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FEATURING

THE BLACK BAT AND THE TROJAN HORSE

A LONG BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL
FEATURING TONY QUINN
MASKED NEMESIS OF CRIME

THE BLACK BAT AND

BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

NOV 1940

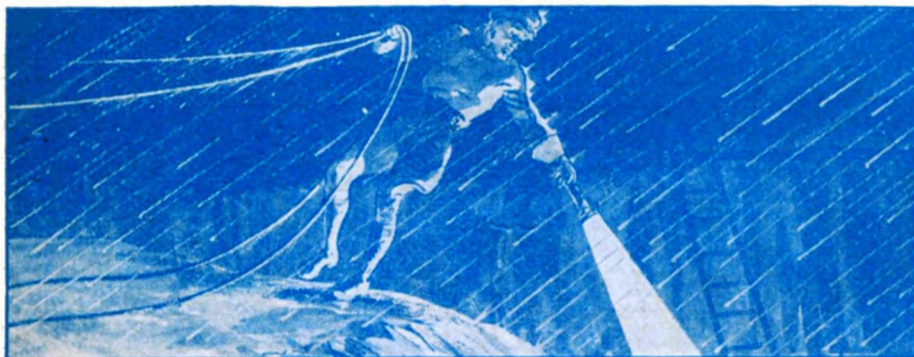
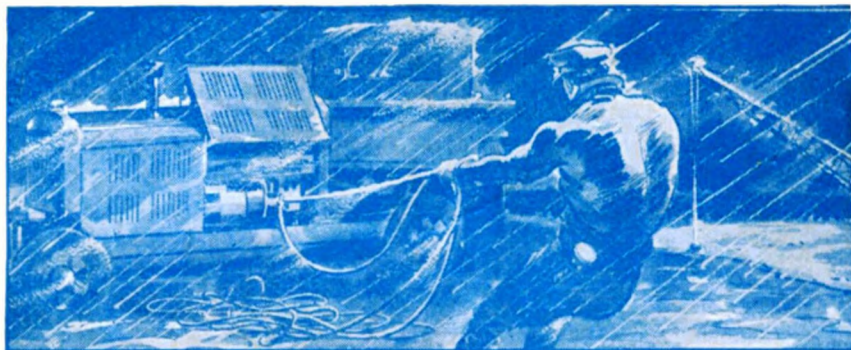
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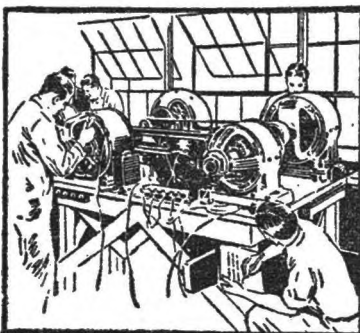
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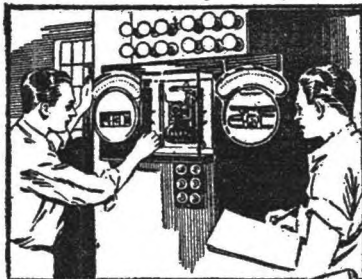
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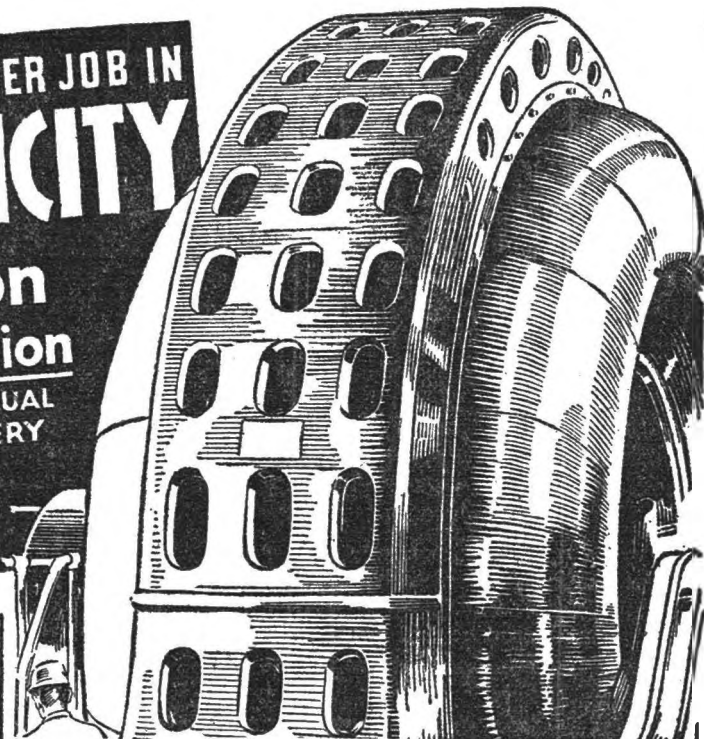
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BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE.

Vol. 12, No. 1

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November, 1940

A Complete Book-Length Novel

THE BLACK BAT AND THE TROJAN HORSE

Featuring Tony Quinn, Nemesis of Crime



By G. WAYMAN JONES

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BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE. Published bi-monthly by Better Publications, Inc., at 4600 Diversey Ave., Chicago, Ill. N. L. Pine, President. Editorial and executive offices, 22 West 48th St., New York, N. Y. Entered as second-class matter November 14, 1933, at the Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1940 by Better Publications, Inc. Yearly \$3.60; single copies, \$.10; Canadian and foreign, postage extra. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the names of any living person or existing institution are used, it is a coincidence. Manuscripts must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope and are submitted at the author's risk.

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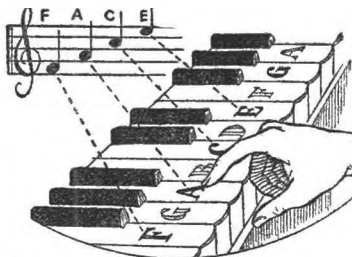
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They did not know that another shadow stalked them, for the Black Bat was on their trail. The Black Bat, that mysterious figure clad in sable-hued garments that made him seem like some strange and huge dark bird out of a fantastic dream. The Black Bat, nemesis of crimedom!

No one knew that the man who had been the district attorney still fought for the people in his own way. How could a blind man combat crime? There were but a few of Tony Quinn's close friends who even suspected the answer to that riddle—and they had been

pledged to everlasting silence.

But the Black Bat knew—and in knowing he saw many things that were invisible to others. It was this, and his audacity and courage, that made him ever dangerous to those forces of evil that sought to battle against him.

The Black Bat in Action!

His aid was needed to combat those who planned to use the Chinese treasure for their own selfish needs—to use it in weaving a web of evil around those whom they hated. The breath of a great mythical beast seemed to come alive—for the city faced the yawning mouth of a wave of crime.

It was up to Tony Quinn to go into action, and how he did so forms the basis of the pulsating book-length novel in the next issue—**THE BLACK BAT'S DRAGON TRAIL**. Here is action and adventure and the grim and ghastly face of Murder! A thrilling and exciting yarn from start to finish—a veritable epic of the war on crime.

THE BLACK BAT'S DRAGON TRAIL is a mystery that will hold you spellbound from start to finish. It's one of the best of the novels G. Wayman Jones has written—which is saying plenty! And remember, in addition to this masterpiece of crime fiction, the next issue will also contain other exciting stories. A gala number!

Write the Editor

Come one, come all, keep those letters and postcards streaming in! We want your opinions, suggestions, comments, criticisms. The more letters, the better the magazine—so do your part! Address communications to The Editor, **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE**, 22 West 48th Street, New York, N. Y. Many correspondents have suggested that we inaugurate a club for the readers of this magazine. What do you think of the idea?

So long. See you all next issue!

—THE EDITOR.

How Big Is YOUR PAY-CHECK?

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"THE size of my pay-check? What business is it of yours?" Perhaps that's the first reply that comes to your mind.

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As part of the National Defense program, a nationwide registration of aliens will be conducted from August 27 through December 26, 1940, by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice. Registration will take place in the post offices of the nation. It is expected that more than three and one-half million aliens will be registered during the four month period.

Registration is made compulsory by a specific act of Congress, the Alien Registration Act of 1940, which requires all non-citizens to register during the four-month official registration period. The law requires that all aliens 14 years or older are to be registered and fingerprinted. Alien children under 14 years of age will be registered by their parents or guardians. When alien children reach their fourteenth birthday, they will be required to register in person and be fingerprinted.

A fine of \$1,000 and imprisonment of six months is prescribed by the Alien Registration Act for failure to register, for refusal to be fingerprinted, or for making registration statements known to be false.

As part of its educational program to acquaint non-citizens with the registration requirements, the Alien Registration Division is distributing more than five million specimen forms listing the questions that will be asked of aliens at registration time. Besides the usual questions for establishing identification, the questionnaire asks the alien to tell how and when he entered the country, the method of transportation he used to get here, the name of the vessel on which he arrived.

To make their registration easier, aliens are being asked to fill out sample forms, which will be available prior to registration, and take them to post offices where they will be registered and fingerprinted. Every registered alien will receive by mail a receipt card which serves as evidence of his registration. Following registration, the Act requires all aliens, as well as parents or guardians of alien children, to report changes of residence address within five days of the change.

The Alien Registration Act was passed so that the United States Government may determine exactly how many aliens there are, who they are, and where they are. Both President Roosevelt and Solicitor General Biddle have pointed out that registration and fingerprinting will not be harmful to law-abiding aliens. The Act provides that all records be kept secret and confidential. They will be available only to persons approved by the Attorney General of the United States.

FALSE TEETH

\$6^{.85}

to

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—BY MAIL—

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Posed by a Professional Model

THE TESTIMONIAL LETTERS WE PUBLISH are communications that customers have sent to us without solicitation and without pay. We have large numbers of such missives. We never print anyone's letter without previous consent. We believe that each of our customers who has written to us enthusiastically endorsing our dental plates is sincere. We do not, however, intimate or represent that you will receive the same results in any instance that those customers describe. What is important to you is that when you pay for your teeth, WE GUARANTEE IF YOU ARE NOT 100% SATISFIED IN EVERY RESPECT WITH THE TEETH WE WILL MAKE FOR YOU. AFTER YOU HAVE WORN THEM AS LONG AS 60 DAYS, WE WILL GLADLY REFUND TO YOU EVERY CENT YOU HAVE PAID US FOR THEM.

BEFORE

AFTER



Mrs. Elsie Boland of Norton, Kansas, writes:

"Enclosed find two pictures. One shows how I looked before I got my teeth; the other one afterwards. Your teeth are certainly beautiful. I have not had mine out since the day I got them, except to clean them."



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"I received my set of teeth. I wear them day and night. I have good reason to be well pleased with them." Thank you very much.

MADE - TO - MEASURE DENTAL PLATES DIRECT FROM OUR LABORATORY TO YOU!

We make to measure for you individually—BY MAIL—Dental Plates for men and women—from an impression of your own mouth taken by you at your home. We have thousands of customers all over the country wearing teeth we made by mail at sensible prices.

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If you find out what others have paid for theirs, you will be astounded when you see how little ours will cost you! By reading our catalog, you will learn how to save half or more on dental plates for yourself. Monthly payments possible.

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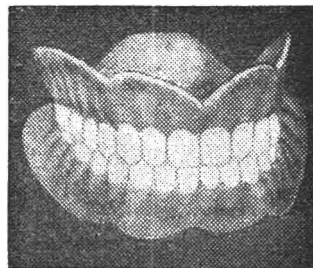
Make us prove every word we say. Wear our teeth on trial for as long as 60 days. Then, if you are not perfectly satisfied with them, they will not cost you a cent.

WITH MONEY - BACK GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION

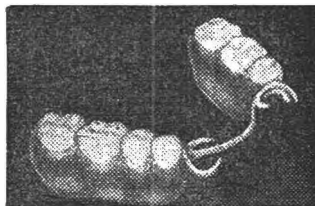
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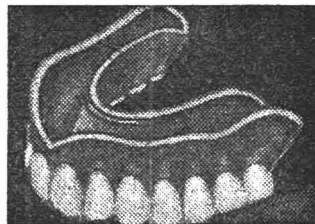
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Wouldn't it be a grand and glorious feeling to forget rupture worry completely and let peace of mind and new zest for living make you look younger? But you can't if a gouging, uncomfortable truss nags you constantly, if you never know a moment's security, if you feel your rupture is growing worse all the time, with not even hope of the opening closing up. Worry, worry, worry, day after day, for all your life . . . why, it's bound to make any man or woman look old, haggard, and worn out beyond their years. Don't, don't, don't submit to this terrible, needless tragedy of dragging, ageing worry. At this very moment, as you read these words you can



decide to enter upon a glorious new life. Not by some clap-trap, senseless "magic"; but by the thoroughly effective aid of the world-famous BROOKS Patented AIR-CUSHION

Rupture Support—that holds with a velvet touch; yet so securely that you practically forget rupture, banish worry, become normally active and again know the zest and joy of life that *cannot help but make you look younger*. Scores of thousands know this is true. Let the Brooks help you.

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BROOKS asks no man or woman to buy a Brooks Appliance outright, on *faith alone*. Instead it will be sent you on a *thorough trial*. Wear it. Put it to every test for heavenly comfort and security. If you or your doctor are not satisfied, return the BROOKS and the trial will cost you nothing. So if you have reducible rupture send for a BROOKS Air-Cushion truss and let it *prove itself on your own body*. How doctors regard the BROOKS is shown by the fact that more than 9,000 have ordered, either for themselves or their patients.

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Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy a BROOKS. But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine BROOKS is never sold in stores or by agents. It is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. The Patented Air-Cushion Support does away completely with hard, gouging, painful pads. There are no stiff, punishing springs. Instead, the yielding, clinging, secure AIR-CUSHION and velvet soft body band. Sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. No metal girdle to rust or corrode. And the Patented Automatic AIR-CUSHION continually works to give Nature a chance to close the opening. What a contrast to ordinary hard-pad uncomfortable trusses!

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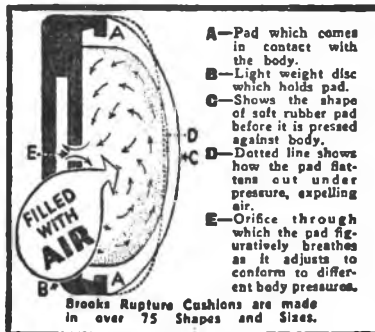
In **PLAIN ENVELOPE**, please send your **FREE BOOK** on Rupture, **PROOF** of Results, and **TRIAL OFFER**. No one is to call on me personally about my rupture.

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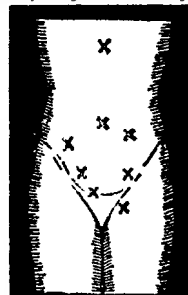
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State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐



- A—Pad which comes in contact with the body.
- B—Light weight disc which holds pad.
- C—Shows the shape of soft rubber pad before it is pressed against body.
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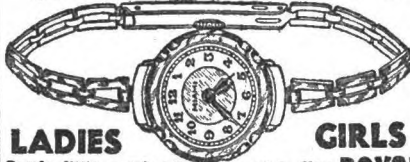
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Fully equipped—Balloon tires and all. NIFTY!—THIS Bike, Cash or choice of other marvelous premiums given—SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE good size beautifully colored famous Art Pictures with our well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE, used for chaps, mild burns, shallow cuts. Salve easily sold to friends, relatives, and neighbors at 25c a box (with popular picture FREE). Remit and select premium as per catalog. 45th year. We are fair and square. Many customers waiting. Act Now! Mail Coupon! Salve and pictures sent postage paid. Be first—Write

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Lovely little watch about size of 5 time. Has second hand not shown. A beauty! Big Movie—Adjustable lamp socket—Special bulb—Shows good size picture. A Whiz! EITHER Wrist Watch, Movie, Cash or choice of other fine premiums given—SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE good size beautifully colored popular Art Pictures with our well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps, mild burns, shallow cuts. Salve easily sold to friends, relatives, and neighbors at 25c a box (with popular picture FREE.) Remit and select premium as per catalog. 45th year. We are fair and square. Many Customers waiting. Act Now! Be first. Mail Coupon to—WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. TG-31 TYRONE, PA.

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Boys Girls Start Today Mail the Coupon!

GIVEN

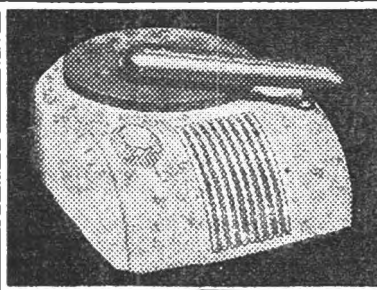
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GIVEN

Nothing To Buy!

Send No Money—Mail Coupon

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Laid Up By
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What Would It Mean
To YOU To Get Up To

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A MONTH?



Amazing New Policy

COSTS ONLY 3¢ A DAY

If sickness or accident should strike YOU—lay you up, disabled—stop your income, perhaps for months—don't face the additional worry of money for bills and expenses! Protect yourself and your loved ones with the remarkable low cost Sterling Sickness and Accident Policy! For only 3¢ a day this amazing policy provides ACTUAL CASH—to help pay bills and expenses! Pays you up to \$150.00 a month for sickness disability, including Hospital Benefits; up to \$100.00 a month for accident; pays as much as \$2,500.00 for loss of limbs, sight, or accidental death, plus many other liberal benefits, as provided in policy.

*Pays Cash For Common Sicknesses
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This policy covers and pays graded benefits for all sicknesses common to both men and women, and all types of accidents as happen every day in or by automobiles or trucks, on street, at home, on the farm, in factory while at work, etc. Benefits payable from FIRST DAY of disability, as provided.

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Here's our sensational offer. Write, giving your age, and the name and relationship of your beneficiary. We will mail you Actual Policy on 10-days' FREE INSPECTION. No obligation whatever. Act now.

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**Liberal Benefits At
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AS MUCH AS

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IN CASH for Accidental
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UP TO \$150.00

a month for sickness includ-
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\$100.00

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Doctor's bill for non disabling
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**All Benefits as described
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GENUINE Late Model No. 8

L.C. SMITH



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ROLL-A-WAY SECRETARIAL

TYPEWRITER STAND

For those who have no typewriter stand or handy place to use a typewriter, I make this special offer. This attractive stand that ordinarily sells for \$4.85 can be yours for only \$2.00 extra added to your account. *Quality built. Just note all its convenient features.*



Mounted on casters, can be moved by touch of finger.

Big working surface, all metal, compact, strong, quiet, rigid, attractive. Two metal wings, correct working height.

NO MONEY DOWN
10 DAYS TRIAL
Easy Terms—9c a day

No obligation. Send no money. See before you buy on wide-open 10 day Trial. Pay on easiest terms—only 9c a day. You get this genuine late office model L. C. Smith beautifully rebuilt with all standard improvements—basket shift, standard 84 character, 4-row keyboard, shift lock key, back spacer, 2 color ribbon, ribbon reverse, stencil cutting device, tabulator, etc. Ball Bearing throughout—quiet operation. THOUSANDS PAID \$102.50—IT'S YOURS FOR ONLY \$31.85 (CASH PRICE). No risk, money back guarantee.

2 YEAR GUARANTEE

Our 2 year ironclad guarantee is your assurance of satisfaction and long service! Our 30 years of Fair Dealing Backs Up This Guarantee.

IDEAL FOR HOME OR OFFICE

This late L. C. Smith with basket shift is the machine used by schools, large corporations and business houses the country over. The perfect, all-purpose typewriter for correspondence, office work, billing, manifold work, etc. Has all modern improvements you need, stands hard service—IT'S YOURS AT ONLY \$2.50 A MONTH!

WIDE CARRIAGE MODELS

Wide carriage L. C. Smiths for government reports, large office forms, billing, etc. The 14 inch carriage takes paper 14" wide, has 12" writing line—only \$3.00 extra with order. The 18" takes paper 18" wide has 18" writing line—only \$5.00 extra with order.

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COMPLETE TOUCH TYPING COURSE

We give FREE with your L. C. Smith a complete 9 lesson Home Study course of Famous Van Zandt Touch Typing system. You can now learn typing quickly and easily.

OFFER FOR LIMITED TIME—SEND COUPON TODAY

Accept this wide open offer now! Send no money. Use L. C. Smith for 10 day trial in your home. Return it if you don't think it the greatest value you have ever seen. If you buy, pay on easiest terms—only \$2.50 a month, 2 yr. ironclad guarantee. Avoid disappointment—mail coupon today.

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Send me L. C. Smith (F.O.B. Chicago) for 10 days' trial. If I keep it I will pay \$2.50 per month until easy term price (\$35.85) is paid. If I am not satisfied I can return it express collect.

☐ 10" carriage ☐ 14" carriage (\$3.00 extra) ☐ 18" carriage (\$5.00 extra)
FOR QUICK SHIPMENT GIVE OCCUPATION AND REFERENCE

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OVER 200,000 SATISFIED CUSTOMERS ALL OVER THE WORLD.

THE BLACK BAT

Like a clap of
thunder, the am-
munition dump
went up (Chap.
XX)



By G. WAYMAN JONES

Author of "The Black Bat's Triumph," "The Black Bat's Crusade," etc.

CHAPTER I

Freedom of Speech

THE man was a skinny, crafty-faced individual, utterly unprepossessing in his worn and dirty brown suit. But some strange whim of nature had blessed him with a ready

tongue. He went into action first by striking up a conversation with a passer-by, and his loud voice brought other listeners. They were mostly young men without jobs, who spent a great deal of their time watching the war bulletins in front of the newspaper office.

The Black Bat and His Aides Challenge

AND THE TROJAN HORSE



A Complete Book-Length Mystery Novel Featuring Tony Quinn, Nemesis of Crime

The stranger dropped his voice when policemen strolled by and his audience never grew to more than half a dozen. But from his lips dropped poison—the venom of a serpent coiled hidden in the grass, waiting to strike from ambush.

“So what happens?” he asked the group around him. “We grow up and

we got no jobs. That’s the trouble with this kind of government they call a democracy. They oughta make jobs for us, and pay us good, too. We’re just as smart as the birds who make a million bucks while we don’t get enough to eat. Now they’re going to make us train and maybe fight for them.

the Might of a Sinister Alien Power!

Men Die on Schedule When Spies Make

"Why should we fight? So these damned millionaires can eat their caviar and drink champagne? Yeah, while we'll be lucky if we get beans. Any sucker who lugs a gun and fights for millionaires is crazy. There's a better living in Germany and in Italy today. That's where these rich guys work for people like us, see?"

A boy, no more than seventeen, elbowed his way closer.

"Mister, are you telling us not to fight if this country gets into war? Is that what you mean?"

"You bet, kid. That's just what I'm trying to drive home. I'm as broke as the rest of you fellows. I don't even know where I'm going to sleep tonight, or get my next meal. But pick up a gun and dodge bullets for a country that don't care? Not me! And you guys oughta get wise, too. Next thing you know, they'll heave what's left of you into a grave, like a lot of plowed-under cotton.

"Don't fight! Don't even work in munitions plants. Don't listen to the speeches of the war-mongers. All they want are profits from selling guns and bullets to shoot down other saps like us."

While the stranger talked and, to his credit, swayed the small group of young men, a seedy looking coupé backed to the curb, almost close enough to knock the speaker off his feet. Knowing he held his audience, the speaker only glared at the driver of the car and kept on talking. He preached what

amounted to revolution and backed it up with arguments that were corrupt, but nonetheless readily understandable to the young men gathered around him.

THE door of the coupé opened. The whole left side of the car dipped. close to the gutter as its driver got out. He was a hulking brute of a man with fists as huge as boxing gloves. Sometime in the past, his nose had suffered a collision with an irresistible object, which had flattened the bridge. He had a wide, usually placid face, but now there were troubled wrinkles on his forehead.

As he stood listening to the speaker, those wrinkles grew deeper and deeper. Gradually his eyes narrowed and his thick fingers worked convulsively. Finally, as if he could stand no more, the big man moved forward. With a sweep of his arm he pushed some of the group aside and planted himself directly in front of the speaker.

"Listen, mister," he said slowly. "I ain't no college man, see? I don't know much either, but I don't like the way you're talkin'. There's a lot of trouble goin' on in the world and you ain't helping matters much. So why don't you close that trap of yours and beat it, huh?"

The speaker gave vent to a string of curses and shook his fist as close to the big man's face as he could reach.

"I will say what I like. This stupid country allows free speech. No one can stop me. Not you, nor the police, nor the Army, nor the Navy—"

"Yeah?" the big man growled. "Maybe not even the Marines, huh? But I can, you squawkin' skunk. One more yap outa you and I'll use you to clean up the sidewalk. You'll be the broom, see?"

"I shall have you arrested," the speaker yelled. "No one can talk to me this way. Find me a policeman, somebody!"



a Grim Attack on Our American Defenses!

He couldn't say any more because one of those enormous fists shot out. The fingers seized his necktie and he felt himself being lifted completely off the sidewalk. He began flailing his arms and screaming for help. Those who had been listening to him backed away. They wanted no trouble with this giant who was doing exactly what they had inwardly wanted to do themselves.

The huge man suddenly turned his prisoner upside down, grabbed him by the ankles as if he were no more than a ventriloquist's dummy, and shook him hard. A stream of silver fell out of the speaker's pocket, then several other small objects, and finally a roll of bills fastened together. The silver clip dropped off as the money bounced on the sidewalk, and the bills fluttered around—five of them hundred-dollar bills, a dozen were fifties, and there were twenties, tens and fives in profusion.

"Hey!" one of the youths shouted. "That guy said he was out of a job like us. Look at the dough he's got! He was handing us a line, talking about millionaires, saying we shouldn't fight for them. He's a millionaire himself. Boy, look at that big guy mop the sidewalk with him."

"Yeah," another boy said coldly. "Serves him right. We were a bunch of saps for listening to him. I hope he gets his neck busted."

A POLICE whistle shrilled. Four patrolmen rushed up, and a sergeant joined them. He took one look at the big man and reached for his blackjack. But the big man ceased shaking his victim as the police closed in.

"Put him down, Atlas," the sergeant ordered. "Make one funny play and I'll slug you."

The big man still gripped his victim by one ankle. He held him over the



The Black Bat

gutter and let go. Then he spread his hands in a gesture of dismay.

"But look, Sarge, this guy was talkin' against the United States. He was sayin' it ain't no good and that nobody should fight for it. He said he'd rather live in Europe. Now I ain't a smart guy, but I don't like what he said, so I just figured I'd show him how I felt."

"That's right, Sergeant." Several of the youths gathered closer. "He was saying we shouldn't fight even if we're drafted. I felt like slugging him myself."

"Who are you?" the sergeant asked the big man.

"Butch—Butch O'Leary. I didn't mean no harm, but a guy can listen to just so much. . . ."

"Hey," the sergeant yelled suddenly. "Grab that fifth columnist! He's crawling along the gutter to make a break for it."

Two patrolmen pounced on the orator and dragged him back. He drew himself up, glared at Butch O'Leary and tried to use the influence of his voice again.

"I am Hans Hofer, a citizen of the

United States. I can say what I please, where I please. This ape assaulted me. I demand that he be arrested."

"Okay, sweetheart," the sergeant said. "Murphy, call the wagon. As for you, Mr. Hofer, you better come along, too. With my own eyes I saw you trying to kick that big guy. That amounts to assault, so you're pinched, too."

Ten minutes and six arguments later, a patrol wagon pulled up. Butch gulped as he looked at it, leaped when a patrolman touched his arm.

"Let's go, pal. What's the matter, don't you like to ride in the wagon? Say, I'll tell you what. You ride up front with the driver and everybody'll think you're a plainclothes man."

"Gosh, thanks!" Butch smiled for the first time. "But ain't that against the rules or somethin'?"

"Maybe it is. But if we have to pinch a guy like you, we do it polite. Anyway, that skinny mug is a dangerous guy. If we put you in back with him, he might get tough and hurt you. Get up on the front seat and don't argue."

A craning, shoving crowd had collected. The dispersing audience of the arrested speaker passed through the crush explaining what had happened. A low hum of angry voices made the sergeant look around worriedly. He hustled his prisoner to the back of the wagon.

"No!" Hofer screamed. "I will not ride in that thing like a common criminal. You cannot make me do this."

The sergeant didn't say a word. He merely grabbed Hofer by the back of the neck and the seat of the pants. Hofer came into violent contact with the front panel of the truck and began to blubber. As the wire doors closed and the wagon rolled away, derisive shouts followed it.

ONE hour later Butch O'Leary faced a night court magistrate and tried to tell what had happened.

"I'm guilty, I guess, but I didn't slug him. I just kinda shook him a little. I

don't like to hear guys sayin' this country ain't no good, Judge, and that's just what he was doin'. Maybe I shoulda minded my own business, but I ain't smart like you or everybody else in here. I ain't sorry for what I did and I won't promise not to do it again. So I guess maybe I oughta go to jail."

The judge adjusted his glasses, cleared his throat and looked questioningly at the sergeant who had made the arrest.

"Did you take the fingerprints of these two men? You did! Any record of that nature pertaining to Mr. Butch O'Leary is to be destroyed forthwith. He is not a criminal."

"Your Honor," Hofer shouted angrily. "My fingerprint records must also be destroyed. I am here as the com-



plaining witness. I have my rights. It is not a crime to say what you think in this country. The Constitution guarantees me the right of saying what I like. I am a citizen. . . ."

"Your fingerprint record and personal history," the judge interrupted, "are to be sent to Washington. I want to be certain that you are a citizen, as you claim, and that you have no criminal record. Until word is sent back, I hold you in ten thousand dollars bail, on the charge of felonious assault upon the person of one Butch O'Leary."

"Then you must hold him, too!" Hofer shrieked. "He is the guilty one. I am a peaceable citizen. He attacked me. I did not hit him."

"Butch O'Leary, step forward for sentence," the judge announced. "You have pleaded guilty. You had no legal

right to strike or touch this man. It is the sentence of this court that you be fined one dollar—without costs—and the execution of the sentence is suspended. You are free to go."

Butch's wide face lit up. He stumbled to the bench, extended his vast hand to the judge and looked a little ashamed even though it was accepted.

"You," the judge said acidly, turning to Hofer, "claim to be a naturalized citizen. Which means that, without coercion on the part of anyone, you elected to adopt this nation as your own. Now, with four-fifths of the world gone mad, you preach the theory that the poor people should not fight for the benefit of the rich. But you had three thousand, four hundred and eighty dollars in cash in your pockets. That doesn't exactly make you a pauper and it refutes any theories you have to offer.

"You have been asked where you got that money and you refused to say. That is within your rights, but we're going to find out just where that money did come from. I have fined a man, given him a court record because he chose to act, instead of listening to your words as so many indifferent citizens do.

"When he laid hands on you, he committed a crime because anyone has the privilege of saying what he wishes in our country. Abroad, you would probably have been shot. Freedom of speech is one of the blessings of the United States, but let me tell you—it will not be blasphemed. You were clever in speaking to only a small group, as though it were nothing more than a friendly street conversation. It shows the way men like you operate.

"Fortunately I can hold you for a short time, and I remand you to jail in default of bail. Take him away, Bailiff, and bring up some of those respectable drunks I see in the prisoners' cage. They'll make the atmosphere of the room smell sweet after what has just passed before the nose of this court."

CHAPTER II

Butch Has a Problem



BUTCH O'LEARY walked out of night court. Somebody had thrust a fat cigar between his teeth. He felt elated, and just a little proud. Yet deep within him lurked doubts. What would Tony Quinn think of

this escapade? Quinn had given definite instruction that those who worked with him must keep out of trouble.

Butch was glad everything had happened too fast for the newspaper photographers. If they had taken his picture, it would have been catastrophic. He had to avoid the limelight as much as possible, for Butch O'Leary was one of the three living persons who worked with the eerie being known as the Black Bat.

Butch possessed no supreme confidence in his own powers of thinking. He could fight like a tiger, and he possessed the strength of three ordinary men, but he needed guidance for his peace of mind. Therefore, instead of returning to his own modest boarding house room, he went immediately to an apartment house only a couple of blocks from where he lived. He rang the bell under the name card labeled "Carol Baldwin." She was another of the Black Bat's operatives.

Carol was an extraordinarily pretty girl and as clever as she was good looking. Blond, with blue eyes and a trim figure, she exacted many admiring glances. As the Black Bat's trusted agent, she had use for her wits. Now they served her well as she listened to Butch's story.

"It was swell of you, Butch," she approved whole-heartedly. "That man deserved to be shaken up a bit. It's all over now, and you have nothing to worry about. They can't connect

Butch O'Leary, the man who stood up for his country, and Butch O'Leary, the agent of the Black Bat. Just forget all about it."

Butch dug into his pocket and drew out a thin strand of silvery chain. It was a bracelet of some sort, in the center of which was what seemed to be a flat locket.

"I been wonderin' about this," he said. "When I shook that guy, I musta loosened this and it fell to the sidewalk. I picked it up. Nobody saw me do it. So I pry open the funny lookin' thing, and look—it's got a paper inside, sure enough. What do you think of this Carol?"

BUTCH'S fingers secured a lever-age on the locket and forced it open. Carol removed the tiny bit of tissue paper, unfolded it and looked at the picture and the words printed beneath it. She arose abruptly and went into the bedroom for her hat.

"Butch, we're going to see the Black Bat now—at once! You may have uncovered something of great importance."

Carol and Butch left the apartment house, turned down a side street. Making certain that they were not observed, they quietly slipped through a gate into the spacious grounds behind Tony Quinn's house. They walked directly to a small garden house and entered it.

Butch opened a cleverly concealed trap-door and helped Carol into a well constructed tunnel. After following her in, he pulled down the trap-door. They proceeded along the tunnel until they reached a ladder which brought them up to the white-tiled laboratory inside the home the Black Bat maintained as Tony Quinn.

By this means the Black Bat and his aides could come and go at will, without fear of detection. It had often provided Tony Quinn with a good alibi.

He was seated before the fireplace of his rich study when Carol and Butch

were making their way along the tunnel. Dressed in tweeds and a smoking jacket, he held a cane between his knees as he stared blankly into space. For Tony Quinn was stone-blind, the surgeons had said, and with no hope of recovery. His face, particularly around the eyes, was so horribly seared that the scars made a mockery of his former handsome features.

Tony Quinn had been a crusading district attorney of a great city, a fearless man who had fought crime and criminals ruthlessly. One day, in open court, he was preparing to show evidence which would put a killer behind bars. Hirelings of that criminal sought to obliterate the evidence with a powerful acid. Tony Quinn had battled to prevent them, and in the fight the acid had been flung into his face. He was instantly blinded, scarred for the rest of his life when his burned flesh healed.

He had been a broken man, refusing to see anyone and becoming a virtual recluse. Though he was independently wealthy, all his money couldn't find an eye surgeon able to restore his sight.

Then, during a night of darkest despair, Carol Baldwin had come, blond and lovely, to offer him the corneas of her dying father's eyes. A law officer, he had been shot by a bandit. She brought Quinn to a skilful and unknown country doctor, who performed the phenomenal operation—and Tony Quinn again could see and battle crime.

