardly more than a whisper.
“You have wondered about it yourself?”

“No,” she said hastily. “It never entered my mind until you suggested it.”

“But there was possibly motive for his being killed?”

“I—I can’t answer that. I don’t know.”

“If he was murdered—perhaps poisoned—you understand we would have to have quite a bit of evidence before we could get a disinterment order from the district attorney?”

Edna Gravens bit her lip to stop its trembling.

“But I have no evidence. As far as I know, he died of heart trouble. He had high blood pressure, a tobacco heart. Dr. Lex said that if he didn’t stop smoking he’d die suddenly. And he couldn’t stop smoking, though he might have.”

Chance frowned. “ Might have? I don’t understand.”

“I mean,” she said, “that Dr. Lex was giving him some medicine to make him stop smoking—little capsules. He was supposed to smoke all he wanted to up until noon, then take a capsule. He took them at lunch time for about three days before he died.”

“You have those capsules, Mrs. Gravens?”

“Why, yes. That is, they’re downstairs in the dining room. We kept them down there so that Lionel would not forget to take them. Shall I get them?”

“If it’s not too much trouble.”

As soon as Mrs. Gravens had left the room, Chance stood up in front of the drop-leaf table. He moved the ash tray and lifted the mat. Against the yellow linen that lined the reverse side of the mat were inked marks that he had noticed when the electric fan had blown the mat up. He turned the mat back and looked into the mirror above the table.

It was obvious that someone had at some time slipped a freshly addressed envelope beneath the table cover. The linen had blotted the ink, and in the mirror the reversed writing was clearly discernable. The name on the envelope had been “Q. T. Annaman” and the address a street number in Yonkers.

CHANCE replaced the ash tray and resumed his seat. Presently Edna Gravens hurried in. She closed the door, leaned against it while she caught her breath.

“They’re gone—the capsules!” she gasped. “There must have been a dozen of them left, but they’re gone now. Here—here’s the box.”

She handed Chance a small brown pill box. He removed the lid, sniffed at the cotton lining without detecting any particular odor.

“You’re sure there were a dozen capsules left?”

“Or more. What could have happened to them?”

He shrugged. “I think somebody beat us to it.”

Chance said good-night to Mrs. Gravens shortly after that. On his way down the stairs, he heard voices in the community living room.

“But my dear man, I’m absolutely certain it was ninety-four cents. Don’t you remember—I borrowed it from you to pay a C. O. D.”

It was a penetrating feminine voice, colored with affectation.

“Eighty-five.”

The “dear man” evidently was soft-spoken Harry Coy.

In the hall Chance saw a magnificent fawn-colored Siamese cat, its small legs and fore-paws a rich beaver brown. The strange blue eyes of the cat focused on Chance as he descended the stairs. The cat made an attempt to bound up the steps, but fell back to land on its side with a bump. The cat righted itself quickly, sat back on its haunches, and if it is possible for a cat to look embarrassed the Siamese cat looked that way.

Chance stooped to stroke the animal.

“Bangkok, what are you up to?”

The woman with the penetrating voice crossed to the foot of the steps. Chance lifted his hat to her. She was small, with a tip-tilted nose and thick, petulant lips. Her hair was frizzled and henna-rinsed, her eyes almost the same shade of blue as those of her cat.
"Hello," she said to Chance, then picked up the cat and tapped its nose playfully.
"Bangkok, I don't know what's got into you."
"He's a beautiful specimen," Chance said politely.
"Thanks."
Harry Coy came over with a notebook in his hand.
"Look here," he said. "Whenever anybody borrows money from me, I write it down. It's eighty-five cents, Miss Hillhouse. You borrowed it August fourteenth."
Chance started toward the door. Jasper Maynard, the hardware merchant, was leaning against the door, smoking his cob pipe, one thumb hooked under a suspender strap.
"Ought to take that cat of yours to the vet's, Roma," he said. "Ain't logic a cat would be like him."

ROMA Hillhouse smoothed Bangkok's fur as she looked into Harry Coy's notebook.
"I'm going to," she said to Maynard. "Eighty-five cents. Well, you could have gyped me nicely, Mr. Coy. I know now where I got the notion it was ninety-four cents. When I asked you for some change, you said you had ninety-four cents. But I only wanted eighty-four."
Chance went out the door as Miss Hillhouse put down her cat to open her purse. Bangkok scooted out the door, bumping the door frame with its hind parts. Miss Hillhouse dropped her purse, dashed through the door in pursuit of Bangkok. Chance, however, had already caught the cat.
"Thank you so much," Miss Hillhouse said, "Bangkok, I don't think you're acting like a nice cat at all."
"He's not in good health?" Chance asked, his tone politely curious.
"Something's wrong," Miss Hillhouse admitted. "He's been falling all over himself and bumping into things for about five days now."
"You think he might have got hold of something to eat that wasn't good for him?" asked Chance.
"I certainly hope not," Miss Hillhouse patted the cat's head. "Bangkok, we'll have to go to the doctor, won't we?"
She went in the house.
CHAPTER IV
Appointment with a Corpse

George Chance left Harmony House, but he didn't leave the grounds that surrounded the strange building. Not immediately, at any rate.

He walked briskly up the sidewalk, one hand lifting frequently to his face. He might have been batting at mosquitoes, but actually he was watching the house behind him in one of those mirror rings which magicians sometimes use in mind-reading acts.

Certain that he was not followed, he made for the shadows of shrubs and tall trees on the rolling lawn. Keeping well within the friendly dark, he made his way around the side of the house.

At the back of the house were outbuildings, relics of the days when Harmony House had been the center of some great dairy farm. A barn had been remodeled into a garage, a large shed had been turned into a summer house, and in a large grass-grown mound he recognized an old fruit cellar.

He hurried toward it.

There was a rusty padlock on the fruit cellar door, but this yielded under the probing of his steel lock-pick. He creaked the door open, groped into total darkness with a cautious foot. He found rickety steps leading downward, went down two of them, turned, closed the door tightly after him. Only then could he risk showing a light.

Here in this damp, musty-smelling hole he would bring the Green Ghost into being. George Chance had done everything possible to get someone interested in disinterring the corpse of Lionel Gravens, to no avail. As the Green Ghost it was possible that he could do a little grave-robbing and get away with it.

He quickly removed the gray-green suit he was wearing and snapped out the lining with its many special secret pockets. The suit was reversible and when turned inside out it was black enough to make an admirable shroud. The black lining could then be snapped into place, over the gray-green surface now on the inside of the coat.

From one of the lining pockets he took his compact make-up kit. His early life in the circus had taught him a multitude of things, among them the art of disguise, as well as knife-throwing, ventriloquism, the rudiments of magic, and vocal impersonation. To assume the identity of the Green Ghost was a simple task for him. Keeping that identity a secret was something else, however. The Green Ghost had made so many enemies among the kill-for-a-nickel fraternity that George Chance's life would not have been worth a row of pins if the secret ever leaked out.

His naturally thin face lent itself readily to the disguise. Ordinary brown eyeshadow deepened the pits of his eyes and emphasized the hollows of his cheeks. Then a highlighting of liquid powder, two wire lashes thrust into his nostrils to tilt the tip of his nose, and his face began to approach the contours of a death's head. Yellow celluloid shell teeth slipped into his mouth and a skull's grin eclipsed the charming smile of George Chance.

The job was done so far as make-up was concerned. As he now appeared he might have passed in a crowd without attracting particular attention. But when he "turned on the Ghost" as he liked to express it, the result was little short of terrifying.

Muscles of his face would freeze into deathlike rigidity. The deep-set eyes would assume an unblinking, vacuous stare. A tiny green light globe concealed in a uniquely designed scarf pin would throw a paleful greenish glow across his features, highlighting the prominent cheek bones.

Few would have cared to meet the Green Ghost in the dark. Those who had met him found his terrifying visage haunting their dreams.

After a final look at himself in the metal trench mirror he carried, he re-
packed his make-up kit, turned off his flashlight, and cautiously left the cellar.

He had spent most of the day in Edgerton and had seen most of the town. He knew that behind the big lot on which Harmony House was built was a stretch of pasture. By cutting across this field diagonally he would come to the rear boundary of the cemetery.

That afternoon, when it had become obvious that he could not arouse the local authorities sufficiently to get a disinterment and post-mortem order, he had telephoned to New York and talked to Joe Harper, that bum off Broadway, that prince of chiselers who had made himself a permanent guest at the Chance house.

Joe had aided the Green Ghost in untangling many a knotty problem. Joe had promised to meet him at the Edgerton cemetery at ten o'clock.

Chance was determined to have a look at Lionel Gravens' body. The magician-detective, through his close association with Dr. Robert Demarest of the New York Medical Examiner's office, had learned a great deal about toxicology.

He hoped that knowledge would be sufficient to establish Gravens' death as murder.

The night was moonless and quiet, the high wind having worn itself out. The Green Ghost moved in swift silence across the field, climbed the iron fence that enclosed the burial ground.

His unerring bump of locality led him straight to that new grave he had noted by daylight. Lionel Gravens had been interred in a little-used portion of the cemetery half-way down a knoll. The caretaker of the graveyard was deaf, Chance had learned, and occupied a house next to the iron gates at the street entrance, a distance away that would have approximated two city blocks. And the lay of the land would shield the Ghost's operations from anyone who happened to be passing on the street.

On reaching the grave, the Green Ghost sat down to wait for Joe Harper. It was after ten, and Joe ought to have been there by now. At ten-thirty, he was still waiting alone and came to the conclusion that he would have to tackle the business without Harper.

The caretaker's tool shed was not far away and the door was neither closed nor locked. The Ghost fumbled in the darkness of the interior, had no great trouble finding a shovel. Quickly he was back at the grave and at work.

Below the sod line he found gravel, which made grave-digging a noisy business. While he dug with the untiring energy stored within his lean, sinewy body, his nerves were kept constantly on edge by the alarming amount of noise he was making. As the heap of earth grew, small stones were constantly trickling into the grave.

Frequently he paused to listen, to reassure himself that his chances of being interrupted by anyone other than Joe Harper were remote. Standing in the grave he would hear the eerie voice of the night—the lonely, quavering note of an owl. He would listen, sweat chilling on his body, and would tell himself that now he could say that he had done everything.

The shovel at last struck the top of the casket. Then he worked feverishly to clear the gravel away and give himself a place to stand when opening the coffin. The trickle of gravel made him pause once more to listen. The snap of a twig assumed the proportions of a rifle shot in the silence.

Someone walking above?

The Ghost leaned his shovel against the grave wall. His hand dropped to the side of his black coat. Pressure against a concealed gimmick that had originally been designed to drop a handkerchief-dyeing tube into the hands of a conjurer delivered a small automatic pistol into his palm. He crouched, looked upward.

He realized then that, living or dead, a man was certainly in a spot at the bottom of a grave. It wasn't easy to get out of it, and he couldn't see who might be approaching. Maybe, as William Philmore had said, the dead didn't care. But to the liv-
The magician-detective dropped back into the grave. His limp body fell flat on the coffin and lay still.

The killer turned a narrow beam of light downward. He saw the shovel, as the Ghost had left it. The dark shrouded figure knelt and pulled up the shovel.

To get this corpse hidden was foremost in the killer's mind. Cover it completely, bury it without a prayer. This would only be an inexplicable disappearance.

THE killer knew the identity of this latest victim. The Green Ghost, most dangerous manhunter of them all. Well, he was a ghost for certain now!

Gravel rattled into the grave. Earth fell on the immobile form below. The killer had never before heard the sound made by earth falling on a corpse without a coffin.

Work faster, and never mind the sounds in the night. Or the thoughts that kept crowding in. This was the way to safety. Dig and cover, dig and cover. Any fool could murder but it took brains to cover the crime.

The killer worked feverishly. Murder will out? Ha! Not this, nor the others. This was the way to do—kill and then cover.

The killer leaned on the shovel, panting. Again the narrow beam of light stabbed into the opening. The grave was not so deep now. The body on the coffin was already hidden. More earth now. It was work but it was worth it. After this, the plan would move straight toward its lucrative goal. Kill and cover and collect—that was how it worked.

And the Green Ghost was the last. Unless that man Chance got too nosey. If he did, Chance would go the way of the others.

The murderer straightened, listening. Had that been the squeak of car brakes coming faintly from the street? The killer scrambled to the top of the knoll which commanded a view of the street. It was too dark now to see who got out of the car or even see the car, but the click of heels on sidewalk could be heard.

Perhaps someone was visiting the
caretaker. If so, it wouldn’t do to be heard shoveling gravel.

The killer crouched behind a headstone. The heel clicks had stopped, but that didn’t prove that the intruder had not taken to the lawn. Yes, someone had cautiously entered the graveyard. A black shadow moved across the white of monuments.

And then the murderer’s attention was taken in another direction. Another figure, gaunt and gray, fragile-looking as mist, moved among the graves.

“That crazy old fool again!” the killer thought, then hurried back down the knoll.

The grave wasn’t deep enough for two more meddlers, nor would it be good to try to dispose of two lives at once. There was nothing to do but retreat, and watch, and wait.

CHAPTER V

The Nail

Shortly before midnight Joe Harper alighted from a taxi-cab that stopped in front of a house across the street from the Edgerton Cemetery. He had come by train, but not the train he ought to have taken in order to keep his appointment with the Green Ghost.

He was late because of a horse named “Get There” which had got there in the third race, but not soon enough to pay Mr. Harper. So Joe had found himself with a train to meet and with insufficient funds.

Eventually he had borrowed the price of his traveling expenses, but by the time he had found such a sucker, it was too late for him to make that particular train.

Arrived now, at last, he made a great show of approaching the front door of the house in front of which the taxi had stopped. As soon as the cab had turned at the corner, Joe crossed the street, and entered the cemetery. He wore the usual gaudy plaid suit which he and he alone considered good taste, and he was about to discover if the shriek of his tie would wake the dead.

George Chance had phoned him that they were going to open a grave. If Joe looked forward to the task with no particular relish, it was not because it was ghoulish business but because it suggested work. Joe Harper was of the opinion that only a sucker worked. Smart guys like himself lived off the labors of others.

Walking in a graveyard at midnight was inconvenient, but in no way terrifying to Joe Harper. He stumbled around considerably, trying to find the Green Ghost in the darkness. But he came at last to what must have been Lionel Gravens’ last resting spot. Joe deduced this by the fact that the grave was less than half filled with earth and a long handled shovel was sticking in the dirt.

The Green Ghost had got tired, was the obvious conclusion, and maybe was looking for Joe to help finish the task. Joe sat down on the mound of earth and wished he could decide whether it was safe to light a cigarette or not.

An owl hooted, and Joe Harper turned up his coat collar. Owls were not for him. He looked out across this silent village of the dead and saw something that was like a thin wisp of gray fog moving toward him. As it came nearer, it assumed human form. Joe simply sat there and watched it.

Feet snapped fallen twigs, proving that the gray shape was flesh-and-blood, was no ghost. It was the tall, gaunt figure of a woman in a long dress.

She came to the edge of the half-filled grave, looked across at Joe Harper.

“Hello,” he said.

The woman moved around to the foot of the grave. In the pale night glow Joe could see enough of her face to convince him that she was old and ugly. Her unkept gray hair was a frowsy halo.

Extending a skinny arm, she pointed a trembling forefinger at Harper.

“Let the dead alone!” she warned in a quavering voice.
"I do," Joe said, "and hope they'll do the same by me."

"You were here before, digging in the graves of the sacred dead," the woman intoned.

"Not me, Mrs. Frankenstein," Joe said.

"Mother Beel," the crone corrected. "Every night I come here and walk among the graves."

"You should sometimes take in a movie for variety."

"But my little Ronny isn't here. He left me forty years ago."

Mother Beel, Joe decided, didn't have all her buttons.

"I see things walking here at night," Mother Beel said.

"That must be good fun."

The old woman sighed. "Little Ronny will come to me some night. Sometimes he answers me when I call."

In spite of the fact that Joe Harper had nerves of steel piano wire, he shivered a little.

"Don't call," he said.

"I must. Little Ronny is lost. He was eight years old when he went away. Only a child."

Mother Beel cupped thin hands around her mouth and stage-whispered into the darkness:

"Ronny! Ronny, dear!"

The earth in the half-filled grave at Joe's feet moved. He stood up as suddenly as though he had been bitten by a snake. He stared down into the grave, saw a lean black rod, no bigger than a lead pencil drill up through the loosely packed gravel.

"Ronny!" Mrs. Beel called quietly, then put a hand back of one ear.

Joe stepped to the old woman's side and dropped a hand on her shoulder.

"Cut that out," he said tensely.

"You're making me nervous."

"Joe!"

Joe Harper twisted around, his eyes flicking at the half-filled grave. His slight body was bathed in cold sweat. A voice, calling him by name, had come from the grave.

"Ronny answered me, didn't he?" Mother Beel said. "Didn't you hear it?"

"Joe!" the voice from the grave came again.

Joe Harper put a hand on Mother Beel's arm.

"You come with me, Madam," he said. "These people around here paid good money for their earthy beds. They got a right to sleep, and you're waking them up."

"But that was little Ronny's voice!" Mother Beel insisted.

"I assure you it wasn't," Joe insisted.

He led the protesting woman across the burial ground. He was absolutely sure that the voice he had heard was that of George Chance, the Green Ghost. Exactly what he was doing down in Lionel Gravens' last resting spot was not clear to Joe, but it was reasonable to assume that he had not got there of his own free will.

"Now listen, Mother Beel," Joe said, trying to get a kindly note into his harsh nasal voice, "I don't think Ronny's here tonight. You'd better go home. If Ronny does come back, he'll go home. Suppose he did, and you weren't there? Think how he'd feel."

Mrs. Beel sighed. "True, true."

"So you'd better go straight home, and if I see Ronny I'll tell him where you are."

This apparently convinced the woman, for she left Joe and proceeded under her own power. Joe watched her pass through the gate and the darkness swallowed her.

Then he hurried back to the half-filled grave and picked up a shovel. Stooping over, he saw that the black rod which had been thrust up through the soil was hollow. It was, he knew, one of those telescoping "reaching rods" which fake spirit mediums frequently employed to produce certain seemingly supernatural effects. Such a rod was always part of the Green Ghost's equipment.

Joe put his mouth down as near to the end of the tube as he could get it, and said: "You okay down there, George?"

"I'm alive, if that's what you mean," the Green Ghost replied. "But make it snappy, man!"

George Chance had been buried alive before. Once, when he had
trouped with a carnival, to provide the spectators with thrills he had permitted himself to be buried alive three times a day. But before each one of these interments had been a period of preparation, and no one had given him an anesthetic with a blunt instrument before he had been placed in the grave.

His hat had offered him some protection from the killer’s blow. Also, as soon as he had seen the blow coming he had tried to ride it, by releasing his hold on the edge of the grave. Nevertheless the blow had stunned him, and not until earth started dropping on him from above had he regained consciousness.

Too weak to throw off the weight of the dirt and gravel he had turned face down, folding his arms, and they had enabled him to keep the loose dirt and gravel from packing in around his face. Carefully controlled breathing such as was the basis of many of his startling escape tricks on the stage, had enabled him to exist though air was sparingly rationed.

When the killer had stopped shoveling earth, the Ghost had managed to work one hand down inside his coat and get hold of the telescoping reaching rod.

Fortunately, the killer had been interrupted before he could fill the grave and pack the earth closely. The Ghost had been able to extend the hollow rod up through the loose earth to the surface. Through this tube, he had heard Joe Harper talking to the woman who called herself Mother Beel.

When he had removed as much earth as he could without gouging the Ghost with the shovel, Joe Harper reached down, found the Ghost’s grasping fingers and helped him to sit upright.

The Green Ghost opened his mouth and gasped in clean fresh air. Joe hauled him to the mouth of the grave and brushed off some of the dirt.

“In all the days I’ve spent as an Egyptologist on Broadway,” Joe said, “you’re the worst looking specimen of a mummy I ever dug up.”

“Huh!” the Ghost grunted. “Mummies on Broadway?”

“Red-hot mummies,” Joe said. “Here, have a slug of this.”

He pulled a flask out of his pocket, gave the Ghost a healthy snort of whiskey. Then he had one himself. Then he asked Chance how come he happened to have ended up in a hole like that. The Ghost thought it was rather obvious that somebody had put him there with malicious intent, he explained in some detail.

“All of which,” he concluded, “further bears out my hunch that Lionel Gravens was murdered. So, Joe, if you’ll just clear the rest of the earth away from that coffin, we’ll have a look.”

Joe worked a while in the darkness, and finally stopped digging and switched on his flashlight. The Ghost looked into the grave.

“Thought I found something,” Joe said. “It’s nothing but a nail.”

He would have thrown the thing in his hand away if the Ghost had not checked him.

“Let’s see it.”

Joe handed over the nail which he had found on top of the casket. The Ghost turned it over and over in the thin beam of his own compact flashlight. The nail was about two inches long and free from rust—something it would not have been had it been buried even as long as twenty-four hours. It must, therefore, have been
dropped into the grave by the killer who had attacked the Ghost.

The Ghost put the nail into his pocket and turned his light down inside the grave. Joe Harper was leaning on his shovel, contemplating the coffin.

"Well, open it," the magician-detective urged.

"Nuts!" Joe said. "Next time we play ghoul, don't get crocked on the head, so you can do the honors."

But he hooked fingers under the casket lid, found the latch, pressed it, lifted the top. The Ghost played his light down into the interior of the casket.

For a moment it looked as if Joe were going to jump out of the grave.

"Control yourself," the Ghost warned softly.

"Yeah, but two of them!"

"I'm coming down," the Ghost warned. "Step aside."

He dropped into the grave and his flashlight again flicked into the casket, illuminating two corpses.

It was obvious that the embalmed body on the bottom was that of Lionel Graves. Graves' lean gray face was placidly resting between the shoe feet of Corpse Number Two who had been a short, slight man in a cheap blue suit. He was lying face down with his head between the ankles of dead Graves.

His thin, yellowish hair was stained with dried blood. Close inspection showed that a nail had been driven deep into the man's brain.

"I ask you," Joe said, "who'd stand still and let anybody drive tacks in his head?"

The Ghost grunted. "With a magnetic hammer you could sneak up behind a man and drive that nail with a single blow."

He lifted the top corpse while Joe held the light. The dead man's eyes were protruding and slightly crossed.

"Know him?" the Ghost asked quietly.

Joe snorted.

"How on earth would I know him? Put him back and I'll like him better. And what's this about a magnetic hammer? In case I see one, I'll want to duck."

THE Ghost let the body return to its former position.

"A magnetic hammer looks just like an ordinary hammer, only it's magnetized. Carpenters and roofers sometimes use them. It speeds up work, since you don't have to hold the nail to get it started. It speeds up murder, too, since you could drive a nail into a man's head with a single blow."

"You think that's what the killer tried on you?"

The Ghost nodded. "But the nail was knocked off the end of the hammer head when it struck my hat. Otherwise, there'd be three dead men in this grave instead of two."

"Okay," Joe said, "I'll avoid all hammers. But"—he indicated the two corpses—"what do we do with these?"

The Ghost started to climb out of the grave.

"We don't do anything. Corpse Number Two spoils my plans. The body hasn't been dead longer than twenty-four hours. Which means this grave was opened last night."

Joe joined the Ghost out of the grave.

"You'll tip off the cops?"

"Right. If Corpse Number Two doesn't interest the Edgerton authorities in the possibility that there was something phony about the passing of Lionel Graves, then I'll have to appeal to New York's medical examiner Robert Demarest, to recommend that the local coroner consider a post-mortem. The Edgerton cops ought to know, too, that some of the medicine Graves was taking before he died is now missing."

They walked toward the burial ground fence.

"Then there's a personal matter," he said.

"What?" Joe asked.

"George Chance has been running around Edgerton trying to convince somebody that there was something phony about Graves' death. And this evening, the killer interrupts the Green Ghost in the act of opening Graves' tomb. Eventually, the killer may get the idea that the Green Ghost and Mr. Chance are one and the same.
So it’s about time I provided myself with an alibi, huh?"

CHAPTER VI
Living Alibi

The Green Ghost met with his four assistants in the small hours of the morning, in the secret sanctuary he had built into the basement of that ancient rectory on East Fifty-fifth Street in New York. The rectory had a reputation for being haunted. That and the fact that George Chance, who owned the place, kept the rental prohibitively high, kept the place untenanted, providing a perfect council chamber for the Ghost and his friends.

Joe Harper was there, of course, and also Merry White, the little lady who had provided the feminine interest in George Chance’s magical reviews. Tiny Tim Terry, George’s smallest and oldest friend, who had once won fame and fortune as leader of a troop of circus midgets, was there, puffing on an enormous cigar. And there was that veritable reflection of George Chance himself—Glenn Saunders.

Saunders was what every famous stage magician hopes to find—an identical double. Plastic surgery plus a natural resemblance made it next to impossible to distinguish Saunders from George Chance, something that had greatly facilitated certain remarkable transposition illusions in the Chance stage shows.

Since the advent of the Green Ghost, Saunders had become increasingly valuable. Having shucked his own identity in exchange for a high salary and all that Chance could teach him of magic, Saunders stood ready at any moment to step into the famous magician’s shoes.

Because of this, it was possible for the Green Ghost to go about his man-hunting, while to all appearances George Charice continued about his business at the same time. Glenn Saunders was, therefore, the perfect living alibi.

Merry White, pretty, petite, and brunette, sat on the couch in the rectory basement room, cuddled into the crook of the Ghost’s left arm. Joe Harper, his atrocious green hat on the back of his head, a cigarette dangling from his thin lips, concocted high-balls in tall thin glasses. Tiny Tim paced the floor, and Saunders sat quietly smoking his briar pipe. The pipe was the only mark of personal distinction to which he clung, and even this had to be put aside when he took the place of Chance.

“You haven’t the slightest idea what you’re getting into, have you, darlin’?” Merry asked, when Chance had told of his experiences in Edgerton.

He shook his head. “It’s a disorganized mess of peculiar events and circumstances. Because of that crank note which Standish received, the clumsy Siamese cat which belongs to Miss Roma Hillhouse can in some way be connected with the death of Lionel Gravens. But from there on, nothing

[Turn page]
is connected."

Tiny Tim waved his cigar.

"You watch the guy in the dark glasses who was sitting outside the hotel. He sounds like he could be a first class villain."

"Could be," Chance granted. "However, I'm not going to watch him particularly. I think that's a job for Merry. In spite of his dark glasses, his hands indicate that he won't be blind to Merry, so I suggest that you take over the Edgerton Hotel, watch Dark-Glasses, and keep an eye on Philmore's office."

MERRY wrinkled her nose at him.

"Sounds exciting. Dark-Glasses is probably a wolf in cheap clothing."

"Sheep's clothing, Frail," Tim corrected.

"I was being punny," Merry said.

Glenn Saunders said in a voice that was like an electrical recording of Chance's own:

"It seems to me this Harmony House is a peculiar set-up—all those people who are obviously on different financial planes, living together. And then this Annaman who owns the house, a man nobody seems to know. He'd bear watching."

"You'll help me watch Harmony House, Glenn," the Ghost said. "I can rent a room there, I think. I'll spend the nights prowling around as the Ghost. You'll be the watchman at this synthetic rubber plant of Philmore's. With you being George Chance, the Ghost should be free to do what he pleases."

Joe Harper passed the drinks.

"And what do you want me to do?" he asked. "Dig up some more graves?"

"I'll need you, don't worry," Chance insisted. "But for the time being, you'd better stick in New York, at my Fifty-fourth Street place. And for you, Tim, I've got a pretty special job."

"No little boy act, I hope," Tim said eagerly.

"Well," Chance admitted, "not exactly. But you heard what Joe said about this mad Mother Beel who haunts the Edgerton cemetery, looking for her dead son. She's probably seen some of the goings-on around there—so Tim, I want you to try and impersonate a ghost. Mother Beel's long dead little boy."

Merry White laughed. "With a big cigar in his mouth!"

"Shut up!" Tim screwed his baby-like face into a threatening grimace. "I've acted the part of a kid, so I guess I can act the part of a kid's ghost. And I won't smoke on the job."

"It'll take more than acting to pump a feeble-minded old woman like Mother Beel," Chance said. "It'll take some psychology, too."

"I got that," Tim insisted. "You want me to find out if Mother Beel saw the killer plant Corpse Number Two in Gravens' tomb."

