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NOV.

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

THE VOICE OF DOOM
A COMPLETE BLACK BAT NOVEL

BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE



THE VOICE
OF DOOM

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

WAYMAN JONES

NOV. 1945

\$2.00
MYSTERY
NOVEL
EVERY
ISSUE!

"THE JAWS OF DEATH CLAMPED DOWN ON ME!"



A true experience of BALLARD DEAN, Kirkland, Washington



"THE THING sprang out of the earth one bitterly cold evening as I was returning to camp after an all-day deer hunt," writes Mr. Dean. "I suffered excruciating agony, as it bit into my leg. It was a bear trap, illegally set for deer.

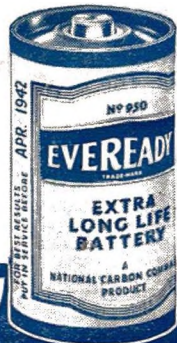
"FRANTICALLY, I TRIED TO GET LOOSE as the cold knifed through my clothing. With sinking heart, I found my struggles of no avail. In a few hours, if help could not be summoned, I would freeze to death. Darkness came on as I fought hopelessly with the strong steel jaws.



"THEN I THOUGHT OF MY FLASHLIGHT. There was a chance that other returning hunters might be in the woods. Flashing the bright beam off and on, my efforts were finally rewarded. Thanks to those 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries, two men saw my signal and rescued me from that death trap. "

(Signed) Ballard Dean

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.



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Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation



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To win out, today, you must **THINK**. You must think **ON** the job and **AWAY** from it and, *most important*, you must think **AHEAD** of it. And that takes study.

Join this "Promotion Parade" of Progress-Minded Men and Women

Of the approximately 2,000,000 men and women enrolled for further education in universities, colleges, institutes of technology and home study institutions, about 37 1/2%—or 750,000—have chosen *home study* as most practical for their purposes. They want to win Success. *You do, too!* They have **FAITH** in themselves. Do you believe in *yourself*? They have investigated *home study*—decided that it offers them their way "out and up" . . . *out* of the low pay, periodically unemployed rank and file . . . *up* into well paid positions where they enjoy prosperity, security and respect.

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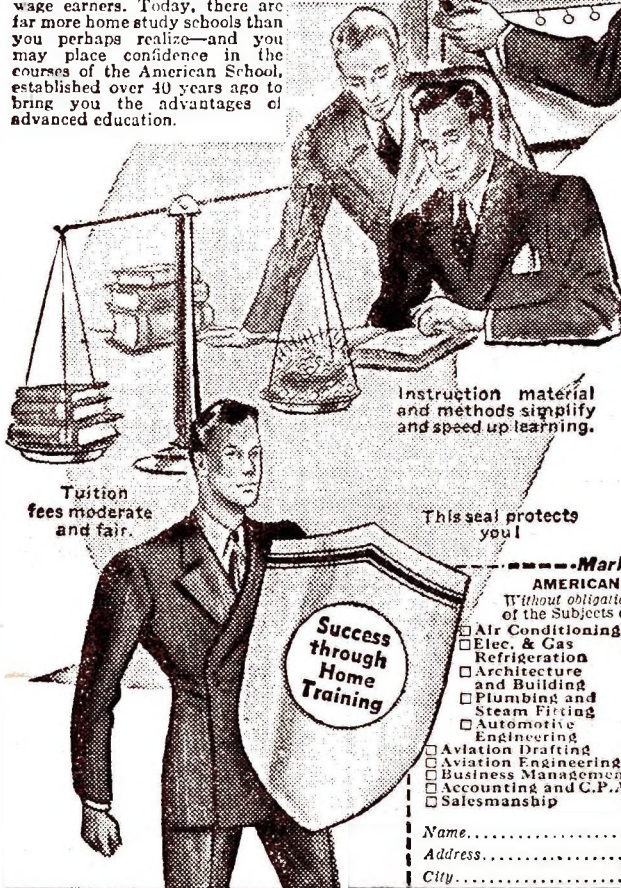
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BLACK BOOK
DETECTIVE

Vol. 14, No. 1

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November, 1941

A Complete Book-Length Novel



**THE VOICE OF
DOOM**

Featuring Tony Quinn, Nemesis of Crime

By **G. WAYMAN JONES**

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I JUMPED MY PAY \$35 A WEEK...

This Free Book Showed Me How 



A True Story By J. C. V.
(Name and Address Sent on request)



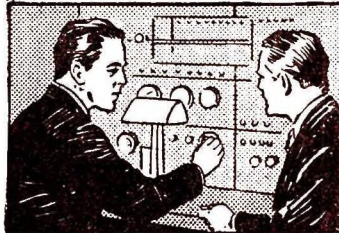
"I had a low-pay, no future job as a store clerk. I was not satisfied, but read about the opportunities in Radio and how N. R. I. would train me at home for them. I enrolled right away."



