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SUMMER
ISSUE



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WITHOUT
BLOOD
THEY DIE

*A Book-Length
Novel Featuring
the Black Bat, Masked
Nemesis of Crime*

By G.
WAYMAN JONES

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MYSTERY
NOVEL
EVERY
ISSUE!

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WITHOUT BLOOD THEY DIE
A COMPLETE BLACK BAT NOVEL

BLACK BOOK
DETECTIVE

SUMMER 1943

BOMB HITS CROWDED ENGLISH HALL—GAS

PERILS RESCUERS...

A true experience of Frederick Mockford, Incident Officer, Deptford District Civil Defense, London... as cablegrammed by a war correspondent.



DISTRICT POST INFORMED ME

HIGH EXPLOSIVE BOMB HIT JUST BEFORE

CLOSING TIME. BOMB WENT THROUGH

BILLIARD ROOM, CARRYING TABLES

CLEAR DOWN TO CELLAR.



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MINUTES. ESCAPING COAL GAS OVERCAME

SEVERAL RESCUERS AND MADE FLASHLIGHT

SAFEST AVAILABLE LIGHT. RESCUE PARTY

WORKED THROUGH NIGHT UNTIL DAYLIGHT, BOMBS

CONTINUING TO ROCK BUILDING

I SENT SOS CALL FOR BATTERIES.

THANKS TO FACT FRESH ONES WERE

AVAILABLE FOR JUST SUCH EMERGENCY WE

WERE INSTRUMENTAL SAVING LIVES

AT LEAST 15 PEOPLE.



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Mr. Mockford's experience—like many such others that have come out of England—is typical of the many emergencies that call for the use of a flashlight. Any kind of open flame would have ignited the coal gas, blocking attempts at rescue.

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BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

Vol. 17, No. 2

EVERY STORY BRAND NEW

Summer Issue

A Complete Book-Length Novel



WITHOUT BLOOD THEY DIE

Featuring Tony Quinn,
Nemesis of Crime

By **G. WAYMAN JONES**

The Mysterious Death that Stalks the Marquette Woods Threatens a Million Innocent Victims—and Points to a Diabolical Fifth Column Plot that Tony Quinn and His Aides Must Uncover!..... 13

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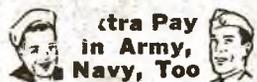
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OFF THE RECORD

A DEPARTMENT WHERE READERS AND THE EDITOR MEET

YOUNG Lloyd North felt very low in his mind that evening when he walked into the park and sat down on his favorite bench. Two days before he'd been fired from his job, the boss accusing him of stealing cash from the till.

The charge was false, but Lloyd couldn't prove it.

Then he'd tried to enlist in the Air Forces, the Army, the Marines and the Navy. Each service branch had turned him down.

"Color blind," they'd told him. "Better wait till you're drafted."

The Mysterious Stranger

A few minutes after he'd sunk down on the bench, however, Lloyd saw a man coming toward him. It was getting dark, but even in the gloom the young man realized there was something unusual about the stranger. Finally, he saw what it was.

The man's left hand was missing and a sinister looking hook projected from his coat sleeve.

The man paused in front of Lloyd, then chuckled and sat down.

"Mind if I tie up here for a few minutes?" he asked. "Down in the dumps, ain't you, lad? But cheer up. The stars are coming out and there's the North Star. Should be your symbol with your name, lad."

Lloyd North was startled. As far as he knew, he'd never seen this squat stranger before in his life. Yet the man plainly knew his name, knew he was down in the dumps and . . .

"How did I know your name, lad?" the man chuckled at Lloyd's amazed question. "I'm an old sea dog, lad. Traveled far and wide. A man meets up with strange things if he goes far

enough abroad looking for 'em."

Lloyd's bewilderment increased. Yet there was something compelling about the old sailor.

For some reason, Lloyd didn't resent his quick familiarity.

It increased still further as the man rambled on to reveal that he not only knew Lloyd's name but that he'd recently lost his job for stealing and been turned down by the armed forces.

"When a lad's in the trouble you've met lately," the sailor went on, "he should take any chance that's offered to him. So you're going to listen to me."

Lloyd nodded. "I'm listening," he said. "But there's something crazy about this whole affair. If you're showing me where I can get work, I'll stand for about anything. But remember, I'm honest, even if you were told that I wasn't."

"You're showing good sense," the old man answered. "Now listen, when you leave the park, go straight to the address I'll write on this bit of paper. You'll be welcomed and something to your advantage will be explained to you. Better get started now. I'll go to the entrance with you."

Just Like a Dream, But—

Lloyd wasn't sure just why he obeyed the old man, but he did. He took the slip of paper and headed toward the park entrance. On the way, the old man pointed out the North Star again, and Lloyd North turned to look at it. When he turned back, the old sailor had vanished.

For a moment, Lloyd stood motionless.

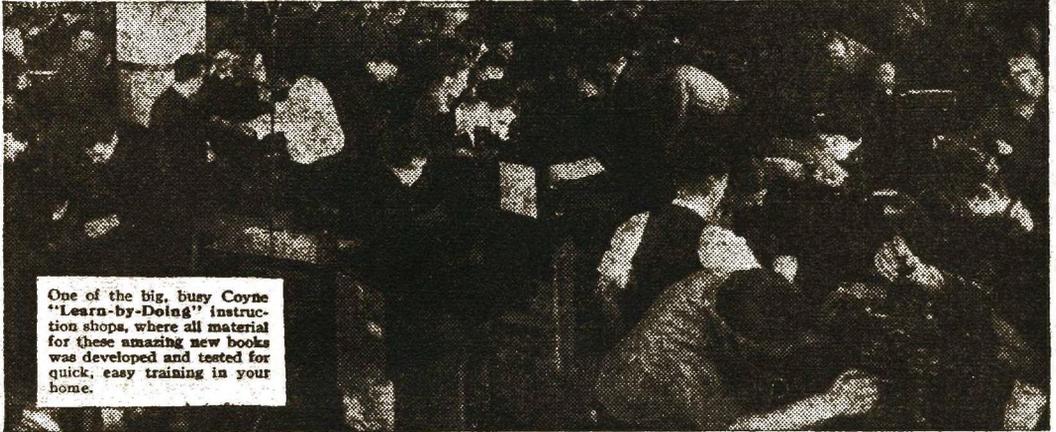
Except for the paper which he still held, he would be inclined to think that

(Continued on page 10)



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OFF THE RECORD (Continued from page 8)

the whole incident was a dream. But the paper was real, and he left the park and took a taxi to the address given him.

More mystery awaited him there. He was given a royal reception, the best dinner he'd ever had in his life—and no information.

After dinner, he was told to go to the home of Attorney Ralston who would explain matters fully.

Was It a Hoax?

Although by this time, Lloyd was suspecting a hoax, he decided to see it through. Ralston met him at the door, ushered him into a dimly lighted room.

"I—I was told you'd have certain information for me, sir," North said un-easily.

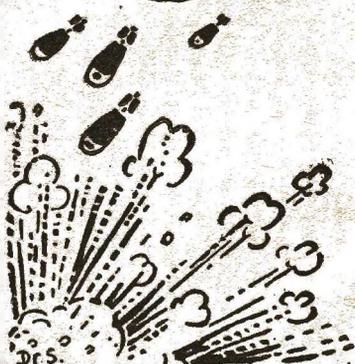
The lawyer picked up a long, sharp paper cutter from the desk in front of him. He lunged out of his chair.

"I'm going to kill you, Lloyd North," he said tensely.

A Fight for Life

The next few moments were a nightmare to Lloyd. He was fighting for his very life against a powerful and furious opponent. Chairs crashed over. The

(Continued on page 94)



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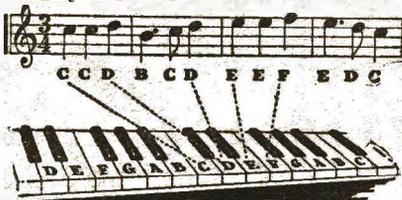


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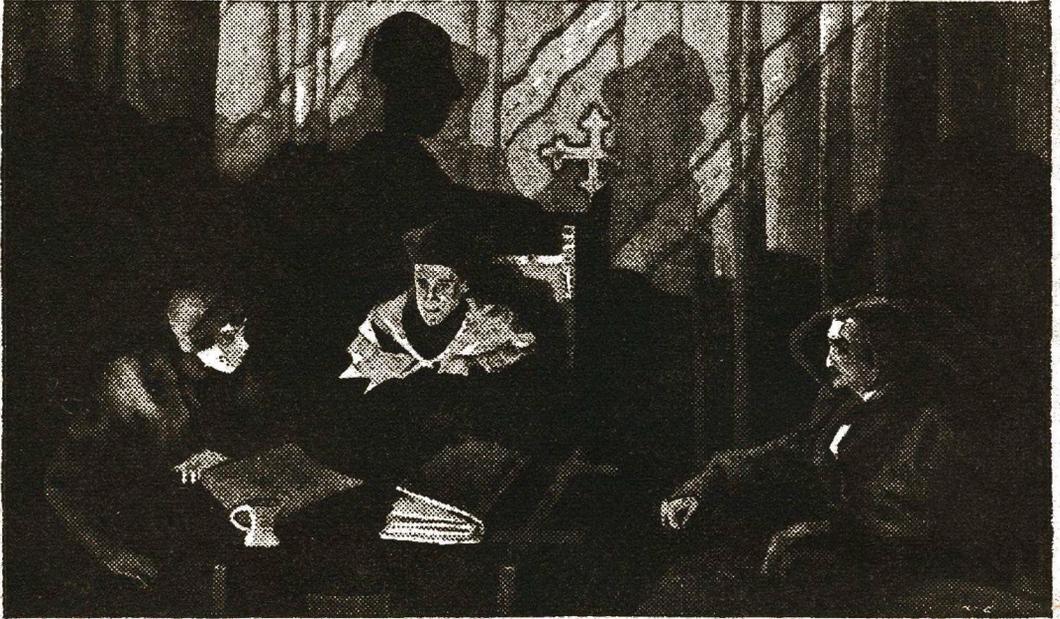
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Quinn had never known the muzzle of a shotgun could look so deadly. (CHAPTER V)

WITHOUT BLOOD THEY DIE

By G. WAYMAN JONES

The Mysterious Death that Stalks the Marquette Woods Threatens a Million Innocent Victims—and Points to a Diabolical Fifth Column Plot that Tony Quinn and His Aides Must Uncover!

CHAPTER I

Shotgun Menace

EIGHT passengers in the rattly station wagon were startled. Three girls exclaimed with delight. An unhurried doe crossed the narrow, twisting woods road, followed by twin fawns. Exclamations came swiftly.

"Isn't she afraid?"

"My goodness, she seems to like people!"

"Look! She's watching us!"

"It's game refuge here," explained the grinning driver. "They's dozens of 'em around Moosehead Lodge. "They ain't got no cause to be scared o' nothin'."

Quick action of the doe and her fawns immediately gave the lie to that. The doe sniffed the breeze. With almost the speed of light she was going away, with the fawns trailing her.

Again the passengers were startled—also alarmed. A scraggly-bearded face appeared between second-growth pines bordering the rutted, sandy road. A brightly barred mackinaw enclosed a long neck and narrow shoulders. The

A COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH BLACK BAT NOVEL

muzzle of a repeating shotgun, known as a "pumpgun," was leveled at the passengers.

"If you folks are goin' in to Moosehead Lodge, have a care where you do your fishin'," a twanging voice threatened. "You city sports ain't wanted in the Marquette woods. Don't let me catch you below Upper Moosehead Lake. There's them as already has gone below, and they ain't come back. Just keep it in mind. Now you can drive on."

The bearded man whisked back among the trees. Through the little pines could be seen the sky-blue water of one woods lake in Marquette National Forest where the setting sun cast a blood-red pathway, as if in reminder of the sudden, sinister warning.

The station-wagon driver swore through snuff-blackened teeth.

"That gol-blasted old Jep Lathur again! Too bad the sheriff couldn't hold him for them other two fellows lost in —"

He clipped off his words as if realizing he had said too much. He sent the station wagon jolting and bumping at too high speed for a mile before slowing down.

"What did you mean about two men being lost?" a fair-haired, blue-eyed girl sitting beside the driver asked him then.

The girl's tone was calm. Other passengers were nervous, but this girl displayed no fright. And with good reason, for back in Manhattan's devious canyons of crime, Carol Baldwin had learned much of violence, and danger, and death at close hand.

AN ASSOCIATE of the supposedly blind Tony Quinn, once a district attorney, but now functioning—unknown to all but three people in the world—as the Black Bat, nemesis of all crooks and killers, it was not strange that Carol should know the seamy side of life.

"Nothin' much, miss," the driver mumbled, in answer to her question. "Just that two city fellows was drowned, maybe shot out of, their boats, and their bodies never was found. They pinched that old coot, Jep Lathur. He owns most all of the land around Moosehead Lakes. But they hadn't no convictin' evidence, and had to let him go. And now, as you saw, he's again threatenin' folks that

comes to Moosehead Lodge for the fishin'."

The log cabins of Moosehead Lodge had just come into view when suddenly the quiet woods echoed to shattering explosions. While the other two girls screamed, and the men swore, Carol Baldwin listened tensely to the six thundering shots, far back in the woods, evidently pumped out as fast as hands could work a gun.

"If Tony hasn't arrived, he'll want to know all about this," Carol thought, as she leaped lightly from the station wagon.

Her gaze swept the dozen or more persons who had come out from the cabins and the main lodge to meet the new guests, but she did not see Tony Quinn. She asked no questions, though, for she had been instructed to display no interest in unexpected happenings. But Carol would have given much for a chance to have trailed that old man with the shotgun.

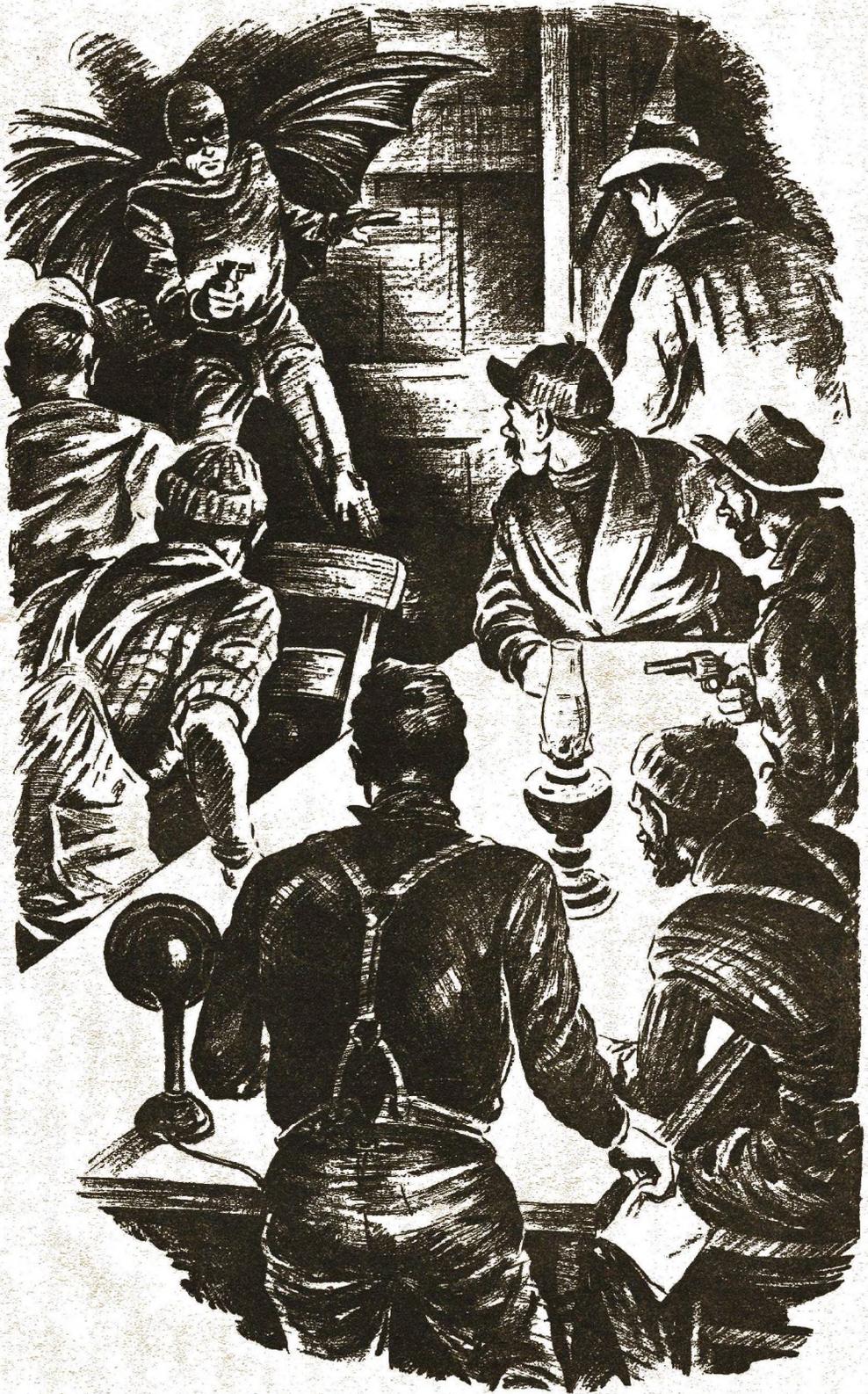
Carol was welcomed with the rest, but as she noted the excited conversation when people learned of what had occurred on the road, heard the plain fright in some voices, she was sure she knew the reason for that. It was the same reason that had taken Tony Quinn by plane to Chicago, and northward to the Marquette National Forest. Though apparently he had not yet arrived at Moosehead Lodge.

The station-wagon driver had said a little about it—before he had shut up—about the city fishermen who probably had been murdered. At least the two had disappeared, one on one evening, one the next, at the same late hour. And their boats had been found blood-stained, marked by buckshot.

The lake from which they had vanished, one of the Moosehead Chain, was Cold Spring Lake. Icy and deep, it seldom surrendered bodies that once had found its depths.

Carol Baldwin walked with others down by the shore of this blue, upper lake on which Moosehead Lodge was situated. Several fishing parties, she learned, were out getting bass, northern pike and muskie fishing that was at its best as darkness came. And motor-boats were being quickly started, to warn them to come in. . . .

Out on the lake, just before the shot-



A winged shadow was moving along the wall as a .38 automatic covered the table.
(CHAPTER VIII)

gun blasts were heard at Moosehead Lodge, a laughing girl and three middle-aged men had been drifting their boat close along a bluff shore. They were below a channel passing Razorback Island, named for its resemblance to the famous southern razorback hog—long, narrow and high.

The three slightly bearded men in the boat were professional men from Chicago, as their non-resident, fishing licenses attested. They were registered at Moosehead Lodge as John Ames, Henry Starke and R. A. Smith. The girl was Ames' daughter, Loretta. With the interest of born anglers, they were all intent now upon luring a big-mouthed bass, a Great Northern pike or perhaps a prized tiger muskalunge from the sunken logs with which the shallows of Cold Spring Lake near shore were floored.

THE boat was within twenty yards of the tree-clad bluff, and the girl, clad in a bright red sweater was standing in the bow of the boat, casting toward shore with a devilbait spoon when a shotgun blast came from among the tall, stately Norway pines. The girl cried out with pain, her bamboo rod fell into the lake, and she tumbled backward against her father. Blood streamed from her face and throat as John Ames' arms caught her.

As the other two alarmed men scanned the shore, a nasal voice twanged:

"You was warned to stay off of Lathur holdin's! Jep Lathur never lies!"

Gun blasts punctuated the angry shouts. John Ames, holding his daughter, sagged forward limply. Henry Starke had leaped from the middle seat toward Ames and the girl when screaming buckshot literally tore his wool shirt off his back.

The third man, R. A. Smith, staggering to his feet, may or may not have seen a bearded, rough face and a brightly-barred mackinaw among the Norways, but he saw the deadly blasts pumping from the killer's gun—and felt them. Clutching at his stomach, Smith fell overboard. He disappeared beneath a scarlet blotch that appeared on the clear, quiet water. He did not reappear. The girl and two men lay inert in the drifting boat.

A high, cackling, insane laugh echoed

among the Norway pines. And the bearded old man in the mackinaw jacket was gone. . . .

A canoe was rounding a point only fifty yards away when the shotgun pumped out its blasts of murder. Another girl who sat in the bow of the canoe, a lithe, straight-backed girl, sent her strength into the clean, powerful strokes of her paddle as she looked ahead with dark, troubled eyes. She was an attractive girl, though her sun-tanned face would be more marked for strength of character than for mere beauty.

But beauty was hers, too, particularly her bobbed blue-black hair, and the fine column of her bronzed throat that rose from her open-necked wool shirt. And she wore her rough blue denims with an unconscious grace.

Something like stark fear was in her dark eyes now, though, as the canoe unexpectedly glided toward tragedy in the boat ahead. In her mind was the sudden shock of memory of those two previous murders. For she was Irma Lathur, daughter of old Jep Lathur, the suspect in the first of the Moosehead murders, and the stubborn-minded, fighting owner of thousands of acres of timber surrounding four-fifths of the Moosehead Lakes.

The brawny young man in the rear of the canoe, Bob Carson, fishing guide, had features as cleanly cut as those of a woods Indian. But his unruly, thick hair was blond.

"Bob!" Irma cried, as she heard the first shot, and caught a brief glimpse of the mackinaw-clad figure in the pines. "Look! Oh, it can't be—"

As the succeeding gun explosions followed almost instantly, Bob Carson swore. His paddle handle bent under his tremendous drive. The canoe split the surface like a driven arrow.

"No!" he shouted. "In heaven's name, no! It couldn't be, darling!"

Bob Carson's voice came hard and distinct above the echoes of the pump shotgun. Yet his paddle suddenly came into the canoe, and his right hand was pulling a .38 automatic from inside his shirt.

WHATEVER his belief concerning the identity of the ambushing killer, his .38 sent slugs ripping among the trees where the powder-smoke of the

shotgun mushroomed, drifted upward.

"No! Bob! Please, Bob! It is—"

For all of her strength as a woods-woman Irma could stand no more. As she cried out, Bob Carson's gun hand dropped—for he saw then what she had seen, a bearded face beneath a tangle of gray hair that seemed to be floating in the murder smoke. Then the face and the figure in the colorful mackinaw were gone. There was a crashing of dry branches back from the shore.

The canoe grounded under the bluff, a few yards from the boat in which lay the bearded killer's bleeding victims. Irma Lathur was about to step ashore. Bob Carson halted her abruptly, pointing to the dog in their canoe. "Look at Pete, Irma! We both thought we saw— But we didn't! Pete knows more than our eyes can tell us! He knows that wasn't your father! Because there's one dog could never be turned against your father—and just look at him now!"

The huge, black dog had come to his feet, his weight rocking the canoe. Half Alaskan husky and half chow, the giant black dog could now have been as nearly a wild killer as any great wolf. And never would sight of Jep Lathur have brought about such fury. For he was devoted to the old man, and a clumsily playful beast. He would never even molest a friend of old Jep Lathur. But to outsiders he was as dangerous an animal as had ever been bred of two cross strains of killer blood.

"Look out, Irma!" shouted Bob Carson. "Stop Pete! He's mad! He'll get himself filled with buckshot if he catches the murderer!"

Irma trapped the collar of the snarling black dog before he could spring from the canoe. Her face was like a gray mask. Even with the dog's instinct as evidence, there still was doubt in her dark eyes.

"Bob!" she said pleadingly. "It's true, isn't it? Nothing could make Pete turn on Dad, could it?"

"Of course not!" Carson said. "Honest men and murderers are all alike in the brain of a dog that is devoted to them. Hurry, darling! We must help those folks in the boat. One man is gone for good—overboard—but the others may be alive. Lucky you're a nurse. Do what you can, and I'll get that outboard going."

Because Irma Lathur was a nurse, and a good one, the two wounded men and girl in the fishing boat were saved, at least temporarily.

Swiftly the woods girl gave first aid and staunched the flow of life blood of all three victims.

Bob Carson got the boat's outboard motor turning and headed the craft with its tragic cargo toward Razorback Island and the forbidden channel.

Irma stared at Carson bleakly.

"They'll jail Dad again when they find him, Bob," she said. "If only we knew where he has been for the past two days and nights!"

"If we only knew that!" Carson said grimly. "I'm afraid, darling, that this time an alibi provided by the boys in his pulpwood camp won't get him off with Sheriff Danvers and the district attorney. I *know* your father is innocent! Danvers and Prosecutor Lark want to believe that, too—so much so that I hear Lark has sent to New York for a famous investigator, a man who used to be a district attorney, to help them get at the *truth!*"

The woods girl was plainly skeptical. "What could any outsider know of us, of the North Woods?" she said bitterly.

CHAPTER II

"Blind" Fisherman



UNFAMILIAR with the tall, well-knit man in the small rowboat with an outboard motor, strangers would have thought him an odd fisherman. He appeared to be casting, and expertly, by the sense of feeling. As the small boat drifted close along the shore, the angler reeled in his line with the jerky movement best calculated to produce a strike from bass, pike or muskie.

When the shadow-minnow, with three sets of triple hooks, darted alongside the boat, the fisherman waited until it stopped. Then he released his line carefully and without seeming to see, shot the plug back toward shore and always checked it just in time to drop it into the water over some rocks shadowed

from the sun, which was just setting.

From the distance came the faint explosions of a gun. But he barely lifted his head.

"Duck hunter," he murmured. It was autumn and the shooting season was on. "But that fellow up there in the pines isn't hunting ducks and he hasn't missed a move I've made."

The angler groped about as any blind man might, found an oar and stroked the boat out a few yards. Again he made one of his sense of feeling casts. As the plug landed lightly beside a sunken log, a broad mouth surged from the depths.

A split second later a big-mouth bass was dancing away on his tail. A five-pounder or more, the game fish resented the hooks gripping his bony jaws. He performed two somersaults trying to shake the plug loose, but the blind man proved to be a skilled angler. The line never slackened under his sensitive fingers. Slowly but surely he fought his fish. The big bass rolled close to the boat. Then the blind man made his first fumble. In trying to slip the hand net under the bass, his sense of touch failed him, it seemed.

The rim of the net struck the fish. With a splattering rush the bass tore away and the apparent blind man swore with true fisherman's fervor.

But if the skulking watcher on shore had been able to see the eyes in wrinkles of burned, scar tissue, he would have known that he had been witnessing only clever deception. The "blind" man had been brought within ten yards of the shore in his fight with the bass.

As he fumbled with the oar as if to push the boat around, a burly figure clad in the heavy lumberjack trousers known as "tin pants," stepped into view.

"Okay, you!" The burly man stood empty-handed. "Push your boat this way! You're two lakes too far down! The boss don't allow nobody fishin' below Razorback Island! He ain't makin' allowances for no blind mug either! This way, I said!"

Tony Quinn, once district attorney of Manhattan, who once had been blinded by a mobster during a trial, appeared to turn blank eyes toward the sound of the voice on shore. But his oar shoved the boat out a bit farther.

"Hey!" the man on shore barked. "Even a blind man can hear! I've got a

gun pointing at you! Come this way or you won't be going back to Moosehead Lodge!"

Tony Quinn was stalling for time. Only a few minutes before his first lieutenant in his unsuspected business of hunting down killers—Norton "Silk" Kirby, had gone ashore and he was waiting for him.

Quinn was in the second lake below Razorback Island, in the third lake of the Moosehead chain of four. The three lower lakes were surrounded by woods on land owned by old Jep Lathur. And these last three lakes of the chain had been forbidden to visting fishermen and sportsmen.

OLD Jep Lathur, of the third generation of Lathurs owning this land, had bitterly resented the opening of a fishing and hunting resort at the head of Moosehead Lakes. He had openly expressed his hate for "big city men" he called "lake destroying vandals."

Ever since Mort Singer, a Chicago sportsman, had opened the Moosehead Lodge, old Jep Lathur had repeatedly warned all resorters to stay on the upper lake. And apparently it was the failure of some of them to heed the order that had been the reason that Tony Quinn had received an appeal for help from Bill Lark, young district attorney, and an old college friend.

The letter had been written after the two fishermen had disappeared and Jep Lathur had been arrested, but had produced an alibi among his own lumber camp workers. Lark had pleaded with Quinn to come to Moosehead to give his advice, and any suggestions possible for tracing down the real murderers. For neither Prosecutor Lark nor Sheriff "Buck" Danvers could believe old Jep guilty.

The letter that had decided Tony Quinn to fly out, and possibly later begin a strange manhunt in the North Woods—though not even Lark would ever suspect that—had read, in part:

Our chief suspect in our two unsolved murders, Jep Lathur, is an old-timer, Tony. He is stubborn and he has threatened and chased fishermen off of three lakes by shooting close to them. He has paid fines for the shooting, though he has never tried to hit anyone—unless he did commit those murders—and he has the sympathy of the natives here. Also he has a small army of lumberjacks who believe in him.

Some good fishermen come here. But some tinhorn sports do, also. They race speed-boats, put on wild parties, and raise general commotion, which none of the natives like. Some outsiders have camped on Lathur's land, set fires accidentally—or perhaps purposely?—spoiled the fishing with their speed-boats, and even potted a few wild deer illegally in this game refuge. The old man's new lumber camps are turning out wood for planes and plastics for the war. And one or two of the recent fires undoubtedly were the work of saboteurs. Still old Jep cannot prevent anyone entering the lakes that are enclosed, almost entirely, by his own land, for the channels in the lower three lakes are legally state waters.

I am asking you to help me out, Tony, because the last time I was in New York, Com-

The important thing, though, Tony, which I have left for the last, is that there is reason to believe that killers and saboteurs may be using old Jep's known reputation to carry out their own ends. We are very close to the vital Sault Ste. Marie canal and locks. Many of the Lathur logs are being shipped from a port near the locks, and pass through them. And should there be serious trouble there even the heaviest guard might not be able to prevent it.

So here it is—if you want the pleasure of good fishing, and possibly a chance to exercise your fine brain to send the rest of us on some good manhunting, why not combine the two? I hope you can join me in helping solve a bad situation before more lives are lost, or some really serious sabotage takes place.



THE BLACK BAT

missioner Warner was boasting that it was your clear thinking and advice, in spite of your regrettable blindness—or it may be because of it—that has enabled his New York police to put away many killers they might otherwise never have caught.

Frankly, old Jep Lathur may be our murderer. Yet I have a strong feeling that he either is innocent or has gone in for out-and-out killing for a more serious reason than wishing to chase trespassers. The old man has "talked killing," at that, though not about those who invade the Lathur land and lakes. He is fiercely patriotic, and has vehemently declared he would kill any saboteur he caught. If his threats ended there, we might handle this. But he seems to have an idea that all sportsmen on three Moosehead lakes are enemies of this country. At least, he stubbornly threatens all trespassers.

That letter had eventually put Tony Quinn here in this small boat, apparently engaged only in fishing. Drifting into the second of Jep Lathur's three lakes, he and Silk Kirby, one-time confidence man, but now a hater and foe of all crooks, had become aware of skulking watchers in the nearby woods. Quinn had quietly instructed Silk Kirby to leave him alone in the boat.

"STAY out of sight yourself, Silk," had been his order. "I'll see what a little blind man baiting will do toward bringing us someone who might be made to talk. If we are being watched

by Jep Lathur's own men and they get rough, we may have a chance to discover how much truth there is in Lathur's alibi for those murders."

Now, with the bulky woodsman on the grassy shore producing a revolver, Tony Quinn still stalled for time. His clumsy efforts at paddling the boat kept it away from shore.

Tony was acting in the belief that Silk Kirby would appear at any moment, coming upon the lumberjack gunman from behind the tree before which the man stood.

"Listen, mister!" The man on shore lifted his short gun. "I said push the boat this way!"

"I'm afraid I'm awkward with the oar," said Tony. "You want me for something special?"

"How'd you get into this lake, if you can't see to row?" demanded the gunman truculently.

"A guide rowed me down here," said Tony. "He left me to see if he could find some live locust bait. Wait! I can't do much with the oar, but I can cast the plug to shore and pull the boat in."

"Do it any way you want, but get that boat in! Maybe if you have to find your way back through the woods alone, it'll teach you to stay off the Lathur lakes."

Tony Quinn balanced the rod lightly in his hand.

"You workin' for Mr. Lathur?" Tony swung the bamboo back over his shoulder. "I hear he doesn't like too many careless sportsmen and I agree with him."

The lumberjack laughed harshly.

"Won't he be glad to hear that! Because we have you dead to rights, you want to play up to the boss. Okay! Pull yourself in before I lose my temper!"

The bamboo rod flicked like flashing light in Tony Quinn's expert hand. The plug with its mean triple hooks and its four ounces of weight, traveled like a bullet. At the same instant Quinn dropped flat, thumb on the singing reel. The lumberjack's gun exploded. But the slug went wild. The lumberjack let out an agonized howl as the flying plug imbedded its hooks in his cheek and ear.

Then Tony Quinn was erect and the gunman was spinning around, shooting wildly. But he dropped the weapon to grab at the stout silk line attached to

Tony Quinn's bending bamboo rod.