"Right." The magician-detective turned to Joe Harper. "I'm calling the medical examiner's office, Joe, and see if I can get Dr. Demarest to take a personal interest in what killed Gravens. His word would carry a lot of weight with the Edgerton authorities. You keep in touch with Demarest, and I'll get the dope from you."

"And Glenn, you'll get into Edgerton at dusk tonight. I'll meet you in the old fruit cellar back of Harmony House before you take over the job of watching that synthetic rubber plant. I'll be in Edgerton most of the day, in my own identity. You'll take over as George Chance when night comes."

"What are you going to be doing today, darlin'?" Merry asked. "That is, as soon as it gets light."

The Ghost smiled at her. "Well, my first job will be to try and see Mr. Q. T. Annaman of Yonkers. No one seems to have seen the gentleman so far, but maybe I'll have better luck. I don't know what his game is, but anybody who keeps as completely under cover as he does is up to no great amount of good..."

NINE o'clock found George Chance in front of a small brick house on Riverdale Avenue in Yonkers. A plump, sleepy-eyed woman who wore a rose-colored housecoat over her night dress, opened the door to his ring.
“We don’t need any,” she said, defensively.

Mr. Chance smiled pleasantly. “I’m looking for Mr. Q. T. Annaman. This is his residence, is it not?”

“It is not,” the woman declared. “This is the home of Sergeant Charles Hennessy of the Yonkers Police. You got your figures twisted, Mister.”

“No one by the name of Annaman lives here?” Chance persisted.

“We got a daughter named Anna, age eight. You haven’t got her mixed with somebody, have you?”

Chance shook his head. “No. It’s evident that Mr. Annaman has changed his address.”

The woman shook her head. “I think you just got your figures mixed. We’ve lived here for five years.”

“And no mail addressed to a Mr. Annaman has been delivered here recently?”

“I never heard of Mr. Annaman,” the woman said, closing the door.

George Chance left Yonkers with a sense of satisfaction. It was now clear that Annaman had built a maze of mystery about himself, and Chance believed that the United States Post was unwittingly contributing to the secrecy, with which Annaman surrounded himself. Annaman could easily have a secret address where he could receive mail, yet which none of his correspondents would know about.

This could be accomplished by a simple dodge. Annaman could have gone to the Yonkers post-office and asked for a change-of-address form. In the blank space designated as “old address” he could have written the number of the house on Riverdale Avenue, the address to which Mrs. Graves had sent her communication. In the blank space intended for the forwarding address, Annaman could have written his new and secret address.

Since postal officials are not permitted to inform anyone of a correspondent’s change of address, Annaman’s little secret was well protected. There was, however, a way around this for George Chance—and it would cost him just exactly fifty-one cents to find out where Annaman actually lived.

As soon as he reached Edgerton, Chance went to the post-office and bought a stamped envelope. Inside this he put a couple of blotters. He addressed the envelope to Q. T. Annaman on Riverdale Avenue, Yonkers. In the left hand corner he wrote the name of his friend, Edward Standish, Police Commissioner of New York, and the address of Standish’s residence.

He registered this envelope as non-negotiable papers, paid for a return receipt card, specifying both name and address of the addressee.

He had the elusive Q. T. Annaman nicely caught in a trap. For if Annaman claimed the registered “letter” he would have to sign his name and address on the return receipt which would be mailed to Ned Standish. If Annaman didn’t claim the letter, it would be returned, the envelope bearing Annaman’s forwarding address.

Satisfied, Chance walked from the post-office to Jasper Maynard’s hardware shop.

CHAPTER VII
Corpse Number Two

JASPER MAYNARD stood behind a counter laden with paint cans. His left thumb was hooked into his belt and his right thumb was hanging onto a suspender elastic. Here, Chance reflected, was a man who might lose his shirt, but never his pants.

“Room at Harmony House, huh?” Jasper Maynard repeated after Chance had made his request. “Why come to me about it? I just manage the place for Mr. Annaman—”

“Whom you’ve never seen,” Chance broke in.

Maynard dragged on his cob pipe, nodded.

“Yeah, he must be a shy cuss. Well, tell me, Mr. Chance, did Annaman say you was to have a room?”

The magician-detective shook his head. “I don’t know Annaman. It just occurred to me that if I am to work for Mr. Philmore at night, Har-
mony House would be a nice place to
live in the day time."
Maynard nodded again. "Just so. Well, I’ll tell you. There’s just one
furnished room downstairs which you
could have. Nice view of the back
lawn, private lavatory. You don’t
want it for long, do you?"
"I wouldn’t want to pay more than
a week in advance,“ Chance said
cautiously.
"Well," Maynard said, "for twenty
dollars cash on the bârrel-head, it’s
yours for a week. And you can pay
me."
Chance raised his eyebrows. "Not
Mr. Annaman?"
Maynard coughed. "Nope. I’ll see
that Mr. Annaman gets it."
Chance took a twenty-dollar bill
from his wallet, handed it over, got
the key to the room in exchange, and
started toward the front door. Jasper
Maynard moved after him.
"Saw you t’other day in Bill Phil-
more’s office,” he observed. "You’re a
detective, huh?"
Chance nodded. "Private."
Maynard stared at the floor. "Won-
der if it could be you was interested
in what happened last night at the
cemetery, huh?"
"What happened?" Chance said. "I
just came up from New York this
morning."
"Well, there was ghouls at the cem-
etry," Maynard said. "They opened
the grave of Lionel Gravens who died
recent. Police got a phone tip from
the Green Ghost. Ever hear tell of
him?"
"I’ve heard about him,” Chance said.
"Well, like I heard it, the Ghost
said over the phone, ‘You better get
over to the cemetery and look into
Lionel Gravens’ grave. And then you
better figure out what killed Lionel
Gravens.’ And the police—Tom Hus-
ton, our chief of police—he went over
there and in where Lionel was sup-
posed to be buried what do you think
there was?"
"An oil well?" Chance said.
Maynard showed yellow teeth in a
grin. "Now you’re funnin’ me. In
Lionel Gravens’ coffin, right smack
on top of Lionel was another body with
a nail drove smack into his head. Two
corpses in one coffin! What do you
think of that?"
"Uhmm,” Chance showed no particu-
lar interest. "Crowded, eh?"
"And then they come to figure out
who the other corpse was,” Maynard
went on. "They didn’t know, and
Tom Huston was for sending finger-
prints to New York. But I went over
to the morgue—it’s the basement of
the hospital—and had a look."
"Who was it?" Chance asked.

MAYNARD removed his pipe
and shook his head. "I didn’t
know neither. Never seen the man in
my born days."
"Maybe it was Q. T. Annaman," Chance
suggested.
"Could have been, for all me," May-
nard said. "I went back to Harmony
House and was talkin’ about the body
in the morgue, and pretty soon, when
I got describin’ the dead man, Harry
Coy ups and goes out."
He rekindled his pipe.
"Coy’s a writer," he said then. "I
seen something he wrote once for
Hardware Retailer, Right good, too
... Well, Harry used to be in social
service work, trying to straighten out
convicts and settin’ wrong guys right.
So he went over to the morgue and
identified this dead man right off.
Saved Tom Huston no end of trouble,
believe me."
"What’s the Green Ghost mixed up
in it for?" Chance asked, a whimsi-
cal smile on his lips.
"By me,” Maynard replied. "Yes-
sir, by me. Seems from what he said
to Tom Huston on the phone, he
thinks maybe Lionel Gravens didn’t
die natural."
"Anybody around here share that
opinion?"
Maynard shrugged. "I guess some
thinks so and some don’t. I’m not
saying what I think."
Considering the emphasis it wasn’t
necessary for Maynard to say what
he thought. It was plain he was con-
vinced that Gravens had been mur-
dered.
"Anybody around here think up a
good motive?" Chance asked.
"Could be. Bill Philmore put a
right smart amount of trust in Lionel,
and his death was quite a set-back for Bill. Then I've heard Lionel kept up a good sized insurance, so I guess anybody on the hunt for one could find a motive one way or another."

Chance left the hardware shop and went over to the office of the Philmore Construction Company. The big bluff contractor was in better humor than he had been on the previous day.

"I just dropped in to tell you I'd be on the job tonight," Chance told the builder.

It was, of course, Glenn Saunders who would be on the job, but Philmore would never have known the difference.

"A good thing," Philmore said. "I don't know whether that guy Arthur Stuart is still trying to hire my men away from me or not, but Lannagan didn't show up for work this morning."

"Maybe that hand of his—"

"No, I talked to Dr. Lex about that. There's no infection in it."

"Well, I'll keep an eye open," Chance promised.

"Better keep two," Philmore said gruffly.

On leaving the construction company office, Chance found that the man in the black glasses had resumed his chair on the sidewalk at the side entrance to the hotel. Chance walked rapidly past the man, but employed his mirror ring for a backward glance. The man in the dark glasses apparently was watching Chance closely.

The magician-detective picked up a cab and rode to Harmony House. A maid showed him to his new abode, a room entered by one of three doors opening off the back hall. Of the two other doors, one communicated with the upstairs by means of a back stairway, while the other led into the basement. The maid explained that a full size apartment in the basement was occupied by Jasper Maynard.

CHANCE stowed his baggage in the closet and returned to the community living room. A radio or phonograph was playing loudly from behind a door on one side of the big room. This appeared to be a door into one of the downstairs apartments because it was marked with a card similar to the one on Mrs. Graves' door in the hall above.

"That's Miss Hillhouse, sir," the helpful maid who was now dusting explained. "She didn't go to town to her work today. She called up and said she had a headache, but by the looks of things she won't have a headache until tomorrow. She's celebrating."

Chance smiled. "What's she celebrating? Is her cat well again?"

"No, sir," the maid said tiredly. "Just celebrating—which means her apartment will be an awful mess."

Chance waited until the maid left the living room, then approached the door of Miss Hillhouse's apartment and knocked. Roma Hillhouse put in a rather startling appearance, in a bright green halter-neck playsuit, a half-filled highball glass in her hand. "Why, hello again!" she said.

Chance smiled. "I came to inquire after the health of Bangkok."

"Come on in," she invited. "Bangkok's been to the vet and he's sulking."

Chance went into a cheerful living room with French doors opening onto a side terrace. Swedish modern furniture of bleached wood opening somewhat incongruous with the high ceilings of the old house, but went rather well with the mistress of the apartment. Miss Hillhouse was modern enough, though probably not Swedish.

She asked Chance if he would have a drink, and he said that he would. The magician-detective got down on his knees and coaxed Bangkok out from under a table which combined some of the features of a bookcase. On the shelf for books, he noticed, were several volumes on spiritualism and mediumship.

Chance picked up the Siamese cat, took it to a chair and sat down.

"What did the doctor say about you, Bangkok, old man?"

Roma Hillhouse handed Chance his drink, then softened the volume of the phonograph.

"The doctor said that Bangkok was getting old," she said. "I just let him
talk, then went out without paying him, because I raised Bangkok from a kitten and he’s not four years old. The vet was a fraud, that’s what.”

Miss Hillhouse sat down in a low cushioned lounge chair, stretched bare legs and wriggled her toes. The sun through the French doors made a ruddy halo of her frizzed hair.

“The doctor implied that Bangkok had high blood-pressure, in other words,” Chance said. He patted the cat’s head. “I don’t want to discourage you, Bangkok, but that’s what killed Lionel Gravens, they say.”

ROMA HILLHOUSE looked at Chance sharply over the rim of her glass. When she put her glass down, she said, “Say—” then checked herself.

“Say what?” Chance prompted.
She shook her head. “I’m drinking too much. I’ll get high blood-pressure like Bangkok if I don’t stop.”
He smiled. “You were going to suggest that maybe someone was poisoning Bangkok, weren’t you?”

She nodded. “Maybe I was. You’re a mind-reader, aren’t you, Mr. Chance? Do you go in for spiritualism?”

“I notice you’re interested in it,” he said.

“I think it’s fascinating,” she said.
“Look, I want to show you my most treasured possession.”

She got up, crossed to a combination writing desk and bookcase, opened a drawer, and took out a black-framed mirror. She brought it to Chance. It looked like a rather ordinary plate glass mirror to him, though the frame was decorated with gold six-pointed stars—the supposedly mystic seal of Solomon.

“Cagliostro’s mirror,” she explained. “I bought it last week from one of the best mediums in New York. Every night at midnight, I breathe on it and I’m supposed to get messages from the other world. At least, the medium did when she demonstrated it.”

“Doesn’t it work for you?”
She shook her head. “It hasn’t yet, but I keep trying. Sometimes, I think the fog on it forms something, but I can’t make it out. Maybe there’s too much alcohol on my breath.”

Chance laughed. “It’s a poor spirit that doesn’t like spirits, if you know what I mean. Keep trying. Maybe you’ll get a message yet.”

“I’m going to,” Roma Hillhouse said seriously.

Chance put Bangkok down and the Siamese cat tried to rub on his ankles, nearly fell over trying, finally sat down, looked up at Chance, and meowed.

“Poor Bangkok!” Chance said sympathetically. He thanked Roma Hillhouse for the drink and went out into the living room. There he found the white-haired, black-browed Harry Coy talking with Mrs. Gravens.

“They’re putting my picture in the paper and calling me ‘local author’,” Coy was saying, “and I must say I don’t care much for the publicity.”

Edna Gravens saw George Chance and called to him. She introduced him to Coy and as the magician-detective shook the writer’s hand, Chance said:

“I understand you identified the murdered man who was found last night.”

“I’m afraid I have,” Coy said quietly. “The body was that of one Jeff Humber, alias ‘Little Jeff’ an ex-convict and habitual criminal. The social service work in which I was engaged when I met him devoted a great deal of time to the rehabilitation of criminals. But I’m afraid we did rather a poor job on Jeff Humber.”

“You were a social service worker in New York?” Chance asked.

Coy nodded. “Yes. And I don’t mind telling you that I found the work too difficult for a man of my sensitive nature. Too difficult, and too nerve-wracking. I find it much more to my liking just to turn out my little articles for trade journals.”

COY started for the stairway, shaking his head sadly.

“Still,” he said, “I don’t care much about being captioned as ‘local author’ in the newspapers.”

Chance turned smilingly to Mrs. Gravens. The widow’s blue eyes were troubled.

“Mr. Chance,” she said, “I have
signed a permit for post-mortem examination of my husband's body. The medical examiner from New York has urged such an examination."

"And if I were you," Chance said, "I would brace myself for some rather startling news."

He went at once to his room. As soon as he had unpacked, he intended to find a public telephone, and call Commissioner Standish in New York.

He wanted to check up on Harry Coy's record as a social service worker, and explain to Standish how he had used the commissioner's return address on that registered "letter" he had posted to Annaman. That little trap should bring valuable information.

"There's plenty about that place and it's inhabitants that puzzles me. Incidentally, Glenn, I think that William Philmore is half anticipating fireworks. He seems to be pretty well assured that somebody will try to prevent him from making that time limit in his contract. So keep your wits about you."

The double nodded, and left the cellar. Ten minutes later, the Green Ghost came out into the thickening dark and let himself in through the basement door of the house.

Jasper Maynard's basement apartment consisted of living room, bedroom, and bath. The living and bedroom were paneled in beautifully finished knotty pine and comfortably furnished. The Green Ghost gave the place a thorough searching without coming across anything to excite interest until he opened the top drawer of a maple chest in the bedroom. There he discovered two puzzling items.

The first was a fragment of gray cloth, perhaps torn from a woman's skirt or a man's trousers. The second was a wad of tissue paper in which were nine small brown gelatine capsules.

The Green Ghost transferred the capsules to an envelope and replaced the tissue in the drawer with the scrap of cloth.

He left the apartment, crossed a room which housed the heating plant, found the stairway to the back hall. He paused there a moment, listening to the buzz of mealtime chatter that came from the dining room. Then he hurried to the living room, crossed to a door that was marked with the card of Dr. Roy Lex.

He had yet to meet the physician who was supposed to be the best in Edgerton, but he thought he might learn something about the man's personality from an examination of his apartment. The door was locked, but few knew locks as well as the Green Ghost did.

Aside from one table, one chair, and a radio cabinet, the doctor's living room was barren. There were no magazines and no books. The bedroom contained the minimum essen-
QUICKLY he searched closets and drawers but failed to find anything to distinguish Dr. Roy Lex from anybody else in the world. There seemed almost a deliberate attempt to conceal any clue as to personality, tastes, and habits.

The Green Ghost left the doctor's apartment, hurried soundlessly up the carpeted front steps and along the hall to the two rooms at the back. On one door was the card of Harry Coy, on the other that of Frank Lannagan.

The Ghost entered Coy’s room first. It was small, painfully neat. It contained desk, bed, chair, bureau. On the desk beside the typewriter was a stack of short manuscripts, none with more than five pages of typing. They dealt with methods of merchandizing everything from cheese to farm tractors. There were also letters from various publishers of trade journals and a stack of photographic prints illustrating novel retail store displays.

There were few books—a trade journal market list, a dictionary, a short encyclopedia, a book of quotations, several texts dealing with social sciences and kindred subjects. Nothing of interest was to be found in either bureau or closet, and the Ghost soon left Coy’s room to enter that of Frank Lannagan.

Here was contrasting untidiness. The bed showed evidence of daylight sleeping. There were two empty liquor bottles beside the bed. Photomagazines were piled in the chair.

In one of the drawers of the bureau, the Ghost found a .45-caliber automatic, and the gun numbers had been obliterated. Beneath the cover of the bureau he found an envelope addressed to Mr. Q. T. Annaman of Riverdale Avenue, Yonkers.

The Ghost dropped a hand into his pocket and withdrew a circular gadget about the size of a fifty-cent piece and the thickness of an old-fashioned watch. One side of the device was faced with a rubber sponge, while the other side was plastic. A turn of the plastic case would admit alcohol to the sponge.

The device was known among fake spirit mediums as a “reader’s sponge,” and if Roma Hillhouse could have seen the thing in operation, her faith might have been somewhat shaken. The Ghost held the envelope tight against the sponge surface for a moment, then held the envelope close to the light. The area against which the sponge had been pressed was now sufficiently transparent for him to see the contents.

The envelope contained a one-hundred-dollar bill wrapped in a blank sheet of paper.

The Ghost raised his eyes at a slight sound, looking into a mirror in front of him. It showed him a man poised in the doorway, arms raised above his head. The man was the long-jawed, dark-complexioned Frank Lannagan, and what he held in his upraised hand was—

The Ghost ducked and twisted at the same time. What had been in the man’s hand sailed over his head and thumped into the chair in front of the window. It was an unopened flask of Irish whiskey.

WITH a quick movement the Ghost’s fingers touched the rheostat and switch in his pocket which controlled the battery-lighted globe concealed in his ornate scarf pin. A pale greenish glow spread upward across his features. His lips peeled back from yellow shell teeth.

Lannagan froze in his tracks as the Ghost’s sunken eyes stared with awful fixity. Lannagan’s tongue touched his dry lips.

“You’re—” he said, and couldn’t make the rest of it come.

“T’m—” The Ghost’s voice had a hollow ring, yet something in it taunted Lannagan.


“Splendid reasoning,” the Ghost mocked. “And this—what’s this?” He held out Lannagan’s letter to Q. T. Annaman.

“My—my rent,” Lannagan mumbled. “A hundred dollars for this little room?”

“I—I—”

Lannagan decided that action would
The Green Ghost's fingers flicked to a coat sleeve. His slender throwing knife came from its sheath, poised a moment in upraised hand before it flashed like a beam of light across the room to pin Lannagan's shirt sleeve to the front of the bureau.

Lannagan forgot about going for his gun. His terrified eyes were fastened on the knife. Then he wrenched it from the wood and came at the Ghost, brandishing it.

When Lannagan's hand struck down in what was intended for a kill-thrust, the Ghost caught his wrist, twisted.

His right hand lightly brushed the bottom edge of his black coat, and in passing picked his small black automatic from its gimmick holder. That hand stopped jarringly at the side of Lannagan's head. As the short barrel of the gun struck Lannagan's temple the big man would have dropped had not the Green Ghost caught him.

The Ghost hauled Lannagan over to the bed and let him down there.

"You need some sleep anyway," he advised, though Lannagan was in no condition to hear.

The Ghost had started for the door when he was stopped by the ringing of a telephone on the bedside table. He picked up the phone.

"Lannagan?" somebody whispered. It was impossible to tell whether the voice was that of a man or a woman.

"Yeah," the Ghost answered, his voice Lannagan's to perfection.

"Annaman," the whisperer announced. "You didn't work today. Why?"

"Aw, I guess I kinda went on a tear," the Ghost replied.

"I can't have that. Be at work tomorrow. If you fail me I'll turn you in. You're nothing but pin money to me anyway. Understand?"

"Yop," the Ghost agreed. "I get you."

And the connection was broken.

GETTING out of Harmony House proved to be more difficult than getting in for the Ghost. Dinner had evidently been concluded some time ago and the tenants were either in the living room downstairs or returning to their private apartments.

The Ghost found the back stairway, went down into the back hall. There he ran into a fat colored woman, probably the cook, who took one look at the skull-like face mooning out of the shadows at her, screamed, threw up her hands and promptly collapsed to the floor.

The Ghost slipped through the door to the basement, got it closed before anyone could come into the hall and discover the Negro cook.

He quickly ran down the basement steps, crossed the furnace room, unbolted the outside door and streaked rapidly across the black-and-white shadowed lawn.

Fifteen minutes later, he was calmly walking down one of the town's main streets, a gaunt figure in black, hat pulled low over his eyes. Passersby paid him very scant attention.

He turned into a drug-store, bought a pocket tin of headache pills and some stamps. Outside, he emptied the pills from the tin, substituted the nine capsules he had found in Maynard's drawer, and put the tin with the capsules into the envelope.

To this he added the registration receipt which covered the "letter" he had posted to Q. T. Annaman, and a note he had previously prepared for Commissioner Standish. He addressed the envelope to Standish, marked it "Special Delivery" and dropped it in the mail box.

Then he crossed the street toward a small red brick building on the door of which was lettered:

ROY LEX, M. D.

Several patients were in the waiting room, but the "Doctor-not-in-please-be-seated" sign was on the door of the consultation room.

The Green Ghost turned from the door and walked around the building to the back.
CHAPTER IX
The Skeleton Dances

DR. ROY LEX had earned the respect of his patients, if not their undying affection. He was a small man with a sleek black head, irregular features, and small, black, expressionless eyes. He was blunt and efficient and if his fees were not paid with what he termed reasonable promptness, a patient need not call at his office again. He was sufficiently mercenary, some said, to welcome an epidemic.

Dr. Roy Lex ducked into his office half an hour late, bobbed his head to the waiting patients, went into his consultation room and closed the door. He had donned his white tunic and was ready to receive patients when there came a tapping on his laboratory door.

Dr. Lex stopped and listened. His laboratory was a small room, and since he kept his medicines there, including narcotics, it was kept locked. That being the case, he must have been imagining he heard any tapping from inside the lab.

But it came again, a peculiar sound, not like the knock of a fist. Rather, it was as though it were being done with a loosely held bundle of lead pencils.

Scowling, Dr. Lex stepped to the door and assured himself that his laboratory was locked. The tapping persisted even while he was fiddling with the knob.

Thrusting a key into the lock the doctor turned it impatiently, jerked the door open. And then he saw that the “tapping” had been made by his specimen skeleton which hung near the door. Perhaps a draft from the window had blown a bony foot against the door.

But looking past the skeleton, Dr. Lex saw that the window was not open. He stepped back suddenly, mounted his pince-nez on the bridge of his thin, crooked nose, and took another look at his skeleton, from a few paces distant. Something seemed different about that old familiar skull.

Dr. Lex snorted. Of course! Somebody had put a black hat on top of the skull. Some moronic patient with a twisted sense of humor. Some—

Dr. Lex’s thought clogged. He stared at the grinning face of the skull and saw that an unholy greenish light was playing up across that face. And glinting eyes were in the sockets which had been empty all these years.

“You’re turning a little green yourself, Doctor!”

That was the skull—the skull speaking to Dr. Roy Lex!

Then the skull deserted the skeleton. It moved sharply to the right, seemed suspended there for a moment before Dr. Lex realized that beneath the skull was the body of a man clad completely in black. And then he saw that the skull wasn’t a skull at all, but the face of a man—a ghastly face and as immobile as that of a cadaver, but nevertheless there was pale, tautly stretched flesh over the bones.

And then he knew!

As though he read the doctor’s mind from his facial expression, the Green Ghost nodded.

“That’s right. You know who I am. Won’t you sit down and compose yourself, Dr. Lex?”

LEX would not sit down.

“What do you want?” he demanded.

“There’s no hurry. Have you a cigarette?”

“I have not,” the doctor snapped.

“I do not permit tobacco in any form in my office.”

There was a vase of flowers on the doctor’s desk. The Green Ghost reached out a hand, removed the flowers, reached into the vase, and removed a glowing cigarette which he set between rows of yellow teeth.

“Will you state your business and get out as soon as possible?” Lex demanded again.

“I have simply to ask a question, Doctor. Just what sort of medicine were you giving to Lionel Gravens when he died—the medicine in the little brown capsules.”

“I refuse to answer,” Lex said. “I
never discuss my patients, their ailments, nor my medication with anyone outside the medical profession."

The Green Ghost moved with a speed that was just a bit beyond Dr. Lex's comprehension. Suddenly a knife was in his right hand and he had fingers on the doctor's throat.

"I have always had a secret ambition to perform an appendectomy, Doctor. Is this the correct point for making the incision?"

The doctor shrunk from the point of the knife.

"You're crazy," he said. "Plain crazy!"

"But I get results. I cut red tape. Better answer my question before I start cutting."

"I had prescribed one-fifth of a grain of"—swiftly the doctor gave the medical terminology of his medication—"to be taken at noon after excessive smoking in the morning. This treatment has been successful. Graves' craving would gradually have lessened—"

"If he had lived long enough, you mean," the Ghost said, and added meditatively, "Mmm, lobeline you gave him. Derived from lobelia, commonly called Indian tobacco. It would have increased Graves' blood pressure. You never tried that treatment before, did you, Doctor? And when Graves died suddenly, you were rather surprised? And you weren't quite sure that you had not made a mistake in giving him lobeline?"

"No—no," Lex protested.

"And because, you weren't quite sure, you were hasty about making out the death certificate? You didn't want an investigation. You knew no one would question your word, but you weren't sure in your own mind but what the lobeline had killed Graves?"

"No, you're wrong. All wrong!"

The Ghost changed the subject abruptly.

"Why do you live at Harmony House?"

"I—I like it there," Dr. Lex said.

"You, the most successful physician in town, like living in what is little more than a boarding house? Or perhaps the attraction is Lionel Graves' widow. There's an idea!"

Dr. Lex was pale with fury and the Green Ghost was laughing at him—laughing as he backed into the laboratory from whence he had come. Suddenly, the magician-detective whipped a black silk cloth out and spread it over his left arm. From beneath it, he produced the skull which ordinarily topped the skeleton hanging in the doctor's laboratory.

"I think there's more than one skeleton in your closet, Doctor," he said. "Here, catch!"

He tossed the skull at Dr. Lex, jerked the door of the laboratory shut, and was out the window before Lex had time to draw a deep breath. . . .

As the Green Ghost approached Harmony House from the rear, light from the basement windows showed that Jasper Maynard was at home. The Green Ghost entered the basement and knocked at Maynard's door.

"Who is it?" called Maynard.

"Harry Coy," the Ghost answered in the soft voice of the trade journal writer.

"Just a minute, Harry. Be right with you."

Maynard came to the door hooking up his suspenders.

"I was just ready to get in bed—" he began and stopped, stared out into the gloom. "Holy cow!"

The Green Ghost stepped into the room and Jasper Maynard backed away until a chair hit his knee joints. He collapsed into the chair and ran a finger around inside his collar.

"Phew!" he said.

The Ghost sat down and stared hollow-eyed at Maynard, then said in a graveyard voice:

"You're going to answer a few of my questions, Maynard."

"Yah—yes," Maynard said.

"You wrote a note to the police commissioner of New York City," the Ghost said. "You used a carpenter's pencil and printed the words because handwriting can be identified. You thought Lionel Graves had been poisoned. You thought that the capsules he was taking were killing him. You decided to prove this by trying those
capsules on Miss Hillhouse’s cat.
Right?’”