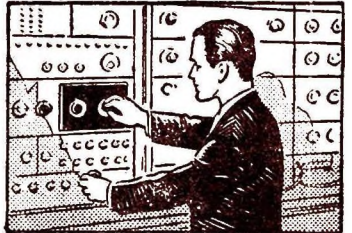
"The Course National Radio Institute gave me was so practical that I was soon ready to make \$5 to \$10 a week in spare time servicing Radio sets."



"After graduating I got a job as Radio Operator aboard ship, and was able to travel and see many parts of the world with all expenses paid, and a good salary besides."



"Immediately after leaving my ship job, I was made Chief Engineer of a small broadcasting station. Later I held the same job with several other similar stations in the South."



"I'm now Chief Engineer of WDOJ, Chattanooga, Tenn. I make \$1,800 a year more than when I started Radio. There are many opportunities for trained Radio Technicians today."

BE A RADIO TECHNICIAN

I Will Train You at Home In Spare Time

Many fellows who want better jobs are going to read these words—and do nothing about them. But a few, like J. C. V., who are MEN OF ACTION are going to say "SHOW ME HOW TO BE A SUCCESS IN RADIO!" The rest of my story is for these men. The "do-nothings" can stop here.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio is one of the country's busiest industries today. On top of a record demand for Radio sets and equipment for civilian use, the Radio industry is getting millions of dollars in defense orders. The 822 broadcasting stations in the U. S. employ thousands of Radio Technicians with average pay among the country's best paid industries. Repairing, servicing, selling home and auto Radio receivers (there are 50,197,000 in use) gives good pay to thousands. Many other Radio Technicians take advantage of the opportuni-

ties to have their own service or retail Radio businesses. Think of the many good jobs in connection with Aviation, Commercial, Police Radio and Public Address Systems. N. R. I. trains you to be ready when Television opens new jobs. Yes, Radio Technicians make good money because they use their heads as well as their hands. They must be trained.

Beginners Quickly Learn to Earn \$5, \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time


Nearly every neighborhood offers opportunities for a good part-time Radio Technician to make extra money fixing Radio sets. I give you special training to show you how to start cashing in on these opportunities early. You get a modern Professional Radio Servicing Instrument. My fifty-fifty method

—half working with Radio parts, half studying my lesson texts—makes learning Radio at home interesting, fascinating, practical.


Find Out How I Train You for Good Pay in Radio

Mail the Coupon below. I'll send my 64-page book FREE. It tells about my Course; the types of jobs in the different branches of Radio; shows letters from more than 100 of the men I trained, so you can see what they are doing, earning. MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postal.

J. E. SMITH, President,
Dept. 1M09, National Radio Institute,
Washington, D. C.



**EXTRA PAY IN
ARMY, NAVY, TOO**



Every man likely to go into military service, every soldier, sailor, marine should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty at pay up to 6 times a private's base pay. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. **IT'S SMART TO TRAIN FOR RADIO NOW!**

WANT TO MAKE MORE MONEY?

FIND OUT WHAT RADIO OFFERS



GOOD FOR Free 64-PAGE BOOK

Mr. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 1M09, National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Send me the FREE 64-page book which helped J. C. V. jump his pay \$35 a week. I want to know about Radio's opportunities. (No salesman will call—write plainly.)

Name Age.....

Address

City State.....

They Never Knew It Was SO EASY To Play

Thousands Learn Musical Instruments By Amazingly Simple Method

**No Teacher, No Musical Knowledge
Required. In a Short Time You
Start Playing Real Tunes!
700,000 Now Enrolled**

THINK of the fun YOU are missing! The popularity, friendship, good times! Why? Because you think it's *hard* to learn music. You have an idea that it's a slow, tedious task, with lots of boring drills and exercises.

That's not the twentieth-century way! Surely you've heard the news! How people all over the world have learned to play by a method so simple a child can understand it—so fascinating that it's like playing a game. Imagine! You learn without a teacher—in your spare time at home—at a cost of only a few cents a day! You learn by the famous print-and-picture method—every position, every move before your eyes in big, clear illustrations. You CAN'T go wrong! And best of all, you start playing real tunes almost at once, from the very first lesson.

No needless, old-fashioned "scales" and exercises. No confused, perplexing study. You learn to play by playing. It's thrilling, exciting, inspiring! No wonder hundreds of thousands of people have taken up music this easy way. No wonder enthusiastic letters like those reproduced here pour in from all over the world.