"Lemme go! You devil! Stop it!"

Quinn's jerking hand was too much for the lumberjack, until he finally had his hands upon the hooking plug. But Quinn was already out of the boat, plunging toward him.

Sure that the shots would bring Silk Kirby, Quinn tackled the lumberjack about the knees. The shooting did bring Silk. But not as Quinn had expected.

"Get up!" commanded a hard voice. "And you stay put, fellow, while we gather in your pal!"

Tony Quinn came to his feet, his eyes filmed and vacant. But he *could* see—and what he saw was that Silk Kirby was in the hands of two other lumberjacks.

"Stay as you are until we see how blind you are," ordered a man whose shotgun was pointed at Tony Quinn.

He stepped closer, until the gun muzzle prodded Quinn's stomach. Then he flicked a match head with his thumb nail. He waved the lighted match before Tony's blank eyes.

ALL the lumberjack could see was scarred tissue and the dead whiteness of the eyeballs that showed no pupils. Although Tony Quinn, because of a remarkable operation, could see much better than other men, even in the darkness, he had learned the trick of keeping his eyes turned to a point where even an oculist would have sworn he was sightless.

"All right, you're blind," growled the lumberjack. "And that bein' so, I guess you're that Tony Quinn from New York they sent for to advise 'em how to get the boss. And you"—he nodded at Silk—"lead Mr. Quinn. Old Jep will tell you a few things about outsiders messin' around on his property."

Tony's right hand moved in a quick gesture with bent fingers. It was a signal that keen-witted Silk could understand. It meant:

"This may be what we want. Play along."

He stumbled over logs and rough ground beside Silk. Darkness had fallen when they came to a split-log shack in which a light showed only through some chinks.

"So you got all four of 'em, though three of 'em are still alive, and they've been landed at Moosehead Lodge," they

heard a voice inside the shack say boastfully. "Maybe that'll clean up for our payoff."

The door of the shack opened suddenly and Tony Quinn, who had seen Jep Lathur in the county seat town before coming to Moosehead Lodge, saw the old man standing inside the shack. He heard old Jep's curse, saw him slam his fist into another man's mouth.

"Three of 'em livin', huh?" The old man's voice had a nasal twang. "And you come back here leavin' 'em to talk. It was enough for the other girl and Bob Carson to see me, without any of them gettin' back to the Lodge."

Old Jep turned and saw Tony Quinn and Silk Kirby in the hands of the lumberjacks outside. Still cursing, he grabbed up a shotgun.

"Why in thunderation did you have to bring some other rapsCALLIONS to this place?" demanded old Jep, raising the pump gun. "I'll be havin' all the outsiders at Moosehead Lodge namin' me! I'll fix this now!"

Tony Quinn had a chill feeling that he had never been closer to death than at this moment.

CHAPTER III

Old Country Doctor



MORT SINGER, proprietor of Moosehead Lodge was a wilted two hundred pounds of distress, watching three of his best paying guests being carried, unconscious, to their rooms, and knowing a fourth victim was dead in Cold Spring Lake.

Singer's double chins quivered as he rubbed his hands helplessly. Even so, he was game and sympathetic.

"If it could bring back that Smith, or save these men and that girl, I would give away my resort to the first man to come along," he stated positively. "Can we get them to the hospital?"

Irma Lathur shook her head, and Bob Carson backed her up.

"All three have lost so much blood that it would be fatal to move them, Mr. Singer," Carson asserted. "I've called Dr. Caller. He's old-fashioned, but I

tried to get Dr. Cass at the Lake Hospital and he is out for the evening."

"We can't get Dr. Cass?" Mort Singer's tone was frantic. "Doc Caller is a good country doctor, but he's not a surgeon, and he won't do for these wounded people!"

"Dr. Caller can do all that must be done now," Irma Lathur said. "I will help. I have often helped Dr. Cass at the hospital. But I will need someone. Has anyone here had nursing experience?"

Carol Baldwin stepped forward. She did not know who Irma was, for ever since arrival of the tragedy boat the Lodge had been in a state of excitement. Some panicky guests were insistent on leaving at once.

"I'm not a nurse," Carol said to the Lathur girl, "but I've had experience in emergencies. I can take orders, and I won't faint at the sight of blood or a scalpel."

Irma Lathur's dark eyes met Carol's blue ones. Carol read strength of character in Irma, and a desperate anxiety to save the lives of three wounded persons. And in Carol, Irma recognized coolness, efficiency and intelligence.

"I am glad you will help," she said. "We must change the compresses I have made and take the heart condition of the patients to be prepared for Dr. Caller. I would say that, except for loss of blood, all three have a good chance. Shotgun pellets from that distance cause only superficial wounds."

Mort Singer mustered a note of cheerfulness. He spoke then to Irma Lathur.

"You are a nurse, working with Dr. Cass?" he said to Irma. "Strange I have not met you. But since you are Bob Carson's friend—he is a good guide for my place."

"I am Mr. Carson's friend, yes," said the nurse. "And I have been here practically since I was born, Mr. Singer. I am Irma Lathur."

Carol Baldwin restrained an exclamation. This girl was the daughter of Jep Lathur, the man who was the reason for Tony Quinn's coming to the Marquette Forest.

"Lathur?" an hysterical woman guest screamed. "Why, it was that murdering fiend, Jep Lathur, who shot these poor people! He threatened all of us! You are—"

"Jep Lathur is my father," Irma Lathur interrupted coolly. "But I am also a trained nurse, the only one available. If my father is being accused, then I have an added reason for trying to save three lives."

The resort owner swallowed hard. Then he tried to smile.

"Why, yes, I see what you mean, Miss Lathur," he said slowly. "If your father threatened all of my guests, you would want to—"

Bob Carson whirled on Singer. His sun-bronzed face had paled, and he forcibly held his fist clenched at his side.

"Don't say one blasted word more, or I'll knock your teeth out, Singer!" he grated. "I have my own proof that Jep Lathur could not have shot these people! What it is you will all know at the proper time. Irma, get busy. Doc Caller will be here in a few minutes."

EARNESTLY Carol wished that Tony Quinn was here, for she had walked right into the midst of more murders, when she had come with him to help solve the mystery of two other killings. She found Bob Carson's gray eyes studying her, and felt as she did sometimes when she knew Tony Quinn was reading her thoughts.

"You're from New York?" asked Carson. "You say you've had first-aid experience? Wouldn't that include gunshot wounds?"

"It would," Carol said calmly. "Perhaps not shotgun wounds, but I've helped probe for what, in the city, are called slugs."

Carol heard women guests gasp, saw the eyes of the men on her with hard inquiry. And suddenly it came to her that with all that seemed to be happening around this "peaceful" fishing resort it might be a good idea to command some respect the hard way.

"In fact," said Carol, "I have friends who are always getting themselves shot up. I've helped them out and just to be on the same side in our big, bad town I have this always handy."

Bob Carson's eyes were like flinty steel as a deadly, blue automatic slid into Carol's hand from her swiftly opened hand-bag. And before startled exclamations became coherent speech, Carol said coolly:

"I am ready for orders, Miss Lathur,

and we are wasting time."

As both Bob Carson and Mort Singer started to speak, a big, red-faced man spoke from the lodge entrance.

"I hear some of you folks are wanting to clear out," he boomed. "Nobody leaves Moosehead Lodge until I give the word. I am Sheriff Danvers."

Muttered protests that arose were stilled when Dr. Andrew Caller came bustling in from his car which had just rattled up. He was a round-faced, nervous man with gray side whiskers like those affected in the nineties. At first sight of him Carol had a qualm of fear for the wounded patients.

Less than ten minutes later, Carol revised her opinion of the country doctor. She was with him and Irma Lathur in the room where Loretta Ames lay unconscious. The wounded girl's face was chalk-white.

"The others have a good chance," said Dr. Caller. "But this girl . . . Irma, I'll have to operate right here, and she



must have a transfusion. We've no time or chance for typing. How about the blood bank at Lake?"

"Dr. Cass is away," said Irma, "but I have access to the plasma. We have our biggest shipment already sealed. It's eight miles to the hospital, but if you'll let me have your car, Dr. Caller, I can be back within an hour."

"Take it, Irma, and be careful of your neck," said the country doctor. He turned to Carol. "Now young lady, can you stand by while I try suturing some small arteries that are rapidly draining away the patient's strength?"

Carol nodded. Bob Carson put his head in the doorway to say he was going to drive Irma to the hospital, and the doctor nodded absently.

Perhaps Carol, inured as she was to violence and emergencies since she had been aiding Tony Quinn in his crook-fighting career, had never been in a stranger situation. But helping the

little old-fashioned country doctor, she had to admire the efficiency of his bony hands.

As he worked, Dr. Caller talked to Carol.

"That Lake Hospital blood bank is great stuff," he said. "Hundreds of the hardest woodsmen and natives up here have donated their blood for plasma going to the fighting boys. I didn't approve of Dr. James Cass when he first came here—came on a vacation and liked it so well he stayed—but what he's done with that blood bank is amazing."

CAROL was listening with one-half of her mind, but the other half was busiest. When Bob Carson, the guide, returned, she thought, she would enlist his help to make her way through the dark woods or down the lakes. One thing she had managed to pick up in the general confusion downstairs was that Tony Quinn and Silk Kirby were registered here. For she had heard talk about the blind man and his companion who were out on a fishing trip. And that being the case, some way she had to find out what had happened to them. Tony had planned to meet her here on her arrival.

"Butch" O'Leary, too, Quinn's other fighting aid. Big Butch, retired pugilist and tough as a knot, had been sent ahead to be ready when Tony Quinn needed him. Butch should now be employed in one of old Jep Lathur's timber camps.

A worried, prematurely bald young man came in to tell the doctor that Sheriff Buck Danvers and several deputies were out scouring the woods for old Jep Lathur. The young man was Bill Lark, district attorney, who had summoned Tony Quinn. But of course, not knowing that Carol was associated with

Quinn, he gave her only a brief glance.

"It's the devil and all, Doc Caller," Bill Lark said in a low tone. "You think this girl and the men will live?"

"They have a good chance, if this girl gets the plasma transfusion in time," stated Dr. Caller. "Irma Lathur is on her way with it from Lake Hospital."

"Irma Lathur?" exclaimed Lark, scowling. "It's one heck of a mixup. I wanted to believe old Jep was innocent. But from what's happened this evening I judge old Jep's case is hopeless now. I have to think he's insane, especially on the subject of sabotage, and believe every trespasser on the lower lakes is a Fifth Columnist."

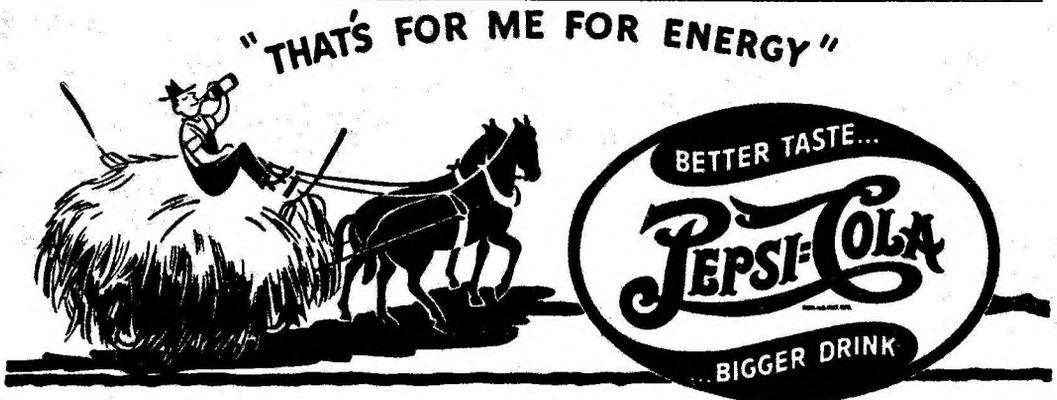
"You can't visit the sins of the father upon his children," said Doc Caller. "Irma's as right as rain. And I wish right now I had old Jep's son Jess here to help with these patients. He's gone farther experimenting with blood plasma than most big city doctors have."

"This Dr. Jess Lathur, the son of the man they suspect," Carol asked surprised. "He practices in this community, Dr. Caller?"

"Practices?" repeated Dr. Caller. "Bless your soul, no. His dad fitted him up with a modern laboratory on the home place and he has been up to his ears in research for five years. Why, he's so wrapped up in it, he scarcely realizes there's a war or that old Jep has been in trouble."

This was becoming complicated, as Carol saw it, but all she could do now was to watch over Loretta Ames, while Dr. Caller was busy with John Ames and Henry Starke. She was relieved when she heard Irma Lathur and Bob Carson return.

[Turn page]



CHAPTER IV

Vanished Victims

FOR the next half hour Carol was busy aiding Dr. Caller and Irma Lathur as they attended to the liquefying and transfusion of the blood plasma.

"I had to break open one of the sealed shipping containers," explained Irma. "You see, with plasma, it's possible to combine dehydrated blood of all types, as the cellular structure is destroyed and does not revive to cause typing trouble. Right here we have enough plasma ready to save hundreds of wounded soldiers."

Within a few minutes Loretta Ames was breathing more regularly, and there was some color in her cheeks. Dr. Caller took her heart reaction and nodded with satisfaction.

"All three patients should survive," he said. "John Ames was conscious for a few minutes, and gave me a message to wire a brother in Chicago. But it must wait until morning."

For the first time Carol had a suspicion that Irma Lathur could be playing a part that was not exactly meant to save lives. She saw the girl's dark eyes staring at Dr. Caller when he mentioned John Ames' message. But Irma looked away quickly.

"Get some rest, Miss Baldwin," she said. "I may need you later and I'll call you."

Carol went downstairs where most of the guests were still assembled. None of them seemed to care for sleep. Carol knew they were looking her over intently. There was high disapproval in the eyes of the women. Probably they had put her down as a gun moll.

Mort Singer was talking with Prosecutor Bill Lark.

"And Mr. Quinn's been gone since this afternoon?" Carol heard Lark ask. "That's strange. He's an old college friend of mine and I was expecting to see him here."

Carol would have liked to ask both men a few questions, but of course she could not. And her immediate business was to find Bob Carson.

She found the fishing guide outside, sitting on a rail of the porch. He was staring gloomily out over the lake. Carol started toward him, but before she reached him, a tall, thin young man with stooped shoulders appeared from the darkness.

"Doctor Jess!" exclaimed Bob Carson in a low voice. "Hey! You hadn't ought to have come here!"

Dr. Jess Lathur's long face was dark and strong, his features much like those of his sister Irma.

"I heard what happened, Bob," said Dr. Jess. "How are the patients? Are they thinking it's Dad again?"

"The patients will recover, I guess," said Bob Carson. "Yes, they are thinking it is your dad again, Dr. Jess. But I've good reason to believe they're wrong this time and there's my reason!"

Carol saw him point to a great alert dog that was crouched at his feet. The dog had given Dr. Jess a low, friendly growl of welcome, but had not moved.

"I'll talk about that later, Bob," said Dr. Jess Lathur. "I want to slip up and see Irma. I wouldn't want Singer or others to see me. I have a new experiment in blood plasma I want Irma to give Dr. Cass as soon as possible."

It struck Carol that Dr. Jess Lathur was more interested in his own experiments than in the important threat of arrest on a murder charge for his father. Or could Dr. Jess simply be making an excuse to talk to his sister?

"Go around the back of the lodge, Dr. Jess," said Bob Carson. "The patients' rooms are close to the hill. And the second floor is hardly more than ground-high back there."

As soon as Dr. Jess Lathur had gone Carol approached Bob Carson.

"Mr. Carson, would you help me find some friends?" she asked quickly.

THE illumination from inside showed the steely shine of his gray eyes.

"Your friends wouldn't be any of the new arrivals here who have been raising Cain with our war workers in the line camps, would they, Miss Baldwin? The kind they pick slugs out of in New York?"

Bob Carson's tone was coldly discourteous. Carol's reply was hot on her tongue, but she never made it. For from the rear of the lodge there was the sud-

den sound of a car starting away fast. And in the thunder of its motor sounded two crackling shots. Instantly Bob Carson was across the porch and running, a gun coming into his hand.

Carol darted through the startled guests in the main room of the lodge. At the top of the stairs she halted suddenly. In the hallway, Dr. Andrew Caller was lying outside one of his patients' doors! And one glance showed Carol that the old country doctor would save no more lives. At least one bullet had entered his throat.

Others were crowding up now, women screaming, men cursing. But Carol sped to Loretta Ames' room. And the girl whose life had just been saved was gone! The low window was open and the screen was torn out.

Bill Lark, his voice terrible in his anger, was coming from another room.

"The two men are gone!" he shouted. "Taken through the windows! Someone in this hallway, someone probably still in the lodge, shot Dr. Caller! Everyone with a car will have to help in the hunt for the kidnapers!"

Mort Singer, all but moaning, was attempting to stop his guests from crowding upstairs.

"Tell them, Lark," he pleaded, "that I will see that Sheriff Danvers lets them go as soon as he returns. My station wagon driver says the wagon was seized by half a dozen men who broke into the windows. I'm closing Moosehead Lodge until Jep Lathur is caught and this is cleaned up!"

"I'll tell them, Singer," said Lark. "But it looks as if getting Jep Lathur means we've got to call in the army. His men must have grabbed those patients. But what in thunder is their idea? They can't clear Lathur by . . . Good glory! I hadn't thought of that. It could be."

"Could be what?" wailed Singer, wringing his hands. "Don't tell me Jep Lathur would be insane enough to want a girl and two men killed, just because they didn't die when they were shot! That's inhuman!"

"Ripping folks apart with a shotgun is also inhuman," Lark said bitterly. "Singer, we've already had two murders, and even without his alibi, we couldn't have convicted Jep Lathur. Bodies never have been recovered from the middle of Cold Spring lake. No bodies, no

murder case."

"Then you mean—Jep Lathur can do this to my place. If he can get away with this, I might as well burn the lodge!"

Bill Lark's lips were moving over silent oaths. But all Carol Baldwin was thinking of was that Irma Lathur was missing and that no one had mentioned seeing Dr. Jess Lathur who had been back of the lodge when the patients were kidnaped. And grimly now Carol recalled how Irma Lathur had looked at Dr. Caller when he had said John Ames had given him a message to be sent to his brother.

"And now old Dr. Caller will not be sending a message or repeating what John Ames may have told him" muttered Carol. "Irma Lathur could have wanted to prevent that! She and her brother might go to any lengths to save their father."

There were families like that. And it struck Carol that the Lathurs must be fanatically devoted to each other and to upholding the legal claims of the third generation of Lathur here in the deep North Woods.

SUDDENLY Carol felt her arm gripped with cruel intensity. Bob Carson's steel-cold eyes were piercing her.

"Come with me," he said, his voice low and hard. "You mentioned looking for some friends. Keep your mouth shut, Miss Baldwin. I'll help you find your missing friends. Perhaps you might know what has happened to Irma?"

It was a bit fantastic, the guide's cold assumption. But Carol was cool enough to reason quickly. It would accomplish nothing to contact Prosecutor Lark now. She had to depend on this fishing guide, no matter what he thought of her.

Whatever she might suspect concerning Irma Lathur, somehow Carol could not extend it to this gray-eyed, cold-voiced guide, Bob Carson. She decided it might be as well to accompany Carson now, and later inform him why she was seeking Tony Quinn, now strangely missing.

"Wait till I slip into some outdoor clothes, Mr. Carson," she said quietly. "I'll be right with you."

Less than ten minutes later, Carol Baldwin was in the black-dark woods

below Moosehead Lodge. Bob Carson walked close beside her. They were moving only by the guide's uncanny instinct, it seemed to Carol who could see nothing.

Suddenly she felt a warm touch on one hand. There was a low, friendly growl. Bob Carson halted. A light flicked in his hand. Pete, the big husky Chow dog, was nuzzling Carol's hand.

"I guess I'm wrong, and I'm sorry," said Bob Carson. "Pete has more brains than I have. If he's decided you're all right, that's good enough for me. Now tell me more about these friends we're supposed to be hunting."

She told him quickly about Tony Quinn who had come up here at Lark's invitation to see if he could prove old Jep innocent, and that she had come here to join him, since she acted as a sort of pair of eyes for the blind man whose clever mind could see what others could not.

"Murder!" exclaimed Bob Carson. "And I turned down Bill Lark who's worried and wanted me to start out on the same chore. I got the wrong slant on you because of that gun you carry, and decided your friends might be among a crazy lot who have just arrived here and are trouble-makers. Come on, we'll see if we can pick up the sign of Tony Quinn. I've heard all about him."

But Carol knew that Bob Carson was wrong there. For no one in the world except Silk Kirby, Butch and herself knew that Tony Quinn was the much feared, mysterious Black Bat, terror of killers and the whole underworld!

CHAPTER V

Old Jep "Convicted"



QUINN had never known the hole in the muzzle of a shotgun could look so big and deadly. Although his eyes still appeared blank, he could see the bearded old fanatic tightening his finger on the gun trigger.

Silk Kirby made a sudden move, risking other guns, and knocking Quinn to one side. Then one of old Jep Lathur's lumberjacks inter-

fered—and violently. He was the man old Jep had slapped in the teeth.

"You fool!" he shouted. "That's Tony Quinn, an' he's blind! An' you'll be bringin' the posse already huntin' you down on this shack!"

His swinging fist in a powerfully driven, crunching blow caught Jep Lathur under one ear. That huge fist would have knocked down a bull.

Jep Lathur's knees buckled as he went down in a heap on the floor. And in the short confusion, when the men holding him and Kirby had their eyes fixed upon the rebellious lumberjack who had floored his boss, Tony Quinn acted with the speed of a cat.

"Take 'em, Silk!" he rapped out as he twisted away from a shotgun held lightly against his body.

Quinn's hard toe kicked the kneecap of the lumberjack holding the shotgun. His fist went into the man's stomach as the knee kick bent the fellow double.

Then Quinn pivoted, just as another lumberjack caught him with a hard fist in the side of his neck. Quinn staggered, but brought up the muzzle of the shotgun under the second man's chin.

Although unarmed, Silk Kirby, one-time carnival grifter, was lightning in a rough-and-tumble encounter. He laid out two men who were much bigger and heavier than he was beside Tony Quinn.

"Do we grab guns and take 'em, chief?" Silk asked hopefully.

"We slide out from under for the present," Tony Quinn said grimly. "Keep fading into the woods. You heard what was said. I heard shooting. While we've been trying for a toehold here and missing badly, apparently old Jep Lathur again made use of his shotgun before his men got us."

They were out of the cabin now, their get-away covered by blackness inside when Quinn had crashed the lantern, and were moving swiftly through needle-carpeted space under towering Norway pines.

"Heard that mug say he got four people, and that three of them were taken to Moosehead Lodge," said Silk Kirby. "Chief, they were laying for me when I left you. And they know who you are. I wonder how?"

Tony Quinn chuckled.

"You've been around the big town so long, Silk, you forget these woods com-

munities know every stranger who appears," he said. "While we were in the county town, Bill Lark said old Jep Lathur was across the street and described him to me accurately. Bill, of course, couldn't know that I saw Jep Lathur, so I knew him when they took us to that cabin. And yet I'm of the opinion there was something phony about all we've just experienced, including our comparatively easy getaway."

"You think they meant for us to escape?"

"Certain of it," Quinn said quietly. "It was too easy after old Jep Lathur was knocked out."

"You think we should go back and trail them, Chief?"

"Silk, a dozen men were there. They scattered in several directions as soon as we got away. But two of those men are tailing us right now, and doing a blundering job of it. Silk, for lumberjacks, those boys don't know these woods as well as they should."

"Our next move then?" asked Silk.

"Get back to our boat, if it is still there. We will go back as far as Razorback Island. You will put me ashore there. Silk, I have an idea the Black Bat might well make a personal appearance. There is much more to this than a feud against trespassers being conducted by one apparently crazy old man."

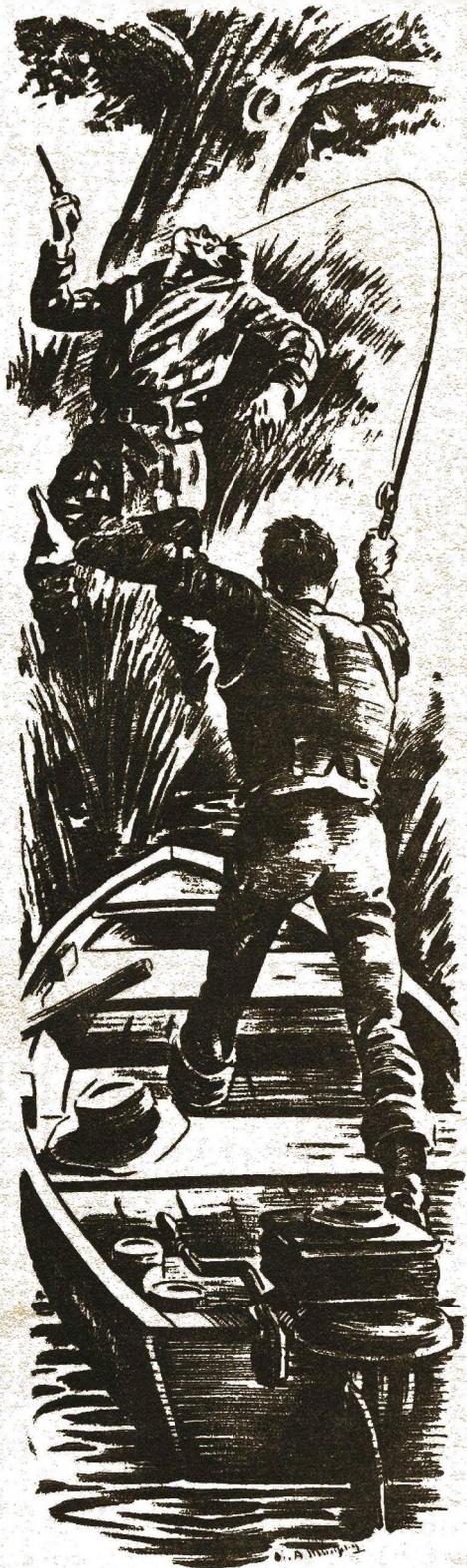
THERE was no sound of the men who had been trailing them when they reached the place Tony Quinn had come ashore. Their small boat was still grounded. Abruptly Silk made a quick jump for the boat and splashed into shallow water.

Silk must have thought a huge black wolf had come out of the night. The beast sprang toward them, growling, but stopped belly-deep in the lake as there came a whistle and a call.

Carol Baldwin appeared out of the dark and introduced Bob Carson to Quinn and Silk. She swiftly told them what had happened at Moosehead Lodge.

"Three wounded persons snatched?" Quinn said slowly. "That changes our plans for the moment."

"Look, Mr. Quinn, I'm coming clean with you. I'm in love with Irma Lathur. I intend to marry her. I've reason to believe the killer with the shotgun today was not Jep Lathur. This dog Pete



The lumberjack let out an agonized howl as the hook was imbedded in his cheek. (CHAPTER II)

knows what we don't, and he was all set to chase that killer down—and he would never hunt old Jep. He loves the old man."

"Then you believe that Miss Lathur and her brother, Dr. Jess, were seized by the mob that abducted the wounded people?" asked Quinn.

"I'd stake my life on it," Bob Carson said solemnly.

Carol got Quinn to one side and quickly told him about the message Dr. Caller said John Ames had told him to wire to his brother, and of her belief that that had sealed his fate.

"Only you and Irma Lathur heard what Dr. Caller said?" asked Quinn.

"I don't like to accuse her, but that's true, Tony."

"But Dr. Caller could have informed some other person he had such a message, Carol," Tony Quinn said gently.

Quinn had intended carrying out a Black Bat visitation to the Lodge. In that rôle, supposedly blind Tony Quinn came and went like a fitting shadow, and his ability to see in darkness was a tremendous asset. Now he had another idea.

"Our next move would seem to be to get on the trail of those who took away the shotgun victims," he said. "Look, Carson. This dog Pete would undoubtedly trail his master. Or if it should happen, as you believe, that the killer is not Jep Lathur, but perhaps a masquerader, the dog would refuse to follow a strange scent."

"That's a smart idea, Quinn," stated Carson. "If that man you saw in the shack was Jep Lathur, Pete will take his trail."

"It could be," reasoned Quinn, following Bill Lark's logic, "that when Jep Lathur shot those people the dog failed to recognize him. And if the three wounded survivors never are found, and the body of that man who went overboard is not recovered, Jep Lathur or any other person could not be convicted of homicide. No corpus delicti. No case."

"It's a fool law!" blazed Bob Carson.

"Well," said Tony Quinn. "Let's get going. You know the woods. Probably the rest of us could not find our way back to the cabin."

"I know the shack," said Carson. "It's an old logging bunkhouse, the only one in this part of the woods. If that was

Jep Lathur there with you I'm willing to help track him down with Pete. Probably the only way I can find out what might have become of Irma. I trust her fully, but Dr. Jess, her brother, was at the Lodge when those people were snatched. I don't know—" He hesitated. "Maybe it's just that I think Dr. Jess is odd because he's always experimenting with blood and poisons and such. But ever since this Dr. James Cass started the blood bank business, Dr. Jess has acted strangely. I've seen him watching from the woods three different times when Dr. Cass was out fishing."

"You think Dr. Jess suspects Dr. Cass of something?" asked Quinn.

"I don't know, Mr. Quinn," said Carson. "And Dr. Cass sure ain't open to any suspicion in the good work he is doing. It just struck me queer that Dr. Jess should be spying upon him. Lord knows what screwy ideas these doctors get."

QUINN added Dr. James Cass to those he might wish to interview. Undoubtedly Dr. Cass, in charge of the blood bank, would know much of the personal history of the woodsmen and others who had donated their blood.

As they walked on in the dark woods, finally the black bulk of the split-log shack appeared in a clearing. Tony Quinn kept silent about something his batlike eyes had seen. He was being guided carefully by Silk Kirby for the benefit of Bob Carson, but as they had neared the shack, Quinn had detected the shadows of men moving through the trees toward the lake. Plainly they were trained woodsmen; otherwise Bob Carson's keen ears would have heard them.

As yet Quinn could not be too sure of the guide. He had only his instinct to tell him that Bob Carson was sincere. But he was equally sure that Carson might step outside the law to help Irma Lathur.

Then Tony Quinn was amazed as he looked ahead and into the open doorway of the dark shack. The others could not yet see the figure still lying on the dirt floor. But Quinn knew that the man he had believed to be old Jep Lathur, and who had talked of shooting four persons, was inside the shack. Furthermore, because Quinn and Kirby had been trailed,



SILK

he knew that several persons had made certain they were returning to the shack.

Then suddenly, with a rumbling growl, the dog, Pete, bounded forward. That rumble in Pete's throat was both friendly and troubled. Then Quinn saw, in spite of the darkness in the shack, the big black beast crouching, whining and licking at the bearded face of the man on the floor.

"Somebody's here that Pete knows and likes!" Carson exclaimed, and then his flashlight was making a circle about the figure on the shack floor. With a sharp oath he strode quickly to the inert figure.

"I wouldn't have believed it! I still can't believe it! Jep! Jep! You hear me? You hurt? It's Bob—Bob Carson, Jep!"

"So the dog identifies his master," Quinn said slowly. "This is no masquerader. And that would also convict Lathur, if we had the bodies of those he may be accused of killing. But wait a minute, Carson."

The guide was muttering low oaths, declaring he still could not believe it.

"Silk," Quinn said, "you saw and I heard this man knocked down. See if there are marks. He must have been hit hard or his men would not have left him here like this."

"They couldn't carry him, so maybe they went after a car or one of the logging wagons," said Carson. "Mr. Quinn, there are bruises across the side of old Jep's head. He's been completely knocked out. I suppose all we can do is to get in touch with Sheriff Danvers. But I'd rather cut off my right arm."

"Is the shotgun he used anywhere about?" asked Quinn.

"Yes, it's over by the wall," Bob Carson said miserably. "But Pete couldn't have made a mistake at the time of the shooting from the lake shore. That isn't dog instinct. And if Pete had caught up with that killer then, he would have torn him to pieces!"

"Listen!" Quinn said abruptly. "Isn't that a motor-boat?"

EVEN Bob Carson had to wait a minute before he caught the sound of the motor on the lake. But Tony Quinn had heard it moments before.

"The ears of the blind are acute," explained Quinn, then he surprised Bob Carson. "Suppose we leave Jep Lathur here while we investigate that motor-boat. It might be some of those who are hunting the missing shotgun victims. I am tired, and would like a lift back to Moosehead Lodge."

"You want me to stay and watch old Jep?" questioned Carson. "You don't mean to leave him here alone?"

Tony's piercing vision had detected what the others had missed. Jep Lathur's eyelids had fluttered and Quinn was convinced that the old woodsman was conscious. But he had been listening, feigning coma. He was a pretty foxy old-timer.

"This looks like some of Lathur's own men are trying to throw him to the wolves," Quinn said quietly. "You know any of them who dislike him, Carson? He certainly was slugged hard enough by one of the men who brought us here."