Maynard took his cob pipe from his pocket and chewed on the bone bit. He nodded slowly.

“Sort of amateur detecting, you might say.”

“What gave you the idea?”

“Dr. Lex said tobacco was hurting Gravens. Shucks, I been smoking a pipe since I was ten and it never hurt me none. It sounded phoney to me. Then, Lex has always been sweet on Mrs. Gravens—you could tell by the way he looked at her. And there ain’t nobody who won’t agree he has his eye out for money, and there was Lionel’s life insurance to count on if Lex could get married to Mrs. Gravens. Besides there was opportunity. Lex could give Gravens poison, and fix up the death certificate to suit himself.”

The Ghost nodded. “And it never occurred to you that exactly the same motive could be assigned to any man in this house—you yourself included? And that the opportunity was equal, since Lionel Gravens kept his medicine in the dining room where anyone could have had a chance to put some deadly poison in it?”

Maynard squirmed. “But wouldn’t Lex have noticed something wrong when Lionel died?”

“He might have noticed, and feared that his own medication was responsible,” the Ghost went on. “And another thing, Maynard. In the top drawer of your bedroom chest, there’s a scrap of gray cotton cloth which—”

“Oh, that.” Maynard forced a dry, mirthless laugh. “More of my amateur detecting. You see, last month—it was Friday night, the fourteenth—somebody busted into the tool room back in the garage. That there piece of cloth was a clue I found on a nail where the prowler ripped his pants or something.”

“On the fourteenth, you say. And Lionel Gravens had died on the sixteenth. What was stolen from the tool room—a magnetic hammer?”

JASPER MAYNARD looked blank.

“Now I wouldn’t know as to that. There is—or maybe was—a magnetic hammer out there, but I ain’t checked to see if it’s gone. What I did notice was gone was a chemical spray cartridge that you fit into a special nozzle which you attach to your garden hose and sprinkle and spray at the same time. I brought three of them cartridges up from the shop for the gardener to use here, and one of them was missing.

The Ghost’s little automatic suddenly appeared. Jasper Maynard raised trembling hands.

“Here, now, Mr. Ghost, I been telling the truth. Ain’t I been cooperating?”

“I just want to make sure that you continue to cooperate. I want that scrap of cloth and also the key to the tool room.”

Maynard brought out his keys and selected one.

“Thanks,” the Ghost said. “I’ll pick up the scrap of cloth for myself.”

On his way out of the apartment the Ghost paused in the doorway, asked abruptly:

“How much rent are you paying to Mr. Annaman, Maynard?”

Maynard’s fingers fumbled for a suspender strap.

“I—I, why twenty-five dollars,” he stammered.

The Ghost laughed. “You’re a poor liar, Maynard.” He went out.

CHAPTER X
Tim Plays Ghost

NEXT day the Ghost returned to New York, and for the three following days he was around town in a disguise and employing an alias which was famous at Police Headquarters—that of Dr. Stacey, a friend of the commissioner.

This role contrasted sharply not only with his own identity but with that of the Green Ghost. Metal “plumbers” were employed to round out the hollows of his cheeks. Skillfully added lines on his face made him
appear at least fifteen years older, and his suit was cleverly padded to make him appear a much heavier man.

“Stacey,” gruff, eccentric, and deliberate in his speech, had access to the police files and laboratories, and while his presence might have been resented by some members of the force, he was tolerated because of the commissioner.

The afternoon of the third day, the Green Ghost, now Dr. Stacey, dropped into the commissioner’s office. Standish looked up and smiled wryly.

“I suppose I’m in for a sermon on why I should pay closer attention to my crank mail,” he said.

The Ghost shook his head. “The clumsy cat was none of your affair, Ned. But I made it mine, and you’ll have to admit the developments have been peculiar. I’ve been looking into the past lives of the tenants at Harmony House, and I’ve got some startling information.”

“I’ve got some information for you,” Standish said, “but make your contribution first.”

“Well, the brick-layer or whatever he is, Frank Lannagan, has done time for armed robbery. He’s done a couple of stretches. Roma Hillhouse, whose real name is Helen House, used to work with shoplifters up and down the West Coast. She’s done time, too, but apparently is going straight now and pulling down big money as a department store buyer.

“Jasper Maynard probably got a lot of his knowledge of hardware from being an expert safe cracker until a term in Sing Sing taught him to mend his ways. Now, he’s doing all right for himself. He’s a widower, has a son who holds a responsible position with an investment house. His wife has been dead so long that Maynard has all the earmarks of a bachelor, which I first thought him to be.

“About the dead Lionel Gravens, I can find nothing to smudge his good name. Same thing for Edna, his wife, though when Glenn Saunders sends her fingerprints, I may be able to do better. I can’t find a thing against Dr. Roy Lex, and as for Harry Coy, he seems to have had an admirable record in social service work.

“The man Jeff Humber, whose body was found in Gravens’ tomb, was all to the bad, but I can find nothing that connects him with any of the people at Harmony House.

“So much for my research. Merry White reported on the phone this morning that a man who lives at the Edgerton Hotel and poses as an invalid—to me he’s just the man in the black glasses—has a couple of other names.”

“Naturally,” Standish said. “You didn’t expect him to be called Mr. Dark Glasses, did you?”

“All right,” the Ghost said, “go ahead and rib me. But Mr. Dark Glasses is registered under the name of Peter T. Smith. But Merry picked up a card that dropped out of Smith’s wallet when he was paying his dinner check. I suppose his black glasses handicapped him sufficiently so that he didn’t see the card drop. But on the card was the name Humphrey Rennard, a vice-president of the Pennsylvania Synthetic Rubber Corporation, a newly formed organization with plenty of money and weight behind it.”

STANDISH frowned.

“What would he be doing in Edgerton, under an assumed name?”

“He’d be watching the progress William Philmore is making with that rubber plant he’s building for Wayland Synthetics,” the Ghost said.

“What’s the hook-up between that and the people at Harmony House and”—he added this maliciously—“a clumsy cat?”

The Ghost shook his head. “That’s not clear. But what sort of news have you? Maybe we can put two and two together and get four.”

“Well, those capsules you sent me,” Standish said. “I had them analyzed, and each capsule contains one-fifth grain of lobeline sulphate. It’s doubtful if it could have killed Lionel Gravens.”

“I didn’t believe it did,” the Green Ghost said. “Especially since it hasn’t killed Miss Hillhouse’s pet cat. But lobeline raised the cat’s blood pressure, until it appears much older than it is and appears to be ‘clumsy’
as Jasper Maynard put it in his note to you."

Standish nodded. "I won't argue with you there. But I've talked to Demarest and he's got hold of the report on the post-mortem examination of Lionel Gravens' body. Traces of nicotine as well as of lobelia were found, and there were definite nicotine burns on the esophagus."

The Green Ghost snapped his fingers. "Then that's it. The killer stole a spray cartridge out of the tool room at Harmony House. That spray cartridge was concentrated nicotine sulphate, used by gardeners. In mild solution, it kills all leaf-eating insects. Which gives you a faint idea of what the concentrated chemical would have done to Lionel Gravens who had a weak heart.

"The killer simply got hold of one of Gravens' capsules, removed the lobeline sulphate and filled the capsule with nicotine sulphate from that stolen spray cartridge. He knew that eventually Gravens would take that capsule—"

"Which leaves you exactly nothing to go on," Standish said. "It looks like the perfect crime to me."

The Ghost nodded. "But we've smashed perfect crimes before. I'll lay you ten to one that the killer is Q. T. Annaman. I'll go farther than that. The tenants of Harmony House are being blackmailed by Annaman, but so cleverly that you'd not get a case against Annaman even if you caught him.

"Don't you see? That's the whole reason behind Harmony House. Annaman has herded his victims under one roof. He makes them cut in with a large chunk of their monthly income, calls it rent. It's blackmail, but there wouldn't be anything to prove against Annaman unless it would be rent profiteering."

"Well," Standish said, "I haven't yet received that return receipt for that registered letter you sent to the man. You figure that Annaman killed Lionel Gravens because Gravens was catching up with him?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if Gravens did just what we did—sent a registered letter," said the Ghost. "And I think that if Gravens could have found out who Annaman was, he might have killed Annaman."

"Nobody could have blamed him for that," Standish said. "I never could work up any sympathy for a blackmailer."

"We'll get him, whoever he is," the Green Ghost promised, "and I don't think blackmail will be the charge either. . . ."

For the fourth consecutive evening Tiny Tim Terry had kept a lonely vigil in the Edgerton Cemetery. The evenings were chill and damp, and Tim found the knee pants and socks that were part of his get-up as the ghost of "little Ronny" were decidedly uncomfortable. At forty-five, Tiny Tim was beginning to feel twinges of rheumatism and these damp nights did not help his ailment at all.

But on that fourth night, the midget's patience was rewarded. He was huddling in a blanket, his back against a granite monument, when a voice came out of the gray mist of the night.

"Ronny—Ronny, where are you?"

Tim got out of the blanket and saw a woman wandering aimlessly across the burial ground. He hastily opened a briefcase from which he took a piece of tulle. The thin, fragile material had been treated with phosphorescent paint so that it resembled nothing so much as a shaft of moonlight. Tim spread this thin, glowing drapery, long enough to reach to his ankles, over his head.

"For I shall be queen of the May, Mother," he muttered somewhat disgustedly, then sallied forth to meet the mad woman.

As soon as Mother Beel saw Tim, the midget realized that this adventure was apt to resolve itself into a game of tag.

"Ronny!" Mother Beel cried, and lunged for him.

Tim jumped backward and held up a hand.

"Do not try to embrace me, Mother," he warned. "My stay in this mortal world is short."

Mother Beel stopped in her tracks
and it suddenly occurred to Tim that this was not fun. It was kind of a dirty trick to play on the poor old soul. Still, there was just a chance that Mother Beel might derive some consolation from this visitation.

"Ronny! Ronny, darling, you have come back!" she sobbed.

"But only for a minute, Mother," Tim said, "have I been sent from a better, and happier place."

"I know, I know!" The old woman's voice was trembling.

"And I cannot return to the better world until I have put at rest the soul of another," Tim said dramatically. "I need your help. Last Saturday night, the earthly remains of a murdered man were concealed in this burial ground. You, Mother, saw it."

"Yes, yes, I saw. A funeral at night. And two mourners dug the grave."

"Tell me who those two mourners were," Tim insisted. "I have been sent to this earth to see that justice is done."

"I do not know," Mother Beel said. "It was a man and a sinful woman. She wore woman's crowning glory like Satan's halo about her head—a halo of red. But she wore a man's attire."

"You mean slacks—" Tim caught himself. "I mean, I have to go back... Tell me quickly—what was the man like?"

"Perhaps he, too, was a woman in man's attire. I could not see him closely. They were dressed alike. Ronny, darling, may I not clasp you once?"

Mother Beel was inching up on Tim, and abruptly she made another lunge at him, caught his veil. Tim seized the veil in both hands, and scrambled behind a headstone.

"Gone," Mother Beel sighed. "Back to a brighter and better world. I—I'm so happy!"

She kept muttering as she walked across the graveyard.

Ten minutes later, Tiny Tim Terry had put through a long distance call to the Green Ghost's haunted rectory. When he had concluded his story the magician-detective said:

"That's a swell piece of work, Tim. Now, you'd better come back here."

The Ghost hung up with a scowl. The "sinful" woman in slacks with a halo of red hair—could she have been Roma Hillhouse? While he was trying to get this to fit into his pattern of the crime his phone rang again. The voice from Edgerton via long-distance was Joe Harper's.

"I got it and I haven't got it," Joe said. "That scrap of cloth you gave me, G. G., is off somebody's pants. You said probably the killer would drop them at a laundry rather than try and burn them, because of the smoke. Well, the pants with the tear in the right place, and made of the right material were shoved through the night slot of a laundry on the fourteenth of August and nobody has claimed them. So I don't know who they belonged to."

"Were they men's slacks or women's?" the Ghost asked.

"How the heck would I know unless they were filled? Anyway, when I tried to claim them, I was asked to describe what was left in one of the pockets. Also, they wanted me to tell what size the slacks were. I said there was a handkerchief and some cigarettes left in the pockets, making a wild stab at it, and the desk girl said, 'Oh, yeah?'"

"It seems that if this laundry finds any valuables in pockets of things left there to be washed or cleaned, they put them in a little cloth bag which they tie onto the garment. When I heard I had left some valuables in my pants—"

"Your pants?"

"Well, I figured they were mine if there was anything of value in the pockets," Joe said. "Anyway, I raised Cain. I had the pants spotted—they were on a rack in the back of the shop—and when it was a sure thing they weren't going to let me have them, I got right over the counter and made a snatch at the pants. I got the little cloth bag that was tied to one belt loop."

"You would!"

"Well, it was a cinch the murderer wouldn't come back and claim those pants."
Considering that the person who had stolen the poison that had killed Gravens had torn the slacks in the process, the slacks probably were incriminating.

"So you got the bag of valuables," the Ghost said. "What was in it?"

"A nickel and four pennies," Joe said. "One swell reward for what I've been through. Believe it or not, but I'm no news on the squad car radios around here. You'd think it was grand larceny. As for the slacks, male or female, you'd have to have a court writ or something to get them now."

CHAPTER XI
Annaman's House

Late the following afternoon, Police Commissioner Edward Standish phoned the Green Ghost's rectory to announce that the registered "letter" which the Ghost had posted to Annaman's Yonkers address had been returned to Standish's home.

"He wouldn't bite," Standish said. "There's an 'undeliverable' imprint on the envelope, but the forwarding address is on too. Where do you think Annaman lives?"

"Somewhere here in New York, would be my guess," the Ghost replied.

"He lives in the Bronx, Elsmere Place. I'll give you the number."

The Green Ghost listened carefully.

"Okay," he said. "I'll run up there and look things over. And Standish, I'll probably get away from there by six o'clock. You'd better have a man at Annaman's house after that to grab anybody who goes there."

"On what charge?" Standish asked.

"All right. So there isn't any charge. Just tail anybody who goes there, then. The way I figure things, Annaman and the murderer are synonymous, but if you want to get technical, I suppose we haven't any proof yet."

"Where are you headed for after six o'clock?" the commissioner asked.

"For Edgerton, to close this case as fast as possible," the Ghost said.

Five-thirty found him at Annaman's house in Elsmere Place—a small, brown brick, boxlike structure with all blinds pulled.

The Ghost rang the bell. There was no reply. He went around to the back door, knocked, and still no one answered. The back door lock yielded readily to a master key, but there was a bolt on the inside of the door.

The Ghost always carried a small jimmy with a take-down handle, and though he was working in broad daylight, he assembled the jimmy, rammed it between door and frame. A woman next door looked at him curiously. The Ghost touched his black hat, smiled.

"I've lost my key and got myself locked out," he announced.

"I do that sometimes myself," the woman said, and went inside.

The chances were she had never set eyes on the mysterious Annaman. Had the Ghost been trying to force his way in after dark she might have notified the police, but now what he was doing appeared innocent.

The bolt yielded finally to his skilful manipulation of the jimmy, and the Ghost entered a kitchen which showed no signs of use. His footsteps echoed as he crossed into the unfurnished dining room. The living room contained a chair, a table and a telephone. The bedroom had a bed, but nothing else.

Attached to the inside of the front door was a black steel strong-box connected with the letter slot in the front door. The combination lock of the strong-box presented no great difficulty to a man of the Ghost's talents and as soon as he had the little metal door open, he drew out a number of envelopes.

The top one was from Edna Gravens of Harmony House, and addressed to Q. T. Annaman at the Yonkers address. The Ghost opened the envelope, found that it contained five hundred dollars. The second, similarly addressed, bore the return inscription of Harry Coy. It contained seventy-five dollars.

Lannagan's "rent" was there—a
one-hundred-dollar bill. Dr. Roy Lex’s enclosure showed that for his barren apartment he paid no less than seven hundred dollars a month. There was also a payment from Jasper Maynard of two hundred dollars. There was no contribution from Roma Hillhouse, however.

“Not bad,” the Ghost muttered. “Not bad at all.”

Judging from what Lannagan must have earned, it appeared as though Annaman charged his tenants just about half of their total monthly income. It was blackmail deluxe, but blackmail which would be difficult to prove in court.

As the Ghost left Annaman’s house by the front door he still had a number of problems to untangle. He knew now who had killed Lionel Gravens, but had yet to prove that the same person had killed Jeff Humber. He had a pretty good reason for believing that Annaman and the murderer were one and the same persons—but no proof.

This killer was an artist at covering his tracks. He had developed a law-proof blackmail set-up. He had accomplished a murder that, except for the persistence of the Green Ghost, would have been perfect. But could the killer keep covering, now that the Green Ghost was hot on the trail?

* * * * *

Merry White’s investigation of the man in the dark glasses had not so far produced any startling results. Merry was accustomed to contributing considerable assistance to the Green Ghost and it annoyed her to realize that she had only uncovered one fact—that the man in the dark glasses, registered as Peter Smith, was really Humphrey Rennard of the newly-organized Pennsylvania Synthetic Rubber Corporation.

She had developed a keen dislike for Humphrey Rennard. Several times she had attempted to strike up a conversation with the man, but he would merely comment on the weather, then impolitely withdraw.

Merry White was not used to being ignored by men.

She had had better luck with the captain of bell-hops in the Edgerton Hotel, however. By the simple ruse of losing the key to her own room, she had got the bellhop captain to employ his master key. While he had been opening one of her windows she had found a chance to confiscate the key, leaving another so that the bell-hop had gone away thinking of his handsome tip, instead of his master key. When he had missed it later, and asked if it had been left in Merry’s room, she was certain it had not been.

So this evening Merry White was equipped to visit Rennard’s room and give it a thorough tossing.

Rennard dined at eight, and it was at this hour that Merry decided to go through his belongings. His only luggage was an unlocked suitcase and Merry went through it in short order.

IT WAS not until she explored Rennard’s toilet kit that she discovered something which might be important. It was a receipt form filled in by Q. T. Annaman, which Rennard had tucked away in a toothbrush holder. The receipt was for seventy-five thousand dollars—a lot of lettuce any way you looked at it.

Merry tucked this into her purse and finished her search of the room but without finding anything else of interest. She hurried down to a public phone booth, and tried to call the Ghost’s rectory. But the long distance operator could get no response.

As Merry stepped out of the booth she all but ran into the sinister Humphrey Rennard. He was wearing a long black topcoat, carrying his cane, and Merry could fairly feel the eyes behind the dark glasses boring into her.

“Good evening,” he said. “I wonder if I could persuade you to take a little walk with me.”

Merry smiled mechanically. She started to step back, but he kept nearing her until her back was against the phone booth.

“No,” she said. “I—I haven’t eaten yet—”

“It will give you an appetite for dinner,” he insisted. Then Merry saw
that his right hand was deep in the pocket of his topcoat, and knew that he had a gun there!

"You'll take my arm," he said quietly, "and then we'll walk."

She took his arm, and they walked —out of the hotel and onto the sidewalk. They turned to the left, walked half a block to where a big black sedan was parked. He nudged her with the hidden gun.

"You get in and drive," he ordered.

Merry got in under the wheel.

"I know what you're up to, Mr. Renlard," she said. "It's something about that new synthetic rubber plant. You don't want it to be put into operation before your own plant gets to working. You want to snare a lot of fat government contracts or get priorities or something—which you won't get if the Wayland people start making rubber before you do."

"It's nice weather, isn't it?" Renlard said. "Turn here at the next corner, to the left. And don't be in such a hurry. You really don't want to go where you're going, you know."

The Green Ghost opened the French doors that opened on Roma Hillhouse's living room at Harmony House. Seated in one of the deep lounge chairs she was not aware of her visitor's presence until the Ghost's graveyard voice spoke. Her book fell out of her hands as she stared at that glowing green death's head.

She had opened her mouth to scream when the Ghost crossed the room with incredible speed and clamped a hand over her mouth.

"There is no need to be alarmed, Miss Hillhouse," he said. "Answer my questions truthfully, and I'll leave you. You won't scream?"

She shook her head and the Ghost released his grip on her.

"First," he said, "I must tell you that I know your real name is Helen House. And what I know of Helen House's past could deprive Roma Hillhouse of her lucrative job. But your secret is safe with me."

"Out of the frying pan and into the fire, is it?" Roma Hillhouse said.

"If you mean that I might blackmail you, you're wrong. You deserve credit for having gone straight and worked your way up to such an excellent position."

"Thanks," she said dryly. "Now that the orchids have been handed out, what do you want?"

"I'll be frank," the Ghost promised. "You may know enough about me by repute to know that I want nothing but justice. You are being blackmailed by a man named Annaman. That is, you pay him a certain amount of your income in the form of rent."

Miss Hillhouse shook her red curls. "Not any more. I'm celebrating a funeral. Annaman is dead."

The Ghost was silent, studying her face.

"You believe that?" he asked.

"Believe it? Say, I—" she checked herself. "Sure, he's dead."

"And you were going to say that you helped to bury him. Mother Beel saw you in the cemetery when you helped to bury Jeff Humber."

Roma Hillhouse's face was pale beneath heavily applied makeup.

"I'm not talking."

"I think you'd better," he said. "You're in a spot."

"I'm not, and you know it. Mother Beel is insane. Nothing she might say could be used in court. Annaman's dead—and deserved to die. Call it murder if you want to. I didn't kill him, but I would have if I'd had the chance. He's bled me for five straight years. When I got a job that paid real money, he made me move here. Then he started slapping on the rent. If I had moved away or refused to pay rent, he'd have told my employers about my past. Half my pay was better than none, so I've lived here and paid his blasted rent."

She reached out an appealing hand to the Green Ghost.

"You don't want to punish the person who killed Annaman. Loving justice as you do, you might have killed him yourself."

"And you think that Annaman was Jeff Humber?"

She nodded. "I know it. I've stopped paying blood money, haven't I. I'm going to move next week. I'm free!"

"And you know who killed Jeff
Humber?"
"Wild horses couldn’t drag that out of me."
"Who else in this house was being blackmailed?"
Roma Hillhouse’s eyes narrowed. "Well, the person who killed Annaman was. Maybe some of the rest of the dopes were, too. But I wouldn’t know. Now go haunt somebody else, Mr. Ghost."
At a knock on the door, the Ghost nodded.
"Go see who it is, but don’t let anybody in. We’re not through yet."
Roma opened the door and the Ghost heard Jasper Maynard’s voice speaking as Roma stepped out and closed the door behind her.
The Ghost picked up the mirror which Roma had shown him when he had visited her as George Chance. Cagliostro’s mirror, she had called it, and she had said that every night she attempted to get the mirror to deliver spirit messages. At twelve midnight, she had said, she always breathed upon the mirror, hoping that a message would appear in the glass.
The Ghost took a piece of French chalk from his pocket and quickly wrote something across the face of the mirror. He pulled out a white silken handkerchief and rubbed out what he had written, polishing the glass with the silk. Then, before Roma Hillhouse could return, he went out the way he had come.
His next move was to get in touch with Merry White, about the man in the dark glasses. From a drug-store he phoned the Edgerton Hotel only to learn that Merry was not in her room, nor did she respond when paged in the dining room.
He hurried to the hotel and asked if Mr. Peter Smith was in. He was informed that Mr. Smith had gone out some time ago.
“Alone?” the Ghost persisted.
“No, I believe in the company of a young woman.”
The Ghost turned away. There was no slightest doubt but what Merry had gone out with Humphrey Rennard, alias Peter Smith. And he didn’t like the idea at all.
the strength in his lean body. And
no sooner had it left his hand than
he sprang at Rennard. There was
sudden darkness as the flashlight
struck the wall and went out, but
there was the thud of blows delivered
with the rapidity of machine-gun
shots.

Merry pressed back against the
wall, eyes straining against the cur-
tain of blackness. Then there was the
sound of somebody falling to the floor.
The voice that came out of the
darkness was—Rennard's!

"Don't try to get out of that door,"
he warned. "If you do, you'll be
shot."

Footsteps moved across the room,
the door was slammed, then some-
thing heavy was dragged across the
floor and braced against the door. A
thin, flickering thread of light showed
beneath the door, then the sound of
somebody pounding with a hammer.

Rennard was nailing the door shut!
Merry heard his footsteps descending
the stairs only after he had driven
four nails into the door.

She would have given anything for
a light—even a match—but Rennard
had taken her purse away from her
and she had nothing with which to
bring light into this awful blackness.

A T L A S T her groping fingers
touched Glenn Saunders' inert
body. She dropped to her knees be-
side him, feeling for his wrist. There
was a pulse, thank God!

Glenn Saunders groaned then.
"Glenn!" Merry said. "Glenn, come
to, can't you? Rennard's gone. We
—we're nailed up in here and I'm
scared."

She slapped his face gently and he
groaned again.
"Glenn, wake up! We've got to get
out of here. It's—I don't think it's
healthy to stay here."

"What's the matter?" Glenn Saun-
ders said sleepily. "Turn on the
light."

"There isn't any light," she re-
peated. "Glenn, are you all right?"
"My head—" he groaned again, and
sat up.

Merry got hold of his hands.
"Come on, Glenn—up on your feet.

We've got to get out, even if he has
nailed us in."

Glenn leaned heavily upon her as
she led him over to the small window.
It was a steel casement and one of the
panes had either been broken out or
had not yet been fitted into place.

"I'm a swell night watchman,"
Glenn muttered. "Merry, when
George finds out I've let you in for
treatment like this, he'll—"

"He'll just say it's the fortunes of
war or something like that. Get a
sniff of air, then we'll decide what
to do."

Down below, Rennard's car was set
in motion. Its headlights blazed a
trail.

"What do we do, I wonder?" Merry
asked. "Maybe yell?"

"There's not a chance of anybody
hearing us," Glenn said.

He went back to the door and she
could hear him testing its strength.

"I've got a knife," he said. "We
might whittle our way out."

She heard him chopping with his
knife and the sound seemed to go on
endlessly. Time and again she looked
out the window and down. At last,
down near the foundation, she saw a
flicker of light.

"Glenn!" she whispered. "Some-
boby's down there."

Glenn came to the window and
looked down. A man with a flashlight
was standing close to the wall, scrap-
ing at the mortar between bricks.

"Who is it?" Merry whispered.

"Don't know. Watch."

The man had dug two wires out of
the mortar and as they watched he
attached these two wires to some sort
of box.

"Good lord!" Glenn whispered.

"He's going to blow the place up."

"And we're in it." Merry gasped.

Down below, the man completed his
connection. Then he set a little dial
on the side of the box and there was
a faint ticking sound from within.
Satisfied, he straightened, turned
swiftly—and stopped in his tracks.

H E W A S staring at the grinning
green face of the Ghost. And
for just a moment, he was too terri-
fied to notice the black automatic in
the Ghost’s fist. “Stand where you are, Lannagan!” the Ghost ordered.

Frank Lannagan raised his hands. “I—we’ll blow up with this building!” he choked. “We’ve got sixty seconds to get away from here!”

“Then we won’t get away,” the Ghost said quietly. “Not unless you talk.”

Lannagan lunged at the Ghost, but the magician-detective’s fist drove him back to the wall. Lannagan stood there, his big body trembling.

“We’ll blow up!” he yelled. “There’s dynamite set all around here! Wires run through the foundation to set it off!”

“Talk!” the Ghost insisted. “Who put you up to this? Rennard? Or was it Stuart?”

“No—no. Annaman. He said if I’d dynamite the place, he’d let me go. He’s been blackmailing me, threatening to turn me over to the cops for a job I pulled out West. He said if I’d do this I wouldn’t have to pay him any more. It’s Annaman, I tell you! He got a wad of dough from Rennard—Rennard found out from me that Annaman had a hold on people he could force to do such things—he was only in touch with him by mail, of course. And then Annaman has to go and pick me for the job!”

The Green Ghost stepped in close, slammed the barrel of his automatic to Lannagan’s head. Then, quite calmly, he ripped from the wall the detonating device which Lannagan had wired up.

“When you get time, how about getting us out of here, huh?” Glenn Saunders called from the window above.

Minutes later, the Ghost, Merry, and Glenn were on their way back to the road, lugging the unconscious Lannagan with them.

“I waylaid Humphrey Rennard,” the Ghost told them. “He’s out in his car, and I mean out.”

“He paid Annaman to blow up the building!” Merry said excitedly.