Sound interesting? Well, just name the instrument you'd like to play and we'll prove you CAN! If interested, mail the coupon or write.

**U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC
29411 Brunswick Bldg.,
New York City**



"**Thar's Gold in Them Thar Hillbilly Songs.**" Craze for mountain music, "swing" and other popular forms has brought fame and fortune to many who started playing for the fun of it. Thousands have discovered unexpected pleasure and profit in music, thanks to the unique method that makes it amazingly easy to learn.

**Send for FREE Booklet and
Print and Picture Sample**

See for yourself how this wonderful self-instruction method works. Sit down, in the privacy of your own home, with the interesting illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home." No salesman will call—decide for yourself whether you want to play this easy way. (Instruments supplied at discount when wanted, cash or credit.)



Learned Quickly at Home. I didn't dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. Now when I play for people they hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time. *H. C. S., Calif.



Wouldn't Take \$1,000. "The lessons are so simple," writes *S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo., "that anyone can understand them. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for my course."



Found Accordion Easy. "I've always wanted to play the piano accordion," writes *H. E. from Canada, "but thought I'd never learn it. Then I read about your lessons. I don't know how to express my satisfaction."



Plays on Radio. I am happy to tell you that for four weeks I have been on the air over our local radio station. So thanks to your institution for such a wonderful course. *W. H. S., Alabama.

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29411 Brunswick Bldg., New York City, N. Y.**

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument indicated below. Please send me your free booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home" and the free Print & Picture Sample.

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Guitar	Ukulele	Organ
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Hawaiian Guitar		

Name..... Have You This Instru.?
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Address.....

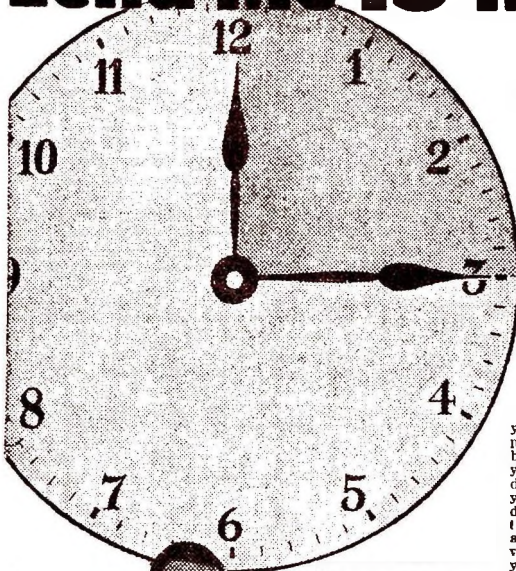
City..... State.....

Check here for Booklet "A" if under 16 years of age.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by Professional models

Lend Me 15 Minutes A Day

..and I'll prove I can make you a NEW MAN



I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them.

I don't care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double quick time! I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that there's not even "stand-in" room left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new, beautiful suit of muscle!

What 15 Minutes a Day Can Do For You

Are you ALL MAN—touch-muscled, on your toes every minute, with all the up-and-at-'em that can lick your weight in wildcats? Or do you need the help I can give you—the help that has already worked such wonders for other fellows, every-where?

In just 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home, I'm ready to prove that "Dynamic Tension" can lay a new outfit of solid muscle over every inch of your body. Let me put new, smashing power into your arms and shoulders—give you an armor-shield of stomach muscle that laughs at punches—strengthen your legs into real columns of surging stamina. If lack of exercise or wrong living has weakened you inside, I'll get after that condition, too, and show you how it feels to LIVE!

I Was a 97-lb. Weakling

All the world knows I was ONCE a skinny, scrawny 87-pound weakling. And NOW it knows that I won the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Against all comers! How did I do it? How do I work miracles in the bodies of

FREE THIS FAMOUS BOOK THAT TELLS YOU JUST HOW TO GET A BODY THAT MEN RESPECT AND WOMEN ADMIRE

Almost two million men have sent for and read my book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It tells you exactly what "Dynamic Tension" can do. And it's packed with pictures that SHOW you what it does. Results it has produced for other men. RESULTS I want to prove it can get for YOU! If you are satisfied to take a back seat and be pushed around by other fellows weak-in, weak-out, you don't want this book. But if you want to learn how you can actually become a NEW MAN, right in the privacy of your own home and in only 15 minutes a day, then man!—get this coupon into the mail to me as fast as your legs can get to the letterbox! CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-L, 115 East 23rd St., New York City.