"Old Jep's men would go to the devil for him," Carson said positively. "Mr. Quinn—"

There was a sudden increase of sound from the motor-boat on the lake, and with it came the whine of a car winding through one of the woods trails. Car and motor-boat appeared to be converging upon the same spot along the shore, perhaps half a mile away.

"Silk, come on!" commanded Quinn. "Carson, you'll have to lead the way. Lathur will be here when we get back. Even if he isn't, now that we know what we do, he can be picked up by Sheriff Danvers. The men in that boat or car may have some news of Miss Lathur and Dr. Jess."

Quinn could almost feel the nerves of old Jep Lathur going taut. He could see one hand slowly clench. But for some reason the old woodsman was determined to maintain his pretense in the hope of being left alone. Besides, had the intimation that Irma Lathur and Dr. Jess were missing been news to their father? It was impossible to say. But what Tony Quinn wanted was a chance to talk to Jep Lathur alone. He believed that the old woodsman would crack at the right time and place—and that might be when the mysterious Black Bat made him a visit.

The Chow dog would not leave Lathur's side. And Quinn could see the loyal Bob Carson welcomed this slight delay in having old Jep put into the hands of the law.

Even though Tony, again guided by Silk Kirby, moved as fast as Carson and Carol did, they ran into a wide stretch of down timber and windfalls between the shack and the spot to which the boat

and car seemed headed. Forced to fight their way through the huge fallen logs and thick underbrush, when they finally reached the shore of the third lake, where Tony Quinn had fished a few hours before, there was neither sound nor sight of a motor-boat or a moving car.

"Funny," said Carson. "I'd have sworn the men in that boat and car intended to meet, but now they're both gone."

Suddenly crackling shots broke the dark silence of the lake shore. Whip-like automatics made ominous echoes. Then these were drowned by another deeper thunder of a pumping shotgun.

"That's from up there where the car must have met that boat!" shouted Carson, starting to run along the high bluff.

TONY QUINN, gripping Silk Kirby's arm, stayed motionless, and kept Carol beside them.

"Perhaps I made a mistake," said Quinn. "Jep Lathur was entirely conscious while we were there. Even the mention of Irma Lathur and his son being abducted did not break through some stubborn idea he had of keeping us fooled. And now—"

As the shooting increased in violence, there came a crashing of the brush nearby. Bob Carson pivoted, with his flashlight slicing toward the sound. The circle of light caught the bearded face of old Jep Lathur, his brightly barred mackinaw and his shotgun. The old woodsman was moving with incredible celerity for his age. Beside him bounded the huge black dog.

Bob Carson yelled, but before anyone could have interfered, Jep Lathur took a headlong dive off the bluff, some twenty feet above the deep lake. The black dog followed without hesitation.

It was too dark to see what had happened down there, for the shore here was sheer rock. Swearing, Bob Carson came back.

"We can't climb down here," he said. "Have to go up the shore a quarter of a mile toward that shooting. I haven't told you, Mr. Quinn, but this isn't the first shooting in these woods. Mysterious strangers have had several clashes with Lathur's loggers."

The shooting ended then as suddenly as it had begun. The only reminder that there had been a strange night battle was the sudden exhaust fire of an

outboard motor-boat. Although it seemed there was little chance of heading off Jep Lathur who would be swimming close in along the shore of the lake, Quinn was directing the others to get him to the nearest spot where the water could be reached.

"That's queer about that boat," said Silk. "Looks like whoever is steering it has been hit or something. It's making crazy circles. Look!"

The final swing of the small craft ended in a crashing of its prow into the rocks under the bluff. The motor raced, then quit.

They had reached the old woods road that had been cut through down to the lake for an old logging boat crossing when Carson stumbled over a body lying in this road. The man who wore the blood-soaked clothing of a lumberjack, apparently had been killed instantly.

When Quinn was told of the find, he asked quickly:

"One of Lathur's men, Carson? You know him?"

"I never saw him before in my life," said Carson. "And if he's a logger, with those white hands, I'm a lion hunter."

"If that was Jep Lathur in the shack, and now escaping in the lake, this must be one of his men," Silk Kirby said. "One you don't know, Carson. Mr. Quinn hit this man in the face with a bass plug, casting at the sound of his voice. His ear and cheek are torn where the hooks came out."

"Hold it there, you fellows!" came the heavy, booming voice of Sheriff Danvers. "What's going on here? You doing that shooting?"

The sheriff showed up with two deputies, all with their guns upon Quinn's party. But when the light revealed their faces, Danvers put down his weapon and stared at the body on the ground. He knew Quinn whom he had met in Bill Lark's office the day before.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Another murder? Who is he, Carson? I don't know all the new men Jep Lathur has put on."

"He isn't one of them, Sheriff," said Carson, in spite of what Silk had said. "We heard a car, and there was a motor-boat smashed into shore down below here a bit. We were heading for the boat when we ran onto the shooting."

QUINN detected the anxiety in Bob Carson's voice, waiting for Quinn or Silk to tell about Jep Lathur. But Quinn put Carson's fear at rest.

"You haven't picked up Jep Lathur then, Sheriff Danvers?" he asked. "Silk Kirby and I ran into trouble with several lumberjacks. With Silk as my eyes we got away, but not before Silk thought he had seen Jep Lathur with them. We were coming to meet the motor-boat, hoping to pick up a hitch back when it ran aground."

Sheriff Danvers had not missed what the dead man's hands told. He shook his head slowly.

"This fellow never in his life handled a peavie or an axe," he said. "Carson, he's one of the strangers who have been seen around the lakes. They've been reported, but I've never been able to catch up with one of them—until now. How about whoever was in the boat? Where did they go?"

"Nowhere yet," said Carson. "And they would have to come up this way. We'll have to climb down there. Think you can make it, Mr. Quinn?"

"Let's go!" said Tony Quinn.

CHAPTER VI

Strange Doctor Jess



VEN as they descended to the wrecked boat, Tony Quinn's batlike eyes surveyed the nearby shore. He saw that Jep Lathur could easily have reached a stretch of shallows thick with reeds and backed by shore bushes. He judged the smart old woodsman had escaped that way.

Suddenly as two flashlights picked out the motor-boat, its prow reared upon the rocks, Silk caught Carol, turning her around.

"Don't look, Carol," he advised. "Carson probably can identify this body. Know her, Carson?"

"Loretta Ames!" exclaimed Bob Carson grimly. "You wouldn't think there were fiends like that alive!"

The bright-haired girl who had been shot, then abducted after a blood trans-

fusion, was lying across the forward seat of the motor-boat. From the way her head was twisted, her neck had been broken by strong hands, like those of a woodsman.

Sheriff Danvers was swearing violently. For there was another body in the bottom of the boat.

Carson identified John Ames, the father of the dead girl. Ames' neck also had been broken by expert hands. And there was no single clue to point to who had ferried the corpses here, and left the boat running crazily out of control.

"One of the regular fishing boats from Moosehead Lodge," stated Sheriff Danvers. "And there were a dozen others out searching along the lake shores for Jep Lathur."

"Point out what's coming from the buckshot wound in the girl's neck," Tony Quinn said softly to Silk. "That isn't blood."

Silk bent and touched the dead girl's face. When he straightened, his own face was deathly white in the light of the flashes. Before he spoke though, he bent beside the body of John Ames for a few seconds, looking at what seemed to be blood from the wounds in the dead man's bared breast in the bottom of the boat.

"Sheriff Danvers," said Silk, "it sounds crazy, but the blood has been expertly removed from both of these bodies. Water has been injected into their veins, and only a doctor or an undertaker could have done that, or possibly a trained nurse."

Bob Carson had a scrap of paper held at his side. Quinn had seen the guide take it from the dead man's shirt, but he waited to see if Carson would speak or conceal it.

Carson's voice was shaking as he held the paper under his flashlight. He read the typewritten words as if forcing them through his dry throat:

Those who fail to heed the warning against entering the Lathur lakes will die with water in their veins. The Lathur rights must be respected.

"Curse it, that settles it!" said Sheriff Danvers. "Boys, shoot to kill when you see Jep Lathur! We'll end this horror in the Marquette woods!"

"It will not be ended, Sheriff Danvers, by shooting Jep Lathur," Tony

Quinn said calmly. "I'm of the belief that at the time these persons were shot, Jep Lathur was a prisoner. Certainly he would have to be insane to have committed such a crime openly. Perhaps in a short time I may be able to tell you why the blood of John Ames and his daughter was so badly wanted that murder had to be done."

"I'm only a country sheriff with too much woods to cover," the sheriff said reluctantly. "But I know Jep Lathur's going to jail, if only for his own protection."

"Perhaps you're right about jailing Jep Lathur to protect him, but I'd rescind that order to shoot him," Quinn said. "That dead man with the soft white hands you saw with the Jep Lathur I heard and Silk Kirby saw. Do you believe the real Jep Lathur would employ a soft-handed man for logging, or that he would commit such a hellish crime as this? You've known the man all your life."

BIG Buck Danvers was fair-minded. "No, to both questions," he growled. "I hate to admit it, too, but I've had some sympathy for old Jep in his fight to scare these wild city dudes and fire setters off his lakes. But I thought all the time he wouldn't hurt anyone."

"Keep on thinking that way, Sheriff," said Tony Quinn. "Now I would like to return to Moosehead Lodge as quickly as possible. You are held here by these bodies until the coroner sees them, so I suppose we will have to hoof it."

"The coroner was Dr. Caller," said Danvers. "As for leaving these bodies here, no. It may be the letter of the law, but it ain't good sense. Dr. Cass, of the Lake Hospital, will have to act as coroner. So such of us as can ride will accompany the corpses back in the motor-boat. Bob Carson and my deputies can hit the trail back and beat us there, anyway."

As Carol Baldwin shivered beside Tony Quinn in the motor-boat, her hand gripping his, she whispered:

"Could Jep Lathur be trying to protect his son, Dr. Jess, or Irma in something with which they have become involved?"

Quinn's answer was covered by the noise of the motor as the boat proceeded

slowly with Sheriff Danvers compelled to keep bailing constantly.

"I have been considering that, Carol," said Quinn. "It's plain enough that rival gangs are clashing in these woods, none of them Jep Lathur's lumberjacks. They fight with fists and caulked boots, not guns. One thing I know—that those same gangs are impeding war work in the timber, and that this trouble has broken out within relatively a few miles of the most vital canal and locks in America at this time."

"You mean the Sault Ste. Marie, Tony?" Carol asked quickly. "But in the middle of the continent, nothing could happen there."

"Something can happen anywhere, Carol," Quinn said soberly. "This year the Sault Ste. Marie canal is carrying four times the vital iron ore and other tonnage that is passing in total ship tonnage through the Panama Canal."

That surprised Carol, as it would have surprised ninety per cent of all Americans.

Razorback Island loomed up against the blue northern sky where stars appeared to have been carved cleanly of brilliant silver metal. The island cut off the upper Moosehead Lake, on which the resort lodge was situated. Two narrow channels passed from Cold Spring Lake around the two ends of the knife-like island into the upper water.

In the channel, Sheriff Danvers straightened up, peering ahead.

"Dagnation!" he boomed. "There's more trouble ahead, over by the lodge! All the boats are off the lake! And that big fire means something!"

Tony's keen eyes saw a group of people clustered about one spot on the shore. A high, crackling blaze of pine wood was casting an eerie light across the water. Carol Baldwin shuddered. That pathway made by the fire across the lake reminded her of the blood-red omen created earlier by the setting sun. Murder had followed that!

After their boat landed, Tony Quinn stood quietly on the shore with Silk holding his arm. He gave no sign that he saw the two blanket-covered lumps lying upon the shore close to the fire, plainly two more corpses. And he took note of all the frightened white faces of a score of persons about the fire, on the side away from the bodies.

A troubled man with rumpled dark hair and a round, intelligent face adorned with a small mustache greeted the sheriff.

"And what now, Dr. Cass?" boomed Danvers. "We found the Ames girl and her father. They're in the boat. What is it here?"

"The Ames girl and her father?" Dr. Cass ran a capable, long-fingered hand through his already mussed black hair. "You didn't—" He hesitated as if he feared the reply he would be given. "You didn't see any sign of Irma Lathur? Or her brother, Dr. Jess?"

KNOWING human voices as he did, Quinn did not have to be told that Dr. James Cass had as deep an interest in Irma Lathur as did Bob Carson. Young Carson read that, too, for his face turned suddenly toward the physician who breathed deeply as with relief that Irma Lathur and Dr. Jess had not been found murdered.

"No," Sheriff Danvers said bluntly. "But what—"

He indicated the blanketed bundles on the pebbly beach.

"It's incredible, Sheriff Danvers," said Dr. Cass. "Those are the bodies of Henry Starke and R. A. Smith. Now all four who were in the fishing boat fired upon by Jep Lathur are accounted for. I took the liberty of making a quick examination, Sheriff, since Dr. Caller—"

A tall, thin man with a bony, hatchet face and an angular figure, turned and walked away toward the Lodge. But the glance the thin man had given Sheriff Danvers and Dr. Cass decided Tony Quinn to check on the man later.

Then Dr. Cass was taking Sheriff Danvers to one side, speaking in a low tone.

"Just a minute, Dr. Cass," Danvers interrupted. "I'd like for Tony Quinn, a friend of Bill Lark's from New York, to hear what is to be said. Lark asked Mr. Quinn to come up here to advise him in the investigations. He used to be district attorney in New York."

Dr. Cass had a worried frown as Silk Kirby guided him toward the two men. And as Dr. Cass greeted the blind man he was quick, bending to peer directly into Quinn's eyes.

"Yes, I've heard that the New York police put great dependence on your ad-

vice, Mr. Quinn," said Dr. Cass. "And it has seemed to me you could not really be—"

He hesitated as if reluctant to offend. But Tony smiled and spoke quickly.

"I am quite accustomed to being blind, Dr. Cass," Quinn said, gropingly extending his hand. "This is Silk Kirby, who with certainty serves well as my eyes."

Dr. Cass apparently judged it would be well to clear up things.

"I'd like to get these outsiders away, Sheriff Danvers, and I have the most fantastic problem of my whole medical career in what I have just discovered," he said grimly. "Sheriff, Mr. Quinn—both Starke and Smith, somehow placed on this beach without anyone seeing it done, have no blood in their bodies. Something that only a person with skilled medical training could accomplish *has* been done."

"Now we have four murder victims who have had lake water injected into their veins," Quinn said quietly. "Perhaps a warning note purporting to implicate Jep Lathur also was found with these bodies?"

DR. CASS evinced his surprise with a hard, low oath.

"The fiends! So a note was with the others, too? But it's crazy! Jep Lathur couldn't have enough medical knowledge to remove a man's blood from his body. Of course, there's his son, Dr. Jess. But I'll swear by Dr. Jess. No one has been of greater help in supplying new and quicker methods for converting blood into plasma. Why he—"

"Mr. Quinn," Danvers interrupted. "you remarked that someone must have a motive for stealing blood from the corpses we found. Dr. Cass, to find new methods of plasma making, as you call it, would Dr. Jess have to have human blood?"

"That would be an advantage," said Dr. Cass, but instantly shook his head. "But you're making a bad guess there, Sheriff. Dr. Jess could obtain all the blood he needs for experiments from loggers and woodsmen more than willing to help the war effort. No—"

Tony Quinn heard a sudden, sharp exclamation. Without lifting his head, he saw Bill Lark, Mort Singer, and two of the sheriff's deputies coming from the lodge. It had been Bill Lark exclaiming,

"Quick, Singer! By the trees! That's Dr. Jess Lathur himself!"

CHAPTER VII

Double Trickery



S TONY QUINN casually moved his head, his keener vision saw the shadowy, tall figure just at the edge of the trees. It was too distant to distinguish features. And just as Lark cried out, the tall figure started to withdraw between the trunks of the Norways.

"Doc Jess!" rapped out one of the sheriff's deputies. "Hey! Wait! Hold it, or I'll shoot!"

Whether he intended to shoot to kill or only to halt the mysteriously appearing Dr. Jess Lathur, the deputy's gun roared and bullets sang into the pines. He and his companion were running as both started shooting.

Quinn had not expected to go into sudden, physical action so quickly. But the eyes that once were blind and now could penetrate the deepest darkness saw what the deputies had missed. The ring of big Norways curved back toward the main lodge and several tourist cabins. And the fleeing man was smart. He was doubling back, far enough in the blackness of the trees to make sure he could not be seen.

The deputies were pursuing him in the wrong direction. Danvers and Dr. Cass were running toward Lark and Singer. Tony, Silk and Carol were left alone, unobserved.

"Go to the lodge, Carol," commanded Quinn. "Should anyone ask you, say that I decided suddenly to have you take me to Dr. Jess Lathur's laboratory."

Then he was slipping swiftly across the cleared space away, with Silk beside him. He had again seen the shadowy figure of the fleeing Dr. Jess and, once among the trees, Quinn could easily keep track of the man by the rustling of pine needles and the crackling of dead branches ahead.

Quinn halted Silk when they had proceeded only a short distance.

"It's time the Black Bat takes over,

Silk," he said quietly. "I'll go on from here alone. You'll have to get busy, too, for we have a good many angles to cover. I'm sure Bob Carson joined the deputies in the chase after Dr. Jess. Go back. Wait for Carson and tell him it's important to get to Jep Lathur's logging offices at once, and to persuade Jep Lathur to meet me secretly as soon as possible. You'll find Butch O'Leary holding down a job in Lathur's main camp."

Tony's words had been hurried, but already sound of the fugitive was growing fainter.

"You and Carson keep Lathur out of Sheriff Danvers' hands, and keep him well guarded," finished Quinn. "I'll contact you."

He was gone then and guided by woodsmanship he had learned as a boy, was moving with greater speed and silence than the fleeing Dr. Jess ahead of him.

Tony slowed up as the fugitive kept circling. It was bone-tiring work, this trailing through the woods. It kept up for nearly an hour. Then Tony became aware that Dr. Jess was walking over ancient, finished wood instead of the carpet of pine needles.

The place was a deserted logging camp. Only small second-growth trees grew here. This same growth covered hundreds of square miles in the Marquette Forest. Buildings of the old camp were sagging. What had probably been the log cook shack was set into the side of the hill, and it was when Tony Quinn saw the chink of light there, then the opening and closing of a door, that he made an abrupt change in his appearance.

From a small bag he carried he brought out a capelike garment with ribbed sides. His hat was turned inside out and became all black as he pulled a silken mask over his face. In the dead-black garb, he now appeared to be some great ominous bird of the night. It would be difficult for anyone with sight less keen than his own to have seen him at all.

BUT Tony Quinn could pierce the darkness with a double vision, had been able to ever since this man whom other men believed blind had been given back his eyes by Carol Baldwin. Carol's father had died of wounds inflicted by mob killers, but before his death he had

made one last selfless gesture for humanity.

The story of District Attorney Anthony Quinn, whose fine career as a prosecutor of just such men as were putting an end to his own life, had come to Carol's father, and he had made an offer to give the corneas of his eyes, before death, to replace Quinn's which had been destroyed by acid hurled by a mobster on trial.

Carol had attended to her dying father's request as a sacred trust. When Quinn had accepted the gift, an obscure country physician had performed the remarkable operation which was now responsible for Tony Quinn's vision which was as good in darkness as in light. At her father's death, Carol had offered herself as assistant to Tony Quinn, for she had dedicated her life to helping wipe out criminals like those who had killed her father.

She had come to be invaluable to the Nemesis of crime, and a tender affection had grown up between them. This, however, was rarely mentioned, for both their lives had been laid on the altar of sacrifice to the good of humanity, and that must come first.

While Quinn had been actually blind, he had developed other senses to a remarkable degree so that now, with clear vision, he was eminently fitted for his Black Bat rôle that had given him a nation-wide reputation as a crime fighter. For wherever big city crooks came together, the name of the Black Bat was known and feared.

"Perhaps it will not mean much here in the North Woods," he thought now. "But the Black Bat may be known to some of those 'outside' killers infesting the region of the Lathur lakes."

Gliding silently to the side of the old shack, the Black Bat heard murmuring voices. At the back, he discovered the logs had rotted away, and slipped inside what had been an old underground grub cellar. Light glowed around a rickety door opening into what had been the long cook shack.

The tall Dr. Jess the Bat had followed through the woods was standing at the end of an old table. Ten men were seated on the hard benches around it, all of them bearded, all wearing the seasonal woods clothing of wool shirts, mackinaws, heavy cords, and laced boots.

The Black Bat studied Dr. Jess Lathur's face. He was silently reading something on a paper he had taken from his pocket. The man's face was thin and bony, the eyes deep-set, the black hair unruly, and his hands the white, capable ones of his profession.

"It could be possible that some of these natives have banded together against some other mob," the Black Bat thought. "But it takes more than clothes and a few days' beard to make a woodsman or northern farmer."

His eyes were upon one chunky lout in rough clothes who was examining his fingernails, and polishing them against his mackinaw.

Then Dr. Jess spoke, his tone was slow and soft.

"Everything went through as the boss planned it," he said. "We had to work that blood trick fast, or the whole works would have been ruined. That's what comes of trusting a blasted dame too far. It had to be something that would get rid of their blood, and quickly."

EXCITEMENT stirred in the Black Bat. Dr. Jess was speaking with an unusually well modulated voice, even though he referred to some woman as a "blasted dame." And someone—the boss—had had to work a blood trick. Why had blood of the murdered fishermen and a girl had to be removed? And what could some woman have done that had made it so necessary for such a dangerous chance to be taken in the face of the law being right on the trail of a supposed murderer?

"Okay," the man polishing his fingernails grunted. "So how soon do we push the rest of the play?" Apparently, from his tone, he had little respect for Dr. Jess.

Another man uttered a short oath of impatience—and the Bat tensed. For the man had spoken in German!

The Bat was well informed of fires that had been set and of other minor acts of sabotage. But this group was too large and too well organized except for something of greater importance. What? He quickly had part of an answer to that.

"The blow-off follows the shipments," stated Dr. Jess. "As soon as the stuff is on its way, we have the men planted to handle the logs. The old fool with his

messin' around the lakes may get in the way, but he has to be handled. That's where the dame comes in."

"I don't like the set-up!" snarled the man so interested in his nails. "If we had brought in a plane and put it together in the woods, there are clear places for taking off. It's only minutes to the canal, and no spotter could get us fast enough to keep us from blowin' the locks to the devil. Then we could—"

The voice of the tall man—Dr. Jess Lathur, to all outward appearance—hardened.

"We're taking orders, Marlin!" he rasped. "That goes for you as well as the others! You caused two fights that nearly put us in the hands of the law! From here on, we take straight orders!"

"Yeah?" sneered the man called Marlin. "Look! I'm not against working with a bunch of Nazis. This business of two bosses has me worried. Some of us came up here to do one, nice, quick little job, you told us—to get the old man out of the way for keeps. But Nazi stuff puts us in a spot where if we're ever caught loading the logs and helping with the other stuff, it's a Federal spy rap! And they won't send you up for life either, as Michigan does for bumping off a mug."

Whatever more the Black Bat might have heard was stopped suddenly as the one door at the other end of the long shack was burst open and in ran two more bearded men, breathless and excited.

"Corker—Marlin!" one of them shouted. "We've got to get out of here! The boss sent word that blind Tony Quinn and the guy who leads him around trailed right in here, and they're probably bringing the sheriff and a posse!"

The tall man who was—or maybe not—Dr. Jess Lathur, swore fluently. And as he turned, the Bat saw a swollen bruise under one ear. Here was proof now of what he had suspected. The tall man was not Dr. Jess Lathur! And only a few hours before, this same tall man had been masquerading as the whiskered old Jep Lathur at a shack on the lower lakes! For the Bat was sure that bruise was the result of a knockout blow that had been part of a realistic effort to pin a murder on Jep Lathur.

The slow, soft voice and perfect enunciation were now explained. This man was an actor of no small ability. More-

over, the Black Bat knew now that he had seen this same man, without disguise, walk away from the fire at Moosehead Lodge.

He had wanted to question that man. He still did. But the impersonator of the two Lathurs, old Jep and Dr. Jess, had to be separated from this strangely mixed mob.

CHAPTER VIII

The Black Bat "Dies"



IN THE urgency of his departure from Moosehead Lodge, the Bat had armed himself with only Carol Baldwin's .38 automatic. For the success now of his swiftly formulated plan he had to count upon nerve, surprise, and the extinguishing of the gasoline lamp on the table.

The actor had been called, "Corker." And upon capturing Corker depended not only the possible answer to an amazing cross plot of trickery, with two bosses, but perhaps the lives of Irma Lathur and the real Dr. Jess Lathur, to say nothing of their father.

Now the Bat knew what had been meant when Corker had said old Jep Lathur could be coerced through a "blasted dame." They were preparing to use Irma Lathur in carrying through some plot concerning a shipment of logs meant in some manner to destroy the locks of the vital Sault Ste. Marie canal.

"That would happen!" the chunky Marlin growled harshly. "You're only good at your own stuff, Corker! Come on! We'll scatter! If they trap us now, these hicks won't wait for any trial after that blood trick!"

"I'm still running this show, Marlin," Corker said grimly. "We'll get out okay. And we'll scatter, to meet in the caves as arranged. Marlin! Keep only the girl! Get rid of Dr. Lathur and leave him where it will look as if—"

A sudden buzzing, like radio static, stopped Corker short. It came from a directly wired loud-speaker at Corker's end of the table. A voice broke through, hoarsely indistinct and excited.

"Corker! Something's come up! I

heard the order to bump off Dr. Jess Lathur! He's to be kept okay! Have to use him in another way! Give the word to the boys we're through stringing with the Heinies! I'm playin' smart an' laying off all the Nazi stuff! It'll only get us—"

Corker's hand ripped loose some wires. It cut off the voice. But the bomb had landed in the room.

Marlin, the stubborn mobster, started to rear to his feet. Half of the other men were springing up, jerking guns from their mackinaws.

German oaths made guttural threats. The Nazi mobsters were together, lining along one side of the room, with Marlin and his men on the other. And into this sudden and unexpected explosion between a sabotage mob and one of another character, the Black Bat struck.

No one heard the cellar door swing open. Then a winged shadow was moving along the wall. Eyes like those of a bird of prey glittered through a black mask. A .38 automatic in a steady hand covered the length of the table.

"The first to move or shoot will die!"

The eerie voice of the Black Bat halted two mobs of opposing killers.

"The Black Bat!" one of Corker's own men choked. "Out here? I'm through!"

The Bat knew by that that the boss who had spoken was commanding a mob of city killers. Only criminals of that type would know and fear the Black Bat. But one Nazi saboteur started shooting, and a city mobster in a mackinaw crashed to the floor. Instantly the chunky Marlin rapped out slugs so fast that three of the Nazi killers twisted to the floor.

The Black Bat smashed the gasoline lamp then with a single bullet. As darkness gave the killers a chance to move, to drop to the floor, the Bat barely saved his own life from a burst of whining slugs that cut viciously into the wall where he had been standing.

IN THE move, his miraculous eyes clearly envisioning every angle of the suddenly halted fight between American and Nazi mobs, the Black Bat halted in a corner. Corker, in his rôle of Dr. Jess, was having none of this suddenly blasting death. He was jumping toward the outside door.

"Marlin!" the Black Bat said sharply, deliberately drawing fire to the sound of

his voice. "I command the room! See what I mean!"

His .38 cracked on another single shot. Marlin let out a groan of agony. His gun wrist had been ripped across and his rod clattered to the floor. And again the bat was a drifting shadow.

"Stop it, you mugs!" Marlin was crying out. "The Black Bat can see! He'll kill us all! Get together! Never mind the bosses!"

The Bat was in the doorway from which the cautious Corker already was starting away. Unseen, unheard until his .38 pressed into the back of the impersonator's neck, the Bat spoke low.

"Keep going, Corker! You've got another boss!"

Outside, in the thick second-growth pines, more of a thicket because of salmon-berry bushes, Corker's breath was pulled in sharply. But his head did not turn, his hands stayed down and he obeyed the Bat's command.

They had progressed only a few yards when behind them a mushy blast was followed by quick, bright flames. The gasoline lamp the Bat had smashed with a bullet had started to burn.

"I know when my number's up, Black Bat," Corker said then, his voice level. "You can shoot now or later, but I'll never talk!"

"Keep going!" ordered the Bat. "We'll see about that."

Long experienced in judging men, the Bat never had believed that all killing rats would squeal and something in Corker's tone told him that this time he had picked the one killer in a thousand who would not.

From behind them shots again rang out. Apparently the blaze had made the divided mobsters visible to each other, and a gun battle was raging.

"Maybe you won't talk," the Bat said to Corker. "But perhaps one of two bosses I heard mentioned wouldn't know that. The well-known doublecross is on between two murder mobs, and you'll be caught on the wrong side, as usually happens to stupid tools of brains."

As the Bat pushed Corker deeper into the tangled berry vines and thick pine bushes the crackling slugs from automatics cut through the vines and trees so close that the lead buzzed away like stinging hornets. Suddenly Corker threw out his hands, groaned, and fell

forward, limp.

Not often was the Black Bat deceived by clever trickery, but Corker's fall was convincing. For an instant the Bat's eyes lifted from Corker, following a few mobsters still escaping from the blazing log shack, shooting at each other as they ran for the protection of the small pines and the darkness. The Bat had just caught sight of Marlin, the chunky mobster he had wounded when—

Never had he been kicked so hard in the stomach!

Corker's solidly planted boot doubled the Bat over. He attempted to strike at Corker's lifting head with his gun. Then he discovered that Corker was not only an actor but a resourceful fighter.

THE Bat was thrown forward by an acrobatic scissors twist of Corker's long legs. A dizzying rabbit punch hit the base of his brain at the same instant. He was passing out, everything was going black, and for the moment he could do nothing. Few men, single-handed, had ever downed the Bat. Corker was one of the few.

Then Corker had a gun in his hand and as the Bat tried to roll away weakly, the gun flamed. The Bat seemed to float away in a black dream in which men seemed to be rushing over him, their boots trampling his numbed body. As the Black Bat finally passed out it was with a vague realization that he was finished. . . .

The Bat did not know how long it was before the searing heat of running fire acted as an active stimulant to rouse him. His numbness was leaving him to be replaced by a throbbing pain in his chest. His hand came away from his side sticky with his own blood. It had reddened his shirt. But instinct urged him to stagger to his feet and start moving aimlessly.

The log cook shack was a raging blaze. The fire that had aroused him was jumping across dry pine needles on the ground, but the greener pines and berry bushes were not catching fire.

Then the Bat saw that he was not alone. But the men keeping him company were no longer a threat. Two bodies lay outside the doorway of the burning log shack. Maybe others were inside, but the clever, fighting Corker was gone, and the Bat knew that some of the other mobsters had got away.



BUTCH

The Bat not only was thankful that he was alive, but glad that Corker undoubtedly believed he had finished him. The Bat recalled the vague sense of boots trampling him and discovered that had been an actuality when he explored the gouge of a heel upon one cheek. And a slug had furrowed along a rib.

"It's something to be left for dead," he thought wryly. "If the clever Corker thinks that, he probably will return to Moosehead Lodge, because this fire will bring Danvers and a whole posse."

He started circling the burning shack, but could not discover a wire that might have connected a mike and a speaker. It probably would be well buried, but there was no time for a search now for he heard voices, the crashing of men coming toward the blaze.

The Bat decided upon a sudden bold move. Bringing with him one of the bodies of the two men who had been killed close to the shack, he swiftly stripped off the mackinaw, boots and corded trousers. Concealed in the low pines he substituted his own clothes for those of the mobster, fastened his winged Black Bat cape over the dead man's shoulders and crushed the black hat upon the head. He had just completed the

change when he heard Sheriff Danvers' booming voice.

BUT when the Bat slithered away through the trees, he had the extra winged cape he always carried under the mackinaw he now wore. Also he had a Luger pistol and an American automatic .38 he had taken from the corpse.

With the light of the dying fire behind him, the Bat hurried on until he reached the shore of the upper lake just below Moosehead Lodge. From here he could well judge the direction of the Jep Lathur logging camps and the Lathur home on the west shore of Cold Spring Lake.

Sheriff Danvers and the others would find the strange, masked Black Bat dead, and Corker would probably be in such a hurry to get back to Moosehead Lodge that he would not wait to see the face of the man who now wore the Black Bat's regalia. The Bat hoped it would work out like that, because if Corker should see the face of the slain Nazi mobster he would know that the Black Bat was still alive.

And the Bat wanted to remain "dead," until he could investigate the cases of the two bosses, one of whom was undoubtedly a Fifth Columnist, and the

other who had been hooked up with the Nazi saboteurs now planning a double-cross, to get himself and his own men out from under.

CHAPTER IX

Cool Corker Mann



DURING this time the Bat would have appreciated information concerning what Silk Kirby and Bob Carson had discovered. Had they succeeded in rounding up old Jep Lathur? It was vitally important that they should, now that the

Bat knew that a plot involving old Lathur was afoot, one that concerned major sabotage. The old man was to be coerced into helping some sinister purpose by the threat of torture or death to his daughter Irma, and perhaps to Dr. Jess, his son. That would go through even though the big city and the Nazi mobs were now definitely split.