“Maybe,” the Ghost said. “But Annaman forced Lannagan to do the dirty work. Anyway, Glenn, we’ve got a nice sabotage case against Lannagan, and Merry can charge Rennard with abduction. You two go to the police with Lannagan and Rennard. Better ring William Philmore, Glenn, to attest you’re his night watchman.”

“And what are you going to do?” Glenn asked.

“You’re letting me off at Harmony House. It’s now a little after eleven, and this case is scheduled to break along about midnight.”

“You mean—” Merry began.

“I mean that shortly after midnight, I’ll have Annaman right where I want him.”

CHAPTER XIII
Midnight

WHEN the little clock in Roma Hillhouse’s apartment chimed midnight, she put aside her book on spiritualism and picked up Cagliostro’s mirror.

She looked into the glass, but saw only her own face.

Perhaps, she thought, it was that

[Turn page]
face of hers which scared away any
messages the mirror was supposed to
receive from the spirit world, though it
was not unattractive. The medium
from whom she had bought the mir-
ror had brought messages out of the
glass, but the medium had been a
rather sad-eyed woman, soulful-look-
ing—not at all like Roma Hillhouse.
Dutifully, Roma Hillhouse made
the mystic sign of Solomon’s seal with
her forefinger. Then she held the
mirror close to her face and breathed
upon it. Her breath condensed in a
cloud on the glass—and her heart gave
a sudden bound. In the center of the
cloud on the glass was a letter—no,
two letters, an “A” and a “N.”
She breathed on the glass until
the whole surface was clouded, then took
another look. And there across the
surface, as though drawn by an in-
visible finger, was the message.

I was not Q. T. Annaman. Annaman is
alive.
Jeff Humber.

Roma Hillhouse almost dropped
Cagliostro’s mirror.
“Alive!” she gasped. “Annaman
wasn’t Humber. Then—then—”
Suddenly she realized the truth,
realized how she had been taken in by
the murderer. She knew who Ann-
aman was now! The spirit of Jeff
Humber had told her.

Roma Hillhouse went to the door of
her apartment, her heart hammering
against her ribs. She stole quietly
through the house to the room of the
murderer. She tapped at the door.
She knew what she would do now.
All these years she had been paying
blackmail money to this killer. Now
it would work the other way. She had
witnessed murder, and the murderer
had said that the victim was Ann-
aman. But the spirit message on the
mirror was the truth.

The killer opened the door, peered
out at her.
“I want to talk to you,” Roma said.
“Jeff Humber wasn’t Annaman.”
“Not here,” the killer whispered.
“In the summer house at the back,”
Roma said. “I’ll meet you out there,
right about where you killed Jeff
Humber. And no tricks. I can take
care of myself.”
“In five minutes,” the killer said.
“I’ll do right by you, Roma.”

THE killer stumbled across the
lawn at the back of Harmony
House — stumbled, because murder
was a nerve-jarring business full of
things to stumble over. First it had
been Lionel Gravens who had sent a
registered letter and discovered what
Annaman’s real address was. Gravens
hadn’t discovered who Annaman was,
but it was only a short step from find-
ing the address to lying in wait for
Annaman to come to collect the
monthly toll of blackmail money.
Then there had been Jeff Humber,
who had wanted a part of the racket,
and after that, the Green Ghost who
had got in the murderer’s way. And
now—now it was Roma Hillhouse,
who had witnessed the killing of
Humber. Roma ought to have been
silenced long ago, but it had seemed
best to tell her that Jeff Humber was
Annaman. She had believed it, and
the murderer was so rich now that her
monthly contribution wouldn’t be
greatly missed.
It was too bad to have to kill Roma.
The murderer had always considered
her attractive. It was especially too
bad to have to kill her with a mag-
netic hammer.

The murderer stopped on the way
to the summer house—stopped beside
a wooden garden bench. He knelt,
reached under the bench, found the
hammer which had been hidden there.
And a few nails.
When he reached the door of the
summer house the light of the full
moon filtered down through the over-
hanging vines. Roma was waiting
just within the door.
“Now you’re going to pay me, An-
aman,” she said.
“You saw me kill Humber,” the
murderer said. “You helped me bury
him. You’re really an accessory.”
Roma laughed. “That wouldn’t stop
me from telling the truth now that I
know who you are. All that hard-
earned money of mine you’ve taken
—I’ll want it back with interest.”
“Do you want me to tell you why I
killed Humber? You ought to know.”
The voice was quiet, steady. "I went to a bank in New York to deposit some money—"

"My money," Roma said.

"Yours and the money of all the others who have been contributing. And while I was making the deposit, Humber came up. He had been watching me. He knew that I had stumbled onto something big, and he wanted a share of my racket. Do you know what I did to Humber? You ought to—you saw it. And just in case you don't remember, this will refresh your memory!"

The hammer in the murderer's hand swung up, poised above the woman's head.

Then out of the night winged something that was like a bird of silver flashing in the moonlight. The flying knife struck home in the biceps of the killer's upraised arm. The hammer dropped—but behind the killer.

Annaman wheeled to meet the Green Ghost emerging from the shadows.

The murderer must have known, then, that this was the pay-off, that there was no escape. He was no match for the Green Ghost, with the Ghost's knife through his right arm. Nevertheless, he dashed straight at the weird figure with the glowing green face. The Ghost's automatic spoke three times, shooting the killer's legs out from under him.

ANNAMAN fell—fell at the Ghost's feet and the pain of his wounded legs drove consciousness from him.

The Green Ghost turned to Roma Hillhouse, standing in the doorway of the summer house.

"You'll testify against him, won't you?" he said. "You were an eye witness to the killing of Jeff Humber."

"Yes," she said weakly. "I'll testify."

People were running from Harmony House, attracted by the shots.

"They're free now," the Ghost said. "Really free. You'd better call the police, Miss Hillhouse."

The green light faded from his face. Like a specter from the grave, the Ghost faded back into the shadows.

Roma Hillhouse turned suddenly to those who came running from Harmony House.

"It's Annaman!" she shouted. "He's here on the ground. He's a murderer! Get the police, somebody. Annaman's a murderer...."

It was not until the following night that the Green Ghost's friends—Tiny Tim, Merry White, Joe Harper, and Glenn Saunders—got all the details. They were gathered in the haunted rectory, talking it over.

"And you knew who Annaman was before you caught him in the act of trying to murder poor Miss Hillhouse with that horrible hammer?" Merry asked.

The Ghost nodded. "As soon as I realized what the blackmail set-up was, I began to get suspicious of Harry Coy. He had been a social service worker, had dealt with the rehabilitation of criminals. So he knew all about the skeletons in the closets of his blackmail victims.

"We don't know what he had on Dr. Lex, but my guess is that Lex at one time or another was guilty of malpractice. If so, Coy might have discovered this from a conference with somebody he was trying to help in his social service work—somebody who knew of the doctor's crime. As for the others, he knew their past histories from the records which would have been at his disposal as a social service worker."

"Yeah, but wasn't there a clue somewhere?" Joe Harper wanted to know.

"Of course," The Ghost smiled. "A funny thing, but I thought you'd all want to know how come Harry Coy was sending money to Annaman's address when all along Harry Coy was Annaman."

"That don't bother me," Joe said. "Gravens probably worked the registered letter gag on Annaman to find out the address. It occurred to Annaman—I mean Coy—that any fool could deduce that the guy who was not represented in Annaman's mailbox was Annaman. So he started to send regular contributions to himself, just in case."
"Right!" the Ghost said. "Now, about the clue. That was the piece of cloth that was torn off Coy's trousers when he stole the nicotine sulphate out of the tool room. When Coy discovered that his pants had been torn, he disposed of them by putting them in the night drop at a laundry. He was so upset over having left this clue, that he didn't take a nickel and four pennies out of his pocket. This change was subsequently found by the laundry—"

Joe cleared his throat importantly.
"And even more subsequently by me," he said.
"Well, he swiped the poison on the night of August fourteenth. That same evening, before he swiped the poison, Miss Roma Hillhouse borrowed some change from Coy to pay for a C.O.D. package. She borrowed eighty-five cents, but she had some notion that she had borrowed ninety-four cents. I overheard an argument about that between Coy and Roma Hillhouse.
"Harry Coy, the soul of honesty, to all appearances, insisted that Miss Hillhouse owed him only eighty-five cents. She had a notion that it was ninety-four, because when he had brought out his pocketful of change to see if he could lend her that much, he had had just ninety-four cents in change and undoubtedly had said so.
"So," the Ghost concluded, "eighty-five cents from ninety-four cents leaves a nickel and four pennies in Mr. Coy's pocket. The nickel and four pennies were in that pocket when he dumped the incriminating trousers at the cleaners."
"Simple," Tiny Tim said. "Two and two make four."

Next Issue: The Green Ghost in THE CASE OF THE BACHELOR'S BONES, Complete Novelet by G. T. Fleming-Roberts
MURDER IN THE NURSERY

By TED COUGHLAN

Flowers and Trees May Not Whisper to Gregory Somerset, Botanical Expert, but He Knows His Onions When It Comes to Digging into a Case of Murder!

The mildly inquisitive look on Gregory Somerset's brown, prematurely grooved face deepened, as the dry red leaves crunched under his feet. He looked up at the two umbrella-shaped almond trees, marking the entrance to Miami Nursery, as if apologizing to them for hurting their freshly shed foliage.

Seeing no one in the nursery, he walked to the large coral rock house behind it, and rang the bell. The door opened before he could take his finger away. A small, wizened old woman came out. She peered at him over her dime-store glasses. Her lips set in a grim line.

"Didn't I tell you never to come here again?" she sputtered. "I won't have you taking plants without paying."

Somerset's face looked even more pained. He towered over the old lady, his shoulders stooping more than usual.

"Aren't you making a mistake, Mrs. Cook?" he asked in a gentle, persuasive voice. "I'm the nursery inspector, on my semi-annual trip. Is Mr. Cook around?"

The old lady took off her glasses, wiped them with the wrinkled sleeve of her white cotton dress, and peered at him again. Her face assumed a semblance of geniality.

"I'm sorry. I took you for one of them thieving customers. Oh, I don't..."
know what to do! I have so many troubles."

Gregory Somerset sighed. The old lady told him her real and imaginary troubles every time he came. He looked through the heart-shaped foliage of the blooming flame vine which shaded the porch.

"I see him now, thank you!"

He left the old lady mumbling to herself, and approached Tim Cook, who was painting young hibiscus shrubs with oil.

"White fly?" The inspector bent solicitously over the plants.

"Pretty bad this year." Cook stood up, slowly straightening his arthritic knees. "How do you find the nursery business, Inspector?"

"Slow. Cold weather and the war, I assume." Somerset's mild blue eyes blinked. "Most of Miami nurserymen want to sell out. I declare, I hardly have enough to keep me busy."

"You've managed to hold on to your job through six changes of governors, so I imagine you'll be all right," Cook said. He liked the soft-spoken inspector.

"Oh, yes, I seem to have the knack of guessing who'll win the election, and getting on the right band wagon."

Somerset walked through the rows of potted shrubbery. He bent over a bed of white pansies.

"Have you been using commercial fertilizer on these? They don't seem to be able to digest it. You'd better transplant them into leaf mold."

He completed his tour of inspection, came back, and handed the nurseryman a red sticker.

"Clean bill of health again, Tim. You surely look after your place. Glad to have seen you again. Well, I must be moving along."

He started toward the driveway, stopped and turned back.

"I'm so sorry," he said apologetically. "I forgot that I left my coupé over at the Twenty-seventh Avenue garage, to have a tire patched. I came over by bus. I wonder if your man could drive me back?"

"Sure." Cook walked over to his dusty pick-up and blew the horn. "Wallace will take you."

"Is he one of the young men Mrs. Cook was just reviling?" the inspector asked, with a trace of a smile on his sun-chapped lips.

"No, she likes him. Don't pay too much attention to her. She's been in bad health lately, and nothing suits her. Wallace Brannon is a good boy. . . . Oh, here comes Mrs. Donovan."

A middle-aged, plump woman in grayish white seersucker slacks scuffed toward them, looking inquiringly at the inspector.

"You honked for Wallace?" she asked Cook. "He went to the corner for cigarettes. The old lady says she's got to go shopping again. She wants him to drive her."

"Thanks. Tell her she'll have to wait for half an hour."

When the woman walked away, Cook explained:

"Another new helper. They come and go on the average of two a week. This one set a new record. She's been here five days."

WALLACE BRANNON came a few moments later. His surly, heavy-lipped mouth was drooping, and sweat had stained his bright plaid sweat-shirt. He looked hot and uncomfortable, as he stared at the inspector through thick-lensed glasses.

"Anything more you want today?" he asked Cook.

"I'd like you to drive Mr. Somerset to get his car. When you come back, take Mrs. Cook to the store."

"I'll get her list and bring the groceries myself," Brannon grumbled in a slightly thickened voice. "I'm going to the races." He glanced at Somerset.

"Where's your car?"

"Over on Twenty-seventh Avenue, near Flagler. If it wouldn't take you out of your way—" Gregory Somerset waved his thin, veined hand vaguely in the direction of Miami.

"That's on the way to the track. Let's go."

Somerset started for the truck.

"Not that pile of junk," Brannon said. "I'm taking my own car."

Two hours later, Somerset drove into the nursery again.

"I'm sorry," he apologized to Cook,
“but I must have left my brief-case here. Have you seen it?”

“I put it on the desk in the living room for safe-keeping. Wait a minute, I’ll get it for you.”

“Don’t stop that transplanting. I’ll get it myself, thank you.”

Somerset walked along the perfectly tended lawn, pushed open the front door, and peered inside, once, twice . . . He backed out, faster than he ever remembered moving before in his life. He didn’t stop until he bumped into Tim’s potting bench.

“My goodness, Mr. Cook, it’s awful,” he stammered. “I— I—”

“Calm down, Gregory. What happened?” The phlegmatic nurseryman didn’t even stop mixing soil.

“It’s Mrs. Cook!” Somerset blurted. “She’s — I’m afraid . . . She seems dead!”

Cook looked stunned.

“Did she have another stroke?”

With dread reluctance, both men hurried to the house. Somerset mopped his forehead jerkily.

“I don’t think so,” he explained. “It looks too messy for a stroke. I’m afraid — it looks as if someone . . . Oh, dear, I don’t know how to put it,” he faltered. “She seems to have been most brutally murdered.”

One glance at the corpse bore him out. The front of the old woman’s white shirt-waist was spattered with blood. Her head, with its sparse gray hair, had been crushed by blows.

Cook started to lift his wife from the worn grass rug, but Somerset stopped him gently.

“You’d better leave the body where it is, Mr. Cook. The police would not like it disturbed until they arrive. Do you still have a phone?”

Cook pointed dumbly to the instrument in the next room.

After calling the police, Somerset came back into the room where Cook was staring at the corpse. Oddly he noted that there was a small rip in the front of the woman’s shirt-waist, as if a pin had been torn loose from it. Then he saw the pin on the floor, and picked it up. But as he started to lay it on the table, he hesitated. Something that looked like a thread, that was not white, like the woman’s waist, was hanging to the pin. Quietly Somerset slid pin and thread into his pocket. It might come in handy later.

Then he took Cook gently by the arm and led the nurseryman outside, to the large rock porch, facing the street. They heard a speeding car. It turned into the nursery, its tires screaming. The right front wheel hit the corner of the cement driveway, its tire let out a deep sigh of relief, and sagged.

Wallace Brannon jumped out, and examined the blowout.

“Of all the rotten luck! My last tire, too, and I can’t even buy another. I’ll be—”

“You shouldn’t drive so fast, Mr. Brannon,” Somerset remonstrated. “I warned you earlier today. After all, with a car just turned sixty thousand miles, one can expect accidents.”

BRANNON made a wry face. Seeing Cook’s troubled face, he asked:

“What’s wrong, Mr. Cook?” The nurseryman did not answer. He was sobbing gently.

“Mrs. Cook is dead,” Somerset informed Wallace Brannon.

Wallace’s eyebrows went up. “How terrible!” he exclaimed.

“When did it happen?”

When told the grim details, he shook his head.

“Well, I suppose you won’t need me here any longer. No use me hanging around. I’ll come back for the car, when I pick up a tire somewhere.”

He started to walk away, but Somerset stopped him with gentle firmness.

“You will have to remain, Mr. Brannon. It is a case for the police, and they want to talk with everybody.”

Brannon stared at him, opened his mouth, then closed it without a word, and sat down on the porch glider. The police car stopped in front of the house. Three men got out of it. Brannon got up from his seat restlessly.

Somerset recognized the heavy-jowled, brusk Lester Harrel, chief of Miami’s police. Harrel had a tough reputation, especially with colored people. This was his second term. The first time he had been suspended by the governor, because of alleged brutal-
ity. His companions were plainclothes men.

“What’s going on around here?” he demanded.

“Mrs. Cook has been killed. The body is inside.” Somerset pointed to the front door.

“Robinson, you stay out here and watch those guys,” Harrel ordered, and strode inside, followed by the second detective, a short, serious-looking, gray-haired man wearing spectacles.

After a tense pause, Harrel bellowed from the house:

“Bring them in here! Round up everybody on the grounds!”

When they all crowded into the front room, he asked Cook:

“Who else lives here?”

“Mrs. Donovan, the housekeeper. She has a room upstairs. Two young men have the apartment over the garage.”

“Anybody else?” the police chief demanded.

“That’s all.” Cook sat down heavily.

“Go get them, Robinson!” Harrel barked.

The detective threw a mean look at his chief, and walked away obediently. His broad shoulders were hunched, yet he had to stoop, to go through the back door.

Harrel stood before Cook, scowling impatiently.

“What time did it happen?”

“I don’t know. We discovered her only about ten minutes ago. I presume the doctor could tell you the time of her death.”

“Don’t try to teach me my business,” Harrel snapped. He turned to the other detective, and ordered: “You, Barnes, get the M.E. on the phone. I want him right away.”

Glaring at the three men, he finally recognized Somerset.

“What are you doing here?”

“Why—why I’m still nursery inspector, you know, Chief. This is one of my regular stops.”

“Hmm,” Harrel grunted. He turned on Brannon.

“Who are you?”

“Wallace Brannon. I drive Cook’s truck and help with the outside work. You haven’t anything on me. I was at the race track all afternoon. They know that.” He pointed to Somerset and Cook.

Harrel was not impressed.

“Is that so, fellows?”

“Well, he left here around two, bound for the track, but since neither of us went with him, you’ll have to take his word for it.” Somerset surprised even himself with the long speech.

“I don’t take nobody’s word for nothing!” Harrel snapped, and turned back to Cook.

“I see you’re selling out. The house, or the whole nursery?”

“Either. I would rather sell them together. I’m getting too old for this hard work.”

“Whose name is the property in? Yours or hers?” He pointed to the corpse.

“Both our names. I suppose this will tie things up for a while?”

“Was she a free dealer? You might as well tell the truth. I’ll find it out, anyway.”

“No. She wanted to be, but the alienists certified that she was not capable of managing property. She had several buyers after the place, but she changed her mind as soon as she came to terms, and refused to sign.”

“So you killed her. With her out of the way, only your signature would be needed.” Harrel sounded elated at finding a motive.

“I did nothing of the sort!” Cook protested indignantly.

“We’ll find out!” Harrel blustered.

“Which one of you found the body?”

“Mr. Somerset. He found her when he came back for his brief-case.” Cook started pacing the room.

While Somerset was explaining to Harrel how he had found the body, Robinson came back with three people—the slovenly housekeeper, and the two pasty-faced tenants, in soiled tan slacks. Robinson pointed to a sagging sofa, and all three sat on the edge of it.

Harrel paced the room thoughtfully. Scowling, he turned on the assembled suspects.

“One of you knocked the old lady off, and I’m going to find out who. You might as well come clean now. Well?”
"After all, it could have been an outsider, Chief," Somerset suggested mildly. "Was she robbed?"

Still scowling, Harrel picked up the cracked patent leather pocketbook from the floor. Counting a few soiled bills, he asked Cook:

"How much money did she have today?"

"I don't know. She always claimed to be broke. She collected the rents, but I had to pay all the bills—food, electricity, medicine, everything else! Perhaps some of her boarders paid her today. Ask them."

"Did you guys pay her?" Harrel pounced on the two tenants. "Who are you?"

The older one nervously combed his hair with his hand, looked from the chief to his companion.

"I'm Ray Brian," he stuttered. "He's Slim Jackson. We took a vacation before reporting to the draft board. It's our first trip to Miami. We paid her yesterday for last week's room and board. Then this morning she comes over, and says she has a big bill due, and could we advance her another week's rent. We did. We lent her a tenner, besides."

"Where did you get that much money?" Harrel thundered.

"We were out to the dog races last night, and had some luck," the younger one boasted. "Hit the daily double."

Harrel counted the few bills again, and shook them in "Slim" Jackson's face.

"She couldn't have spent it all. How much money have you now? Fork it over—both of you."

The bewildered men dug into their trouser pockets almost simultaneously and pulled out some crumpled bills and a few coins. Harrel grabbed it from their hands. The cash amounted to fifty-nine dollars and thirty-four cents.

"Where did you get that much money?" Harrel's voice held a note of threat. "Bumped the old lady off, robbed her, and tried to frame an alibi? Hey, Robinson!" he barked. "Take those two along with us. Who knows if they were at the dog races last night?"

Robinson shrugged his broad shoulders and reached for their trembling hands. As he handcuffed the men together, he grumbled:

"You don't even know if the old lady was robbed, Chief. The fact that she had money this morning—"

"Who's running this?" Harrel interrupted angrily. "I said lock them up, before they run out on us."

"Oh, all right. You want me to take them in now, or wait till you're all through?"

"Wait a while. No need to make two trips. Keep your eye on them, that's all."

Brannon, who up to now had fidgeted with his car keys, stood up and walked toward the door.

"Where do you think you're going?"

Harrel snapped at him.

"Just out to the car for cigarettes. I left them there when I came back from the races."

Harrel looked out of the window, saw the car, and grudgingly permitted Brannon to leave the house.

"Don't try taking a powder," he warned. "I'll catch you so quick—"

"I ain't got nothing to run away from."

As Brannon walked out, he passed the medical examiner coming in. The doctor nodded curtly to the chief, and walked directly to the body. He examined it, then asked the detectives to lift it to the nearest bed. He resumed his examination.

"One good blow would have been enough to kill her," he finally said. "She was on her last legs, anyway. I'd say she died around four o'clock, within ten minutes of the hour, one way or the other."

"Thanks," Harrel grunted. "You can take the body away."

"Well, what do you make of it?" he asked Robinson. "Can you see anything I ain't got around to yet?"

Robinson restated the obvious facts, for his chief's benefit.

"Several of the people here had motive. Mr. Cook's was probably the strongest. The housekeeper hated the old lady—I understand she was a regular termagant. If it was, as you think, robbery, we can suspect the tenants. Brannon—hmm— He fretted at having to drive her to the store and
wait on her hand and foot. But that isn’t enough motive for murder. Inspector Somerset hardly knew the deceased, and she meant nothing to him, dead or alive.”

“How about their alibis?” Harrel demanded.

“Brannon seems to have an ironclad one. Somerset was not here at the time of the crime. I’ve already checked on him, by phone. Mr. Cook had no alibi. He says he was in the nursery but no one saw him. Mrs. Donovan was upstairs asleep, she says.”

“How about them two punks?” Harrel pointed at the two tenants.

“They were playing pool. That’s where I found them. They said they were there all afternoon, but they could have slipped away for a spell, and nobody would have missed them.” Robinson was trying hard to find a likely suspect.

“We were there all the time,” the younger draftee blurted. “Dozens of guys can swear to it. We played pool and drank beer from two o’clock until the detective picked us up.”

“That’s easy enough checked,” Harrel stated. “Hey, Somerset, would you mind running down to the pool parlor and finding out? I don’t want my men to leave here yet.”

“I will be delighted to leave here for a while,” Somerset said, and went out.

He was back in a moment breathless. Shaking with nervous excitement, he announced:

“Someone has attacked Brannon! He is out there, unconscious!”

“Where?” Harrel started toward the front lawn. “Stay with those guys, Robinson,” he ordered.

Somerset pointed to Brannon’s sprawling body. The man lay near the front bumper of his car, blood oozing out of a wound on his forehead. Harrel bent over him.

“Only stunned,” he told Somerset, who was picking up something from the ground.

“What did you find?”

“Just a piece of cloth, Chief. Here it is. It was snagged from his shirt on this banyan root when he fell over it. I must remember to tell Mr. Cook to cover it. Do you mind if I look around a bit? I’m getting quite interested.”

“Go ahead, but don’t keep nothing from me. I’m going to solve this murder before I leave here today.”

While Harrel was leading the revived, but slightly hazy handyman back into the house, Somerset examined the car and the grounds. He retrieved Brannon’s racing program from the front seat, then looked at the instrument panel. Frowning pensively, he reentered the house, in time to hear Brannon’s explanation.

“That clinches it,” Brannon was saying. “You ain’t got no right to hold me. The guy who killed the old lady tried to bump me off, too. He must have figured I knew something.”

Harrel shut him up with a look.

He stood in front of Cook.

“All right, Cook!” he shouted threateningly. “You were here all alone. You had plenty of motive and opportunity. We know you and your wife hated one another. So are you coming clean here or down at the station house?”

The nurseryman looked stunned.

“You mean—?”

“Yes. I’m taking you in.” He announced to his companions, “Let’s go, boys.”

While Harrel was putting the cuffs on the unresisting nurseryman’s wrists, Brannon volunteered:

“They were always fighting. Only last night she threatened again to change her will. He was furious.”

“Chief, don’t pay too much attention to Brannon,” Somerset interposed. “After all, he has no proof of what he is saying. Neither can I prove that he was at the race track around four o’clock.”

“How about this?” Brannon pulled out a mutuel ticket. “See, I bet on this nag in the fifth. He didn’t come in, but I saved the ticket. If you wanna check up, you’ll find the fifth race went to the post at three-fifty-five. How could I get back here by four o’clock if I was out there then?”

“True, that would be impossible,” Somerset admitted, but as Harrel started to leave the room, he insisted, “Don’t go yet, Chief.”

“What’s the idea?” Harrel demanded. “He couldn’t be in two places at once. I got the guys I need.”
"I wonder. How far is it from here to Hialeah?" Somerset was still pensive.

"Nine and a half miles. Why?" The chief impatiently rubbed the reddish stubble on his chin.

"When Brannon dropped me off at the garage, I noticed that his speedometer read exactly sixty thousand miles. If, as he says, he drove to the races and back, it should not read now more than sixty thousand and twenty, allowing for his taking a slightly longer route. But it now reads sixty thousand and forty-one."

"Sure," Brannon said quickly. "I had

Nobody answered him. All present were staring at the strip of cloth Harrel took from his pocket. He leaned over to compare it with the torn place in Brannon's violent plaid sweat-shirt. It matched perfectly.

"But, Chief," Somerset said, "that would mean nothing—unless there was a reason for that particular piece to be torn out of Brannon's shirt. It's this."

He reached into his pocket and took out Mrs. Cook's pin, with the thread he had found still hanging onto it, and to it also adhered still an infinitesimal swatch of plaid cloth. But what there was also matched perfectly—the previ-

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to drive all over town, after the old lady’s groceries. The A & P was closed. That's how I made the extra mileage. You heard Cook asking me to take her to the store, didn't you?"

"Yes, I recall." Somerset looked toward the kitchen. "Where are those groceries?"

"I ordered them to deliver... Are you trying to frame me?" Brannon looked painsed.

"Mr. Brannon, your story of the attack on yourself won't hold water. It is apparent you tripped purposely over that exposed banyan root. It was scuffed, and the strip of cloth I gave to Chief Harrel—"

"What about it?" Brannon asked.

ous small hole in the bit of cloth torn from Brannon's shirt.

"Brannon, you see, Chief," Somerset explained, "had not expected to be caught up on his race-track alibi, and probably had no chance to change his shirt. When things began to get warm, he went outside and faked being attacked, as a good excuse to tear the whole torn piece out of his shirt."

"Lock him up!" Harrel thundered.

"How many pairs of handcuffs do you think I have?" Robinson reluctantly moved toward Brannon.

Brannon jumped away and threw himself on Somerset.