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-L,
115 East 23rd St., New York City

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name
(Please Print or Write Plainly)

Address

City State

Charles Atlas

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"Builder of Men"

Among all the physical instructors and "conditioners of men" ONLY ONE NAME STANDS OUT. That name is Charles Atlas!

In every part of the country Charles Atlas is recognized as "America's Greatest Builder of Men." Almost two million men have written to him. Thousands upon thousands have put their physical development into his hands!

And now that the call is for men capable of helping America meet and conquer any national emergency, many thousands of others (even those already in their country's Army and Navy) are calling upon Charles Atlas to build the kind of men America vitally needs.

Here's PROOF Right Here!

"Results come so fast by your method that it seems just as if some magician put on the pounds of solid muscle just where you want them."
—W. L., Missouri

"Feel like a million dollars and have a 14" normal chest—A 2" GAIN IN 4 DAYS"
—L. A. S., Illinois

"My doctor thinks your course is fine. In 15 days have put two inches on my chest, and ½ inch on my neck."
—B. L., Oregon

"My muscles are bulging out and I feel like a new man. My chest measures 38 in., an increase of 5 in., and my neck increased 2 in."
—G. M., Ohio



Actual photo of the man who holds the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

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for Men of Character

EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE FOR

AN INVENTION EXPECTED TO REPLACE
A MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY

Costly Work Formerly
"Sent Out" by Business Men
Now Done by Themselves
at a Fraction of the Expense

This is a call for men everywhere to handle
exclusive agency for one of the most
unique business inventions of the day.

Forty years ago the horse and buggy business was supreme—today almost extinct. Twenty years ago the phonograph industry ran into many millions—today practically a relic. Only a comparatively few foresighted men saw the fortunes ahead in the automobile and the radio. Yet irresistible waves of public buying swept these men to fortune, and sent the buggy and the phonograph into the discard. So are great successes made by men able to detect the shift in public favor from one industry to another.

Now another change is taking place. An old established industry—an integral and important part of the nation's structure—in which millions of dollars change hands every year—is in thousands of cases being replaced by a truly astonishing, simple invention which does the work better—more reliably—AND AT A COST OFTEN AS LOW AS 1% OF WHAT IS ORDINARILY PAID! It has not required very long for men who have taken over the rights to this valuable invention to do a remarkable business, and show earnings which in these times are almost unheard of for the average man.

Not a "Gadget"—
Not a "Knick-Knack"—

but a valuable, proved device which
has been sold successfully by busi-
ness novices as well as seasoned
veterans.

Make no mistake—this is no novelty—no flimsy creation which the inventor hopes to put on the market. You probably have seen nothing like it yet—perhaps never dreamed of the existence of such a device—yet it has already been used by corporations of outstanding prominence—by dealers of great corporations—by their branches—by doctors, newspapers, publishers—schools—hospitals, etc., etc., and by thousands of small business men. You don't have to convince a man that he should use an electric bulb to light his office instead of a gas lamp. Nor do you have to sell the same business man the idea that some day he may need something like this invention. The need is already there—the money is usually being spent right at that very moment—and the desirability of saving the greatest part of this expense is obvious immediately.

Some of the Savings
You Can Show

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for \$11 which formerly could have cost them over \$200. A building supply corporation pays our man \$70, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,600! An automobile dealer pays our representative \$15, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$88.60, possible cost if done outside the business being well over \$2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. These are just a few of the many actual cases which we place in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across dazzling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

Profits Typical of
the Young, Growing Industry

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, \$5.83 can be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share can be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

This Business Has
Nothing to Do With
House to House Canvassing

Nor do you have to know anything about high-pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—whatever size the customer says he will accept—at our risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This done away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply tell what you offer, showing proof of success in that customer's particular line of business. Then leave the invention without a dollar down. It starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation should actually produce enough cash money to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time. You then call back, collect your money. Nothing is so convincing as our offer to let results speak for themselves without risk to the customer! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

EARNINGS

One man in California earned over \$1,600 per month for three months—close to \$5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office; counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A man working small city in N. Y. State made \$10,605 in 9 months. Texas man nets over \$100 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from \$5 to \$60 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

No Money Need Be Risked

In trying this business out. You can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. If you are looking for a business that is not overworked—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the buyer relief from a burdensome, but unavoidable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory into which you can set foot—regardless of size—that is a necessity but does not have any price curbing to contend with as other necessities do—that because you control the sales in exclusive territory is your own business—that pays more on some individual sales than many men make in a week and sometimes in a month's time—if such a business looks as if it is worth investigating, get in touch with us at once for the rights in your territory—don't delay—because the chances are that if you do wait, someone else will have written to us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—we'd both be sorry. So for convenience, use the coupon below—but send it right away—or wire if you wish. But do it now. Address

F. E. ARMSTRONG, President
Dept. 4047M, Mobile, Ala.

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TERRITORY PROPOSITION**

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Without obligation to me, send me full information on your proposition.