The Bat made a quick decision. One or both mysterious "bosses" might be at Moosehead Lodge right now. If so, it would be logical for the clever impersonator, Corker, to make immediate contact with his own boss as soon as possible.

The thought sent the Bat around the shore of the lake. Lights blazing in the Lodge were evidence that tonight's tragedies had kept Mort Singer's guests wide awake. But since none of the guests appeared to care to remain outside, the way was cleared for the Bat. The others who had been at the Lodge earlier were now with Sheriff Danvers at the scene of the fire and shooting in the woods.

"The sheriff will be more baffled than ever," mused the Bat. "He will find dead men, one winged and masked. Undoubtedly he has heard of the Black Bat's many acts outside the law in New York—may even know of the suspicions of at least one police official concerning Tony Quinn and the Black Bat. It will be well for Tony Quinn to be here when the posse returns."

After that, the Bat was aware, prompt action must be taken in at least two places.

"The caves," mentioned as the prison of Irma Lathur and Dr. Jess, must be discovered. The logging camps, offices and home of old Jep Lathur must be visited, as well as the laboratory of Dr. Jess Lathur.

Even as he was slipping silently through a loosened window screen at the back of Moosehead Lodge, the Bat was pondering another, and what might be the most vital problem of all. The mobsters had referred to the necessity for working a fast blood trick. That substitution of water for blood in the veins of four murdered persons had been made to appear as convicting evidence against old Jep Lathur.

"Too convicting perhaps," thought the Bat. "It was spoken of as a trick that *had* to be worked and not as merely a somewhat crude attempt to make it appear that Jep Lathur is insane as well as a murderer."

A little later the Bat was talking to Carol Baldwin in her room.

"Yes, I told everybody you had gone to Dr. Lathur's laboratory," she told him. "But Tony, darling, I'm afraid for you. I'm sick every time something like this happens."

The girl whose whole life was wrapped up in Tony was bandaging the furrowed slug wound across his ribs. He had discarded the lumberjack attire for a somber, black suit.

He smiled at her, then said:

"Tony Quinn must appear in the main room. You will be my eyes this time, Carol. We can say that Silk has gone to join the sheriff's posse."

Eyes turned upon the shuffling Tony Quinn as Carol conducted him toward a buffet lunch spread at one side of the lodge's main room. And one of the first persons Quinn saw was the tall, dark-faced man who had masqueraded as Jep Lathur and Dr. Jess.

Corker, as Quinn knew him, was talking earnestly with a tourist who was not wearing the usual sportsman's garb.

"**T**HAT tourist is registered as Nathan Harrell," Carol told Quinn. "I've had my ears open, Tony. He is a plastic man from Chicago. Came up to see Jep Lathur about shipments of logs by barges from one of the ports up here to his Chicago plants."

"And the other man, Carol?" said

Quinn. "How is he registered?"

"His last name is Mann. And his first name is an odd one—Corklin. He's an artist. Spending his time around the lakes sketching the autumn woods. He wanted to put some of his canvases up for sale to guests here, but Singer wouldn't hear of it. They had a row about it early this evening that everybody is discussing."

Quinn, his apparently sightless eyes turned upon the red blaze of logs in the huge fireplace, was unable to catch the lip movements of Corklin Mann, known to the mob as "Corker," and the man who had come close to ending the Black Bat's career.

Corker and this Nathan Harrell, who claimed to be a plastics manufacturer, were having a rather heated argument. Then Harrell got up, pounded one big fist into the other, and Tony Quinn could hear the man plainly now.

"It'll cost me thousands if this non-sensical suspicion of Jep Lathur stops him supplying needed timber! This would have to happen to me! I wanted to know something about that shooting today, and so I introduced myself when I was told you were out sketching and might have witnessed it, but—"

To Tony Quinn, this outburst had a phony ring. It was as if Harrell were covering up what had been really discussed. And, Corker Mann, too, spreading his long-fingered hands expressively, spoke loud enough for any who cared to hear.

"I've never even seen Jep Lathur that I know of, Mr. Harrell," he said. "But from the descriptions of the old man it might have been Lathur I saw. I was sketching sunset on the lake when the shooting started and I'm sure I saw a bearded face and a mackinaw on the shore."

Tony Quinn was more than ever amazed at the cleverness of Corker. If he had not had positive knowledge of what the man's business here was, how he had made himself up perfectly as old Jep, and been the shotgun murderer, and equally well played the rôle of Dr. Jess Lathur—

"Smart," reasoned Quinn. "Accounts for his own whereabouts and becomes a 'witness' to his own crime. As for Harrell—"

The gaunt plastics man strode angrily

across the lodge to the desk and made his harsh demand.

"I'll have my luggage out first thing in the morning! I'm leaving for Jep Lathur's logging camps, and the devil with all of this rubbish that's tying up important work! I suppose I can have a boat take me down the lakes below Razorback Island?"

The desk clerk summoned Mort Singer, spread his hands in an effort to argue.

"I'll jolly well convince Sheriff Danvers my war business comes ahead of his small-time local crimes!" exploded Harrell. "These people who were killed because they got mixed up in some provincial feud aren't important enough to interfere with war work! I want a boat down the lakes at daylight! That's final!"

Tony Quinn's eyes were upon Corker Mann at the moment. The killer was apparently paying no heed to Harrell. Harassed Mort Singer nodded to Harrell's final outburst, and the plastics man stalked up the stairs.

BUT Quinn did not miss the sly, quiet smile on Corker's thin face as the crook-killer started toward the bar. Then to Quinn's surprise, Corker appeared to see him with Carol for the first time, and he came directly over. There was no way to tell that he knew that Tony Quinn had trailed him earlier. Now Quinn's blank eyes gave no hint he saw the man, but he glanced up quickly as Corker spoke.

"You're Miss Baldwin who aided Miss Lathur, the nurse, today," Corker said to Carol. "Seeing you with Mr. Quinn several times since then I take it you are associated with him?"

"I am Mr. Quinn's secretary," Carol said quietly. "Mr. Quinn, this is—I'm afraid I've forgotten your name—"

"Come now, Miss Baldwin," Corker Mann said pleasantly. "You know all the gossips could tell you about me—that I am Corklin Mann, an artist with ambition, and perhaps not too much talent."

"You are discourteous, Mr. Mann," Tony Quinn said curtly. "What is it you want of Miss Baldwin? In what way are you concerned with our presence here? While I am blind, I can hear well enough, and your chief talent seems to

be stirring up trouble. You seem to desire it advertised that you think you saw Jep Lathur in the woods when four persons were shot. Why, Mr. Mann?"

Even the astute Corker narrowed his eyes and compressed his thin lips at Tony's lightning retort. But he kept his tone controlled.

"Very well, Mr. Quinn," he said. "I had some information you might have appreciated, as I understand you are here to act in an advisory capacity to the local district attorney. But under the circumstances, we will let it pass."

Corker walked over to the desk and took his room key. But Quinn could see that Corker was on guard, listening, watching for something to happen. He must be wondering how much Tony Quinn had learned by trailing the supposed Dr. Jess.

Bill Lark, with Sheriff Buck Danvers, came through the main entrance, leaving others of the posse outside. The sheriff was carrying a ribbed black cape, a black mask and a black hat. Clark spotted Quinn and came straight over with the sheriff.

"Tony!" exclaimed Clark. "I was told—"

"That I had started out to visit Dr. Jess Lathur's laboratory," Quinn interrupted, smiling. "I did, but it was too much for me. Silk Kirby guided me back and then hurried to join the posse we heard were on their way to the scene of a fire and another shooting."

"Why, I didn't see Kirby, Tony," said Bill Lark, troubled. "Did you, Sheriff?"

The lawman shook his head. He had troubles enough of his own.

"Nope. Didn't see Kirby. But look at this! For some reason the famous Black Bat who makes so much trouble for the New York crime world, appeared here, by hokey, and walked right into a killer's bullet!"

Tony Quinn evinced amazement.

"The Black Bat?" he questioned. "Impossible! I've followed his career to some extent, Sheriff, and I don't believe he knows anything but the slums of New York!"

"Then somebody else—but all thunder with that! Anyway, we came onto what was left after another mob battle. And a man with nice white hands who was wearing these Black Bat things is still out there, and he's plumb dead!"

IT COULD not have been done better for Quinn's purpose. He could see the relief in the face of Corker Mann who still stood before the big fireplace. Corker Mann was certain now that he had killed the famous Black Bat.

Morbidly curious and frightened guests wanted to hear details of the latest outbreak in the woods. But Sheriff Danvers had had enough for the night.

"Everybody get to bed!" he ordered. "In the morning, I'll see who'll be permitted to leave!"

As if he had heard that pronouncement, Nathan Harrell, the plastics man, came down the stairs and walked over to the lawman.

"Sheriff Danvers," he announced belligerently, "I'm taking a boat at daylight and going to see Jep Lathur. My war work has to go ahead. I must know what to expect now from the Lathur camps!"

Sheriff Danvers nodded curtly.

"I'm not interferin' with any war work, Mr. Harrell," he said. "But you'll have to be accompanied by one of my deputies if you enter the lower lakes."

"Good enough!" accepted Harrell, turning away.

Tony Quinn got up wearily.

"Bill," he said to Prosecutor Lark, "how about a little talk in my room? Several angles have come up tonight we haven't discussed."

Bill Lark nodded as Carol took Quinn's arm. But from the expression on the face of the district attorney at that moment, anyone could have bought his job for a dime, and he would have donated the dime.

CHAPTER X

Raiders of Death



EACHING the top of the broad stairs, Tony Quinn quietly brought up a question that had not been given much attention.

"Bill, Dr. Caller seems to have been shot because he had a message from the murdered John Ames to send to his brother. Have you found out any more about that?"

"I've had it in mind, Tony," stated

Lark. "In fact, if I hadn't been pulled out on this latest crazy mob shooting, I intended to have a look at the luggage and personal effects of John Ames and those who died with him. Some folks insist upon suspecting Irma Lathur in connection with those deaths, and since she has disappeared—"

The dimly lighted upper hallway seemed deserted. Yet Tony Quinn's keen senses detected movement. Then he saw figures materializing through those low windows at the rear of the lodge. He had just time to hurl his

.38 he had taken from a Nazi mobster that he cut down the machine-gunner with the first jolt of his gun. Then he was lifting Carol, thrusting her toward the nearest room door.

"This way, Bill!" he grated.

The next instant after the machine-gunner's quick death, Tony Quinn had Carol inside the room. Lark plunged after them, swearing and gripping his left arm where a slug had nicked it. Quinn needed no light to see this.

"What in thunder, Tony?" groaned Lark. "You'd think they'd moved the



CAROL

weight against Carol, knocking her to the floor, and to snap out a warning:

"Drop, Bill! Get down and into a door!"

Abruptly the whole lodge was plunged into utter blackness, as the electrical system was snapped off. Only from the log fire in the big room below came a faint glow.

Too often had Tony Quinn heard the deadly hammering of a machine-gun to mistake this one. He could see the blaze and, in spite of the darkness, he could also see some half dozen armed men dressed as loggers coming along the upper hallway.

Tony was so quick and deadly with the

whole war up here!"

"Unless I'm mistaken, this may be an outright Nazi attack, believe it or not," Quinn said grimly. "No time to explain now."

He was thinking of the split between two mobs, whose bosses apparently had been working together. If the German saboteurs had an idea Corker Mann's boss was in Moosehead Lodge, this sudden raid was meant to rub him out.

"Out the window, Carol!" commanded Tony. "You'll have to lead me. Come on, Bill. We're safer outside, but take my gun."

Gunfire rattled inside the big log building. Women screamed, men

shouted. Outside, even the starlight was deeply shadowed by the huge Norway pines.

"Carol, stay with Bill here," ordered Quinn. "Luckily my other senses guide me better in the darkness than my eyes do in the light."

Bill Lark protested, but Quinn was gone. Evidently the raiders were unaware that the three had escaped. Quinn passed inside through another window screen, reached his own room in half a minute, and in another half-minute was again in the upper hallway.

Two raiders were emerging from a room and he heard their quick, disappointed conversation. And his whole theory that the raid was a Nazi saboteur reprisal against one of the mysterious bosses was discarded.

"Ain't a thing in there!" said a strictly American voice. "I told you Corker said to pass up that Ames mug's room and break open the luggage closet downstairs!"

TONY QUINN could have stopped either or both with a bullet, but he had another idea now. What if the luggage and personal effects of John Ames had inspired this attack?

Quinn's arms whipped out. His black-ribbed cape spread like wings. His black mask in place, his hat over his eyes, the Black Bat was again prepared to strike.

Corker Mann was due for a big surprise. But only the swift and terrible Bat could possibly break up this raid and perhaps save several lives.

As he reached the head of the broad stairs the keen eyes of the winged Black Bat could see wounded men and women on the floor of the main room below, and a group of gunmen keeping compactly together to keep from shooting each other.

The Bat's speed of action was accelerated when he saw that at least four persons had been shot, and that one was a woman. The gunmen were cursing as they moved in a ring, shooting all about them.

Sheriff Buck Danvers was one of the men who had been shot and he was out of action. Corker Mann must have known what was to take place, for he was not in the room, nor among those fleeing toward the main entrance.

A clerk was down behind the desk, one arm sticking up grotesquely. A few gunmen were already busy inside the offices. The Bat heard the smashing of a door and triumphant shouts.

He noted all of this within ten seconds as he leaped into action, the Luger he had taken from a dead man was in one hand and a powerful flashlight in the other.

Picking his men singly, the Black Bat started the Luger talking at the instant he flicked on the flashlight. The circle of light was momentarily upon his own masked face and his winglike cape.

His voice rang out with weird effect above the whiplike cracking of the guns below.

"All of you will die! And you thought the Black Bat was dead!"

That brief, flashlight glimpse of the terrible figure at the head of the stairs turned the attack that had seemed aimed at exterminating everyone in the main room of the lodge.

"The Black Bat!" It was a cry of pain and fear, in the voice of the chunky gunman, Marlin. "Corker lied! Get out with what you have!" Marlin's wrist was bandaged and he was shooting with his good hand.

But the Bat had cut off his light and was dropping lightly to the floor below, over a bannister, before the first rods racketed their slugs into the top stairs where he had been standing. And the next moment one of his own automatics cut down two gunmen who imagined they would be safe in the darkness as they ran from the office.

"Take the money!" cried the stricken, pleading voice of Mort Singer from inside the office. "Take all I've got! Stop shooting—stop it!"

With each burst from his gun, the Bat moved like a shadow for he was now in the space where the dying log fire cast some light. Still one of the gunmen was quick enough to follow his fitting movement. Slugs breezed into the wall near the Bat's head and he was forced to drop flat.

From a corner beyond the projecting register desk came a harsh voice the Bat recognized.

"You thugs! You'd turn on me, huh?" Nathan Harrell punctuated his own defiant words with an accurately exploding gun.

BY THIS time the deadly shooting of the Black Bat who could not be seen clearly was routing the raiders. The few left on their feet were wedging out through the main entrance. The Black Bat stopped shooting, keen eyes fixed upon a leather brief-case that had fallen from the hand of one mobster he had downed. It was the only article that had been left behind of what might have been seized from the lodge luggage room. That now seemed to have been the main object of the raid, rather than the idea of rubbing out a doublecrossing boss.

And as the Bat seized the brief-case, an emergency gasoline light flashed on behind the hotel desk. The Bat, squarely trapped if he remained here, glided like a shadowy bird toward a door leading toward the kitchens.

He passed safely through the blackness of the kitchen, unseen and unheard by two servants crouched behind tables. Within seconds he was along the outside wall. He heard two cars going away on one of the woods trails as he reached a window through which he made his way to his own room to discard his winged cape, mask, and black hat. . . .

"Great heavens above Tony!" exclaimed Bill Lark, as the blind man came groping his way along the outer wall. "Where did you go? We thought you had run into some of the killers."

Carol knew well enough where Tony Quinn had been, but she played her part very well.

"Tony," she cried anxiously, "I wish we were out of this awful place! We heard some of the gunmen coming out, and they were talking about the Black Bat having killed half of their men. Tony, the lights are on! There must be many hurt and I'll have to help."

"That's right, Carol," Quinn said quietly. "Help all you can. I wanted to, if I could, but there was nothing I could do. Bill, we will go in now, if you will help me."

Sheriff Buck Danvers nursed two minor slug wounds and swore heavily and steadily. Three of the lodge guests, two men and a woman, were dead. Many others had slight wounds.

"Great glory!" exclaimed Sheriff Danvers. "There are seven dead mobsters. I saw two wounded ones being helped away, but I couldn't move. There must

be two Black Bats and this one cleaned out those raiders alone!"

Carol was busy helping the wounded, as Dr. James Cass, his black hair characteristically rumpled, and buttoning his shirt, came into the main room and started attending to the wounded.

"Tried to get a few minutes' sleep," he said. "I was dead tired. Sheriff, in heaven's name, what is this? Was it a hold-up, or has it something to do with the other murders?"

"I know as much as you do," groaned the sheriff. "But I'm putting through a call to the governor. There's troops up at Bay Mills on the lake, and at the Soo. We have to have help to clean out these killers."

"Sheriff," Bill Lark said miserably, "as district attorney, I give you authority to call the governor, then to deputize and arm every lawful citizen we can muster. Our big trouble is we have miles of wilderness to cover. Tony, what would you advise?"

Quinn had nothing definite to offer. He was thinking of Corker Mann. The time had come to seize Corker and compel him to talk if the truth had to be beaten out of him.

But Corker had not reappeared, and Tony Quinn had an idea that he would not return to the lodge in the person of Corklin Mann, the artist. By this time Corker knew that the Black Bat had not died in the woods, and that he might be openly accused if he showed up again.

CHAPTER XI

Bloody Bit of Mud



SINGER, the Lodge proprietor, was a sicker man than the slight bullet furrow along one arm justified. He thoroughly realized that his investment in Moosehead Lodge was worthless. He said as much.

"Look, Mr. Lark," he said to the district attorney. "It wasn't a hold-up. All that killing—these poor people who were my guests. I don't care about the lodge or my money. I'll go broke gladly to help those who have

been hurt and to bring the dirty killers to justice."

"If it wasn't a hold-up, then what do you think was wanted?" Tony Quinn asked quietly. "I had a narrow escape from the killers, in the upper hallway. I understand no one saw them because the lights were out."

"Yes, the lights were out, Mr. Quinn," said Mort Singer. "And all I know is that the devils broke open our luggage room—and the only thing taken was the stuff that had belonged to John Ames, his daughter, and the two men who died with him! It doesn't make sense. Curse it all, what we need is the state guard or enough soldiers to clean up these woods, and to root out old Jep Lathur's loggers who have turned killers."

"You think Jep Lathur's loggers made this raid, Singer?" Quinn asked harshly. "I have examined the hands of all the dead gunmen. None of them ever worked in the woods, Singer. And we might as well bring this into the open for everyone to know. Jep Lathur has no more to do with these murders and this mob raid on your place than you have!"

"You accusing me, Quinn?" Mort Singer shouted angrily. "Why, you New York wise guy, I'll—"

Singer's round face twisted with sudden contrition.

"Good Lord, Mr. Quinn, I'm going crazy!" he cried. "You'll have to forgive me. I not only forgot you are my guest, but that you are blind, and that you came out here to help us with your advice."

Quinn smiled a little, his eyes blank as he put out his hand.

"Forget it, Singer," he said. "I understand how you feel, I guess I'd feel the same way if everything I had was suddenly snatched away. Perhaps I did feel that way once. And perhaps I may have some ideas soon that will help. Possibly you might know something that John Ames and his friends had that might be wanted, or of someone who might have been their enemies?"

"I know nothing of the Ames party," Singer said, "except that they made reservations a week in advance. They were just enthusiastic fishermen—talked of nothing else that I heard."

A hard, compelling voice broke in then.

"If the sheriff hasn't troops in here within twenty-four hours, I'll call the President himself and have FBI men up here! This whole thing is aimed at stopping war work and sabotaging supplies for my plastic factories! More than that, I believe a deliberate effort was made to kill me! Only the luck of having this metal-backed order book in my coat saved my life!"

The bombastic Nathan Harrell pulled back his coat and shirt to show a swelling bruise high on his chest. And a slug was buried in the leaves of the metal-bound memo book. It had failed to penetrate the other cover.

Dr. Cass, sleeves rolled up, examined Harrell's bruise.

"You have a broken rib at that, Harrell, and it will have to be taped," he said. He looked around then. "Has anyone heard of Irma Lathur or Dr. Jess during all of this tonight? I understand there was a fire and a mob fight in the woods while I was grabbing a handful of sleep and—"

WHEN told that nothing had been heard of the missing Lathur sister and brother, Dr. Cass muttered wearily:

"Then I'll have to have another nurse. I have another batch of blood donors due in before noon today. I can't handle them without expert help. We're making up the last shipment."

Dr. Cass was looking at Carol Baldwin. But Tony Quinn was recalling what he had heard before the mob fight at the old log camp—"We had to work that blood trick fast, or the whole works would have been ruined. That's what comes of trusting a blasted dame too far."

"Miss Baldwin," Dr. Cass suddenly asked Carol, "would you be willing to give me a hand at the Lake Hospital? You've had some training. It's important and I can't get another capable nurse up from the city for perhaps a week or so."

"Miss Baldwin is my secretary, Dr. Cass," Quinn said, "but I'll gladly lend her to help out as long as you may need her. In the meantime, I'll put my mind to work to see if it's possible to solve the disappearance of Miss Lathur and her brother. I'll admit that an army seems needed, but from the way I've

figured it out so far, when you call for troops, you will probably be making certain the death of the two young Lathurs."

"Others have been killed!" Mort Singer exploded. "My resort has been put out of business! Mobs are fighting each other here openly! Call the troops, I say! We can't hold off for two persons when we're not even sure they are alive!"

"I'm sure they're alive," Tony Quinn put in calmly. "But I agree that two lives cannot be permitted to stand in the way of cleaning out wholesale killers. I think I will go to my room now, gentlemen. Bill, can we have the talk that was broken up? Come up in a short time."

Carol was alone with Tony Quinn a few minutes before Prosecutor Bill Lark came up.

"Tony," she said flatly, "you have some definite reason for wanting me to take Irma Lathur's place at the hospital with Dr. Cass."

"Yes, Carol," he said. "It's a long chance, and I may be wrong, but I'm fairly sure I have put my finger on the key to this whole situation, where both city mobsters and enemy saboteurs are at work, fighting now because their bosses have disagreed. Carol, I may be putting you in deadly danger, but we have to be certain before we can make a move that might destroy one of the greatest of our war efforts. And if what I suspect is true, that war effort will be virtually destroyed if we fail to act in time."

Carol shook her head, puzzled.

"Irma Lathur brought blood plasma from that hospital for the transfusion made by Dr. Caller," Tony Quinn went on. "Dr. Caller was killed. Loretta Ames who was given the transfusion, and three men who had been shot were all found with water in their veins. Carol, I want a sample of some of the Lake Hospital plasma that's already sealed for shipment."

"Tony, you don't mean that the plasma—"

"I'm not quite sure what I mean yet," cut in Quinn. "Anyhow, don't let Dr. Cass guess that his blood project is endangered. Get a sample of the plasma without his knowledge, Carol."

"I'll get it," she promised, as Bill Lark rapped at the door.

TONY QUINN had been so side-tracked by his amazing and fearful theory concerning the war blood plasma that he had overlooked investigating the leather brief-case dropped by one of the mobsters he had shot. He told Lark that he had stumbled over the brief-case in the hallway, where it had been dropped by a fleeing killer.

The lock of the case had already been broken and Quinn opened it, after he let Bill Lark discover the initials "J.A." He was curious, for the brief-case contained some lumpy substance, rather than papers.

Apparently Tony Quinn's trained fingers told him what he took from the case and spread upon the table. Then Carol exclaimed:

"What strange stuff to have in a brief-case! It looks like hard chunks of clay streaked with blood!"

Bill Lark stared hard at the rough chunks of what seemed to be hardened mud.

"What do you make of it, Tony?" he said. "By glory! Some of those streaks are dried blood! That would mean that Ames must have shoved the stuff into that case after he was wounded. It doesn't make sense, for Ames and the others were unconscious when Irma Lathur and Bob Carson found them."

Quinn's sensitive fingers rubbed over the surface of one rough chunk. It had almost the texture of fine china clay. It crumpled easily between his fingers.

"Bill," he said, "I have been wasting time if this is what I think it is. Did you find out anything much concerning John Ames from papers or letters in his room?"

Bill Lark's face reddened.

"Everything has been happening so fast that I got around to that too late," he admitted. "There was nothing in any of the dead men's rooms. Mort Singer and I went over all of the luggage and the clothing. The Ames party seemed to have come fishing with little more than personal identification." He shook his head. "This brief-case was not in the luggage I saw."

"Say nothing about this, Bill," admonished Quinn. "By the way, how about the typewritten notes from the corpses? They had three distinctively bad letters, as I recall hearing someone say."

"Sent them with one of Sheriff Danvers' deputies over to Jep Lathur's main camp, Tony. Instructed him to get some samples from Lathur's office typewriters to see if they match. I'm going over there myself the first thing in the morning. I think old Jep will talk to me if I can find him."

Quinn said nothing of Silk Kirby and Bob Carson having started out to take Jep Lathur into protective custody.

"Which is the quickest and shortest route to Lathur's camps?" he asked.

"Eight miles by boat through two lakes," said Lark. "Twenty miles around by land. Look, Tony, are you holding out something I ought to know?"

"Surely," Quinn smiled. "But you'll find out. What do you know about this Nathan Harrell who claims to be a plastics man?"

"As much as I know about this crazy Black Bat, Tony," said Lark. "You know I believe the Black Bat is on one side of a mob feud, and has horned in against an opposing mob. One mob is composed of saboteurs, and the other is made up of city killers after something special—and we can't lay our hands on either of them!"

Quinn glanced at the lumps of hard clay, streaked with red, without Clark knowing he saw them.

"Yes, the city mob has something special in view," he said slowly. "And you may be right about the Black Bat. But if so, the Black Bat must be with the German saboteurs. The raiders tonight were the city killers. They wanted only the luggage of John Ames' party—and got back Black Bat lead."

AS SHERIFF DANVERS pounded at the door and called out, Quinn directed Carol to conceal the brief-case and the mud lumps, for he could hear Mort Singer talking to the officer.

"Thought I'd find you here, Bill," said Danvers when the door was opened. "And here's news. Singer here has had an offer for Moosehead Lodge. In fact, he has had three offers a few days apart, from a Chicago real estate firm. The first came right after the first two murders in Cold Spring Lake."

Mort Singer swore angrily as he produced three letters.

"The whole thing seems to add up," he said. "The first letter offered a hun-

dred thousand. The second dropped to eighty, apparently after the news of the two murders got to the firm. This third offer is absurd. It is for twenty-five thousand. And I have spent seventy thousand on this place!"

"You had the firm looked up, Mr. Singer?" suggested Tony.

"I sure did," said Singer. "This Markham Realty Corporation making the offers has offices in a building owned by Nathan Harrell, the plastics man. But that might mean nothing. Harrell is a big shot in Chi and owns a lot of property, but it's a coincidence."

"It's worth looking into, Singer," mused Tony Quinn.

CHAPTER XII

Missing Brief-Case



IN THAT moment, not noticing the men who were discussing the real estate offer, Sheriff Danvers was beside the table. His fingers rubbed together some crumbled bits of the broken mud lumps still there and he appeared to be alert, on guard.

He was looking at Bill Lark and Tony Quinn searchingly.

Then Danvers glanced about the room, as if he expected to see where the crumbled clay had come from. Quinn was suddenly recalling then that this sheriff was an old-timer up here. He was deep in politics or he would not have been sheriff. He was recalling, too, that Sheriff Danvers and his deputies had made a rather blundering search when it had been suspected that old Jep Lathur had shot the Ames fishing party. Now Quinn was convinced that Sheriff Danvers knew something about that odd clay, but was saying nothing. But of course "blind" Tony Quinn could give no indication he had noted the sheriff's actions in expression.

"Singer," he said, "you wouldn't consider selling out at anything like the price you have been offered?"

"If that firm would go back to their second offer, or even half of that, I'd dump Moosehead Lodge," Singer said abruptly and surprisingly. "I'm fed up

with killings and trouble, and the Lodge will be a dead loss for years to come. It would never have paid anyhow with the one lake. Frankly, before this crazy series of murders began, I had hoped to buy rights on the whole chain, four lakes, from Jep Lathur."

Then Tony Quinn shot a direct question.

"Singer, have you any idea who might be behind all of this killing, if not Jep Lathur?"

"I can't give Jep Lathur a free bill," Singer said stubbornly. "But there is his son, Dr. Jess, who stands to inherit a couple of million in timber lands and lakes now that the war has pushed logging up again—should anything happen to the old man. But Dr. Jess has been missing ever since he appeared here and was chased, just before that fire in the woods and the shooting out there. And Irma Lathur—why did she disappear?" He sighed heavily. "Things around here are certainly mighty queer. For instance there was that Black Bat who was killed in the woods. Then another Black Bat shows up here during the raid. It's all too much for me. I wish I could help, that's all.

"Dr. Jess might have posed as one Black Bat. And how do we know that Irma Lathur is not implicated in something questionable, seeing she is gone? She was associated with Dr. Cass in the blood plasma project. With the general belief that there are German spies in the woods, though it seems impossible to catch them, couldn't there be some plot involving the Lake Hospital? That's only a thought, remember, and a deadly insult to Dr. Cass if the suspicion should be wrong, but—"

Amazement was in Bill Lark's face, and a sharp oath came from Sheriff Danvers. But Tony Quinn's blank face, with the staring blind eyes, showed nothing whatever.

"You're off your nut, Singer!" grunted Danvers. "But I'll have a talk with Dr. Cass."

"No—no, Sheriff!" protested Singer. "Please! This was only a suggestion."

"Don't annoy Dr. Cass!" said Lark, so sharply that Quinn studied the face of his former college mate. "We're getting all mixed up here. We need some rest and take this up with clear heads later."

TONY QUINN'S question then was intended to end further discussion of Dr. Cass and the possible chance of danger to the blood plasma now sealed in containers at Lake Hospital, and waiting to be sent to thousands of soldiers.

"Sheriff," he asked, "just how well do you know and trust Bob Carson? It comes to me that, as a guide, he would know more about the woods and lakes than most men. Suppose old Jep Lathur were out of the way, and Bob Carson planned to marry Irma? And in the meantime something happened to the son, Dr. Jess?"

Again Mort Singer displayed a run-away temper. He sprang in front of Quinn, his fist shaking before the blind man's face.

"Bob Carson is as honest as the day!" he bellowed. "Mr. Quinn, I think sending for you in an advisory capacity is an insult to our intelligence! I think—"

"Get hold of yourself, Singer," snapped Lark. "You had better sell Moosehead Lodge before you blow it up with your unholy temper."

Singer was not mollified when he stalked out. Sheriff Danvers lingered a moment after Singer was gone.

"I resent your holding out on me, Bill Lark, and you, Mr. Quinn," he said angrily. "If you're planning to go to Jep Lathur's log camps after daylight, I'm going along."

Quinn was smiling a little.

"We are going to the log camps," he said. "I was about to suggest you accompany us, Sheriff Danvers. Now if Miss Baldwin will retire, I think I'll go back downstairs for a good night or good morning smoke before the fire. I can make my way in the Lodge now alone."

When Danvers, Lark and Carol were gone, Tony Quinn fumbled his way, tapping with his cane, out of his room and down the broad stairs.

He found a chair at a table near the cigar and magazine stand. His summons brought the girl clerk who selected a good Havana cigar. For a good half hour Tony Quinn sat smoking, his hand juggling a bit of red-streaked mud which he finally laid on the table.

Though it was only about two hours before daylight, the main room was still filled with guests, talking in fear-clustered groups. Singer was behind the desk, looking spent and weary, as if

wishing he could order all to retire and call it a night.

Tony was observing the reactions of several persons to his own presence as he enjoyed his cigar, sitting before the log fire.

It amused Quinn's quizzical sense of humor to watch the actions of those who believed him blind, and had no idea that his other senses could detect what they were doing.

Sheriff Danvers, for instance. After buying a cigar, the red-faced lawman paused beside the table on which lay the red-streaked lump of clay Quinn apparently had forgotten. Pausing to light his cigar, the sheriff's big hand went out, pinched off a bit of the clay, then he tiptoed away.

"Either he knows what that clay means," thought Quinn, "or he is burned up, thinking Bill Lark and I are holding out something on him."

A sickly, sallow-faced guest was next. That odd lump of clay had intrigued him. Probably he would have slipped it in his pocket if Quinn hadn't coughed and turned halfway about. The sallow-faced man started hurriedly to the cigar counter.

"Have you a light, Mr. Turner?" Quinn asked quickly.

"I'm not—why, yes I have a light, Mr. Quinn," said the sallow-faced man, producing a lighter. "You've made a mistake though. My name is Jenkins, Arthur Jenkins, sir. In the pottery business. I've been looking at that fine bit of china clay you have on the table, Mr. Quinn. It come from around here?"