As his sight returned, Quinn discovered that he had been amply rewarded for his suffering in darkness. He was able to see in the dark almost as well as in daylight. Object that were invisible to ordinary sight were as clear to him as if he carried a flashlight. He could even distinguish colors that were mere blots to other human beings. But besides that, his other senses had developed to an extraordinary extent while he was blind. His hearing had grown abnormally acute, his sense of touch extremely keen.

Thus had the Black Bat been born.

When Quinn returned home, he kept the recovery of his sight a secret. He still pretended to be totally blind, for nobody could suspect a blind man of being the Black Bat. He assumed the name as a gesture of derision for those who were happy when the district attorney had become blind as a bat.

He sallied forth at night, garbed in a hood that covered his scarred face, and a cape fashioned like the ribbed wings of a bat. This symbol quickly terrorized the underworld enough to make them offer a huge price to anyone who could prove he killed the Black Bat.

Even the police were instructed to arrest him at the first opportunity, for some of the Black Bat's methods were not entirely legal. He had killed men, though only in self-defense. But when a man dies by violence, the police are required to arrest the killer. They had come close several times, particularly a detective-captain named McGrath. Because of his excitable nature, McGrath had sworn to run down the Black Bat no matter what the danger nor how much time it required.

A SLENDER, almost bald-headed man walked quietly into the study. Quinn didn't turn his head. He played the part of a blind man to the hilt, for there was no telling when someone might be looking in through a window. The newcomer was Silk Kirby, Tony Quinn's combination valet, butler and friend. Silk had once been a slick confidence man, but he had given up this life to aid Tony Quinn and the Black Bat. As smooth as his name, Silk could worm his way into the confidence of even a man who didn't trust himself.

Carrying several newspaper clippings in his hand, he walked over and stood by Quinn's side.

"I've clipped more of those articles you wanted, sir," he said quietly. "Seems as though your hunch was right. There are too many Army officials, Navy officers and even Marine



McGrath

Corps men dying by accident. Major Rolfe is the latest. He was retired about seven years ago from the Coast Guard. Night before last, he was attacked by three or four criminals who wanted to rob him. In the scuffle he received a broken head and died instantly."

"Before Major Rolfe, there were Captain Nelson, Colonel Hickman, Lieutenant-commander Hall," Quinn said thoughtfully. "Rolfe makes the toll four, Silk. All of these victims were retired military men, specialists in their own fields, mostly defense. In case of war they would become invaluable, and now they're dead."

"Two were killed by criminal violence, and in each case it seemed as though robbers had murdered them for their possessions. The other two died as the result of auto accidents. I don't like it. The police and the Federal authorities haven't become suspicious yet, but to me those four deaths came too close to be coincidental. I think those men were murdered."

"Yes, sir," Silk agreed. "So do I, but how can we prove it if the police see nothing suspicious in their deaths?"

Retired men aren't expected to live long. Because of their advanced age, they are more prone to accidents and to the results of injuries imposed by robbers."

Quinn suddenly made a sharp yet almost imperceptible motion for silence.

"Silk, there's someone in the laboratory! Pull down the window shades quickly."

Silk obeyed the order. Quinn arose and thrust his cane under one arm. Walking swiftly to one wall, he opened a secret door by means of a hidden control. Silk followed him into the spacious room and the door closed behind them. Tony Quinn smiled happily into Carol's eyes and then noticed that hers were serious. Butch, too, seemed worried.

"Something has happened," Carol said. "Not about the Black Bat, or you, Tony. Butch happened to overhear some fifth columnist making a speech about pacifism and revolution. He didn't like it so he manhandled this person. Butch was arrested along with the orator. The judge practically praised Butch in open court and let him go. The speech-maker is being held temporarily."

"Good work, Butch," Quinn said. "I wish I'd been there to help you. There are too many of those subversive elements active right now. I hope you satisfied that sadistic urge you possess."

Butch grinned. "I dunno what sadistic means, Boss, but I sure tossed the guy around till his teeth clicked. I made a sucker out of him, all right. He'd been tellin' everybody he was poor and not workin', but three thousand bucks fell outa his pocket. And I kinda got to like cops. They even let me ride on the front seat of the patrol wagon—and what do you think? I blew the siren all the way to the station house!"

"That's nice," Quinn said and faced

Carol. "But what has that to do with me?"

CAROL unfolded her hand and showed the wristlet of silvery metal.

"In the scuffle, Butch must have broken the chain of this bracelet, Tony. It has a locket attached. Remember telling me how suspicious you were of several deaths recently, of ex-Army and Navy officers? Take a look at this."

Quinn took the folded piece of paper. When he spread it out on the laboratory bench, he gave a sharp explanation. He bent closer and studied the paper intently. The picture printed on it was easily recognizable as the well known features of Lieutenant-colonel Catlin. Until his retirement five years before, Catlin had been one of the most able officers attached to the Chemical Warfare Service.

Below the picture, words were printed in extremely fine type. Cryptically they related that Lieutenant-colonel Catlin was in the habit of dining at the Army and Navy Officers Club each Tuesday night. He attended all piano concerts that were available. He lived in a suite which had the stairway running close to it, and he retired promptly at midnight. According to this document, he was in the habit of walking through parks, even at night. He drank sparingly and made few friends because of his quiet nature.

"Explicit, to say the least," Tony Quinn remarked. "Now look here, all of you. This little record was printed on a hand press, judging by the smudges. It means that a limited number of copies have been circulated. I believe that the men who were given these copies were instructed to kill Colonel Catlin at some time when conditions favored the murder. That's why the habits of Catlin were so carefully outlined. We've got to act—this time, not against crooks and ordinary killers, but against a Trojan Horse!"

"Yuh mean one of them things the Nazis beat Norway with?" Butch asked. "That's a wooden horse, ain't it?"

"It was a wooden horse in the days when it originated," Tony Quinn answered. "Now it has changed its characteristics to those of a slimy serpent that burrows underground and occasionally raises its head to strike. When the opportune moment comes, it will sneak out of its hole and create havoc. Before that day arrives it must be crushed underfoot like the crawling thing it is."

"Show me where I can put my foot on it!" Butch howled furiously. "Just show me."

Tony Quinn leaned back on the high stool in front of the bench.

"But it's not as easy as that. Foreign agents have been living here for years, plotting and planning for just this moment. They are all around us, some of them in high offices. Our job is to rout out as many as possible. Here's our course of action. Butch, I want you to go back to the police station and tell them you're sorry about what happened, that maybe this man you threw around isn't as bad as he seems to be. Ask to see him. He won't be there, for the forces behind him will have furnished bail by now.

"Find out who posted the bail. Find out, if you can, all the facts contained in his record. Determine the name of his attorney, because it would take a clever one to get him out if he is gone. Then report to Carol."

"Do I get in on this, sir?" Silk asked with restrained eagerness.

"When Butch gets his information, it's your turn," Tony Quinn said. "You will watch the man, find out whom he contacts. Carol, you are to stand by your phone for the present. I'm going to see Colonel Catlin. Perhaps he knows some reason why these spies are trying to kill off the ex-service men. Silk, get out my paraphernalia. The Black Bat will spread his wings . . ."

CHAPTER III

Policy of Ruthlessness



JUST before he donned the robe and hood of the Black Bat, Tony Quinn made a neat parcel of certain instruments he thought would be necessary. Fighting spies that would resort to Trojan Horse activities required the same kind of stealth they used. The Black Bat intended to work against them with their own brand of ruthlessness and slyness.

He put two loaded automatics into special holsters on his person, removed the hood temporarily and replaced it with a wide-brimmed hat. Whenever the Black Bat worked more or less openly, he had to shield his features as well as he could. Those hideous scars around his eyes revealed his identity, with which practically every police officer in the city was familiar.

Carol put a hand on his shoulder and looked anxiously into his eyes.

"Tony, this is probably the most dangerous job you've ever undertaken. Ordinary thugs and killers aren't as clever. They don't have the tremendous resources behind them, nor the number of men a spy ring can control. Please be careful—for my sake. I know just how necessary this work is, and I hope I get into it actively, too. But there's so much danger. . . ."

"In a way," Tony Quinn admitted slowly. "But remember that these rats will be just as afraid of me as I'll probably be of them. If I can, I'll put them on the defensive, make them look to their own wits. If it's necessary, I'll wear them down, one by one. This is a game without mercy. They'll certainly extend none and I'm not inclined to be soft-hearted with termites who undermined so many European democracies by boring from below—and

above. Perhaps by morning I'll know more about what we face. Meanwhile we can't let them get to Colonel Catlin. At exactly nine o'clock, you are to phone Catlin's apartment."

Tony Quinn dropped into the tunnel and made his way to the garden house. Within a few seconds he was seated behind the wheel of Butch's old coupé. This car was something like a Q-Boat, for though it looked like a wreck, there was plenty of speed in her smoothly running motor. Recently the Black Bat had installed cleverly hidden compartments which held a rifle with telescopic sights and a submachine-gun with plenty of ammunition.

He wondered now, as he drove toward the apartment house where Colonel Catlin lived, if some premonition had caused him to make those arrangements. Dealing with Trojan Horse activities might easily require the use of fast-firing automatic rifles or some careful sniping with the assistance of telescopic sights.

It was blindingly dark in the vicinity of the colonel's home. High, heavily branched shade trees gave the street a gloomy touch, but for the Black Bat this was perfect. He parked the car, faded into the darkness of an adjoining building and drew on his hood. Under one arm he carried the package he had made up in the laboratory.

The Black Bat strode rapidly through the night. An ordinary man pursuing this particular course would have stumbled over an oil tank intake that jutted out of the ground. But the Black Bat saw it as plainly as though it were bathed in sunlight. Everything which would have been an obstacle to any other person was easily avoided by the Black Bat.

HE reached the rear of the apartment house, which was not a large one. There were no lights in the cellar, indicating that the superintendent was not on duty all the time. This exactly suited the Black Bat's

plans. He slipped up to the basement door, examined the lock in the intense darkness and then inserted a key he selected from the ring he carried. The lock slid back on the first attempt.

He slipped into the cellar, closed the door and quietly placed an empty pail about a foot away from it. If anyone tried to sneak in, there would be a terrific clatter.

The Black Bat searched through the gloom of the cellar until he spotted the telephone system. Striding to it, he examined the tiny identifying tags hooked to the various wires from the different apartments. Since he had looked up Colonel Catlin's phone number, he found the proper wire in less than a minute. Swiftly he unwrapped his package, revealing a compact device for tapping wires. He hooked this up, found an old chair and sat down.

From time to time, he glanced at his wrist-watch. When the hands were almost on the hour, he finally heard a buzz. Colonel Catlin's booming voice answered. The Black Bat smiled contentedly, for the caller was Carol, pretending that she had obtained the wrong number. The Black Bat knew now that Catlin was home and that his wire was successfully tapped. If Catlin was lured anywhere, the Black Bat would know that, too.

The spy ring was bound to strike against him soon. Probably the man Butch had mused up was assigned to this work, if he had obtained his freedom. They would, of course, want to make it seem like an accident, and therefore the Black Bat saw little danger of any attempt at murder while Catlin was home. A hit-and-run driver, or a band of fake robbers who slugged their victim too hard—that would be the best means of accomplishing their designs.

Thirty minutes crawled by before the line buzzed again. The Black Bat listened intently.

"Colonel," the caller said, "this is Anton Morino. I must see you on a mat-

ter of vital importance. I cannot leave my home, nor can I explain over the phone. Will you come out here, please? Believe me, I wouldn't call if this were not an extremely serious matter. And please tell no one I called."

"Why, of course I'll come, Anton," Colonel Catlin said. "If I can help you in any way at all, don't hesitate to ask me. Where do you live?"

The man called Anton Morino gave specific directions, which Catlin had to write down to remember. They involved many turns at certain streets. Morino was giving anything but idle directions. This was a trap—a death trap for Catlin! If he followed that route, as he certainly would, death would be waiting somewhere along the roads!

The Black Bat quickly unhooked his instrument and returned to where his car was parked.

Five minutes later Catlin hurriedly emerged. He crossed the street, backed his car out of a garage and headed north. The Black Bat followed, far enough behind to avoid detection, yet close enough to act quickly when things would start happening. Exactly how the killers would operate he didn't know. Most of the section Catlin had been told to traverse was unfrequented. Shots could be fired or even a bomb thrown. But the Black Bat doubted that the killers would resort to such obvious means.

THE chase led to the outskirts of the city. Carefully as the Black Bat had watched before, now he searched everything ahead with his incredible eyes. He saw an intersection and—what an ordinary man wouldn't see—a car parked at the junction of each cross artery. Instantly the Black Bat stamped heavily on the gas pedal, making it hit the floor. The old car spurted forward.

But Catlin had already reached the intersection. As he crossed it, both cars shot out. Catlin must have seen

one of them coming, for he yanked the wheel hard, veering to the right. The other car was coming from that direction. There was a deafening crash of smashed metal, splintered glass and exploding tires.

The Black Bat was traveling without lights, so he knew his car wouldn't be seen in the intense darkness. Besides, the killers had selected a spot where there would be little traffic. They didn't want to be found at their bloody work.

As the Black Bat turned off the road, he saw four men emerge from the two heavy sedans. One held a short length of iron pipe. Rushing up to Catlin's sedan, they pulled open the battered door and reached in to yank Catlin out. After they stretched him alongside the wreck, three of the men drew back. The actual killer raised the short iron bar. His lips parted in a snarl of hatred as his breath came in savage hisses—until he stopped breathing.

From the darkness beside the road, a jet of flame and the roar of a gun startled the killers. The man with the iron pipe moaned and collapsed across Catlin's sprawled form. The other three whipped out guns and started shooting in the direction of the gun flame. But as the Black Bat pulled the trigger of his weapon, he tensed, moved fast. Every bullet of the spies missed him by yards. They couldn't see him, but they could not know that they presented perfect targets to the super-sensitive eyes of the Black Bat.

One leaped toward Catlin and aimed his gun at the helpless man's head. But he did not shoot. He was dead before he had finished raising his gun.

The other two gave a single bleat of alarm and raced for their undamaged car. As they got in, three bullets smashed through the windows. The whine and crash only served to lend wings to their flight. The car started off with a grinding of hastily shifted gears. Carefully the Black Bat steadied

his gun on one arm and sent another slug through the rear window. It had shatter-proof glass, but the Black Bat was using steel-jacketed, high-powered forty-fives in this fight. He was answering terrorism with ruthlessness.

The sedan disappeared into the night while the Black Bat ran over to Catlin. Brutally he hauled the dead spy off, and gently raised the colonel's head. Catlin opened his eyes and stared blankly. He could just make out the outline of the hooded head, though the Black Bat could see every line of his pain-contorted face.

"DON'T be alarmed," the Black Bat said softly. "You have not been badly hurt. The accident knocked you out and a quartette of playboys tried to make a real job of it by bashing your head in or putting a slug through it. The two men who actually tried to wipe you off the face of the earth were killed. I had to shoot them to save you."

"But I don't understand," Catlin protested weakly. "Please help me up. I—I feel fairly strong now. You killed these two men because they were trying to murder me? Nonsense! Who would want to kill me? I haven't an enemy in the world."

The Black Bat laughed without mirth.

"I'm sorry to contradict you, Colonel. You have several million enemies. Two are dead, but two others got away. They may get help and return. Lean on me, and don't be afraid of me because of the outfit I'm wearing."

"I'm not," Catlin answered. "I know you are the Black Bat and that you saved my life. But why in the world should anybody want to kill me?"

"I'll explain later," the Black Bat said.

He helped Catlin into his old coupé and then ran back to where the two spies lay dead. This was one of the few times that there was no remorse in

the Black Bat's heart. He had been forced to kill before. More than once his victim had been some wild-eyed crook who, with a different childhood environment, might not have turned to crime. That kind the Black Bat had never wanted to destroy. But these two men—spies and saboteurs who lived for the day when they might hurl destruction on the entire nation—their deaths didn't bother his conscience.

He knelt beside them. In the center of their foreheads he pasted stickers fashioned after the image of a bat in flight, with wings outspread, dark and mysterious. Then he returned to the coupé and drove several miles away.

CHAPTER IV

Human Target



ARKING in a dark spot, the Black Bat shut off the motor and extracted a pack of cigarettes from a pocket beneath his robe. He handed one to Catlin, lit it and then touched flame to his own. In the glare of the match Catlin saw sharp, cold eyes gleaming from behind the mask. He shivered, praying that he would never be on the wrong side of the game with the Black Bat hunting him down.

"You've been to several military funerals lately, eh, Colonel?"

Catlin frowned. "Why, yes. But what has that to do with a plot to murder me?"

"The men whose funerals you attended also thought they had no enemies, but they were murdered. I can't prove that, of course, yet I know it to be true. By a stroke of good fortune, I discovered you were on the list and I took steps to prevent your murder. Enemies, Colonel? You have millions of them! This nation is rearming. We



"So, you cannot follow orders!" the Gestapo agents grated (Chap. XIV)

don't want war, but we want to be ready for it if it comes to our shores.

"Besides our defense preparations, we're supplying the nations that hate and distrust the explosive forces of might. We're trying to keep the world a decent place to live in. At this moment, we're free men, and we'll fight to maintain that freedom. But we're being fought, too, by shadowy figures who work in the dark with underhanded methods.

"Other nations have had tragic experiences with the Trojan Horse, the spies who make countries defenseless by confusing and sabotaging preparations. Those men we must stop."

"Yes, of course," Catlin agreed. "But

I still don't see how I'm involved."

"You're in it up to your ears. We're training men, thousands upon thousands of them. More are being brought into the service every day. They need instruction from experienced men to teach them how to fight. If the spies can prevent that, it will be as great a disaster as the sinking of our battleships or the blowing up of our munitions factories. You and those four officers who were murdered—all of you were retired, but you can still be called to active service at any time.

"That call must be coming soon or those spies wouldn't act so quickly. I'm betting everything on the fact that Washington intends to recall you ex-

perts to train the green troops. We are under-officered and that condition can be remedied only by having men like you train your successors. The spies want to prevent that and they are willing to resort to murder to do it. Now can you see that there are enemies who can't allow your existence?"

CATLIN wiped his sweating forehead, took an immense drag on his cigarette.

"Of course I see, and I'm grateful that you showed me the light. Yes, I am about to be called back, just as you say. Those devils certainly are working cleverly. They intend to murder us old men, and we are easy prey. Then, when our ranks are so badly depleted, they'll tackle the younger officers. No one will realize what is happening till it's too late. We'll make them know! Take me home. I'm going to call Washington and, if you don't mind, I'll mention your name."

"You have my permission," the Black Bat said. "I want those slinking spies to know I'm fighting them. That's why I left souvenirs on the two men I killed. But before we start back, I want to know about this Anton Morino who lured you into this trap with a phone call."

"Anton?" Catlin gasped. "Great heavens, he can't be involved! That isn't possible. He hates everything those spies represent. He hates them with all the malevolence of a man who has actually seen their work of destruction. Anton Morino came here from Tyrolean Austria, just after Hitler invaded it. He had to flee for his life."

The Black Bat started his car and pulled onto the road.

"Perhaps, Colonel. Norway accepted many people like that—men who presumably fled from the Nazi wrath. And what happened? Those the Norwegians befriended turned traitor, dug knives into their backs. They were sent to smooth and prepare a field of

action for armed forces that would eventually arrive.

"Don't forget that those monsters don't adhere to the rules of the game—only when someone else pulls the same trick on them. Then they squawk to high heaven and protest that they've been fouled. Anton Morino may be wholly innocent, but until I'm convinced, he stays on my list of suspects. I must insist that you do not let him know what happened."

* * * * *

BUTCH O'LEARY, in response to the Black Bat's orders, paid a short visit to Police Headquarters and then phoned Carol's apartment.

"They thought I was nuts because I wanted to tell that bum I was sorry. But anyhow he's free. Guy named Anton Morino put up ten grand in cash and the bum walked out. What do I do now?"

"Go back to your room and wait," Carol said. "I'll tell Silk what happened."

Silk Kirby was seated before a mirror in one of the upstairs rooms when the phone rang. His appearance was undergoing a radical change. In the past, Silk had learned to adapt himself to two disguises that used to be of great assistance when he pried spare cash from the bankrolls of people with more larceny than honesty in their hearts. Now, as the Black Bat's right-hand man, these disguises often proved invaluable. There could be no connection between the operation of the Black Bat's aide and Silk Kirby, or the whole secret might be exposed. Silk was becoming almost as well known as his master.

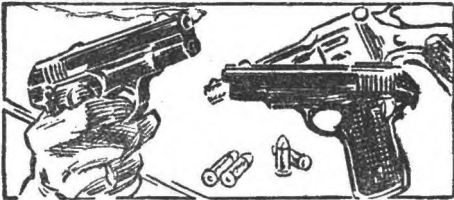
He widened his face, changed the contour of his lips and created a couple of sacks under his eyes. A wig, cleverly fastened to his bald pate, made him look years younger.

Silk answered the phone, using the upstairs connection. He listened to Carol's instruction, then hung up. Hastily he completed his disguise with

a suit of clothes that Silk Kirby, gentleman's gentleman, would never have worn even to an masquerade.

He locked the house from the inside, slipped out through the tunnel and hailed a taxi two blocks from the house. He had already checked Anton Morino's address, and before long he was studying the place from a safe distance.

It was an old, rambling house, without close neighbors and well isolated from the road by big trees and plenty of shrubbery. Silk was grateful for the



protection that these natural barriers offered. He sneaked into the grounds, fumbled around and picked up a small stone, which he threw toward the back of the house. When no dogs set up a clamor, he breathed a sigh of genuine relief.

Silk knew plenty of ways of entering a house without those inside being aware. Many of his former associates had been crooks of high caliber—in their professions, if not in their characters. When he crept to the rear of the house, he blinked in amazement. Four big cars were parked in one of the gloomier spots, yet the house itself was darkened.

Silk straightened up from a crouching position just beneath a window. He failed to raise it, and resorted to the use of a thin piece of metal that he carried on these expeditions. Forcing back the latch successfully, he clambered through the open window and stood listening.

He could hear muffled voices that seemed to come from near the floor, directly across the room. Silk stepped forward warily, moving his hand cautiously in front of him to locate

furniture. If he stumbled now, there was no telling what the result might be. He found that the voices came from an old-fashioned hot air vent. Apparently this house was no more up to date than its outward appearance suggested. Silk knelt on the floor and listened.

A MAN with a loud, authoritative voice was speaking. With each word, Silk's blood ran one degree colder. The Black Bat's hunch had certainly paid off! This must be one of the chief hideaways of the spy ring.

"And so," the voice went on, "we are this day almost prepared. Yet we must not relax in our vigilance, nor in our constant training. You men gathered here have shown poor results in target practice. When the time comes, I will need men who can shoot fast and straight. Therefore you will report to Hans at the old farm, where no one can hear your practice shots. Prepare yourselves, my lieutenants, for our day is coming soon!

"You will remain at the farm until your aim is true and your firing rapid. Then, and only then, will you be ready. We are strong, yes, but do not let these Americans fool you by their apparent lassitude. Once aroused, they will fight back like demons. We must arrange it so they will have no leaders. Even now we are in the process of wiping out another man who might prove harmful to our mission. He is number five, but there will be more—many more—and these fools here will go on placidly, never suspecting murder."

"That is right," another voice broke in. "I, Erik Wolfram, say it is so. You have been sent here from the mighty Gestapo to direct our efforts. We are cleverer than any of the fools who oppose us. Even though we have never seen you, our Director, we obey you implicitly. Our cause cannot fail."

"Good," the booming voice approved. "It is well. Now you will stand at attention. About-face, all of you. Do

not turn back for five minutes. Any further orders will come over the usual channels. You have but to keep your eyes open."

A moment later Silk heard a car door slam shut. He scurried across the floor toward the window. Undoubtedly the man leaving the place was the spy leader, unknown even to his own men. Silk knew that if he could seize and identify him, half the battle would be won. But as he reached the window, a car flashed by, turned into the street, and vanished.

He cursed softly and determined to satisfy his frustration by exposing these rats who characteristically used a cellar as their meeting place. The man they called their Director had spoken of a target range where his legions could learn how to kill effectively. More than anything else, he had to find the location of that farm.

Silk looked around for a hiding place, for the men in the cellar would be coming up soon. He headed toward the hallway, moving with absolute silence. He was half-way down the hall when the front door opened and the hall lights were turned on. Silk's hand darted toward the gun in his pocket. But he was a fraction of a second too slow. One of the two men in the hall had him covered.

"What's the idea of using a gun, copper?" Silk snarled, though the men wore civilian clothes. "I ain't robbin' the joint. I'm just lookin' for a place to hole up for the night."

Silk's voice attracted those in the cellar. He swallowed with difficulty when he counted eleven burly men as they filed into the spacious hallway.

"**H**OLY smoke!" Silk carried on his act. "I figured this joint was vacant. Say, all you mugs can't be cops. What is this—a stag party?"

A broad-shouldered man moved ominously toward Silk. When he spoke, his voice identified him as Erik Wolfram.

"Who are you? What are you doing in this house? How long have you been here?"

Silk jerked his head in the direction of the living room.

"I just opened a window about a minute ago and came in. I'm on the lam. The cops are after me and I figured this was one swell spot to hide. So—"

"He lies," one of the men ground out. "A minute ago we stood at attention as our Director's car left here. We turned our backs on it according to orders. We therefore faced the house, and we did not see this man going through any window. He is a spy—an accursed Government-man!"

Silk started forward until a gun, pressed against his chest, stopped him.

"I don't know what kind of an outfit I ran into," he snapped, "but don't call me no G-man. I hate their guts. Search me if you want to. I'm heeled, but you won't find nothin' that'll make you think I'm a G-man or any other kind of a cop. You mugs got me all wrong."

One of the two men who had entered through the front door departed after whispering to Wolfram. When he returned, he carried a corpse over his shoulder. He dropped it and went out after the second body. As the dead men were turned on their backs, Silk gave an involuntary start. Between the eyes of each man was pasted a Black Bat sticker!

"So, perhaps you are not of the police," Wolfram snarled. "But those two men belonged to my organization, and the man who killed them branded his work. We all have heard of the Black Bat. You are the Black Bat!"

"Me?" Silk howled. "Say, if that guy ever caught up with me, I'd be laying there right between your two boys. Listen, if the Black Bat is on your trail, run for cover. I'm tellin' you he's poison."

Wolfram allowed an enigmatic smile to cross his face.

"But perhaps I have the antidote for that poison, eh? You are the Black Bat. You killed my men and spoiled certain plans of mine. Somehow, you learned of this place and sneaked in to watch and listen. But you will never profit by it. A short time ago we received orders to improve our shooting. Even now, we are ready to go to a certain spot where we may shoot as often as we like, without interference. Yet we were desolate because we would have nothing but inanimate targets to shoot at.

"Now all that is changed. We have you—the Black Bat! We can indeed become proficient with you standing before us as a target. You will not mind a little fun like that, eh?"

Silk's eyes flashed across the group of sinisterly grinning killers. Suddenly he lunged forward, slapping down Wolfram's gun as he did so. He managed to bury one fist into Wolfram's stomach and another in a blow that glanced off the cheek. The rest of the mob closed in, eager for blood.

Half a dozen pistol butts slashed at Silk, and most of them collided with his head.

He fell to one knee, wound his arms around the legs of the nearest man and pulled him to the floor. Then a savage tattoo of gun butts all but split his

skull apart. He fell face forward and lay utterly still.

CHAPTER V

Desperation



SILK awoke to the pitching of a car traveling over a rough road. He groaned and tried to move, but his hands and legs were firmly tied. When he attempted to open his mouth, he found that a gag choked back everything more articulate than a groan. A hefty foot struck him on the back of the neck, forced his face into the filthy carpet on the floor. He had to stay that way, half strangling, until the car finally stopped. Then the foot was removed.

Before Silk could even gain a normal breath, his ankles were grabbed and he was dragged out of the car. His head struck the running board so hard that he almost lapsed back into unconsciousness. Bitterly he wished that had happened. It might have lasted long enough to spare him the terror of the grisly end they planned for him.

[Turn page]

Private Notes from Mrs. M--'s Diary



3 Slept like a top all night. Ex-Lax worked fine this morning and didn't upset me a bit. Headache's all gone now and I feel bright as a lark.



1 Suffered all day with a terrible headache. Felt dull, tired and out of sorts. Remembered that I needed a laxative and decided my headache was due to that.



2 Took an Ex-Lax tablet before going to bed. It tasted swell — just like a piece of fine chocolate.

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle*! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.

10¢ and 25¢



Two other cars without lights pulled up, and laughing, highly elated men clambered out. Silk was dragged on his back to an old barn, where his legs were dropped. Two men stood guard over him while the others disappeared into the house. For a few moments there was nothing but silence, until the frogs in some nearby swamp lost their sudden fear. Silk shuddered. That was where they would throw what was left of him. In this forsaken spot, his body would never be found.

At last the men filed out again. Silk was hoisted to his feet and the rope around his ankles severed. The gag was also removed before Wolfram confronted him.

"This," he waved an arm expansively, "is theoretically the property of the Fatherland, for it was bought with our money. Here, on the soil of our real country, we accuse you of being a spy. The sentence is death by gun fire—immediately! Walk ahead of me to that tree, the one near the foot of that hill."

Silk fought down his impulse to shudder. He was going to die, but he would not give these murderers the pleasure of seeing a man yap and beg to save his life. He knew that was what they were anticipating, because genuine disappointment showed in Wolfram's eyes.

"Well, thanks for the fast trail, anyway," Silk grunted. "It was streamlined, all right, but you went too quick for justice to catch up. It doesn't matter. I'll be seeing all of you when the Black Bat goes to town. You can't laugh him off, Nazi. He just doesn't scare. Let's go. You boys want your fun, and I wouldn't spoil. . . ."

Wolfram struck viciously, a back-hand blow across the mouth.

"You will not speak those brave words when we begin shooting. How can the Black Bat harm us after we kill him? You are the Black Bat, so what is the use of pretending? Walk before me. The slightest trick will mean a bullet through your leg."

Two men seized Silk's arms, half carried, half dragged him toward the tree. He closed his eyes in misery as he stumbled along. Not only had he sacrificed his own life, but he had failed the Black Bat as well! The only comfort he could find was the two Black Bat stickers that had been pasted to the foreheads of Wolfram's men. The Black Bat had already collected a fifty per cent profit on what was going to happen now.

THEY lashed Silk to the tree. A car was driven close enough for the high beam of its headlights to make Silk close his eyes wearily.

"So, it is ready," Wolfram gloated. "We are miles from the nearest dwelling, still farther from any highway. There is no one to hear our shots nor the screams of the spy. Aim for the legs and arms first. We must learn to cripple as well as kill. There may be some we shall wish to take alive, eh? Max, you caught this man. Your reward is that you may have the first shot. Aim well, for the right arm."

Max bared his teeth in a murderous smile as he strode forward importantly. He cocked his revolver and spread his big feet apart to balance himself. Raising the pistol, he sighted Silk's right shoulder along the barrel. A hush fell over the others who waited their turns. This was a supreme moment in their lives. Before their eyes, a man was to die.

Silk didn't brace himself for the impact of the first slug, nor even open his eyes. Nothing seemed to matter now. But when he heard a shot, his eyes widened involuntarily. He waited for the terrific blow and agonizing heat of a bullet smashing through his body. But he had not been hit! Instead, Max was slowly rocking back and forth, the weapon sagging in his hand. Even through the blinding glare of headlights, Silk could see the bluish hole directly through the forehead of the ex-gunner.

A man shouted a hoarse Teutonic curse, ran frenziedly to the still twitching body of his dead friend. He raised his gun savagely. A shot blasted the frightful stillness—and his gun dropped out of his hand!

This time Silk realized that the shot had come from the darkness behind him. Hope surged through his heart, but not for long. As the second victim of that uncanny marksman dropped, Wolfram screeched orders. "Kill him—no matter what happens!"

The men started forward. Instantly unholy bedlam burst loose. An automatic rifle sent whining chunks of steel just above the heads of the charging men. They broke in terror and spread wildly in all directions.

The rapid shooting followed them as they headed for their cars, did not stop even when they piled into two black sedans. A few snapped shots back at Silk, but they were fired on the run and the bullets missed by yards.

Abruptly a weird form broke from the thick woods behind Silk. The gun poised at his shoulder was still firing a challenge at the fleeing men. Then, as the mysterious rifleman came into the scope of the headlights from the abandoned car, Silk gave a shout. There was no mistaking the simulated wings and the hood of the Black Bat!

SILK was so weak on his legs after his ghastly ordeal that the Black Bat helped him into the coupé, which had been well hidden off the lane. He grinned at Silk.

"Those rifles certainly came in handy. I reached Anton Morino's house just as they were carrying you out, so I followed the parade. While they held a conference in the farmhouse, I found myself a good spot for some neat shooting. Two of them are dead. If the others hadn't run, there would have been a slaughter. You see, Silk, you're worth a thousand of those lice. Now if you feel well enough, we'll see what those dead men have on them.



Silk

I'd also like to take a look inside the farmhouse."

As they searched the dead spies, they piled up a small heap of junk. The men were well supplied with cash, which the Black Bat appropriated.

"We'll send it to the Red Cross," he smiled. "Silk, look at this. It's a plain heavy card with a series of small holes punched in it. See the way those holes are arranged? Three with short spaces, then a large space and two more. In some places there are as many as five of the holes in a group."

"Code?" Silk asked promptly.

"I don't know. A code of this kind, depending on sets of symbols, wouldn't necessarily have to consist of holes. It would be easier to make a few dots. Anyhow, we'll take these with us. If it is a code, I'll study it as soon as I have time. Let's head for the farmhouse."

The Black Bat picked up the automatic rifle in his crooked arm, and Silk held the repeater rifle equipped with telescopic sights.

"They've got a leader they call the Director," Silk said. "I overheard that much before they grabbed me. Whatever they are up to is about ready, so they'll strike soon. This Director isn't even known to them. He makes them turn their backs when he leaves the place. Maybe he puts a screen in front

of him while he talks. Anyway, I heard him tell those skunks that more orders would follow and all they had to do was merely to keep their eyes open."

"Odd," the Black Bat said puzzledly. "Keep their eyes open for orders? They usually come by mouth. He should have told them to keep their ears cocked instead. This is no haphazard organization, Silk. It's headed by a man specially trained for this kind of work. Either he or his lieutenants must be in the confidence of certain high officials. That's what makes it difficult. You can't clean up a snake's nest until you know where it is. Watch out now. We may run into some trouble in this house."

The Black Bat found that only an unlocked screen door barred his way. He opened it, dodged with cautious swiftness into a big kitchen. He and Silk grew rigid. From one of the distant rooms came a low moan. Holding their rifles ready, they searched the place. In the living room they found a gray-haired man lying in a pool of his own blood. He was still alive, but dying fast. A knife had been thrust through his throat, and another wound close to his heart was pumping a scarlet stream.