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Street or Route.....

Box No.....

City.....

State.....

Why Trained Accountants Command

[—and how ambitious men are qualifying by the LaSalle Problem Method] **High Salaries**

GET this straight.

By "accountancy" we do not mean "bookkeeping." For accountancy begins where bookkeeping leaves off.

The skilled accountant takes the figures handed him by the bookkeeper, and *analyzes* and *interprets* them.

He knows how much the costs in the various departments should amount to, how they may be lowered.

He knows what profits should be expected from a given enterprise, how they may be increased.

He knows, in a given business, what per cent of one's working capital can safely be tied up in merchandise on hand, what per cent is safe and adequate for sales promotion. And these, by the way, are but two of *scores* of percentage-figures where-with he points the way to successful operation.

He knows the intricacies of government taxation.

He knows how to *survey* the transactions of a business over a given period; how to show in cold, hard figures the progress it has made and where it is going. He knows how to *use* these findings as a basis for constructive policies.

In short, the trained accountant is the *controlling engineer* of business—*one man business cannot do without.*

Small wonder that he commands a salary two to ten times as great as that of the book-keeper. Indeed, as an independent operator (head of his own accounting firm) he may earn as much as the president of the big and influential bank in his community, or the operating manager of a great railroad.

Some Examples

Small wonder that accountancy offers the trained man such fine opportunities—opportunities well illustrated by the success of thousands of

LaSalle accountancy students.* For example—one man was a plumber, 32 years old, with only an eleventh grade education. He became auditor for a large bank with an income 325 per cent larger.

Another was a drug clerk at \$30 a week. Now he heads his own very successful accounting firm with an income several times as large.

A woman bookkeeper—buried in details of a small job—is now auditor of an apartment hotel, and her salary mounted in proportion to her work.

A credit manager—earning \$200 a month—moved up quickly to \$3000, to \$5000, and then to a highly profitable accounting business of his own which netted around \$10,000 a year.

And What It Means to You

Why let the other fellow walk away with the better job, when right in your own home you may equip yourself for a splendid future in this profitable profession?

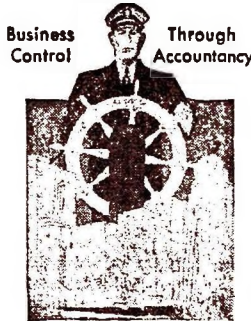
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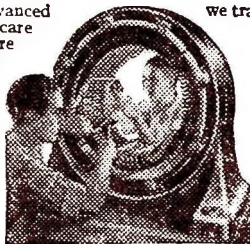
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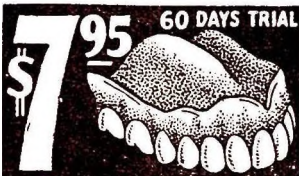
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OFF THE RECORD

A DEPARTMENT FOR READERS

CRIME is associated with darkness. The blackness of night is a cover for the foul deeds of criminals of every type. When nature's great eye, the sun, is down, the criminal leaves his den, much as jungle animals leave their lairs to hunt their prey—and the night sees acts of dastardly cunning and ferocity such as the day never looks upon.

Or, rather, the night does *not* see them. For there is no light to see them by. Even the red blood of murder is black by night, as though to symbolize the immunity of the nocturnal taker of human life. So, in the long history of human experience, night time has been crime time, and the criminal has favored the night above the day in the pursuance of his nefarious occupation. For at night the world is blind.

Suppose it could be made as blind by day! Suppose an arch criminal, drawing upon the most modern science to effectuate his fell purpose, could make crime by day as safe as crime by night! Nay, safer and surer! Suppose he could do what the night does and more—not only reduce the powers of sight of his victims and possible witnesses but rob them of that power altogether, at the same time leaving his own vision unimpaired?

A Startling Accomplishment

Such, in fact, is the startling accomplishment of the mysterious master criminal who cuts his deadly swathe through next issue's **Black Bat** novel—**THE EYES OF THE BLIND.**

You can judge for yourselves, there-

fore, the magnitude of the task which confronts that greatest foe of crime, that man who knows best of all what darkness means to the guilty and innocent alike, having once been blind himself—that man with his strange gift of seeing in the dark—Tony Quinn, the Black Bat!