"You lie! I ain't been back here this afternoon. I can prove it."
“What was the name of that horse you bet on?” Somerset asked.

“None of your business,” Brannon snapped.

“Come on, answer him!” Harrel raised his fist.

“Maple Syrup. He run in the gutter.” Brannon produced a mutuel ticket. “He was Number Five in the fifth.”

Somerset took the crumpled program from his coat pocket and handed it to Harrel.

“Someone seems to be in error, Chief. Maple Syrup was Number Five in the fourth, not the fifth race. How could a gambler make such a mistake? I don’t believe Brannon ever bought that ticket.”

Harrel tapped his forehead.

“Why, sure!”

He yanked Brannon out of his chair.

“If you had really bet on Maple Syrup, you wouldn’t make such a fool mistake. You picked up that bum ticket when you went back to the track after killing the old lady.” He struck the suspect with his open palm. “Come clean, before—”

Cringing under the blow which had split his lip open, Brannon glowered at Somerset with murderous hatred.

Seeing Harrel’s clenched fist raised to strike again, all the courage left him.

“I was tired of her ordering me around,” he whined. “She made me pay her all I made for room and board. I only stood for it because she said she had willed me her share in the nursery. I could have sold out to Mr. Cook and left here. I was sick and tired—”

“Take him down, Robinson, and book him. Turn the others loose. I got to call the reporters. Solving this in such a hurry won’t hurt me none. Just what I need with the elections coming up, and me running for sheriff.”

He took the cuffs off Cook and stalked proudly out of the room, without even a glance at the mousy-looking nursery inspector.

“My goodness, I’m glad that is over,” Somerset looked at his watch and smiled apologetically at Cook. “Really, I must be going along to the Tropical Gardens. I’m fourteen minutes late now.”

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THE GIRL WHO LAUGHED!

Detective Quentin Grey hears the echo of tragedy in a girl’s laugh and battles to penetrate the fog of intrigue and mystery surrounding a gloomy old mansion in

THE HOUSE OF FEAR

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ONE OF THE MANY EXCITING THRILLERS COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

By STEWART TOLAND

His Wife's Gift Surprises Anthony Chase No End!

ANTHONY CHASE stood still by his upstairs bedroom window. His eyes were black and hot. His mouth cruelly thin. It hadn't always been so. Once he'd been young, loving Maria, and he had swept her off her feet to the altar.

But now Maria was old. He watched her opening the garage door. Her hair was streaked, her dress clung in the sun of the afternoon—bulging, revealing, against some two hundred pounds of flesh. She'd put that meat on her bones sitting at his table, laughing and cooking great mounds of food. Content that she was the perfect wife.

But a man wanted more than just to crowd his stomach. He wanted food for his eyes. Something young and lovely, to stir his tiring senses.

The car lurched out of the garage and down into the street nicking a tree on the way. The man above smiled disdainfully. How many years had she handled the wheel so, erratic and stupid. How many years would he have to live in this house with her. He was tired of her. She was old and worn, and she dated him more than the gray about his temples. A man could throw away a pair of old slippers—even his house, yet he had to keep his wife.

Or did he?

His eyes roved down the now empty street. A woman, no—she could still be called a girl, came out on the lawn of the fourth house. She ran and laughed in the sun, playing with a dog. He, Anthony Chase, had held her in his arms. He had given her the dog and kisses...

Tomorrow was his birthday and they were going to dinner and a dance. Their first whole evening together. He had dreamt of it for a week: seeing himself in tuxedo, that already waited in a hotel; walking across the floor of the supper room, with this blonde child laughing up at him. Diners would turn to stare after them in admiration, in envy.

She was what men searched for and seldom found. And she was his for the evening.

But he'd have to come home to Maria.
Anthony Chase turned from the window. He walked quickly to the desk, took paper and pen. Carefully he wrote as though he'd practiced many times.

Dear Tony,

This is a terrible thing to do to you when you've been so wonderfully good to me. I've got an incurable illness. I can't bear the thought of dying by inches, of finding each day weaker and more terrible than the one before. This is easier for me and, in the end, for you. Believe me.

With all my love,

Maria

He laid the paper neatly on top of the desk. Then he went through the drawers thoroughly, copying each grocery list, each little notation of hers in this new back hand of his. He burned the originals and threw the ashes down the drain. If they searched for verifications of her writing, they would find them all the same. And she had no relations. No one to come forward to name his lie. Only her loving husband.

He smiled.

It was dark by the time he had finished. Then he poured out a glass of tomato juice and took a little vial from his pocket. He'd been carrying it a long time now. Waiting till their next door neighbors should all plan to be away. Figuring each angle, making perfect each phase of this thing called murder.

SO INTENT was he on mixing the drink he did not hear the car or the garage or even the front door. She came in puffing, large and loud, looking especially well pleased with herself.

“Darling, you must be starved! I didn't mean to be so late but every-thing seemed to keep me.”

She took off her hat, brushed at the straight hair straggling down her neck. Her nose was shiny, her laughing eyes filled with only a vapid, smug contentment. He marvelled that once he had dreamt of nothing else, as now he dreamed of the girl down the street.

Maria came and pecked on his forehead. “You look cross, darling, don’t be. We're having stew and dump-lings.”

“Don't hurry, Maria,” he said. “I can wait. I’ve already had a snack and I saved the same for you. Here’s a tomato juice cocktail.” He smiled and held the glass out.

It was very quick.

So soon as he was sure she was dead he called the police. His voice trembled on the phone and it wasn’t play-acting.

It all happened just as he had imagined it so often. The medical examiner, officers walking around solemnly reading the note and accepting his story of having just come in from a long day selling on the road. He was late. There was no dinner on the table. He hurried upstairs—and found this.

He had his order-book full of impressive and genuine building supply sales for defense houses. Just the date was changed—yesterday’s to today’s. No doubt the next door neighbor had seen him drive in, there was an old woman in the family that rubbed at every car on the street. But the next door neighbors didn’t answer.

The cop wrote “suicide” in his little book and then said maybe he should feel the car engine. Mr. Chase claimed he’d just come home. The car, then, would still be warm. It was mere formality, just to round out his report.

Mr. Chase smiled and led the way. The engine surely would be warm. Maria always raced the car so, wasting gas and making the car seem even more rattling and threadbare than it was.

He opened the garage doors. There was no auto. Just an empty, hollow room that made their voices suddenly seem loud and strange.

The police looked interested.

“I thought you’d just come home in the car.”

“I did, not five minutes before I phoned you!” he was cold. God, how cold he felt! “It must have been stolen.”

“We'll send out an alarm right away.”

The officer watched him with a new, more calculating gaze, like a cat before a caged bird. And just then a stranger walked up the drive to ask
if Mrs. Chase were home. The officer answered a quick yes and the man smiled in vast relief.

“Well, I'm glad! From your uniforms I thought maybe there'd been an accident. I didn't like her having to walk home.”

“Walk home!” the words were a whisper and filled with terror.

“Where did she walk from and when?” the cop shut his little black book.

“Why about a quarter of an hour ago from my lot. I had a little more work to do, so I promised to deliver later.” He smiled at the bewildered man in the group of officers crowding close.

“I s'pose you're Mr. Chase and lucky you are. Your wife got the best buy I've had on my second-hand lot since the war began. A 'forty-one model with good rubber on it. And your old car is already on its way to making guns. The new one's out front.” He grinned. “I wish my wife kept as nice secrets from me, Mr. Chase.

“Happy birthday!”

Next Issue

Calendar of Mystery

Timpson groped his way down the dark pathway to the garden gate. Behind him, the silent house loomed still as death. No one knew of his visit, because there was no one to know. Which was just as well. He had little love for the man who lived in that gloomy old dwelling. A wasted journey—all these miles, just to have knocked in vain. Still—

A slight scream and the sounds of a scuffle caused him to look up sharply. Down the street a covered car was standing, beside it a girl struggling in the grip of three men. “Help—” her cry came feebly, stifled as one of them put a hand quickly to her mouth.

Stimpson gritted his teeth and started running forward, reckless of the odds. With a shout, he flung himself upon the attackers. He let drive at a man and tore the girl from his grasp.

“Quick!” he snapped—and then stood literally dumbfounded.

The girl whirled her cloak suddenly over his head. Swift hands seized him, and, caught in the folds, he was borne backward, his yell muffled. He clutched out, and silk fabric tore away in his grip.

Pressed to the ground, Stimpson felt ropes being slipped about his wrists and ankles. He heard the soft sound of a woman's laughter.

Such is the gripping start of the lead novel scheduled for next issue. THE HOUSE OF FEAR, by Frank Johnson, is the thrilling and chilling experience of the famous detective, Quentin Grey, as he investigates the mystery of THE HOUSE OF FEAR and the amazing girl who laughed. This story of crime and eerie intrigue will hold you spellbound to the very last page.

And then before your hackles can settle smoothly back into place, George Chance, the famous magician-detective, presents the CASE OF THE BACHELOR'S BONES, a fast-moving novelet by G. T. Fleming-Roberts. In this gripping story George Chance assumes the identity of his alter ego—the Green Ghost—in order to penetrate the mystery of violence and death at an old mill which involves buried banks and loot and the amazing murder of four bank-robbing crooks. An unusual story in an unusual setting.

Besides which there will be thrilling short stories by your favorite mystery authors which will make you want to keep the lights burning all night. And if you survive the suspense—I'll meet you here with other ominous prophecies for the issue to come. And Chakra will have more strange stories of the weird and occult for you.

Won't you write in and tell me how you like the stories and features in our magazine? Simply address your cards or letters to The Editor, THRILLING MYSTERY, 11 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y. Thank you!

—the editor.
A Complete Novelet

EXCHANGE SHIP

CHAPTER I

Cheated Rifles

Obviously, the three men in the back of the car were Americans. No man in Italy had possessed pure wool clothing, bright neckties or good quality shirts for years.

The driver of the car was a Gestapo lieutenant who tore through the streets of this Italian city with little regard for life or limb. There was not much traffic. The only cars in Italy are those of the Gestapo—the unofficial army of occupation.

The lieutenant was young, slim, and wore the usual sneering frown of superiority. He stopped the car near the outskirts and in front of a large graystone building. Its windows were barred, its main entrance a huge gate. This opened at the sight of the
Gestapo uniform and the car rolled through.

An Italian officer, in charge of the prison, gave a disinterested salute which the Gestapo lieutenant answered with a snappy one.

"Three American dogs." The lieutenant gestured at the three men in the car. "You will keep them in one of the questioning rooms until I find time to see what they know. By the way, I am speaking German, but you do not seem to quite understand what I am saying."

"You speak too fast," the prison officer said. He reached into his pocket and took out a well-thumbed German-Italian dictionary.

"All Italian officers have been ordered to learn to speak German!" the lieutenant thundered. "It shall soon be the master language of the world."

The prison officer's face was a bit ruddy. "I am sorry, Herr Leutnant."

Compatriots from the Terrors of Axis Slavery!
German is a difficult language. I should think, seeing you Herrenvolk are so clever, that you would learn our language far more quickly than we can learn yours."

"I suppose you think that is funny," the lieutenant snapped. "Never mind. Get these men inside and no one is to know they are here. That must be understood."

"I know, I know." The Italian wagged his head impatiently. "These men I have seen before. Signors Halton, Mander and Caldwell. The entire Gestapo has been seeking them for days. They operated businesses here in Italy for years, and they have seen and heard too much. Especially about submarine bases and ports of embarkation for Libya. Eh, Lieutenant?"

"Business men!" the lieutenant scoffed. "They might as well have been spies. Yes—they know too much. It is necessary that they be prevented from reaching the United States with the information they possess."

"Well, don't worry," the prison official said. "They'll be safe."

"They had better be," the lieutenant grumbled. "Now there is an American girl who has been here for some time."

"Si. Her name is Davis. What about her, Herr Leutnant?"

"I am not so sure," the lieutenant said. "First, I will question her. If she is obstinate—a firing squad immediately. That is the way we dispose of the enemies of the Reich."

The Italian shrugged. "It is too bad. She is a nice girl. There are too many executions anyway. One scheduled in about half an hour. An Italian woman whom they say ... Ah, what difference does it make what she did? She is doomed and I cannot prevent her execution."

The three American prisoners were herded inside and locked in a large, bare room. They looked around for chairs, found none, and sat on the floor. Not one of them uttered a sound.

The lieutenant swaggered down a corridor, glared at prisoners who peered out of their cells at him and finally stopped in front of the last cell. He gestured impatiently and the Italian officer quickly unlocked the door.

A girl came out. She showed evidences of having been a prisoner much too long. Her face was pale, her hair none too orderly, although she had tried in every way to keep it neat. She looked stolidly at the Gestapo lieutenant.

"You will come with me." The lieutenant grasped her arm hard and yanked her along the corridor. "There are certain questions I think you will answer, Fraulein. That is, if you care about living."

"Let go of me, you beast!" The girl tried to disengage her arm. "This is Italy—not Germany. What right have you to—"

"The right of the greatest power on earth. The Reich! Now behave or I shall be compelled to use force."

The Italian officer opened the door of another of those barren rooms and stepped aside. The Gestapo lieutenant shoved the girl into the room, then faced the Italian.

"Remember what I have said. The three American men are to be held quietly. Even if other Gestapo officers come, they are not to know of these men. As for the girl—I am not sure yet, but I soon will be. Either she talks quickly—or there will be another execution."

He stepped into the room, closed the door and slid home a bolt. There were no windows in the room, no other doors. A weak electric light bulb dangled from the center of the ceiling.

The girl turned slowly. Her eyes were large and her lips were parted. The Gestapo lieutenant walked close to her. Suddenly he put both arms around her and their lips met.

"Peter!" the girl choked when he let her go. "Oh, Peter, I thought it was you, but in that uniform—"

Peter Lynn grinned. "Fits me pretty well, doesn't it? But I have about two minutes to explain the reason for it. Halton, Mander and Caldwell are in another part of this prison. The whole doggone Gestapo is looking for them. If they are caught—if you and I are caught—it means
death. That's why we must work fast."

"But Peter, the last I heard of you, you were in Budapest. I thought you went back to New York on the diplomatic exchange ship."

"Without you?" Peter Lynn chuckled. "Diane, you didn't believe that?"

"You believe a lot of things after being locked up for months. Fortunately, the officer in charge of this jail is Italian and not so bad. But those long weeks—"

"Over now," Lynn said. "The next couple of hours mean everything. You see, darling, the Gestapo knows that Halton, Mander and Caldwell hid as soon as Italy declared war on the United States. They prevented them from contacting the Embassy before the first ship sailed. Now there is another such ship—leaving Lisbon in a couple of days.

"Those three men are entitled to passage, are even expected. The Gestapo can't stop their transfer because they have nothing on them—nothing definite, that is. They only think they know a lot about coastal defenses in Italy. The fact is, they do know so much that British and American Intelligence would give a right arm to listen."

"But Peter, if they join the passengers for Lisbon, won't the Gestapo find out and do something about it? They want me too, you know. For hours at a time they've questioned me, tried to find out what information I've picked up here and there. About Vichy France working hand in glove with the Italians, of Nazi U-boat bases here in Italy, how the Italians are dominated by Hitler, and Mussolini has become nothing more than a poor figurehead."

Peter Lynn nodded, one eye on the closed door. "I know all about it," he said. "When I found out that you and the others were unable to make the first boatload of exchange diplomats and civil employees, I knew the Gestapo was on your necks."

"You should have left, Peter," Diane reproached him gently. "It's so dangerous now. You and I were reporters. We got around too much and kept our eyes and ears open. The Gestapo is looking for you, too."

"Don't I know it?" Lynn grunted. "I was sent to Budapest just before war was declared. They were going to send me back here in time to meet the diplomatic ship. But how could I leave when you were in danger?"

"They arrested me right away," Diane explained, "and charged me with being a spy."

"I know. Anyhow I got myself some forged papers, gave the Budapest gendarmes the slip and got back here. I found out where you were locked up, contacted Halton and the others who were in hiding and—well, here we are."

"In a prison," Diane groaned. "Sure, but prisons have gates. Listen—if we all make the train to Lisbon, make our presence known to an American diplomat who is in charge of the party, then the Gestapo won't dare yank us off the train. Why? Because, little lady, if they do, certain Germans who are being exchanged for us won't leave the United States. These Germans happen to be so important that the Gestapo doesn't dare risk tampering too much."

"But how in the world can we get out of here, Peter?"

He told her, as rapidly as possible. Then suddenly, Peter Lynn hurried over to the door and put his ear against it. He heard the sound of marching feet and the clink of rifles.

"The zero hour," he whispered. "Let's go!"

He seized her arm again and dragged her to the prison officer's quarters.

"When does the Italian woman die?" he asked brusquely.

"They are already going for her," the Italian said. "Why, Signor?"

"Because this girl dies with her! Where is the courtyard?"

The Italian pointed toward the door.

"You have only to look for a wall weakened by bullets. What of the three American prisoners you took?"

"As soon as the firing squad has done its duty," Peter Lynn said, "you
will have those three men placed in my car. I shall leave immediately."

Dragging Diane again, Peter left the office, crossed a cleared space where his car was parked and both disappeared into a small courtyard. There Peter stopped and looked around. It was just getting dark.

"Listen carefully," he said to Diane Davis. "That car over there is mine. You'll find a blanket in the front seat. Crouch down under the dash, pull the blanket over you and don't make a sound. Beat it, Beautiful."

CHAPTER II

A Hint of Menace

Peter Lynn watched Diane race across the yard. She had changed, but less then he had expected. A beauty parlor could shape her blond hair quickly. Good food would soon restore the natural pink to her cheeks and iron out the hollows around her face. Diane was still beautiful.

Lynn too, had managed to hold his own. He was of average height, a little thinner perhaps than when he had been an American reporter stationed over here, but just as agile and eager as ever.

The other three Americans really had suffered. Hiding out from the Gestapo meant they had not been able to provide themselves with proper food. As a result, Halton, Caldwell and Mander were already coming out of the prison office. They solemnly clambered into the back of the Gestapo car. Lynn got behind the wheel, saluted the Italian official, and drove toward the big gates. They were opened instantly.

Once clear of the prison, Lynn stepped on it. The firing squad would wait just so long. The Italian prison officer would soon learn that the American girl had not been a victim. He would suspect instantly. A phone call to Gestapo headquarters would blow the whole thing wide open, and Peter Lynn had to be at the train before that happened.

"Peter," Halton said from in back, "we heard a firing squad. It wasn't—"

"Diane is riding with us... Darling, you'd better keep low until I give the word. If it gets stifling, raise the blanket a bit."

"I'm used to being stifled," Diane's muffled voice answered. "Spend a good part of a year in one cell and you'll find out too. Oh, Peter, that poor woman! They killed her, didn't they? I heard the rifles."

"Yes. I couldn't prevent it."

"Of course you couldn't," Diane replied. "All she did was beg her son
not to go back to the army for a few days beyond his furlough. They shot the boy in front of her eyes—and now she is dead. That was the work of the Gestapo, Peter."

"I know. Her death was avenged before she died, Diane. I took this uniform off a Gestapo lieutenant and he protested a little too much, so I broke his neck. They won't find him for days—I hope. Now hang on, everybody. I've a hiding place in mind close enough to the railroad siding so we can reach the diplomatic train quickly."

LYNN headed for the outskirts, stopped not far from a military post, and pointed to a small house with boarded-up windows.

"That," he said, "is a small ammunition dump, believe it or not. They have to disguise the places like that or some of the Italians who don't like the war, don't like Hitler, and think Mussolini would be a better attraction in Hades than in Italy, would blow it up. I know that those who are aware of what it really is rarely go near it, so you should be safe there for a short time. I have to get rid of this buggy and then I'll join you."

Diane came from beneath the robe and kissed Lynn on the cheek.

"Thank you, darling, for saving my life. Don't be long. There is so much to talk about."

"Do you think you should dare try to get rid of the car?" Halton asked. "Got to," Lynn answered. "They'll have a description of it broadcast as soon as the Italian prison official wakes up. Don't worry about me. Now about yourselves."

Halton sighed deeply. "Thank heaven we're almost out of it. They arrested me once, you know. Locked me up, and if any new tortures are ever developed, the Gestapo or the Gestapo-trained Italian OVRA will think them up."

"I know," Lynn said. "It must have been pretty tough."

Halton nodded. "Yes, indeed. At one time I even decided it was no use to go on. I was going to kill myself, but the Gestapo found it out and even denied me that privilege."

"Let's go," Mander said impatiently, "or we'll all be in the clink again."

Lynn watched them slip up to the small house, one by one. When they were all safe inside, Lynn drove away. He headed for town and hailed the first Nazi soldier he saw. There were plenty of them in Italy. It was no wonder the people realized they had lost the war almost before it began.

"Attention!" Lynn snapped. "Listen to me. This car belongs to General Scheidel. He is in the next city north of here. Take the car to him and do not stop for anyone or anything, is that clear?"

"Perfectly, Herr Leutnant."

"Good. Then take over and don't waste time or the Kommandant will have your head and mine."

He watched the car vanish up the road and grinned a bit. That soldier looked like a wooden-headed slob. He had his orders and Lynn knew he wouldn't stop for trouble or high water. Maybe he would get himself shot. That was all right, too—so far as Peter Lynn was concerned.

He turned in the direction of the railroad tracks. The station was about half a mile to the west. There was rather a lavish cafe a short distance from the tracks. In peace times it had been a popular place with railroad men. Now the Gestapo had taken it over because the owner knew how to cook and serve food.

Lynn drew himself erect, hoped he would not be scrutinized too carefully, and walked into the place. There were a couple of officers slouched at a table, drinking schnapps. They were a little boiled, and paid no attention to Lynn.

The owner was a stout, swarthy man with a gigantic mustache that bounced up and down furiously. He bowed to Lynn, and then his black eyes started to sparkle.

"Ah," he said, "it is the Leutnant from Bavaria. The one who likes my cooking. Good! I shall prepare you a wonderful meal. You may supervise it yourself. Come—into the kitchen."

ONCE there, the Italian put both arms around Lynn and kissed him soundly on each cheek. Then he
drew back a little and his eyes grew worried.

"Signor Lynn! Beata Madre, it is good to see you again. You came from Belgrade?"

Lynn nodded. "Yes, Tony. From Belgrade, and the news isn't good. The woman you married and your children are considered anti-Nazi. The eldest son was—"

Tony covered his eyes. "Shot—si, I know. They shoot everyone. The beasts—the pigs! My wife, Signor. What has happened to her?"

Lynn shrugged. "Concentration camp. The younger children were sent to a school to be taught how to become good Nazis. Tony, keep your mouth shut. If the Gestapo ever discovered you had married a foreigner, an enemy of the Reich, they'd go to extremes with you."

Tony's black eyes flashed. "I keep quiet. One day though, these Nazi animals will pay. I am no Fascist, no Nazi. All I wanted was peace and a chance to bring my family from Belgrade. It is lucky I came back alone. The Italy I had left was gone. Disappeared. Now I must help those who will bring it back."

"Good," Lynn approved. "It's the only way Europe and the world can keep on existing—through hope and courage and a slap at the Nazis when you get a chance. You can do me a favor, Tony."

"For you—anything. You know that."

"Thanks. Four friends of mine—Americans—are hidden in that little ammunition dump on the edge of town. It's unguarded. The Nazis believe everyone thinks of the house as merely abandoned. Send someone to bring those friends here. We need refuge until just before dawn."

"I go myself," Tony declared. "It is little enough. I shall not be gone more than ten minutes. It is not far. If anyone comes, hide. The cafe is empty until meal times, and then the pigs flock in."

Peter Lynn was in the cellar of the cafe when Tony returned with Diane and the others. Tony hurried toward the steps.

"I go to make food—much good food. Ah si, I have it. The Italians do not eat, but the Germans, they eat well. They take everything."

Mander sat down on a barrel.

"Peter," he said, "until you arrived, I thought we were properly cooked. You got us to a safe place, but how in the world can you arrange to slip us aboard the diplomatic train?"

"Easy." Peter Lynn grinned. "The train will be made up in the yards about a hundred feet from this café. It's on the siding ready. It will be rolled into the station empty, and unguarded. But we'll be on it, and we'll stay hidden until the train is sealed. Then let's see the Gestapo take us off."

Diane leaned back on a pile of burlap bags and sighed in contentment.

"This feels like a satin-covered bed, Peter. Such luxury, after that dismal cell. Peter, will you do me one more favor?"

"Anything," Lynn smiled.

"Take off that uniform. Remove it before you're contaminated."

Halton laughed. "I wouldn't crawl through a pig sty with it on."

"I'll have Tony provide me with some clothes," Lynn said. "One thing I must do first, however. I've got to find out the reaction to our escape. That can be done easily right upstairs when the Gestapo officers come in to dine. They won't know me, for new officers come and go every day. I'll pick one who looks as though he might talk. Now we'd all better keep quiet. Those devils will begin to assemble pretty soon."

They waited an hour while Tony fed them with food meant for Gestapo stomachs. It was good food, from all parts of conquered Europe. Food for the lack of which children died and old men fell in the streets.

Peter Lynn straightened his uniform, threw back his shoulders and gave the Nazi salute. He pivoted and marched upstairs. Tony showed him how to slip into the café without being seen. Lynn selected a table at which one pompous-looking Gestapo captain sat.

"Good evening," Lynn said respectfully. "May I sit down, Kapitan?"
eat and to ask questions, if you will be kind enough to answer them. I am new here, recently transferred from Poland."

The German captain whistled and leaned across the table.

"By all means, sit down. Poland! Ach, that is where I should be with my talents. Something doing there, and none of this miserable cheese and spaghetti. Always spaghetti and red wine. Champagne and cognac is for conquerors like us, eh?"

He led Lynn into telling about Poland and Lynn gave him harrowing details. The bloodier they got, the more the captain licked his chops. Suddenly Lynn switched subjects.

"It is too bad you must remain here, Herr Kapitan. Among dumb animals like these Italians. I understand they actually allowed prisoners to escape right from under their noses."

The captain nodded and cursed.

"Ach, ja! Such idiots. But we of the Gestapo are clever enough to outwit the Americans in the end. Steps have been taken."

Lynn didn’t dare ask details, but he kept plying the captain with more and more wine. The café gradually emptied until only half a dozen were left. The captain was obnoxiously drunk.

Lynn looked around. No one paid any attention. He doubled up one fist, shot it across the table and plastered the captain’s jaw. The German slumped out of the chair onto the floor.

Lynn got to his feet and roared with laughter. He was still laughing as he picked up the captain, threw him over one shoulder and staggered out. But on the way to the front door, along a hallway he darted toward a door that led to the cellar.

Tony signaled that everything was clear. Lynn carried the unconscious German into the cellar and dumped him on the floor.

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CHAPTER III

Man Overboard!

ARRANGING an old table and a few boxes Lynn talked swiftly. The three American men sat down. Diane faded into a dark corner of the cellar.

The German finally stirred and groaned. Lynn snuffed out the single candle, then hoisted the Nazi to his feet.

"Wake up, you stupid dog!" he snarled in German. "Wake up. Stand at attention before your superiors. Do you hear me?"

"What is?" the captain asked thickly. "Where am I? What has happened?"

"You were seen talking to a spy—a spy in the uniform of a Leutnant. At the café, idiot. Don’t you remember?"

The captain tried to penetrate the darkness, but failed completely.

"Why are there no lights?" he asked. "There is a table—people seated at it. I do not understand."

"This," Lynn told him, "is a court-martial, Kapitan. You have been under arrest for hours, and in a drunken stupor. We are your superiors, but it is fitting that even you have a fair trial. The men here cannot see you any more than you can see them. Therefore, there will be no prejudice."

"Court-martial? Himmel! What have I done?"

"Talked too much with a tongue oiled by wine. What did you tell that spy? Answer truthfully and you may not be shot. One lie, and you are finished."

"I—I told him nothing. Nothing at all."

"That should get you shot at once. May I remind you there were other ears in the café. You were heard telling how the escaped Americans will never reach the United States."

"A lie! I said nothing of the kind. Lieber Gott, I said nothing like that! Only that things were taken care of. Nothing more, I swear it."

" Didn’t you tell the spy how we were going to take care of those Americans?"

"No! No! How could I, when I do not know myself?"

"How much do you know?" Lynn asked sharply.