PAINFULLY the dying man lifted one hand off the floor. Between his shaking fingers he held a card that had been punched with a series of holes exactly like those they had taken from the two dead spies. The gray-haired victim seemed to be trying to tell them something with his eyes, for the knife in his throat prevented speech. When the Black Bat took the card, the man attempted a wan smile before his head dropped with a bang on the floor.

"They killed him because he probably knew too much and they thought he wasn't trustworthy," the Black Bat said grimly. "We'll pay them back for this murder. Search the house, Silk. Look especially for letters and papers."

While Silk busied himself, the Black

Bat compared the three cards. The two that had been taken from the dead spies were identical. The holes matched up exactly when he placed one over the other. But the third, which was still wet with the murdered man's blood, didn't compare at all. The holes were in radically different series. That these cards meant something vitally important was absolutely plain, but the Black Bat could find no answer.

Silk came hurrying down from the second floor with a bunch of letters tied with a piece of rough cord. The Black Bat opened several of them, found they were written in German. He knew enough of the language to make a rough translation.

"Damn them," he cried. "Silk, this man died trying to help us! He was in league with the spy ring, but not because he wanted to be. These letters are from his wife and two daughters, who are interned in Germany. The letters plead with him to obey the orders of the Gestapo and to keep a close mouth about everything. Now, probably, those three helpless women will be killed or forced to work themselves to death for a cause they hate. This isn't new. They've done it before, in several parts of the world, but it's the first time I've come into actual contact with it. Silk, I wish I'd cut down every one of those men. Come on, we're going back to town. I want to see a Tyrolean Austrian named Anton Morino."

CHAPTER VI

Two Sick Men



CAUTIOUSLY the Black Bat parked his car near Anton Morino's home.

"I'll take the rear," he told Silk. "You tackle the front. Use that automatic rifle if necessary. If Morino was warned that you are still alive, he has probably run

away. But I have a hunch those rats we dispersed are too busy hunting their own cover to help anyone else."

Silk approached the house carefully, and in silence climbed over the east railing of the porch. He bent low for a quick look inside. A man, about fifty years old, was pacing the floor, nervously running his hand through his thick shock of pure white hair. He was heavily built, though not tall, and clad in expensive clothing. He looked clever and meticulous about his appearance.

Silk didn't wait. There might be others in the house, but by now the Black Bat would be ready for action. Silk stood erect, smashed the window with the barrel of his gun.

"Lift 'em high!" he snapped. "That's right. Now walk over here and unlatch this window. Open it wide. Move back ten paces and keep turned toward me. Don't forget that this is a Tommy-gun. It shoots fast and straight."

Silk climbed through the window. Anton Morino sat down heavily and covered his eyes, moaning.

"So it has come at last! For all that I have done, the reward is death. Yet I have expected it." He looked up and his face was agonized. "Shoot—go ahead and shoot me! That's what they sent you here for. I know that one failure is repaid with execution. I have failed, somehow. I don't know how. I don't even care. It will be heaven's blessing when I am dead. Shoot, damn you! Why do you look at me like that?"

A curtain at the far end of the room moved aside and the Black Bat emerged. When he stepped up to Anton Morino, the Nazi's harrowed look changed to awe and terror. He started from his chair, but Silk pushed him back.

"You are the Black Bat!" Morino screamed. "They killed you! You are dead! They told me they were taking you away to kill you—and they never fail. . . ."

"They fail more often than they



Carol

admit," the Black Bat answered grimly. "Morino, you deliberately lured Colonel Catlin out of his apartment tonight, and sent him over a route along that you knew would mean his death. You are involved in this spy ring. Unless you tell me everything about it, you really will die. First of all, why did you think this man with the machine-gun was sent here to kill you?"

"Because I failed them," Morino groaned. "They do not tolerate failure, even when it is not my fault. Colonel Catlin is my friend. I didn't want to help in his murder, but what else could I do? They forced me into it. When he did not die, they said my arrangements were not satisfactory and I would hear from the Director. We men in the ranks hear from him only by bullets or knives. You must believe me."

"Just keep on talking," the Black Bat said. "Who is this Director? Where is the headquarters of the ring? What are they up to?"

"I don't know who he is," Morino cried hysterically. "No one knows his name nor what he looks like. He never permits himself to be seen. But he must be an important man, high in the confidence of officials, because he seems to know everything. There are no headquarters. The Director designates a certain place, and those who receive the orders assemble there. To-

night it was in my own home.

"His intentions are to disrupt the preparedness plans of the United States by any methods necessary. He cares nothing for human lives. He also wishes to prevent supplies from reaching his military enemies. I tell you, he is not human. He is a monster from the depths of hell!"

"What hold does he have on you?" the Black Bat suddenly demanded.

MORINO staggered to his feet, clenching his hands.

"There is no use in being silent now. I am to be killed in any case. Let me open the safe hidden in the farther wall. I can show you things that will make your eyes open wide!"

He didn't wait for permission to cross the room. As he headed toward the farther wall, Silk and the Black Bat followed more slowly. But when he neared a wide rear window, he broke into a wild run and dived recklessly through the glass. Landing in a flower bed outside, he sprang up instantly and streaked away into the darkness.

Silk jerked the machine-gun to his shoulder, but the Black Bat pushed the barrel down.

"We'll get him later, alive," he said. "Morino is desperate, Silk. He took a mighty long chance just now and he must have had some terrific reason for it. Keep your eyes open while I search the place."

Morino's home revealed none of the mysteriously punched cards. In fact, it seemed to have been stripped of anything which might have damaged Morino or the spy ring. The Black Bat wondered if he shouldn't have let Silk fire a withering hail of lead after the fleeing man. There was a chance that Morino had put on a good act. Was he the Director, the cunning spy leader who guided every movement along the path to death and destruction?

"Morino put up the bail for Hans Hofer's release," the Black Bat said later, as he and Silk were driving to-

ward Tony Quinn's home. "Ten thousand dollars is a lot of cash to sacrifice, which means there's a paymaster, Silk. He may be this man known as the Director, but I'm sure this cash comes from Berlin and in quantities that are amazing. Imagine it! While their own people are half starved and go around in *ersatz* clothes, or barely any at all, the Nazi Government sends millions over here to keep their Gestapo busy. If we could stop that source of income, we'd break the spy ring wide open. They're faithful to the Fatherland, all right—as long as the money flows freely."

"Butch said there was another man with Morino," Silk informed. "A lawyer named Tolly obtained a *habeas* when the police refused to release Hofer even on bond. He also must know something. Why not pay him a visit?"

The Black Bat looked into the rear view mirror of the coupé. He wasn't being trailed, and no pedestrian was in sight. He pulled over to the curb.

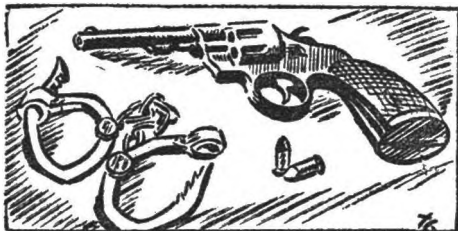
"It's almost morning, Silk. We need rest and time to outline our plans. Tolly can wait. Let's go through the garden gate now. Hurry."

LATE the next morning, Tony Quinn, holding his cane, tapped along the paths through his estate. His eyes were blank, staring straight ahead, as he walked with the characteristic caution of a blind man. A few people in the neighborhood saw him, which was exactly what he wanted. Not even for an instant did he wish Tony Quinn to be considered anything but hopelessly stone-blind. His former affliction now provided him with an excellent alibi.

Shortly after noon he entered the secret laboratory where he could work unobserved. Placing the three cards in front of him, he studied them with puzzled, brooding eyes. The cards were about the size of ordinary post cards, and the holes punched in them were

perhaps a sixteenth of an inch in diameter. When he measured the distance between them, he found that even though several of the holes were grouped together, they were irregularly spaced. Obviously some kind of machine had punched those holes, yet why was there a discrepancy in the spaces?

The Black Bat had access to several master codes. For two hours he vainly tried to associate those holes with a code, but it just couldn't be done. He realized that each recipient of these cards might have a key in the form of a



letter or book. By placing the card in a certain position, the holes would bring out certain letters.

"But if that's it," Quinn muttered, "this message must consist of about three small words. These holes wouldn't reveal entire words of ordinary print. There must be something else, some other way of using these cards. Here I probably have the solution to the whole mystery in my hands, and I can't even use it!"

Carol came through the tunnel, soon after dark. She listened intently as Tony Quinn described the events of the night before, and with each word her pretty face became more worried.

"They're such desperate men," she cried, "ready and eager to kill anyone! Fighting them here is worse than fighting them on an actual battleground. There you can recognize the enemy—the one in front, anyhow. But the enemy doesn't wear any uniform here, and he doesn't attack in the open. His weapon is a knife in the back. I wish there were no wars, no world troubles. Why can't we be fighting some nice gentlemanly band of murderers, or

maybe some pleasant orphan asylum arsonists instead of these treacherous wolves?"

Quinn chuckled and sat down beside her.

"So far the score is in our favor, and I hope it stays that way. If I only knew where they'd strike next—what their main objectives are—but I'm temporarily stuck. I can't even find any members of that band to argue with."

CAROL looked down at her well manicured nails and said:

"A week ago you told me about the various travel agencies in town, the ones that specialize in arranging trips to Germany, Austria, Holland, and Italy. I've checked them. Since the war started, they have done no business whatsoever, yet they are still in business. Their staffs remain the same, though no customer ever enters the offices. They haven't sold a steamship ticket in months, and still they pay rent on time."

"That's great news, Carol," Quinn exclaimed, his eyes glowing. "You've done fine work. Those agencies can legally, and without arousing suspicion, obtain money grants from their home offices. I suspect the whole business is controlled by the Gestapo. Through these travel agencies the spies must be supervised and paid off. That is the answer, I think."

"There is one group of German agencies," Carol went on. "They're headed by a man called Fritz von Elkin, and if I ever saw a true Nazi, he is it. He lives like a prince and keeps an office like the late Ziegfeld's, just above his travel agency on West Boulevard. I went in, asked for a job and did they snow on me! My accent wasn't so good, I guess."

"Well, that's something to start on," Quinn said thoughtfully. "Fritz von Elkin, eh? That hero used to lecture some years ago on German submarine warfare. I remember that when he told about sailors and passengers swim-

ming hopelessly fifty miles from shore, he actually glowed all over. His attitude was so obvious that nobody would attend any more of his lectures. Von Elkin was an efficient submarine commander, and now he's probably a good spy. So we'll try to scuttle Herr von Elkin. Perhaps, if we get too close, he'll scuttle himself. We'll enter von Elkin's name in my mythical black book. Anton Morino heads it just now, and a lawyer named Tolly also seems to warrant being included."

"Can't I help you, Tony?" Carol asked. "About von Elkin, I mean."

Quinn shook his head. "I'm going to give von Elkin the benefit of my personal attention, Carol. You're much too pretty to be a burglar, and that's exactly what the Black Bat will become tonight. I'm going to perform a one man raid on the headquarters of the travel agency chain, as soon as I can get there.

"See if you can comfort Butch. He mopes around gloomily like a St. Bernard with his tail hanging down and swears I'm neglecting him. But there just isn't an opening for strong-arm work yet. Be a good girl and find Silk for me—without exhibiting yourself around the windows too much. Tony Quinn has no interest in girls, you know."

Carol doubled her fist and playfully tapped Quinn's chin with it.

"In other girls, you mean. I'll find Silk for you."

Quinn was donning his black clothing when Silk hurried in.

"Silk, get the big car out of the garage," he ordered. "I've got to visit the business section—as Tony Quinn. I want you to drive."

SILK parked across the street from a big business building. Across the full width of a huge window on the second floor ran a lurid neon sign, proclaiming that the Elkin Travel Service maintained its headquarters there. Above that were the windows of pro-

fessional men's offices, mostly attorneys and doctors.

"I'm not feeling well," Quinn told Silk. "Something in the pit of my stomach makes me quite ill at times, so I think I'll pay Dr. Norton a visit. His offices are only one flight above the travel agency. There's a tow rope in the back of the car. Please take it out and help me coil it under my coat."

"You're not really sick, are you?" Silk asked with a worried frown.

Quinn pursed his lips. "Yes, but it's not incurable. It has something to do with a spy ring. Their methods are a bit nauseating, but the good Dr. Norton may be able to help. Here is where you come in. You're sick, too—headaches often bother you, and you want a complete physical examination. You'll see Norton first. He doesn't know you, and neither do I. Understand? Get that rope."

Silk took Tony Quinn's arm after he helped him out of the car. Quinn looked straight ahead with the blank stare of a blind man. As he tapped his cane, Silk led him across the street and into the building. They separated in the lobby and Silk went up first.

Quinn gave him five full minutes before he entered the elevator and had the attendant lead him to Dr. Norton's offices. When he went in, the most careful observer would have sworn that those eyes saw nothing. But Quinn noticed with satisfaction that there were no other patients. Dr. Norton came out, helped him into a chair.

"Tony, I haven't seen you in weeks! There's nothing seriously wrong, I hope?"

"Not at all," Quinn smiled. "Shall I go in?"

"If you don't mind, I have a patient in there now. It will take about half an hour, possibly a little longer. I'll ask him to wait if you're in a hurry."

"Did you ever know a blind man to be in a hurry?" Quinn countered. "I'll just sit here. Give your patient all the time he needs."

CHAPTER VII

Blind Man's Bluff

THE instant Dr. Norton closed his door, Quinn swiftly went into action. He removed the gray tweed trousers he always wore, revealing beneath them the clothes of the Black Bat. From under his coat he took the robe and hood. After donning them, he hid his tweeds under the cushions of the sofa. Hastily he uncoiled the rope Silk had given him, opened the window and looked down.

The rear windows of von Elkin's tourist agency were just below. He anchored the rope in such a way that it would hardly be noticed. Letting himself out the window, he lowered the sash so there would be no draft to puzzle Dr. Norton.

As he dangled just outside one of the agency windows, he opened the lock without much trouble and climbed into von Elkin's private suite. He listened carefully, heard nothing.

He examined the contents of the desk, though the place was dark. That didn't trouble him, for the Black Bat needed no light. When he found nothing of importance in the desk, he tackled the locked files standing against a wall. None of his keys would open

them, and even a small pick he frequently used proved to be ineffectual.

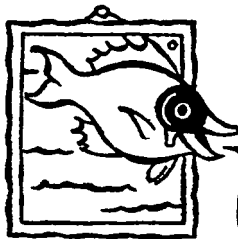
"Well," he muttered, "von Elkin must have something mighty private in these drawers to have special tumbler locks installed on them." He sighed wearily. "I can't open it like a Jimmy Valentine, so I'll have to do the job as Butch would handle it."

For work of this kind, he always carried a compact kit of the finest tools. A special chisel, hit noiselessly with a padded hammer, cut a small hole in the steel paneling. As he inserted another instrument and twisted it, a large section of the cabinet ripped open like a sardine can. His sensitive fingers manipulated the lock through this hole and the drawer slid open easily.

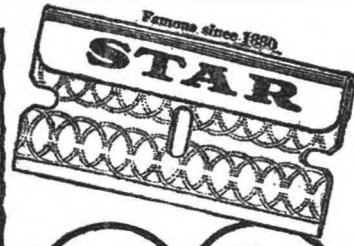
The Black Bat saw a portfolio lying at the bottom of the drawer. He removed it and glanced sharply at the contents. They consisted of several maps of New York Harbor, showing particularly the placements of the shockingly few anti-aircraft batteries. Before he could search farther, he heard a key being inserted into a lock somewhere outside the office.

The Black Bat replaced the portfolio, stepped quietly to the door and moved with amazing speed to the window where his rope dangled. He gripped it, launched himself into space. But he didn't climb back to Dr. Norton's office. Instead, he began swinging in long arcs until he could look into the win-

[Turn page]



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dow of von Elkin's private quarters. When he reached it, his soft-soled shoes stopped the swing. Balancing himself precariously, he risked a quick glance into the now lighted offices.

Von Elkin, a towering man with a square face and a completely bald head, was cursing luridly at the sight of his burglarized steel drawer. There was one other man in the room—Anton Morino! But he didn't act the craven, terrorized victim of the spy ring's vengeance now. He appeared utterly confident of himself.

"I have long suspected something like this would happen," von Elkin grated. "No matter what the orders are, we go now! I cannot see why the orders were countermanded, anyway — nor why they sent you to tell me I should come back and make doubly sure I left nothing."

Morino was facing von Elkin, with his back toward the office door. As the Black Bat watched, the door opened slowly, silently, and a gloved hand holding a Luger pistol came into view. Before the Black Bat could give any kind of warning, the gun fired twice. Morino threw up his hands convulsively. He fell on the top of the desk and slid off it slowly, leaving a trail of dripping blood.

Five seconds later, a police whistle blasted the quiet outside the building. Loud voices shouted orders. The Black Bat took one more quick glance through the window. Von Elkin was running wildly toward the door.

THE Black Bat put the soles of both feet against the wall. Rapidly he climbed back to the window of Dr. Norton's waiting room, and was relieved when he saw that no other patients had entered. He closed the window quickly and coiled the rope around his middle, after he had removed the Black Bat's hood and cape. He slipped into the tweeds he had hidden under the sofa cushions, replaced his jacket and sat down hastily. Perhaps twenty min-

utes had elapsed since he had invaded von Elkin's offices.

Quinn's abnormally sensitive ears could hear the sound of confusion in the building and on the street. His hands, clasped on the curved handle of his cane, worked nervously. What was going on? Who had killed Morino? Why? What had von Elkin meant when he wondered why Morino had arrived with countermanded orders?

Ten minutes went by while Tony Quinn fidgeted and tried to puzzle out the meaning of all the excitement. Then Silk and Dr. Norton emerged from the consultation rooms. Silk glanced casually at Quinn and walked out. Dr. Norton helped Quinn to his feet and guided him into the other room. Dragging up a chair, he listened as Quinn described some symptoms indicative of an abused stomach. With a smile, the doctor wrote out a prescription, and they talked for a few minutes before Quinn left.

It took a long time for the elevator to reach his floor. When it finally arrived, the operator was shaking with excitement.

"Know what happened?" he yelped. "A G-man raid! Yes, sir—they just raided a tourist place, one of them German agencies! Boy, I never seen so many cops and G-men!"

Quinn left the elevator and entered a crowded lobby. Two men in plain-clothes stepped up to him.

"Where did you come from?" one demanded. "Did you see a bald-headed, fat-faced man anywhere in the building?"

Quinn shook his head sadly. "I've been visiting Dr. Norton on the third floor. I didn't see anyone. I'm blind."

A uniformed police lieutenant approached and recognized Quinn instantly.

"It's okay, boys," he said. "This is Tony Quinn. He's blind, all right. Used to be D.A. before some rats threw acid in his eyes. How are you, Mr. Quinn?"

"Pretty fair," Quinn answered.

"What in the world is happening?"

"We just raided a spy nest, sir. Got evidence enough, but no rat. He must have been tipped off. Can I help you outside?"

"Thanks, I'd appreciate it," Quinn said. "My car and the driver are across the street."

Silk elbowed his way to Quinn's side. As he reached for his employer's arm, Quinn was suddenly jerked around. Silk's face went grim, but Tony Quinn



only looked blankly over the head of the man who held him. It was Detective-captain McGrath, self-appointed tracker of the Black Bat.

"Wait a minute, Quinn," McGrath snapped. "There's been a murder in this building. In the past few hours there were four others. Two of them were branded with the Black Bat's insignia. Get what I mean?"

"I gather the significance, McGrath," Quinn replied tiredly. "You think I'm the Black Bat. You believe I killed five men and stamped the murders as the work of the Black Bat. Then why don't you arrest me, Captain?"

McGrath flushed. "You know damned well why. Twenty doctors would swear you're blind. I'd make a fool out of myself."

"Don't flatter your creative ability," Silk put in with smooth irony. "You were a fool even before they threw you out of the second grade. Listen, Sherlock. Mr. Quinn is sick. He came here to visit Dr. Norton. Dr. Norton's office is upstairs. Now that Dr. Norton has examined him, I am going to take

Mr. Quinn home. Is that simple enough for you to understand?"

"Try leaving here and I'll jug both of you," McGrath threatened. "Stay where you are till I see this Dr. Norton, if there is such a guy. Maybe this is one time you tripped on your own smartness, Quinn."

AS McGrath disappeared into the building, an official car pulled up and two men emerged. Although the most careful observer would never have noticed his quick glance, Quinn recognized both men. One was Police Commissioner Warner, a slender, distinguished looking man. Beside him was Philip Trent, whom Quinn had known for ten years.

At one time, he had sympathized with Trent for the whole side of the man's face was deeply scarred, his hair was perfectly white, and he walked with a decided limp.

Quinn knew what had caused that. Trent had been a captain in the A.E.F. in 1918, when he led his men in a savage attack. Shrapnel and machine-gun bullets had almost torn him to shreds. Plastic surgery was crude in those days, and it hadn't helped his appearance much, although it had probably saved his life. Since he had also been badly scarred, Tony Quinn knew just how Trent must feel, yet the man worked prodigiously and was well on the way to becoming a power in politics.

Warner spotted Quinn and hurried up to him.

"Tony! What are you doing here?"

"He's waiting for a genius to make sure he didn't murder five guys," Silk explained witheringly. "Five, no less!"

Warner frowned. "McGrath again, eh? Well, Tony, you're free to go any time you wish. McGrath's suspicions are becoming a nuisance. Do you know Phil Trent? Oh, yes—of course you do."

Trent took Quinn's hand and clasped it firmly.

"Glad to see you again, Tony. It's too

bad you're not the D.A. these days. We could use a man like you to fight these fifth columnists."

"He's right," Warner agreed warmly. "In conjunction with Federal men, we just raided a German tourist agency. I understand some evidence has been found, but the birds we hoped to trap left their nest. Trent is working with us and with the Federal authorities, helping to run down these influences. Wait. Here comes McGrath. I can tell by his face that the news he learned isn't at all satisfying."

McGrath saluted Warner and then looked at Quinn.

"You can go now, I guess. Doc Norton alibis you okay. The dead man upstairs hasn't got a Black Bat sticker on him, either."

"Ah," Quinn smiled. "Then my wrists are not going to be handcuffed. That's a distinct relief, Captain, although I sympathize with your disappointment. I know just how much you want to find the Black Bat. I'm particularly honored that you think I might be he."

"You?" Trent exploded. "How can any man in his right senses think you — Oh, I'm sorry, Tony. I know just how it feels to be—well, unable to take part in any activity. But McGrath's accusation was so absurd. . . ."

Quinn was looking directly at Warner as he answered Trent.

"Forget it. A thing like this makes life interesting for a blind man. It gives me a great deal to think about. Good luck with your spy hunt, gentlemen. Silk, let's go back to the car."

SILK led him through the crowd. As they reached the outer fringe of it, the driver spoke softly.

"When you get into the car, take a look at the entrance of the building, sir. There's a short, loudly dressed man there. It's Tolly, the lawyer who bailed out Hans Hofer! I overheard the cops questioning him. He's got an office on the seventh floor."

Quinn glanced across the street for a fraction of a second. McGrath was talking to the man Silk had described. Apparently everyone in the building was being questioned. Quinn leaned back against the cushions and lit a cigarette while Silk wormed his way through the slowly moving traffic.

"I saw the murder McGrath described," he stated quietly. "The victim was Anton Morino, but I don't know who killed him. Von Elkin was in there, too, only he got away. I can't figure out how he escaped. There was evidence in his offices that he was engaged in spy work, but you know that von Elkin is no fool. I can't believe that he'd be careless enough to leave such evidence lying around."

Silk picked up a newspaper and handed it to Quinn.

"I bought it while I was waiting for you, sir. There's an item on the front page that looks interesting."

Quinn put the paper on his lap in such a position that no one could possibly notice that he was reading it. The boxed item certainly was interesting.

ARMY OFFICER THWARTS BANDITS

Major Oliver Rankin, retired, successfully routed two robbers in the secluded sections of Bryant Park late this afternoon. They attempted to use blackjacks on him, but they did not realize that Major Rankin at one time was runner-up for the Army boxing championship. The major seems to have lost none of his prowess. Police are making an investigation. Major Rankin provided them with detailed descriptions of his assailants.

Quinn let the newspaper drop to the floor.

"So Rankin is on their list," he said. "Except for the attempt on Colonel Catlin's life, it's the first time the spy ring's executioners bungled their job. But Rankin is pretty fast with his fists even if he is nearly sixty years old. It's our break, Silk—the one I've been hoping for! They'll try to get Rankin again. Through the men assigned to kill him, I can contact the gang once more. Step on it!"

CHAPTER VIII

Men Without Mercy

WHILE police and G-men searched for more evidence of the spy ring's activities at von Elkin's offices, and Tony Quinn returned to his home, a factory on the outskirts of the city became an extremely busy place for so late at night.

It was a fairly large building, run by a man named Aranoff, and engaged in the manufacture of metal barrels and tanks. The factory closed promptly at five. But now—though the hour was close to ten—one whole section was lighted up and a number of cars stood inside the locked yard gates.

Word had gone out that the sales department was holding an important meeting, so the families living nearby thought nothing of it. Perhaps some of the employees wondered why business wasn't better with so large a sales force and all the meetings they held lately. But that was as far as their suspicions went.

Inside the plant, with every window and door carefully guarded, eighteen men were drawn up in two precise lines, standing at rigid attention. At the front of the large room was a five-inch dais, like a miniature stage. The face of it was studded with a battery of powerful lights that were equipped with reflectors.

Suddenly all the other lights in the room died away and the stronger ones were turned on. They blazed straight into the eyes of that strange audience, but no man moved even a muscle. When a harsh voice gave an order, the two rows of men pivoted completely around in military formation. The harsh voice spoke again and they faced the lights. If anyone stood on that stage now, he was completely invisible



He saw the gun fire twice (Chap. VII)

to his audience, for those lights defied any eyes to penetrate their glare.

"This will be one of our final meetings," a man's voice announced from somewhere behind the lights. "Soon now you will see my face. When you do, you will laugh, my lieutenants, at the way we have tricked these gullible Americans. Now listen to orders. Each of you controls a certain section of this country. Under you are the *Gauleiters* who strut like peacocks—and rightly so, for they are the backbone of our organization. Under them are the privates—the men who will do the fighting. Some of them will do so willingly, because they believe. Others will do so because they are ordered, and know that if they fail, someone dear to them will find life most miserable in Europe. For those who are not citizens, we have arranged that upon a given word they are to be arrested and deported. They will be useful, and upon completion of our mission, we can cast them aside. For, mind you, my lieutenants, there will be no room here for other men who crave power. That lies in our hands, and ours alone!"

A gruff shout went up from the two ranks and their right hands shot stiffly outward in a salute.

"We are almost ready to strike," the unknown leader went on. "All over the nation our groups have their guns, their ammunition and bombs—even gasses, if necessary. Every man knows his job. When you leave here, cards will be distributed. You will forward, one to each of the *Gauleiters* and warn them to stand ready. Bauer, step forward."

ONE of the men in the front rank took two steps ahead of the others and stood at rigid attention.

"Your squads will concentrate on the submarine factories and bases in New England. They are to be blown to pieces beyond any hope of quick repair. Vogt and Schmidt, step forward."

Another pair moved out of ranks.

The unknown spoke again, his voice venomous as he described their duties.

"You are in charge of the New York area. You will see to it that all transportation ceases, that officials who have spoken against us die. Confusion must reign throughout the city. The waterfront is to receive particular attention. No ship can remain intact nor any dock left useful. Our ships at sea will receive radio orders that will be taken care of.

"When we finish, this nation will be in such confusion that we can rapidly consolidate our positions. We shall create panic such as these fools have never before known. All their preparations for war will be demoralized. The help they are sending our enemies abroad will be cut off. We shall show them that we are the masters of the world!"

There were further explicit orders, all calculated to create panic and death. Great shouts went up, accompanied by the stiff-armed salutes. Then Max von Elkin stepped forward and received permission to speak.

"I have bad news. My travel agency was raided tonight. Anton Morino, one of our own kind, managed it! He lured me back to the office so I would be arrested, by stating that he had orders for me to take all my papers, even the non-incriminating ones. I escaped with the aid of the man who leads us so well. Once again he has proved beyond doubt that he is cut from the same great pattern as he who will eventually rule the world."

"And Morino is dead," the unknown's voice stated with a dry laugh. "I dislike only the fact that he died too quickly, for it was his scheme to have himself arrested with von Elkin. Then, safely in a cell, he would tell all he knew, how he was forced to help against his own will and judgment. But he was not quite clever enough, and his fate shall be a lesson to any of you men who may have the same idea."

"There is one other extremely important thing. We have not only the Federal authorities and the police to contend with, but also—the Black Bat! I see by your faces that you fear him. He is as aggressive as we, and he does not adhere to the silly laws of this country. Yes, he is a dangerous enemy, but not for long. Already I have set into motion a scheme which will trap him, and then—he dies!

"When I gave orders that Major Rankin was to be attacked without being injured, I knew just how the Black Bat would act. He has guessed



our little scheme far ahead of the police. He knows we seek to eliminate as many trained officers as possible so the preparedness plans of this country will not go forward swiftly.

"The Black Bat will try to protect Major Rankin. Then we shall lure Rankin away, to a place of our own choosing. The Black Bat will follow. Rankin can be easily disposed of, and then we close in on the Black Bat. All is arranged. There cannot possibly be failure. By morning, the menace he constitutes will be no more."

* * * * *

MAJOR RANKIN, brittle-eyed disciplinarian and military tactician, adjusted his top hat while a doorman whistled for a cab.

"Nice evening, Major." The doorman touched the peak of his cap in salute. "Stepping out, eh?"

Rankin didn't smile in return, for he never smiled. Prior to his retirement two years before, he had been known as Sphinx Face.

"I'm making the rounds of my clubs," he stated. "Tomorrow I go back into active service. It seems they cannot do without me. Good night, Grogan."

Rankin climbed into the taxi and sat stiffly erect as it pulled away. The driver headed toward the Officer's Club, wondering unhappily if his tip would be the usual dime that Major Rankin dispensed. He cut over to an avenue and turned north, humming to himself, until another cab came alongside. The driver had his cap pulled so low that his features could not be seen. He blew a blast on his horn and yelled to Rankin's driver.

"Hey, buddy, the boys at the corner asked me to look for you. Your wife's been hurt. Better call your house quick."

The driver straightened up with a gasp, sought a hole in the traffic and pulled over to the curb. He got out and stuck his head in the door of the tonneau.

"Sorry, Boss, but it's my wife—She's been hurt. I'll call and see how bad she is. Won't take a minute and then I'll finish driving you to the club."

Rankin didn't like the idea, but he assented with a curt nod of his head. The driver vanished inside a drug-store.

Two men sidled up to the cab. One of them suddenly yanked open the door, jumped in and shoved a gun against Rankin's side. The other walked around the cab and slid behind the wheel.

"Quiet!" the man with the gun warned Rankin. "If you would live, do not utter one word."

The cab pulled away while Rankin turned scarlet with rage. Once he opened his mouth to speak, but the gun jabbed him painfully and he subsided. The gunman raised his head and peered out of the rear window.

"It goes well, Hugo. He comes."

Completely unaware that he was walking straight into a well laid trap,

the Black Bat trailed Rankin's taxi. He had witnessed the clever change of drivers and blessed the hunch that warned him the killers might strike quickly.

When the taxi reached the outskirts and picked up speed, he drew one of his automatics and laid it on the seat beside him. Apparently Rankin was being taken to some spy nest. The Black Bat determined not to strike until he could really damage the spy ring.

THE taxi driver tooted his horn as he drove up to the gates of a medium-sized factory. A man hurried across the yard to open the gates. They closed after the cab passed through. It drove directly into a garage.

The Black Bat also stopped. Getting out and holding his gun ready, he made a half circle of the factory until he reached the rear. The high fence was made of steel, which made him approach it warily. He knelt, gently tossed his gun against the steel wire. When no electric spark leaped out, he knew it was safe to climb the fence. He went over it with the agility of a monkey.

On the other side, he stopped to study the place. There was a loading platform at the back of the three story building. He made that his goal. The night was to his liking—dark and sultry, with storm clouds gathering ominously in the sky. With the unerring help of eyes that could see as well in darkness as in light, the Black Bat reached the loading platform. He climbed up and glanced at the big sliding door. It was ajar about a quarter of an inch. He frowned, for it was almost an open invitation to enter.

Yet, he asked himself, how could the spies possibly know he was on their trail? If they had somehow become suspicious, certainly they would never have brought Major Rankin to this place. The Black Bat gently shoved aside the door enough to squeeze himself through. . . .

CHAPTER IX

Black Battle



DESOLATE silence greeted him. He knew he was in some kind of large shipping room, for tiers of steel drums were neatly stacked up. His eyes darted around. Not only could he feel the presence of hidden men—there was an almost undiscernible change in the darkness of the room.

Without turning, the Black Bat knew that the big door had slid shut silently, excluding the faint light from outside. In the pitch darkness he drew his second gun, slipped the safety off and began moving along close to the wall. The advantage of the darkness lay in his favor. Anyone concealed in the rows of steel drums couldn't see him, but he was not handicapped by the absence of light.

When he passed the fourth tier, he suddenly tensed. Two men were crouching low, both holding drawn revolvers. One of them motioned with his free hand. As he crawled down the alley between the barrels, three others followed.

The Black Bat didn't wait for the attack to come. That would be fatal, because these men would open fire the instant they had a target. He began running lightly, without making a single sound. He selected the alley next to the one along which the killers were approaching. Half-way up it, he stopped and listened. They were separated from him only by the steel drums that towered high above.

The Black Bat placed both hands against the drums and pushed hard. They rocked dangerously. Someone let out a screech of warning, but it came too late. The row of barrels tipped over, crashed down on the men who

were maneuvering to get the Black Bat from the rear.

In the unholy din, the Black Bat went streaking toward the door that led into the factory. But two men came rushing through it. At the same instant, someone abruptly got sense enough to throw on the light switch. Instantly the Black Bat's advantage disappeared.

His guns blasted. The two spies coming through the door were hurled aside by the force of the forty-five slugs. The Black Bat's cape billowed out behind him, casting a weird shadow against the wall. How he left so quickly, the survivors of the battle never knew. They swore afterward that he simply left the ground and flew away.

Actually he went through the door with the speed of a flash. Others would be waiting, and he had to protect himself. He reached a machine shop, spotted the switch panel just inside the door. He raced toward it, but he saw a gun in the hand of a spy who had suddenly appeared.

The Black Bat ducked behind a work-bench. Coming out on the other side, he snapped a single lightning shot. When the gunmen went down, he reached the switch panel, seized the wires and ripped them loose. Instantly the whole place was shrouded in darkness again.