For tenseness and suspense, you would have to look far to beat that emotionally stirring sequence in THE EYES OF THE BLIND where Tony Quinn, robbed of his sight once, is again faced with the prospect of—

But no, we're not going to reveal any more of the exciting detective drama which awaits you in the next issue of BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE, in which the Black Bat outdoes all his previous thrilling exploits, and in which you too will be excitingly in the dark until the great white light of Tony Quinn's exposure of the master criminal suddenly bursts upon you in a coruscating burst of sleuthing brilliance!

READERS' FORUM

The editor of this department, as he's said before, has a good time talking to you. But he has even a better time having you talk to him, as you've been doing in the steadily mounting stream of letters that have been pouring in, testifying to the growing esteem in which BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE is held. Seldom has a character taken such swift and firm hold upon the affections of detective fiction readers as Tony Quinn, the Black Bat.

That he has continued to maintain that hold is due in large part to you readers, who have written in and told us what you liked about the Black Bat novels. Such popularity has to be earned.

No man pays closer attention to your letters than G. Wayman Jones, the creator of your favorite character, whose only wish is that you continue to enjoy the reading of his novels as much as he delights in the writing of them.

Here's a sample of the letters that do an author's heart good:

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be an exaggeration, I tell myself, since it's hard to see how improvement could go on forever, and it would be enough if the novels were kept on the same high level as previous ones, without getting any better. But I'll be darned if, after reading **THE BLACK BAT'S INVISIBLE ENEMY** in the September issue, I didn't go ahead and say it again—and mean it too. I'm looking forward to **THE VOICE OF DOOM**.—Dan Marsden, Richmond, Va.

Well, Dan, here's **THE VOICE OF DOOM** in this issue. How'd you like it? And wait till you read **THE EYES OF THE BLIND!**

A discriminating reader from out West writes:

One of the things I like best about the Black Bat novels is the portrayal of the character of Tony Quinn. He doesn't hog the spotlight. He's the kind of guy who uses help when he needs it, and gives Carol and Silk and Butch a chance to strut their stuff. You can understand why he commands their loyalties, and that's one of the reasons he commands the loyalties of readers like me.—Sam Caraway, Denver, Colorado.

Correct, Sam. We like him too, for the same reason.

Another old-time reader comes up with an interesting angle:

You know, there's one character in the Black Bat novels that's kind of got under my skin. Of course, the others are swell—but I got a particular soft spot for him. You know the guy I mean—the chap who always gets there, only he's a couple of minutes too late to do what he'd give his right eye for—prove Tony Quinn is—you know who. I'm speaking of McGrath. And I'm real glad he worked himself up to a captaincy. He deserved it. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised to see him Commissioner some day. Here's hoping Mac will continue to try to catch the Black Bat—and continue to fail.—Ellis Gordon, Buffalo, N. Y.

But listen, readers—all bouquets and no brickbats makes Ed (short for Editor) a dull boy. Ain't you got nothing to kick about? If you have, let's hear it. Address your missives to The Editor, **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

And many thanks to all you others who have written in. I'll be talking—and listening—next issue. See you then.

THE EDITOR.

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HERE, AT LAST, is Victor H. Lindlahr's remarkable method of health through diet brought to you in a big, fascinating book—at a price so low everyone can own it! In just one evening, you can learn how to *correct* mistakes in eating that may have been keeping you below par . . . you may learn how to be healthier, happier by following the *proven* principles of health through diet in Victor H. Lindlahr's remarkable book, "You Are What You Eat."

Do you know how you may improve your complexion by a simple change in diet? Do you know what high-vitamin fruits and vegetables will help build you up when you are run-down? Do you know what foods often help promote sound, restful sleep? Do you know what methods of cooking destroy the chief value of certain foods? Do you know what vegetables can help in building better blood?

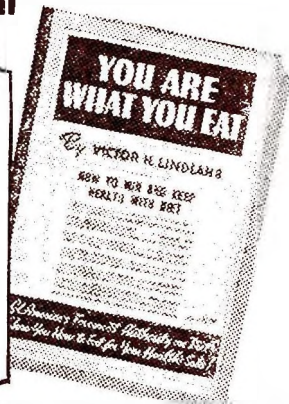
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Black Bat Detective Novel

THE



A machine gun
chattered, but
the shots went
wild (Chapter
XV)

By G. WAYMAN JONES

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

CHAPTER I

Strange Awakening

POLICE COMMISSIONER WARNER, head of the largest police force in the nation, awoke with a start. He sat up in bed,

rubbed his grey, rather thin hair, and stared around a strange room. It was a very well equipped bedroom, with oversize furniture, elaborately decorated walls and bed covers of silk.