The captain clapped both hands to an aching, muddled head.
dred and thirty people, well-guarded, clambered aboard the train for Lisbon. A white-haired consular official was in charge. He watched the doors of the train sealed up, saw Gestapo agents climb onto the platforms and take up positions.

Finally the train pulled out. Weldon, the consular official, went to his room, opened the door, and his eyes bulged for a moment. He hastily closed the door again.

"Peter Lynn!" he exclaimed. "Halton—Mander—Caldwell! And you, Miss Davis. We'd given all of you up for dead."

"Well, they've got the well-known finger on us yet, Mr. Weldon," Lynn said. "We got here by a margin as slim as the pity in a Heinie's heart. But we're here, and that's something. Now let the Gestapo find us. We're provided with passports and visées. They'd love to cancel them, but if they do and you know about it, I'm afraid certain Germans won't reach the Reich quite as fast as they'd like to."

"You're right," Weldon snapped. "All of you are under diplomatic protection now. That is, if you haven't committed any crime."

Lynn grinned. "None they'll find out about soon. But we're still in a jam. A Gestapo agent is aboard this train and intends to sail from Lisbon with us. His instructions are to see that we never reach the United States, and our own Military Intelligence."

Weldon hastily opened his bulging brief-case.

"I've a list of everyone aboard. Been made up for days, and there are only three recent additions. All were permitted to go along only this morning."

"What a break!" Lynn cried. "The Gestapo couldn't have made up their minds to send a spy until last night. Among those recent additions is our man. Who are they—so we can be on guard?"

Weldon consulted his papers. "I know none of them, Peter. Perhaps you or Miss Davis may. Both of you got around a lot as newspaper reporters. There's a Frenchman named Armond Cleron who claims United States citizenship, an Italian named
Minzoni, who claims the same thing, and a Eurasian—subject of Nepal. He wanted refuge in the United States, and was permitted to come along."

"French, Italian and Eurasian," Lynn grunted. "At least, they should be easy to pick out. Hey, Diane—do you recognize this stuff we're sitting on. Plush! I never knew a railroad seat could be so soft. We don't sail for hours yet and until then, why worry?"

Hours later, Peter Lynn and Diane stood side by side on the deck of the Portuguese freighter, Diplomio, and watched the passengers file aboard. Portuguese police were on hand to count each person and make certain of his identity.

Somewhere else in the harbor was another neutral ship, loaded with Nazis and Italians who were to be exchanged for those who were now coming aboard.

The three suspects were easy to pick out. Sindra Lal, the Eurasian, wore a turban, was somewhat diminutive, swarthy and handsome. Minzoni, the Italian, was the opposite. He was squat, greasy-looking, and dressed in cheap clothing. The best he could get, probably.

Armand Cleron, the Frenchman, was of average height and build. He had keen little eyes that darted around and for a moment locked with Lynn's. Armand Cleron touched the brim of his hat in a friendly gesture and passed along.

There was no time to study the man any longer. The ship's whistle howled and the anchor went up. Slowly the ship began moving away from shore. It was no palatial liner, this craft.

In fact, Lynn soon got the idea that even a lot of cattle might be uncomfortable aboard it. Yet no one complained. There was not a person aboard who would not have tried to swim the Atlantic if he thought there was a chance of lasting that long.

Lynn went below to his cabin. Weldon had arranged things so that Diane was in the next cabin while Halton, Caldwell and Mander were together in another stateroom far down the corridor on the same deck.

Luncheon was served promptly at noon. A cheap, none too appetizing meal.

Consular Official Weldon saw to it that the five Americans were at the same table with the three suspects. Sindra Lal was about five minutes late, and murmured polite apologies.

Studying these three men, Lynn decided that the Frenchman would perhaps be the most logical one to suspect. He was smooth and had the appearance of being strong and clever. They all chatted about experiences all over Europe and there was nothing strained about the group. Yet Lynn knew that the Gestapo spy, whichever he might be, must be aware that his presence was suspected.

At dinner, Sindra Lal showed up first. He smiled at Diane and she drew just a bit closer to Lynn.

"I don't like him," she said softly. "Reminds me of an eel—oozy, slippery."

Lynn laughed. "Sindra Lal is a Nepalese, and professes anti-Nazi sympathies. What of Minzoni? Been able to strike up an acquaintance with him yet?"

"Uh-uh. He's one of those solitary types. Just tips his hat when I come along and keeps going his way. Cleron, the Frenchman, is something else again. Pesters the very dickens out of me."

"Just keep prowling," Lynn advised, "and be sure to stay above decks until I escort you below. Our killer is going to strike pretty soon. All of us must be on the alert."

At nine o'clock Lynn saw Minzoni walking furiously around the deck for exercise. He vanished aft and Lynn cut across the deck to head him off. Suddenly there was a shout that turned into a wild yell of horror. Before Lynn reached the after-deck, Minzoni's yells became words. Words that made Lynn's blood run cold.

"Man overboard! Man overboard!"

The ship quivered as engines were put into reverse. A life-boat was swung out from its davits. Search-lights swept the sea. This refugee ship was traveling under a protection agreement and lights were burning.
Lynn raced toward the life-boat, but at once gave up the idea of helping to search for the victim. Diane was beside the rail and he decided to remain with her in case this was a ruse to draw him away.

He looked around for the others. Halton and Caldwell quickly made their presence known. There were no signs of Mander.

Lynn watched the life-boat being rowed over the choppy sea. In the glare of the searchlights he saw the fin of a shark, then another, and another.

Peter Lynn took Diane's arm and they walked aft until they reached the rail. Lynn drew a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped the whole length of the rail with it, and then motioned Diane to have a look. The handkerchief was stained with fresh blood.

"I suspected there'd be blood," Lynn explained, "when sharks appeared so quickly. They smelled blood. Diane, I'm afraid our enemies got in the first lick. It must be Mander."

Diane shivered and clung to Lynn's arm.

"Peter," she said, "we just can't wait for that killer to strike! He must be Minzoni. He gave the alarm, but he knew that Mander was dead."

"I know," Lynn said. "Sometimes I think Minzoni fills the bill too well. Go over to starboard and look for him, will you? If he is still there, contrive to keep him busy. I'm going down to his cabin."

They both walked forward a bit. Diane squeezed Lynn's arm.

"Look! There's Minzoni just coming up the companion way. He's been to his cabin already."

Lynn left her there and hurried below. Minzoni's cabin was locked, but this cheap old ship was not equipped with modern spring locks. Lynn got the door open with his own cabin key. He stepped inside, closed the door and picked out Minzoni's big black bag. This too was locked, but Lynn was no longer thinking in terms of courtesy and care. He used a knife on the bag and dumped its contents onto the top of the bureau.

Slowly he picked up a thin-bladed, razor-sharp stiletto. No blood stains were on it, but they could have been removed easily. Lynn appropriated the knife and went back on deck.

"It was Mander," Diane told him. "They checked, and he is the only man missing."

"Let's go below," Lynn suggested. "In this crowd swarming all over deck, anything might happen. Halton and Caldwell know their danger and can take care of themselves. Next time the killer won't be able to rely on the element of surprise."

They descended the companionway ladder and walked slowly along the poorly lighted corridor to their state-rooms. A single electric light bulb hung from the low ceiling to illuminate the corridor.

Lynn saw something like a shadow flash across the wall ahead of him. He whirled, and at the same time buckled his knees and brought Diane closer to the floor.

A gun cracked. The slug whined above their heads and smashed into the further wall. Lynn saw no one. The killer must have ducked aside the instant that shot was fired. But he might try again—before the passengers and crew came below to investigate the pistol shot.

Lynn suddenly jumped to his feet, took three steps and swung a fist. It was aimed at the electric light bulb, and made perfect contact. The bulb shattered and he felt blood ooze out of his knuckles.

As the light winked out, there came a second shot. It hit the floor not more than a foot from where Diane was huddled. Obviously the killer's aim had been affected by Lynn's sudden movement toward the bulb.

Lynn helped Diane up and in a crouched position they ran toward her cabin, got the door open, and darted inside. Lynn slammed the door and sank weakly into a chair. Diane was a little pale, but she managed to smile.

"I'm getting tough, I guess," she said. "Still, all those weeks in prison made my hide a bit thicker. Peter, did you get even a glimpse of him?"
Lynn shook his head. "Just his shadow, and I couldn't identify it, of course. He must have watched us going below, slipped away from the crowded deck, and took a chance on getting rid of us."

Someone was banging on all the doors. The ship's Captain entered when Lynn opened up. Lynn professed to know nothing about the affair and Diane repeated his denials.

Later on, Halton and Caldwell joined them. Both were nervous. "They didn't find the body, of course," Caldwell said. "It was Mander all right. Lynn, how can we uncover this murderer? How can we attack him and protect ourselves?"

Lynn shrugged. "We haven't enough to go on, gentlemen. Until the spy tips his hand, we'll be in danger every minute. Without knowing who he is, we can't take counter measures, but we can protect ourselves. I suggest that you two go to your cabins. While one sleeps, the other must remain awake. I'll take care of Diane. And watch Minzioni. I found a knife in his possessions, and Mander was knifed before he was dumped overboard."

Lynn went to his own cabin, adjoining Diane's. He heard her lock the door and drag a chair against it. Lynn left his own cabin door wide open, sat down and fought sleep until morning.

When the passengers began stirring, Lynn closed his cabin door and slept for three hours.

CHAPTER IV
The Second to Die

SINDRA LAL was again five or six minutes late for luncheon, and profuse in his apologies. He also sympathized with Caldwell and Halton for the loss of their friend.

"It is most difficult to understand," the Eurasian said, "how Mr. Mander could have fallen over the rail. The ship was riding an even keel, was it not?"

"Yeah," Halton grunted. "Pass me some of that stuff, will you? I wish we'd run into tough seas so I'd not want to eat."

Peter Lynn managed to sit next to Minzioni during the meal, and engaged him in conversation. After lunch he proffered a cigarette and they paced the deck. Minzioni was anything but communicative. Finally he talked—in anger.

"Something is wrong on this ship," he said. "Last night a man fell overboard. My cabin was robbed, my bag slit open. Then there were pistol shots—"

"I didn't know about a burglary," Lynn said. "Was anything stolen?"

Minzioni shook his head. "That is what mystifies me so much. Not a thing was taken. I checked carefully. Would you advise reporting this to the captain?"

"Why?" Lynn said warily. "He'd just ask a few questions and let the matter drop. That man is interested only in finishing this voyage and collecting his bonus. Tell me, why did you leave Italy so unexpectedly?"

"Unexpectedly?" Minzioni wrinkled his nose and spat into the sea. "I have been trying to get away for months. Because I was over military age, they finally permitted me to leave in exchange for an Italian prince who was caught in the United States by the war. Now, if you do not mind, I will go to my cabin for rest. I couldn't sleep last night."

Lynn let him go, kept walking, and spotted Armand Cleron, leaning against the after-rail and watching the wake of the ship. A cigarette dangled from his lips.

"Bon jour, monsieur." Cleron smiled thinly. "We are having an adventurous voyage, no?"

"That—" Lynn grimaced—"is a mild word for it. I understand you're an American citizen."

"Oui. My mother was an American, and I was born in Baltimore. At three they took me to Paris. My own land of birth shall be most strange to me. Strange, but welcome. I fled Paris, then Vichy and points south. The Spaniards interned me for weeks. I got free by pressure the American consul exerted and—well, here I am.
And very glad of it too, you bet.”

Diane joined them and Cleron wandered away. Halton and Caldwell were waiting well forward and they all formed a little group.

“The moment it becomes dark,” Lynn said, “we must be doubly careful. The killer will find it hard to strike by daylight, but keep in mind the fact that he has a mission to perform and he’ll go through with it even at his own personal risk of danger.”

Caldwell shivered. “We’ll be careful all right. Lynn, this Gestapo spy will never get through United States immigration authorities. They’ll question everyone on this ship for hours, examine papers minutely. The spy must be traveling on forged passports and with a faked identity, and they should be able to nail him. What does he plan to do, do you suppose? Give himself up?”

“I don’t know.” Peter Lynn frowned. “Perhaps arrangements have been made to get him off the ship. A Nazi sub, maybe, before we reach land. The spy might have some means of communicating with a sub, too. I’ll look for that. Meanwhile, watch yourselves.”

During the rest of the afternoon Lynn managed to search the cabins of Sindra Lal and Cleron. He found nothing to incriminate the two men. Minzoni still seemed to carry the most weight as a suspect.

At dinner, the Eurasian put in a prompt appearance, and paid no attention to the poor quality of the food. He ate as though it was lobster, steak and ice-cream. When they were finished, it was dark, and another night of horror began.

Lynn spent it without sleep — and nothing happened. Perhaps the killer was afraid to strike. Or, even more logical, he might be biding his time until he was closer to a possible rendezvous with a Nazi sub. Lynn had few doubts but that the spy hoped to accomplish his mission and get clear.

It made little difference now if United States authorities protested that a Gestapo agent had murdered exchange prisoners. The Axis group of exchanged prisoners were by this time already nearing their respective countries.

Lynn decided to forego the breakfast of moldy cheese, soggy crackers and liquid of a light brown color that passed for coffee. Instead, he slept again, until almost noon.

He shaved in a hurry, and was still tying his tie as he sped toward the companionway and managed to reach the dining hall in time. Again, Sindra Lal was a bit late and just as apologetic.

At dinner, the Eurasian was the first to put in an appearance, and Minzoni the last. Neither Halton nor Caldwell showed up and Lynn began to worry. He excused himself, went on deck and looked around. Caldwell was aft, pacing the deck impatiently.

“What kept you?” he asked. “I was beginning to get worried. Speak fast. Where is Halton?”

“At dinner, I suppose. A message was slipped under my door asking me to meet you here. I’ve waited fifteen minutes.”

“Come on!” Lynn cried.

He raced below, reached the cabin shared by Halton and Caldwell and tried the cabin door. It was unlocked. He opened it—and Caldwell gave a yell of horror.

Halton hung from a pipe. His feet were only two or three inches from the floor and his face was purple. Lynn raised him, loosened the noose, and Caldwell cut it free. Lynn placed Halton on the bunk, knelt beside him, and then groaned.

“He’s dead! That accursed killer has won again.”

“I wonder.” Caldwell had picked up a piece of paper from the table. “Have a look at this, Lynn. It’s in Halton’s own handwriting.”

The note was brief, and merely related that Halton was sick of all the horror he had undergone. There was no specific reference to suicide, yet the note implied that Halton had killed himself.

Lynn went over to the body and searched it. There was a fountain pen in the vest pocket. He examined this and straightened up slowly.

“Our killer,” he told Caldwell, “is doing his best to make these murders
look like suicide and accidental death. This time he slipped. Caldwell, Halton’s pen is dry. Has been for weeks. Ink is at a premium in Italy—like everything else — and this ship doesn’t boast any reading or writing lounges.”

“But he did write that note,” Caldwell insisted. “I know his handwriting well.”

LYNN carried the paper over to the desk lamp.

“You may be right about that, but now there is fresh proof that this note was written to cover Halton’s suicide. The ink was cheap and has begun to fade. This was written a long time ago. Caldwell, don’t you remember Halton telling us about his arrest?”

“Yes!” Caldwell said excitedly. “The Italian OVRA had him locked up for a month or so. I understand the Gestapo took a hand in it too. Found Halton roaming near the waterfront, filling his eyes with Nazi preparations to use the harbor as a sub base.”

Lynn folded the note and put it away in his pocket.

“Then we have our explanation,” he said. “Halton must have written this in prison to explain his contemplated suicide. You will remember he spoke of that, and of how he was restrained. It was through this note that the Gestapo realized what he was up to. They kept the note. They keep every scrap of paper, Caldwell. It was passed to the spy who came aboard this exchange ship and used by him to motivate Halton’s death… Where is the note you got? The one asking you to meet me?”

Caldwell looked around. “Why, I left it on my bunk. But now the thing is gone.”

“More proof,” Lynn grumbled. “Well, we’ve got to report this. Before we do, take a look at Halton’s right wrist. It’s a trifle swollen, as though he had been held in a painful grip until the killer got the rope around his neck.”

Caldwell whistled softly. “You’re right. Lynn, Halton was no weakling. The man who killed him must have been incredibly strong. No one even heard Halton shout for help.”

“Strong, ruthless and exceedingly clever,” Lynn said musingly. “Caldwell, from now on, you stick with me. Nothing must separate us unless you are protected by the presence of a lot of other people.”

Lynn and Caldwell allowed the ship’s captain to assume that Halton had killed himself. It was easier that way. But they told Diane Davis, and Weldon, the consul. For the rest of the night, Caldwell switched his quarters to Lynn’s cabin and they took turns sleeping.

In the morning they held a council of war and resolved that the one and only way to protect themselves, of which Peter Lynn already had spoken, was by staying close together. Until they had a lead on who was the Gestapo spy, it would be impossible to attack him.

Peter Lynn kept wondering more and more as to how this killer intended to escape, once his mission was an accomplished fact. Certainly he could have few hopes of entering the United States.

More and more, Lynn realized that the free passage furnished this ship was liable to be interrupted by a Nazi submarine. They were nearing the United States and keeping strictly in the regular sea lanes for passenger ships. A sub could pick them up at any time.

Lynn looked around, made certain that no one was close enough to overhear, then outlined a little plan.

“Diane,” he said, “you and Caldwell go to the dining room for lunch, but get there about fifteen minutes early. Caldwell, you synchronise your watch with mine. I have eleven-thirty on the dot now. Leave Diane in the dining room and you hurry to midships. You know the ship’s bell on which they sound the time. When you have precisely eleven-fifty-five ring that bell eight times. Got it straight?”

“Sure. But I don’t see what on earth—”

“Never mind trying to figure it out. I haven’t time to explain. Now get ready and don’t fail me. Diane, watch yourself when you are alone.”
PETER hurried to the companion-way, swung himself down the steps and walked along the corridor until he came to Sindra Lal's cabin. He rapped on the door and the Eurasi-an's cultured voice told him to enter. Lynn sat down and watched Sindra Lal finish dressing for luncheon. The man had a lot of baggage. More than anyone else aboard, but he was fopp- ish enough to require much clothing.

“What do you think about these two deaths?” Lynn asked the Eurasi-an.

Sindra Lal patted a recalcitrant lock of hair into place and eyed him- self in the mirror.

“An accident and a suicide?” he said idly. “What is there to think about such things? It is almost time for luncheon, is it not?”

Lynn glanced at his watch. “A minute or two. Guess I’d better clean up myself. I’ll talk to you later, Mr. Lal.”

Peter Lynn backed toward the door, held it open a moment or two, and managed to slip a folded piece of match box into the lock. He stepped out, closed the door hard and kept looking at his watch.

He had lied to Lal about the time.

CHAPTER V

The Bowing Serpent

THE ship’s bell rang out eight times. Lynn, waiting outside Sindra Lal’s cabin, gently pushed the door open again. Sindra Lal was in the middle of the room, facing east, bowing slowly, and with great rever- ence.

Suddenly he looked up and his yellow face turned a lighter shade. His black eyes sparkled in hatred.

“You may come in, Mr. Lynn. There is no longer any need for deception. You are most clever. My congratula-tions.”

“You crummy Jap!” Lynn said through set teeth. “No wonder we couldn’t find a Gestapo man aboard. They simply used the other end of the Axis to provide a spy.”

“And how did you discover me?” Lal asked.

“You gave yourself away by always being late for luncheon, and ahead of time for every other meal. I knew something kept you away from the table. Seven years ago I spent several months in Japan. I know all true followers of your Mikado bow to the east on the stroke of noon every day, in obedience and reverence to the emperor. I had the ship’s bells sounded a bit early to catch you in the act. It’s just noon now, so if you want to bow some more, go to it before I take you to the brig.”

Sindra Lal turned to the east again and bowed half a dozen times. Then he faced Lynn and there was a mean and challenging smile on his face.

“When we reach the luncheon table, Mr. Lynn,” he said suavely, “you will notice that Miss Davis will not be there. I am not the only Axis agent aboard. Even our very worthy cap-tain is on my side—for a considera-tion, of course.”

Lynn sprang forward and grabbed Lal by the throat. He forced the man back against the bunk.

“If Diane is hurt, so help me, I’ll kill you as slowly as I can! Under-stand me, Lal, we Yanks can get tough too, even though we don’t thrive on bloodshed and slaughter. Where is she?”

“Somewhere below.” Lal rubbed his throat and for the first time a spark of fear showed in his eyes. “It will be of no use to try and find her, for if you did, she would die instant-ly. I am quite prepared for death myself. A Japanese—even a half-breed like me—knows that death on the battlefield is the greatest honor a man can acquire and this, my friend, is a battlefield.”

“I think,” Lynn said with forced calmness, “that you’re going to be well-honored. Very honored and very dead.”

“Please sit down.” Lal pointed to a chair. “We shall forego luncheon today. I am quite willing to show you how useless it is to oppose me. The two men who died, Mr. Caldwell, the girl and yourself know altogether too much. The foolish Italians were
lax in allowing all of you to wander about at will before the war began. So, for the safety of the Axis, all of you must either die or be held prisoner. You and the girl may have your choice."

"Thanks," Lynn grunted, "for the big break. I'll see you get the same kind when this ship reaches the United States."

"I will not be on it," Lal said bluntly. "Neither will you, nor Miss Davis. Caldwell is to be killed. Those are my instructions, but the Gestapo wants you and the girl alive. You do not seem to believe this can be done? Watch!"

Lal opened his biggest trunk and Lynn let out a sharp exclamation of surprise. That trunk was merely a blind for an elaborate short-wave radio set. Lal grinned toothily, snapped a switch, and storage batteries sent life into the mechanism. He twirled dials, clapped on earphones, and watched Peter Lynn every moment.

LYNN moved forward a step or two and instantly he was covered by a gun. Lal motioned him back. Then the Eurasian began sending. The set made little sound, and certainly could not be heard outside the state room.

Sinda Lal consulted a chart, sent another message, and finally shut off the set. He closed the trunk again and locked it.

"Now," he said, "you may destroy the radio if you believe it will do any good. In a short time a submarine will surface and stop this ship. You and the girl will be taken off. Caldwell may jump overboard or be knifed, as he wishes. Now you will excuse me. There are many things to be done."

Lynn walked out of the cabin without saying a word. He didn't look for Diane. Sinda Lal's threat to kill her instantly was no idle boast. Lynn went to the dining room and signaled Consular Agent Weldon.

He quickly told him about what had happened. Weldon shook his head from side to side slowly.

"The captain even refused to permit me to send a code message on the ship's radio," he said. "He claims to be Portuguese, but I think he is an Italian. So are a few members of the crew. Perhaps they are active Axis agents. This captain is a mercenary type. I know, for one thing, that any passenger can get better food by bribing him, and as for fresh bed linen—you pay him personally, or go without."

Lynn frowned. "The captain, of course, intends to see this voyage through. Now we know he is money-hungry. We are also certain the passengers are loyal Americans."

"I can vouch for them," Weldon said.

"Good! We may have to start a mutiny. If a Nazi sub threatens us and the captain proves incompetent or treacherous, we have a right to act. Also, we must contrive to send a radio message somehow. I have an idea that might work. It's based on the captain's greediness. Suppose a hundred passengers demanded the right to send radio messages and threatened to sue the captain, attach the ship, if he refused. Suppose half of these passengers crowded into and around the radio room?"

Weldon's slow smile indicated that he understood. He left immediately and Lynn saw him mingling with the passengers. Lynn also noticed two sailors who always kept him in sight. Lal certainly had help aboard this tub.

An hour later, Peter Lynn wandered toward the radio room. He heard angry voices as he neared it, and saw about thirty people waving messages they wished sent. Apparently, the captain was giving his permission, for a few passengers were crowding near the harried radio operator.

Lynn stepped into the crowd before his two-man guard could catch up with him and stop him. He found a path cleared for him and this path mysteriously closed as soon as he passed through. He reached the side of the operator and spoke softly in his ear.

"You will send a message as I dictate," he said finally. "If you don't, I'll send it myself and you'll be buried at sea. How about it? Are you a Nazi, too?"
The radio operator gulped. "No, I will have nothing to do with them. The captain ordered me to destroy the radio if I was forced to send anything but routine messages. To the devil with him! I will send. Speak your message."

Lynn gave it rapidly and he knew the operator was not faking it, for in his capacity as a newspaper man Lynn had learned codes long before. This one required no more than three or four minutes for sending.

HE STEPPED back and the crowd parted for him. In a moment he was idly leaning against the wall outside the radio cabin. His two guards spotted him and began talking to each other rapidly. It was clear that neither knew for sure whether or not Lynn had reached the radioman. It was also apparent that they were going to do nothing about it. Failing to keep an eye on him would mean no money, and that was their only interest in this matter.

Lynn stayed on deck. Weldon had taken Caldwell into his own cabin. From time to time, Lynn glanced at his watch. It was getting dark. The submarine rendezvous spot could not be much farther away.

At seven sharp, he walked toward the dining room. Sindra Lal was just emerging. He grinned at Lynn and bowed a bit.

Lynn took his arm. "Lal," he said, "I'm licked. Can we make a deal? Isn't there some way the girl can proceed to New York? I don't care about myself, but—"

"There is no way," Lal answered promptly. "Do not try to plead with me. Or—wait! It is pleasant to see a haughty American begging for mercy. You may come to my cabin if you wish, and until the submarine surfaces, I shall enjoy myself."

Lynn walked beside him and the two guards strolled a short distance behind. The American and the Eurasian stepped into the cabin. Lynn closed the door and made sure the lock fastened it.

Then he suddenly seized Lal by curling one arm around his throat and driving a knee into the small of his back. He found the man's gun and put it in his own pocket. Then he gave Lal a shove that sent him reeling across the small cabin.

Lal, his face frozen in rage, crouched and looked ready to attack. Lynn reached into his pocket and extracted the ugly stiletto he had found in Minzoni's cabin.

"Recognize this?" he asked coldly. "It killed Mander and it can kill you. I suppose Minzoni's baggage was held by the Gestapo until they could fashion duplicate keys for his bags. That gave you a chance to plant this knife in one of them. Listen, you Oriental rat, I'm staying right here with you! If a sub surfaces, you'll die. Then I'll go after Diane, because it won't make much difference if she is killed on board. At least it will be quick."

Lal smiled thinly. "You have underestimated us again. If I am killed, this ship will be sunk and no lifeboats permitted to put overside. Every person will be machine-gunned and the fate of this ship never known. That is my trump card, and now is the time to play it."

"Open that trunk!" Lynn ordered. "You're going to send a message to the sub that this deal is off."

Lal wetted his lips, shrugged, and unlocked the trunk. He snapped on the switch. There were two shots that burned his ear and the tubes crashed into pieces.

"Go to the porthole and listen," Lynn ordered. "If my shooting has not deafened you, your ears will hear another sound. Bombers! Big bombers with depth charges, Lal. The radio operator aboard this ship doesn't like Nazis. He sent a message for me. Listen to them!"

Lal gave a wild shriek, looked at his watch, and dropped heavily on the bunk. The roaring sound grew louder and then began a shrill whine. The ship suddenly rocked under terrific explosions that deafened the ears and shook the vessel in every timber. There were screams on deck.

"There," Peter Lynn said, "goes your submarine, Lal. The only way out for you. Now, unless Diane is released immediately, I'm going to
use this knife. It may take quite a while for you to die."

SINDRA LAL blinked a few times. He went to the door and shouted orders. The guards hurried away. Five minutes later Lynn heard Diane's voice.

He opened the door, backed into the hall and gave a quick look.

Diane was free. The two men who had been watching him were held between a couple of husky Americans. The ship’s captain had been pushed against a wall and menaced by Weldon’s fist—which was anything but diplomatic.

“How are we doing?” Weldon cried. “The treacherous element aboard this ship has been placed under arrest. The second mate, an honest Portuguese, is in command now. That Nazi sub was blown to blazes! Water’s all covered with an oil slick.”

“Hang onto those birds,” Lynn called back. “They’re all going to have a taste of American justice . . . Diane, you’re all right?”

“Yes, Peter. What about Sindra Lal?”

“Oh yes,” Lynn nodded. “Sindra Lal. Pardon me a moment or two, please.”

He slowly put the knife back into his pocket, doubled up his fists and walked toward Lal. The Eurasian let out a yowl and backed away. For the next few moments, Lynn was extremely busy. Then he opened the door.