But flashlights went into action. One picked out the Black Bat as he raced through the machine room. He fired in the direction of the beam. Answering bullets whizzed past his ear as he dodged out of the room.

He was at the front of the building, with four men challenging his attempt to escape through the door. Though they couldn't see the Black Bat, he could see them. Glimpsing a staircase, he went up the steps three at a time. No one was at the landing to intercept him.

As he headed down another long workroom, though, four men came

swarming in his direction. Apparently they had been covering the rear windows and the yard in case he tried to escape through the shipping room door.

THE BLACK BAT whirled and raced to the third floor, where the offices were situated. Other men pounded up the stairs in pursuit and harsh voices were giving orders. He had a brief moment to wonder what had become of Major Rankin. The man seemed to have disappeared completely.

Looking straight through the darkness, the Black Bat saw that office space occupied only about one-third of the floor, and factory space the rest. The office was a poor place to stand them off. They might have another way of getting to this floor, perhaps even come at him from behind.

The Black Bat darted between the desks. Closing and locking a door behind him, he emerged into a spacious room filled with half completed steel drums. There were several oxy-acetylene torches on small hand trucks, by which they could easily be moved around. Half a dozen shots rang out. The Black Bat ducked, realized that for a second he had been standing in front of a window. His form had been darkly silhouetted as a target.

"No more shooting—for the moment!" someone called out authoritatively. "He is trapped. There is no way out for him now. If he goes through the windows, he must jump three stories, right into the hands of the men we have waiting there. We have the Black Bat cornered and we can take our own time in exterminating him. There is no use exposing ourselves. We shall force him into that small room at the back, where we can fix him with gas—a quiet, certain and pleasant way.

"One of you go downstairs to the chemical laboratory. You will find a large and well equipped one there. Two others dismantle the big exhaust

fan in the rolling room and bring it here, while another repairs the electric light system. Hurry!"

The Black Bat crept toward a window and cautiously peered out. His escape really was cut off. Two men armed with rifles stood behind cover, looking up and watching continuously. The man who headed this particular unit of the spy ring knew that the Black Bat was powerless. He planned to release some deadly gas and blow it in the Black Bat's direction with a huge fan! There was no possibility of help. If the shots had attracted any attention, the men planted outside the factory could say a small night shift was engaged in some special work which happened to be unusually noisy.

The Black Bat took advantage of the temporary lull to wonder just how he was going to get out of this trap. If he were wounded, or if the gas knocked him out, they'd unmask him and the Black Bat would be exposed as Tony Quinn. That would finish his activities and place his life in constant danger even if he did worm his way from the net now thrown around him.

There seemed to be nothing he could do but put his back against the wall and go down with as much company as possible. He still had a few slugs in his guns and an extra clip for each weapon. By making every shot count, he might wear his enemies down. But nobody could intimidate gas with bullets. The spies seemed complacently aware of that, so they were in no hurry to risk their lives in actual combat.

A score of oxy-acetylene tanks were piled up, making a barrier behind which he crouched. Nothing short of a field-gun could break that down.

Abruptly the Black Bat heard the preparations that were being made to smoke him out. He heard them set up the big fan, heard the clink of heavy bottles and the splashing of liquid. The spies kept well out of the range of the Black Bat's guns, for they didn't have to take risks now.

The enormous fan suddenly whirled to life. The mighty breeze it created blew the first cloud of gas toward the Black Bat. His nostrils quivered with dread. Beneath the hood he turned pale, for they weren't intent on simply knocking him out. This was chlorine—one of the deadly gasses used in the First World War! They had easily manufactured it out of chemicals that were common to any laboratory.

ONLY one thing lay in the Black Bat's favor. The room in which he was trapped was large. It would require several minutes before a sufficient concentration of the gas could be manufactured to kill him. But what good could that do him? Even several hours wouldn't help much, unless the morning shift of employees arrived immediately after dawn.

He fingered his guns and pondered the chances of making a sweeping charge, shooting down as many of the spies as he could, and trying to make a fierce, swift escape. The odds were probably a thousand to one against success. But by staying here—waiting for the gas to take effect—he had no chance at all. The Black Bat was rapidly understanding how Silk must have felt, tied to a tree and bracing himself for inevitable death.

The Black Bat suddenly coughed—hard, racking coughs. Instantly he heard the derisive laughter of the spies clustered somewhere behind the big fan. The Black Bat realized that they must have located some independent source of electrical power—batteries perhaps, or an emergency switch to operate the fan. The lights hadn't gone on yet, and he knew he had ruined the switch panel beyond hope of quick repair.

More and more of the gas came sweeping his way. In less than fifteen minutes, he realized, he would be dead. Even if he managed to get clear by some miracle, his lungs would be permanently damaged. Of all the ghastly

ways to kill, poison gas was the worst.

Gas! The Black Bat gave a start of hope. Perhaps he was not finished, after all. . . .

Working furiously, protected by the darkness, he managed to lift one of the heavy tanks of oxy-acetylene gas to the floor. He rolled it slowly, making no noise at all, toward the middle of the big room. With two huge packing cases that he had seen earlier, he blocked the view from the doorway. Rapidly he turned the valves of the tank, heard the hissing of another gas. If his plans didn't go awry, this gas would grant him life—

He scraped a match, touched it to the nozzle of the tank. Blue, almost colorless, the light of the burning gas made a dull glow in the room. He twisted the nozzle around, keeping the searing flame away from the hose connection to the tank. He deliberately placed the blazing jet two inches from the middle of the tank and waited long enough to see the metal start to melt under the terrific heat. Then he ran lightly toward the rear of the factory. In a corner as far away from the hissing jet as possible, he lay down and covered his head with his hands. He muttered a prayer as he waited.

It might bring a death as hideous as the one the spies intended for him. But it also would show what this factory really was—a hideout and meeting place for spies. Some of them might even be injured badly enough for them

to be captured. At any rate, it was better than merely waiting like a docile animal for the slaughter.

Apparently the bluish glow from over the tops of the packing cases had attracted the spies. The Black Bat's eyes penetrated the darkness, saw two of them approach cautiously, with handkerchiefs over their noses and mouths. One gave a sudden yelp of alarm. They sped back—about four steps.

THE oxy-acetylene gas, under high compression in the tank, abruptly let go. The heat from the jet had penetrated the steel sides of the container. The explosion blew the spies back, lifted a section of the building's roof. It tore down one wall, gouged a hole through the floor, sent machinery and stack of tanks rolling wildly. Debris smashed against every wall. Dirt, bricks and pieces of metal struck the Black Bat, although he had tried to protect himself.

A horrible silence clamped down as soon as the blast of the explosion died away. The Black Bat raised his head cautiously. Somewhere outside, automobile motors were roaring into life. He glanced out of the shattered window. Four cars were speeding through the open gate.

The Black Bat drew his guns and limped slightly across the floor, avoiding the weakened section around the

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spot where the tank of gas had rested. There was still plenty of chlorine to burn his eyes and lungs, but with all the windows blown out, enough fresh air rushed in to dilute the deadly gas.

The Black Bat reached the stairway. He realized that neighbors would put in an alarm, for part of the building was now on fire and thick columns of smoke were beginning to rise.

He saw one of the spies lying against a wall sprawled in death. Two others lay less than ten feet away.

He knelt beside one and made a swift, thorough search. There was nothing of significance in the pockets, but a bulge in the lining of the coat attracted his attention. He ripped the lining away, lifted out a neatly stacked sheaf of the mysteriously perforated cards.

Suddenly a siren warned him of the danger of capture. The Black Bat raced down the stairs, ran like a streak across the first floor and through the shipping room door. He jumped off the loading platform, scurried toward the fence and was over it in a single motion.

All at once, he had disappeared into the night.

CHAPTER X

Set-up for Murder



As the Black Bat drove back to town, he realized that at no time during the battle had he seen Major Rankin nor heard his voice. Unless they had concealed him somewhere in the factory, he was either still in their hands or had escaped in the confusion.

The Black Bat was puzzled by that, for he imagined the spies would have killed Rankin the moment trouble started. They had orders to murder Rankin to slow up the preparedness program. They had less than no use

for him alive—he might prove a decided hazard. Why, then, had he been permitted to escape or been taken with them in flight?

The Black Bat was still somewhat shaken by his nearness to death. His nerves were on edge, his muscle sore from the tenseness. But worse than that, he felt he had failed his job by not rounding up the spies.

He eased up on the gas. Turning into the street near his home, he pulled to the curb not far from Butch's boarding house. A troubling thought struck him as he shut off the motor. How had those spies known he was coming to the factory? They couldn't possibly have spotted him on their trail unless they had been warned to expect his presence.

In the factory, though, everything had been set to surprise and capture him. They knew he was coming. But how? Major Rankin hadn't known he was under the observation of the Black Bat. Even he couldn't have set any trap.

With his hood and cape stowed under his coat, Quinn walked briskly toward the garden gate. A thousand questions were pounding insistently at his brain. Now, more than ever, he realized that he was fighting the brains and physical strength of a sinisterly clever, fiendishly powerful horde. This was no blundering gang group, but a highly developed organization that was skilled in murder, trained in all the forms of sabotage that existed, well paid, supplied with an abundance of money, and shockingly well shielded. To break down this spy ring, he would have to get at the leader, the baffling man who addressed his audience and then commanded them to turn their backs when he departed. Nothing short of the leader's capture and the obliteration of his first lieutenants would suffice.

To make matters worse, they might be set to strike at any moment of the day or night. When it came, it would involve the entire nation, Quinn was

sure. Death and destruction would follow in their wake. With the element of surprise on their side, they might even gain control of parts of the country and hold them! What was it, if not war?

Tony Quinn slipped through the garden gate. After peering through the intense darkness, he disappeared into the garden house. As he hurried along the tunnel, he removed the floppy-brimmed hat that concealed his features. Silk was waiting for him with a rye and soda, in the spacious living room. Before doing anything else, Quinn downed the drink, instantly felt his tense nerves relax.

"I fell for one of their tricks," he stated bitterly as he donned his tweeds and smoking jacket. "It almost cost me my life. Did anyone call?"

"Only Carol, sir," Silk replied. "She's worried."

"Risk phoning her that I'm all right," Quinn ordered. "Tell her to check up on Major Rankin if she can. Then keep watch while I do some work in the lab. Remember those perforated cards? I managed to get quite a few of them this time. Maybe now we can get some results."

IN the privacy of his lab, Tony Quinn carefully examined the stack of cards. All of them were perforated like the first ones. Unlike the others, though, the holes of three were all over the card, like some fantastic design.

He set up an infra-red machine, placed one of the cards under it and made a long, careful study of it. The rays brought into relief one corner section of each card, which seemed to have been treated. Quinn consulted a volume on secret ink preparations. Then he spent an hour mixing various solutions and trying to develop whatever was on the cards.

Finally a light gray series of lines came into view, gradually forming into words. But even though he had overcome the secret of the ink, the words

meant nothing. They read:

SECT. 10

No. 161

Every card showed the same meticulously hand-printed words. If they had indicated a volume and a page, his lead might have materialized, but with merely a numbered section and just a plain number, they meant nothing. The ink with which the cards were treated was one that had been developed in German laboratories not ten months before. In other words, the spy ring was in constant communication with the Fatherland, and worked with only the most modern devices of espionage.

Quinn straightened up from his exacting work. Silk had placed all the late editions of the newspapers on the bench. Going through them quickly, Quinn found nothing new. The raid on von Elkin's travel office was described, but no tangible results had been obtained, so the article rated only half a column. Maps had been found which incriminated von Elkin. The German travel expert had vanished, however.

On an inner page, Quinn spotted a brief item that made him whistle in amazement. A public meeting at the Officers' Club was in progress right now! Several prominent men were to make speeches endorsing the preparedness program and denouncing the aggression of Europe's most savage invader. A list of notables who would be present was given. They included a great number of active and retired Army, Navy and Marine officers, some with the highest ranks.

Quinn folded the newspaper thoughtfully. It was only a few minutes after ten o'clock, and the meeting had been scheduled to begin at nine-thirty. But those affairs usually started late. The real business would certainly not come up for at least an hour after the meeting opened.

He picked up his cane and strode toward the door which led into his study. Instantly his eyes went blankly star-

ing, and his head assumed the rigid position of a blind man. He called to Silk as he entered the study.

"I'm going to attend a meeting at the Officers' Club," he said. "If those spies are intent on wiping out all the military experts they can, that meeting will be the best opportunity they'll ever have. Drive me there, Silk, and hurry."

"But if you're going as Tony Quinn, what can you do if anything starts?" Silk asked.

"I don't know. Probably nothing. But at least I'll be there and I'll be able to see what happens. Even the Black Bat couldn't invade a meeting hall that size, and it's too late to stop the spy ring's plans, I imagine."

THE committee arranging the meeting had selected a spacious auditorium in the center of the city. People were still streaming in when Silk stopped the car and helped Tony Quinn fumble out. He led him up the steps. Forcing a way through the crowd around the door, he managed to reach the entrance of the center aisle.

"I see Commissioner Warner, sir," Silk said. "He's down ahead of us. Shall I call him?"

"Yes, ask him if he can make room for me," Tony Quinn said. Several people approached, identifying themselves. He shook his head with a sad, gentle smile. He smiled in their general direction, yet never looked squarely at them. Suddenly Commissioner Warner took his arm.

"Tony, why didn't you tell me you were coming here? I'd have arranged a better spot."

"I came on the spur of the moment, Commissioner," Quinn said. "Silk was driving by. I heard the sound of many people and asked him what was going on. He read me the banners and placards, so I decided to come in. A blind man appreciates things like lectures, you know. He has to amuse himself by emphasizing the medium of the ear rather than the eye."

Warner led him down the aisle to a good seat about half-way to the platform. Speeches were going on, all concerned with the armaments program. Quinn, sitting erect in his chair, stared straight ahead. His starkly blank eyes, however, saw everything all around him.

Major Rankin was seated in the first row and in full uniform. He certainly seemed to be calm, despite his recent danger. How had he escaped? Why did he appear so unmoved by his near murder? Attorney Tolly was there, too, about five rows in front of Quinn. His oily, bland face kept turning around to study everyone in the audience.

Someone came down the aisle and passed close to Quinn. It was Colonel Catlin, whom the Black Bat had rescued from the spy ring's assassins only a few hour before. Catlin also was in full uniform.

Without moving his head, Quinn counted more than thirty ranking officers of the various military divisions. He squirmed around in his chair. Turning his head in the general direction of Commissioner Warner, he spoke softly, asking who was present. But that was only a pretext, for Quinn's eyes ranged over the entire south section of the auditorium. They missed nothing—not even the tall, square-shouldered man with the black beard and thick shock of black hair.

Trained to penetrate disguises, Quinn knew that Fritz von Elkin, sought by G-men and the police, must have an urgent reason for attending this meeting. He had no doubt at all that it was von Elkin. Now he was sure that things were ready to happen!

He groaned inwardly because he knew he would be helpless to act. Tony Quinn, a blind man, could not rise up to stem a sinisterly furtive attack. He racked his brain for some method of giving a warning. There was none that he could use successfully. Bitterly he resented the pose of blindness he had

unwillingly been forced to assume.

"Phil Trent is going to speak," Warner said softly! "Be ready to hear spies and saboteurs get their ears battered down. Trent is plenty upset about them. He's doing all he can to run down the vermin."

A ripple of applause went up as Trent mounted the speaker's platform. Quinn listened carefully, but he also watched everyone seated in front of him. They couldn't fail to strike, especially with von Elkin here. Though von Elkin certainly was not the mysterious leader of the ring, he was unquestionably a capable adjutant and a clever spy. It was more than possible that he would give the signal when the right time came.

Quinn's hands curled into fists. He had to check an urge to rise up and denounce von Elkin, queer the whole set-up, stop any possibility of murder. If he did—then what? Exposure, arrest, the inevitable end of the Black Bat. He relaxed unwillingly and forced all such thoughts out of his mind.

CHAPTER XI

Fog of Death



VEHEMENTLY Trent was speaking, with all the fire of true conviction for a just cause. His voice was passionate, his gestures perfectly timed. Everyone in the audience forgot his scarred face, his limping walk and the completely white hair that made him look much older than he was.

"We have among us, on every side, men who have been trained for years in sabotage. As head of the Officers' Club, I have done all within my power to combat these subversive influences, but I cannot do this alone. It requires the vigilance and courage of every red-

blooded American who wants to go on living life as he knows it. We do not want the slavery which foreign legions would impose upon us if they gained control of this land of ours. The freedom we enjoy is worth fighting for—worth dying for ten times over!

"We do not want the glory of the world, not even the glory of our own nation—but a simple, small thing called honor. Without it, we will become slave legions under the thumb of a malignant power that will spread until we are completely squashed."

Tony Quinn joined in the round of applause that followed. Trent took a drink of water and sailed furiously into the rest of his speech.

"We are arming as fast as the might and resources of this nation can allow us. We are preparing to defend our rights and our own shores in this war-mad world. Yet, while we do this, there are thousands of men concentrated on one task—to slow up and eventually disrupt our defense preparations. To them, human life means nothing. They would no more hesitate to demolish a huge factory filled with workers, than they would shrink from blowing up some small trestle along a rural railroad siding.

"Those are the elements we must battle first. We must wipe them out, expose them for what they really are—treacherous, murderous, ruthless bandits with an insatiable desire for power. The organization which gives this series of lectures has not been idle. Not many hours ago we accumulated evidence against a travel agency which proved to be a spy nest. We found proof of that, even if the man who operated it managed to escape.

"There will be other raids, as fast as we can accumulate the necessary evidence. But we cannot do everything alone. Every citizen of the United States must watch for treachery, must expose it wherever it appears—in high places as well as low!"

Trent went on while his audience re-

mained hushed, drinking in absorbedly every word he uttered. There was something so persuasive about his voice that his convictions reached every man who listened.

Tony Quinn kept staring straight ahead, though he knew that with every passing second the danger mounted higher and higher. His anxiety increased in the same proportion, until he felt as though he could not stand it any longer.

Abruptly, while Trent was still talking, Colonel Catlin jumped to his feet and leaped from his seat into the aisle. He took two or three steps in the direction of the platform.

Quinn saw ten men rise simultaneously on what must have been a pre-arranged signal. They hurled something against the walls, toward the platform, against the floor almost at their own feet. In no more than two seconds, the auditorium was shrouded in a white fog which even the Black Bat's eyes couldn't penetrate!

HOARSE shouts went up. Men milled about. Someone screamed. Tony Quinn felt, rather than saw, Commissioner Warner leave his chair to take command of the situation. Quinn stretched out both arms. There was no one on either side of him. He knew that his seat was located half-way between the aisles, which meant that the others in the auditorium would be pressed close to the aisles, leaving the center sections empty.

Quinn restrained himself no longer. He climbed on his chair, leaped over the row before him. He repeated this as fast as he could, and no one impeded him until he came to the first row. There two men were struggling furiously. He could see only the vague shapes of their bodies and hear their gasps for breath.

Two others suddenly found their way into the battle. Quinn saw one shadowy arm spring upward, plunge down viciously. With a strangled

moan, one of the fighters dropped to the floor. Quinn hurdled over the last row of seats. He could make out the form of the fallen man and one who was bent over him. The remaining two seemed to have fled.

Quinn surged forward. As he did so, the stooped figure straightened up. Holding a knife above his head, he had been about to sink it deep into his victim's body for the second time. But now he aimed it at Tony Quinn. The knife started down. It traveled only a few inches before a hand shot upward, grasped the wrist and gave it a savage wrench. The bone snapped and the knife fell to the floor.

The killer screamed in pain, fought loose and tried to escape through the chemical fog that blanketed the auditorium. Tony Quinn raced close behind, seized his shoulder and spun him around. He snapped a hard fist to the killer's jaw. When the man staggered back, he followed up the blow, putting into it all the power he could muster. The killer crashed to the floor.

Quinn's face remained grim, though at least one of the spies wouldn't squirm through a rat hole to escape. The man would be unconscious for at least an hour, judging by the pain in Quinn's knuckles. It wasn't possible that he had recognized Quinn, either, for the fog seemed thicker than ever.

Quinn turned back and found his way to the injured man's side. As he turned the man over, he muttered a curse. It was Colonel Catlin! The stamp of death was already written on his features, although his lips moved and his eyelids trembled.

"Colonel!" Quinn said softly. "You know who did this. Tell me why you jumped out of your seat. Listen to me. It's the Black Bat, Colonel!"

That name seemed to penetrate Catlin's dying brain. He opened his eyes. Doubt shone in them until Quinn thrust his face close to Catlin's.

"Yes, I'm the Black Bat. I'm also Tony Quinn. You're the one man who

knows my secret and I'm telling you only because you must trust me. Who stabbed you? What's behind all this?"

"I . . . was . . . fool. Complete fool . . . should have . . . known. I wanted . . . to . . ."

Catlin's body gave a shudder and his eyes began to glaze. Quinn's shoulders drooped as he let Catlin's body ease to the floor. For the first time in the existence of the Black Bat, Quinn had revealed his identity, but that secret was now locked in the brain of a dead man.

What had Catlin meant by branding himself as a fool? Why had he jumped up so suddenly? There was no question in Quinn's mind but that Catlin himself set off the fire-works. The spies had acted to stop him. Quinn wondered how many more of the assembled officers had died. There was still a great deal of confusion, but someone had smashed windows and cold air was sweeping in to disperse the man-made fog.

QUINN vaulted the rows of chairs and returned to his original seat.

He sprang into it, making sure there was no blood on his hands or clothing. Swiftly he dropped the mask of blindness over his eyes again.

Two minutes later, Commissioner Warner came fumbling back. When he found Quinn, he heaved a great sigh of relief.

"I'm sorry I had to leave you, Tony. Something happened. The whole audience must have been matched man for man with spies. They threw some kind of glass bombs, which released a smoke that was so dense, nobody could penetrate it. We don't know if anyone has been killed yet, nor if the spies got clear. The fog is beginning to break up now."

Quinn looked anxious. "I should never have come here. I'm only in the way."

"Nonsense," Warner soothed. "If you had your eyes, Tony, you'd have been in there, battling away. I'm afraid

I'll have to leave you again. I must see if those damned spies got away, or if they are still in the audience. You just sit tight and don't move for anyone. I'll be back."

The atmosphere had cleared now and Quinn's apparently sightless eyes watched the confusion. He could see Colonel Catlin's body near the platform, with Warner beside it. Quinn moved his head slowly, barely preventing himself from gasping in astonishment.

There had been over a hundred potential victims for the spies—yet Catlin was the only man who had been attacked! In the confusion, a dozen ranking officers could easily have been murdered. Why hadn't that happened? Could all of this have been done with only the death of Colonel Catlin in mind?

Quinn gazed steadily in the direction of the platform, wondering why nobody noticed the spy he had knocked out. Certainly the man couldn't have recovered his wits even sufficiently to crawl to some hiding place. Quinn knew perfectly well the power that lay behind his fists. That spy should still be there, sprawled out and surrounded by Warner's men.

Trent climbed up on the platform and shouted for order. The command in his voice stopped the panic near the exits, which were now completely blocked off by police.

"Gentlemen, please return to your seats! No one is permitted to leave until we have searched for the spies who instigated and carried out this murder. Yes, it is murder! Colonel Catlin is dead—knifed in the back. You can be certain that he will be avenged, gentlemen. From now on my association and I will actively campaign against these murderers who must obscure themselves in a fog to carry out their killings.

"All of you, please sit down! Look through your pockets for identification of some kind, and I warn you, it must

be good. Those who cannot furnish it will be held until they are identified. It is an inconvenience, but it may trap some of the killers."

The audience returned to its seats. Warner, in full control of the situation now, posted his men at advantageous positions. Quinn noticed that they were all armed with submachine-guns. Row by row, detectives studied the identifications presented to them by the people in the auditorium. Some were escorted out of the place, others were lined up against one wall for further questioning.

HE saw that Captain McGrath was there, working hard. The detective spotted Quinn and came over, dropping into the chair which Warner had previously occupied.

"I know just what happened here," McGrath said grimly. "It's enough to make an Eskimo's blood boil. Remember that I accused you of killing five



men? Well, I take it back—not the fact that I think you're the Black Bat, mind you! But if you are, and you did kill those damned spies, I'd like to shake your hand."

"I don't mind shaking hands with you, Captain, but I insist that I am not the Black Bat."

McGrath's eyes narrowed as he came half out of his chair.

"Then how did you know it was me, if you can't see? Answer that one!"

Quinn allowed a faint smile to cross his lips.

"But Captain, you asked me that question under similar circumstances before. It so happens that a blind man learns to distinguish voices. I'd know yours at least a block away."

"Oh!" McGrath said, rather weakly, and dropped back into his seat. "Well, if you are the Black Bat, I'm telling you that all curbs are off. You're fighting these spies and I won't try to interfere. Understand? While this goes on, the Black Bat has a free hand, as far as I'm concerned. He can fight these rats the way they ought to be fought—with bullets!"

"I think you're perfectly right," Quinn said, "even if you persist in barking up the wrong tree. This is a time for all the forces of justice to band closely together. Trent was right. Everyone must fight this menace! Believe me, if I could use my eyes—if I weren't the crippled, helpless man that I am—I'd get into it, too. Good luck Captain. I hope you round up these killers."

"I don't know, Quinn," McGrath sighed. "Sometimes I'd swear that you're the Black Bat. But other times, like now, I begin to think I'm nuts. Anyway, you know how I feel about this. Just sit tight. I'll send a couple of men to escort you out of here."

"I'll stay," Quinn countered. "I'm no different from anyone else here. I'll show my identification. Besides, this is all quite exciting for a blind man. I can't see, but I can hear and guess just what's going on. Thanks for trying to help me, Captain."

McGrath went back to work. Quinn turned his apparently sightless eyes around the large auditorium every few moments, searching for von Elkin. The Nazi spy would never get by with his faked beard and wig. He was trapped, might make a desperate attempt to get away.

Exactly what Quinn could do about that wasn't clear, even to himself. Without the masking fog of smoke, he was completely stymied.

CHAPTER XII

Face in the Window

GRADUALLY the members of the audience were whisked out, for not one suspicious person had been found. Every man had either identified himself satisfactorily or sent for trustworthy citizens who could make the identification for him.

All the spies, including von Elkin, had made good their escape! But how? The front entrance of the building was crammed with an overflow audience. They certainly would not have permitted anyone to leave after those smoke bombs were set off. Warner, tired and hot, sat down beside Quinn.

"Well, they beat us to it again, Tony. Colonel Catlin is dead, and we haven't a single clue to his murderers. They created a fog of smoke and escaped through it. Of course, everything was set—exits prearranged skilfully. But you'd think one of those spies would have tripped up somewhere. I wish the Black Bat had been here. He has a way of handling situations of this kind. We can't hope for miracles, though, I suppose."

Quinn smiled. "You're hinting, Commissioner. Like McGrath, you have a vague idea that I'm the Black Bat, and now you're offering me a chance to operate. McGrath just did the same thing. I wish I were the Black Bat—not because I would then have the ability to see once more. That would be only a minor item now. I really could help in battling these spies, if I were the Black Bat."

"They're getting more daring every day. Victories in Europe make them more aggressive than ever over here. Triumph has undoubtedly brought additional members to their ranks. I'd

like to go home now, if I may."

"Of course." Warner helped Quinn to his feet. "Silk has been clamoring like a madman outside. We couldn't let him in, obviously, and I sent word that I'd take you home. You have a good man there, Tony."

Warner led Quinn along the aisle, through the cordon of police thrown around the building, and down the stairs to the sidewalk. Warner's official car was parked across the street. As they stepped off the curb, Philip Trent joined them, linking his arm under Quinn's free one.

"There's only one thing by which that murder may benefit us," he said earnestly. "It shows the people exactly what the whole nation is up against. All of us have been more or less tolerant of these openly foreign organizations. We've let them have their petty drills and rifle practise. We've passed some minor legislation against their uniforms and laughed at the crooks who usually led them into absurd mischief. But it's not mischief now. We must stop laughing and turn from the defensive to the offensive."

"It's my fervent hope that everybody begins to realize what is going on. They'll be wise in not trying to interfere personally, however, because they can take what just happened as a good example of the ruthlessness these men exhibit. I think . . ."

Directly across the street stood Attorney Tolly, watching the trio approach Warner's car. Suddenly Tolly gave a shout of alarm and pointed up the street. Warner and Trent looked swiftly, saw a heavy car bearing down on them with its throttle wide open!

QUINN almost visibly restrained the impulse to look. He heard Warner's cry of fear and knew what was happening. Then Tolly came scooting across the highway. As he neared the trio, he went into a wild dive. His arms grabbed Quinn's legs and sent him crashing back. Warner

and Trent, now freed of Quinn, made a mad surge out of the way. Careening crazily, the big car passed within six inches of the spot where Quinn lay, with Tolly sprawled at his feet.

Quinn had secured a brief glimpse of the driver of that murder car. He recognized the black wig and beard. Fritz von Elkin had made a deliberate attempt to run down the three of them. Just whom he meant to kill wasn't clear. Trent, perhaps, because of the savage manner in which he had attacked von Elkin's principles. It might also have been Warner, because he represented an organized fight against spies.

"What—what happened?" Quinn gasped as Tolly got up.

Warner and Trent rushed over and helped Quinn to his feet. Warner pumped Tolly's hand.

"That was a brave thing you did, sir. Trent and I were squarely in the path of that car, just a little fuddled, I think. You acted promptly and efficiently. You saved the life of a man who couldn't help himself. This is Tony Quinn. He's blind."

Quinn's hand was proffered, but only in the general direction of Tolly. The lawyer took it.

"I wondered why you didn't try to jump. And believe me, Mr. Quinn, you've got a couple of mighty good friends by your side. They seemed to be willing to risk their lives to protect your own. What I did was nothing, but I'm glad I happened to be around, anyway. My name is Tolly. I'm an attorney."

Warner led Quinn to his car after Tolly and Trent left. The police commissioner was obviously shaken by the episode, and a little disgusted when the police cars returned. No trace of the murder vehicle had been found.

"I've got to stick around," he told Quinn. "Things are happening so fast, I don't dare leave until the whole mess is cleaned up. I'm sorry that you were exposed to such danger. And, Tony,

remember what I said about the Black Bat? If you should bump into him, I'd like to have him know just how I feel."

Quinn sank back against the cushions of the sedan.

"I'll keep my nose out of this, from now on," he said sadly. "I'm just in the way. Oh, don't try to tell me that's not the truth. What good can a blind man be? From what I heard, you nearly lost your life—you and Trent—trying to protect me. As for the Black Bat, I'd sell my soul to be in his shoes for just a few hours. I'm sorry to say that I doubt if he'll meet me or that I'll run across him. But if I do, I'll give him your message."

AS Warner watched the car disappear down the street, he stood stroking his chin thoughtfully. There was a fixed notion in his mind that Tony Quinn really was the Black Bat. Warner had known Quinn for years, knew just how aggressive he'd been as district attorney. The Black Bat fought exactly same way, and the touch of this mysterious marauder of crime sometimes seemed identical with Quinn's former efforts.

Against those theories, though, was the word of a dozen competent eye specialists who had stated firmly that Quinn would never see again. Warner also recalled how that searing acid had burned so deep and so fast. He had been present at the scene, had witnessed the entire horrible affair. If money could have cured Quinn's sight, he would now have the use of his eyes, for Quinn was wealthy enough to spend almost any amount. He had spent a small fortune, too, but without an iota of success.

Warner shrugged his shoulders and decided that he and Captain McGrath were a pair of fools even to suspect that Quinn was the Black Bat.

In Warner's large car, Quinn sat rigid, holding his cane firmly. His face was without expression, but his brain worked furiously. For one of the few

times in his life, he felt the unmerciful assault of doubt.

Had that careening car been meant to kill Trent, Warner or—Tony Quinn? Did someone suspect that he was the Black Bat? Was the spy ring going to concentrate on him as their greatest menace? Yet he knew that he had given himself away in no manner. His dual identity was just as secret as ever. He had never relaxed his pose of a blind man while he was Tony Quinn, and as the Black Bat he had worked under cover at all times.

Still, those doubts kept crawling around miserably in his mind. He didn't worry only for himself. There were Silk, Butch and Carol to be concerned about. Any man cunning enough to have determined the identity of the Black Bat, would also have run down those three people as the Black Bat's aides.

He thought of Major Rankin, too. He had been in the audience, yet apparently no attempt had been made on his life. Why? The spies had certainly tried to murder him before, and he had been at their mercy during that meeting. And how had von Elkin managed to get out of that building without detection? How had the ten or twelve spies accomplished the same thing?

Quinn kept tapping his cane gently on the floor of the car. That was the only betraying sign of his justifiable nervousness.

Silk was waiting at the house. Quinn had never seen him so worried. He drank the rye and soda which Silk had prepared and spoke in a low voice.

"We've got to watch our step, Silk. It's possible that someone knows I'm the Black Bat. I'm not sure, of course, but things happened to give me that idea. Perhaps I'm just growing too suspicious, but it won't hurt if we're careful. Later on, I want you to slip out and contact Carol and Butch directly. We can't trust the phone any longer."

Quinn shuffled slowly across the floor

of his study, using his cane to make certain the path was clear. He sank into his accustomed chair in front of the fireplace. Silk dragged over a straight-backed chair, sat down and picked up the newspapers which he had placed on a small table.

"I'll carry on as usual, sir. I've already looked over the papers, and I'll tell you what I've learned from them. Early tonight, G-men conducted raids all over the country in a search for fifth columnists. They found nothing—nothing at all, sir! While the items don't mention this, I can read between the lines. The spies were tipped off, somehow!"

TONY QUINN nodded. "That's what makes it so difficult. They have people who are trusted in various high circles. They pick up information you or I could never hear. That's transmitted to their headquarters, where the little items from all over the land are assembled. Some especially clever mind goes over these and arranges the items to organize a concrete picture of what is to happen.

"But I promise you, we won't be idle any longer. I have one hope—Fritz von Elkin. He's a fugitive, so he must be holed up somewhere. I think I know where he is. You'd imagine that his taking refuge in the section where his kind of people live would be dangerous for him. It wouldn't. He'd be less conspicuous there than among those who don't speak as he does. So I'm going to invade that section and find him."

"But how?" Silk asked. "You can't travel around as the Black Bat and ask a lot of questions. Those people won't talk, even if they wanted to."

"I know, and that's where you come in, Silk. I'm going to take one of the biggest chances of my life. I'm going into that area without the hood and cape. It's up to you to find some way of covering these scars on my face. A pair of colored glasses, an old suit, a

tin cup and cane will be my disguise. Dangerous? Yes, but there is no alternative. We can't just wait for those spies to hit again. Next time they may pull whatever big coup they have in mind. I want you to—

"Silk, be careful now! Someone just ducked past the window in the east wall. Fold the newspapers and don't show any sign of haste. Walk to the kitchen, pick up a gun on your way, and go out. If you see anyone, grab him. Shoot if you have to."