The furnishings were equivalent to what the average householder spends

VOICE OF DOOM



The Black Bat Tackles an Unseen Nemesis of Society—a Human Scourge Who Battens on Underworld and Upperworld Alike!

to equip an entire six room house. There was nothing feminine about the place either. A stag's head was mounted over the bed, ancient cutlasses decorated another wall and

there were two hunting pictures in excellent taste.

Warner tried to figure it out. Propping a pillow back of him, he relaxed against it. The last thing he remem-

Tony Quinn and His Aides Face Grim

bered was leaving a party, getting into his car and starting to drive home. From then on everything was totally and horribly blank. Where was he? Who had brought him here?

Warner climbed out of bed. To his amazement a pair of brand new slippers in his size were waiting for his use. A silk dressing gown was neatly hung over a chair. He donned it, walked swiftly to one of the two doors in the room and tried to open it.

The door was locked. He tackled the other one which proved to be that of a clothes closet and it contained his suit, neatly hung up. His other wearing apparel was also there, and no valet could have taken better care of them.

"I'll be darned," Warner muttered. "This is carrying things too far. Must be a joke, but I don't see the humor in it."

He thought of the windows and dashed over to them only to give a groan of despair. They weren't really windows at all, just fakes to resemble real ones and with artificial light streaming through them to simulate daylight. Outside Warner saw plain grey walls. This room, which held him prisoner, was really a room within a room.

"My gun," Warner said aloud. He hurried back to the closet. His compact, high powered automatic was still in its hip holster. The bullets were intact. He felt a little better with the weapon in his fist.

Then Warner heard a loud click like that of an electric switch only amplified several times. A voice came from nowhere and everywhere. It filled the whole room.


"Good morning, Commissioner Warner. You had a very nice rest. It's noon—did you realize that? I'm very sorry about the informal manner in which I had to bring you here, but circumstances made it necessary. But

here I am talking while you must be starving.

"Please open the door. It was locked when you tried it before. It leads into another room where you will find toilet articles, even to the brand of toothpaste you are accustomed to use.

"There is a table spread with a typical breakfast, the kind you really enjoy. While you eat, I shall outline the reasons why I brought you here."

The voice stopped with another click. Warner shrugged. He went into the next room and stared at the table. There were eggs, prepared just as he liked them, bacon, blackly crisp, which was one of his demands of bacon, fried hominy with syrup, toast, butter and fruit juice. Warner couldn't have asked for a better breakfast. He washed up and then sat down to it.

 RDINARY men might have had no appetite under circumstances such as these, but Warner sailed in with gusto. He heard that familiar click and the same deep, clear voice spoke again.

"I commend your choice of food, Commissioner. It tallies closely with my own likes. Now to business. That is—if everything is quite to your satisfaction. You may speak. I can hear you."

"Thanks." Warner spread butter on a piece of toast. "I don't get this business at all, but if I'm to be kept a prisoner here and the food remains as good as this, well—I'll ask the judge to give you life imprisonment and not the electric chair. Who are you? What do you want? Where am I, anyway?"

"I can't tell you where you are," the voice answered with a chuckle. "My identity must also be held secret, but you may know me as the Voice of Justice.

"I shall show you why I have

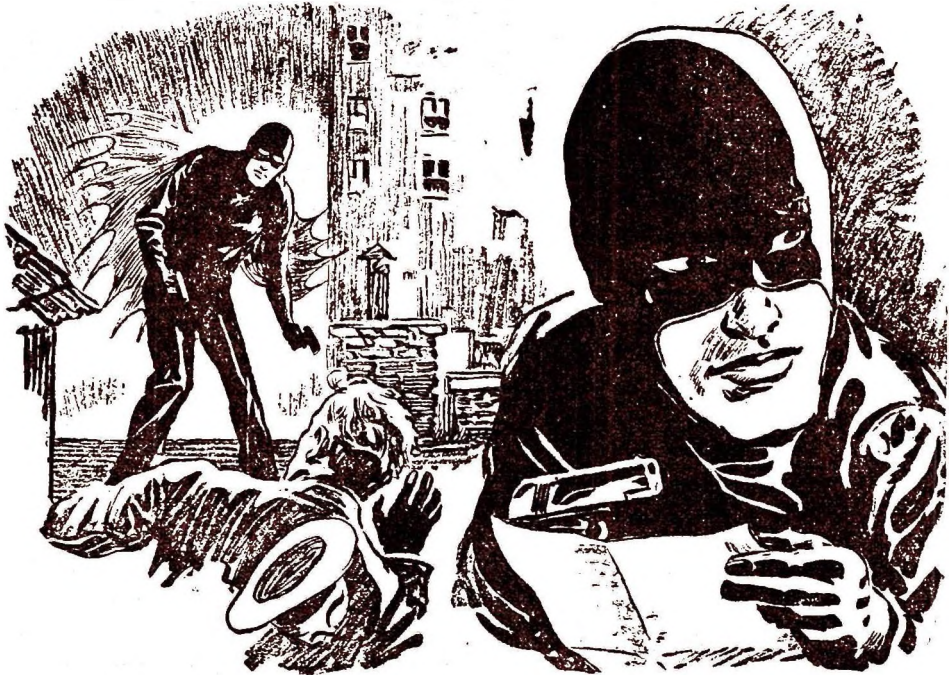
Doom in the Pursuit of a Master Crook!