"Oh, that?" said Tony. "No. Blind men have to have hobbies. I sculpture in clay sometimes. That sample of mud was sent me by a friend, but it's too crumbly. Not plastic enough."

QUINN nodded as Arthur Jenkins went away. The man's explanation about the pottery business was certainly logical.

But Nathan Harrell was more direct when he came and stood by the table. He looked at the lump of clay, then touched Tony Quinn's shoulder.

"If that stuff's connected up with any of this crazy killin', Mr. Quinn," he said abruptly, "I'd keep it out of sight."

"Know what it is, Mr. Harrell?" Quinn asked quickly.

"You're blamed well right I do!" said Harrell loudly. "It's a good grade of silica that glass makers use. But for the duration, and probably afterward, plastics have made it practically worthless. Still someone might think it valuable enough to want property where it can be found. Good night, Mr. Quinn."

Two other guests, one a woman, could not resist handling the lone lump of clay. Even Mort Singer, passing the table, paused to look at it and to glance at Quinn. But Singer passed up handling it or asking questions.

"Not much of a haul," thought Quinn. "One man thinks it's china clay, and another man says it's silica. Mort Singer imagines I'm dumb and crazy, and doesn't know what it is."

Five minutes later, Quinn was on his feet, tapping his way slowly toward his room. He moved faster in the upper hallway, hurrying after he had noticed that all those who had touched the lump of clay on the table, had disappeared from the main room. He saw no one, but when he reached his door he found that the lock of his door had been forced. He opened the door quickly, to discover his light had been turned off. Had he really been blind, the smashing blow of a swinging gun butt aimed at his head just inside the door would have floored him. As if by instinct, he ducked, missing the swing by an inch, and crying out:

"Who is it? What—"

As he spoke he brought his cane up with a forceful rap that knocked his attacker to the floor. And instantly his automatic was in his hand, covering a big man who was struggling to his feet.

"I can't see you, but I've a sense of hearing," said Quinn. "I can put a slug right where your breath goes into your nose. Who are you?"

"You, Quinn?" Sheriff Danvers' heavy voice spoke. "Good Lord, I thought you were the fellow who had just knocked me out! And I struck at you in the darkness! Wait—I'll put on the light!"

Quinn saw instantly that the Ames brief-case had been taken from under his mattress. And Sheriff Danvers had an egg over one eye. He had been knocked out, but that did not explain why he was here, after having first seen fragments of clay on the table in this room, then touching that larger lump on the

table downstairs.

But Sheriff Danvers was ready with an explanation.

"I was on my way to a room for a few minutes' rest, Mr. Quinn," he said. "I knew you were downstairs, so when I heard someone prowling in your room and saw that the lock on your door was busted I thought I'd better take a look. Guess I'm getting old. Had my gun in my hand as I stepped in. But whoever was in here was too fast for me—knocked me clean out. I was just coming out of it when I thought he was coming back, and I swung at you. You're mighty fast, Mr. Quinn. But look! Anything been taken? Your bed is torn apart. But I forgot you are blind."

"I'll let you know if I miss anything, Sheriff," said Quinn. "Glad we didn't kill each other by mistake. Good night, Sheriff. Expect you with Bill Lark on a boat to go to Jep Lathur's place right after daylight."

CHAPTER XIII

Elusive Corker Mann



WHEN the sheriff went out, Tony Quinn spent a few minutes adding up the most amazing cross angles of crime he had ever encountered. Someone had taken the Ames brief-case and its lumps of clay. And whoever had it was one of the murder bosses, or working directly for him.

"Any person in this whole queer set-up might be guilty," mused Tony. "That Arthur Jenkins with his quick story of the pottery business. He would know that was not china clay, or should. Nathan Harrell, with what might be a phony wound, making it appear the raiders tried to kill him, might have thought the clay was silica used in the making of glass.

"Sheriff Danvers might have been looking for a prowler. And he would have the nerve to crack himself on the head hard enough to make it look as if he had been knocked out. Whoever he believed me to be, that was a killer swing he made at me.

"Mort Singer looked at that clay. But

Singer had had that brief-case in his possession for some time. The raiders, undoubtedly directed by Corker Mann, who grabbed that brief-case, were acting for one of the murder bosses.

"Irma Lathur is missing and she could have killed Dr. Caller. Dr. Jess Lathur has a big inheritance coming to him when his father dies. Irma doubtless would inherit all of it if Dr. Jess were out of the way, and Bob Carson plans to marry Irma.

"Then Mort Singer sounded sincere when he expressed doubt of Dr. James Cass and suggested the importance of the blood plasma for thousands of soldiers being kept safely.

"But of all of them, Bob Carson, knowing the lakes and woods, would be most likely to know where that clay came from.

"We have a sabotage plot against the Soo locks. We have a blood trick that may be meant to cover up something connected with that blood plasma at Lake Hospital. We have Irma and Dr. Jess Lathur perhaps prisoners, or hostages of the city killers while they were working with the saboteurs.

"So now what? Not until I have old Jep Lathur's confidence and his own story of all this will there be a key, unless—"

Tony Quinn crumbled a few of the stray bits of clay still on his room table.

"Someone right here in the lodge knew the truth, and that has to include even Bill Lark and Sheriff Danvers. Someone knows the lumps of mud from John Ames' brief-case is the purest of bauxite, with hardly more than a trace of sesquioxide of iron. It probably is purer than any of the aluminum producing bauxite of Arkansas or Alabama and Georgia, and here in this range of iron-ore hills might be worth millions during the war."

Realizing that he and his aides would have to strike swiftly and hard within the next few hours, Tony Quinn refreshed himself with two hours' sleep. . . .

Bill Lark steered the small motor-boat into the gray mist of dawn on the upper lake where stood Moosehead Lodge. Tony Quinn was silent, hunched in the bow of the boat. Sheriff Danvers, the third man in the boat, had spoken but little. Evidently he did not wish

Lark to know of his mistaken encounter with Tony Quinn.

"NATHAN HARRELL is in that boat just ahead," said Lark, as a small-motored skiff came into sight. "That stubborn guy insisted he was going to Jep Lathur's camps alone and almost had a fight with Mort Singer over getting a boat."

"I gave him permission," said the sheriff. "I thought we might keep an eye on him. You know, Mr. Quinn, that Singer suspects Harrell of trying to make a deal for Moosehead Lodge. The more I think of it, the more I believe he's here for something more than getting logs for his plastics business. You see—"

"Hold it," said Lark suddenly in a low voice. "Harrell's trying to dodge us in the channel alongside Razorback Island. See? But I forgot, Tony. What I mean is I thought someone showed up in the fog on the island just then, but I'm not sure."

"Swing in, Bill," ordered Danvers. "I saw someone on the spine of Razorback myself. And Harrell's left his boat. He's after someone."

Lark swerved their boat toward the rocks of Razorback Island. As he cut their motor down to a whisper there came one whiplike explosion, then another.

"Rifle shootin'!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Could be somebody peggin' a deer out of season, but—"

The quick, heavier gunfire that followed certainly was not meant for deer killing. It had been a revolver triggered several times. Then there were shouts. Tony Quinn was standing up. Perhaps the bulky sheriff stumbled by accident, but anyhow he fell heavily on the side of the small motor-boat and Tony Quinn, unbalanced, went into the swirling stream of the cold channel. Bill Lark was swept down the channel a short distance, then climbed safely up on a rock.

Sheriff Danvers was puffing like a porpoise, but making the ledge of shore rocks. And Tony Quinn acted upon a sudden idea, and the opportunity now given him. He went deep under the surface, swam along the rocks and came up where he had seen an overhang of bushes. He could hear Danvers and

Lark calling his name excitedly.

The sheriff was swearing. Lark's voice held a note of anxiety bordering upon grief. The two men were coming along the rocks seeking him. Tony Quinn was through the bushes and on the spine of the Razorback Island while they were still searching, knowing they must believe he had been drowned.

He was moving toward the spot from which the two rifle shots and the revolver shooting had come when, fifty yards from shore, he came upon the body.

Nathan Harrell's bombastic career was ended. The plastics man lay face downward. Two rifle bullets had passed through him. Quinn's quick search of Harrell's pockets produced only a wallet, a driver's license with his name and a letter in a torn envelope. Hearing Sheriff Danvers and Bill Lark coming, Quinn moved quickly inland before opening the letter.

He heard the sheriff and Lark exclaiming when they came upon the body. Then he was reading the brief letter he had found:

Nathan Harrell,
Moosehead Lodge,
Raco Station Post-office,
Michigan.

Dear Harrell—

Have no reply to latest offer made Morton Singer for Moosehead Lodge. Perhaps you should bring more pressure to bear. Inquiry has been made as to our connections. Singer is suspicious. Check on last lot of J. Lathur log shipments indicates possibility of rejection. If Lathur loses heavily, and Singer is bluffed out, we can kill two birds with one stone. Be careful of New Yorker, a blind man called Tony Quinn. Advise Corklin Mann to keep away from Moosehead Lodge for his own safety. The stuff is better than you believed. Be careful contacting Dr. Cass.

Markham.

Tony Quinn glanced at the envelope again. It was to be expected it would not contain the return address of the Markham Realty Corporation, for it might have come under the eye of Mort Singer. But that letter was an indication that Harrell could have been one murder boss.

TONY QUINN was deeply thoughtful as he pocketed the letter. Could the "stuff" referred to be the valuable bauxite? But why the careless use of names?

Quinn was about to move again, when

a man's weight landed upon him, and a voice growled:

"This time you don't play ghost, Tony Quinn!"

The long arm encircling Quinn's windpipe was like the coils of a rubbery snake. And, with his breath shut off, Quinn was looking into the the glowing black eyes of Corker Mann.

Even as he fell, trying to counter the throttling hold with an elbow punch for his attacker's stomach, Quinn heard the sheriff's and Lark's excited voices. But Quinn could not make an answering sound, held with his spine cracking under the strain of Corker's deceptive strength. As Sheriff Danvers and Lark beat a way past through the bushes he heard the lawman remark:

"It must have come from a high point Bill. The bullets both ranged downward through Harrell's body. Look out for a trick."

That was Sheriff Danvers. Bill Lark viewed another thought.

"More murder and we don't know why!" Bill Lark groaned. "And I'd give ten years of my life if I hadn't called Tony Quinn here to drown like that!"

"So-o-o!" Corker Mann's voice was low and deadly. "They think Tony Quinn is dead! Perfect! They don't even know you're the Black Bat. I alone know that—reasoned it out. Tony Quinn trailing me as Dr. Jess—then comes the Black Bat. So now the Black Bat—blind Tony Quinn—will not only be supposed drowned. You will be!"

As the voices of the sheriff and Bill Lark receded, Quinn collapsed utterly, his breath apparently leaving his body. This Corker Mann was a smart killer. Probably the cleverest Tony had ever encountered. And it was playing right into his hands for Quinn to be thought drowned. Corker would see to it that it was an actuality.

There seemed to be only one single bare chance left. Corker would not kill him here. He would carry him to the channel first, for to bear out the theory of drowning, Tony Quinn's body must be found with water in the lungs. Waiting, helpless for the moment, Quinn knew his only hope lay in pretending to be completely out, then watch for an opening.

Suddenly there was a slight crackling

in the bushes. The tall, thin Corker reared up, looking about. He swore softly, then bent and picked up Quinn. He held him over one shoulder, feet first.

"Okay, Tony Quinn alias the Black Bat," whispered Corker as he started moving noiselessly back toward the channel. "First you, and then that girl friend of yours, Carol Baldwin." He laughed low, then what he added brought every nerve in Tony Quinn alive: "If Doc Cass doesn't get to her first. He's wise, or he wouldn't take her in on the blood trick."

The rustling sound of someone evidently searching the heavy underbrush was continuing. Tony acted then, swiftly, noiselessly. His powerful, back-handed punch caught Corker solidly at the base of his brain.

Corker's whole body stiffened, relaxed and started to fall. Quinn rolled aside, but some noise had been made. The unseen searcher suddenly was moving in that direction.

QUINN flattened, automatic ready, watching the thick bushes where the knocked-out Corker Mann lay. Then the searching man, bent over in a crouch, loomed into view.

"Hold it!" Quinn's voice was low and deadly. "You're covered!"

The crouching man straightened.

"Silk!" Tony Quinn leaped to his feet to face Silk Kirby, who had been sent with Bob Carson to Jep Lathur's camp with the idea of holding Lathur from being either arrested or killed. Silk was bleeding from scratches, and his clothes were torn.

"What gives?" he exclaimed. "You're the last one I expected here!"

"Save it," cautioned Tony. "Sheriff Danvers and Bill Lark are somewhere around. They think I've been drowned. I want them to keep on thinking that. A man named Nathan Harrell was killed here with a rifle a few minutes ago, and one man we want badly—a killer named Corklin Mann, is lying over there, out. When we have him tied up, you can talk."

"But Bob Carson and Jep Lathur—I lost them, and—"

"Wait, Silk," repeated Quinn. "This Mann killer is dynamite. We'll put him away first."

CHAPTER XIV

Blood of the Dead

NOT half a minute later Tony Quinn was looking at the crushed bushes only. He had described Corker Mann as dynamite and the description fitted all right. His cleverness made him even more dangerous than any explosive.

Apparently having regained consciousness in time to realize that Tony Quinn had help at hand and that he could not handle two of Quinn's brand openly, Corker Mann had departed quickly and soundlessly.

Tony Quinn's plan to "remain dead" might now be upset by Corker. But he determined to try it.

"Now about Bob Carson and Jep Lathur, Silk?" he questioned quickly. "They are on the island?"

"Somewhere," said Silk. "We found Lathur, and Carson persuaded him we were helping him. The old man's half nuts because his girl and his son were gone. He was anxious to do anything to find them, and Carson suggested we hole up on Razorback Island with the old man until I could get word to you—"

"Make it brief, Silk," said Quinn. "There's been another murder. Carson or Lathur must give us a line on some 'caves,' if we're to save the girl and Dr. Jess. Then we have a double job to do, one perhaps at this Lake Hospital. Go on!"

"We heard a couple of motor-boats," said Silk. "One of the boats apparently was landing—"

"Nathan Harrell," said Quinn.

"Carson asked me to slip down and see who might be coming ashore," said Silk. "I heard another boat landing, then I got all mixed up in the woods, I heard a rifle shooting, then a smaller gun. I thought of old Lathur's rifle—he didn't have a shotgun at all, just a rifle—and I thought he and Carson had run onto some of the killers. I was trying to find my way back to them when I came onto you."

Tony Quinn make a quick decision.

"I'm fading out, Silk, for a little

while," he said. "You keep on moving about. Make some noise. You'll run into Sheriff Danvers and Bill Lark perhaps, but you might stir up Carson and Lathur. I don't like the sound of this. Silk, has Carson seemed okay all the way?"

"I think so. Anyway, he's sure wild, believing Irma Lathur is in the hands of the killers. All right. Here I go."

Tony Quinn, watchful for any sudden reappearance of Corker Mann, trailed Silk's noisy progress. Silk called Bob Carson's name. He made noise enough to be heard across the island.

Quinn followed Silk over the bald mound of rocks close to one channel shore. As he did, his quick eyes picked out a canoe that was just merging with the morning mist that shrouded Cold Spring Lake below the island. And even at that distance in the fog, Quinn saw that the tall, thin Corker Mann was paddling the canoe. He also had a brief glimpse of another man lying flat in the canoe, and as the light craft was swallowed in the mist, Tony Quinn was sure that the man escaping with Corker was Nathan Harrell's murderer!

And then the booming voice of Sheriff Danvers rang out.

"Curse it all, Carson! Sure as the devil I almost shot you! Just what are you doing up here?"

Bob Carson's reply was profane and bitter.

"Was with Silk Kirby and old Jep, and Kirby went to the shore to see about a boat we heard! We were coming back to see Mr. Quinn, to ask if he had any ideas about how we could find Irma and Dr. Jess! Old Jep was behind me, but I don't think he hit me! Just feel that lump, Sheriff!"

"Yeah, you got conked, Carson! Then what?"

"I fell down, but I was up in a minute," said Carson. "Old Jep was gone. I'd just started looking for him when I heard a rifle shoot twice. I saw a man stagger and fall. Then the killer started away. He couldn't have been old Jep, because he was short and hefty. I was so everlasting mad I cut loose at him, but he was too far away for me to hit him. When I got up where he had been and found these two rifle shells, he had faded. That's all—except that

old Jep has disappeared now, and so has Silk Kirby."

THEY heard Silk Kirby shouting Bob Carson's name, then, and the next moment Silk himself appeared. Tony Quinn crouched, watching Carson display two shining brass cartridges.

"Huh!" grunted Sheriff Danvers. "They're twenty-five-thirty, ain't they? How about your own twenty-five-thirty, Carson? They're scarce around here."

Silk Kirby was beginning to play his rôle, telling about how he had been lost.

"Wait a minute, Kirby," interrupted Danvers. "We've bad news for you. But

in the forefront of his thoughts. Jep Lathur was missing. And in Quinn's mind it was a question whether that sudden disappearance was enforced or voluntary. There had been someone in that canoe with Corker Mann. Though Bob Carson had said the man he had seen murder Nathan Harrell was short and bulky.

"That wouldn't fit either old Jep or Corker," reasoned Quinn. "And Nathan Harrell had a letter on him, indicating that he is or was neck deep in trying to get Moosehead Lodge cheaply, and that he probably knows something of the bauxite aluminum ore that was in John

"I'm Going to Kill You, Lloyd North!"

THE words struck Lloyd with the impact of a hammer blow. There was Ralston, holding his deadly weapon, ready to carry out his threat—and Lloyd had the fight of his life on his hands!

EVER since he'd met the mysterious stranger who sent him to Ralston for "information," bewildering things had been happening to Lloyd North. How they all fit together into as neat a jigsaw pattern of crime as you ever saw is told in **GUARDIAN IN BLACK**, G. Wayman Jones' next exciting complete book-length Black Bat novel!

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Carson here hasn't answered a question. Where's your own twenty-five-thirty, Bob? Still use it for birds and rabbits, don't you?"

"What the devil you gettin' at, Danvers?" Carson's tone was furious. "My rifle's in my cabin at Moosehead Lodge! Haven't had it out in weeks!"

"I'll take the shells, Carson," said the sheriff. "Now, Kirby, Tony Quinn had an accident. He—"

"I'm afraid he's drowned," Lark interrupted mournfully.

Tony Quinn faded from the scene as Silk went into a good act. He knew, too, that Silk would look into the matter of Carson's rifle.

As Quinn swam easily across the Razorback Island channel, one idea was

Ames' brief-case. He was also supposed to contact Dr. Cass. Now what—"

When Quinn came ashore he headed directly for the Jep Lathur logging camps nearly ten miles across the woods from this point. In the bright sunlight he rested a few minutes, and again studied the letter taken from Nathan Harrell's pocket.

Tony Quinn's attention to small details was keen. And when finally he thrust the letter into his coat he had in mind the three distinguishing marks that were on two typewritten notes found when the Ames party who had died without blood were discovered.

The lower case *t* was broken. The *y* was out of line. The *h* was like an *n*, the top being broken off.

"Unless I'm wrong," thought Quinn, "a typewriter like that will be found either in old Jep Lathur's offices, or in the laboratory of Dr. Jess Lathur, because a killer with a fixed idea hasn't yet learned how badly he has slipped in pinning the first murders on old Jep. And now he has substituted Nathan Harrell for himself. But the letter to Harrell had to be written on another machine."

The singing of a cross-cut saw from the first Lathur log camp was now distinct. Axes were making strokes like the beating of drums. Tony Quinn hastened his stride.

But he had not taken three steps when it seemed to him that the woods half a mile ahead suddenly exploded. The blast was dull, mushy, but there was an immediate mushroom of bluish gray smoke riding on the morning air.

Quinn heard oaths and shouts on a woods road. Half a dozen trucks piled high with short logs, were halted. Drivers and loaders were running back toward the smoke.

"It ain't Doc Jess's lab!" one of the truck drivers was shouting. "It's the old man's offices! Look! Ain't that Doc Jess?"

INSTANTLY Quinn saw that the rear of some small office buildings were flaming up, and the inert figure lying on the ground nearby them—the figure the logger had cried out was Dr. Jess. But Lathur's logging fire fighters were efficient. Already two tractor pumpers were smashing out the fire. An intention to destroy the offices was stopped with one small building ruined and blackened.

Quinn wanted to investigate, but naturally he could not be seen here, for Tony Quinn was supposed to be drowned.

Then he saw a tough-looking truck driver with a once-broken nose and lumpy ears. His low, sibilant whistle turned the tough worker—"Butch" O'Leary, ex-pugilist, whom Quinn sent here to get a job, keep his ears open and await orders.

Under cover of the excitement, back among the trees, Butch exclaimed:

"Mr. Quinn! Am I glad you come along. There's the devil to pay. Them offices was closed by old Jep Lathur. We was startin' out with loads of logs

that have to make a steamer at Emerson before dark, to go through the Soo canal tonight. Then came that blast."

Loggers were gathered around Dr. Jess Lathur. He appeared to be badly hurt, burned. Quinn heard one logger curse, then shout:

"He set off that fire, sure as guns! But old Jep would want him saved!"

Tony Quinn was thinking fast. Sheriff Danvers and Bill Lark would be delayed by the murder of Nathan Harrell, and possibly a search for Jep Lathur, and the inquiry concerning Bob Carson's .25-30 rifle. But now another idea sped into Quinn's quick mind.

Why wasn't the deputy sheriff Bill Lark had sent here to see if the murder notes had been written on one of the Lathur typewriters not here now? That gave him a fair idea as to why the offices had been fired.

"Butch, you have some fast work ahead," Quinn said hurriedly. "Who was in those offices this morning—or did you notice?"

"The old man closed them and posted an order no one was to enter today," said Butch. "He put the same order on that half underground building over there. That's Dr. Jess Lathur's laboratory."

"Now, Butch, listen," said Quinn. "Get into that burned building somehow, and no matter how many smashed or partly burned typewriters are in that office, get them out and smuggle them to your logging truck. Then insist that Dr. Jess must be taken to the nearest hospital and show what you know about first aid. Then put him in your truck cab."

"I'll see to it," Butch promised grimly. "How about you, Chief?"

"I'll be waiting to slip onto your truck by the time you leave," said Tony. "I want only a few minutes in Dr. Jess' laboratory."

Even as he spoke, Quinn was conscious that skulkers were among distant trees, but carefully keeping away from the scene. Corker Mann must have headed this way, perhaps had followed him, and that being the case he had to work fast.

Gaining entrance to Dr. Jess Lathur's laboratory was simple enough, and Quinn found that it was unusually well equipped, especially for the blood

experiments in which Dr. Jess had been specializing.

Quinn's eyes narrowed as he caught sight of four tall, crystal containers, each filled with reddish liquid.

"It's too brazen, too deliberately convicting," he muttered, for on the instant he had seen that the labels on the crystals of blood bore initials. They were: "L. A." "J. A." "H. S." "R. A. S."

"Loretta Ames, John Ames, Henry Starke and R. A. Smith," whispered Quinn. "It puts the finger directly upon Dr. Jess—but it's too fantastic. These containers have been planted."

HE HEARD more cursing and excited movement outside, then through a small window he saw Butch O'Leary and another man carrying the injured Dr. Jess. They were headed toward one of the six loaded log trucks that had been stopped by the fire. It was time for him to get out there, Quinn thought, but there was one more thing to be done in the laboratory. Again staring at the four containers of blood he was remembering that Loretta Ames was the only one who had been given a transfusion with plasma from the Lake Hospital. He placed the container labeled "L. A." under his coat.

"In this," he muttered, "may be at least half the answer to the double-action murder wave here in the Marquette Forest."

Just as the trucks were moving, Tony Quinn came from among the trees and slipped into Butch O'Leary's truck, unnoticed.

The trucks rumbled along, hitting a fast pace for the rough woods road.

"Have to make time for that lake steamer," said Butch. "What's in your mind, Chief?"

"Does this road pass near Lake Hospital?" asked Quinn. "And how close to Moosehead Lodge?"

"Crosses a lane half a mile from the hospital," said Butch. "But it follows a ridge two miles above Moosehead Lodge."

Tony Quinn's keen eyes were scanning the trees at both sides. And in his mind was what he had heard from the mobsters about a plot to blow up the Sault Ste. Marie locks.

Quinn made a quick examination of Dr. Jess Lathur. The tall, dark young

man was seriously burned, so badly that he might not live more than a few more minutes. His clothing smelled strongly of gasoline.

Quinn gave him a stimulant he always carried for emergencies. Dr. Jess revived a little, began murmuring.

"The caves, Dad—Irma—in the caves —"

CHAPTER XV

Murder Shell



ENTHLY Quinn tried to bring Dr. Jess to consciousness. At the same time he searched the victim's pockets. From the burned coat he took two crumpled sheets of paper and when he spread them out, he swore silently.

These were the threat notes which had been found upon the body of John Ames and of another bloodless corpse. They showed the three bad letters on a typewriter.

"You get the typewriters, Butch?" asked Quinn.

"In the box back of the seat," said Butch. "Had two fights, but swore the old man had ordered me to guard them." He grinned. "Had to knock out a couple of loggers, though."

In a moment Tony Quinn was examining the keys of a smashed and fire blackened typewriter. The fire setter had been smart enough to damage nearly all of the type faces. But he had missed out in his cleverness. The faulty "t" and "y" and "n" were still as they showed in the threat notes. The deputy sheriff who had been sent to check up on those typewriters may have discovered the same thing—but what had happened to him was only conjecture.

"Either Dr. Jess, if guilty, caught him and got the notes, then set the fire," reasoned Tony. "Or Corker Mann's boys did the whole thing, burning Dr. Jess in the bargain."

Tony Quinn believed the latter to be true and was anxious to get Dr. Jess Lathur to Lake Hospital. That would be his only chance for life.

The log trucks were booming at a fast forty for their heavy loads. Butch ex-

plained that the logs were part of a big consignment going to Nathan Harrell, through the Soo canal, then down through the Straits of Mackinac, between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, to Chicago.

Quinn gave Dr. Jess a little more brandy stimulant. And again Dr. Jess started murmuring:

"Dad—the caves—Irma—I got away—"

The man was close to death, but because other lives hung in the balance, Tony Quinn worked upon the subconsciousness of the stricken man.

"Yes, Dr. Jess," he said soothingly. "The caves—where are the caves—the caves, Dr. Jess?"

For half a minute Dr. Jess' blackened lips were so still that Quinn felt for his pulse. Then Quinn's watchful eyes picked out a bright mackinaw in the trees, ahead and to one side. He was touching Butch O'Leary's arm to call attention to the skulker, perhaps danger from the woods when Dr. Jess half raised himself and whispered hoarsely:

"The caves—back of Moosehead Lodge—they took us—Irma—in through cabin. Tell Bob Carson—his cabin—Dr. Cass' cabin—you find trapdoor and—"

Dr. Jess Lathur's final words whispered to nothing. He was dead.

Tony Quinn straightened. The caves where Irma Lathur was a prisoner had an entrance within Moosehead Lodge's grounds, and Dr. Jess might have meant a trap door in one of two cabins he had mentioned—Dr. James Cass' cabin, or Bob Carson's.

"Butch, we swing off toward Moosehead Lodge," Quinn said. "This truck-load will not get to the steamer." Then a grim thought came. "Butch! We must stop all of these loads! Do you know about all of the short logs you're hauling?"

"No, Chief," said Butch. "I'm only a truck driver. The logs were already loaded this morning, fixed and chained last night."

Tony Quinn was convinced now that Dr. Jess Lathur was the victim of a frame-up to make him appear guilty of the murders of the Ames party. He had Loretta Ames' blood, and in it he expected to find one solution to a murder, perhaps an answer that might expose a menace to thousands of men in service.

HE HAD just been amazingly told that "the caves" where Irma Lathur likely was held as a prisoner to coerce old Jep Lathur into granting something that was badly wanted were under the grounds of hillside Moosehead Lodge. He had learned that the caves had been entered through a trapdoor in a cabin.

Carol Baldwin had been permitted to go upon a mission of deadly danger, according to what Tony had just discovered. If the theory he now had were true, Dr. James Cass and the German sabotage mob never would permit Carol to leave Lake Hospital alive, if she were caught taking a sample of the sealed blood plasma.

Corker Mann, now sure that Tony Quinn was the Black Bat, also was threatening Carol Baldwin. And there was still another murderer, the second "boss" who had set out to doublecross Dr. Cass, if the doctor should be proved to be a Fifth Columnist.

And—

Unless Tony Quinn was guessing wrong, somewhere among the logs on these six trucks had been planted timed explosives intended to destroy the vital Soo locks!

"Ease off, Butch," Quinn said abruptly.

But his plan to halt the trucks was not concluded. He saw the blue puff of smoke from a rifle—three puffs, the sound of the shots lost in the rumbling of the trucks. The leading driver was just sending his heavily loaded machine into a narrow curve at better than forty.

"Brake down, Butch!" Tony Quinn cried. "We'll be into it! Miss the truck ahead!"

The leading truck got out of control, for the rifle shots had ripped a front tire. The skidding wheels, pushed ahead by ten tons of short logs, were tearing up the narrow woods road as the big machine slewed sideward. Swampy ditches were on both sides of the filled-in log road so when big Butch saw the leading truck skidding and crashing over he deliberately headed his own truck into the swampy ditch on the opposite side of the road.

And with that move Butch not only missed piling into the truck ahead, but saved Tony Quinn and himself from being blown to eternity. For the first

log truck appeared to disintegrate in a terrific explosion. Some of the logs hurled from it tore up huge trees, obliterated the vehicle and the men in it, and furrowed a deep crater in the earth.

Realizing that logs on their own truck probably were loaded also, Tony Quinn instantly was smashing through the cab door and hurtling into the swampy ground just as a following truck skidded on into the gaping hole that had been the woods road. The second explosion drove out Tony's breath. It seemed that tons of black swamp mud rained down and buried him alive.

His senses faded out as the frightful concussion appeared to shatter his eardrums and his brain. . . .

Back on the lake near where Tony Quinn had left his assistant, Silk Kirby was having certain experiences of his own, and though they had not the violence of Quinn's trial by explosion, they were in a way puzzling. At least Sheriff Danvers was puzzled, and he was swearing.

The sheriff, Bill Lark, and Silk, were in the righted motor-boat, towing the boat containing the body of the murdered Nathan Harrell back to Moosehead Lodge. Bob Carson's boat trailed.

Lark was so downcast over the supposed drowning of Tony Quinn that Silk was almost tempted to relieve his mind and tell him Quinn still survived. But Silk had been well-taught by Quinn to keep his counsel while an investigation still pending.

"I had both them murder shells in my pocket!" boomed Sheriff Danvers. "Now one of 'em's gone! How'd I lose it out of that deep sheepskin pocket?"

SILK KIRBY glanced at his long fingers, educated to do strange things in his former career of confidence man, and said nothing. Anyhow, Danvers' glare at Bob Carson indicated whom he suspected of having lifted that murder shell. And, when finally the boat drew up at the Moosehead Lodge dock, the sheriff ordered sharply:

"Carson, you stick by me till I finish here." He glanced at the harried Mort Singer who, with a crowd of morbid guests, had rushed down and were staring at the covered body in the second boat. "Where is Dr. Cass?" he demanded. "Yes, by glory! It's another!

Nathan Harrell! And there don't seem any reason to it, except old Jep Lathur is loose again, this time with a rifle. Cuss it! If Bob Carson and Tony Quinn's friend Kirby hadn't horned into this, maybe we would have old Jep and this wouldn't have happened. I'm sending posses out, I phoned the governor, and the troops from the Bay Mills and Bromley barracks where they've been guarding the Soo canal will be here some time today."

Silk Kirby was slipping through the crowd toward Bob Carson's log cabin, ringed by huge pines. He knew which it was for one of the first things he had done at Moosehead Lodge, acting on Tony Quinn's suggestion was to find out who occupied the various log cabins.

Gaining the rear of the Carson cabin, Silk pried open a window and eased himself in. In the one big room he found a gun rack made of deer's antlers. A heavy, long-range deer and bear gun was at the top of this rack. Beneath it was a smaller rifle—a .25-30 caliber—deadly at considerable range.

Using his handkerchief to hold the gun, Silk removed a shell and nipped out the bullet and powder with his knife and replaced it in the firing chamber.

When he had triggered and driven the hammer upon the empty shell, Silk removed it. With a small magnifying glass he always carried, he compared the shell just taken from Bob Carson's rifle with the murder shell he took from his pocket.

No two bullets from different guns can ever be alike any more than can fingerprints. But only experts know that no two firing pins make exactly the same indentation on a fired shell.

"That settles that," muttered Silk. "The murder shells were fired by this rifle of Carson's. But since Bob Carson couldn't possibly have had the rifle and has not yet been to his cabin, someone is about to pull a fast one. We'll double it in spades."

Silk grinned as he thrust the small rifle out of sight in a trousers leg and under his coat. He turned back toward the window he had opened.