Silk licked his lips nervously, but that was his only unusual reaction.

"What if they take a shot at you through the window?"

"I'll have to accept that chance. Now get going."

Silk obeyed the orders explicitly. When he returned twenty minutes later, he had nothing to report.

"I searched the whole estate, sir, but there's no sign of anyone. Are you positive it wasn't a mistake? Some shadow or a branch of a tree—"

"There was no mistake, Silk. You know how my eyes function. Whoever it was, he took only a fleeting glimpse into the room. I had no chance to see his features, but I did hear his clothes catch on a bush. We're under observation, and not by a gang of small-time crooks. Slip through the tunnel and get Butch and Carol."

Silk nodded, stepped close to Quinn and unobtrusively slipped a gun into the pocket of the smoking jacket.

"If you see anyone else, let him have it," he advised.

Silk had a sudden thought.

"Say, McGrath must be prowling around again!"

Quinn tamped tobacco into his pipe, keeping his eyes fixed before him.

"I thought of that. I'll just make sure."

Quinn arose, walked sightlessly toward the telephone and slowly dialed McGrath's home by counting the holes with his finger. The detective-captain answered almost at once.

"This is Tony Quinn. I am calling because I want to warn you that I informed Commissioner Warner of your ideas concerning the Black Bat. He might ask why a respectable member of the detective bureau should agree to consort with a criminal like the Black Bat. Good night, Captain."

Quinn hung up slowly, shaking his head.

"It couldn't have been McGrath," he said softly. "Now hurry along, Silk. We've got to go into action immediately, before these spies really manage to put us out of action."

CHAPER XIII

Changed Faces



FORTY-FIVE minutes later, when Silk returned, Carol and Butch were already in the laboratory. Quinn had been seated in front of the fireplace all that time. Now he slowly arose, yawned hugely and stretched with great weariness.

"I think I'll go to bed," he told Silk. "You may lock up."

Silk examined each window, making sure the latch was secure, and pulled the shades almost all the way down. After Quinn had made his way up the stairs to the second floor, Silk extinguished all the lights.

Then, in the darkness, Tony Quinn retraced his path. He avoided the furniture, kept as close to the wall as possible. Opening the secret door, he slipped inside. Silk remained upstairs, watching and listening. Carol ran into Quinn's arms, as Butch watched.

"Tony, Silk told us you're under suspicion! I had a feeling something like this would happen. Oh, Tony, what are you going to do? Can't we help you?"

"I'm going to war," Quinn said grim-

ly. "And you can help, both of you as well as Silk. Here's the idea. I'm forced to resort to a disguise—a simple one, but it ought to work. As a blind beggar, I'm going to look for von Elkin. You and Butch must keep me in sight at every second. If anything happens, Butch, you can wade in. I don't care how many heads you break or how many jaws you dislocate. Silk is ready to act the same way. He's getting the disguise material ready now. Meanwhile, Carol, did you learn anything about Major Rankin?"

"Plenty! I studied all the newspaper files on him and I asked a few questions in the right places. Major Rankin once served as military attaché to the United States Embassy in Berlin. He was constantly exposed to Nazi *Kultur*. Maybe some of it soaked in. Secretly he might have renounced his allegiance to our country and joined the Nazis. It's happened before—in Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and even France."

Quinn whistled softly for a moment before he spoke.

"It does build up suspicion against the major. I never knew any of that before. Anything else?"

Carol nodded. "In checking up on Rankin, I discovered that one of his closest friends is a man named Roscoe Bell. He used to be an international economics expert before Hitler blew the continent wide open. Bell was in constant contact with the aggressive powers over there. He sold, or negotiated the sale of more oil and machine tools to Italy than any one in the United States.

"He's welcome at the embassies of the Axis nations, and he's an exceptionally clever man. I had a look at him." She shuddered. "He's got the kind of face that curdles milk—reminds you of a death's-head."

When Butch stirred angrily in his chair, it groaned under his immense weight.

"Say, Boss, lemme have a crack at

him, huh? Ever since I shook that bag of bones who had me pinched, I been achin' to slug one of the big rats. I'll make him talk."

"I think you could, at that." Quinn laughed. "But the time isn't ripe yet. Don't worry, you'll have a chance with those fists of yours. Here are my orders. Our lives might hinge on the way you follow them, so don't miss anything. It's after midnight now, but we can't afford to wait. Our plans go into action immediately. They may require some time before things hatch out.

"Butch, loaf around the section I will indicate. Silk will follow me. Carol, have a fast car ready, and also keep Silk in view. In that way, we will never be out of sight of one another. If any of us disappear, the others will immediately start things humming.

"We're to look particularly for Fritz von Elkin, but if we run across anyone else connected with the spy ring, that person will serve us just as well. What I'm aiming for is to locate their main hideout or meeting place. Sooner or later the leader will put in an appearance to give his orders. Then we shall have him."

CAROL and Butch hurried away, to keep a rendezvous at the appointed spot. Quinn slipped back into the house, made his way to the second floor and found Silk getting the disguise material ready. As he sat down, Silk went to work.

"It won't be such a good job, sir," he said unhappily. "I'm no expert at this, but I think I can fill in those scars around your eyes. Maybe I can even turn you into a sallow-complexioned, glum sort of a man. Will that do?"

"Yes, I think so."

Fifteen minutes later, Quinn looked at himself in a mirror and decided it certainly would do. Silk had used a light plastic material to fill in the acid scars, and then colored it to match the slightly dull complexion he had given

Quinn's face. A deft application of another substance gave the impression of a week's growth of beard.

"I've been studying up, sir, so maybe it isn't as bad as I thought," Silk explained. "Got myself a few odds and ends for experiments, too. But I never thought I'd use them on you."

Quinn removed his tweeds and donned an old black suit, which Silk had carefully rumped and soiled in spots. A wrinkled shirt and an old, narrow tie completed the illusion. When he donned dark glasses and put on a battered hat, he nodded approval.

"I COULD face Captain McGrath and get away with it," he said. "There's no doubt that I'll fool men like von Elkin. You know, Silk, he cannot possibly be the leader of this group. I think Morino was killed by the real leader while von Elkin stood by. Then you heard von Elkin ask his master certain questions, which also eliminated him.

"I don't like the way Major Rankin has acted. First of all, he was kidnapped quite smoothly, and a neat trap was set for me. They knew I was watching him. That means they deliberately failed to kill him the first time, knowing I'd read the newspaper accounts and get on Rankin's trail. But Rankin was the prisoner of at least eight or ten men. Yet he got away, and as far as I know, he never even made a report of the snatch.

"He was once subjected to Nazi influence, and no matter how I hate to suspect an officer of our Army, Rankin must fall under that classification. Then there's Attorney Tolly, who bailed out Butch's friend, Hofer. He had an office in the building where Morino was killed. He could easily have committed the crime and then given himself an alibi by going back to his office."

"But if he was the leader of the spies, and he also suspected that you were the Black Bat," Silk asked

after a moment, "why should he risk his life to save you?"

"That I don't know. Perhaps it wasn't a serious attempt on my life. It may have been aimed at Warner or Trent. Or it may have been a ruse to find out if Tony Quinn really was blind. I almost gave myself away, Silk. Tolly shouted a warning, and he put plenty of expression in his voice. If I had turned my head and seen the car coming, I would have jumped for it. Then they'd have known I wasn't as blind as I pretended to be. So Tolly saved my life, or thought he did. Why? Was it to throw all suspicion off himself?"

Silk was putting on a disguise of his own while they talked. He changed his appearance to that of a much younger man, and his skin took on a healthy, tanned color. Silk was completely at home in this disguise. During the lush days of his confidence work, he had used it often, pretending to be a new arrival in a big city and wide open as prey for other slick confidence artists.

Quinn slipped back to the laboratory, stuffed a pair of guns in special holsters that gave no indication of a bulge. His hood and cape went into another prepared pocket. Then he went through the tunnel, reached the street and walked away briskly.

It was long after midnight when he saw Butch patrolling his assigned area. Carol was driving her car slowly over the section he had indicated. Silk appeared, too, after a short time. They continued operations until the hour became so late that they might have aroused suspicion. The Black Bat called off the hunt for that night, but he was glad of the experience he and his troupe had undergone. They had proved they could keep one another constantly in sight.

Late the following afternoon, Tony Quinn had two visitors—Commissioner Warner and Philip Trent.

"Glad you dropped in, gentlemen," Quinn said sincerely. "A blind man finds time heavy on his hands. All I

can do is listen to the radio, and even the war news seems to lose its horror, eventually."

Trent laughed. "This isn't just a social call. We dropped into see how you felt after that terrible experience last night. But we also want to solicit your help. Financially, I mean."

Quinn looked puzzled as he stared straight ahead.

"I don't get your point, but if you are seeking funds to combat this spy ring, name your own figure."

Warner looked questioningly at Trent.

"Remember what I said? Quinn may be blind as far as his eyes are concerned, but he can see and understand the menace that faces this nation. You've hit it on the head as usual, Tony. Trent has been raising funds from members of the Officers Club and certain other important men. But even though they have been more than generous, he needs all he can get."

"We're going after that spy mob with every bit of power we can muster," Trent said. "But we don't intend to interfere with the Federal authorities. What we learn will be turned over to them for action. You see, some of the foreign people here have relatives in Europe, and they are under the control of the Gestapo or whatever other secret police agency those various nations operate. Those unfortunate people are compelled to obey orders from the spy ring."

"By providing sufficient money to get those relatives either to the United States or some other land where they can breathe in peace, we hope to break up this compulsion of unwilling aides to the spy group. It will take large sums, and I'm going on the air tonight in a plea for cash. It won't come in fast enough to suit our purposes, so I hope to interest fifty or more men who are willing to donate a thousand dollars each."

"Silk, my checkbook and a pen," Quinn called.

Silk brought them. After he guided Quinn's shaky pen onto the proper lines, he handed Trent the check.

"This will take a few people to safety," Trent said gratefully. "I'll let you know later just what happens. Thanks again."

Warner lingered a few seconds and spoke in a low voice.

"In your dreams you didn't see the Black Bat by any chance, did you, Tony?"

Quinn chuckled. "I'm afraid not, nor in my limited travels either. Anything new on the murder of Colonel Catlin, Commissioner?"

"Not a thing," Warner sighed. "I'd like to know how those men got out of that auditorium, but mostly I want to know why Catlin was knifed. My best men haven't been able to figure it out. It's keeping me busy, too, and I only took time out because Trent felt a little hesitant about coming to see you for a donation. He's got a smart idea there. It ought to help some. Don't miss his broadcast tonight, because he certainly intends to make the fur fly."

CAROL and Butch hadn't been idle. They reported before dinner, which Silk managed to serve in the laboratory. He had carefully drawn all the window shades before carrying the trays from the kitchen.

"I've worked on this man, Bell," Carol said. "Everything confirms my first suspicions. He's a sympathizer with those alien interests because United State neutrality laws have practically put him out of business. He can't export anything that's worth real money, like munitions. He visited Major Rankin at three-twenty, stayed in the suite for almost an hour, and then went directly to the section we were patrolling last night."

"He owns considerable real estate there, including several meeting halls used by Bunds and certain athletic societies that are patronized by men who have a real need for calisthenics."

"It ain't that," Butch put in with a broad grin. "They drink too much beer. I been around that section all day myself. Boy, they sure got good beer! Like you said I was to do, I followed Tolly around. That guy's business is plenty dead, if you ask me. But he spends a lot of time around the beer joints up there. They think he's a big shot. Everybody knows him. I even seen a couple of gents slip him that funny salute they tire out their arms with in Europe."

"All right," Quinn said. "We'll invade their stamping grounds again. Butch, as soon as you've eaten your usual three meals in one, go back there and wait for us. Carol, keep your car tank filled, and have it ready for a quick getaway. We may need it. Silk, you'd better get the stuff set for our disguises. I have a feeling we'll see action tonight."

CHAPTER XIV

The Disappearing Man



IN his disguise as a blind beggar, Tony Quinn tapped his cane noisily to add to the sum of thirteen cents he had obtained during the first two hours. He worked mostly around a big hall which had been prepared for a meeting.

At nine o'clock a few men began entering it, but some of them looked around furtively before they climbed the steps. Others walked in boldly, boastful of the fact that they had been invited. Quinn frowned. This was going to be a big meeting, with well over two hundred in attendance. Certainly the clever leader of the spy ring wouldn't risk anything quite so open, even in a section inhabited by people of his own nationality.

As he passed the place for the fifth

time in less than an hour, Quinn saw, through his dark glasses, something which aroused his interest. Men were going into the hall, but these made a sharp turn just inside the door and seemed to vanish.

A car pulled up and two men climbed out. The Black Bat recognized them instantly as some of the spies who had been in the auditorium where Colonel Catlin had met his violent death. Now he was certain an important meeting was to be held. He reasoned also that the assembly in the main hall was merely meant to quell any suspicion that a far more dangerous meeting was to be held elsewhere in the building. This area was well policed these days. Uniformed men and detectives constantly kept their eyes open for trouble.

The Black Bat kept tapping his cane and softly calling for alms. He saw two bulky, square-faced men emerge from the hall, descend the steps and start what seemed to be a patrol in front of the place. They saw the Black Bat, whispered to one another and then approached him. He recognized their type immediately. These were Gestapo agents, selected for their ability to keep cruel hands clamped around the throats of those who hated what they stood for.

One of them grabbed Quinn's shoulder. The other struck a match, whipped off Quinn's dark glasses and almost shoved the flaming match into his face. Quinn's eyes never flickered, for they had that dead stare of the blind. When the Gestapo agent blew out the match, Quinn began feeling around the sidewalk for his glasses.

"I ain't done nobody no harm," he whimpered. "Please don't take me in, Officer."

The two men looked at one another and winked. One of them kicked the dark glasses toward Quinn's hand. He picked them up fumblingly and put them on.

"Get away from here!" one of the

agents warned harshly. "If I see you again, I'll break those glasses — and your arm! You are not wanted around here. Is that understood?"

"I—I'll go," Quinn whined. "But I got to eat. A blind man can't do no work to make money. He's got to depend on kind people, but I'll go. I don't want no trouble with the police."

Quinn turned around. Tapping his cane, he obediently went off. One of the agents nudged the other, stepped quietly behind Quinn and delivered a hard kick that struck Quinn's ankle. With a choked sob, he tapped his way painfully to the next corner and rounded it.

SILK was waiting in a doorway, his face livid with rage.

"I saw them do that, sir. With your permission, I'd like to take a crack at the rats."

"I'll take care of them myself," Quinn said grimly, "and in just a couple of minutes. They seem to think this is Berlin. Now listen carefully. The meeting upstairs in that hall is a blind. I think the real business will take place in the basement. There's an alley beside the building, and a side entrance which leads to the basement.

"My theory is that when the proper moment arrives, our mysterious spy leader will come in person to deliver his speech. If that happens, we'll have him. Contact Butch. Take him with you and slip down that alley. Warn Carol to be ready, because this will have to be worked with blinding speed."

Silk looked puzzled.

"But those thick-necked mugs who chased you away— They'll pounce on us like a pack of dogs."

"I'll clear the way for you," Quinn laughed. "Once inside the place, let Butch go to work on anyone who is in your path. Wait for me. I'll follow shortly, but when I enter, it will be on the heels of the spy master. Find Butch and Carol, and then watch me do

a little angling. I'm really going to enjoy this."

Quinn waited until Silk gave him a covert signal that all was ready. Then he adjusted his glasses, tapped the cane briskly and turned the corner, heading straight toward the two Gestapo agents. When they saw him coming, they gaped in surprise. Quinn kept on until he started to pass them. But they seized him, dragged him across the sidewalk and shoved him against a brick wall.

"So, you are stupid, eh? You cannot follow orders. Well, one of these days, you and all your kind will be wiped off the streets. If I had my way, you would get death. You are an impediment to the rule that is to follow here. But because you have disobeyed, we shall teach you a lesson—a good lesson, *ja*."

The agent doubled his fist, stepped back a pace and swung hard. As the fist streaked toward his face, Quinn ducked. It struck the brick wall instead, drawing a cry of anguish from the Gestapo agent.

Quinn suddenly moved fast. He thrust out one arm that sent the second agent flying toward the gutter. Then he ripped off the smoked glasses and began running swiftly down the street. The two agents came rushing after him, but Quinn knew they'd never risk shooting at him. They would capture him, if possible, and then silently make sure he'd never talk. By deliberately exposing himself as a fake blind beggar, Quinn knew they'd leave their posts and clear the way for Butch and Silk.

He skidded to a stop near the mouth of an alley two blocks away. Veering sharply, he picked up speed as he headed into its dark maw. Now the advantage was in his favor, for he could see perfectly in the gloom. The two agents followed down the alley, but they had to slow up, trying to find Quinn's shadowy form.

"A spy he is, and he dies!" one of

them said in a hoarse whisper. "*Mein Gott*, if the Director knew how close he was to the meeting tonight! There must be a leak, eh?"

The agent turned his head. Instead of seeing his partner standing beside him, he saw an eerie form, made all the weirder in the darkness. For a moment he thought he had gone mad. He was staring at a huge figure with wings. Then recognition dawned, and one hand shot to his hip pocket.

"The Black Bat!" he whispered in horror.

HE got his gun half out of the pocket when the Black Bat's fist smashed him full on the nose. The blow hurled him back against the wall. Before he could shake the blood out of his mouth and eyes, the gun was wrenched from his hand, thrown far into the alley.

"You asked for this," the Black Bat said stonily. "Anybody who kicks a blind man around deserves the beating of his life, but you're doubly deserving of harsh treatment. Your kind is not wanted in this country. You gained admittance here by subterfuge. You threaten those who want to stay here and enjoy the freedom your own land does not provide. Get your fists up! You boast about physical prowess and 'strength through joy.' Enjoy this for a starter."

The Black Bat's gloved fist hit the Gestapo agent a slashing blow across the cheek. The agent stumbled and fell. The Black Bat grabbed his necktie and hauled him back to his feet.

"No! Do not strike me!" the agent whimpered. "I will give you money. I will go back to my own land. I will do anything you. . . ."

"Yellow!" the Black Bat said harshly. "Unless you've got some poor, half-starved victim under your whip, you're only half a man. You can hand it out, but you can't take it. Your kind never can, but you get it, anyway."

He held the agent at arm's-length

and drove a mighty punch straight to the chin. The agent went limp. Letting him drop, the Black Bat walked into the alley and found the second agent, who was beginning to moan and stir. The Black Bat slammed home another blow, wiped his hands as though they'd touched filth. Then he pushed both men into a small alcove used for garbage and ash cans. He propped them up and shielded them from view with the cans.

Then he hastily stripped off his hood and cape, put them away, and donned his dark glasses and worn hat. After picking up his cane, he returned to the sidewalk and tapped along the street. As he neared the meeting hall, he saw the big doors close. A moment later a sedan turned sharply and crawled down the driveway beside the meeting hall.

It stopped, the headlights winked out, and the door beside the driver's seat opened. A man stepped out. In the gloom he was just a shadowy blur, but the Black Bat's eyes saw that he was heavily shrouded in some kind of cape. He disappeared through the side entrance.

The Black Bat was after him quickly. Making sure no other guards were posted nearby, he changed to his hood and cape, and then entered a huge, faintly lighted room. He saw an electrical switchboard, curtains and ropes, and realized that he was behind a stage. Apparently the basement of the building was used as a theater.

Then his eyes made out a form lying prone on the floor, near one corner. The Black Bat made only a cursory examination of the unconscious man. The lopsided jaw gave silent proof that Butch had been at work. Abruptly a hiss attracted his attention, and Silk came from behind a stage prop. When the Black Bat joined him, Silk whispered in his ear.

"We've got him. They're ready to hold a meeting and the big boy himself just stepped onto the stage. The only man on duty here is over in the corner.

I think Butch all but killed him when he started to draw a gun. What shall we do now?"

"Butch is to take the left wing of the stage," the Black Bat replied softly. "You take the right wing, and I'll slide under the curtain in the middle. His nibs wore a big cloak. We've got to get that over his head so he can't see you or Butch. Then, after he's properly silenced, we'll perform a neat job of kidnaping. All set?"

"I've been set for days, sir. You give the signal."

THE Black Bat hurried to the center of the curtain. Dropping flat, he raised the curtain an inch and saw the feet of the mystery man. Gruff commands came from the small theater out front and then the intense lights were turned on. The Black Bat raised his hand, saw Butch and Silk waiting. He brought it down, sliding under the curtain at the same instant. All three of them converged on the cloaked leader. Butch's huge paw clamped across the man's mouth. Silk tripped him silently, and the Black Bat whipped the cloak over his head. He nodded to Butch. The big man rammed home a knockout blow, picked up the limp victim and retreated toward the wings, with Silk following.

The Black Bat slid beneath the curtain again. He ran to Butch's first victim and quickly slung him over one shoulder. He carried him onstage, propped him up against the curtain and plastered a Black Bat sticker on his forehead. Then he darted off the stage and out of the building.

As he left, he could hear the eager spies hailing the expected appearance of their leader. The Black Bat slipped off his hood and cloak as he raced up the driveway. Carol was waiting in the car, with the motor humming. Silk sat beside her and Butch was in back. Their victim was huddled in a heap on the floor. When the Black Bat got in, Carol quickly drove off.

"Head for Logan Park," he ordered. "It isn't patrolled, and it's dark there—just right for my interview with the big shot. And, Carol, that was slick work. You too, Silk—and you, Butch."

"Aw," Butch replied modestly, "that was nothin'. I never even made my knuckles tingle. That guy's jaw musta been cut outa putty. Say, Boss, do I get a crack at this baby? Just a little two-minute round?"

The Black Bat chuckled. "He's my meat, Butch, and I'll handle him with kid gloves until he talks. This has been one grand night's work. Silk, jump out at the next corner. Phone the F.B.I. and tell them where they can round up those spies in a hurry."

Carol turned into the park and stopped at the darkest spot she could find. As he got out, the Black Bat hauled his prisoner with him and spoke softly to his aides.

"Keep cruising around. When our pal wakes up, I don't want him to see your faces or hear your voices."

He carried the cloaked figure deep into the park, laid him down on the grass and knelt beside him. When he wrenched the cloak open, he groaned in disappointment.

The man they had kidnaped was Fritz von Elkin—the one man who couldn't possibly be the leader of the spy ring!

CHAPTER XV

Wave of Terror



O PENING his eyes, von Elkin stared, then instantly closed them and shivered violently. That hooded head and the cape told him exactly who had negotiated this kidnaping.

"I have done nothing," he moaned. "There is no reason why you should kill me."

"There won't be—if you talk." Von Elkin's eyes showed that he understood the quiet threat. "First of all, I want to know just why you were assigned to address that meeting. Isn't that the job for your leader?"

"I know nothing." Von Elkin sat up, rubbing his swollen jaw. "I received orders only an hour ago, and I obeyed them. I was to put on a cloak, cover my face and go to the meeting. I was not told what to say, and under no circumstances was I to reveal myself to anyone. I swear that is everything I can tell you."

"Then let's take it from another angle," Quinn said. "When Morino was killed, you were in the same room. The man who murdered him fired through the doorway of your office. Who was the man who handled that gun?"

"*Himmel!*" Von Elkin's eyes popped wide. "How do you know that? Even the police have not found out about it yet. You will not believe me. Anyway, if I talk any more, I will be killed. There is no difference, whether my death is at your hands or by the orders of my leader."

"I'm afraid you've got us all wrong over here, von Elkin. We don't torture or murder people to make them talk. Those customs we leave to barbarians. We'll let the law take its course. You may be convicted of murdering Morino. If you are not, then the worst possible punishment you can expect is deportation. We could send you back home by way of Japan, and even pay your fare."

"Send me—back—there?" von Elkin gasped in terror. "No! In the name of humanity, do not deport me! I will be killed at once for having failed. They will show no mercy. I'll tell you everything I know. Everything! The man who leads us is unknown to the entire organization. Whenever he addresses us, lights are thrown into our eyes, so we cannot see his face, though he can see us. His orders come by let-

ter, by phone and by messenger.

"Yes, he did kill Morino. The poor fool had lost his nerve and was ready to confess to the police. Yet I did not see his face even that night. After killing Morino, he told me I could gain my freedom by going to the roof, jumping to the next building and using the side door to escape. A car was waiting for me. He had disappeared before I went to the roof."

"What are your leader's plans? What does he intend to sabotage and when?"

Von Elkin dry-washed his hands nervously.

"By answering that, I forfeit my life. Yet what can I do? The plans are ready. When the signal is given, our men will strike in every part of the country. They have machine-guns, grenades—everything with which to kill and create terror. Sympathizers will feed them and store ammunition. Shipyards, factories, public buildings—all are to be destroyed. The plan is so huge that sometimes it makes me shiver."

"When does all this happen?"

"No one but the Director knows. He alone can give the signal. I swear that is the truth."

THE Black Bat reached under his cape and placed one of the perforated cards on von Elkin's knee.

"Read that. Tell me what it means."

Von Elkin had only to glance at the card to recognize it.

"Through these cards will come the signal. No one knows what they mean, but when the time comes, we will learn how to use them. The lieutenants distribute one to every member of the organization. I also have one."

Von Elkin reached toward his pocket, but the Black Bat gripped his wrist hard. From the spy's inner pocket, he brought out the card. Clumsily von Elkin knelt, bent over the Black Bat's shoulder and pointed to the perforations.

"You see, that is what I mean."

Suddenly he gave the Black Bat a vicious shove, sent him rolling over on the grass. The spy was on his feet in a flash, racing away into the darkness. He plunged headlong into tall shrubbery and kept running. He was shaking badly and sweating with fear, but he had escaped the Black Bat. Naturally he could no longer return to the spy ring after what he had told. There was plenty of room to hide in this big country, though. . . .

"All right, von Elkin. Put your hands up and come out of there. If you try to duck, I'll put a bullet through you."

Terrified, von Elkin saw the Black Bat standing ten feet away.

"*Ach!*" he cried. "You are not human! You found me in this darkness. It is not possible!"

A gun that pressed against his ribs told him it was indeed a fact. He offered no resistance. He was thoroughly beaten, and he knew it. This black-garbed figure was even more frightful than the Gestapo, or the sinister voice of the Director.

Von Elkin was quickly bound with his own necktie and belt. The Black Bat slung him across one shoulder and marched back toward the car. As he neared it, he threw the cape over the spy's head. Butch was waiting to stow the prisoner into the car.

* * * * *

DETECTIVE-CAPTAIN McGrath came home late. His wife was away and he preferred to work overtime rather than sit home all alone. After he put his car away, he walked around to the front of the house and let himself in. The instant he snapped on the living room lights, he jerked erect in surprise.

Strapped to one of his big chairs was Fritz von Elkin, his mouth gagged. A note had been pinned to his vest. McGrath read it in amazement.

Compliments of the Black Bat, Captain. Here is Fritz von Elkin, in whom you and the F.B.I. are greatly interested. He doesn't know much and I've already milked him dry of all the information he could give. He did not murder Anton Morino, but he is a self-confessed spy and his name will look good on your records.

McGrath went to the phone and called the local offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Twenty minutes later, two G-men were clamping handcuffs on von Elkin.

"Nice work, Captain," one of them said. "We certainly wanted this man badly."

Dismally McGrath shoved the Black Bat's note toward the two G-Men.

"Don't thank me. The Black Bat did it. I'm just a go-between."

"Honestly and sincerely spoken," a voice stated from the back of the room.

Everyone whirled. The Black Bat stood just inside the door, an automatic gripped in his hand.

"I'm sorry I had to startle you," the Black Bat apologized. "I wasn't sure McGrath would listen to me, and I really needed a representative of the F.B.I. to hear what I have to say. Sit down, gentlemen. Shall we declare a truce for the moment? After all, we all work on the same side of the fence in this particular case."

"You've got my word that I won't try to nab you," McGrath grumbled.

"And ours," one of the G-men added quickly. "In fact, we have orders to give you a free hand. Before Colonel Catlin died, he notified the Department that you were at work on the case. He was a little proud that even you didn't know he was in active service again. Catlin had been assigned to Military Intelligence several months before. I think they killed him because he had learned too much."

The Black Bat walked over to von Elkin and stripped off the gag.

"How about it? You were in the meeting hall when Catlin died. You may even have been the man who killed him. Why was he murdered? What

was he trying desperately to say?"

"I did not kill him! None of us knows who did it. We had orders to capture him, but not to kill. I do not know why he was murdered. You must believe me! I am telling the truth."

"SO Catlin was on active service with the Military Intelligence." The Black Bat balanced himself on the corner of McGrath's living room table. "That puts a new light on the subject. Those others who died—apparently by accident, or in the course of a hoodlum robbery—what about them? Were they on active service, too?"

"We don't know," the G-man answered. "This is the first time anybody claimed those men were murdered."

"Well, they were. Here is what I want to say. The spy ring is big—far more enormous than you probably believe. Its tentacles stretch into every city in the nation. They are well armed, and already have sympathizers prepared to hide them and to secrete ammunition. In effect, they intend to perform as the parachute troops did in Belgium and Holland—to destroy and terrorize.

"Contact your Washington office and prepare them against this shock. Men must be ready twenty-four hours a day to operate from every branch office you have. They are to be completely armed and augmented, if necessary, by regular Army men. This is no crackpot scheme. It's war on a modern scale.

"If the spies succeed, the whole program of the United States is bound to be delayed, with disastrous results. If my plans carry through, I shall flash word to your Washington offices when and where to strike. We may be able to gather the whole ring into one net."

"As far as we're concerned," one of the G-men said, "those are orders. We'll hike von Elkin to our local office and grill him. He may spill something he forgot to tell you. I'll get in

touch with Washington and have the arrangements made. Nothing will be left undone. You can depend on us."

"I am," the Black Bat said grimly. "So are a hundred and thirty million other people." He arose and backed toward the door. "Do you know anything about the raid I ordered on the spy meeting?"

"It was a fizzle," a G-man said. "We found nothing but two hundred men all singing the 'Star Spangled Banner' and getting ready to close their meeting. They had resolved to fight for democracy."

"I was afraid of that," the Black Bat said. "Did you search the basement?"

"Yes. All we found was a stage-hand who said some burglar had slugged him. But there was a short-wave radio on the stage, too. We looked it over. It couldn't get messages from any great distance and all the sending apparatus had been removed."

The Black Bat nodded. "Take good care of von Elkin. You might give him a drink. He looks as though he needs one. Good night, gentlemen."

The door closed softly, and he was gone.

CHAPTER XVI

Attack in the Dark



RETURNING to the car, the Black Bat got in beside Carol.

"Drive back to the house," he ordered. "Butch, you get your wreck of a car over to the corner of White and Damon Streets. Park it

there, and then go back to your boarding house."

After Butch was dropped off, Carol drove to the neighborhood of the address the Black Bat had given Butch. She parked on a lonely side street.

"Can I help, Tony? I feel as though

"I'm just an ordinary chauffeur."

"Not at the moment. But I'm working on an idea, and you'll be more than useful in it. Right now I'm going to pay Fritz von Elkin's hideout a visit. I learned the address from some papers he had on him. Von Elkin may have been holding back. I'm not sure, but I think he may have been one of the men who fought Colonel Catlin just before he was stabbed.

"The smoke was pretty thick, yet I'm reasonably certain he was hanging onto Catlin. He'd deny that, not because of his vast faith in the totalitarian regime which controls his life, but as a matter of self-preservation. He doesn't want to be suspected of murder. Go back to the house and wait for me in the lab. Silk should be home by now, and we can have a council of war."

She turned toward the hooded and caped figure at her side.

"Tony, this is the greatest thing you've ever done. It's more important than running down crooks and murderers. I'm proud that I had something to do with the origination of the Black Bat."

"I'm just grateful," the Black Bat held her hands, "for a kind Providence that turned you my way—not because you brought back my sight. That's incidental. But it allowed me to know you. Some day our task will be completed and the Black Bat will retire. That day will mean that you and I can be together as long as we live. Providing, of course, that you want it that way."

"I do, Tony. I do! That's why I worry so much when you're prowling around, especially when you work against these monsters. Even if they only suspect that Tony Quinn is the Black Bat, they may think it necessary to murder you. I—I've never really been afraid before, but I am now."

"I know," the Black Bat said softly. "It has affected me the same way. But, Carol, if we fail, a great number of people will die. There's no telling what

will happen if that gang gets the upper hand. I'd willingly lay down my life to prevent it, yet you can rest assured I'm not going to take foolish chances. Those men will give no mercy, and they can expect none in return. I'm beginning to understand all that has happened so far. The chase may be nearly ended. Now, go back and wait for me. This particular job is plain routine."

The Black Bat left the car, darted across the sidewalk and invaded the spacious yard of a large house. He watched Carol disappear around the corner before going on. Through the inky darkness, he crossed other yards without blundering into anything that might give an alarm.

Scrutinizing the house in which von Elkin had been hiding, he wondered how the spy had ever managed to afford to live there. The house was an old-fashioned affair, with gables and turrets, and there were even blinds outside the windows. Some of these had been shut.

Warily the Black Bat approached the rear door. For all he knew, a dangerous number of spies might be holed up there. The ordinary lock on the door gave to his skill in less than a minute.

HE walked across a kitchen, saw opened tin cans strewn around, and dirty dishes and pans in the sink. He opened a cupboard and looked at the supply of food. There wasn't much—certainly not enough to feed many men.

In the middle of the dining room, he stopped and listened. His sensitive ears heard a faint creak, but no other sound. The creak might have originated in the structure of the house itself, for the place was old. The Black Bat walked noiselessly into the huge living room, drawing a gun as he entered. His search of the room revealed nothing of interest. A study and a library at the rear of the house were just as unproductive of evidence.

Returning to the reception hall, he climbed the wide staircase cautiously, grateful for the silence which his crepe-soled shoes insured. There were several bedrooms and a sewing room on the second floor. Only one door was closed, apparently leading into one of the bed chambers. He turned the knob swiftly, flung the door wide. His gun came up, ready for battle. But nothing happened. The same grim silence still gripped the whole house.

When the Black Bat stepped into the room, he knew it held what he sought. On a small dressing table was von Elkin's disguise—the black wig and the beard.

He saw a desk in one gloomy corner and approached it. Before he started to examine the contents of the drawers, he looked down at the waste-basket. It was half full of crumpled papers, among which were the yellow pieces of a torn telegram form.

The Black Bat bent down and picked up a scrap of the yellow paper. It contained only the date of the wire, stated that it had originated in Washington, D. C., and following this was the telegraph company's code numbers. He impressed them on his mind, for the wire might be important, especially since it came from the nation's Capital. There was a chance that it might reveal some spy with his nose stuck deeply into Government business.

For one brief instant, the Black Bat was not on guard. All his attention was centered on picking the scraps of the ripped telegram out of the basket and assembling them.