“Better not look in here,” he told Diane. “Lal isn’t a pretty sight, but I’m afraid he’ll live until we hang him legally. That’s more than the Gestapo or the Japs would do for us.”

Diane held his arm tightly. “Let’s go up on deck for some fresh air, Peter. There’s an odor here that resembles the smell from that uniform you stole in Italy.”

“Funny, isn’t it”—Lynn grinned—“how rats smell alike?”

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George Chance, Master of Magic and Criminology, Assumes the Identity of the Green Ghost Once More to Tackle the Amazing Mystery of Violence and Death at an Old Mill in

The Case of the

BACHELOR’S BONES

A Baffling Complete Novelet

By

G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

THIS NOVELT BRINGS YOU THE GREEN GHOST AT HIS SLEUTHING BEST—AND IT’S ONLY ONE OF THE HEADLINERS COMING NEXT ISSUE!
JOE HOGAN sat slumped behind the wheel of his red and blue taxi. The radio was blaring out the information that Johnny Doughboy had found a rose in Ireland, but Joe Hogan scarcely heard it. He wasn’t interested in music or Johnny Doughboy, either. The only dough he cared about was money, and in a few minutes, when they announced the results of the last race at Belmont, he’d know whether he’d have enough to meet the next payment on the cab, due tomorrow.

The music was cut off suddenly, and Joe tensed, drawing hard on his cigarette. Here it came.


Joe didn’t hear the rest. He sat staring straight ahead. He’d lost—every cent he had. This time tomorrow the red and blue hack would have a new driver, or be standing in the finance company’s garage.

The cab parked ahead rolled out into traffic with a fare. Joe moved up mechanically. It didn’t make much difference now whether he picked up a fare or not. Might as well quit.

Joe cursed bitterly and lighted another cigarette, the last in his pack.

“I was a fool to leave Chi for this burg,” he told himself, “and try to go straight. Shoulda known it wouldn’t pan out. Now what in . . .”

A man yanked open the door of the cab, and Joe leaned toward the win-

dow to get the address. He grunted as the fare gave him a number almost up to Van Courtland Park.

“I can probably stretch it to three bucks’ worth,” Joe thought, and eased away from the curb. “I’ll be almost home when I get there, too.”

He’d rolled a couple of blocks when the man behind him leaned forward and spoke through the open window.

“I’m in no hurry, Mac,” he said. “Go up through the park and over One-Tenth Street to Broadway. I feel like taking things easy. I just made a killing on a race out at Belmont.”

“Yeah?” Joe grunted, coasting to stop at a red light. “What were you on?”

“Nag, called Palooka, in the Seventh,” the fare said.

Joe Hogan cursed and tore a hundred miles of rubber off his tires as the light went green.

“I lost my shirt on that race,” he said. “You would pick my hack and tell me about it.”

“Tough luck, Mac.” The passenger laughed. “What nag did you have?”

“Nuts!” said Joe, and hunched his shoulders.

The cab rolled into Central Park. After the first red light, Joe cut his
speed to match the synchronized lights and got all the way to One Hundred and Tenth Street without another stop.

"Nice goin', Mac," the passenger grunted.

JOE didn’t answer. He was busy thinking. He had to get hold of some dough, that’s all there was to it. He’d better go back to his old way.

Back in Chicago a couple of years ago, Joe Hogan had built quite a rep for himself as a small-time bandit. Then things had started getting hot and he’d lammed out for New York, after promising his old lady that he’d go straight.

He had, too. The first year hadn’t been so bad. Driving a broken down old Packard hack, he’d made out pretty well. Then he’d seen this red and blue job in a dealer’s window and fallen for it, hard.

He’d traded in the Packard, put fifty bucks down and driven out of the garage on the afternoon of December 6th, 1941. Next day, the Japs hit Pearl Harbor and bad luck hit Joe Hogan. People didn’t ride in hacks as they used to. Must be buying War Stamps or something, Joe thought.

There was a red light at the corner of Broadway and One-tenth. The man in back leaned forward.

"Say, Mac," he said, "turn left here and go down to Eighty-sixth. There’s a restaurant there that’s pretty good. Guess I’ll eat before I go home."

Joe nodded and swung south. A few minutes later, the man paid him off—a dollar, with a quarter tip.

"Thanks, Bud," Joe grunted.

He turned west on Eighty-sixth and north on West End Avenue. Around Ninety-first Street a cop whistled at him for cruising.

"Nuts," said Joe, and explained that he was going home.

A couple of minutes later, he picked up another fare. The guy was tight and wanted to go up to Yonkers. Joe grinned and headed up the Drive.

This run ought to be worth a couple more bucks, anyhow.

It was around ten o’clock when he finally headed home. There was money in his pocket now, but not near enough.

As he rolled down the street toward the garage where he kept the cab, Joe saw the dimmed out front of old Pop Fuller’s lunch stand. Suddenly he remembered what he’d heard around the neighborhood about old Pop. Didn’t like banks, they said, and had a roll big enough to choke a hippo.

Joe eased up to the curb in front of Pop’s and cut his engine. For a minute he sat still, thinking. His short, wiry body was tense as he made his decision.

It would be easy to stick up this old guy and then move out of the neighborhood. The old man had never seen Joe and couldn’t identify him. Joe took a heavy monkey wrench from the tool box and got out of the cab.

THE lunch room was empty. Pop Fuller, bald-headed and puny-looking, was alone behind the counter. He looked up as Joe came in.

"Let’s have a cheese sandwich," Joe said. "On rye, Cowfee."

He sat on a wobbly stool, right across the counter from Pop. As the man peeled the wax-paper covering from a thick slice of red American brick cheese, Joe suddenly leaned forward and crooked his arm about Fuller’s neck, jerking the man toward him. At the same time, he pressed the wrench hard against the man’s side.

"Never mind the food," Joe snarled. "Tell me where you keep your dough or this gun’ll tear a hole clean through you."

Pop Fuller struggled weakly in Joe’s grip. Still holding the thick slab of cheese, he pushed frantically against Joe’s chest.

"I ain’t got any money," he yelled. "You’re crazy!"

Somehow or other, Pop managed to wrench himself partially free. Joe saw
him staring hard at the cab driver’s badge pinned to his coat. Joe cursed. He’d forgotten about the badge.

There was only one thing to do now. Joe did it, striking with all his strength.

The steel wrench bit deep into Pop’s bald head. With a tired sigh, Pop Fuller sagged against the counter, his left hand still holding the cheese.

After a quick look out the window, Joe vaulted over and began his search. It didn’t take long to find a huge roll of folding money in the old man’s hip pocket.

Half an hour later, Joe was leaning against the mahogany of his favorite bar and he wasn’t drinking beer. In memory of old Pop Fuller, he was enjoying Scotch for the first time in two years.

Joe wasn’t worried. Dead men don’t talk. And since he’d found the money in the man’s clothes, he had left no fingerprints in the store. He’d touched the counter when he’d vaulted over it, but he carefully removed the prints that contact had made.

“Ain’t got a thing to worry about,” Joe told himself. “Joseph Hogan, my pal, you are a smart monkey.”

He poured another drink and the bartender filled his glass with soda. “Hackin’,” the man grunted, “must be pickin’ up.”

“Yeah,” said Joe. “It is.”

It was late when Joe weaved down the street toward his rooming house. He was lit up like Times Square before the dimout and didn’t care who knew it. The spree had set him back plenty, but the roll in his pocket was still bulging comfortably under his hand.

He didn’t see the two men standing on either side of the doorway until they gripped his arms as he staggered in between them.

“Hey!” Joe yelped. “What’s the idea?”

A powerful flashlight glared in his face. Then the beam shifted to the cab-driver’s badge on his coat.

“Your name Hogan?” a deep voice demanded.

“Sure,” said Joe. “I’m Hogan. What d’you guys want? If this is a stick-up—”

“It ain’t a stickup, Hogan,” the voice rumbled again. “We’re arrestin’ you for the murder and robbery of old Pop Fuller.”

Joe turned cold sober as the handcuffs clicked shut over his wrists. Finally, he found his voice.

“Say, wait a minute!” he yelled. “You guys are nuts. I didn’t do no murder and stick up. Who’s Pop Fuller? I don’t even know—”

“Save it, wise guy,” said the Homicide detective. “You killed him and you know it. Pop was holding a hunk of soft cheese in his hand when you grabbed him. In the fight, he pushed it against your hack driver’s badge. When we found him, we found the cheese and, fella, it had your number on it. Everybody knows that cheese is good for trappin’ rats. Come on.”

Joe didn’t have to see the cheese that held the impression of his badge to know they had him—but tight. He’d never eat cheese again as long as he lived, and that wouldn’t be long, now.

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Follow the Exploits of The Black Bat, Masked Nemesis of Crime, in Gripping Complete Book-Length Novels Every Issue of

BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

NOW ON SALE—10c AT ALL STANDS
THE SILENT SABOTEUR

By FRANK J. WILSON
Chief, United States Secret Service

The tools of war are bought with money, but money itself is a tool of war—a potent, destructive, silent saboteur.

On the battlefronts of a world held fast in the deadly grip of the god of war, human flesh is being ripped by bullets and shattered by shrapnel while a one-way tide ebbs away, and with it the precious stuff which makes men live. Wars are waged with money, but battles are won with blood.

Before there was any such thing as money there were wars. In primitive times, cave men banded together in a common purpose to take by force the caves or other holdings of an opposing group. Their weapons were clubs or stones which they themselves fashioned.

Then, when fighting became a business, someone invented the sling, the sword, the cross-bow, the catapult, the gun, the bullet. But the makers of all of these messengers of death did not design them merely for their own offense or defense. They made and distributed them to others in return for something of equivalent value which they wanted or needed.

In the days of the cave man, the crudely made stone hammer was probably exchanged for the skin of an animal or for food. This was simple barter, and from it grew the need for a medium of exchange. From that necessity came money, and with the coming of money came avarice, treachery and other evils.

The Counterfeit Weapon

What is money? I'll tell you what money is. It's the roof over the head.

A MESSAGE FOR ALL AMERICANS!
of a man, the floor under his feet, the pillow beneath his head, food and drink, shoes, clothes on his back. It's what enables him to live! And all too often it's what causes him to die.

To be valuable, money has to be worth something. If it won't buy anything, it's useless. That kind of money is counterfeit money—bogus, false, spurious, fake—imitation of the real thing. And counterfeit money is one of the most dangerous, most powerful weapons of ancient and modern war!

It's difficult to realize that counterfeiting can be a real menace to an embattled people, but unfortunately it has been, as history shows. Suppose you owned a department store and your competitor hired five hundred people to go into your store and buy everything you had in stock, giving you counterfeit money in payment.

You can guess the result. You would go to the bank, and you would there learn that the money was worthless. Your shelves and your purse would be empty, and your faith in money, in your country and in man would be dealt a terrific blow.

Put the United States of America in your position as the ill-fated department store owner, and put another nation—Japan, say—in the place of the competitor who disrupted your business with counterfeit bills.

The effect on the economic structure of the United States would be devastating. The enemy would have you believe that this is far-fetched, that it is fantastic, that it is impossible and that it could never happen in your country. It has already happened in many countries, could happen here to an extent beyond the wildest imagination.

Napoleon the Note Maker

Napoleon Bonaparte was a counterfeiter as well as a conqueror. Shortly before the Russian campaign of 1812, a corps of French detectives located a secret printing plant in a chateau near the Barrier Plaine Mont-rouge in Paris.
WHAT TO DO TO DETECT THIS COUNTERFEIT

When you get a GREEN SEAL bill with a CHECK LETTER AND NUMBER like any of those on the right below, compare it AT ONCE with a genuine bill of the same type.

IF THE SUSPECTED BILL HAS ANY OF THE DEFECTS DESCRIBED AT THE LEFT, DELAY ANY STRANGER PASSING THE BILL, AND TELEPHONE THE POLICE AT ONCE.

$10 GREEN SEAL NOTE

CHECK LETTERS AND NUMBERS

Study This Official Notice Carefully. It Will Help You Check the Spread of Counterfeit Money

After careful planning, M. Pasquier, the prefect of police, ordered his agents to raid the plant. Crashing through the doors, the raiders found bundles of bogus Austrian and Russian notes.

Great was their dismay and red their faces, however, when the prefect was ordered to drop the case because the chief printer of the bad notes was one M. Fain, a brother of one of Napoleon's confidential secretaries, and—most important of all—because the emperor himself had sponsored and approved the criminal activity.

The counterfeit notes were used by Bonaparte in purchasing supplies for his invasions of Russia and Austria, and Napoleon's General Savary justified this gigantic Fifth column fraud by saying that Napoleon had merely followed examples set by other countries.

Savary probably referred to the accusation under the administration of Lord Castlereagh that false assignats of the French Republic had been made in England, thus debauching the currency and destroying the credit of France.

Assignats were bills of credit, secured by land assigned to the holders and issued as currency to support the revolutionary government of France. The real estate security had been seized from the French nobility and the clergy.

Shortly after the assignats were issued, these two groups organized counterfeiting as a major occupation to deprive France of its resources and to overthrow the revolutionary government.

To perpetrate this fraud on the gigantic scale required, they established headquarters in London and are said by some historians to have worked with the sanction and aid of the government of England.

According to reliable reports, there were in actual circulation in May, 1795, from twelve to fifteen billion francs in bogus assignats, which were such perfect reproductions of the genuine that they defied detection except by the closest scrutiny. The fake
assignats in circulation represented about two counterfeits to each genuine franc.

The Wages of False Money

While the counterfeits increased, the fact that false assignats were in circulation was denied vehemently by the revolutionary leaders. The fact was heralded daily at the stock exchange, but was branded a political lie, since the credit of the government would have been ruined had the people believed the statements about the counterfeits.

By March, 1796, 24 francs in gold would buy 7,200 francs in assignats. They were thus withdrawn as currency and redeemed at only one-thirtieth of their nominal value by a new type of money known as mandats territorial. These became worthless quickly, and by 1797 the entire system ended. By 1807, both assignats and mandats were repudiated by the government of France.

Following the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Congress of the United States issued money known as Continental currency. The British seized the opportunity and set about producing deceptive counterfeits and dumping them into circulation.

This strategy on the part of the English contributed extensively to the downfall of the Colonial money, and the expression “not worth a Continental” is in common use in the United States even today to denote extreme worthlessness.

Bogus Boomerang

A story of the Japanese occupation of Tientsin, China, tells of a neat trick employed by a patriotic Chinese to protect his countrymen. One of the first acts of the Jap invaders was to seize a Chinese engraver who had been employed in the Peking engraving bureau. They forced him to engrave plates for counterfeit Chinese one-yuan currency notes.

Part of the design of genuine notes of this type depicts an old Chinese, the Imperial Tatoa, holding the scepter of his office in his hands. The captured engraver, however, changed the original design to show the scepter held under the arm of the figure, with the index finger of the right hand protruding from a circular opening made by the thumb and index finger of the left hand. The pose is humorous and symbolizes contempt.

Fifty thousand of these counterfeits circulated in the Shanghai money market. They elicited great glee from the Chinese and much chagrin from the foreign bankers, many of whom had accepted them as genuine. The Japanese withdrew the issue from circulation quickly and offered a reward of $50,000 for the arrest of the Chinese engraver.

However, he had joined General Chiang Kai-shek in the interior, leaving behind a heavy demand for specimens of his counterfeit as a collector’s item. To avoid more loss of “face,” the Sons of Heaven placed the counterfeit notes in circulation in their puppet state of Manchukuo, with the admonition to the inhabitants that henceforth the money was as good as gold. The notes are now in circulation there, and are familiarly known as “puppet money.”

Old Stuff to the Japs

The use of bogus currency as an implement of war is an old Japanese custom. For example, in February, 1904, Russia and Japan severed diplomatic relations and began the Russo-Japanese War. The treacherous Japanese, realizing the potency of economic warfare, established in Kobé, Japan, what was probably the most elaborate and most expensive counterfeiting plant in history, costing approximately $100,000.

In that plant, they produced bogus notes purportedly issued by the Hong-kong-Shanghai Banking Corporation,
the Russo-Chinese Bank, the Imperial Bank of China and the Indo-Chinese Bank. The Japanese displayed exceptional imitative ability, and these fakes exceeded the bounds of the word "counterfeit." They were perfect reproductions of the genuine and they defied detection, even under the microscope.

In China, the Japanese supplied coolies with quantities of the bogus notes, which they brought to the

banks to exchange for English and other money. Through such tactics, millions of dollars in genuine currency were returned to the Japanese to finance their fight with Russia, and all of these millions represented tremendous and damaging losses to the banking institutions and to the countries at which the plot was aimed.

When the counterfeiting began, the Hongkong-Shanghai Banking Corporation was compelled to keep open its doors for five days and five nights without respite in order to handle a remarkable and unaccountable influx of notes. When millions of dollars flowed into other Chinese and Russian banks, panic struck like lightning, but the bankers could do nothing until some means could be devised to determine whether they were good or bad.

By 1907, they summoned experts from England and the United States, to solve this problem. With their help, more than $80,000,000 in fake notes was detected. There was no way to tell how much more was in circulation, but it was evident that the Japanese had produced this currency in fabulous quantity to disrupt and destroy the credit of Russia and England.

The Extent May Never Be Known

Mr. J. S. McCune, one of England's greatest experts on forgery and counterfeiting, while in the United States en route to China in 1907, made a statement to the American press in which he said:
The extent of this forgery may never be known. The only reason it has not caused a suspension of business in the Far East is that every man thinks he has a genuine note and therefore does not worry. The only man now worrying is the banker, who is almost pleased by the thought that millions of notes he is carefully guarding in his vaults may be merely a mass of counterfeits made by the Japanese.

If Japan produced millions and millions of counterfeit dollars in 1904 as an important part of its war with Russia, what will Japan do today in its war with the whole world? Even if her armed forces never set foot upon the soil of continental United States, her saboteurs hold a destructive potential weapon. The War for Survival is not a peanut war, and Japan and her Axis partners have stopped at nothing.

If human life means nothing to them, what hesitancy can they have in wrecking the stability of any enemy country by imitating its currency? There has been much talk in this war of secret weapons to be used by this nation and that. Is it unreasonable to assume that one of these much-heralded aids to Axis victory may be a veritable mountain of counterfeit money of the United States or her allies?

On the basis of past performance, it is not only possible but probable that the Axis holds such a weapon, awaiting the psychological moment to loose it in an avalanche designed to bury those it strikes under the debris of panic, fear and bewilderment.

We Must Be Alert

The United States Secret Service is in the midst of a strenuous and widespread program of crime prevention through education, to see that warfare of this kind “can’t happen here.” Secret Service agents have shown educational motion pictures to millions of Americans, and a 32-page booklet entitled “Know Your Money,” printed by the Secret Service in 1940, tells in simple language how anyone may detect counterfeit bills and coins.

The booklet contains many illustrations of bogus money, reproduced by special permission of the Secretary of the Treasury, and thousands of copies have been supplied to high schools in all parts of the country for standard classroom study. Copies of the booklet may be purchased for a nominal sum from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

Since the “Crime Prevention Through Education” program began in 1937, losses to victims of counterfeit bills have dropped 93 per cent. This is a drastic reduction, but with every tread of marching feet, with every salvo of Axis guns, in short, with every minute that the War for Survival pursues its bloody course, the danger of counterfeiting as a weapon of attack draws closer and closer.

The United States Secret Service is alert to that danger and is preparing for it by teaching you to “Know Your Money.” The enemy wants to know what you know. If you “Know Your Money” you can be sure the enemy will hear things that Benito and Adolf and the little Jap what’s is name will be discouraged to learn.

In fact, they may end up by passing their paper sabotage on each other, and with that hopeful expectancy we will do our part by making it impossible for them to give it to us.

---

A GIANT ROUNDUP OF PUZZLES OF EVERY VARIETY!

BEST CROSSWORD PUZZLES

ONLY TWENTY-FIVE CENTS AT ALL STANDS
DEATH TRAMPS THE RAMP

By TED STRATTON

An Axis Spy Does Not Stop at Murder in His Efforts to Halt the Production of Vital Airplane Motors!

A GLASS WINDOW separated Greg Evans, expert motor tester, from the brick-walled testing pit, one of many lining Ramp C of the Eagle Aeronautics plant. He watched a tear-down crew beneath him hoist a grease-coated black-and-silver Whirlaway engine off the block and trundle it through wide doors onto the main floor.

Two husky mechanics began to dismantle the engine and tag defective parts with replacement directions. A vague, gnawing fear pricked the hairs on Greg's neck as he watched the busy scene.

A tiny voice whispered: "Danger!" It came again, strangely insistent. "Danger, Greg Evans! Sabotage!"

Sweat moistened his clenched fingers. Sabotage. It hung like a guillotine blade over every employee in Ramp C. He glanced over at Bill Larson, a splinter of a man tensed and preoccupied at an adjacent instrument panel to the right.

"Morning, Bill," Greg called. Quiet lay like heavy insulation over the testers who lounged and waited.

He swung the wrench at Greg's head
for the work gong to sound and Bill must have heard. But Bill did not answer, kept staring at a dust particle on his oil gauge.

From his left Greg heard Ed Archivelt ask: “Hear the news?”

Greg turned, shook his head.

“That spy wrecked two more engines.”

“Our?”

Then Bill Larrison’s harsh voice reached the two: “I’d like to see the dirty saboteur strung up in this corridor. Even if he was one of you!”

“We feel the same, Bill,” Greg said briefly. “Ed, have the cops got anybody yet?”

“Johnny Sunday says no. Keep your eyes open, Greg. They’ll get excited over anything from now on.”

A chunky man with a bullet-shaped head strolled along the ramp. Greg glanced at him and smiled.

“Hi, Fred,” he called.

Fred Webster, somberly dressed in the green uniform of a company guard, grumbled an answer.

“Seems that spy is back. Got two more Whirlaways.”

Lines of bewilderment furrowed his wide forehead.

“Can’t understand it, Greg,” the guard continued. “I’ve seen thousands of engines come off the lines, but there’s been nothing like this. Eleven motors wrecked in three weeks.”

Air conditioning kept the corridor cool, almost chilly, but Fred mopped sweat from his face.

“Not all the swarming cops can catch the rat. Tell you what we need, Greg—a vigilante committee! Any idea who the rat is?”

**GREG** shuttled the question around in his mind. The saboteur, he knew, could be any employee who had access to the motors and that meant everybody from Johnny Sunday, the chief inspector, down through old Ace Hodgetts who swept the ramp.

Why, Greg remembered, he’d awakened only last night and caught himself about to slip an imaginary washer into the bed post. That was how the saboteur worked—iron washers dropped into cylinder heads. The gong rang sharply across his thoughts.

“Here, Greg.”

Fred extended a licorice gum drop which Greg stuffed in his mouth and mumbled his thanks. Good old Fred, he thought. A nice guy to have at your back when trouble starts. You knew how you rated with Fred. Gum drops to the topnotch workers, vinegar-words to the other men.

Unlocking the pit door, Greg trotted downstairs just as **Hy** Summers, tear-down mechanic, wheeled another precision-built Whirlaway into position and manipulated the hoist chain so that the matter hung suspended over the test block. Neither man spoke. A question slithered around Greg’s brain:

“Could Hy be the rat?”

“What you gawking at?” Hy demanded, one gloved hand resting on the motor casing.

“The Whirlaway.”

“Huh! Then for Pete’s sake lend a hand.”

They set the engine down gently and Hy eased off on the chain. The mechanic shot a suspicious glance at Greg.

“What’s on your mind, Evans?”

“ Heard the news?” Greg countered.

“Yeah, two more motors on the junk heap.”

“Puts us all in one tough spot, doesn’t it, Hy?”

The swarthy, hard-mouthed mechanic picked up a wrench and tightened a nut.

“I ain’t no cop so I don’t know. But all the time I’m thinking—what if this rat’s a guy named Evans.”

“I’m clean, and you know it!”

Hy sneered. “Nuts, pretty face! It could be you. Ain’t you always poking around the entire section? What for I’d like to know?”

“Knowledge, Hy. That’s too deep for you.”

“Nuts again. You could slip a dozen washers into motors while you’re prowling around!”

“Testers don’t wreck motors,” Greg answered sharply.

“Who does, wise guy?”

“How about tear-down crews?
They work with open motors, and they’d only have to lift a tarp corner and—"

“Got it figured out, eh?” Hy snapped. “Then who drops the washers?”

“Any mechanic could.”

Hy gripped the wrench tighter. He made no attempt to bolt the Whirlaway to the block. Teetering on his heels, he stood poised, a menacingly powerful figure clad in dirty denims. “Hinting at me?” he growled.

“I’m telling you what’s common talk on the ramp.”

“Evans, maybe I better split your head!”

The suspense and ever-present fear of the past three weeks gathered and broke inside Greg.

“You and how many more mechanics?” he sneered. “Maybe you are the rat!”

**INSTANTLY** Hy swung the wrench. There was no doubt of his intention as the heavy tool described a vicious arc. Greg side-stepped neatly and rolled his head with the blow. Hy missed. The force of the swing spun him off balance.

Greg stepped forward, towered over his chunkier opponent. With catlike smoothness he shifted body weight to his flat right foot. His right fist drew back, cocked in a professional manner. A long left measured the point of Hy’s unprotected chin, and then he let fly with the balled right.

The blow snapped Hy’s head back. The snarl died on his lips. He tottered uncertainly, then sprawled full length on the oil-streaked concrete floor. He scrambled up, with the wrench in a tight grip and murder blazing from his eyes.

Greg waited. He stood rigid, chest held high so that corded muscles bulged his shirt and his pants slipped down on his hips. A smile played about his mouth corners, but his eyes were watchful and alert.

He feinted with a left jab. Hy ducked, raised the wrench.

“Cut it, you dopes!” a voice roared from the stairway.

Greg did not turn at the interruption. The next move was up to Hy, and he waited. For a moment, the wrench wavered, then lowered. Greg wheeled and saw Johnny Sunday standing in the shadows.

How long he had been there, Greg did not know, but it seemed that all the inspector’s craftiness, so well known to the men, showed on his sharply chiseled features. Or maybe it was due partly to the squint in his bad left eye.

“What’s up?” Sunday demanded, trotting downstairs.

Hy managed a grin. “Nothing, chief.”

“What about that wrench?”

“Oh, that.” Hy acted as if he saw it for the first time. “Showed Evans how to pound out a rivet. Only I slipped on the spilled oil and almost conked him.”

Sunday grunted. “And Evans’ fist—”


The inspector studied the pair for a long moment, turned to the Whirlaway.

“Everybody’s jittery,” he complained. “Three fights in two days. Next thing somebody’s gonna get killed and—” Sunday bent over the block and snarled: “Why isn’t this motor bolted down? You two drawing a buck and a half an hour for shadow boxing?”

They hopped to the bolting job and Sunday stamped out, turning to call over one shoulder: “The Army’s gonna have to whistle for motors with you two on the job.”

“Thanks, pal,” Hy muttered. “Guess I lost my head.”

“You mean I almost did.” Greg grinned. “How’s the chin?”

“Sore. Should’ve known better than to mix with a boxer.”

In silence they finished the bolting. “Maybe you’re right about the rat,” Hy said finally. “It could be a mechanic. What about Boeringer?”

Through the wide doors, Greg saw a strapping, blue-eyed giant busy with a wrench. He shook his head. “Not the type, Hy. He’s too easy-going.”

“The guy’s German descent.”

“I know, but you can’t make a rat out of every German-American.”
“But that's the way these Nazis work,” Hy protested. “Plant a spy years ahead of time in a key spot. Make you forget what he can do when the chance comes. That's how they worked it in the Cyclone plant. Read all about it in the papers.”

“Maybe, Hy. Me, I'm checking my motors and letting the cops spring the trap.”

Hy edged closer. “Do the cops want to catch the rat?” he whispered.

“What are you hinting at, Hy?”

“Nothing — or everything. Just keep your eyes and ears open, that's all. Funny stuff breaking out in this plant.”

HY departed and Greg turned to the engine. Tops, that was the Whirlaway. Nothing off German or Jap production lines equalled the smooth power of this eighteen-hundred-horsepower job with stubby liquid-cooled cylinders mounted on a streamlined rotary head. Greg patted the motor.

“Good old girl,” he muttered. “Give those back-stabbing Japs plenty someday.”