"When some smart mug is ready to lead the law to Bob Carson's rifle, won't he be surprised?" Silk thought with satisfaction. "Now . . . Say what in thunder goes on here?"

KIRBY saw a small car come coasting down back of a nearby cabin back in the woods, the cabin that belonged to Dr. James Cass. Bareheaded Dr. Cass himself, driving, was glancing quickly about. But he evidently saw no one, since nearly everyone about the lodge was down by the boats.

Then Dr. Cass swiftly opened the trunk of his car, removed a heavy bundle covered by an Indian blanket. Silk stiffened, one hand crawling to the gun under his arm as he saw Dr. Cass carrying the bundle toward the rear door of his cabin. And just as Dr. Cass kicked his cabin door open, Silk saw something moving inside the blanket.

One fold fell away. A girl's head appeared briefly. And there could be no mistaking Carol Baldwin's bright blond bob!

CHAPTER XVI

The Caves



KNOWING nothing of what Carol had been attempting, Silk Kirby went catlike through the window. He followed the side of Dr. Cass' cabin, gaining the rear door.

From inside he heard the thumping as if a door had been suddenly slammed shut. Gun in hand, he reached the doorway into the doctor's main room. He had come in through the kitchen. He saw a door, presumably leading to a sleeping room, and it was open an inch. Slipping to it along the wall, he kicked it suddenly, his automatic covering the inside of the room.

"Well I'll be jiggered!" muttered Silk, dumbfounded. "What kind of a shell game is this?"

For Dr. Cass's sleeping room was an empty as the the big main room and the kitchen. All windows were tightly closed. And across the main front door was a heavy bar. Dr. Cass could not have gone on through the cabin.

Next to Tony Quinn himself, no man had greater affection for Carol than had Silk, and what he had just seen had put him in a killing humor. He was looking about despairingly when he saw a long,

black box projecting at one corner of the bed. Hastily he pulled it out. But before he could solve the peculiar brass lock, he heard a grating sound from the main room.

With gliding, silent movement he was back at the open door. Dr. Cass appeared from the floor. Silk swore silently as he realized that what he had heard from outside was the slamming of a heavy trap-door. It dropped again now and Dr. Cass straightened.

"Just stay that way, Dr. Cass!" rasped Silk. "Keep your hands in sight, or I'll drill you!"

The physician's dark face became a swift mask of hate. Gone was all geniality from the doctor's eyes, and his mouth was hard.

"Yes, Kirby?" he drawled. "Why this intrusion?"

"Pull up that trap-door, Dr. Cass! If Carol Baldwin isn't okay, may heaven have mercy on you, for I won't!"

Dr. Cass moved slowly, his hand reaching for an iron ring that had been concealed by a small floor rug. The doctor had the trap-door half lifted when an electrical contact must have been made with gas-charged bombs planted in the last place Silk Kirby would have looked for trouble. Crackling explosions blasted blinding gas from the beamed ceiling as Dr. Cass dropped, sliding flat behind the lifted trap-door.

Choking, his vision almost instantly blanked out, Silk held his fire, following the doctor's example in falling flat to the floor, hoping to clear his eyes and free himself from the strangling fumes.

Silk heard the spiteful, slight crack of a shot that he knew came through a silencer. A slug ripped along Silk's head over one ear, but what happened right after that, Silk missed. His senses were blacked out. . . .

Silk Kirby dreamed of being laid out on a cold marble slab. He opened his eyes and his bed still was cold. He could see vague light from a gasoline lamp shining upon what looked like glistening, white icicles, but a minute later Silk realized they were stalactites in a cavern. His wrists and ankles were pegged firmly. He was lying upon flat rock over which icy cold water spread a film.

A voice seemed to be speaking to

him insistently, but at first it was only part of the chill dream.

"Silk, can you hear me? Silk, can you hear me?"

SILK turned his buzzing head. Carol was lying flat on the same rock. Her arms and ankles were tied to pegs driven into crevices of the wet rock. Just beyond Carol, Silk saw another girl, dark-haired and clean-featured. The missing Lathur girl, he thought dully.

"How did this happen, Carol?" Silk muttered huskily. "The Chief didn't give me a line on what you were doing, so—"

"Easy, Silk," said Carol. "I believe there is a dictaphone and whatever we say will be heard. Only Dr. Cass knows why he brought me here. I was taking a sample of blood plasma at Lake Hospital when he used an ether cloth on me, and then I woke up here. This girl is Irma Lathur, but hasn't been able to talk. I think she is being held until the killers capture Jep Lathur, for I heard Dr. Cass talking to someone over a phone that gave me the idea."

A solid kick in Silk's ribs announced that a bearded guard, in a logger's clothes, had appeared.

"You'll talk when the boss says," growled the guard. "Said you were not to open your mouth until he—"

"Never mind it, Hans," a weird voice broke in. "I am listening now."

Even if the guard had not been called Hans, his German accent would have betrayed his nationality. Realizing that, Silk Kirby knew gripping fear, for this underground prison might never be discovered by Tony Quinn. And saboteurs financially able to be headed by Dr. Cass, with a blood plasma hospital under his

control, could not afford to permit any of them to escape.

"Whatever happens, Carol," Silk said quickly, "the Chief will—"

The big figure of the physician loomed in the shadowy cavern, and he broke in: "What will Tony Quinn do? Go on, Kirby. I am interested."

The name Silk applied to Dr. Cass was as expressive as he could employ with Carol present.

"You might try laughing this off," the doctor said mockingly. "Tony Quinn, the famous blind ex-district attorney is dead."

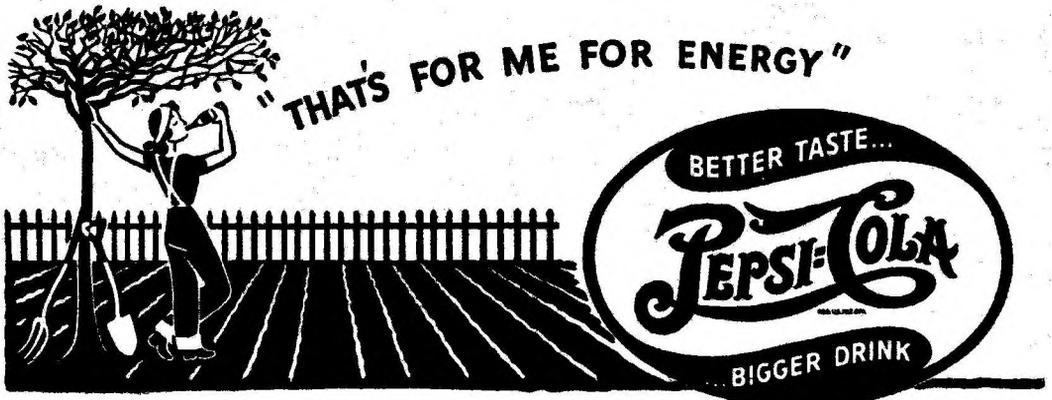
Silk Kirby almost broke as he heard Carol's sharp cry. For he knew the deep affection Carol had for Tony Quinn, and he knew all that Carol meant to Quinn. But even so, in spite of Carol's suffering, he could not tell her now that he knew Tony Quinn was alive.

"We've heard that one before, you traitor," he said biting. "I suppose a few of your spies with machine-guns caught him, eh? That's the only way he would die. Try another, you traitorous leech."

But even as he spoke, Silk was wondering. . . . Corker Mann knew that Tony Quinn had not been drowned. Corker would have had plenty of time to contact Dr. Cass, so since it appeared that he had not, that meant Corker must owe allegiance to another boss. Also it must have been that other boss who had murdered Nathan Harrell, and that could have been to draw a red herring across a hot blood trail.

"Nice names you call, Kirby," mocked Dr. Cass. "But Bill Lark and Sheriff Danvers saw Tony Quinn drowned. Now I have you and this smart *Fraulein*,

[Turn page]



so all those who have suspected my hospital are right here. You and Miss Baldwin are unlucky, and in our country we take no chances. So—"

The hollow-voiced speaker in the cavern sounded.

"Dr. Cass, be careful. Jep Lathur is hunting for his daughter and Dr. Jess. The old man may know of that other entrance to the caves, and he may suspect they were taken there. Bob Carson is about to be arrested for the murder of Nathan Harrell, for the rifle is soon to be discovered in his boat."

KIRBY was bitter. He had almost forgotten he had been in possession of Bob Carson's rifle and the one murder shell. Of course Dr. Cass would have taken those. Then he was thinking about that eerie voice as it had sounded in the big cavern, echoing among the stalactites. He had not recognized it, but since Quinn had told him there were two criminal bosses, with one trying to cross the other, Silk thought this must be the other boss. And what he meant was that the rifle and shell would be planted on Bob Carson, already suspected by Sheriff Danvers. Quinn would straighten that out, but in the meantime—

"Doc Cass, quick!" The speaker's voice changed, became excited. "Hold your prisoners alive! Corker has just made contact! Tony Quinn was not drowned! The Lathur offices have burned, but your trucks have been blown to eternity! Cass, come out, so we can figure this out!"

With guttural, furious oaths, Dr. Cass ordered the guard to see that the prisoners were kept safe. Then the angered leader of the German saboteurs hurried from the cavern.

It seemed to Silk Kirby that only a minute or so had passed when he heard sounds like shooting at a distance. And at the same time, grayish, thick smoke started rolling from one side of the cavern.

The guard sprang up, swearing, to investigate. But he returned choking. The smoke thickened and spread. Silk caught the smell of burning wood.

"The Lodge!" cried the guard. "It's burning. It's across the only other entrance to this cave!"

He started running. The smoke, shot

with heat and flame, choked Silk Kirby as he fought desperately to free his wrists.

"Silk?" Carol's voice was muffled in her strangling throat. "I can't breathe! Silk—there's someone—"

Silk's determined effort freed but one ankle. He could tell by the swift in-rushing smoke and flame that there must have been an explosion, and he distinguished the odor of some form of explosive gas. And now the rear of Moosehead Lodge, falling, had closed an open side of the hill cavern.

One stifled scream told him that Irma Lathur had recovered consciousness. Then a tall figure appeared, wavering like some sinister ghost over him. A weapon, apparently a long-barreled rifle, was raised.

In Silk's fading consciousness was the thought that Dr. Cass had returned to make certain of those who might have become witnesses against him. And then in Silk's whirling brain a curious thing happened. The tall figure struck out with the rifle barrel. The blow tore loose the peg to which Silk's wrists were attached. Silk rolled, trying to get to his feet to battle an armed man.

He staggered and fell, for though he did not know it, he had been unconscious for hours. He breathed in the choking smoke and his senses left him.

CHAPTER XVII

Death in the Blood



HAZILY Tony Quinn felt himself swinging easily in powerful arms. He opened his eyes to see Butch O'Leary's ugly, mud-streaked face. To him then it was the best-looking face in the world.

Big Butch was striding along, Quinn's figure held in his arms. Quinn could hear shooting, screams and the curses of men, the clashing of wood and steel.

"You all right, Chief?" Butch did not pause in his stride. "We got out of that by the skin of our teeth. Some kind of a mob and Jep Lathur's crazy mad loggers are fighting it out around them

busted trucks. The mobsters are dressed like loggers, and it's one swell mixup."

Tony Quinn got his feet onto the earth when they reached a sloping hillside above the swamp where the log trucks had exploded, and in one of which Dr. Jess Lathur lay dead. Quinn was shaky, but rapidly recovering.

"Seein' you're all right, Chief, do we go back and get into it?" Butch asked hopefully.

But as Tony Quinn steadied, he was concentrating upon one angle of the whole situation.

"Butch, how far to the Lake Hospital from here?" he asked.

"Maybe two miles over this ridge. It would have been twelve miles around by the log road."

"Butch, Carol is at the hospital," Quinn said anxiously. "And after what has happened, that killer, Corklin Mann, probably will be on his way to get her. And she is in danger also from Dr. Cass. That is, if Dr. Cass has learned of the latest developments, and I think he has."

Butch O'Leary, like Silk Kirby, was devoted to Carol Baldwin. His oaths were bitter as he heard that she was in danger. His big hands tore aside underbrush and thorn bushes as he cut across slashed cuttings and windfall trees. Quinn kept beside him only with an effort.

The sounds of the woods battle faded out behind them, but Tony Quinn somehow did not feel that they were alone. Again he had a feeling of being trailed. Rustling noises came from both sides, and fleeting movement of colors that could have been mackinaws or the red caps of woodsmen. Yet when they stood upon the hilly knob looking down upon the long, log structure of the Lake Hospital there had been no attempt to intercept them.

Tony Quinn studied the hospital buildings. For such an institution, using scores of blood donors daily, the whole place seemed deserted. There from one small, isolated building a light truck pulled out. It appeared to be loaded with containers of some sort, set into wooden frames.

"That must be the laboratory, Butch," said Quinn. "That is where Carol should be. She was to obtain a sample of blood plasma from a sealed container without being detected by Dr. Cass, but

she may not have got around to it yet. Cut off that truck and ask where Dr. Cass is, Butch."

Butch went down the hill, cutting through a sharp bend in the road. In a few minutes he was back, his voice heavy with anxiety.

"Chief, that guy driving the truck says that Dr. Cass drove off from the hospital four hours ago, going like a streak," said Butch. "And he says that when he loaded this truck, the new nurse who had been there this morning was nowhere about. He thinks maybe she was working in the back of the lab, though. That's the lab building all right."

Some movement was in evidence about other buildings now, and they heard voices as they reached the laboratory. The big plank door swung open at a touch, and Quinn first saw long rows of containers that he knew must hold blood plasma. They were in wooden frames. A Red Cross sign was over the door.

"A complete lab for a backwoods hospital," commented Quinn. "But if Carol was working in here she's not here now. . . . And yes, she was."

HE WAS holding a bright strand of blond hair he had picked up beside a retort that appeared to be filled with human blood.

He called cautiously, speaking her name. He aroused only an empty echo. Then he was staring at the edge of the table where he had found the single hair.

"Butch," he said sharply, "Carol is in trouble! She fell and her face struck the edge of this table."

His keen eyes had found a blood-stain and with it what but few men would have noticed—a faint mark of rouge that had been scraped from Carol's face where she had fallen. Butch uttered terrible oaths then.

"This Dr. Cass!" he growled. "That driver said he drove away alone in his small car."

"Butch, get over to the main buildings and rent, borrow or steal the first car you can find," ordered Tony Quinn. "Come right back here. I must have a few minutes here. It may be important to thousands."

Tony worked fast. In seconds blood from the container labeled L. A., for Loretta Ames, had been poured into several retorts. Little flames were lighted.

Quinn found the chemical reagents he required and when Butch came slamming back through the lab door, Tony Quinn had two small vials tightly sealed and concealed in his clothes.

He knew now one angle of the most appalling murder plot he had ever come upon! Loretta Ames had been given a transfusion of poisoned blood!

"Thousands may die horribly," he thought grimly. "Other thousands will die for lack of plasma transfusions because of the great fear and doubt it will have spread through many war fronts. Every container here must be destroyed. Those that have gone out must be stopped, and no public word of this must get out, or one of the most magnificent medical accomplishments of this war may be lost!"

"There was a key in one car!" Butch exclaimed. "I had no trouble. I got the—"

Four bulky figures in woodsmen's garb came through the big door. They were so close upon Butch that Tony Quinn had only time to cry out a warning and snap out his own automatic. A weapon swung for Butch's head and two men sprang upon him.

The other two moved to one side, centering upon Tony Quinn. They held pistols equipped with silencers.

Butch let out a savage roar of pain and rage, going to his knees. Quinn dropped as one of the silenced Lugers spat out choked explosions. Slugs ripped through retorts of blood and splattered it over Tony Quinn.

That rapid shooting with a silencer proved that these attackers had the most modern fighting equipment. The latest silencers for shooting continuously without waiting for the dissipation of choked gas had been developed only within the past few months.

Butch's ability to take it and come back upset the plans of two killers even bigger than himself. Tony Quinn squeezed his automatic as the second Luger started singing.

The first saboteur to shoot went down with a bullet between his eyes. The other took a mortal wound in the throat. But as he went down he was crying out terribly.

"Get back! Corker—tricked us! Said he was blind—"

There was a crunching sound. Quinn

cleared his eyes of splashed blood to see Butch letting go of the necks of the two men who had attacked him. Butch was staggering, but he had cracked the skulls of his assailants together.

Quinn could hear voices shouting at a distance. The shots had aroused others in the main buildings. He dropped beside a table, and because of that he saw the partly hidden box underneath. His quick, strong fingers exposed the contents.

"GET to the car, Butch!" he called out. "I've a ten-second job to do here! Keep everybody away! And be ready to drive!"

Tony cut off a powder fuse that already was attached to a capped stick of dynamite. Dr. Cass had been prepared for any sudden emergency.

"He would have blown up the lab in a pinch, and have put it onto spies," grated Quinn. "Well, Doc Cass, I'll take care of that little job for you."

The shortened, half minute fuse was sputtering when Tony Quinn reached the door. Then he saw that the score or more persons running from the hospital toward the laboratory, and shouting that the lab was being looted, were being held by big Butch O'Leary, beside a small car with a Luger pistol in each hand. Others were looking away over a rolling hill, and crying out.

Tony Quinn, for the second time that day saw smoke from an explosion plunging high into the blue sky over the woods. Only this cloud ballooned and spread and became many times the magnitude of the fire blast at Jeph Lathur's offices.

"It's Moosehead Lodge!" a hospital attendant shouted.

Because of simple facts he had already determined, and the dying words of Dr. Jess Lathur, Tony Quinn was suddenly gripped by a sick sense of having been beaten. The words of the dying Jess Lathur—"The caves—under Moosehead Lodge—"

"Butch!" Quinn shouted. "Start shooting! Over their heads! Stop them cold! We've got to get out in a hurry!"

Tony Quinn was not remembering now that he must act the role of a blind man, even if he had thought any of them knew who he was. All he was remembering was Dr. Jess saying that Irma

Lathur was a prisoner in the caves back of Moosehead Lodge. He was remembering Dr. Cass' sudden departure—and the evidence in the lab that Carol had been overcome and taken away by the doctor.

And if Moosehead Lodge had been fired, and it was over the prison caves, then Tony Quinn had the sick certainty that not only Irma Lathur but also Carol might be trapped beneath the burning lodge.

Butch cracked loose with both Lugers over the heads of several men running toward the stolen car. That halted them. Quinn was in the car and at the wheel.

"Hang on, Butch! We have only seconds to get away!" He was thinking of that shortened fuse in the laboratory.

He swerved the car across the open ground, driving in second straight at the hospital attendants. They fled as Butch swung on, but kept shooting one of the Lugers.

It seemed to Tony Quinn that the rear of the car was lifted from the road then. Whirling air caught the car and some of the fleeing hospital attendants were swirled from their feet and fell. Quinn managed to straighten the car as the ground rocked. He sent it speeding and bouncing back into the narrow roadway. Then he had a view in the windshield mirror that brought him deep satisfaction.

The rending, splintering explosion of a whole box of dynamite containing that capped stick blew Dr. Cass' blood plasma laboratory apart as though it were made of paper. As the mushroom of gray powder smoke rolled upward and wreckage of the laboratory showed, falling from it, Tony Quinn smiled grimly.

BUTCH was crawling into the seat beside him.

"What the devil and all, Chief?" exclaimed Butch as the echoes of the blast died and Quinn had the car whipping at fifty around narrow turns of the road.

"About what you said, Butch," Quinn said bitterly. "The devil and all has just been wiped out. Chemically poisoned blood plasma that was meant for hundreds of American soldiers went up in that blast. Other stuff that has been shipped must be stopped. But right now the only chance Carol and Irma Lathur may have to live depends upon us get-

ting to Moosehead Lodge!"

When the car reached the wooded ridge above Moosehead Lodge, Tony Quinn slipped from under the wheel and Butch took his place. They were looking down into swirling, thick smoke that had the main building and several cabins of Moosehead Lodge for its center.

Even now Tony Quinn kept to his blind rôle. They started running, but Butch's hand was guiding Quinn. In the bowl of the lake valley where the lodge set, shadowy figures moved through the smoke, passing buckets of water which were being thrown ineffectively upon the fiercely burning structure.

Quinn halted Butch suddenly. He had seen old Jep Lathur. And the tall, bearded woodsman was kneeling, sighting a long-barreled rifle.

CHAPTER XVIII

Death Slug for Quinn



ONLY Tony Quinn's lightning reaction and highly developed senses sent him and Butch O'Leary to the ground, rolling on the hillside as the rifle blazed viciously. It had been centered directly upon Quinn, and the slug breezed close enough to knock off his hat even as he dropped.

He heard the click of the rifle bolt being thrown. His own automatic was in his pocket under him. And Butch was dazed, not understanding the reason for the abrupt violence.

Then the tall, angular old Jep Lathur reared up.

"I'll git you, Tony Quinn!" his high cracked voice cried. "I said I'd clean up the lakes!"

The rifle cracked again. Loyal Butch O'Leary had seen and heard enough then to plunge between Quinn and the flaming gun. Quinn heard the thud of the bullet into flesh.

Old Jep Lathur emitted a cackling, crazy laugh. His rifle clicked and was aimed again. Tony Quinn was clawing for his own gun when the rifle bolt fell with the empty sound of metal upon metal.

Several vaguely seen figures were running out of the smoke a few yards below. Jep Lathur apparently saw he was beaten. He hurled the rifle to one side and started to run. At that moment, from only a short distance away, a shotgun roared out. Old Jep Lathur staggered, but kept on going. The second blast of the shotgun seemed to lift him from his feet. A ragged hole appeared in the back of his bright mackinaw and he fell upon his face.

"It's him!" the voice of Sheriff Danvers boomed. "By glory, I'd never believed it if I hadn't seen him shoot at Tony Quinn! An' we thought Quinn was drowned! Good shootin', Singer!"

"Tony?" shouted Bill Lark, as if he had seen a miracle. "Good Lord, man! We'd given you up! But Jep Lathur? I'll be hanged if I believed it of him until just now! No! Wait! Don't touch the body yet! I'm wantin' this made official!"

Quinn groped about, helping Butch to a sitting position, gripping his hand. Butch was breathing hard, and his thigh was bleeding where he had taken the bullet meant for Tony Quinn.

"Hurt much, Butch?" Quinn asked. "I can thank you I'm alive."

"It don't hurt none," growled Butch, grinning. "Only it's unhandy havin' a busted leg."

The roaring flames of the lodge were mounting higher as the fire fed upon its oiled floors and its thick, dry logs. Mort Singer was standing where he had fired the shot that had blasted out old Jep Lathur's life. The lodge owner's big face was pitifully white and drawn.

"I tell you, Sheriff, I only meant to hit his legs and scare him or stop him!" blurted Singer. "I think I am going to be sick. Even if it's proved now Jep planned these murders, and Dr. Cass was in with him, setting the lodge on fire, I can't feel right—I—can't. I killed Doc Cass, too."

Mort Singer sat flat down, dropping the shotgun.

"Go ahead an' feel sick, but you done some job, Singer!" roared Sheriff Danvers. "I don't know yet why Doc Cass set off your lodge and his own cabin with them fire bombs, but you've sure been right handy with that shotgun! Quinn, what happened to you? We've had merry . . . This is the second fire and

Lathur's log trucks was blown up, and there was a pitched battle on the road."

BUT Tony Quinn waved the sheriff and Bill Lark away. At last he had to risk the discovery that he was not blind. That was a minor matter compared to saving Carol Baldwin and Irma Lathur, though.

"Where's Silk Kirby?" he asked desperately.

"Gone—disappeared slick as the devil when we landed here with a new murder victim, that Nathan Harrell, Quinn," said Sheriff Danvers.

"Yes, Tony," said Bill Lark. "We thought—"

"How do you get into caves under or back of the lodge?" cut in Quinn, his voice shaking. "Irma Lathur and Carol Baldwin must be in them, Bill—Sheriff! If this fire—"

"In the caves?" Mort Singer struggled to his feet, his face working. "Why they're blocked off by the lodge and—You mean these two girls are in there? If they are, then nothing could save them! That cavern has been filled with fire for half an hour or—"

Tony Quinn appeared to go berserk then. Apparently guided by Mort Singer's voice, he sprang upon the man, his fingers locking on the lodge owner's thick neck.

"The way into the caves, Singer!" he shouted. "There's some way! You're the only one who would know it!"

He was shaking the big man as a terrier would have shaken a rat. Sheriff Danvers got a hand on Quinn's shoulder.

"Singer's right, Quinn!" he bellowed. "Stop that! Anyone in that cave would be dead! I knew the lodge was built across one entrance!"

Trembling, feeling his bruised throat, Mort Singer said:

"Dr. Cass had a passage to the caves. We can try to get in. Dr. Cass had a trap-door in his big cabin."

"Which way? Yes, I remember! The cabin at the east end of the lodge! Silk showed me—I know by memory—"

Then the apparently blind Tony Quinn staggered away from the others. Heedless of Bill Lark, Sheriff Danvers and others who tried to stop him, he plunged into the thick smoke, with heat searing his face.

The walls of Dr. Cass' cabin were

still intact, although the lodge was almost down now. A line of bucket passers were keeping water upon the building, saving what they could.

Quinn staggered blindly, but he lunged straight through a smoke-filled doorway into Dr. Cass' cabin. He flattened himself on the floor in order to breathe, but he managed to find an iron ring that was attached to the trap-door.

Pulling this open, he was prepared to make a try at reaching the caves when smoke and flame, released by the opening of the door shot up into his face, ending all hope of forcing his way through.

Driven back, Tony Quinn was compelled to retreat to the outside. He found that Bill Lark, Sheriff Danvers and Mort Singer had fought their way here through the smoke. Lark's hand gripped Quinn's shoulder as the fire from the caves shot up into the cabin.

"It's tough, Tony, tough," he groaned. "I wish to Lord I'd never asked you to come here!"

Beaten, Tony Quinn was at this minute more of a broken man than he had been on that day when he had first been informed that he would be blind for life. He blamed himself bitterly for having sent Carol into such danger, and he knew that life could never be the same again without the girl he loved.

TONY QUINN turned slowly, walking with the others out of the choking smoke. At the edge of the blinding pall, near the lake where the wind was clearing the air, Tony turned again as if he were trying to sense the position of one man there.

He heard the voice of the man who had called himself Arthur Jenkins, a pottery man, and who had been curious about the bauxite the night before. The fussy little pottery man came up, joining the others.

"Did I hear you say there was no way into some caves under the hill except down here through the fire?" said Jenkins. "Funny, but I was up on the hill today and I fell into a hole. I was curious, and I followed a tunnel a short way. Maybe that tunnel—"

"Tony! Tony! You all right? Up this way, Tony! Carol's okay! So is Irma Lathur! Wait until we climb down there!"

Tony Quinn narrowly missed follow-

ing Mort Singer's weak example and sitting down on the ground. Silk Kirby was calling out, and Silk was helping Carol and the other girl climb down a short, steep bluff under the hill back of the lodge.

Quinn gave no sign, but he could see that Silk's face had been scorched. The girls were blackened by smoke, but Tony Quinn breathed deeply as Carol's white teeth showed in a smile.

Then as others crowded around and were exclaiming, Silk put up his hand.

"Listen, folks!" he announced. "We'd have been dead, left there by Dr. Cass who set a fire to murder us, if it hadn't been for one old woodsman knowing his way around these hills. He's been holdin' back, but I'm personally saying he has had nothing to do with any of these murders or either of these killer mobs!"

Tony Quinn saw the others staring at Silk.

"Whoever in tarnation you're talkin' about, Kirby, of course he ain't guilty of these murders," Sheriff Danvers broke in. "I've got the killer, and this last murder, the killing of Nathan Harrell, will be hooked up with the others. Bob Carson's handcuffed to the steerin' post of my car. Got the rifle and the shells he done the last killin' with."

Tony Quinn started to speak, but Silk was ahead of him.

"You can take the cuffs off Bob any time now, Sheriff," he said. "I found that rifle you're talkin' about, and it was in his cabin before Carson got back from Razorback Island. Dr. Cass and some other killer planted it with a shell in Carson's boat—"

Carol was standing close to Tony Quinn, as Silk went on, talking rapidly. Her hand was on the supposed blind man's shoulder, and as she pressed it, hard, for a moment neither of them heard Silk's words.

"Tony, darling!" Carol said hastily, in a whisper. "It's so wonderful to be here with you—and for a little while I was afraid I'd never see you again."

"Dr. Cass found out what you were doing at the laboratory and brought you to the caves, didn't he?" Quinn whispered, his lips tight.

"Yes," she said. "But how did you know, Tony? I didn't have the least suspicion that Dr. Cass had guessed why I was there—I thought I was getting

away with it beautifully—until suddenly, while I was making a test of some of that plasma, he just shoved a gun into my back. I tried to fight back, as hard as I could, but he clapped a hand over my mouth to keep me from making a sound, and the next thing I knew I didn't know anything at all. He had knocked me cold, I guess—and when I woke up I was lying in that cave with the girl I knew must be Irma Lathur near me, and Silk there, too."

Silk's voice was rising, as Quinn squeezed Carol's hand.

"But about the old-timer who brought us out of the caves alive—" He waved a hand toward the top of the hill and shouted: "Come on down, Mister! Tony Quinn will see to it that the law doesn't get off on the wrong foot!"

A tall, lanky figure came over the rim of the bluff and started sliding down. Amazed oaths and other exclamations burst out.

Old Jep Lathur, carrying a long rifle, walked toward the group.

Tony Quinn saw Mort Singer's eyes fairly bulge. The resort owner glanced up the hill toward where another body lay.

"Jep Lathur!" the sheriff and Bill Lark were exclaiming together. "Why you're supposed to be dead, shot!"

Quinn, although he seemed to be staring blindly, was looking into the kindly, faded eyes of old Jep Lathur. He could read that this man could never really hurt anyone. Shaggy, black Pete, the huge Chow dog, bounded down the hill and licked old Jep's hand.

"Then who is the man on the hill?"

SHERIFF DANVERS was asking the question. Tony Quinn turned his apparently sightless eyes toward him.

"You wouldn't know, Sheriff, but he was the man who killed the Black Bat once last night, then had the Black Bat return to upset his mob's raid upon Moosehead Lodge to steal the John Ames party' luggage," Quinn said. "He was registered as Corklin Mann. He was only a hireling of the real leader of killers, the man who was willing to work with Dr. Cass against his country, then wanted to turn Dr. Cass in to make his own position look good."

Arthur Jenkins, the little pottery man, stared at Tony Quinn.

"Didn't you set a sort of trap last night, or early this morning with a lump of clay on a table, Mr. Quinn?" he asked.

Quinn nodded. "And you walked into the trap, Mr. Jenkins."

Jenkins smiled a little. "Not quite, Mr. Quinn," he said. "I'm not so much a pottery man as I am a mining engineer and geologist. I had a wire a few days ago from John Ames to come here to meet him. I did—and arrived just before his body was found. When I saw that specimen you so apparently left carelessly on the table, I recognized it as the finest of bauxite. I nipped off a bit. It contains less than one per cent iron oxide and three per cent of silica. It will produce as good aluminum as will any of the world's few deposits."

Sheriff Danvers started swearing then. "Cuss it all, Quinn! So that's what you and Bill Lark were keeping from the law! I was wondering about that danged clay, because I happen to have run onto a whole hill of it on Razor-back Island. It made me suspicious of everybody! But I still don't get this Dr. Cass angle!"

"I hear troops are on the way, Sheriff," said Quinn, deliberately switching the subject to the more important one of murder. "I would have them round up every stranger in the county who can be rooted out. You will find that some are Nazi saboteurs, and that some are just plain city mob killers. But now, I suppose, you'd like to know more about that dead man on the hill."

CHAPTER XIX

Mark for a Murderer



LIGHTLY resting a hand on Carol Baldwin's arm, and with her fingers touching the hand, Tony Quinn let her lead him up the hill.

Pete, the big Chow, had to be restrained when he saw the body on the ground. He recognized the face, but knew the dead man was not old Jep.

Silk Kirby removed the false beard and rubbed away some of the make-up, and told Quinn the results.

"You see," said the blind man, beginning then the explanation of what he had figured out in his mind, "after the Black Bat broke up this Corker Mann's mob attack on the lodge, to steal the John Ames luggage, the killer had to keep out of sight. He had tried to steer me wrong by deliberately letting me hear him talking with Nathan Harrell, but knew that was not enough. The real reason was that he knew Harrell had dealings with Jep Lathur, and he was under orders to involve Harrell."

"He had a lot of orders, apparently," Bill Lark said sourly. "Like pretending he was Jep Lathur—which he might have got away with, while the old man was actually a prisoner, if it hadn't been for the dog, Pete."

Tony Quinn fumbled in his pocket and produced two typewritten notes.

"I've had these examined," he said. "As you see, they're the notes that were left on some of the bodies—and I'm told there's no doubt they were written on one of the machines that were in Jep Lathur's offices."

"But why would the killer want to burn the offices?" demanded Sheriff Danvers. "That destroyed suspicion against Lathur. Deputy Mather who went there with those notes, to examine the machines for the sheriff's office, was found shot to death."