When he heard a soft step behind him, he started to arise. Abruptly his cloak was thrown over his head. The Black Bat was really blinded. A hard blow knocked the gun out of his hand before he could pull the trigger. He moved away quickly, trying to drag his engulfing cape down so he could see. There was no chance of accomplishing this, for the mysterious marauder worked fast.

He rocked the Black Bat with a hard punch to the chest, directly above the heart. Another slammed painfully into the pit of his stomach. The Black Bat had to give way under the attack. Each time he tried to remove the cape, another blow landed.

Suddenly he realized that the attacker was deliberately forcing him back in a certain direction. That instant, he felt an open window behind him. He made one last frantic effort to land a wild punch, but it missed. That was his last chance. Two strong arms lifted him and thrust him through the window.

THE Black Bat felt himself slipping, sensed that his attacker had stepped back for a kick or a final punch. The Black Bat suddenly relaxed, but his two hands shot out. One of them seized the top of a sturdy blind.

When the last attack came, he was shoved completely through the window. He managed to hang onto the blind with one hand, and reach for his second gun with the other. Whipping it out, he fired two quick shots through the window.

He heard a snarled curse, the sound of furniture being tipped over. Again he fired, and then hastily removed the cape from around his head. He could see now, but the room was empty. The door was closed and a fire burned furiously in the waste-basket.

The Black Bat swung onto the sill and dropped back into the room. The papers were already almost consumed by the fire, but he turned the waste-basket upside down to smother the flames. Snatching up the gun that had been knocked out of his hand, he darted toward the door. He flung it open and leaped out onto the balcony overlooking the reception hall.

Three guns burned a deadly greeting. The Black Bat leaped aside, saw a trio of spies half hidden by doorways on the floor below. His automatic spat once. A spy fell out of the doorway

like a log of wood. The other two were shooting fast, but the darkness impeded their aim. It had no effect on the Black Bat's marksmanship, however. He nailed another with a bullet between the eyes. The third man gave a startling scream. He ducked out of sight, and the Black Bat heard him racing toward the back door.

None of those three had been his attacker, the Black Bat felt certain. The man who had seized him had owned thick arms and the great strength of a

have accidentally nailed the leader.

"Butch!" the Black Bat called softly. "Put him down. Where'd you get him?"

"I was just parkin' the car when I heard shots," Butch explained. "So I kept on drivin', and I saw this baby runnin' like mad. I jumped out, and he argued with me a little, so I conked him. Did I do wrong, Boss?"

"Put him on the floor," the Black Bat said. "I want to take a look."

Butch obeyed by simply letting his

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COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

powerful body. For some reason he was sure that he had tangled with the real leader of the spy ring. Therefore, that telegram must have been vitally important. The Black Bat raced down the steps. As he neared the bottom, the front door opened. His gun came up with the speed of lightning.

He let it sag, for Butch was standing in the hall, trying to penetrate the darkness. Under one arm he carried a limp figure. The Black Bat's hopes surged high when he saw that. Butch may

burden fall. The Black Bat turned the man over, saw a piggish face, a partially bald head, and a thick neck. The Black Bat had never seen this man before, as far as he knew.

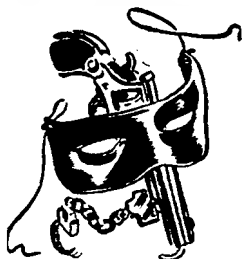
He heard tires grit along the driveway, raced to a window. A sedan was turning crazily out of the drive and onto the road.

"Butch, get in your car and trail that sedan. Don't lose it! Phone Silk just as soon as you find out where it's going. Step on it!"

"Okay, Boss." Butch started for the door. "But if I was you, I'd lam outa here. Boy, them shots were louder'n bombs."

LEAVING Butch's victim on the floor, the Black Bat hurried back to the room where he had fought for his life. Hastily he turned the wastebasket over. He groaned, for every scrap of paper had been consumed by the flames. But he didn't waste time in searching the desk. If it had contained anything of value, the unknown attacker would have destroyed or taken it.

The Black Bat rushed down to the thick-necked man, who was beginning to come out of unconsciousness. After looking out the front door to make sure



no police cars were pulling up, the Black Bat lifted the heavy man. Without too much exertion, he carried him through the house, out the back door and behind the garage. He let the man down and slapped his face gently until he fully awakened.

"Don't make a sound," the Black Bat warned. "When you talk, speak in a whisper and speak fast. I'm in no mood to argue, either. Who are you? What were you doing in that house?"

"It's my house," the man answered, with a frightened look in his eyes. "I'm Roscoe Bell. I own it. I was just coming home when some giant jumped out of the darkness and that's all I remember. I suppose that must have been you. What's the idea of a mask and— Wait a minute. You're the Black Bat! What do you want with me? I can't tell you anything about

crooks."

The Black Bat started. Butch had captured Rankin's friend—the salesman of death weapons!

Sirens were howling in the distance. The Black Bat was in an uncomfortable spot, for he had no car, and the police were bound to throw out cordons as soon as they found two dead men in Bell's house. Even though he might be allowed his freedom and not be unmasked, there would be dangerous delays.

"This time I'm not interested in crooks—of the average kind," he stated. "I'll be back. Don't forget that, and if I were you, I wouldn't try to leave town."

The Black Bat stepped away and faded into the darkness. Instantly Bell began yowling for help. He saw radio cars pull up and disgorge uniformed men. "It's the Black Bat!" he yelled. "He went this way."

Bell pointed frantically, but the sergeant who stepped up didn't even look in the direction Bell indicated. Two of his men ran into the house. An instant later, they shouted their finding of the two dead men.

"So the Black Bat was here, eh?" the sergeant said. "That's okay, but not for you. My hunch is that he came here to run down some evidence you have. So we'll all go down to Headquarters and have a little talk with the commissioner. Maybe you can explain those two stiffies in the house, huh? Don't start yapping right now. Stick out your mitts, brother, and find out what bracelets feel like."

Bell's eyes glittered in hatred.

"You have no right to arrest me. I know nothing about any dead men in my house. I was on my way home when the Black Bat knocked me out. I warn you, there'll be a civil action if I'm taken to Police Headquarters."

"Yeah, I've heard that before," the sergeant said wearily. "Now, are you coming quietly or must I see if my gun butt is as good as the Black Bat's fist?"

CHAPTER XVII

Stealthy Visit

More than a minute was needed for the Black Bat to find a dark spot and remove his cape and hood. He took the soft, floppy-brimmed hat out of an inner pocket and donned it. Then he started for home by devious routes which would not take him near too much traffic. He had to risk the possibility of being detected only because he was forced to.

In a quiet section of the city, he drew down the brim of his hat and walked into a drug-store. He bought a package of cigarettes and then went to the phone booth. Quickly he dialed Captain McGrath's home.

"This is the Black Bat," he said. "I need your help badly. A telegram from Washington was in the possession of certain people neither of us likes. I'll give you the office and the code number. Maybe you can get a copy. Can you get it in twenty minutes?"

"I'll get it, if I have to blow open the doors of that telegraph office," McGrath promised. "The truce we agreed on is still effective. Call me back. Don't worry about my tracing the call."

"I won't," the Black Bat chuckled. "You tried that often enough before and never succeeded. But I'll take your word, Captain. Here are the numbers."

He gave them and then left the drug-store without attracting attention. Long ago, he had learned never to be conspicuous by acting furtive. He held his head high, though that revealed his scars. Twenty minutes later—from a cafeteria phone booth—he called McGrath again.

"I had them read the wire to me over the phone," McGrath said. "It's addressed to Colonel Catlin and it says:

'Nests closing before net is drawn. Look for leak. Has word spread around about this?'"

"Thanks," the Black Bat said. "It helps a lot. Maybe we'll have a neat little package of spies wrapped up for you in a few hours. Did von Elkin talk?"

"He clammed up the minute you left. The only thing that guy is scared of is the Black Bat. Good luck on your hunting. I wish you'd take me along."

"And have you break every law on the rule books?" the Black Bat laughed. "You'd never live it down, Captain. I admit you really would be helpful, but it just can't be done."

The Black Bat slipped through the garden gate of his home without being seen. As he entered the tunnel, he breathed easily for the first time in what seemed to be hours. He had noticed that Butch's car was parked in its usual place. Butch, therefore, had returned. The Black Bat was eager to find out where the spy had driven.

They were all waiting anxiously for him. Silk prepared a quick lunch while Butch reported what he had done.

"I follow the guy out of the city. He turns up a road like the kind they have on farms. I park and go up, too. I see this guy drive through a big gate. When I sneak closer, I see a lot of guys in funny looking uniforms, and they keep sticking their arms out at one another. Then I scrambled. The road he turned off on is just past a big billboard and a heap of sand that's gonna be used when the roads get slippery. It's a pipe to find."

"Carol," Quinn said, "you and Silk go to work. I want that place completely investigated. It sounds like one of the Bund camps, so be careful. Find out how many men are there. See if you can determine whether they are armed, and if they intend to stay there all night. This business is getting ready to break and we must blow it to pieces before they have a chance to act. At exactly one o'clock in the morning,

either be back here or phone. I'll wait until then. If I don't hear from you, I will assume you need help."

SILK waited only long enough to put on the disguise he had used when the spy ring captured him in Morino's house. After he and Carol left, Quinn finished a sandwich in two bites. He replaced the guns in his holsters with fresh weapons and handed one to Butch.

"You may need it. Sometimes fists and strength aren't enough. Bring your coupé to the garden gate and wait there for me."

Quinn spent about ten minutes looking over the sheaf of perforated cards again. Here in his hands lay the possible means of unmasking every spy nest, preventing them from opening a murder drive all over the country. Did they really mean what he was beginning to suspect? He shrugged. That was a question that only time could answer. He put them away.

Glancing at his watch, he saw he had plenty of time before the deadline he had set for Carol and Silk.

When he came through the tunnel, Butch was parked and waiting. Quinn climbed in and gave several precise directions that brought them to one of the best parts of the city. Not quite a suburb, nor actually a section of town, it offered the prospective tenant the choice of an apartment or a whole house—both at remarkably high prices.

"We're going into that brick house," Quinn said. "I want you to come just in case my opinion is wrong."

"Are we gonna grab the big shot?" Butch asked hopefully.

"I hope not. Capturing him would only bring the day of attack closer. He'd find some way of sending out word and then all hell would break loose. Follow me. I'll warn you when there is anything in your path."

"Okay," Butch agreed. "Say, it sure must be somethin' to see in the dark. Just like a cat, huh?"

"That's exactly how we must work—like cats," Quinn warned. "If anyone is in the house, we must leave without making a sound. There are to be no heads broken this trip."

Ten minutes later, the Black Bat and Butch stood in a small study. The walls were lined with books, most of them concerning military tactics. The Black Cat quietly searched the place before he did any actual investigating. When he knew the house was empty, he returned to the study where Butch waited.

Seeing a glass trophy case on the mantelpiece, he stepped up to it. Butch could only see a blur, while the Black Bat's eyes made out everything as clearly as though it were day. The trophy case contained a forty-five Army automatic and an officer's sword. Mounted on a velvet background were the shoulder insignia of a major of the United States Army.

"Stay near the door," the Black Bat whispered. "If anyone comes near, be ready to go through the rear window. I'll open it now."

Butch nodded and moved to obey the orders. The Black Bat walked to the rear wall of the room, raised a window and swiftly peered around outside. He frowned deeply under his black hood. Just outside the window was a projection of wall about two feet thick. In the room itself, though, there was nothing like an alcove to account for that bulge. He stepped up to the wall and removed his black silk gloves. Slowly he passed his extremely sensitive fingers over the wall.

He spent fifteen minutes at this painstaking task, but it brought results.

Suddenly his fingertips encountered a slight lump in the wall. He manipulated it experimentally. With a whirl, an electric motor went into operation, and a four-foot section of wall silently slid back.

Revealed clearly before him was a closetlike room, not more than two

feet deep. A shelf occupied part of this space, and a number of leather-bound volumes were neatly stacked on it.

He removed one, saw that it was a diary, almost twenty-eight years old. As he glanced at a few of the pages, he gave vent to a whispered exclamation. Then he deliberately tore one of the pages out of the book.

After he replaced the volume, he studied a number of maps that were tacked to the hidden wall. They were ordinary route maps given away by filling stations, but there was one for each state. They had been carefully drawn into oblong sections, so that each entire map was divided.

The Black Bat stepped back, made the door slide into place again. Then he went directly to the desk in the middle of the room. Sitting down, he opened the drawers and removed a number of hand-written documents. As he studied these, he was comparing them with the page he had ripped out of the old diary. His eyes could follow every word, every stroke of the pen or pencil, even though the room was so dark that Butch was blinking blindly.

Carefully he replaced the papers he had taken from the desk. He arose and strode without hesitation to where Butch stood guard.

"I'm going upstairs, so keep your eyes and ears open. I'll be gone only a couple of minutes."

He headed straight for the master bedroom, which was easily identified by the lavish furniture it contained. He appropriated a towel from the bathroom, using it to wrap around certain objects. Then he hurried down and closed the window in the study. With Butch closely following him, he left the house. The only evidence of their visit was the absence of a towel. That was hardly apt to be noticed, and the objects he had taken had not often been used.

Butch drove him to another part of

the city, where the Black Bat ducked into a yard. He unloosened the knot in the towel-wrapped bundle he carried. Lashing this to his wrist, he climbed a rear porch pillar. He reached the sloping roof and crawled over it to a partially opened window. It was no difficult trick for him to open it without making a sound. Then he slipped into a bedroom and turned on a lamp.

Commissioner Warner jumped erect, grabbing wildly under his pillow for a gun. Then his sleep-laden eyes made out the black-caped figure that stood beside his bed. He relaxed with a sigh of relief.

"Sometimes I think I ought to hang a badge on you and let you work openly," he complained. "Then you won't scare the wits out of me on your midnight visits. What's up? Did you get anything on the spy ring?"

THE Black Bat placed his towel-wrapped bundle on Warner's bed.

"Inside this package you will find certain articles which should be covered with fingerprints. They are things that my suspect won't miss immediately. Have those prints brought out and then take a plane to Washington. Check the prints with every bureau available, although I think that perhaps the Military Intelligence will have some information on them. Get back here as quickly as possible and wait for me to contact you."

Warner placed a hand exploringly on the bundle.

"So you've rounded him up, eh? I wish I knew how you managed to do it. I've got over eighteen thousand men working for me, and not even one of them could get anything on this spy case."

"They must adhere to laws," the Black Bat laughed. "I don't. I have no rule book to consult every time I want to go into action. It gives me an advantage, you see. Now, I think you'll be back by mid-morning, or early afternoon at the latest. Those prints must

be checked, so happy hunting in the fingerprint files in Washington."

The Black Bat moved toward the window and abruptly vanished as Warner rubbed his eyes. Swiftly he swung his feet over the edge of the bed and started to get dressed. The Black Bat rarely called for help, but when he did, that aid was always of vital importance. No one knew this more than Warner.

An hour later, a Police Department plane was carrying him quickly toward the nation's Capital.

CHAPTER XVIII

Zero Hour



VEN as the Black Bat was prowling the darkness, Carol and Silk reached the camp which Butch had described. They left their car hidden in the brush and walked beside the narrow lane until

they saw an arch and a high wire fence surrounding the whole camp. The sign on the arch was intended to identify the place as an outdoor trap shooting club. There were two men standing just inside the gates. Each casually held a rifle in the crook of his arm. Carol tugged at Silk's sleeve.

"Butch was right," she whispered. "It's nothing more than a blind for an armed training camp. Silk, we've got to get inside somehow, and find out how many men are assembled here and why they are gathered at this time of night. I understand a little German. If they talk, I may be able to translate enough to help us. It's your job to find out how to get in."

Lying flat on his stomach beside Carol, Silk looked at the high mesh fence and shook his head.

"There's only one way to get inside. We've got to circle the place until we

find a tree with a branch that hangs over the fence. And watch yourself, Carol. Those steel wires may be charged. I'd be willing to bet on it."

They crept back into the protection of the forest that surrounded the camp. Silk climbed a tree. Using its uppermost branches as a lookout station, he studied the area as well as he could in the dark. The Black Bat's eyes were badly needed just then. But Silk managed to sight the outline of a tall tree a few hundred feet to the left. Its thick boughs hung far over the fence.

Silk noticed patrols pacing alertly just inside the camp. Entering the place might not be so difficult, but getting out would be another story. It was certainly too dangerous for Carol. Silk crawled down to rejoin her.

"I see a way in, and I'm going to take a chance. Let's suppose I were the Black Bat. Would I let you go along?"

"You wouldn't, but I'd go, anyway," Carol stated. "Don't think you can talk me out of going."

Silk shook his head. "If we're both caught, how will we let the Black Bat know? Look, you stay here. Be ready to run for the car at the first sign of trouble. If they get me, I'll make plenty of noise. Can't you see that's the only way we can do it?"

Carol gave in to Silk's persuasion, but with bitter reluctance. She followed him to the large tree, watched him crawl out over the limb and finally drop safely on the ground within the fence.

Silk was now on extremely dangerous ground. If they caught him, he'd be killed just as surely as dawn would come in a few hours. He glanced over his shoulder at the big tree which had offered him entrance.

Silk made a wry face, cursing himself for being a fool. There were dozens of other trees that were just as tall and almost as near. But the overhanging branches of those trees had carefully been lopped off—leaving only the limb by which he had entered. Had

that been done deliberately? Was this particular section specially patrolled? Were the members of this devil's organization all around him now?

SILK drew a gun and kept on going. There was nothing else he could do. He saw a clearing with a dozen long, low barracks arranged to form a rude circle, with their entrances all facing a large drill grounds. Enough light came through the windows to let him see the uniformed men who strutted around, saluting one another.

He wondered uneasily when camps like these would be outlawed and their members closely questioned. In almost any European country, such a Bund would have been smashed with bullets. Those who survived would have been granted the privilege of dying more slowly in a concentration camp. That must not happen here, he swore.

Silk did not have the hearing of the Black Bat, nor those uncanny eyes that could penetrate the most intense darkness. He could only keep constantly on the alert.

He reached a spot as close to the parade grounds as he dared, when suddenly a car came swiftly through the gates. Two men stepped out. Barked commands brought the camp members into straight, precise lines. They stood at attention while a man in civilian clothes gravely marched along the ranks, holding in his hands a small package of perforated cards. He handed one to each man, then stepped back a few paces and drew himself up as erect as a protruding stomach would let him.

"So," he said sternly, "we are ready. The day has come. By this time tomorrow, we shall be in control of great areas of this stupid country. There will be blood spilled. Some of you may die, but that is a glorious death, and you should court it. Show no mercy. Those are the orders of our Director. The cards have been distributed all over the nation.

"Those who receive them know what to do. You, too, have received those same instructions, but they are not to be acted upon until the zero hour—nine-thirty tomorrow night. Before then, you must strip the secret arsenal. The job has to be complete when you leave here at dawn. Munitions will be available in large quantities elsewhere, but we will need every bit of it we can find. Refuge has been arranged for us, if we do not succeed. But we shall, of course."

Silk gulped and broke out in a cold sweat. This information was absolutely vital to the Black Bat's plans. Silk wanted only one more thing—to identify beyond question the man who had issued those orders.

Taking a desperate chance, he crawled behind one of the barracks. As the pompous leader went back to his car, he crossed directly in front of the headlights. Silk got a good look. He didn't recognize the man, but he memorized every detail of his features and build.

Silk retreated slowly and cautiously. The ranks had broken up, and the men were probably spreading out all over the camp. If he ran into a patrol, the whole game would be lost. He neared the section of fence over which he had crawled. It was possible that all the guards had been temporarily withdrawn so every man would be in ranks when the final orders were given. Now they'd be coming back.

He crouched, looked around, and then started to sprint toward the fence. He wasn't worried so much about his own safety. He had to deliver to Carol the message he had for the Black Bat. Silk realized that devastation would scorch the whole nation if he failed.

FOUR men suddenly came running to intercept him. Silk's gun roared. One of the men stumbled, fell, and didn't move again. The other three ducked for cover, began shooting at the same time. Silk risked everything on a

dash to the fence. There he knelt to hold them off. Carol was just outside, well concealed by the darkness.

"Never mind me," he panted in a low voice. "Tell the Black Bat that zero hour is nine-thirty tomorrow night. Those cards were handed out. Run!"

Silk fired his last two bullets into the darkness. The guards wouldn't charge immediately. They would wait until they were sure Silk was at their mercy. By then Carol would have reached the car and escaped with the all-important message.

He waited five minutes. Then he arose, stretched his hands high and watched five men approach him cautiously. Two of them made a lunge for him. Silk went down under the impact, but he didn't try to fight. There was an odd kind of peace in his heart, for nothing they could do mattered now.

One of the men punched him brutally in the face. Holding his arms, they forced him back to the drill grounds. The word must have passed around quickly, for every man in the camp was already assembled there.

"We caught him just in time," one of Silk's captors reported to a tall, stern-faced man. "A moment before, he had come over the fence. It was good that he did not come sooner, eh?"

"It makes little difference," the camp commander growled. "We should not permit him to leave, anyway, but I have no time for him right now. Lock him in one of the barracks and maintain a strong guard. Double the patrols at once and shoot to kill if anyone else appears."

Silk was dragged to one of the smaller barracks and thrown inside. When the door slammed shut, Silk grabbed a table and pulled himself erect. He wiped the blood off his face, found a chair and sat down wearily. It might be the end of the game for him. But once the Black Bat had the information which Carol carried in her alert brain, he'd know what to do.

Ten minutes passed, and then Silk heard the sounds of a commotion outside. Within a few moments, the door of his temporary prison opened.

Carol was shoved inside! As the light suddenly went on in the barracks, Silk saw that her clothes were soiled. There were scratches on her face and an unholy determination in her eyes. Silk sprang half out of his chair, but he sank back defeatedly.

One of the men who had shoved Carol inside saw Silk and gave a yelp of recognition. He had been part of the band that had previously tried to use Silk as a human target.

"It is the man whom the Black Bat saved! These are the Black Bat's spies. Guard them carefully. Pass the word about that the Black Bat may be nearby."

Carol sat down beside Silk.

"I'm sorry," she said in a low voice. "There were more of them coming to the camp. They spotted me and—here I am. What are we going to do? How can we get the message through?"

"Quiet!" Silk whispered. "They don't know yet that I overheard the orders. They think I had just come over the fence when they grabbed me. We've got only one chance, even though it may mean our lives. I hate to think about it. It's after the deadline now. The Black Bat will know we're in trouble and he'll ride through hell to get us free. But what if he fails?"

"This damned pack of lunatics will hit hard in every part of the country tomorrow night. They'll have the advantage of surprise. While I think they won't make any headway, there will be lives lost, factories and shipyards will be blown up. It will put back the rearmament program at least six months, and that might be fatal."

CAROL dragged her chair closer to Silk's.

"The Black Bat hasn't failed us yet, Silk. You know how he works. These

strutting, saluting maniacs won't think fast enough for him. You'll see."

Silk got up and shuffled unhappily around the prison. At each window a guard was posted. Two more stood at the single door. Escape was impossible. But Silk happened to glance across the parade grounds, attracted by a sudden confusion. Two uniformed men were dragging someone from the direction of the main gate. Silk pressed his face against the glass. Abruptly his world blew up into fragments.

The man who was trying to wriggle out of the clutches of his captors wore a black, ribbed cape and a black hood over his face. The Black Bat had fallen into a trap!

CHAPTER XIX

Trick Against Trick



QUICKLY Butch drove the Black Bat back to Tony Quinn's house. He parked the car, and they walked briskly toward the garden gate. Before they reached it, the Black Bat seized his arm and held him back. Signaling for Butch to remain quiet, he crept forward until he could look around the gate.

As his eyes swept through the darkness, he made out three shadowy figures that were furtively approaching the windows of the living room. Careful as they had been, the Black Bat's acute hearing had detected the sound of their feet on the grass.

"I was afraid this might happen," he returned and whispered to Butch. "They suspect I'm the Black Bat, and those men are here to do a neat job of murder. We've got to get them, Butch. I'll slip down the tunnel and sneak into the house. The rest is up to you. Just be sure that not one of those men escapes."

Butch's face was grim as his big hands curled into lethal trip-hammer fists.

The Black Bat slipped through the gate, reached the garden house without being seen. Two minutes later, he was in the laboratory, hurriedly removing all traces of the Black Bat's identity. He thrust an automatic into the pocket of his smoking jacket and opened the hidden door. Stepping into the study, he walked directly to his accustomed chair in front of the fireplace.

He didn't turn on the lights.

The trio of killers was still prowling, looking through windows. Soon they'd reach the study.

Tony Quinn reached for a newspaper, slid the gun between its folds and kept his finger on the trigger. He kept the newspaper on his lap. Just then, he heard stealthy sounds outside the study window, saw a face rise up and glance quickly inside. Quinn's finger grew tense on the trigger. He'd give Butch every chance to do all the work, but if he saw a gun turned his way, he'd shoot.

Suddenly Quinn saw a man's whole form flash by the window. The sound of a fist crashing against bone reached his ears. He leaped up and hurried to the window. Outside, neatly arranged in a row, lay three unconscious men. Butch stood over them, nursing his right fist and grinning broadly. Quinn opened the window.

"Butch, pile all three of them into the coupé. I know it will be crowded, but never mind how you stack them. Drive somewhere and dump them. Then hurry back. It's after the time I allotted Silk and Carol. They may be in trouble."

"You gonna turn 'em loose, Boss?" Butch blurted. "They'll keep on thinking you're the Black Bat, won't they? Maybe I oughta wring their necks a little, huh?"

"No. Follow my orders. We're not murderers, Butch. These poor fools know nothing. The leader of the spy

ring gives his orders, and they are carried out by men who have no idea what they're doing. Anyway, as soon as they wake up, they'll run for it as far as they can travel. Get going, and step on it!"

Quinn sat down again, forcing himself to be patient until Butch would return. Carol and Silk were thirty minutes overtime. Were they trapped—or dead? He had a violent urge to take the sleek sedan in his garage, cast aside all pretense of not being the Black Bat, and go after them. But he resolutely put this wild idea aside. To keep it from tormenting him, he made his mind review the case, considering each suspected person.

TOLLY, the lawyer whose clientele consisted mostly of people of the same nationality as the spy ring. He had saved Quinn's life when von Elkin tried to run him down. Von Elkin might know the solution to everything, but blind Tony Quinn couldn't testify that he had seen von Elkin driving the murder car.

Then there was Roscoe Bell, who so far had hardly entered into the case at all. But his background made him seem the logical one to run the spy system. He had lost a fortune when war conditions ruined his export business. He had practically worked for the regimes now interested in disrupting the United States as much as possible. Bell looked powerful enough to have been the man who had tackled the Black Bat in the darkened room. He might have lied about being on his way home rather than leaving, when Butch seized him. He looked powerful enough to be that man.

Major Rankin also seemed to require considerable thought. It was more than possible that he had absorbed Nazi ideology, returned to the United States and become one of their spies. Treason like that had often happened all over the world recently. Quinn knew that military secrets had found their way into the hands of the spy ring

—secrets which only someone close to the Army and Navy could obtain.

Yet far back in his mind lay clues which almost sewed up the right man in a net from which he could never extricate himself. Quinn hesitated to use those clues, however. The arrest of the spy leader now would serve only to fan high the smoldering fire in the hearts of his followers. The only way to stop this fiendish attack was to gather in the whole spy ring first. Every branch, every man prepared to attack, must be captured!

There had never been any doubt in Quinn's mind that the perforated cards were the key to the entire puzzle. How they fitted it had been the only problem, but in the past few hours he had found several important hints.

From his desk in the study, he took a stack of ordinary road maps and brought them to the laboratory. Laying them on the bench, he picked up one of the punched cards. He placed it in the upper left-hand corner of the map, traced its outline, and repeated the process until the whole map had been marked off.

For a long moment, he pondered his next step, switching his eyes anxiously from the cards to the map. When he flipped through the cards, turning them on their reverse sides, he suddenly drew in his breath. The faint gray numbers of one corresponded to the number of the highway map!

He had suspected that before. Now he merely had to find out which part of the map the card fitted, and that was only a matter of patient experimentation. Starting at the upper left-hand corner, he slid the card along. He discarded each section until the tiny holes suddenly blended with a number of highways and intersections. . . .

Quinn's first impulse was to shout with triumph. But that would only waste valuable time, and he hadn't really solved the complete riddle.

After marking the highways and intersections with a pencil, he stared at

the cards and maps, trying to figure out the significance of the whole puzzle. What did it mean? He had an important clue, but did the rest of the cards substantiate it?

Taking a deep, hopeful breath, Quinn searched through the perforated cards for the first two he had found. Then he checked through his stack of road maps until he came across one that corresponded with the number written in secret ink on the back of a card.

"If this works," he whispered anxiously, "I've got the key! If it doesn't. . . ."

He marked off the map in rectangles and, by sliding the card along experimentally, found the proper section. Each perforation marked a road or corner!

QUINN was still rushing through his job when Butch came through the tunnel. The huge bruiser was grinning with glee.

"I did like you said, Boss. I threw them over the edge of the city dump. Just for luck, I plastered each guy a couple more times. What's next?"

Quinn donned his black outfit, stuffed his guns in place and hurried out with Butch to the coupé.

"We're going to that camp you found," he explained. "Silk and Carol must be in trouble. This time we'll be invading enemy territory, Butch. It will be dangerous, but no matter what happens, Carol and Silk have to be saved."

Butch drove savagely at a terrific pace through the night. As they slowed at an intersection, the Black Bat's eyes flitted over a group of billboards. He singled out the most interesting. Sponsored by the Officers' Club, it implored the public to rescue American natives who were in danger abroad. The Black Bat nodded thoughtfully.

When Butch found the lane, the Black Bat pierced the darkness, and soon discovered Carol's car hidden in

the brush. Now he was sure they had been captured. Stealthily he led Butch toward the camp. There seemed to be no guards posted outside the high fence.

"You can't see them, but there are fifty or more uniformed men in that camp," he told Butch. "There are too many shacks to search quickly. Carol and Silk must be in one of them, but which one? Butch, are you willing to risk your life in this cause? Would you put on my cape and hood, deliberately let yourself be captured and thrown into the same hut with Silk and Carol?"

"Anythin' you say, Boss. But is it okay to slug a few of them mugs before they grab me?"

"Slug away. Here, put on the hood and cape. Stay right where you are until I go back to the coupé and get a duplicate outfit. Butch, I know you've got what it takes. We'll pull through because we have to."

Later, Butch crept toward the main gate. He knew that the hood and cape made him a marked man. The foe might open fire the instant he came into view, yet Butch kept on going. When he saw two men standing just inside the gate, he picked up a stone and hurled it. Then everything happened swiftly, noiselessly, like an old silent picture. Without a sound, one guard sprang into the tiny shack beside the gate. Almost instantly a dozen men with rifles raced out of the woods.

They rushed through the gates, which had suddenly flown open. In his hiding place, Butch held his breath. Two men came closer, beating the underbrush. He waited until they had almost found him. With silent viciousness, he leaped up, grabbed their necks, banged their heads together violently. They collapsed to the ground.

Grinning behind his black hood, he wheeled to face six other men. The only sound was the crack of bones as his fist pulped one man's face. Even when he raised both hands and surrendered, nobody jeered or shouted tri-

umphantly. Capturing the Black Bat was too awe-inspiring a feat for such ordinary emotions . . .

CHAPTER XX

Death by the Rope



UNDER cover of carefully chosen shadows, the Black Bat was close to the gates when the men charged out to surround Butch. As he hoped, no one remained to watch the gate. Unobserved, he ran through, dived into tall grass just in time, for men were racing from camp to aid the guards.

Still in his hood and cape, Butch was hustled to the drill grounds. The tall camp commander emerged from a bar-

racks with an impatient scowl on his face. He swaggered up to the captive.

"So this is the Black Bat," he sneered, awed despite his attempted sarcasm. "The man police and thieves could never capture. It proves, my followers, that we are much cleverer than the law or even organized crime in this country. Now we shall see who this Black Bat is. Then we shall take care of him and his two comrades."

The hood was wrenched off Butch's face. Then Butch was dragged toward the barracks where Silk and Carol were held.

The Black Bat saw all this with considerable satisfaction. He had hated to risk endangering Butch, but they were almost bound to imprison him with the other two.

The Black Bat ran lightly through the thick woods. Because he could see

(Continued on page 101)

Featured Next Issue: THE BLACK BAT'S DRAGON TRAIL

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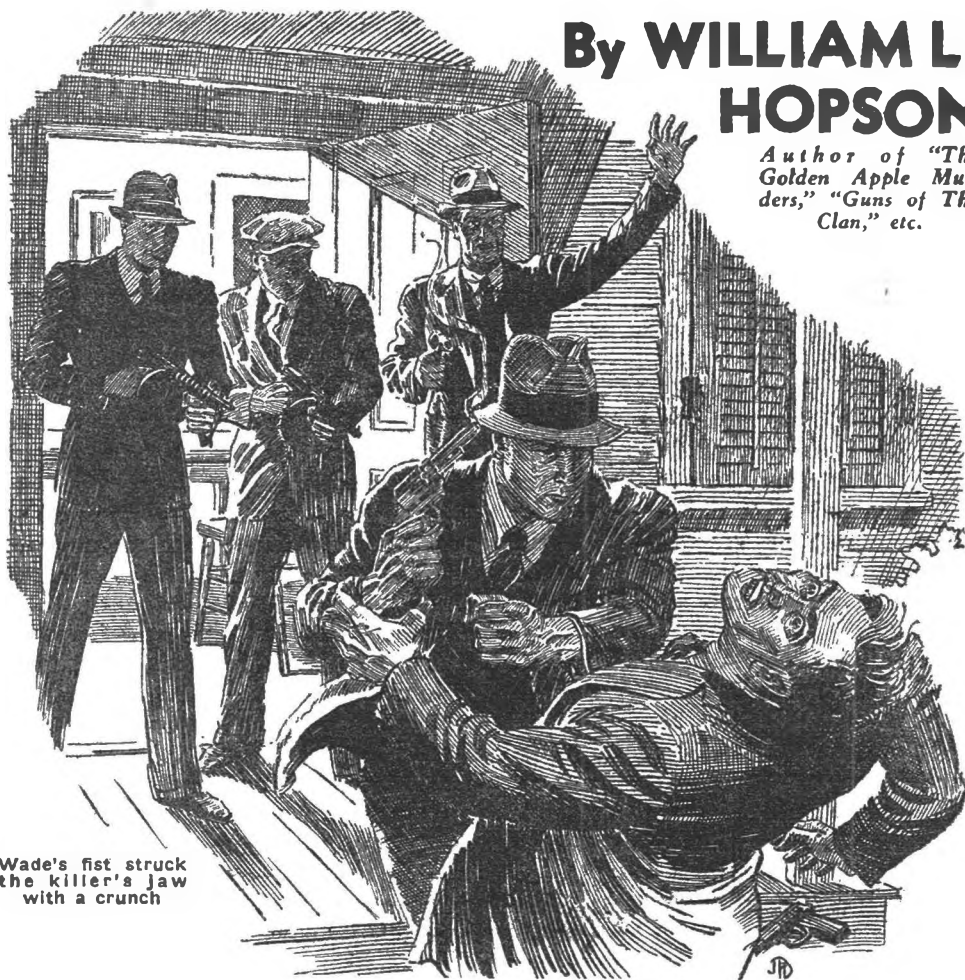
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TROOPER IN STIR

By **WILLIAM L. HOPSON**

Author of "The Golden Apple Murders," "Guns of The Clan," etc.