Expertly he checked plugs, oil lines and connections. This engine needed only a two-hour final trial test before Army inspectors took over. Then the crated motor was shipped to a vital war zone. But somewhere in the intricate, painstaking process of making an airplane engine as fine as the works in a precision watch there were slipups in Ramp C.

Motors came off the blocks with scored cylinders which meant dismantling and duplication of vital parts. Every time a Whirlaway failed, another plane was grounded. And that was what the Axis was after — fewer planes.

But who was the spy with the iron washers? Nobody knew. If Hy were right, Greg thought, nobody in authority cared. In the meantime, Ramp C seethed with suspicion and intrigue.

Greg closed the double doors to the main floor, stretched and locked the protecting chain and mounted the stairs. From a position beside the instrument panel he studied the lonely motor in the pit below.

Would it keep an Army pilot aloft? Perhaps this motor would speed a plane across the blue-watered Pacific in swift pursuit of a more sluggish Jap job. If it did—Greg smiled—That would mean one less Jap. Maybe a lot less Japs.

Throwing a switch, Greg watched the prop kick over and blur into a spinning disk. A steady hum replaced the initial racket and mingled with other engine voices rumbling along the ramp.

For an hour he eased the motor along, eyeing dials and gauges. Once he went below deck and entered the pit.

The prop wash wrapped his denim coveralls tightly to his legs. He moved cautiously about the motor, the remembrance vivid in his mind of Pinky Orr, an ill-fated tester, who had lost an arm in a swirling prop a month ago.

Everything checked okay — air intake valve open in the ceiling, oil lines tight, exhaust connections closed.

A half hour later, Greg advanced the throttle toward maximum testing speed. The purring motor crescendoed into a high-pitched snarl. The ramp vibrated with engine thunder. In the bare pit below, a hundred-watt bulb bathed the Whirlaway in garish light.

Then, beyond the blurred prop, those heavy doors — which Greg had locked — suddenly sucked inward, and slammed against the whirling propeller.

Metal clanged and clanked against metal in an ear-splitting shriek. A piece of steel cut a clean hole in the glass just above Greg's head and whined past to wham with bullet velocity against the concrete wall.

More metal glanced off the pit walls. And the raucous uproar of a fifteen-thousand-dollar motor, the terrifying cacophony of a priceless Whirlaway being pounded to pieces, rose above the other ear-numbing noises.

Greg cut the switch and felt Ed Archivelt's hand on his arm. “You chain the doors?” the other tester asked.

(Turn to page 100)
THE SINEWS OF VICTORY
A Tribute to America's Heroes of Production

By MAJOR GENERAL E. B. GREGORY
Quartermaster General, United States Army

THE production side of this war will be won by Americans who do the small things well, whether it is making a rivet for a tank or sewing a sleeve in an Army uniform.

The casual onlooker is too apt to think of war production just in terms of big tanks, giant bombers, long-range guns and fighting ships.

These are vitally necessary. But in this war, as in every war, the men who fight are human beings. They must have food, clothing and shelter before they can be expected to fly their planes, fire their guns or sail their ships.

Throughout America today, there are millions of workers turning out clothing and tents, growing and processing food-stuffs, building barracks, raising horses and mules—all absolute necessities to the Army, all direct contributions to ultimate victory.

When historians write down the heroes of production in this war, they will spotlight those who served faithfully in the production of necessities that keep our fighting men and equipment in operation. The heroes will be the men and women who did their duty at every place in the production line.
Drowned out the question, but Greg read Ed's lips and nodded. Pressing the emergency button, he stumbled downstairs without a glance toward the wreckage. No washer had wrecked this motor. No spy had—Greg's mind clutched at the thought. Wait a minute... this could be the work of a spy.

But suppose it wasn't sabotage, but carelessness, his own carelessness? What would the others think? Would he be under suspicion? And that chain—had he locked it so that the prop suction could not drag the doors open?

Doubt clouded his mind. You do some jobs automatically, and habit tricks you. You think you lock a door and somebody asks if you did lock it and you don't know for sure that you did.

Johnny Sunday sprinted into the pit with Fred Webster, sweat beading his flushed face, a step behind. Someone else bulked large in the wrecked doorway. Greg shivered. One of the big shots, Arthur Sandback.

“What happened?” Sunday barked. Greg pointed at the crumpled doors, the mangled prop and what was left of the cylinder heads.

“The doors, Evans?”

“I chained them, chief. I know I chained them.”

“You lunkhead, how could—”

Sharp-eyed, hawk-nosed Sandback interrupted. “What speed was she making?” he asked.

“Fourteen hundred revs,” Greg said.

While Sandback studied the wreckage, Fred Webster slid close and nudged Greg.

“Keep the chin up, kid,” he whispered. And his pat on his shoulder was reassuring.

“Get Childers,” Sandback snapped. To Sunday he said, “How is this tester's record?”

“Good,” Sunday answered, then added: “Until now.”

“Looks like incompetence, Sunday. These testers don't seem to know we're in a war. They must think we can lick the Japs with pea-shooters mounted on a Jenny!”

“Sure, Mr. Sandback.” Sunday faced the doorway. “How Evans could be so dumb I don't know. If he chained the doors—”

“How could he?” Sandback asked scornfully.

A tall man in an ill-fitting brown suit glided into the room. He was Detective Gordon Childers, in charge of the Eagle's police work. His eyes bored into Greg.

Something about this bush-browed detective bit into every Eagle employee. It wasn't the cold immobility of his face. Nor the cheek scarred with a bayonet at the Saint Mihiel salient. It was Childers' eyes.

Apparently made of glass, they were a cold steel-blue color. They never seemed to move. They appeared to be riveted fast, like a toad's eyes, and Childers swiveled his head and shoulders whenever his gaze wandered. Only Childers' gaze did not wander. It held a guy with the sure bite of a Stillson wrench.

Childers wheeled toward the open door, bent over the dangling chains. Greg's job hung suspended with those chains—five years of honor service with bonuses and merit pay. Greg held his breath.

The detective turned. “Idle all motors in Ramp C,” he ordered. “Check the door chains.”


“Yes. This one's been cut.”

“But who—” Sunday began.

“Never mind who!” Childers roared. “Right now it's what!”

Sunday and Fred Webster scurried off, and Greg remembered to breathe. Childers inspected the tangled wreckage that had been a Whirlaway. Gradually the engine noises subsided into a pulsing murmur along the ramp as the order was executed. In the sudden quiet Sandback's voice boomed.

“The damage will run several thousand dollars!”

“Probably,” Childers admitted. “But time is the real damage. We'll lose two weeks' work on this motor.”

Greg's heart skipped. “Do you think it's sabotage?” he blurted.
Childers's toad's eyes bored into the
tester. "What do you think?"
Greg didn't answer and Childers asked: "Who was in here besides
you?"
"Hy Summers, Boeringer and Johnny Sunday."
"Any of them here alone?"
"No, sir."
"I see." The toad's eyes never wavered. "By the way, Evans, how's the
wife and baby?"
"Fine."
"That roadster—been keeping up
the payments?"
"Right on the dot."
"Would you be needing any extra
cash?" Childers asked softly. "Say a
couple of thousand dollars?"
"What do you mean?"
But the questioning was too clear.
Sabotage, of course, and Childers sus-
ppected Greg. Cold fingers clutched
the tester's heart and his tongue stuck
to his mouth roof.
"Your wife made you quit the fight
game, Evans," Childers persisted.
"You might be needing cash, say a
thousand—"
The sudden roar of an engine thun-
dered along the ramp and into the pit.
The three men froze. Their eyes jerked to the stairway and saw three
feet of corridor and the blank, gray
ramp wall beyond. "Somebody's
gunned a motor," Greg gasped.
Instantly a picture filled his mind.
The testers were checking door chains
now, and probably stood directly in
front of the idling props. Whoever
stood before thatgunned motor would
be sucked back into the propeller.
Two strides carried Greg to the
stairs. Childers beat him by a half
step and led the way into the corridor.
In the pit to the left—Bill Larri-
son's—a motor hammered out of con-
trol, hammered and pounded. Greg
cut the switch.
If Larrison had been killed—Greg saw Sunday's foxlike face poked
into view from a nearby doorway.
Sunday, Greg thought, could have
gunned Larrison's motor.
Who would ever suspect an inspec-
tor? Nobody, and that might be the
answer to sabotage on Ramp C. A
guy above suspicion could be the rat.

Bing Cresson, a tester, Fred Web-
ster and a dozen others crowded close,
formed a silent circle about Larrison's
door. Greg went below into the glare
of the naked bulb.
"Look out!" Childers said grimly.
"Don't get blood on your shoes."
 Drops of ice water trickled down
Greg's spine at what he saw on the
floor. As if from a great distance he
heard Childers' queer, choked voice:
"Murder. Larrison has been decapi-
tated."

The death of Bill Larrison did not
halt the heavy-artillery roaring of
the Whiraways. This was war and no
time to slow production. Hard-
pressed Chinese, valiant Russians,
stubborn Tommies and, most of all,
far-flung Yanks, pleaded for air sup-
port and that meant more engines.
And Ramp C had responded.
One thing about Larrison's death
made Greg thankful. A man dies
quick in a spinning prop, dies between
two breaths without any agony of
pain or doubt. It's death in a whir-
lung guillotine, but an easy way to die.
As another Whirlaway buzzed in
the pit beneath him, Greg remembered
that when he had scanned the corri-
 dor from the pit, no one had passed
the doorway after Larrison's motor
had been gunned. The murderer had
escaped in the direction where Greg
had first spotted Sunday.
And the inspector, if he was the
killer, could have gunned the motor
and hid in the semi-gloom of a stair-
way.
But whoever the killer was, Greg
thought, what did Larrison's murder
mean? Were men rather than ma-
 chines to be attacked from now on?
That made sense. It took nine months
to produce a fair tester, two years for
him to become an expert.

Kill one tester and production
slows down; kill two, three, four men
and the production line crawls. Let
the United Nations plead for air-
planes—right here on Ramp C a spy
was busy with an answer. And it was
an emphatic "no."

Fred Webster drifted alongside
Greg. Puckers of nervousness edged
the guard's eyes, bloodshot with
strain. Rivulets of sweat ran down his face and stained his collar. He loosened his neatly knotted necktie.

"Bad," Fred muttered, fumbling in a pocket and handing Greg a gum drop.

"Have the cops caught anybody?" Greg asked.

"Not yet. I tell you," Fred said sternly, "that we got to do something. If we had vigilantes, we could trap the rat. Poor Larrison. Had a funny streak, Larrison did. Always growing, but he was the best tester on the ramp!"

The guard wandered off and Bing Cresson, who had taken Larrison's testing board, sidled up to Greg.

"Fred hears all the gossip," Bing said. "What's he know?"

"Nothing."

Bing's face darkened. "There's lots of rats in this plant, Greg. Take Carteret—what if he is president?" Bing leaned close. "Do you think Carteret wants to stop this sabotage?"

"Of course, he does, Bing."

"Like blazes he does!" Bing laughed harshly, a choked sound deep in his throat. "Why, he wangled a ten-percent-plus contract out of OPM. Get it? Every wrecked motor adds to the cost and that means higher profits."

"Can you prove that?"

"Sure! My girl is a steno in the main office." Suddenly Bing's face crazed with fear. "All I see in that pit is Larrison's dead face! Nobody cares what happens to us. They don't care if we get killed. They'll make more money! More money—"

Bing's voice trailed off into a cackle.

"Easy, Bing, easy," Greg soothed.

He saw Detective Childers approaching and signalled Bing to return to his own panel. Then Childers came abreast of Greg.

"Your chain was the only one cut, Evans," he said.

"Not my friends."

"Don't be a fool, Evans," Childers shot a question at the tester: "Was Sunday in the corridor after Larrison's motor was gunned?"

"Yes."

"Where was he?"

"He came from a pit door," Greg said slowly. "The second one beyond Larrison's."

Puckers of thought came and went on the detective's face, and then he moved off. Greg watched the broad, retreating back, the noticeable slump to Childers' shoulders. Maybe a tester's job wasn't so bad, Greg thought. At least it was better than a detective's.

He noticed that Ed Archivelt wasn't at his place. Funny, a tester had strict orders never to leave an engine during the final test run and he glanced at the wall clock. It showed two-twenty-one. And then he remembered that Ed had gone down to his pit. Let's see, that was at—in three strides Greg stood at Ed's window. Ed had gone below at two five!

At first there was nothing to see below but the stubby motor and blurred prop under the glaring bulb. He studied the pit. What he saw made him throw off the switch, dash downstairs.

He found Ed prone on the floor, one arm outthrust as if to cushion an unexpected fall. He rolled the limp body over.

Ed was relaxed. A lump about the size of a robin's egg was on his forehead. Probably stunned from a fall. You had to watch out for the oil smears on the concrete. Still, there was a bluish-black cast covering the still face.

At the same time Greg's head began to hum. Tiny hammers beat against his temple. He tried to lift Ed, but his muscles had little strength. Queer, there was nothing the matter with him, Greg thought.

He managed to drag Ed to the stairs, stepped up the first one. An overpowering desire to sleep gripped him. Sleep, that was it. He'd be all right if he could get some sleep. He felt himself slipping into darkness, cool deep darkness.
Someone was speaking and Greg listened. “Ease off. He’s coming around.”

He discovered that he was not in Ed’s pit. He lay on the ramp floor. Legs ringed him in, and he tried to sit up. Strong arms pinioned his shoulders.

“Lay flat, Greg.” It was Johnny Sunday who spoke.


“Carbon monoxide,” Bing Cresson explained. “Ed’s pit was full of it.”

“Ed—where’s Ed?” Greg demanded, struggling against Johnny Sunday’s grip.

“He’s all right,” Sunday soothed.

Greg twisted around, saw a figure swathed in blankets and a rhythmic body swaying forward, down, back. He heard the slow even one-two-three-four count which meant artificial respiration, and he knew Ed was still not breathing.

“How’d we get out?” he asked.

“Children,” Sunday answered.

“Think you’re strong enough to walk? Children is down in Ed’s pit and wants to see you.”

“I can manage.”

SUNDAY helped him up and he walked to the open door, steadied himself down the stairs. He saw Children kneeling toward the rear, a flashlight poked into the underside of the silent Whirlaway. Children looked up, pointed.

In the flashlight’s beam Greg saw the lightweight rubber hose, the one which testers attached to the exhaust pipe to conduct the fumes outside the building. Children twisted the hose. A jagged hole, perhaps an inch long, lay exposed.

Children stood up. “Feel better?” he asked.

“Yes,” Greg said. “Is that how they got Ed?”

The detective nodded. “Get your brains working, Evans. The killer’s working fast. Who did you see come in here, besides Ed?”

“Why, no one I can remember.”

“Whoever cut that hole,” Children explained, “did it after Larrison’s death. Otherwise, Archivel would have been gassed earlier. See those

[Turn page]
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jagged edges? Probably cut with a knife.

“The killer works along simple lines, Evans. A hacksaw on your door chains; a gunned motor to snare Larrison; now gas for Archivelt. Evidently he slipped in here during the excitement. Whoever he is, he’s smart. There are never any fingerprints, which means that he wears gloves.”

Johnny Sunday’s voice came from the stairhead: “Mr. Childers.”

The detective slipped upstairs, listened and came back. “Think, Evans,” he said. “Who could have gotten in here to do the damage?”

“I—I don’t remember anybody.”

“There had to be somebody,” Childers snapped. “Unless you want me to suspect you! Frankly, you were a suspect, until Larrison died. I knew you couldn’t have pulled off that job. Come now, you were on the ramp all the time. Who came in?”

The cold eyes gripped the tester. Someone else in Ed’s pit—Greg wrestled with the idea. He felt light-headed and leaned his body against the motor. Automatically he stroked his forehead and found the dried blood from a cut which he got when he fell on the steps. But his jumbled thoughts refused to concentrate.

“Would it help,” Childers suggested, “if I told you that Archivelt is dead?”

The news sandbagged Greg. Ed dead. Why, Ed had worked alongside Greg for three years. Larrison and Archivelt. Maybe he was next, Greg thought.

Little details, overlooked and seemingly unimportant at the time, took on new and terrifying significance. If only a single detail would drop into the proper slot; if only the elusive killer had erred—–

He remembered Sunday stooping to wipe blood off the floor. Sandback making odd noises in his throat. Bing tiptoeing about the ramp despite the racket, and Fred Webster plodding back and forth, his eyes everywhere. Ed with a grease-coated handkerchief and Hy Summers—that was a thought.

Why had Hy been on the ramp? Mechanics belonged on the main floor. Now if Hy had been on the ramp before Larrison’s death, Greg thought,
he could have gunned the motor. And what about the cut chain? Hy could have done that, too, because of his work with the teardown crew.

Vaguely Greg heard Childers' voice again. "Do I arrest you to save my own skin or have you an answer?" he demanded.

"Give me a moment more," Greg responded urgently.

Leaning against the Whirlaway, Greg Evans shoved one hand into his denims and fingered the gum drop which Fred had given him earlier. It would taste good. The roof of his mouth was dry and hard and his tongue had the rough texture of old shoe leather.

That monoxide had certainly dried him out. While he thought, he sucked cooling juices from the candy.

The killer, he knew, had had to be in all three places—his door, Larri son's panel, and by Ed's motor. Hy had been at the first two. What about the last?

Why, of course! As head mechanic, Hy had helped wheel the Whirlaway into Ed's pit and helped to bolt it down. And there was another thing about Hy which struck Greg with blinding force. Of all the mechanics on Ramp C, Hy was the only one who

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wore gloves, and Childers had insisted that the killer wore gloves.

Suddenly Greg's chewing slacked off. He stood tongue-tied. Who had had the best chance to sabotage? Connotative ideas raced through his mind too fast for analysis, but one by one details dovetailed, and he had the answer—an answer so simple that he'd been like a man who studies the sky and yet fails to see the sun because of its very obviousness.

"I know!" Greg shouted to Childers.

He raced up the steps. In the corridor, he flung a question at Sunday who pointed blankly to the right. Greg sped past tense, staring testers. At the far end of the ramp he halted beside a stocky broad-shouldered figure.

They faced each other for several seconds, the man surprised and Greg, despite his angrily boiling blood, outwardly cold. When Greg spoke, his voice was icy:

"You dirty rat!"

Fred Webster's bloodshot eyes stared in wonder, then turned to fear. One hand fumbled for his holstered .38. The blue-gray barrel swung free and up while Fred's eyes blazed sudden hatred.

There was only a fraction of a second in which to act, and Greg made the most of it. His fist snapped forward, moving less than a foot.

The blow landed a little under and to the left of a foam flack on Fred's bared lips. The guard toppled like a felled tree. A bullet hissed past Greg's ear. He swarmed on the fallen guard.

One thought filled his mind—that Fred was a rat who had betrayed those who had trusted him. His hard fists smashed down on Fred's jaw again and again until someone dragged him off.

Minutes later, they stood in a washroom off the ramp—Childers, Sandback, Sunday, President Carteret and a guard or two.

"But you've no proof, Evans," Childers began.

Swiftly Greg bent over the bloody Webster who lay stretched unconscious on the tile floor. He drew a paper bag from one of the guard's pockets. From it he poured a dozen
candies into Childers’ cupped hands. “Notice the two sizes,” Greg said to the detective. “The cone shaped ones were passed out to Webster’s friends. Now the others, they’re flatter and larger. Why this second type?”

Greg twisted one with his fingers. It opened easily and within, completely concealed by the licorice, lay an iron washer.

“Who had the best chance to sabotage?” Greg asked the tensed men about him. “Webster, of course. He could and did go everywhere. It was a lead-pipe cinch for him to slip washers into open motors.”

“But how did you know?” Childers demanded.

FROM his mouth the tester took a shapeless, black mass that had been a gumdrop.

“After Larrison’s death,” he explained, “everybody was jumpy, even Webster. He gave me the wrong kind of gum drop. I was so excited I didn’t eat it. Later, in Ed’s pit, I bit into the candy and found the washer.”

Childers turned to Carteret, a tall gray-haired man with the bearing of a colonel.

[Turn page]

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Carteret ejaculated. “Will you repeat that, please?”

Greg told about the ten-percent-plus contract with OPM, adding: “What’s more, many men believe the company is more interested in profits than in delivered motors.”

Childers covered Carteret’s embarrassment. “I heard that rumor, Mr. Carteret, but in the excitement I didn’t take the necessary steps to quash it.”

“Then it isn’t true?” Greg asked.

“No,” Carteret said quickly. “Two years ago, the Whirlaway was still a blueprint motor, and the Army gave us a liberal contract with the ten-percent clause attached. That protected us from a loss until the motor was perfected. Today we operate on a flat price per motor with a top profit of six percent.”

“And you might tell the men,” Childers suggested, “that Mr. Carteret’s son is in Australia behind a Whirlaway!”

“So we’re in this war together,” Greg said, impulsively shaking the president’s hand. “I’m late now.” Greg backed toward the door. “Got a date to finish a half hour test with a Whirlaway before the Army takes it over.”

He vanished through the doorway on the run.

**COMING NEXT ISSUE**

**THE HOUSE OF FEAR**

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By

FRANK JOHNSON
named Tod. He does not wish his last name mentioned. He comes from a town in the middle west.

Not so long ago, a policeman of that town, John Bender, was killed by a crook caught robbing a store. The only clue to the killer was that he belonged to a notorious gang of hoodlums that congregated almost every afternoon in the Red Bat saloon.

Tod heard about the killing and since he always admired the slain policeman, he volunteered to help track down the murderer. With the permission of the police, he secretly installed a delicate instrument in the Red Bat saloon. A detective disguised as a tramp arranged to be in the saloon every time the gang frequented the place.

One afternoon the hoodlums were drinking and shooting pool. Suddenly they all stood still. A whispering voice seemed to come out of the walls. It said: "He killed me. He killed me."

Frightened crooks turned to each other in bewilderment. "Who said that?"

Then the disguised detective drunkenly spoke up: "I thought I saw a cop standing there in the corner. But he's gone now. Give me a drink—I'm scared."

One of the crooks, Waxy Porter, seemed more concerned than he said the others. In a few minutes he didn't seem to feel all that well, and went home.

Suspicion is not evidence. The police had to wait. And the next afternoon when Waxy Porter returned, eyes looked at him questioningly. But he seemed high in spirits, evidently having taken a stimulant.

Then it happened. This time everybody was too nervous. They trembled as the weird voice spoke: "Waxy Porter killed me. Waxy Porter killed me!"

The yellow crook couldn't take it. Withdrawing his gun, he gazed madly at the corner of the room. Then pointing his gun, he shouted: "You cop—I see you. I got you once—and I'll get you again."

He emptied his gun at the imaginary policeman.

Waxy must have taken too much cocaine for the nervous strain made him collapse. In his delirium at the hospital, he repeated his confession. A few hours later he was dead.

Had he really seen the dead policeman? Who knows? Even Tod admits "maybe he did." At least members of the gang believed it, and broke up their notorious organization!

THE ELECTRIC VOICE

MANY strange stories have been associated with thunderstorms and electric mystery, but that of Mrs. Bronson is one of the most outstanding.
A thunderstorm was raging over the town of Plainville when police sergeant Smalley answered the phone at headquarters. A woman's voice cried: "Murder—thief—33 Grove Lane..." And then the line was silent.

Smalley and a patrolman jumped into a squad car and rushed to the address given. The rain had slackened. As they neared their destination, the patrolman said: "Say, sergeant—isn't 33 Grove Lane the address of old lady Bronson who was poisoned last week?"

"Yes," said the sergeant, "that's funny—the house is shut up—but that's the address the voice gave."

They arrived. Across the driveway a tree had fallen, evidently struck by lightning, and the wires had been pulled down by the tree's fall.

"This must have happened when I heard that big clap of thunder before the call came in. Couldn't have been this phone." Then looking at the house all boarded up, the sergeant shook his head. "Nobody in there—must be a false alarm. But we'll investigate."

They walked around the house looking for some evidence of an entrance having been made. Then they saw it—a cellar window was open. The patrolman stood guard and the sergeant climbed in, gun in hand.

In the cellar he heard a noise in the living room above him. He went up the stairs softly and pointed his flashlight into the living room. A man jumped back from the fireplace where he had evidently been tearing out some masonry.

Like a cornered beast, the intruder grabbed a poker and rushed toward the sergeant with murderous eyes. The sergeant had to shoot him in self defense.

Later it was discovered that the dead man was Hans Diemer, who had once worked for Mrs. Bronson and who had sworn vengeance when she had fired him for stealing.

At the sergeant's insistence, Mrs. Bronson's body was disinterred. Her death had been reported as ptomaine poisoning, but an autopsy proved that she had died by arsenic poisoning. Diemer had evidently killed her.

The police were looking for her hidden valuables when the mysterious voice of the electric storm had summoned the police.

Where had the call come from? No neighbor had made it and it could not have come from the house of tragedy because the phone had been disconnected. What do you think?

THE WATERY MESSAGE

THIS story, just reported, will be turned over to the Psychical Research Society for their files.

Max Larsen was a member of the Merchant Marine—a service in which heroes are being reported every day. His wife and five year old son lived in New York City.
One day, recently, the child was sailing a toy boat in the bathroom while his mother was working in the kitchen.

Suddenly, the child exclaimed: "Mommy, mommy—Daddy is drowned!"

The mother rushed in to see what had happened. A toy soldier the child had had on the boat had fallen off and had sunk to the bottom of the tub.

"That's Daddy," said the child. "He fell into the water."

The mother shuddered at the reference and reached down to retrieve the lead soldier. As she grabbed for it she screamed. She had seen reflected in the water the face of her husband. She dismissed the thought as due to imagination caused by her son's mention of the father. She took the child into the other room and sat down, depressed and apprehensive. She couldn't shake off the feeling of dread.

The next morning however, she felt a little better—but when late that afternoon a messenger arrived with a telegram, she swooned. She was sure she knew what it contained.

And her intuition was right. As her neighbor reports, the message told of the death at sea of Max Larsen at the very time her son had called to his mother the dreadful statement: "Daddy is drowned."

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![Image of a child sailing a toy boat](image-url)

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**STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933, OF THRILLING MYSTERY, published bi-monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1942, State of New York, County of New York, as. Before me, a Notary Public In and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared H. L. Herbert, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of Thrilling Mystery, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor and business manager are: Publisher, Better Publications, Inc., 11 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y.; Editor, Harvey Burns, 11 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y.; Managing Editor, none; Business Manager, H. L. Herbert, 11 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y. 2. That the owners are: Better Publications, Inc., 11 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y. L. Pine, 11 East 39th Street, New York, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds or other securities so stated by him. H. L. Herbert, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 9th day of October, 1942. Eugene Wechsler, Notary Public. My commission expires March 30, 1943.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Dear Chakra: Is it true that one of the poison gases used in the last war caused hallucinations and that some of these visions were psychic, the soldiers seeing forthcoming events?

—George Campbell.

Dear Mr. Campbell: Several cases were reported in a hospital near Dijon, France, of soldiers suffering from photosensitive poisoning, having visions. One was a vision of the Armistice on November 11th, five months before it came to pass.

Dear Chakra: A friend of mine, a photographer, claims that if he takes a picture of a group of soldiers going off to camp, that within 90 days he can tell which soldiers in that group will not return. Do you believe this?

—Sam Hudson.

Dear Mr. Hudson: Certain psychics claim this is true. It is based on the old belief that if death is near a person when photographed, the photo of that person will fade slightly as time passes. There are many photos that have proved this. One appeared recently in a New York newspaper of a group of ten soldiers, two of which had been killed. Those two showed a distinct fading in comparison with the others.

Dear Chakra: Who was the sculptor who, after creating a Statue of Death, died from fright when he suddenly glanced at it?

—Mary Mackey.

Dear Miss Mackey: It was Baltazar Gavilan, the famous sculptor from Peru.

Dear Chakra: I have read of many revelations being given to writers in history—but are there any recent revelations reported that are outstanding?

—Harold Brunning.

Dear Mr. Brunning: One has been reported as having been received by a man named Joshua Jackson. It will probably be published in the near future, as at the present time, Mr. Jackson is showing it to certain psychiatrists for their reactions. Jackson heard a strange voice one night and wrote down the 1,100 words which were dictated. Students of literature call it a masterpiece and it predicts the future, concerning a financial reformation in this country. Watch for it when Joshua Jackson releases it.

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