"But before that Jep Lathur's dog had knocked out the idea that the old man was the killer," said Quinn, his eyes blankly on his listeners. "So the next best suspect was his son, Dr. Jess. The offices were burned to leave Dr. Jess, as a suspect, but dying, where it would be thought he had tried to destroy the typewriters, but had failed."

As if he sensed the grief in old Jep Lathur's eyes, and knew Irma Lathur's sorrow as she sobbed quietly in Bob Carson's arms, Quinn's face was grave as he said:

"Bring me Jep Lathur's rifle, Sheriff."

The old man surrendered the long gun, watching Tony Quinn rub sensitive fingers along the barrel.

"I understand Carson's rifle was used to kill Nathan Harrell this morning," said Quinn. "Sheriff, did you find anything of importance on Harrell's body? Anything that might have connected him with Dr. Cass?"

"Nothing, Mr. Quinn," said the sher-

iff. "But he had some of that bauxite clay in his pocket. Likely he was on his way to look at the hot spring on Razorback Island where the stuff shows up when he was killed."

Quinn was watching everyone to whom he was speaking. And though he apparently could not see he noted one man's face in particular. And that man's mouth was white and drawn. Quinn switched the subject suddenly.

"**A**BOUT the bloodless corpses, Sheriff," he said. "I suppose you've reasoned that out for yourself by now. But if anyone has not—it's simple. Dr. Cass found out that Irma Lathur had taken some plasma from his blood bank for a transfusion, and he could not take a chance on Loretta Ames, who had been given the transfusion, dying and having her blood examined later. Dr. Cass was working with the killer, so presumably Corker Mann and his mob carried out orders and abducted John Ames, Henry Starke and Loretta Ames. The body of Smith had probably come ashore by then and they had found it."

"Dr. Cass knew that if only the girl's blood was taken from her body, since she alone had been given a plasma transfusion, that direct suspicion would point to his blood bank. So at the advice of the real, big boss, for whom he was working, four victims were found with water in their veins, and the notes that were left with the bodies—prepared by one of the big boss' men who was working at the Lathur camps—made it appear that Jep Lathur was a fanatical killer."

"Neither Dr. Cass nor this other boss knew then that it had been discovered that a clever actor, disguised as Jep Lathur, had been using a shotgun. They worked a trick to make Silk Kirby and me think Jep Lathur had been knocked out by one of his own men. We were permitted to escape and while we were gone, the real Jep Lathur, who had been a prisoner, was substituted for Corker Mann, the murderer. And then . . . Sheriff Danvers, why were you so long reaching the shack, looking for Lathur? Bob Carson and Carol Baldwin passed you in the woods."

Sheriff Danvers' red face grew suddenly redder.

"I oughtn't to be sheriff," he said.

"Dang it all, I go by rule o' thumb. I couldn't believe Jep Lathur would kill anybody. I'd heard Bill Lark say if there were no bodies, there could be no murder case. And, my badge ought to be taken off, for I was giving old Jep Lathur a chance, as I thought, to get in the clear and maybe dig up some proof he was being framed."

Tony Quinn nodded. Bill Lark glowered at the sheriff.

"And I've been counting on you, Danvers, to help clean up these killings," he said.

Tony Quinn turned quickly to Lark.

"Bill," he said sharply, "so far as I know, you and I and Carol Baldwin were the only ones who knew I had taken a brief-case containing that bauxite found by John Ames to my room. I made a test, and while I was downstairs my room was entered and the case was stolen."

"My Lord!" exclaimed Mort Singer. "You're talking to the district attorney, Mr. Quinn! He's your friend! He asked you to come here!"

Bil Lark was staring at Quinn, his mouth grim, his face white.

"Just what do you mean, Tony?"

"Bill, you wouldn't know about such a thing as gentian violet, would you?" Quinn said quietly as he gripped Silk Kirby's arm twice as a signal. "Like this blue dye on my fingers? It's a dye that has to wear off. I got it from John Ames' brief-case—"

As if automatically big Mort Singer looked at his own fingers. And Silk Kirby was beside him, an automatic jammed in his ribs.

"What is all this?" shouted Singer. "You're accusing me, are you? Look! I've got some of that stuff on my fingers, Mr. Quinn. But I put the Ames luggage, with that brief-case, in the strong room. I noticed this blue stuff right after that."

BUT at that moment Tony Quinn was thinking of the innocent victims of one of the most cruel murderers he had ever seen. Of Dr. Jess Lathur dying. Of the attempt to kill Carol and the others. And as he groped his way toward Singer and Silk Kirby, he saw that Singer was giving a signal to someone who must be hidden among the trees.

"Certainly, you got that gentian violet off the brief-case, Singer!" rasped Quinn.

His left fist snapped up. Mort Singer's head snapped back as Quinn's knuckles cracked under his chin. As the man fell, the blind man yanked an automatic from Singer's coat pocket.

"Sheriff!" snapped Tony Quinn. "Have your men cover the woods quickly! He has some killers ready for a desperate break!"

Sheriff Danvers bellowed an order. Two deputies leaped toward the nearest trees. There were sounds of someone racing away.

Mort Singer was sitting up, staring at Quinn.

"You're crazy, Quinn!" he blustered. "Why, everything that's happened was because somebody wanted to get my lodge! You know about the offers! And that Dr. Cass set the lodge on fire!"

"Shut up, Singer!" commanded Quinn. "You're about the lowest form of animal I've ever known. You also planted a letter on Nathan Harrell's body trying to make it believed he was the other 'boss' who was working with Dr. Cass. It purports to come from the firm you said was trying to buy your lodge for nothing, Singer—seems to have been mailed in Chicago on September seventeenth.

"You've made several mistakes, Singer. That letter probably was written on a typewriter that was in your own office and now is destroyed. But one error was made. You put that note in an old envelope Harrell had received. The letter warned Harrell to look out for me, Tony Quinn. . . . Bill Lark, when did you write me the first letter about these murders?"

"On September nineteenth Tony," said Lark promptly. "A copy is in my files."

"I knew nothing of any letter!" shouted Singer. "This is as bad as trying to accuse me because I got the same dye from that brief-case that you did! I—"

"Yes, and I still accuse you because of that, Singer!" Quinn interrupted. "I had Silk look at your hands. Singer, I put the gentian violet on that brief-case. That's how I stained my hands. The case had no dye upon it when one of your killers dropped it. And it had to be you or one of your employees who

broke the lock to get into my room. It would have looked bad if the door had simply been unlocked by someone who could have a key.

"Singer, I had not locked the door. Whether you discovered that or not, you just had to break that lock to make it look good. You might have imagined I would not remember if I had locked the door."

"You think I would burn my own lodge?" Singer blared furiously. "I can't get fire insurance out here. I'm not that crazy."

"For the chance to get hold of Jep

saved the Soo ship canal locks from being blown up by exploding logs."

WHEN they reached the body of the Nazi, Dr. Cass, they discovered that there was a definite odor of benzine on his clothes. His coat had been dampened with it.

"Careful, Sheriff," cautioned Quinn. "Examine Dr. Cass's hands."

"You win," the sheriff said, a moment later. "If he had spilled that stuff himself it would have been on his hands, too."

"Right," said Tony. "That was the

Enter—THE CRIMSON MASK!



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Lathur's land and lakes, which you started out to do, and then that bauxite fortune after you probably heard John Ames and his companions talking about their find?" said Quinn.

"Bring him along, Silk. Sheriff, I'll make you a little bet. I'll wager that Dr. Cass's clothes smell of benzine or some other explosive, and that there is a reason why Dr. Cass did not set the fire, but was shot by Mort Singer for fear he might talk, and to clear the way for Singer to take over a fortune, if the Lathurs were dead or blackened by crime.

"It would have made Singer something of a hero to have killed Dr. Cass and exposed a Nazi sabotage ring. He would have been the man who saved thousands from poisoned plasma, and perhaps also

way Dr. Jess Lathur was framed also. Dr. Jess' hands were as clean as his soul."

"Curse you, Quinn!" Mort Singer swore bitterly. "You know killers broke into the lodge and stole the Ames luggage and the brief-case!"

"And I know now you summoned Dr. Cass from the caves to be killed while you burned the lodge!" accused Silk Kirby. "And you planted Bob Carson's rifle in his boat. Maybe you were smart enough to remove your fingerprints after shooting Harrell, but if you did, you must have wiped off all Carson's prints, too!"

"By glory!" exclaimed Sheriff Danvers. "So that's why I was stumped. There wasn't a single fingerprint on that gun."

Jep Lathur was grief-stricken over his son's death, but a sad smile touched his old face as he saw his daughter, Irma, in Bob Carson's arms.

"I'll be makin' Razorback Island and this stuff they think is so valuable a wedding present to Irma and Bob," he mumbled.

Carol Baldwin was holding tight to Tony Quinn's hand when the first jeep-load of troops swung into view. Sheriff Danvers hurried to meet them.

"The Black Bat is going to be awfully pleased, Tony," she murmured.

"You've read my mind, Carol," he said, smiling gently. "But I'll get a chance to

tell you all that's in my mind, my dear, the day they catch up with the Black Bat."

Bill Lark, coming over, heard Quinn's last words.

Lark smiled grimly.

"As long as Buck Danvers is sheriff, Tony," he said, "he'll be pestering me about this Black Bat. You wouldn't have any idea who he is, would you, Tony?"

"I've never met the Black Bat," Quinn said cheerfully.

"Well"—Lark grinned—"I guess poor old Danvers will just have to worry about it."

FURTHER EXPLOITS OF THE BLACK BAT
IN
GUARDIAN IN BLACK
By G. WAYMAN JONES

NEXT ISSUE'S EXCITING BOOK-LENGTH MYSTERY NOVEL

I've found a blade that's just the thing
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1. WASH FACE thoroughly with hot water and soap to soften beard and remove accumulations that dull shaving edges



2. APPLY LATHER or Brushless Shaving Cream while face is wet. If lather is used, dip your brush in water frequently



3. TWO EDGES double blade life. Marks indicated above identify edges, enabling you to give both equal use and get extra shaves



4. CLEAN BLADE in razor by loosening handle, then rinsing in hot water and shaking. Wiping the blade is likely to damage the edges



"No, I don't have to worry about you," Red answered, drawing his gun.

BENNY SEES RED

By ALLAN K. ECHOLS

The Hood Called "Trigger Red" Took Just One Chance Too Many When He Dared to Hold a Threat Over Uncle Benny!

UNCLE Benny's stationery store and newsstand was across the street from the Manual Training High School, and at noon it was crowded with students, pushing, shouting and laughing, and feasting on soup and sandwiches, on penny candy and bubble gum and soft drinks. Uncle Benny did a rushing business in school supplies, cheap candies and newspapers, and when the youngsters were free from classes he did not have time to look up.

The red-headed man had been on the corner, idly watching the children for quite a while when the rush began to slacken as the children headed across the street to their classes. Uncle Benny had just sold two girls some writing tablets and pencils with their names on them, when the man dropped in and sat at a stool at the fountain.

Uncle Benny went around behind the fountain, and said, "What can I do for you, sir?" Then his eyes went wide with fright as he recognized the man. Unconsciously, he called the man's name in a kind of a sigh. "Trigger Red."

The man smiled coldly. "Yeah, old

Trigger Red himself. How are you, Benny?"

Uncle Benny was a short man, thick through the middle, and with a band of gray hair around his bald head. His pudgy hand trembled as he leaned against the syrup plungers back of the fountain.

"How are you, Red?" he asked suspiciously. "What are you doing here?"

"Me?" Red answered. "I'm a neighbor of yours now. Been living over there in the Holmes Apartments a week."

"I thought you was away."

"Oh, that. No, my mouthpiece sprung me on a parole. I had some debts to clear up, and the like. See? I don't like to be owin' debts."

There was a cold smile around his mouth, and he looked sharply at Uncle Benny as he spoke.

"No, I don't like to leave debts unpaid."

Uncle Benny wiped perspiration off his forehead with a towel.

"Listen here, Red," he said earnestly, "you've got things all wrong. I know you believe I'm the one who sung to the

cops about you killing that saloon keeper who wouldn't handle your policy slips."

"Now, now!" Red interrupted. "Don't start giving me no song and dance like that. You say you didn't, and I think you did. So what? How come you run out, and hide over here, peddlin' penny candy to school kids, if you wasn't afraid I'd find you?"

"I've got an answer for that whether you believe me or not," Uncle Benny said. "All right, I was peddling numbers for you because I had an invalid wife and a kid in school, and that little newsstand of mine wouldn't support 'em without me getting some extra money some way.

"I don't figure that was such a terrible crime. But I wasn't mixed up in the fight you big shots was having among yourselves, and I didn't know anything about your killings, except what I heard. But they picked me up for selling them numbers and sent me up for a year. My wife and kid had to take charity."

"And how come, Benny, that you got out after serving only six months? Could it be that you bought your way out—say by singing to the law about me being the trigger man for my outfit?"

"No, it was because the parole board investigated my case and found out I wasn't a regular crook."

"That's your story," Red said smoothly. "But mine's different. I say you're the only one who got off easy, and so you must have sung. You know, Benny, I don't like people who talk to the law. Remember Augie Romano? Haven't seen him lately, have you?"

Uncle Benny mopped his face. Even the law knew that "Trigger Red" had killed Augie for squealing, but they couldn't prove that case against him, nor half a dozen others they believed he was back of.

"You're not figuring on—"

Trigger Red examined his white hands attentively. "Well," he answered. "I owe you a debt, but maybe I might forget it. That is, if you've got sense enough to appreciate it."

"What do you mean?" Uncle Benny asked.

TWO boys came in and bought drawing pens and drinks and went out, while Red sat at the fountain. The foot-

ball squad poured out of the basement of the school across the street and caught a bus toward their practice grounds. Uncle Benny came back to the fountain, rang up some silver, and repeated, "What do you mean, appreciate it, Red?"

"I mean I'm going to show you that if you play ball with me you'll have all the money you need to support that crippled wife and kid of yours. Ever see one of these?"

He took a card out of his pocket and handed it to Uncle Benny, who examined it.

"That's one of them football pool rackets," he said. "I been hearing about them."

"Yeah," Red answered. "And it's a square racket. You don't have to juggle it because the odds give you plenty of dough even when it's worked straight. And it's a gold mine in a location like yours here by a schoolhouse. The kids are nuts about it, an' they'll go without eating to buy tickets."

"That's bad for them," Uncle Benny said. "A kid needs to eat right when he's going to school. I have to keep telling my little Benny—"

"Yeah. But that's not our business. We're only interested in the dough."

Uncle Benny examined the card.

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There were listed twenty important football games, with a space before the name of each team, in which the purchaser was to write down what he expected the score to be. The purchaser who predicted all the scores correctly collected ten dollars for each dime he invested in a ticket.

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"It's a gold mine," Red said persuasively. "Particularly around schools. You handle these for me and I'll pay you big money, see? You could have every kid in that school buying them every week."

"No," Uncle Benny answered, putting the ticket in his pocket. "It's just robbing kids, and I don't want to be mixed up in anything like that. I paid my debt for peddling numbers, and I'm not going to get in trouble any more. I don't want

any of it."

A boy came in with a coin in his hand and went over to the pencil-vending machine.

"Uncle Benny," he called, after examining the machine a moment. "I want one of these pencils with my name stamped on it. How do you work this machine?"

Uncle Benny went over, pulled down the levers along the rows of letters, dropped the boy's coin into the machine and pulled a lever. The pencil fell out, and Uncle Benny examined it.

"That's no good, Eddie," he said. "I spelled your name wrong. Here, I'll get you one spelled right." He used his own nickel and got the boy another pencil.

"See," Uncle Benny said when he had returned to the fountain. "These kids all like me. I'd feel like a no-good if I was robbing them with that football racket."

"It ain't like a crooked game," Red said easily. "It's on the level. We depend on the percentage entirely for our dough—no faking or anything." Then his voice reached a soft purr. "Benny, I would feel awfully hurt if you didn't help me cover this spot with these tickets."

"I am not going to do it," Uncle Benny said. "I thought there was something familiar about that ticket when I saw it. And I remember what it is now. That ticket has got blood on it."

Red's voice was silky. "Just what do you mean, Benny?"

"There's a detective lives up the block that buys his papers here. He was telling me. They were trying to trace the man that operated this pool, and they finally found him. But he had been killed. Somebody had muscled in on him, they figured, and had killed him and taken over his business. No, I don't want any of that business at all, Red."

Red's eyes were veiled, and his white hand drummed on the marble of the soda counter.

"I get it," he said slowly, "You've got it all figured out. I killed the guy and took over his racket."

Uncle Benny shrugged. "I don't know anything about what you did. I just know that I'm not getting mixed up in it. I've got a wife—"

"Yes, yes. I know. But, Benny, you're

coming in on this. You're going to handle these tickets, just like a lot of other boys are doing who didn't want to handle 'em. They're alive—and making money. You can't make no money in a cemetery, can you, Benny?"

"You don't need to kill me," Uncle Benny answered. "You just go your way and peddle your tickets. Leave me alone and I'll leave you alone."

"Now that's mighty kind of you to promise to let me alone. But, Benny, do you really think I'm that type to be running around forgetting that you know that I'm the guy the cops want to pin this football pool murder rap on? Benny, do you think I'm that careless?"

"You don't have to worry about me."

Red looked around. The street was deserted now, the school children were in their classes. A heavy truck was rumbling down the street, its engine backfiring every few feet.

"No, I don't have to worry about you," Red answered, and his hand went to a shoulder holster under his coat.

The truck passed the stationery store—and there was a sharp explosion like the backfiring of a heavy motor. The truck rolled on. A red-headed man strolled down the street. And then the street was deserted again, during the dull afternoon.

THE following evening at dusk, Trigger Red sat in his apartment, dressed in a red silk dressing gown. He was counting stacks of currency, and making notes in a small black book.

There came a knock at his door. He quickly shoved the money into a desk drawer, and from the same drawer pulled out a black automatic pistol and slipped it into his dressing gown pocket. Then he went to the closed door.

"Who is it?" he asked.

The answer came from behind him. "Get 'em up, Red," and a detective crawled in through the fire escape.

Covering Red, the detective opened the hall door and let his partner in.

"All right, Red. Let's have a look around, and then get moving."

"All right, Copper. Maybe you'll find some football pool stuff, but that don't call for all this fireworks stuff. I'll come along, but let me call my mouthpiece in the meantime. What's the charge? Operating a lottery?"

"No, Red. It's murder, and this time you won't squirm out of it. It's two murders, Red."

"Two?" Red arched his eyebrows. "Why don't you make it an even dozen?"

"We probably could, if it was worth it. But I think the murder of Uncle Benny will be enough to burn you. If not, then that of the man whose football racket you stole."

"You got me all wrong," Red said. "I never heard of an Uncle Benny, and I'm just peddling tickets for another guy."

"Yeah? You can tell that to the D. A. You see, as we figure it, you had Uncle Benny cornered and he knew you were a killer. He wanted to leave word who did it if he died, but he couldn't write it down. So he gets an idea. Near as we can reconstruct it, he went over to that pencil vending machine and pulled down the levers as though he was spelling out a name. What he really stamped

on the pencil we found in his pocket was:

RED HOLMES APTS KILL

"He didn't have any more room on the pencil. But we got to back-tracking that football pool ticket we found in his pocket along with the pencil, and all the other peddlers told us how you threatened to kill them, too, if they didn't sell your tickets. But your tickets was originally being sold by a guy we found dead. Hey—"

Red had jerked his gun from his dressing gown pocket, and he threw a shot at the detectives as he dived for the window. The detective caught him squarely in the lungs with a lead slug, and Red's body toppled out of the window to the pavement four flights below.

"That ought to save the county a lot of dough," the detective said. "Come and let's see if he's dead—I hope."

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RAIN WILL TELL

By H. WOLFF SALZ

They Didn't Know He Had a Soldier Son When They Tried "the Old Army Game" on This Little Jeweler!



WHEN we get off the train and look around for a hackie we find out that this is practically a one-cab town, and the jockey of this cab has got rheumatism so he does not like to work on rainy days. And today it is raining cats and dogs and also a lot of water.

Crosstown's best and only flophouse, they tell us, is only two blocks from the station, so we start to leg it, only I figure we will have to swim most of the way.

Right next to the station there is a hand-me-down shop, so me and "Brains" Mott stop in there and buy us an umbrella.

But I do not get much protection from the umbrella as Brains is a big potato and the umbrella is not hardly enough roof for one side of him. So my lieutenant's uniform is soaking wet by the time we reach the Mansion House, as they call Crosstown's flop-joint.

The Army uniforms that me and Brains is sporting is Brains' idea. Willie the Weasel, who has got a hock shop over on Main Street in L.A., is the banty that gets the uniforms for us. Willie the Weasel, for a certain cash kick-in, can get you any kind of a tool a guy needs, like nippers, jimmys, shooting irons and other such useful items.

Personally, the idea of wearing Army monkey clothes does not appeal to me. The Army does not like for guys like me and Brains to go around acting like we are officers, especially if we are not officers.

But Brains says to me, "Charlie Bacon, with them uniforms we got a perfect pipe for this job I got in mind. Does Brains Mott ever give a phony steer?"

Being a truthful guy, I want to say

Now I get ready to go into my part of the pitch

yes, he does. But then I owe him a C-note from our last poker game, so I say okay, I am with him on this deal.

So there we are, Brains in a major's monkey suit and I am a lieutenant.

THE Mansion House does not have a two-room suite like Brains asks for, but the blonde doll that runs the joint glims our uniforms and says she can fix us up with a couple of rooms that's got a connecting door and both of them open up on the hall, which is what we want.

Brains pays the good-looking frail in advance for two days, saying, "We may have to leave in a hurry, miss. Army orders. One never knows, you know."

I can think of a lot of other reasons why maybe we would have to leave in a hurry, but the doll looks very respectful and makes a move to help us carry our bags to the elevator, which is a leftover from the Civil War.

But Brains waves her aside with one of his smooth smiles that he thinks wows the dames, being the kind of a guy who thinks he is very good-looking, and says we will handle the bags ourself. So I handle the two bags and Brains carries the dripping umbrella.

Brains has cased the town a couple of weeks ago, so we can get right down to business.

Gibber's Jewelry store is one block from the hotel on the main drag, so after wrapping ourself around a tasty feed of ham-and in the hotel restaurant, we slush through the rain to the ice-house. Brains carries the umbrella, so

I am soaked like a sinker in java by the time we push into Gibber's.

The guy who runs Gibber's Jewelry store is a guy by the name of Rudolph Gibber. He is a little guy with a bay-window and a noodle which is as bald as a plate window. And he's got a flower in his buttonhole.

His eyes look like he is rubbing his hands together when Brains asks to see some of his diamond trinkets.

"I will be delighted, Major," he says, "if you will tell me what kind of ice you are interested in."

Brains goes into his pitch, telling how he is practically broken hearted because he is far away from his wife Emma, who is in Kansas City and how it is their tenth wedding anniversary and how he is anxious to send her a little token of love right away.

I have to smile when I hear Brains telling how he loves his wife Emma, because Brains is the kind of a guy who loves only Brains Mott. And anyway he does not have a wife named Emma. In fact, Brains does not have any wife whatsoever.

Gibber brings out a couple of trays loaded down with brooches and pins and this and that. And Brains looks bored to death with the stuff, like it is a bunch of dime-store glass.

Then he picks up a pin and says, "This is very nice. What is the tariff?"

Gibber looks very happy and says, "Six hundred fish. I am sure your wife will—"

"No, no," says Brains. "I want something a little better." And he mutters a thing or two about it is too bad he has to do his shopping for his loving wife in a small town icehouse. Now if he only was in New York—

Gibber says real quick, "Oh, but we have stuff that runs higher. If you will just tell me how much you care to spend . . ."

Brains says, "Let me see something for, say, a thousand potatoes." And he acts as if he really means a thousand potatoes and not a thousand bucks.

Gibber brings out another tray and his eyes are shining like the ice in the tray, so I guess it is not every day, or even every other Tuesday, that he rings the bell for a grand.

Well, now I get ready to go into my part of the pitch.

Brains picks up a brooch, looks it over and says, "This is it! This is perfect! Emma will be delighted with it!"

He pulls out his wallet and Gibber's eyes bulge out like oysters when he glims the C-notes, which is just what Brains wants. Although I know the ten yards in his poke is all he has got, except maybe a couple of sawbucks besides.

BRAINS weeds out the ten C-notes and passes them to Gibber, talking smoothly all the time.

"I trust," says Brains, "it will not inconvenience you to take spot-cash. I am accustomed to doing business that way as my duties in the Army require me to be moving around the country constantly."

Well, I know a better reason why Brains has to keep on the move all the time, but naturally I do not let out a peep.

"No, no, not at all," Gibber says fast. "Of course, it is rather unusual for our patrons—"

"Now, what I want," Brains cuts in smoothly, "is for you to send the little trinket direct to my wife. I will give you her address. As you understand, my duties are very pressing and as I am expecting a very urgent call from Washington I will have to sit tight in the hotel, so I will not have an opportunity to send it off myself."

Well, now it is time for me to speak up. Gibber has the scratch in one hand and the diamond brooch in the other hand. And I can see he thinks the deal is all sewed up for him.

"Excuse me, Major Mott," I say. "There is just one little thing, if I may offer my suggestion?"

"What is it, Lieutenant?" Brains asks in the kind of a voice you would expect a major to use to a young lieutenant.

"I distinctly remember, Major," I say, "that Mrs. Mott does not like platinum settings for her diamonds. She likes silver settings."

"Why, yes!" Brains gives a cry, like he has been kicked by a mule. "Of course! How could that slip my mind! Emma would never forgive me if I had forgotten that!"

"Oh," says Gibber quick. "We have a number of brooches with silver settings. I will show you."

"No, no!" Brains says. "This brooch is exactly what Emma would love. Only it has to have a silver setting."

"We can manage that easy," Gibber cries. I can see he does not want to lose the thousand fish he has already got in his hand. "We will transpire this brooch to a silver setting."

Now, this is just what we have been aiming at, but Brains still shakes his head.

"I am sorry," he says, "but we will only be here till tomorrow. I cannot wait till you make the change."

"Ah!" says Gibber. "I can have it ready for you anyway. It will only take a couple of hours to make the change."

Brains looks as if this was not good enough for him.

"I will have to see the brooch before you ship it off to Emma," he says. "And I will not be able to come back here from the hotel. As I say, I am expecting an urgent call from Washington and must remain in the hotel all afternoon."

Gibber is a very accommodating kind of an apsay.

"That is quite all right," he says. "The hotel is only a block away and I will be happy to bring the brooch over there for your approval as soon as we make the change."

"Fine!" Brains says, beaming all over his face. "That will be very kind of you."

And at the same time he puts out his hand and takes the ten C-notes back from Gibber, whose pan drops like an elevator.

"I am very confident," Brains says, "that the change will be satisfactory and we will close the deal at the hotel, where I will pay you. Then you can ship the brooch to my wife."

Now everything is jake. Gibber has swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker. He comes to the door with us and waves us a good-by. We splash back to the hotel. The rain pelts down on me because Brains has all of the umbrella over himself. A couple of soldiers pass us by and they give us a snappy salute, which makes me feel good, as it is the first time in my life a soldier gives me a salute.

upstairs in our couple of rooms passing the time of day with some two-handed pinochle and this and that. We don't worry about catching a train any time we are ready to skip, because Crosstown is a junction for a lot of rattlers and there is one in and out every couple of minutes.

It is a couple of hours later when there is a knock on the door. Brains breezes into the other room and I close the connecting door as he jumps into bed and pulls the sheets over his clothes.

Then I open the hall door and Gibber comes in with the brooch. I explain to Gibber how Brains has caught a cold in the rain and is catching a couple of blinks and a nod in the next room.

The jeweler lets loose with a line about how sorry he is, but I tell him to give me the brooch and I will wake up Brains and show it to him. Then if he likes it, Gibber will get his dough and he can express the brooch to Brains' loving wife Emma.

I take the brooch, go into the next room on my tip-toes. Before I close the connecting door, I make sure Gibber glims Brains sleeping in the bed.

As soon as the door is closed, me and Brains go into fast action, but quiet as a couple of mice at a cat show.

Brains jumps out of the bed, drops the brooch into his pocket. We grab the bags and the umbrella and head for the hall door. We can hear Gibber humming to himself in the next room.

We open the door very softly and head fast for the steps because we don't want to wait for the elevator. We are feeling very happy as this is the nicest score we have made in many a day.

Then suddenly we run smack-dab into a mountain that walks on two legs and has two arms that are like a bear's. The two arms close around me in a big hug and my head is buried in the guy's chest. I can hear Brains raising a yelp and I know somebody else has grabbed him.

I know when I am hooked, so I do not try to muscle my way out of the guy's arms. In a couple of minutes me and Brains are hooked together in a pair of bracelets.

And there, shaking his fist at us, is Gibber, who has come running out of our rooms.

"I knew it! I knew it!" he yells. "I knew they are a couple of crooks!"

IN THE hotel we get our stuff ready for a quick fade-out, then sit around

Brains is looking like a guy who has just been rolled over by a tank. He is looking very sorrowful indeed.

"Yeah?" he says. "How did you know we are crooks, which I do not admit!"

And that is a laugh, because the law has just lifted the brooch out of his pocket.

"At first I am not sure you are crooks," says Gibber. "That is why I bring the brooch. But anyway, I suspect it. That is why I also bring the sheriff, to wait outside."

The sheriff, who is the ape I first mistake for a mountain, says to Gibber,

"What makes you suspect that these dirty crooks are not bona fide Army officers, Rudolph?"

Gibber points to the umbrella that Brains has still got in his hand.

"That umbrella," he says, "is what makes me suspect them."

"The umbrella?" says the sheriff. "I do not undetrstand."

"My son, Hector," says Gibber, "is a lieutenant in the Army. That is why I know something or two about Army regulations. So I know that Army officers are not allowed to carry umbrellas, even if it is raining very bad outside."



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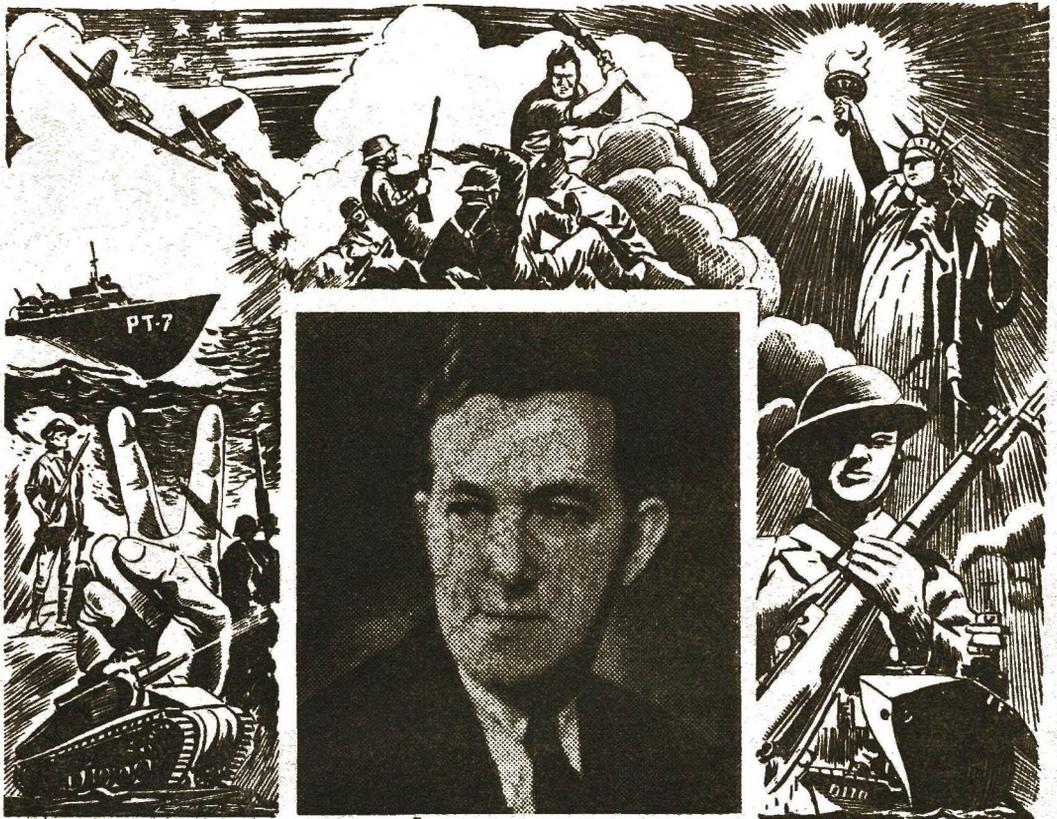
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FRANCIS WALLACE

CREDO FOR WAR

By FRANCIS WALLACE

Author of "Explosion," and Other Well-Known Books

THIS is true of war, that a few must say it will or will not be; but when war comes, it is the towns which must make the war, the little towns all over, all hating the enemies they do not know, all fighting the enemies they do not know, to get at the devils who have made the war. For war is not a cruel jest of God's. God would not think up a war. Man thought up a war. And when you find the man who did, call him devil.