Wade's fist struck the killer's jaw with a crunch

SERGEANT Dave Wade, Troop A, State Police, turned wearily from the barred door to face his cellmate.

"Another day shot, Pete," he said to the beady-eyed little man who lay sprawled on a bunk. "One less I'll have to do."

"Yer name ain't dry on the books, yet and yer worryin' about time passin'," laughed Pete Marco, lifer. "Keep up that way an' you'll be stir bugs in no time. Wait'll yer hair's growed back in before you start beefin' about gettin' out."

"It's fifteen days. That's ten too long," growled Wade. "I'll get out

Dave Wade Plays the Lead in a Drama of Danger Behind Prison Walls!

someway—soon."

Marco's eyes narrowed and his yellow teeth gnawed at his lip while he studied the huge trooper.

"Listen, big one," Marco rapped out from the corner of his mouth, "You look like a right guy an' I like you. Keep yer nose clean and mebbey 'fore long you'll be out."

For ten days, ever since he had arranged with Warden Keller to be celled

with Marco, Wade had waited for this moment. Marco was ready to talk.

Wade leaned forward.

"You mean there's a break comin'? I'll be cut in?"

Before Marco could answer, a bell sounded loudly in the cell block. There was the rattling of chains, the clang of steel on stone as two thousand bunks were slung up against the walls. The feet of guards pounded their way along concrete ranges, hesitating for a moment before each cell. The evening count of prisoners was under way.

Their cots folded back on the wall, Marco and Wade stood side by side, facing the door of the narrow cell. The bright light suspended from the ceiling reflected from the oily black hair of Marco and glinted from the short blond stubble of Wade. When the guard passed their cell they let down the bunks and Marco started to undress.

"What' up, Pete?" Wade whispered, moving closer to Marco. "When will we get out?"

Marco's eyes blazed and he whispered fiercely: "Never mind. Shut up. Get pinched fer talkin' now an' spoil the whole show. You don't know nothin', see? Just take it easy."

Wade cursed softly and stripped the coarse prison clothes from his powerful frame. As he slid between the rough blankets, the cell light winked out. The night lights outside the cell cast a pale glow through the bars of the door. Marco grunted and rolled over, his face to the wall.

Wade lay staring into nothing. The groans, grunts, and tossing of adjusting tired bodies on straw-filled mattresses was all about him, but he didn't hear them. His mind was full of the job on hand. He had almost had his hands on a lead. Marco would have given some hint, but that damn bell had given him time to think and he had changed his mind. There wasn't much time left.

A flood of narcotics and other con-

traband was entering the prison. Men had been caught with cocaine and heroin in their possession, but could not be made to divulge the source of supply. A guard had found six pistols with ammunition hidden in the waste box of the construction shop. The same day the stoolie who had tipped off the guard was knifed in the back, by parties yet unknown.

That a bloody prison break was being planned was a certainty. Other guns would come in to take the places of those found.

IT was fifteen days since Sergeant Dave Wade had been committed to prison from a small up-state county. The faked papers gave Dave Wade five to ten years for manslaughter. The warden gave him a job, prison yard sweeper, that permitted him the run of the prison. Wade had made some progress. He had met and been accepted by the hardest, toughest, most vicious clique in the pen. But he was still unable definitely to name the plotters and he did not know how the contraband arrived in prison.

Every guard as he reported for work was carefully searched. Every box, bale, or bundle regardless of size consigned to the prison, was taken first to a warehouse outside the prison. There every article was thoroughly searched and repacked in new containers by old and trusted employees. How could the stuff possibly enter the prison? At the end of his resources, Warden Keller had appealed to the State Police.

Wade stirred uncomfortably on his cot. The prison was quiet now except for the whispering snores of Marco and the muffled sobbing of the kid, a first offender, in the next cell. Wade drew the blankets up to his chin and tried to sleep.

After the morning breakfast count Wade took his broom and began his day's work near the rear gate. He stopped sweeping to watch the heavy gates roll back and a powerful car, the

warden at the wheel, creep between them.

Warden Keller answered the salute of the guard and glanced at Wade, then drove past. Wade leaned on his broom and watched the big car move effortlessly through the yard and into the garage. His eyes narrowed in concentration, Wade watched the warden leave the garage and walk griskly toward the Administration Building.

"Get going, sweeper!" barked the guard. With a smile of apology Wade resumed his desultory swinging of the heavy broom.

Past the storeroom and around the plumbing shop Wade moved, his mind filled with his problem, his broom pushing ahead the collection of match sticks and cigarette butts. As he neared the garage, Wade looked up to see Marco and two other cons watching him from an upper window of the plumbing shop. Without returning Wade's salute the three cons left the window.

A puff of wind whisked a bit of paper to one side and the trooper reached out with his broom to recapture it. As he did so, metal flashed in the morning sun and a knife tore a jagged scratch along his cheek. Wade threw his hand to his face and ducked into the shelter of a low porch on the shop.

Cautiously he looked about. No one was in sight. At the far end of the drive the guard leaned against the gate. On the pavement where it had fallen lay a knife—crudely, cruelly made of a broken file affixed to a tape-wrapped wooden handle.

Sure that he was unobserved—by a guard—Wade picked up the knife and tossed it under the porch steps. Then, holding a handkerchief to his face, the trooper made his way to the dispensary. The pain didn't bother him. But the fact that he was a target for the knife could have but one meaning.

"Ducked away from a bug of some kind and scratched my face on a nail in the wall," was the story Wade gave to

the elderly and suspicious hospital guard who ordered the wound dressed. Wade returned to his work. The morning passed slowly for the worried trooper.

MARCO was in the cell, bent over the sink when Wade entered for the noon lock-up and count. The trooper dropped his bunk from the wall and sat down. He watched Marco rinse the soap from his face and rub briskly with a coarse towel before he spoke.

"Well, Pete, what's new?"

Pete Marco pulled a comb through the hair. He stared at the tape on Wade's face and an evil grin twisted his thin lips.

"I heard a funny one," he sneered. "Watta ya think? There's a copper in the joint. One of the boys spotted him. Used to live in the same town with the louse. That's a hot one, eh? If the copper's got any sense, he'll be goin' away quick."

Wade's expression remained wooden. He wasn't fooled by Marco's circumlocution. Nor was Marco fooled. Marc knew Wade's secret. He knew that Wade knew he knew. Wade could provoke Marco into a quarrel, a fight, then the killer would go to solitary confinement. But that would solve nothing. It would only delay the blow-off. So Wade tried to make his voice sound indifferent when he said:

"Maybe there's some mistake, Pete?"

Marco laughed, a short bitter laugh.

"There was a mistake, yes. But it won't be made the next time. If I was that copper, I'd get goin' before there was a next time."

All semblance of guile left the little killer's face. Hate blazed from his black eyes and he spat on the floor at Wade's feet.

"Copper!" He hissed. In that one word he expressed his hate of Wade and all that he represented.

Silently Wade and Marco stood up for the count. Silently they left the

cell and marched to the messhall. The silence in the messhall was broken only by the clatter of tin spoons on tin plates. The silence intensified the unspoken curses that lay behind the hard ruthless eyes glaring at Wade from every direction.

There was a tension, a feeling of expectancy, in the air. Something was brewing. The tension of the convicts communicated itself to the guards. They nervously paced between the narrow tables, hardwood clubs held tightly in sweating hands.

The man across the table from Wade drew a grimy finger across his own throat while he hissed: "*Fink!*" By a real effort Wade refrained from driving his huge fist into the sneering face. Too much to lose, he thought. Give him a little more time and he'd have it—the whole set-up.

The meal was cut short by minutes. The whistle of the Captain of Guards shrilled across the hate-laden messhall. Two thousand chairs were pushed back from the tables, then grated on the concrete floor as they were shoved under the tables.

Slowly double lines of brown-clad cons formed and shuffled out the three big doors. As Wade's division neared the door, the man in front of him stumbled, then lurched back. The trooper's hands flew out to fend the man from him. Two strong arms circled him from behind and locked across his chest.

WADE threw himself sidewise and down. The long knife missed his breast and ripped down across his ribs. Wade's arms came back over his head and clutched the head of the con behind him. With a heave and jerk he threw the man over his head as another knife slashed a gash in his back.

Then he was down. The voices of guards barked above the curses of the convicts. Wade clutched at the feet kicking at him from every side. He

heard the voice of Marco.

"Ya damn' fools, you'll spoil everything. Stop it. If we're jammed up now we're sunk. Tomorrow—"

A heavy prison shoe thudded against Wade's head. The curses of convicts and the hoarse shouts of guards were smothered by a heavy, star-shot blackness.

Wade felt strong arms about his shoulders. He heard the voice of the captain ordering a guard to bring a stretcher.

"Hurry it up!" snapped the captain. "This guy's bleedin' like a ripped hog."

The trooper shook his head to clear it and opened his eyes. When the whirling world of blue uniforms stopped spinning and the ringing in his ears fell an octave lower, Wade saw several guards escorting four cons toward the isolation cellblock. Marco was not among them. Neither was Butch Devlin nor Whitey Sharpe, Marco's lieutenants. As usual the umpchas were taking the rap. Two guards hurried up with a stretcher and as speedily carried the big trooper to the prison hospital.

The doctor stepped back from the table and stripped the rubber gloves from his hands.

"Nothing serious, Captain. He'll be O.K. in a day or two. You can question him now."

The captain towered over the white table. His stern eyes held those of Wade for a full minute before he spoke. Then:

"Well, fella, what's the answer?"

"Call the warden, will you?" asked Wade, "I've got to see him at once."

"I'll turn in my report an' you'll see him tomorrow. What's your story?" rapped the captain.

"Listen," Wade began, when over the broad shoulder of the captain he saw the grim face of the warden—

"All right, Captain," came the voice of Warden Keller, "You may go now. I wish to speak to this man alone."

The white door closed silently be-

hind the captain and the doctor.

"Hard luck, Wade," smiled Warden Keller. "I'll make arrangements to have you transferred back to your barracks this evening. We'll have to try something else, I guess."

Wade sat up and swung his long legs over the edge of the table.

"It's too late to try anything else, Warden. If I'm right, the blow-off comes tomorrow. I'm not hurt. I'll return to my cell now and carry it through. We will—"

WARDEN KELLER frowned and shook his head. "Nothing doing, Wade. Your life isn't worth a dime in that cellblock. Tell me what you know or suspect, and we will prepare for it. But I refuse to permit you to endanger yourself any further."

"Warden," replied Wade putting his hand on Keller's arm, "it's my job to take chances. You've more to think about than me. Tomorrow morning when the night shift leaves their posts, hold them here in reserve. Do it as secretly as possible. Draw in the outside guards and have them stationed within the walls. Have the guard at the rear gate doubled. And concentrate your strength, as inconspicuously as possible, about the construction and plumbing shops."

Keller gnawed at his lower lip and moved over to the window, his eyes narrowed by a deep frown. Wade watched the warden while the heavy odor-laden air of the dispensary pressed down on him like a smelly blanket.

"How does the stuff get in?" snapped Keller, wheeling about and walking toward Wade.

"I don't know—for sure," answered the trooper as he struggled into his clothes. "But I've a strong suspicion. Every possible place of entry has been eliminated. So it must be an impossible place. At any rate, this time tomorrow should settle the question."

"Why tomorrow?" asked Keller.

Quickly Wade sketched for the war-

den the orders he had heard Marco give the cons who had tried to kill him at the door of the messhall.

"All right, Wade. On your head it is. I'll prepare for a showdown tomorrow. Good luck." The warden extended his hand. As Wade gripped it he added: "And you'll certainly need it."

Wade was sitting on his cot when the working companies came into the block and Marco stepped into the cell. At sight of the trooper, Marco's little eyes widened, then narrowed to tiny slits. He ignored Wade's wide grin and began to clean up for supper.

"Well, Greaseball," grinned Wade as Marco pulled a clean shirt over his head, "What's next on the program? You've sure got a lot of stumble-bums doing their stuff for you."

Marco's head appeared above the collar of the heavy shirt. "Keep quiet," he snapped. "Have you got a bug in the joint now? Am I to talk while a screw listens in on us?"

"Can't keep quiet and answer questions," smiled Wade. "But I'll tell you this"—Wade's voice hardened and he leaned forward—"if you've an ounce of brains, you'll go to the Man and spill the works. Fold up and call it off. I'll guarantee you'll get a break."

Marco's thin lips twisted into a sneer.

"Watta you talkin' about? I'm doin' my time my own way. An' git this, copper. I ain't got nothin' to do with what happens to you. See?"

"You're a liar, Marco. Skip it!" snapped Wade. "You're running your head into a noose. Can't you see you can't—"

The harsh clang of the bell echoed through the cell block and the convicts filed out of their cells. Wade and Marco moved along the range side by side. Marco usually stalled at the cell door and fell into line with his partner, Devlin. But tonight he kept close to Wade. The trooper grinned at the thought of Marco protecting him.

The little killer was taking no chances on his scheme folding up. If

Wade were knifed now, the cons would be kept locked in their cells until after an investigation was made. Marco didn't want that.

IN the morning Wade, now dressed in street clothes, was near the plumbing shop when the warden drove his car into the garage. Slowly the trooper moved over toward the garage. Warden Keller passed him. From the corner of his mouth he dropped two words: "We're set."

The door of the Administration Building had hardly closed behind the warden before Marco, Devlin, and Whitey Sharpe sauntered out of the construction shop. Marco amazingly was wearing a suit which he must have had secreted. He might have been mistaken for a plainclothesman. At a word from Marco, Whitey started toward the garage. As he walked up the short ramp, Wade, out of sight, wheeled and swiftly followed him. From the side of his eye the trooper saw Marco and Devlin exchange glances, then start after him.

When Wade entered the dimly lighted garage, Sharpe was not in sight. Quickly the trooper swung the door shut and shot the bolt.

"Open that door, copper!"

At the sound of Sharpe's harsh voice, Wade spun around. Whitey Sharpe, flat on the floor under the warden's car, was pointing a heavy automatic at him.

Sharpe crawled from beneath the car and scrambled to his feet. Holding the gun centered on Wade's chest he advanced to the trooper. His eyes blazed wickedly as he snarled:

"Yer number's up, you dirty—"

There was a light knock on the door and Marco's voice came through in a whisper.

"Whitey," he called, "Shake it up. Somethin's gone haywire. Here comes the Man and a couple of dicks.

Sharpe glared at Wade and, without taking his eyes from the trooper, reached out and fumbled for the bolt

with his left hand. The bolt stuck and Sharpe turned his eyes from Wade. In that instant the trooper moved. His hands lashed out. The left grabbed the automatic and twisted it to one side, while his right hand clamped on Sharpe's throat. His knee came up, and thudded into the hood's groin.

With an animal-like grunt of pain Sharpe folded up and fell, pulling the trooper with him. In falling, Sharpe's weakening fingers pulled back the bolt. As they crashed to the floor the door burst open and Marco, with Devlin at his heels, ran in.

Devlin went straight for the warden's car. He slid under the car while Marco threw himself on Wade's back. With a quick twist and jerk the trooper got the gun away from Sharpe. Before he could reverse the gun and bring it into play, Marco grabbed Wade's hand with both of his and grimly hung on.

By a prodigious effort, Wade raised himself up and fell backward. The shock of the fall loosened Marco's grip and Wade rolled to one side. A gun roared and a steel-jacketed slug ricocheted from the concrete floor an inch from his head.

Wade rolled over again, shifting the gun to his right hand. Devlin, on one knee, a gun in each hand, knelt beside the car. He fired again, and a bullet burned a long furrow across Wade's cheek. Before Devlin could press the trigger a third time Wade sent a bullet crashing into the hood's brain.

DEVLIN'S body had not hit the floor when Wade was on his feet, covering Marco and Sharpe, who were weakly trying to pull themselves erect. Marco's eyes shifted from the trooper to his rear. At the sight of Warden Keller and two detectives entering a side door to the garage he growled an oath and threw himself at Wade, seizing his gun-wrist. Wade shot out his free fist. It struck the killer's jaw with a sickening crunch. The gun which he had picked up dropped from

his hand. As Marco fell, Keller and his men stepped through the door.

"Get them," Keller barked, swinging his pistol toward the prone figures on the floor.

"Greetings, Warden," grinned Wade. "Sorry you missed the show."

Keller smiled crookedly as he moved to Wade's side.

"You're hurt. How bad?" he asked. Without waiting for a reply he took Wade's arm and shoved him gently toward the door. The trooper glanced back and saw Sharpe, hands cuffed, leaning against the wall, being noisily and visibly very sick at the stomach. The two guards were working over the still unconscious Marco.

Later, hospital odors stung Wade's nose. He sneezed, then fingered the bandages on his face before he answered Warden Keller's question.

"Well, Warden," he grinned, "I found, just as you had told me, every loophole had been plugged. So the stuff

must have been coming in here in a way that was impossible. It was impossible that you could be bringing it in, so I paid particular attention to you."

"What?" barked Keller.

"That's right," smiled Wade. "When I saw that you alone of all the people who came in here were not searched, I knew that in some manner these hoods were using you to furnish them with narcotics and then the guns they meant to use on you."

"But how—" began the warden.

"Easy," continued Wade, "You live outside the prison. It would be a simple matter for an experienced thief to duplicate keys to your garage. Then to slip into the garage at night and fasten the contraband under the car took only a minute. That's how it was done. We'll check Marco's outside connections and soon you'll have a new boarder."

Keller whistled softly.

"Well, I'll be jiggered."



WAS MY FACE RED

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FOR THE BREATH

5¢

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VALUABLE TO
SINGERS AND SPEAKERS

when she
dodged
my kiss?

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DRESSED IN WHITE

By LEO HOBAN

Author of "Dirty Hands, Dirty Fate," "Escape to Death," etc.

The Badge of Purity and the Shield of the F. B. I. Join Forces Against Young Doc Stanford's Lifelong Hate!

Island in the Bay
Sept. 2, 1940

Rush Houston
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.
Dear Sir:

I DOUBT that Dr. Stanford tossed fitfully in his sleep that night two years ago when Blackie Bragg and Joe the Jeep secretly carried me into his office in Castle-town. This, despite the fact he knew his number was up and that this night probably would be his last.

And Dr. Stanford did die that night, which is important.

Even as I did, which is unimportant.

When Joe went upstairs and jerked him from his bed and sleep, it is certain that he knew a great disappointment. He'd been risking his life for but one purpose: he'd made himself a notorious physician studiously avoided by his medical colleagues, with one object in mind.

He'd been waiting for the Brain, the man who'd killed his mother. . . . he'd been waiting for the Brain, the man who'd destroyed his home. . . . He'd

been waiting for the Brain, the man who'd plunged him into an orphanage, the man who'd brought upon his name a great shame. . . .

Yes, he'd been waiting for the Brain so that he could wrap his deft fingers around his scrawny throat and press

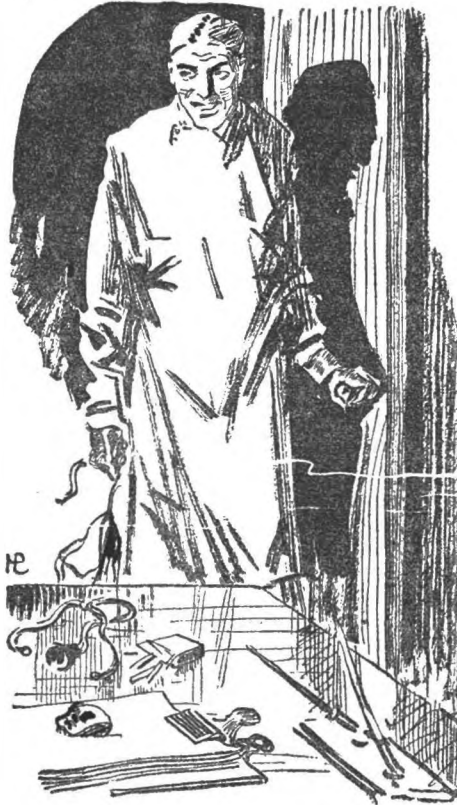
and press until his heart fluttered, and the sordidness evaporated from the vileness that had been his life. He'd been waiting for the Brain.

He'd been waiting for me!

He didn't know it then. But in blinding flashes of fury he knew it later when he was holding my pierced and bleeding, weakly - beating heart in the palm of his hand. And when he did realize it, that hand became a fist that squeezed that heart into immobility. Perhaps it was murder? And if it was, I know now that murder occasionally is warranted.

When Joe told him, "Get up, Doc.

You got some business downstairs," and he felt the steel muzzle prodding near his left armpit, he naturally supposed that Nails Lerch, who had decreed his death, had come for him. Yet he rose with dignity, slipped into



Stanford stood there, a hard grin on his face

slippers and dressing gown and led the way steadily downstairs. His tall, broad form was straight, and his angular face was fatalistically serene, somehow. Yes, Dr. Stanford was a man of great talents and great nerve.

WHEN he entered his lighted office he paused, surprised. He'd been reprieved—momentarily. He recognized Blackie and Joe and the Jeep, knew them for a vicious gang far from their territory that had centered around Cleveland. But he didn't know me. Certainly I never looked like a gangster—more like a pensioned bookkeeper.

And, in a sense, I never was a gangster. I lacked the courage, if courage it can be called, to take an active part in a crime. No, I was the Brain, the man who safely hid behind the scenes, a puppet of Blackie's, but directing Blackie as a brilliant puppet, elevating him to the position of Ace Public Enemy.

Then Stanford was across the room, looking down upon me with professional interest. His whole attention was centered on me, the little old man with long, curly white hair, as I lay on the operating table.

I knew nothing of this at the time, being unconscious. With every agonized beat, my puny heart floundered in blood like a twig caught in the mad swirl of rising flood waters. The heart was in a bad way. There was a bullet in it.

He examined the wound, and knew futility. Only a surgeon with steady and eloquent hands could successfully perform such an operation.

That I was alive was a miracle. That I should be brought to Dr. Stanford was a miraculous situation that only Fate in a grim mood of retribution could bring about.

Joe followed the doc across the room, his gun in ominous communion with Stanford's spine. Blackie and the Jeep had tilted their chairs against the spotless walls. The Jeep was chewing tobacco and had dirtied the floor. Blackie bounced an automatic in his beefy hand and gnawed the nails of his left hand. He was watching his power and smartness die there on the

operating table—and he, too, knew futility.

The doctor looked at the hoods and down upon me; and his trained mind erased the picture of the virulent species of rat there represented. He was a professional man with a job to be done. And he knew if he failed Blackie would kill him. That was Blackie, black of face, blacker of beard and huge as a black cloud is huge. Even his eyes—may they burn forever in Hell—were black flint. And he died with dark lead in his black heart.

Death had cast its shadow on each man in that room that night; and I like to believe that only the young doctor recognized this incontrovertible fact.

Certainly he knew that even if Blackie failed to kill him—if the operation succeeded—Nails Lerch certainly would. Possibly Blackie knew that the "Dr. Stanford" name on the diploma on the wall was false; that for years wounded gunmen had come to that office and been made well and sent on their way—along a route that, strangely enough, always seemed to result in their capture or deaths soon after prescriptions were filled.

And, stranger still, Nails was the first to muse upon the fact that the F.B.I., thoroughly conversant with the young doctor's malodorous reputation, did nothing whatsoever about it. Nails, too, realized belatedly that the Bureau uses men in all the varied professions as agents, especially canny physicians who succeed in establishing themselves as trustworthy pawns of killers. And the late Dr. Stanford's success had been amazing.

But the doctor's futility was different from the clodlike hopelessness of Blackie. He, as all physicians, are subjects of an austere code. Try—try always—no matter how apparently futile. . . .

He straightened, his mouth grim, and the gray curling hair fringing his temples added to his dignified composure.

"Put the guns away," he snapped. "They're not needed. You should know that."

"Yeah," Blackie said hoarsely, "we hear you're a right guy. How much

chance has the little squirt?"

"About one in a million."

"You'd better score on that one. That gutless punk dying there is valuable to me."

The doctor examined the wound, cutting away the clothing, working swiftly.

"He doesn't look like the gangster type. How did he get the bullet in his heart?"

Blackie ignored that. "Get to work and stop the chatter."

The doctor looked levelly at Blackie, at the Jeep and Joe. Blackie seemed the cleanest of the lot.

"Get out of your clothes, get into a gown and disinfect your hands." His voice was authoritative. "I need help. And once more—how did he get the wound? In the Sedalia bank job today?"

BLACKIE looked surprised. He doesn't take orders. He gives them—deadly ones. His eyes glittered, then fell before the level gaze of the doctor. Had it been an ordinary hoodlum lying there on the table. Blackie certainly would have told him to go to Hell and probably sent him on his way with amazing abruptness.

"Okay," he grunted, slipping out of his coat. "Yeah—it was the Sedalia job. We were coming out to here to see about combining with the Nails Lerch mob. We were running short of cash. This guy's usually in hiding when a job is pulled. He's a yellow, gutless heel, afraid of everything. But he does as I say. He always has. He stayed in the car. Getting away after the job, the dizzy dame of a cashier takes a pop at us with a dinky twenty-two. We cut her down. Then we find this mug isn't white and babbling any more. He's damn near dead."

The young doc nodded, went into a little ante-room, donned his white gown, disinfected his hands. Blackie did the same. Stanford followed him back to the office, and stood there, one hand on the knob of the door, the other holding his operating mask. He was preoccupied, waging a valiant battle for control of his taut nerves, but there was a hard grin on his face.

Here was a major crisis in the Bu-

reau's war against crime. A Blackie-Nails combine would form a vicious duo, a smoothly working criminal wedge extending from the Rockies to Cleveland. Somehow he must retain his life and his brain to crush the consolidation. The immensity of his task made his nerves tingle. And that was bad, for what had to be done—saving the futile, little man's life—would call for steady nerves, steadier hands. Many lives rested upon the success of the operation.

Certainly it must take superhuman effort to throttle the terror that must arise when you know your own life already is forfeit, and that the only possibility of a minute reprieve rests entirely on the steadiness of your nerves, the sureness of your hands. In young Doc's hands rested his own life and the many lives of innocents a mad dog criminal combine would claim.

Yes, I know now, that Dr. Stanford was a man of great talents and great nerve. He fought for composure—and obtained it.

Blackie, in his white gown that somehow looked muddled, misunderstood the hesitation, the motionless statuesqueness of Stanford. He grabbed his gun from the chair's seat.

"Doc," he said, with the smoothness of a cobra's hiss, "I don't like the cut of you right now. You're thinking too much, wasting too much time—and this is a damned quick, hurry-up job. Now get the lead outta your pants and the lead outta this chump's heart."

Looking down the gun's muzzle, the young doc kept his amazing composure. And that composure would have remained unshaken had Blackie kept his big mouth shut. But he didn't. He raged on:

"You see, this guy's important to me—damned important. He's got the best criminal noggin in the business!"

It came to the young doc then, in belated shock.

Why, here—here was the Brain!

Here was the sordid thing—the thing that had made of his life an everlasting Hell; the rancid, gluttonous thing he wanted only to kill.

Here, before him, was a dying man—an almost inanimate thing; a futile,

helpless, little, cowardly nincompoop. Yet upon his puny, fluttering heart, that could be stilled permanently by nothing more than the hesitation of a doctor's scalpel, rested the safety of many lives, and triumph over gigantic crime.

It was then during that intense, swirlingly dramatic moment that young Doc decided the Brain should perish.

And the Brain did perish—all of which makes it so odd that I should be writing to you at such length, explaining everything, in the hope that not one word will be censored. On the value of a single word may ride my fate. . . .

THE young doctor was dressed in the white of purity—the badge he wore so proudly—but the glitter of his eyes above his mask as he bent over me were those of an executioner, dressed in black.

Around my neck was a gold chain and an old-fashioned locket. The young doc snapped opened the locket, looked at the brown photo of the couple inside. He cursed long and fluently, his emotions outraged, every nerve raw, his hands twitching, mad things.

A jerk and the locket was ripped from my throat. His hand went under his white gown and the locket dropped into a pocket.

Blackie reversed his gun, his eyes narrow, his thick lips compressed. The gun made a soft arc and cracked across the young doctor's cheekbone, ripping the flesh off underneath the mask.

The young doctor took a backward step, his burning eyes still riveted on me. Possibly he didn't feel the blow? You can't hurt a mad thing that already is mad with hate. And that was the doctor.

He'd been waiting for the Brain, the man who'd killed his mother, destroyed his home, brought upon his name a great shame. . . .

He'd been waiting for me, and there before him was the vengeance he'd sought. The Brain was dying surely, rapidly. And he could safely dispatch it, make sure of its extinction

by killing it.

The thought was like the shock of ice water. His nerves steadied. He plunged a hypodermic needle into my arm. He made the incision between the rib and breastbone cartilage. He rolled back the flesh, cursing Blackie for his failure to mop the sudden flow of blood from my sunken, narrow chest.

He was a man obsessed. He wanted that heart so that he could hold it in his fist and crush the life from it. His hands were deft tools of granite steadiness. His father had had deft hands also, said, three decades ago, to be one of the best pairs in the business.

It is certain that as the flesh was rolled back that young Doc rolled back the years. . . .

His father, an interne at Price hospital, had married in violation of the rules. Needing money he had been shown the way to quick profit by Blackie Bragg. Blackie was a slugger, in a hard bowler hat, turtleneck sweater, and high button brown shoes. He slugged for the half-king of the waterfront—Boss Coke. The crippled Carbone claimed the other half of the kingdom. Both gangs dealt in narcotics. They hijacked each other, fought each other, eventually killed each other.

Boss Coke needed a medico—a good one—who could repair his hoodlums and still be trusted to keep an “honorable” silence.

Blackie Bragg brought the baby-faced interne to Coke.

He avoided the actual murderous brawls when knives glittered, and skulls were crushed under clubs. He abhorred the coarseness of his criminal associates. He was weak and spineless, was the young doc's father. He was the type women want to cuddle and mother.

That was why Mae, a precious woman who could love deeply and sincerely just once, married him and bore him a son, never knowing of his criminal activities until he went to jail dressed in his whites of an interne.

But by the time that happened the interne had branched out. He

switched inferior morphine and other narcotics for tested and pure hospital supplies. He became contact man with the unethical practitioners of that era, foul members of an honorable profession, who found it profitable to use far more drugs than shown in their report sheets. Yes, young Doc's father had a sweetly sorted racket. And, yes, young Doc's father was a whole-hearted rat. . .

The ultimate accounting came one night as the young interne, in his whites, alighted from a hansom cab in front of the rooming house. Blackie was there, waiting, and peremptorily rushed him to the cellar of Boss Coke's saloon. A leaden weight had parted the bristling hair of the boss' skull during a hijacking.

While working on Coke, the cellar doors had burst open and Carbone's Yellow Shirt gang were suddenly swinging clubs and using knives in swift reprisal. Only the influence of ungovernable terror made the young interne battle for his life. He'd slashed out with a scalpel—and watched in horror a jugular vein part and geyser blood. The young interne had become a murderer.

He was still in the trance of terror when police in horse-drawn patrol wagons and ambulances carted the embattled mobs to jails and hospitals.

Hospital authorities saw to it that when the interne stood trial he was dressed in more appropriate clothes. Anything but white. And as he made the train trip to the penitentiary the shackled interne knew with a sense of great shame he'd never again wear the whites he'd defiled. . . .

STANFORD worked swiftly, cursing Blackie violently. Blackie's dark face was ashen, and the Jeep was sick.

He went right into me, cutting open the pericardium, laying bare the heart sac.

There was a ragged hole midway in the sac, blood pumping from it at every uneven beat of the stricken heart. The heart action was that of an exhausted swimmer making his final, desperate, and futile, strokes.

The lower sac was filled with blood,

throttling and pressing against, and almost stilling all movement.

Grimly, with his teeth-edged knife, the young doc slit the hole. His deft hands reached in—and he held the living, pulsing heart of the Brain, who'd murdered many, the Brain who killed his mother, destroyed his home, made his life a living Hell. He held it—held it in the very palm of his hand.

It came to him in sudden shock that here was a situation, calling for quick and final decision, a decision far greater than worldly hates and human foibles. Only a higher power had the right summarily to send a soul—no matter how black—into eternity.

"But you have the right," his outraged emotions screamed in unappeased anguish. "By all that is right and by all the wrongs this scummy thing has brought about in this world."

His trained and more logical mind whispered in warning:

"If he dies, you die immediately. If he doesn't die, he'll need your services for days—time enough, with luck, possibly to trap both Blackie and Nails. In saving this one life, you may save many others that such a criminal combine would sacrifice."

"But you have a personal right," his emotions stormed. "This is no ordinary hoodlum. This man blighted your life. You wanted so long only to feel that scrawny throat between your hands. An all-holy power has presented a better setting—putting into your hands the very heart of the killer, the very organ that has shamed you."

There was a raw hole coursing downward in the heart. The spent bullet made a bulge on the far side. And even without the hole and the bullet in it, the heart would have been weak.

"You see," his mind said, "he may be saved. Hurry—hurry."

"Saved—saved for what?" his emotions protested. "So he can scatter ruin and death and heartbreak behind him again? He can't live. He has no right to live."

"But the F.B.I. needs this man alive, needs his life for awhile so that they

may capture other criminals as vicious as he."

"The Bureau will win out whether he lives or dies. This is a personal matter. To Hell with ethics!"

The young doc looked down at the heart in his hand. Yes, what matter ethics? He straightened and his fist closed. The heart seemed to jump, to struggle like a trapped fish—and then was still.

The young doc knew a great satisfaction—and then great horror. Here he was, dressed in his white of purity, crushing out the life of a human—a sordid sort of human, but still a human, a helpless man, one dependent on the brains and the skill of a man in a profession subject to an austere code. Try — try — no matter how futile; fight—fight—for each breath.

"Adrenalin!" he suddenly yelled.

Blackie looked in dismay at him. The young doc's left hand swooped out, picked up the long needle and inoculated the still heart with the restorative.

Nothing happened. He cursed himself for forgetting his Bureau vow, for fringing on the medical code of ethics. He moved the heart between suddenly gentle palms, massaging it, tilting it, his deft hands praying life back into it.

And minutes after it throbbed—was quiet—throbbed weakly, then took up an uneven beating.

Dr. Stanford became the man of great nerve and great skill then. He probed for, got and removed the bullet; he sewed, trimmed, sutured.

He worked in agony, every reluctant move a torment.

IT was noon of the following day when I regained consciousness. But I wasn't the same. The Brain had died.

There beside me, sagging tiredly on the chair was the young doc. I recognized him immediately despite the bandage on his gashed cheek. His tired eyes were steady, implacable, looking down into mine. And I knew how he'd had to labor through the long hours to return me from death, fighting his better fight under the ever-present threat of three guns. A

great man of great talent and great nerve was young Doc, with a relentless intentness of purpose.

I looked into his eyes and looked ashamedly away.

When I opened them again it was a day later, and I felt stronger. But I knew how quiet I would necessarily have to remain. The mending, paining heart was weak, uncertain, incapable of standing a shock or sudden strain.

But it was strained later to the utmost, strained deliberately.

That was when I saw young Doc crumble under the impact of bullets.

But now the room was quiet. Young Doc still sat beside me, his face lined with strain and tiredness.

The Jeep and Joe slept on chairs in the bedroom. Blackie leaned against the door, his gun in his hand, his eyes forever on the doc, questioning.

"When will he be able to move?" he asked.

"He should rest a week," young Doc's voice was unutterably weary.

"Just rest is all he needs?"

"Rest and—" I recognized the stall in his voice—"and occasional medical attention. You can't very well kill me yet."

"Maybe — maybe," Blackie said. "The Jeep and me are going to meet Nails Lerch tonight. The grapevine told me long ago he'd spotted you. It'll be up to him. We're bringing him here. Joe and the Brain will see you do nothing foolish, like trying to get to a phone."

I closed my eyes. It was so like Blackie. Domineering, threatening. He'd waged his terrifying influence on the young doc's dad and others in the penitentiary. He'd retained that influence over weak men when they'd been paroled, made of them puppets and fugitives. But young Doc wasn't susceptible to weakness. The scorn in his eyes told Blackie that.

It happened so suddenly. I was so tired. I simply awoke, as if an alarm had clanged in warning inside my stupid brain. I opened my eyes. The doc still sat beside me, his head on his chest, sleeping. Joe sat across the room, his gun in his lap. My right hand felt curiously heavy. I looked

at it and saw it contained an automatic. A loose finger was on the trigger release, but the butt of the gun and the hand itself were one, a hidden duo, encased under folds upon folds of adhesive tape. The feel of the gun was terrifying.

I recognized Blackie's handiwork. Joe might fall asleep; if so I was to hold the young doc at bay. And trapped as the gun was, it couldn't be jerked suddenly from my hand, thereby giving young Doc an ace in the game.

Even as I became aware of this fact, the bedroom door opened. In came Blackie and the Jeep, and the thin, hard-faced Nails and one of his hoods. Lerch's lips were bared over his stained teeth. He went quickly across the room. His clubbing fist knocked the sleeping young doc from his chair. And Nails laughed.

Young Doc got unsteadily to his feet, dead-tired, dead-game, implacable as ever.

"We're taking the Brain," Nails said. "I talked to a guy who knows about medicine and such things. He says just to move him carefully and to keep him quiet. And he'll get well." His lips twisted sardonically. "And this is one time, you G-man heel, your pals won't be able to trace a hangout when prescriptions are filled. You aren't going to get well. You're going out right here."

His right hand moved to his shoulder holster. Young Doc struck out. Knocking Nails spinning, his gun slithering into a corner.

Right there, in the following holocaust, young Dr. Stanford died, and I like to think that all the hate and shame that had become an all-consuming virulent disease inside him perished. Even as the Brain had perished during the operation. In fact, I'm as certain of it, sir, as I am that, right then also, he assumed his real identity—Dr. Rush Houston of the F.B.I.

Blackie's gun roared joyously. Young Doc fell in a heap.

And suddenly I knew what fury meant, paid off all the years of misery Blackie had forced upon me.

From the black muzzle peeping from my bandaged hand, flame spurted

steadily, first at Blackie, then into the amazed faces of the Jeep and Joe and Nails' man, even as their own guns made hungry slugs whine about my head. And finally, knowing a strange loftiness, I turned the muzzle and the bandaged hand and the death inside both at Nails' back.

I ROLLED out of bed, knowing a great pain and a great dizziness, and crept like a stricken frog on hands and knees to the phone. Then I crept back to young Doc. His wounds did not appear serious. I tried to get his blood-stained white jacket from his shoulders. In this I failed.

When the police arrived, they found us like that, my fingers caressing the jacket, and every one in that room dead, except us two. Young Dr. Stanford had trapped the Brain, broken up the gang, and fulfilled his Bureau assignment. The Brain had perished—and so had "Dr. Stanford."

That's why I repeat that all of this makes it very odd that I should be writing to you at such great length. But I'm explaining everything down to the minutest detail to show my thorough understanding of what has happened. It is my hope that not a single word will be censored. For on a single word may ride my fate. . . .

I wish to say again that the young doc was a great man of great nerve and great talent. Also an implacable law official. But such a man is also just.

My health is fair, but the prison physician says, even as I know, that my time is limited. I strained my punk heart too much that night. But my behavior has been excellent, and has gained me an amazing reward. Twice a week I'm permitted to assist the physician here. And the first visiting day of next month is one of the days when I'm dressed in white.

I sincerely hope that you will call upon me then, when I'm so dressed, and return that locket I prize so much. Your hate cannot be so intense any more, so I hope you can grant me this great favor. And somehow I think you will.

Your grateful father,

Rush Houston, Sr.

No. 8855.

THE BLACK BAT AND THE TROJAN HORSE

(Continued from page 86)

everything in his path, he made no noise. When he reached the back of the barracks, he spotted the guards beside the windows. Smiling grimly, he dropped to all fours and crawled closer. Then, with inverted gun, he suddenly plunged.

The guard at the rear of the barracks didn't hear nor see him coming. The gun crashed down, muffled by the military cap of the guard.

The Black Bat scratched on the window. Silk sprang to it, opened it quietly.

"They strike at nine-thirty tomorrow night," Silk whispered. "In case we all don't get clear, there are almost a hundred men here. They've got a whole secret arsenal ready."

"Where is it?" the Black Bat asked.

"In a small shed near the drill grounds. I saw them bringing guns out of it."

"Be ready. When that ammunition dump lets go, the whole camp will be in a panic. Scramble through this window and head for the gate. Is Carol all right?"

He saw her smiling confidently at him. The Black Bat waved, then faded away into the darkness.

He found the arsenal easily, for it was the only building that didn't look like a barracks. One man was posted at the door. The Black Bat crept forward, gun ready. All the other Bund members were gathered in small groups on the parade grounds, rehearsing verbally what they'd do when the time came to strike. He had to cross a cleared space before he could reach the arsenal. That entailed considerable danger, but he didn't hesitate.

As he approached, the guard shouted an alarm and started to raise his rifle. The Black Bat fired once and the man went down in a heap.

(Continued on page 102)



Okmulgee, Okla.
Hazelton, Pa.

Des Moines, Iowa
Sioux City, Iowa

Look Men!

Here's a Partial List of States, Cities and Institutions in which GRADUATES of I. A. S. were placed in positions as Finger Print Experts!

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State of Michigan
State of Utah
State of Ohio
Duluth, Minn.
Detroit, Mich.
Pueblo, Colo.
Idaho Falls, Idaho
Ogden, Utah
Lorain Co., Ohio
St. Paul, Minn.
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lincoln, Nebr.
Birmingham, Ala.
Columbus, Ohio
Havana, Cuba
New Haven, Conn.
Great Falls, Mont.
Galveston, Texas
Pensacola, Fla.
Stillwater, Okla.

Calgary, Alta., Can.
Houston, Texas
Waterloo, Iowa
Victoria, B. C.
Baton Rouge, La.
Atlantic City, N. J.
E. Lansing, Mich.
Globe, Arizona
London, Ont., Can.
Henryetta, Okla.
Seattle, Wash.
Ferndale, Mich.
McAlester, Okla.
Nogales, Mich.
Lawton, Okla.
Crown Point, Ind.
Bay City, Mich.
Roanoke, Va.
Glendale, Calif.
Hawaiian Islands
Drumright, Okla.

Miami, Florida
Orlando, Florida
York, Pa.
El Paso, Texas
Everett, Wash.
Schenectady, N. Y.
Alhambra, Calif.
Livingston, Mont.
Saginaw, Mich.
Fort Collins, Colo.
Bedford, Ohio
Huntington, W. Va.
Salt Lake City, U.
Taft, California
Jamestown, N. Y.
Phoenixville, Pa.
Rochester, N. Y.
Media, Pa.
Dayton, Ohio
East Chicago, Ind.
Green Bay, Wis.
Nocona, Texas
Neenah, Wis.
Kingfisher, Okla.
Centrella, Wash.
Bismarck, N. D.
Bloomington, Ind.
Cuyahoga Falls, O.
Rock Island, Ill.
Philadelphia, Pa.
Astoria, Oregon
Pendleton, Ind.
St. Joseph, Mo.
State of Illinois
State of Iowa
State of Idaho
State of Colorado
Lima, Ohio
Selma, N. C.

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Name.....

Address.....

Age.....

(Continued from page 101)

Like a flash, the Black Bat leaped through the door. He saw boxes of ammunition, a heap of grenades and submachine-guns loaded and ready for action.

He seized one as the uniformed spies closed in ominously on the building. He grinned expectantly. They outnumbered him, but they had given him the whip hand. . . .

His automatic rifle suddenly blasted, spitting flame and lead. Nobody could battle that stuttering death. Even the verbally fearless spies had to break ranks and flee. He could have shot them down, to the last man, but that would have meant shooting them in the back. He held his fire.

Swiftly he grabbed a hand grenade, yanked the pin, dropped it. He raced out, timing every action then to the split-second. Everything had to move on a time-table.

Carol, Silk and Butch were sprinting toward the gate—straight into the muzzles of guards they couldn't see! But the Black Bat saw the rifles aimed. He squeezed the trigger of his machine gun, chopped inevitable death at the guards. As they went down, the men who had fled came charging back, revolvers roaring. He whirled on them, trapped.

Like a clap of thunder, the ammunition dump went up. The terrific concussion hurled the Black Bat to the ground, but he was up before the camp members knew what had happened.

The Black Bat and his aides ran madly down the lane. They piled into Carol's car—all but Butch, who took the wheel of the coupé. In another moment they were streaking back to the city.

"Carol!" the Black Bat ordered crisply. "Stop here. We don't have much time, but there's something I must investigate."

Carol stopped abruptly. The Black Bat knew the danger of delay, yet this was vital enough to risk capture. He

hurried toward a billboard at one side of the road, stepped behind it. What he read in the dark on the reverse of the sign made him whistle in grudging admiration. He returned quickly to the car, signaled Carol to start instantly.

"What an idea!" he said. "But nothing really surprises me, after that last hour at the camp. Carol, I can't let you take chances like that! I swear I'll stop sending you into danger."

"Of course you will, darling," Carol laughed, "when there is no more Black Bat. Are we finished for the night?"

"We're finished," the Black Bat said. "So is the case—except for one more important detail. Butch is right behind us. Signal him to come abreast. I'm taking the coupé. You three go back and get some rest. No questions now. I can see them ready to burst from your lips. Tomorrow afternoon, Silk, I'll have a little job for you. But keep some coffee ready when I get back, will you?"

"Yes, sir," Silk answered. "Don't forget, though, the deadline is ninety-three. Those cards have been sent out already. Every spy in the country has one by now. And, say—I had a look at one of the big shots of the ring. He was a heavy-set man, with practically no neck at all. Blond, too, and about five feet eight."

"The Honorable Mr. Bell," the Black Bat mused. "It's a perfect description of him. He's the man who slugged Butch. I'll soon have a little talk with him."

The Black Bat changed cars when Butch stopped. He streaked ahead of Carol's sedan, driving straight toward Bell's home.

WITHOUT arousing any attention, the Black Bat entered Bell's house. He hadn't long to work, for with daylight, the Black Bat must fold his wings. Stepping lightly through the kitchen, he suddenly froze into immobility. The front door had suddenly banged shut! Gun in hand,

the Black Bat advanced cautiously. There was no one in the hallway. He headed for the library. As he reached it, he holstered his gun and sprinted inside.

A man was hanging from an old-fashioned electric light fixture. An overturned chair lay beneath him. The whole situation spelled suicide, except for the banging of the front door which the Black Bat had heard.

He seized the waist of the victim, quickly loosened the noose and finally extricated the man's neck from it. Carrying the limp form to a sofa, he laid it down gently and made a quick examination.

The victim was Roscoe Bell—the man who had visited the Bund camp only a short time before and issued the final orders for the assault against American civilization! He wasn't dead, for the Black Bat had cut him down before he choked completely. Yet Bell responded to none of the Black Bat's efforts to awaken him.

"Drugged," the Black Bat muttered. "He deserved this, but I wonder if the spy leader wasn't a bit too soon."

He carried Bell out of the house and put him in the coupé. There was a visitor in Tony Quinn's home that night—a visitor who lay unconscious until mid-day, when a black hood was drawn over his head. He could breathe easily, yet not have the slightest idea where he was nor who nursed him to normal.

* * * * *

BEFORE nine-fifteen the next night, twelve men slipped down an alley and into a side door which led them to a dimly lighted room. A stage occupied one end of the room. A radio stood against one wall and incongruously played soft dance music. The men entered singly, and about ten minutes apart, so it required two full hours before they were all assembled.

Their faces bore expressions that varied from strain to worry. They wore

(Continued on page 104)

INDIGESTION?

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(Continued from page 103)

no uniforms and gave no salutes. Instead they talked in low voices, as if they were afraid some unseen presence might overhear.

"Do you think it will go all right?" one asked. "It will be hard for us if it fails."

"Bah, how can it fail?" another replied. "Tonight is the turning point for us. Tonight we hear how our men can fight and kill. We see, for the first time, the face of our Director—the man who has planned all this."

"But at the camp last night," the first man said uncertainly, "the Black Bat was there. A hundred of our men could not hold him, nor even shoot him down. He is free and I do not like it. What if he comes here?"

"How can he? Who knows of this place with the exception of ourselves and our Director? It is agreed that the Black Bat heard nothing of our plans, nor did those people whom he apparently rescued. He does not know when we strike any more than this silly Government does. Look, it is nine twenty-five! In five minutes, that foolish dance music will stop and something else will come over the air. Music to our ears, eh? But not sweet notes for the others who live in this country.

"It will be over by midnight. We shall hold many of the most important and strategic points. Other men will rally to our banner. There are two million of us in this country—two million who owe allegiance to the Fatherland, whether they believe so or not! Some will join, and the others will feel our vengeance. We cannot be beaten."

As the hands of the clock over the radio reached the half hour, the men drew into one rank. They stood at rigid attention, all gazing expectantly at the small stage.

The already dim lights in the room winked out. Half a second later, the blinding lights on the stage were turned on. The men closed their eyes, made no other movement. Then they

heard the voice of the man they called their Director.

"You are all here. Good! In a few moments we shall know the results of our long, careful planning. How can we fail? The radio will carry full reports. When I am assured that victory is ours, I shall come down off this stage and you will know me. You will have a good laugh, too—at the discomfiture certain important officials are going to feel when they realize how they were tricked. Meanwhile, stand at ease. Any moment now it will start."

FIVE minutes passed by. Then the dance music was abruptly cut off and the voice of an announcer, vibrant with excitement, broke in.

"We interrupt this program to bring you startling news. Five minutes ago, one of the most important bridges on the West Coast was blown up. A Navy yard in the same region was turned into junk by bombs. Other reports are constantly coming in. It is our duty to remain calm, though it appears that a Trojan Horse organization has struck at us.

"All transportation in New York City has ceased, due to explosions. A submarine base in New England has been bombed. All through the Middle West, the South—everywhere—there are riots. Men in uniforms, equipped with machine-guns and hand grenades, are creating a panic wherever they strike. Stand by! There are orders from the nation's Capital coming through."

The leader's voice gloated over the glaring footlights.

"You see? Some have doubted me. They are the same type who doubted the man we worship, but he fought his way through, and he is now the undisputed leader of the entire world. One of the last strongholds of the weak plutocratic democracies is on the verge of breaking down. These people have wasted too much mercy for their fellow men. The world is well rid of that kind.

From this moment on, only the strong will survive, to the greater glory of the man who has urged us on. Listen, does that news not sound pleasant?"

"Military law has been ordered in more than a hundred communities," the announcer cried. "In some places, authority has passed out of the hands of the police and into those of the Trojan Horse killers. The enemy is machine-gunning ruthlessly. Men, women and children have died by the hundreds. Armories have been blown to bits, and with them the equipment needed by the National Guard. The war has crossed the Atlantic so swiftly that none of us is prepared.

"Police insist that no one leave home under any circumstances. If the enemy troops—whether they are parachute men or not, we do not yet know—come into sight, phone the police at once. Do not try to intercept them."

The announcer kept stating incidents that grew more gruesome by the moment. Finally the leader spoke softly.

"It is time. We have won without question. What happens after this achievement will be unimportant. Therefore you will turn the radio down. Gentlemen, you will now meet your leader!"

The overhead lights were turned on and the footlights began to dim. This man, whom they knew only as the Director, liked theatrical effects, for they lent more glamor. The dozen subleaders stood at rigid attention but with gaping mouths. Even the news that still came through the radio was minor. They were about to meet the mysterious figure who had led them to victory.

The footlights grew dimmer and dimmer. Suddenly they were extinguished entirely. The leader moved forward a few steps and he was smiling broadly.

"I have purposely spoken to you in a disguised voice," he explained, "but secrecy is no longer necessary."

The man who faced his audience was Philip Trent! He was the man who headed the Officers' Club and cam-

(Continued on page 106)

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(Continued from page 105)
 pained for funds with which to fight the very organization he directed. Trent's smiling face creased into an angry frown.

"Well," he asked roughly, "why doesn't someone speak? Is your amazement too much? Have you lost your tongues? Come, many of you know me. Can't you see how I have tricked these pigs?"

"Be careful whom you call a pig!"

The voice spoke softly, close to his ear. Trent's face turned pale, making the scarred cheek grow a beet-red. He felt a gun digging into the small of his back as he raised his head and gaped at the windows of the cellar meeting room. Constructed of steel, they were now open. Through each protruded the ugly snout of a machine-gun. Trent turned his head slowly, saw a hooded and caped figure standing behind him.

"The Black Bat!" he shrieked.

CHAPTER XXI

End of a Spy



HASTILY other people walked up on the stage — Commissioner Warner, the Chief Inspector of Police, and men from the Federal Bureau of Identification. Trent glared at them with hate-filled eyes.

"So I have been tricked! Somehow you found this place, but you are too late. I cannot be executed without a trial. Before you can even put me in jail, my men will be here. They have taken over the most important sections of the country. I shall give orders that unless I am released, one thousand civilians will be shot down. No, five thousand—for I am worth that many of your stupid kind. As in everything else, a democracy has acted too late."

"Turn up that radio," the Black Bat

ordered crisply. When a G-Man obeyed, the radio started playing dance music. At the end of the number, an announcer merely stated the next song on the program. There was certainly no hysteria in his voice. Then the music was cut off again just as it had been before. The same excited announcer rapped out further bulletins.

"The whole country is in the hands of the enemy. Our Army has been smashed. The Navy is thousands of miles away, on fake orders. Officials are even now negotiating terms of peace. . . ."

"Do you see?" Trent sneered. "Now do I go free, or is it your desire to commit suicide? The first stipulation of peace will be your deaths unless I am freed."

"Just keep listening," the Black Bat retorted.

"We're licked!" the radio voice continued. "The White House has just been destroyed." Then the voice changed suddenly, accompanied by a laugh. "How am I doing, boys? Was that realistic, or wasn't it?"

Trent's grin turned to a stare of fear. His men actually cringed.

"The broadcast was faked," the Black Bat explained. "We tapped your wire hours ago and hooked it to a microphone. An accomplished radio announcer brought you the news you wanted to hear, but your whole scheme has collapsed, Trent. Those little perforated cards you sent to help your aides have helped us more. You were much too sure of yourself. The way you requested donations for use in running down spies was a masterpiece of conceit, for you intended to use that money in financing the spy ring.

"You even had billboard posters put up all over the country, but these had a more significant purpose. On the backs of certain sections of the posters were printed maps and full directions for your men. With the aid of these, they could find arms, refuge and sympathizers to lend a hand. The perforated

cards were simply placed over the proper maps and each perforation revealed the location of a signboard bearing that ad. Your men had only to visit the billboards."

"But when they did, they ran into police and G-men, who were planted there! Your years of intrigue were useless, Trent. Every person you involved in this scheme has been exposed and arrested. It was clever—we all admit that. Your men knew nothing. If they were picked up, they couldn't talk. Until the day and hour you set, they would remain in ignorance."

TRENT suddenly drew himself up. "All right, gentlemen," he replied suavely. "I only acted the part to see how good I was. Yes, I did head this band of spies, but only to nail them all. I planned to turn the entire group over to the authorities. However, there were some mysterious persons behind it and things got out of hand. At least, that's what I thought. Those broadcasts nearly frightened twenty years from my life."

"A good story," the Black Bat applauded. "But how do you account for the fact that four retired military officers told you — and you alone — certain military secrets, which soon passed into the hands of the powers you represent? You knew those officers would realize that no one but you could have transmitted that information, so you had them destroyed."

"At first I thought you were intent on killing off all capable officers to slow down the defense of this country. I believe your own men thought the same thing. But you failed to kill Colonel Catlin after he informed you that authorities intended to raid certain spy nests. You notified those spies and as a result the raids were fruitless."

"But you didn't know that Catlin had been called back and was an active member of Military Intelligence. He received a wire which informed him that the spies had been tipped off."

(Continued on page 108)

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(Continued from page 107)

"He suspected you, and was going to expose you before the meeting you had called. You beat him to it, but fortunately I found enough of that wire to get a copy."

Trent spread his hands in wild appeal.

"Have you forgotten that I served in the A.E.F., that I was badly wounded? Look at my face, my hair! Do you think I'd turn to the people who almost killed me? Certainly I deserve some benefit of the doubt."

"You got it," the Black Bat said. "I suspected you, but I couldn't make myself believe a man of your standing and history could possibly have turned spy. However, that doubt is gone now, because you are not even Philip Trent. You are the Baron Otto von Dahlke, one of the greatest spies of the First World War! Your fingerprints prove it. You were on the verge of being captured just before the armistice, but you managed to escape. You fled toward the German lines, where you were wounded by your own side."

"You were taken to a German hospital, and there a colossal plan was concocted to get you to the United States as Philip Trent, who had really been killed. You took his identification, pretended a minor case of amnesia and shell-shock for awhile. You were sent back to this country. Just before you arrived, Philip Trent's sister was mysteriously killed—by your agents—because she alone could have known you were not Philip Trent."

"A man named Roscoe Bell sponsored you. You moved away from the mid-Western city where Trent had lived, and came to this city. Bell set you up in business because he was promised a great deal of export business in return. You kept Trent's diaries well hidden in your home, so that if anything happened which demanded that you recall Trent's past, you had his history for reference."

A pair of G-men brought Roscoe Bell into the room. White-faced, he pointed

BEST FUN, FICTION AND FOTOS IN

at Trent.

"Everything the Black Bat said is the truth. I'll swear to it. Von Dahlke came here and established himself as Philip Trent. Later, when another power ruled his Fatherland, he was appointed head of all secret agent activities in the United States. He became a disciple of the new Fatherland. I was in it up to my neck, so they made me hide von Elkin, threatening to kill me if I refused. But now that I'm free of them, I'll talk, all right.

"I heard that broadcast. If von Dahlke's plans had gone through, that's exactly what would have happened. I'm a poor specimen of an American right now, but believe me, I'll do what I can to make up for it!"

"So you see," the Black Bat went on, "a net has closed around you, Trent, alias von Dahlke. You'll be charged with murder first—the murder of Anton Morino. He never wanted to work for your spy ring, but you forced him by threatening to kill his relatives in Austria. But Morino reached a certain point and couldn't go any further. He even refused to trust me, and crashed through a window to escape. Then he made a fatal mistake.

"Knowing that Philip Trent was fighting spies tooth and nail, he went to you. He was afraid to tell the police because he had been involved. You must have asked him to help trap von Elkin, but in reality Morino trapped himself. You were afraid to take any chances that he may have taken to someone else, so you tipped off the G-men to raid von Elkin's travel agency. You killed Morino there.

"I can prove that Morino saw you just before the murder. Commissioner Warner met you only a block away from the building, but I didn't know that. There are apartment houses on either side of your home, too. They have doormen, and those people are incredibly good at remembering faces. They even recall that the murdered officers came to see you often.

(Continued on page 110)

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(Continued from page 109)

"You started the Officers' Club so you'd be in constant contact with men who knew what was going on. Some of them may even have known the real Philip Trent. But the wounds you suffered provided a good alibi for your changed appearance and the fact that you might not remember everything."

"You had the stage set at the meeting so your spies could escape easily. You ordered all the men out front to listen to your speech so the spies could get out by a rear exit unobserved. You sent von Elkin to take your place at a meeting night before last, but von Elkin didn't understand the significance. That night, you were to make a radio broadcast appeal for funds. You did make a recording which was to be short-waved to the meeting while von Elkin appeared as a dummy."

Trent closed his eyes and drew a long breath.

"Very well," he said stiffly. "I cannot deny proof of that kind. But there is one thing I will tell. The Black Bat ruined my plans, and so I shall expose the Black Bat. He is Tony Quinn! Yes, Tony Quinn—the blind man!"

The hooded figure behind Trent jabbed him with the gun.

"Turn your head, von Dahlke. Look toward the door. Detective-captain McGrath happens to be standing there—with Tony Quinn! I did not wish a blind man to be suspected of performing in my role. I knew you suspected him, and I took steps to prove he could not possibly be the Black Bat."

Trent stared at Tony Quinn, who stood beside McGrath. Quinn's eyes stared ahead blankly, apparently seeing nothing.

"Which settles that," the Black Bat said. "Now I think the entire performance is over. I admire your cleverness, von Dahlke. Any man who can pose as another over a period of years is no fool. I suspected everyone but you at first. Attorney Tolly, because he had so many close connections with your

(Continued on page 112)

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(Continued from page 110)

kind. But Tolly was only trying to help bring stranded relatives to this country.

"Major Rankin, too, acted oddly. He didn't even report his kidnaping except to his direct superiors, because he detested any form of publicity. He got away from your men in the confusion I started. I should have—"

Von Dahlke suddenly spun around, shot a straight-arm jab at the Black Bat's chin. He streaked toward the door. For an instant he was in a cleared space—until the machine-guns at the windows ripped stuttering blasts of death. Von Dahlke hesitated. Staring blindly, he drew erect for a second, and then plunged forward on his face.

TONY QUINN was driven home in McGrath's car. Silk was at the door to let him in.

"Say, I guess I must have been all wrong about you, Quinn," McGrath said contritely. "I'm sorry."

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But after McGrath drove away, Silk let out a quiet, victorious laugh.

"I think I did it rather well, sir, but it was nothing like the way you could have handled it. That spy wouldn't have made a break if you were in the hood and cape I wore."

"It's just as well," Quinn said. "Men of his kind are safer dead. You know, I thought it was Trent right after he and Warner were helping me cross the street and that murder car came roaring down on us. Trent didn't make the slightest attempt to push me out of the way. He actually kept such a hard grip on my arm that Warner couldn't get me out of the car's path. I couldn't tell them that, of course, without exposing myself as the Black Bat."

"So, Silk, this calls for a celebration. Carol and Butch will arrive soon. We've defeated a group of men intent on destroying our country. I hope it will arouse our people to the full realization of what a Trojan Horse in our midst is capable of doing. We need to be toughened. We've got to become stronger, harder than those gangsters abroad. I know, from this case, that they must be fought as they fight themselves—without mercy, with absolute relentlessness."

"I think," Silk replied softly, "that with you to fight for us, the Nazi menace will not make another Norway, Holland, Belgium, or France, of America. . . ."

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20x17.75-21	10.25	16.80	
20x18.00-19	10.30	16.90	
20x18.00-20	10.35	17.00	
20x18.00-21	10.40	17.10	
20x18.25-19	10.45	17.20	
20x18.25-20	10.50	17.30	
20x18.25-21	10.55	17.40	
20x18.50-19	10.60	17.50	
20x18.50-20	10.65	17.60	
20x18.50-21	10.70	17.70	
20x18.75-19	10.75	17.80	
20x18.75-20	10.80	17.90	
20x18.75-21	10.85	18.00	
20x19.00-19	10.90	18.10	
20x19.00-20	10.95	18.20	
20x19.00-21	11.00	18.30	
20x19.25-19	11.05	18.40	
20x19.25-20	11.10	18.50	
20x19.25-21	11.15	18.60	
20x19.50-19	11.20	18.70	
20x19.50-20	11.25	18.80	
20x19.50-21	11.30	18.90	
20x19.75-19	11.35	19.00	
20x19.75-20	11.40	19.10	
20x19.75-21	11.45	19.20	
20x20.00-19	11.50	19.30	
20x20.00-20	11.55	19.40	
20x20.00-21	11.60	19.50	
20x20.25-19	11.65	19.60	
20x20.25-20	11.70	19.70	
20x20.25-21	11.75	19.80	
20x20.50-19	11.80	19.90	
20x20.50-20	11.85	20.00	
20x20.50-21	11.90	20.10	
20x20.75-19	11.95	20.20	
20x20.75-20	12.00	20.30	
20x20.75-21	12.05	20.40	
20x21.00-19	12.10	20.50	
20x21.00-20	12.15	20.60	
20x21.00-21	12.20	20.70	
20x21.25-19	12.25	20.80	
20x21.25-20	12.30	20.90	
20x21.25-21	12.35	21.00	
20x21.50-19	12.40	21.10	
20x21.50-20	12.45	21.20	
20x21.50-21	12.50	21.30	
20x21.75-19	12.55	21.40	
20x21.75-20	12.60	21.50	
20x21.75-21	12.65	21.60	
20x22.00-19	12.70	21.70	
20x22.00-20	12.75	21.80	
20x22.00-21	12.80	21.90	
20x22.25-19	12.85	22.00	
20x22.25-20	12.90	22.10	
20x22.25-21	12.95	22.20	
20x22.50-19	13.00	22.30	
20x22.50-20	13.05	22.40	
20x22.50-21	13.10	22.50	
20x22.75-19	13.15	22.60	
20x22.75-20	13.20	22.70	
20x22.75-21	13.25	22.80	
20x23.00-19	13.30	22.90	
20x23.00-20	13.35	23.00	
20x23.00-21	13.40	23.10	
20x23.25-19	13.45	23.20	
20x23.25-20	13.50	23.30	
20x23.25-21	13.55	23.40	
20x23.50-19	13.60	23.50	
20x23.50-20	13.65	23.60	
20x23.50-21	13.70	23.70	
20x23.75-19	13.75	23.80	
20x23.75-20	13.80	23.90	
20x23.75-21	13.85	24.00	
20x24.00-19	13.90	24.10	
20x24.00-20	13.95	24.20	
20x24.00-21	14.00	24.30	
20x24.25-19	14.05	24.40	
20x24.25-20	14.10	24.50	
20x24.25-21	14.15	24.60	
20x24.50-19	14.20	24.70	
20x24.50-20	14.25	24.80	
20x24.50-21	14.30	24.90	
20x24.75-19	14.35	25.00	
20x24.75-20	14.40	25.10	
20x24.75-21	14.45	25.20	
20x25.00-19	14.50	25.30	
20x25.00-20	14.55	25.40	
20x25.00-21	14.60	25.50	
20x25.25-19	14.65	25.60	
20x25.25-20	14.70	25.70	
20x25.25-21	14.75	25.80	
20x25.50-19	14.80	25.90	
20x25.50-20	14.85	26.00	
20x25.50-21	14.90	26.10	
20x25.75-19	14.95	26.20	
20x25.75-20	15.00	26.30	
20x25.75-21	15.05	26.40	
20x26.00-19	15.10	26.50	
20x26.00-20	15.15	26.60	
20x26.00-21	15.20	26.70	
20x26.25-19	15.25	26.80	
20x26.25-20	15.30	26.90	
20x26.25-21	15.35	27.00	
20x26.50-19	15.40	27.10	
20x26.50-20	15.45	27.20	
20x26.50-21	15.50	27.30	
20x26.75-19	15.55	27.40	
20x26.75-20	15.60	27.50	
20x26.75-21	15.65	27.60	
20x27.00-19	15.70	27.70	
20x27.00-20	15.75	27.80	
20x27.00-21	15.80	27.90	
20x27.25-19	15.85	28.00	
20x27.25-20	15.90	28.10	
20x27.25-21	15.95	28.20	
20x27.50-19	16.00	28.30	
20x27.50-20	16.05	28.40	
20x27.50-21	16.10	28.50	
20x27.75-19	16.15	28.60	
20x27.75-20	16.20	28.70	
20x27.75-21	16.25	28.80	
20x28.00-19	16.30	28.90	
20x28.00-20	16.35	29.00	
20x28.00-21	16.40	29.10	
20x28.25-19	16.45	29.20	
20x28.25-20	16.50	29.30	
20x28.25-21	16.55	29.40	
20x28.50-19	16.60	29.50	
20x28.50-20	16.65	29.60	

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I Am Getting Ready to Earn More Money ... Preparing for a Bigger Job

I am a student of the American School, Chicago. A little more than half way through my course—already my increased knowledge has brought me promotion as a result of the hour or so a day I have been spending getting acquainted with the principles of the work I enjoy. I use only part of my spare time, so it doesn't interfere with my home and social life, and certainly helps me on the job.

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E-P159-Ladies' Kent Watch; 7 jewels; newest style 10K yellow rolled gold plate case-\$15.95.
F-K190-Man's Kent Watch; 7 jewels; sturdy; new style; 10 yellow rolled gold plate case-\$15.95.
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A765-Engagement Ring; 2 large diamonds and 2 other diamonds; 14K yellow gold. \$4.75 a month

\$3350



A84-C75-Bridal Set; 8 diamonds; both rings 14K yellow gold. \$3.15 a month

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I154-Man's Initial Ring; diamond and 2 initials on Black Onyx; 10K yellow gold. \$1.60 a month

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\$2,000.00

Maximum Indemnity for Auto Accidental Death

\$3,000.00

Maximum Triple Indemnity for Travel Death

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The amount of insurance payable upon the death of any of the persons insured hereunder shall be the amount set out in the following table for the attained age nearest birthday at death of such person divided by the number of persons insured hereunder immediately preceding such death.

Table of amount of insurance purchased by a monthly payment of one dollar.

Attained Age at Death	Natural or Ordinary Accidental Death Amount	Auto Accidental Death Amount	Travel Accidental Death Amount
1-40	\$1000.00	\$2000.00	\$3000.00
41-50	750.00	1500.00	2250.00
51-56	500.00	1000.00	1500.00
57-62	300.00	600.00	900.00
63-68	200.00	400.00	600.00
69-75	100.00	200.00	300.00

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