So the towns must make the implements of war and send their best boys out to use them and grow the food to keep the fighters strong. And those who

remain to work and mourn and be proud must also fight with their money, their hearts and their prayers.

That's the way it has always been and that's the way it is. For when a bully punches you in the nose you must punch back or be punched again, for there is nothing a bully loves better than a big man who will turn the other cheek—unless it's a proud little man. And when he sticks a knife in your back while he's talking peace—well, there's nothing left to do with that fellow but wipe him from the face of the earth. No, there's nothing left to do with that fellow.

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A WAR BOND MESSAGE FOR ALL AMERICANS!

DEATH AND VIOLENCE

By THAD KOWALSKI

ROBERTS, at the wheel of his parked taxi, saw the little man hurry down the subway entrance. The act itself was not unusual though the Paramount clock's hands had long since passed midnight. But the man was wrapped in a voluminous coat entirely unneeded on this warm night. A shabby, green velour hat perched on his head and he was clutching a briefcase under his arm.

Joe Roberts wasn't interested a bit, not even when the cab behind him pulled away empty, heading for the other entrance a block away. But he did get interested a minute later when the little guy staggered out of the BMT entrance in the building down the street. He looked around with a quick motion and when his eyes rested on Joe's cab, he waved. Joe trod on the starter.

The little man got into the cab, panting, and slumped back on the seat. His face was white and his eyes half-closed. He clutched the briefcase with both hands.

"Quickly! Go quickly away from here!"

"I gotcha," Joe grunted, and let the clutch in with a jerk.

The guy was either soused or a nut. Whatever it was, Joe decided to run a few blocks before asking where the stranger wanted to go. Even two bits on the meter counted.

In about two minutes Joe spotted the other taxi following him and closing fast. He stepped on the gas and the old crate roared and rattled through the night.

"Look," Joe said, watching the pursuing taxi and his passenger alternately through the rear view mirror, "it ain't any of my business, but there's a hack following us."

The passenger glanced around with a harried expression.

"Vischer! You must get away. They must not catch me again. It would be the end," he coughed.

"You bet!" Joe answered, wheeling for the park.

He had no desire to be mixed up in anything — especially spies. This guy spoke

with a trace of accent. On the other hand, it wasn't up to Joe to guess about his passengers. All he was supposed to do was play dumb and take



Joe laid over the right cross he had been saving for Bryant

Joe Roberts Gets Battle Practice Driving a Taxi!

them where they wanted to go. And there might be a tip in this.

He settled down to the business of getting away. He had been wheeling a cab around New York for ten years and he could drive the streets blindfolded if he had to. But the other driver seemed also to know his stuff, and Joe had all he could do keeping his distance until he reached the park. There, he was confident, he could get away from a bloodhound.

HIS passenger was leaning back in the seat, looking straight ahead. He was a little green around the gills, as though he was sick. His breath was coming in short gasps, and it struck Joe that he was an awful long time in recovering from the exertion of running into and out of a subway.

The park drive stretched out like a white ribbon up ahead. Joe went roaring into it, hoping he would meet no cops. If he didn't get at least a fin out of this his faith in humanity—what little a taxi driver has—would disappear entirely.

With no traffic to worry about, he jammed the pedal to the floor boards and the needle shot upward. The old crate jerked convulsively and threatened to shake loose every nut and bolt that held it together. He took the curves on two wheels and he could almost feel the rubber screechingly stripping off his tires.

The other hackie continued to fall behind. Joe played it safe. He took a few more turns to the detriment of his nerves, skidded past a startled bum and found he had at last outdistanced his pursuers.

"You're safe now," he said and glanced down in the mirror to see how his passenger was taking it. He let out a startled oath. The passenger was gone.

For a second Joe had the feeling that he had witnessed a demonstration of black magic. One moment the guy was there; the next he was gone. He couldn't have jumped. At that

speed he would be nothing but a dark spot on the pavement. Joe braked to a stop, got out and opened the tonneau door.

His passenger was on the floor of the cab where he had fallen at the last turn. He was still gripping the briefcase, but feebly now. His coat was lying open, and Joe saw the crimson of blood-stains on the shirt. Joe propped him up and the thought of getting him to a doctor was but a fleeting one. Even to an inexperienced eye the man showed he was dying.

His speech was little more than a gasp. "The briefcase, you will take it to the—," and here Joe wasn't sure of the word although it sounded like "yascoolca." "Take it there. But you must be sure Vischer's men do not follow."

"Sure," Joe said. "What's in it?"

But the man's eyes were glassy and he was breathing faintly.

This was a devil of a mess. Here he was, with a dying man in his hands which meant cops, and no one to pay the fare on his meter, though maybe he would get paid if he delivered the case. But what was a "yascoolca?"

He didn't have a chance to ask any more questions. The man went limp and died, and a moment later a car slammed to a stop just behind him. Joe found himself facing a mean-looking gun behind which was a thin-lipped, cold-eyed gent.

"No noise, please," warned the stranger.

"You one of Vischer's men?" Joe asked.

"You have heard of Vischer? From who?" His accent was thick and menacing.

JOE jerked a thumb to the interior of the cab. Still keeping a wary eye on Joe, the guy took a look.

"So, he is dead. Too bad." He motioned to his own cab driver to cover Joe, and he took the briefcase and fumbled with the lock. "Hmm—

locked. A small matter."

Reluctantly Joe's mind jumped to a conclusion. "You knocked him off," he accused. "You must of plugged him in the subway so the noise of the train would drown out the shot. That's why he was in such a hurry to get away."

"Get a load of that," jeered the hackie. "The guy is smart."

"So it appears."

"The cops," Joe said heavily because he had taken a violent dislike to the both of them, "don't like murderers."

"Really?" Cold-eye didn't seem disturbed at all. "It appears, my friend, that you know much more than is good for you. Obviously," he nodded toward the corpse, "he talked."

"He didn't say a thing," Joe answered quickly as he saw danger staring him in the face.

He should have kept his trap shut. What business was it of his that two foreigners wanted to knock each other off?

"I shall make sure of you. Get in my cab."

There was nothing to do but obey. Cold-eye raised his gun and prodded Joe. Given a free hand, Joe could have broken the guy in two, but not against a rod. He didn't like rods. They meant dirty business and cops and questions, and all Joe wanted was to be left alone to drive his cab.

They drove out of the park, passing a cop on the way. The silence was heavy, heavier than the gun against his ribs. At length the tough guy broke the stillness with an order.

"Stop here."

They got out.

"I won't need you," he told the cabman. "This way, my friend," he told Joe.

Roberts saw an entrance to the subway. A chill played down his back as he descended. The guy chuckled without humor.

"I do not desire to shoot you, but if we should happen to meet a police-

man, perhaps, you will be quiet, of course?"

Joe was silent as he was directed to the local side of the train platform, alongside a couple of other men. Cold-eye stood behind him and Joe could feel the slight shape of the gun. A train came; a few people got off.

"Not this one," warned his captor, and they waited out a few others.

Always somebody was on the platform with them. Then when they were left alone and the incoming rush of air signified that another train was on the way the guy moved Joe over to the express side, and he realized what he was up against.

The sound of the train approaching came to him faintly, then louder and louder. He could feel the guy edging closer. A hand touched his back. Cold-eye was waiting to push him under the wheels of the train. And here it came.

Joe sidestepped desperately and grappled with the man. Momentarily they teetered on the edge of the platform; then the guy lost his own balance. Joe clutched at him, but found he had grabbed only the briefcase. The train hurtled forward, brakes protesting, and the crunching sound that he heard made Joe sick as he dashed up into the street.

He'd had enough. Next time he would play deaf and dumb no matter what.

HE knew all the short-cuts, but even so it took him a while to get back to his cab. He'd get the body out of the car, maybe fix things up a bit, and keep his trap shut. If he went to the cops it would mean publicity. The guy who had been ground beneath the iron wheels of the train had not been in on this alone. Joe didn't want anybody else coming after him with a gun.

The cab loomed up darkly ahead. He slowed down to a careful walk, but no one seemed around. The door of the cab was open just as it had

been left. He walked up, found the little man's body grotesque in death.

On the floor lay a gleaming gun. The murder weapon. He could see it. The cops would have traced the cab, found him in the morgue and decided he had been accidentally killed while making a getaway. The tide of anger swelled within him.

He whirled around at the sound of a faint rustle and his heart jumped like a wounded tiger. A purposeful cop was approaching him, gun in hand. He had come out of the growth bordering the driveway.

"Stop right there and elevate your hands!" came the order.

The briefcase dropped to the sidewalk.

The copper was old and he was anxious to catch a killer. It might give him a desk job where he could ease his feet. So, overconfidently, he came too close.

Furiously, Joe smashed his hands down on the cop's wrists. The gun clattered to the sidewalk and Joe lashed out with flailing fists. A left staggered the cop and a right slapped him down with a dazed and glassy look in his eyes.

Panting, Joe scooped up the briefcase, kicked the gun into the bushes so the cop couldn't use it on him and took to his legs. The cop tried futilely to stagger to his feet.

It was not until he was safely out of the park and headed for his room that Joe became aware again of the briefcase. The subway car was deserted save for himself and he turned the case over in his hands. It was brown leather, well-worn, and it was locked.

Something valuable must be in it. There should be, because two men had died for it already. Thought of the second gave Joe a trace of the jim-jams.

It felt like papers inside the case. Suppose this was spy stuff and the papers were stolen plans of some sort? Just the other day the papers had car-

ried the story of a spy round-up.

He could see where he was getting into something nasty that would not make for his peace of mind. A disturbing thought entered his mind. He couldn't go back to his room. Even now the recovered park cop might be on his way, for in the cab was Joe Roberts' license, complete with picture and address.

He got off at the next stop. He had five bucks and some odd change in his pocket. That would do for a while. Right now he had to find a room and examine the contents of the briefcase.

He knew of a cheap hotel where questions were seldom asked and never answered, and he made for it. He passed into the dim lobby with its sickly lighting.

A SLEEPY, wispy clerk glanced at him without interest.

"Gimme a room for the night."

The clerk shoved the register before him.

"Sign here. One dollar."

He wrote down a fake name, Tom Burns, and tossed a crumpled bill onto the desk. The clerk took a key off a hook and tossed it to the colored elevator boy.

"Five-ten," was all he said.

They went up. Joe gave the kid a dime, and the negro smiled. Tips were scarce at the Hotel Hudson.

Joe locked the door and threw the briefcase on the bed. He was tired, but that could wait. His jack-knife came out and the blade began to bite at the seam. He cut about half the stitching at one end and decided that was enough. His pulse quickened. He looked in.

Inside was a sea of green.

He dumped the contents on the bed and stared at the mountain of greenbacks. New, crisp, hundred-dollar bills. Fifteen hundred of them. A hundred and fifty grand!

He sat down heavily.

Presently the taxi-driver composure returned. "No wonder Vischer's

after this. Who wouldn't be? I got to get rid of this dough before I get into something I can't get out of. With a guy bumped off in my cab I'd get the hot seat sure if the cops caught me with this dough. Boy, what a mess for a hack driver to be in! And my draft not due to come up for weeks."

He stared at the money in a troubled way as he slowly scooped it back into the briefcase. Now that he had found out what was in it the thing seemed to weigh a ton. He thought he knew how it felt to be rich and worried about your dough. Just the same, it would be better than nickel-nursing.

He clapped the leather under his arm and took the elevator. The clerk gave him a quizzical glance.

"Be back in a couple of minutes," he flung at the uncommunicative fellow.

The nearest bus station was what he sought. It was open and nearly deserted. Down in the washroom the colored attendant paid no attention to him after one glance.

He made sure he wasn't being watched and then he quickly slipped the dough out of the case and shoved it into a public locker. He turned the key, pocketed it, and left, whistling a bit dolefully. A thought struck him as he reached the street. He took a newspaper out of a trash can and, after tearing it into strips, packed it in place of the money. The corners of his lips hooked into a grin. Why should he kid himself. He was in this for keeps.

The clerk of the Hotel Hudson opened his mouth as if to say something when Joe entered, but thought better of it and kept quiet. Joe felt his eyes on him as he got into the elevator. Even the colored boy was acting strangely. Joe lit a cigarette as the cage creaked up. It stopped and he stepped out into the hall.

His room was but two doors down the corridor. The builder of the place had evidently been a believer in ven-

tilation, for a faint strip of light showed from beneath the door. Joe was positive he had turned it off. He was getting very, very annoyed and he was going to do something about it. He took a drag on the cigarette and then ground it deep into the sand of the stone container standing there for that purpose. He eyed the urn almost tenderly as his fingers dug into it.

JUST before his hand closed on the door knob he shoved the briefcase deeper into his armpit. He took a deep breath and entered.

The man in the chair had a leg resting over the arm. He looked at Joe with calm blue eyes. He got up and held out a well-manicured hand.

"Mr. Burns? That isn't your real name, is it?"

Joe gave him the once over. The guy was heavier and taller than he and looked like a prizefighter minus the marks.

"That's the name I go by," he answered warily.

The newcomer laughed. "Richard Bryant is my name and I happen to represent Uncle Sam."

"G-man?"

"That's right."

"Prove it," Joe challenged.

"Look at these," Bryant took out some papers and a gold badge.

They seemed authentic.

"How'd you find me?"

"We want that briefcase. We've been trailing it for a long time now. I found you because we have had a man on the trail of Anton Boros, the dead man in the cab, and Vischer's man Paul. Even in the subway where you so cleverly escaped from Paul you were watched."

"Who is this guy Vischer?"

Bryant shrugged his wide shoulders. "We're not sure."

"Okay. I suppose you'll clear me with the cops? I had to slug one."

"Yes, I'll do that, but you'll have to do something for us. There's a

taxi driver we would like identified. If he is the same man who was with Paul then our case will be nearing its close. So if you'll come along with me, Mr. Burns, we'll get that settled."

"We're on our way," Joe said with a touch of grimness. He had the itchy feeling on the back of his scalp that meant someone was going to get it, but good! He was sure this ginzo was no G-man. If he was and if Joe had been watched all the time in the subway the guy would have mentioned that Paul was dead. All he had said was that Joe had escaped.

They went out and walked side by side through the lobby. A cab with a sleeping driver was at the curb and Bryant went to it. They got in and the driver turned around, grinning at Joe.

"Hello, pal. We meet again."

Joe said something nasty and they searched him.

"For a cab driver," said Bryant, "you're dumber than most. Hand over that case." His eyes on Joe he patted it, found it bulging and felt the split seam. "So you know what's in it? No matter."

Joe kept silent. Being called dumb by this so and so got his goat. It began to look as though even a taxi driver wasn't allowed to mind just his own business.

They drove out of Manhattan and into Jersey. They finally stopped before a small, quiet house. There was not another within a quarter-mile. Weeds grew thick and high in the fields. The house was dark, but they shoved Joe to the door. Bryant knocked, the door opened and they went in. The lights came on.

HERE were two more men to face. Hard guys with foreign pans.

"Who iss dis?" demanded one.

"You'll learn," Bryant said. "The boss gone?"

"Yes. To the—" and here was that word again, "yascoolca."

Bryant poked Joe viciously with

the gun. "We caught up with the money." He handed over the briefcase. "Here it is."

One of them took it and looked in and his eyes grew hard.

"What iss dis?" He scattered the newspapers on the floor.

"Tricked!" Bryant cried aloud, and Joe laughed.

"Dumb, am I! Fooled you, sucker."

Bryant swung viciously with the gun. The barrel caught Joe on the side of the head and sent him sprawling dizzily.

"What happened to Paul?" Bryant demanded harshly.

Joe licked his torn lip. "Ever see hamburger? That's him now. He fell under the wheels of the subway train."

Their faces became ugly. Joe scrambled to his feet and tore in, bull-like, but what could he do against four men? They slapped him down, stood him up and knocked him down again.

"I'll make you talk," Bryant mouthed. "You'll tell where the money is."

"Like heck!" Joe managed to snarl, struggling.

This time he couldn't get to his feet. The fake G-man stopped it.

"Wait a minute! That'll do for now. We've got to make him talk. Vischer won't like it if something happened to this guy and he didn't get the money."

He hauled Joe to his feet and propped him in a chair standing near the window. A glass of water thrown in his face partially revived the stubborn taxi driver.

Bryant spoke to the other cab driver: "Didn't you see Paul after he went into the subway?"

"No. I catch on what he means when he says he won't need me, so I stick around. Pretty soon this guy comes out and I trail him. He musta ditched the dough in the time I took to call you after he left the hotel. Good thing you were that close, too, or he mighta got away himself."

"Listen, you dumb ox," Bryant said

viciously to Joe. "We want that money—quick. We have ways of making people talk."

"You got me scared," Joe mumbled through swollen lips.

"So all right. You're not scared. You're too dumb for that. But how would you like to have your fingernails torn out with a pair of pliers or maybe have your hands boiled in water? We've got other tricks, too, like burning your feet with matches or a cigarette on your eyelid."

Joe couldn't decide whether he ought to sweat or chill, so he did neither.

"Go ahead, rat," he said defiantly.

"Hold up, you guys," said the cab driver, switching off the lights and coming away from the door. "I hear somebody prowling outside."

"Make a noise," warned Bryant, waving his gun at Joe, "and I'll make a bigger one. Heinrich, you and Karl go outside and see who it is."

The minutes ticked by. Joe tried to make plans for the future. In the darkness their breathing sounded loud and forced. The knock on the door boomed out.

Heinrich and Karl came in with a prisoner, a little friendly-looking guy, not over thirty.

"Hello, Bryant," he greeted. "It seems my curiosity got the best of me and I came too close. Do you blame me? I saw the taxi drive up."

"A fed!" Bryant spat.

"Right the first time."

THEY sparred verbally, Bryant trying to get some important information out of the man. Joe marveled at the little guy's nerve in sticking his neck out. His mind raced. Certain things were clearer.

This new guy was the real McCoy. He recalled that funny-sounding word, and it came to him that it might be the name of a restaurant such as were found on the East side. The riddle must have its answer there—only first he had to get away. He

was in so deep now the cops would give him the chair and no questions asked. And besides, he got a yen to stick his nose in somebody's business and pay off a few debts.

The G-man was walking closer, slowly, and coming nearer Joe. A wild idea flashed into Joe's head. If the guy would only get in front of him!

Maybe the fed was a mind reader—maybe they were just a couple of minds with a single thought—but he did get in front, and Joe, his senses and strength regained, heaved backward. He crashed through the window amid a shower of glass. Bullets *spanged* around him, kicking up little clouds of dust. The last he saw of the G-man was the sight of the guy tearing in and keeping them busy.

The taxi was at the curb. Taxi drivers were all alike in one respect, and Joe climbed in, found the key as he had expected, and jammed his foot on the starter. It sounded like a concrete mixer on a rampage as the wheels spun and then gripped. He shot away.

He was sitting on something hard and he reached behind to get it out. His fist closed on a knurled grip, and he dragged out a gun from between the cushions. It was a good, big, heavy automatic and Joe had an impulse. He wheeled the hack around the block. Trouble or no, he was going to use it. He owed the G-man something.

The mob was on the sidewalk. He gave the hack all she could take and then, blindly, he sprayed bullets out of the side window. He hoped a couple of them found a mark.

The foreign word buzzed in his brain as he cruised, looking for the place. The gray light of dawn was enveloping the city in its shadowy grasp. A few people were hurrying to work. A bum or two slept in a doorway.

On Second Avenue he found the place and he grinned. All the time

he had forgotten that the letter "j" was pronounced like "y". Here was the place he was supposed to deliver a hundred and fifty grand. A flight of stairs led up into the restaurant proper. There was a sign over the sidewalk with a bird painted on it and the word "Jaskolka." He went past it two blocks and stopped the taxi.

Now came the dangerous part, and he was thankful for the gun, empty though it was.

A plan formed. He went into a drugstore and made a call. Five minutes later when he came out, another car had drawn up before the Jaskolka. That would be Bryant and the rest of his mob, the slugs. The stage was set.

HE entered the place cautiously. Bryant was explaining that it had not been his fault. A deep, unknown voice was berating him for a fool. Probably Vischer.

Joe stepped in and placed his back to a wall. "Stick 'em up, you guys." "That's the man!" said Bryant, popped.

[Turn page]

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"A grand. In small bills."

"Why did you not keep it all?"

"Ever see a cab driver try to get rid of hundred-dollar bills?"

"I see your point. You are a clever man. Where is the money?"

"Cached in a locker at the bus station."

"And the key? You have it with you?"

"I ain't quite that dumb," said Joe scornfully.

"Where is it, then?"

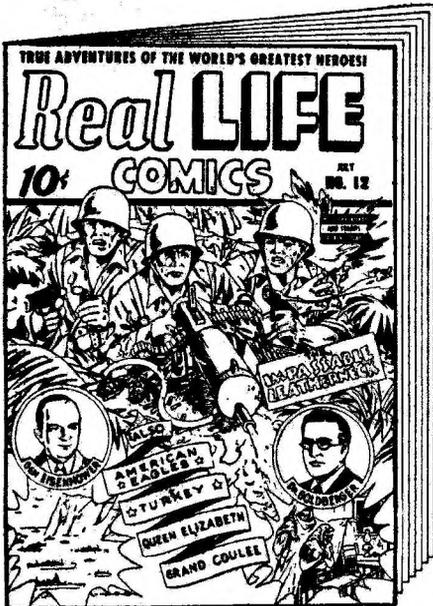
"At the hotel. I hid it when I saw this guy." He jerked a finger at Bryant who regarded him suspiciously. "You get it when you turn over a grand to me."

"I was watching you all the time," said Bryant angrily. "You didn't hide a thing."

"Okay, have it your way." Joe shrugged carelessly.

"We can blow the locker open," snarled Bryant. [Turn page]

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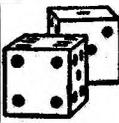
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Joe laughed. "At which station? There's three of them."

"Very clever," commented Vischer. "I think we will go with you. Fortunately, I have enough money with me to pay you. Bryant, Karl, Heinrich, come with me. The rest of you stay. I will telephone."

So far so good. They left the restaurant.

"My friend," said Vischer, "for your sake I hope you are telling the truth."

"That dough is no good to me. All I want is a cut."

"You shall be well-paid," Vischer said in an oily voice.

IT took but a few minutes to reach the Hotel Hudson. They went past the same clerk and the cage started to take them up.

Now was the big moment. A phone was ringing shrilly as they got out and approached room 510.

Men seemed to materialize out of thin air, and guns roared. Joe dropped to the floor, his decision being that the G-men could take over from here. But when he saw Bryant dash into a

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room he went after him. He had a personal score to settle.

Bryant was already climbing out onto the fire escape. Joe grabbed his foot and hauled him back in. He knocked the gun out of Bryant's hand and laid over the right cross he had been saving up for just this occasion. Bryant fell flat.

Joe grabbed him by the collar and hauled him out to the hall where the G-men had things under control. Joe gave vent to his curiosity.

"You tell me, boys. I don't want to have to feel that all I got was a bunch of penny-ante racketeers. Are these guys spies?"

"Not exactly," Carney, the man in charge, said. "Vischer is a foreign agent, but his work here is not to spy except perhaps incidentally. He's here to foil any attempts which nationals might make in this country to obtain release of prisoners in concentration camps and to secure possession of any money which might be raised for this purpose. Money can do wonders, even in Europe."

"I get it. Anton Boros was one of these prisoner-releasing guys, and so were the people at the Jaskolka."

"That's right."

Joe eyed the prisoners darkly. "I wish I could meet you guys in a dark alley sometime—one by one," he said.

"Just one thing," said Carney. "Where is the locker key?"

Joe dug his fingers in the sand of the ash receptacle and brought it out. "I ditched it when I saw the light."

"Smart lad!" praised Carney, laughing. "Hey! Where are you going?"

Joe paused on his way to the elevator.

"I've decided not to wait for my draft number to come up," he answered. "I'm going to try to enlist while I'm in fighting practice."

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OFF THE RECORD

(Continued from page 8)

single lamp was swept from the desk, plunging the room in darkness.

Lloyd lashed out, got the knife. He swung a haymaker and Ralston staggered back, tripped and fell to the floor. Lloyd stepped closer. Ralston didn't move.

He bent down.

The lights clicked on and Lloyd turned to stare into the muzzle of a service revolver held in the powerful hand of Captain McGrath of Police Headquarters.

"Lay the knife down, young fellow," said McGrath. "You're under arrest and the charge is murder."

Horrified, Lloyd North realized that he'd been neatly framed.

Enter—the Black Bat!

And that, in brief, was the story Lloyd North told Tony Quinn when the celebrated blind attorney, called in by McGrath, interviewed him in his cell. It was so utterly fantastic that Tony believed it.

No sane man would have made up such a crazy sequence of events. And Lloyd, Tony knew, was sane.

He took the case and, in so doing, started the Black Bat on one of the strangest and most dangerous trails in his career of crime fighting.

G. Wayman Jones tells all the details of the Black Bat's latest exploit in **GUARDIAN IN BLACK**, a full-length novel, in the next issue of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**. Those details make one of the most thrilling stories that it's been our pleasure to publish in a long time.

No admirer of the Black Bat, Carol Baldwin, Silk and Butch will want to miss **GUARDIAN IN BLACK**. And we'd be willing to wager that not even the smartest detective-story expert will be able to guess the final surprising solution to the strange adventures of Lloyd North.

In the same issue, of course, there'll be the usual fine collection of short stories.

The Mailbag

You reading folks have certainly done yourselves proud this month in the matter of writing in your opinions of

BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE. There's an unusually big stack of letters on our desk right now, so let's get at them. We'll try to choose a representative group of excerpts. And if you're disappointed at not seeing your letter in print, write us another. Maybe next time you'll have better luck.

Here's a letter from Corporal H. Standish, of Uncle Sam's Army:

I'm stationed in a camp that's a long way from anywhere, and believe me, all the boys in the outfit get a kick out of your **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** magazine, whenever we can get our hands on it. I've been reading it since long before I got into the Army, and it seems even more interesting now. Maybe that's because it is a change from the usual military routine. Anyway, I can't think of any better way to spend the few leisure hours a soldier gets than in reading about the exploits of Tony Quinn.

The **Black Bat** is about the only one of these super-detectives who seems real to me. Perhaps that is because he gets into so many bad jams, and always manages to get out of them in a reasonable, possible-sounding way.

His partners are tops with me, too. But Tony had better hurry up and marry Carol, or Butch will get her. And say, speaking of Butch, how come that big guy isn't in uniform?

I've got only one kick coming about your magazine—the novel isn't long enough. But I suppose we can't have everything.

Thanks a lot, soldier, for the kind words. It makes us feel good to know that we are helping to keep you fellows cheerful in the big, important job you're doing for us and the rest of the civilized world. [Turn page]

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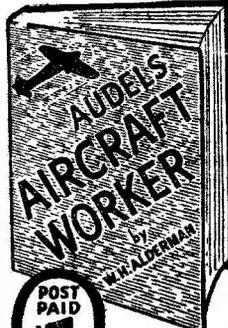
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Now let's take a look at this one from Robert Hartwell of Rochester, New York.

I don't believe it's possible for anyone to pretend to be blind, as Tony Quinn does. That is, not to fool expert eye doctors and things like that. For instance, you've said sometimes that he can stare into a dazzling light without blinking, merely by exercising muscular control. I don't think it could be done—by Tony Quinn or anybody else.

And the business about his being able to see colors in the dark is nonsense. If it's totally dark, there is no light to be reflected by the colors. So there'd be no colors. And neither Tony Quinn nor anyone else could see in real total darkness. Even cats, owls and other night-moving creatures have to have some light.

Some times your short stories are pretty good. I liked **THE MAN WITH TWO FACES** in the last issue. Why not have a shorter Black Bat story and more shorts? I think that would make a better magazine.

What do some of you other readers think about the points Robert Hartwell brought up? Let's hear from you. Nothing like a good argument to liven things up, even if it has to be carried on by mail.

And here's one from Marie Shaw of Baltimore, Maryland.

The Black Bat and his friends are my favorite detective-story characters. Carol Baldwin, I think, is just about tops. But how I envy her her chances to take part in Tony Quinn's adventures.

I think Butch should have more to do in the stories. We all like to laugh, and Butch can usually make us do so when he goes out "block-busting" against the crooks.

The above are typical of many hundreds of letters received—and we'll be looking forward to more fine letters from you all. They'll all be welcome and all the suggestions that they offer will be carefully considered.

So until next time, so long and good luck—and keep on buying all the War Bonds and Stamps you can possibly afford!

THE EDITOR.

WIPE THAT SNEER OFF HIS FACE!



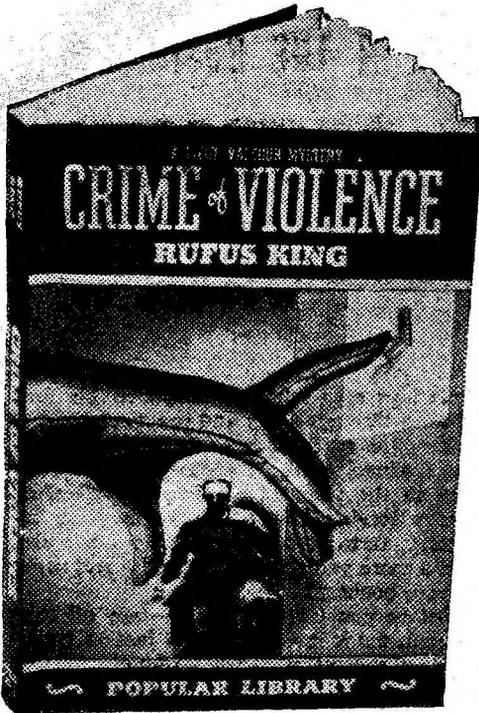
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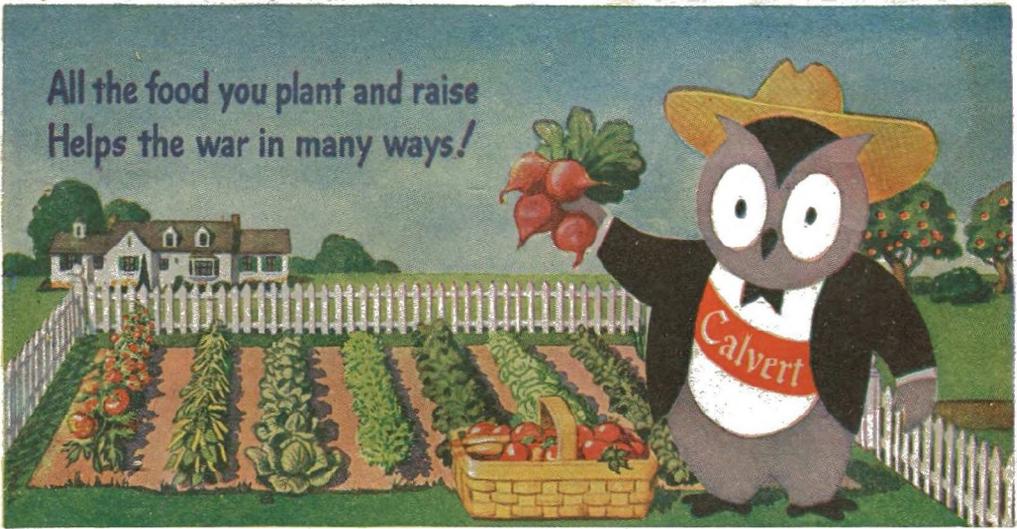
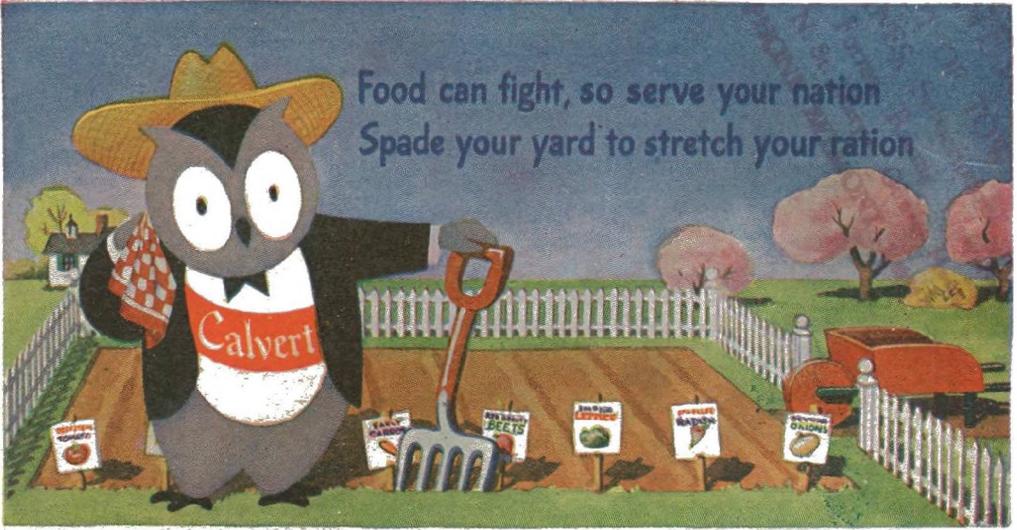
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