chosen that name in a moment. All I want from you is a little cooperation. Last night you were drugged with a harmless opiate that leaves no ill effects. Your car is hidden, but will be returned to you. I had you brought here for this conference.

"I'm a strange man, Commissioner.

Warner chased a bit of crisp bacon around the plate. "What's there in it for you, my friend?"

"Nothing! Not a red cent, but there is one small provision attached to it all. These men I shall expose will either have rewards posted for their capture or rewards should be



THE BLACK BAT

I might be an ex-convict or a philanthropist or even an amateur criminologist. The fact remains that I deplore the number of crimes committed in this country which go unpunished and have decided to do something about them.

"My idea is to expose many of the more important criminals. How I shall accomplish this is my own secret, but it shall be done. Wait and see. Naturally, I cannot associate myself directly with the police and therefore find it essential to contact a man I can trust without the slightest question or doubt."

"And you want me to name him."

offered. This money is to be turned over to certain designated parties.

"No, I'm not one of them. You must understand that I'm quite honest, Commissioner. I could take all of the loot for myself, but I am returning it for the much smaller reward sums involved. These rewards will really go to useful purposes. Now—whom would you recommend?"

Warner sipped delicious coffee.

"Well, I can't say off hand," he said. "I don't know exactly the type of man you want. Give me more details."

"Of course," the voice sounded gratified. "The man I want must be

persuasive enough to get those rewards even though none are offered in some cases. He must be thoroughly honest and capable. A man who might not see too much either, and who would be willing to pass up opportunities to nab me.

"I am not a man of violence, but I shall be compelled to resist forcibly any attempts to discover who I am. This work, to which I have dedicated myself, places me in extreme danger. You can understand that. Now you know the type of person I need. Tell me."

Warner nodded slowly.

"Yes, I think I know the man for you. He's an attorney—which provides the persuasive tongue. He's thoroughly honest, and I guarantee he will not see too much because this man is totally blind. His name is Tony Quinn. He used to be District Attorney, but he was blinded by acid. Of everyone I know, Quinn fills the bill better than any other."

"Good. Good. Splendid, in fact. I shall contact him soon and I am extremely grateful to you. In a few moments you shall be released. There is nothing else you wish to know?"

"No," Warner said thoughtfully. "Nothing you'd tell me, I mean. However I must warn you that this whole procedure is distinctly outside the law, and you lay yourself open to prosecution. Anyway, thanks for the breakfast and for your faith in me to name the man you want. Now how do I get out—of—here—I—I feel dizzy."

"Don't worry." The voice seemed miles away now. "You have been drugged again. It's the easiest way for me to return you. Tell Mr. Quinn he will be contacted soon. Sleep well, Commissioner."

Warner's head fell on top of the table, knocking a pitcher over and rattling the dishes. From the hidden amplifier came a hoarse, grim chuckle and then silence.

Warner woke up with a cool breeze

fanning his senses alert. He was behind the wheel of his car in some big park. A careful look around told him where he was—in one of the more isolated portions of Central Park. He was fully clothed, his gun was in place.

It all seemed like a dream, but he knew it wasn't. What he'd been through was stark reality, the maddest form of reality, but as true as the sun that warmed him. His dashboard clock indicated that it was three-thirty. He'd been unconscious for three hours.

Warner grunted in exasperation, stepped on the starter and drove straight to his office at Police Headquarters. He wondered how Tony Quinn would take this questionable contract, and if it would bring the Black Bat, enemy of all criminals, into the open once more.

Sometimes Warner thought Quinn was the Black Bat. Other times he would have taken an oath that such a thing was quite impossible and yet—he liked to think that Tony Quinn and the Black Bat were one and the same.

CHAPTER II

Confession of Guilt



HE name on the glass part of the door read *Anthony Quinn, Attorney at Law*. Police Commissioner Warner smiled as he studied the sign, then he pushed open the door and walked into a nicely furnished anteroom.

There was a desk for a stenographer, another for a clerk. A carved railing separated these working quarters from the small space allotted for clients. There was a trim, brown-haired girl sitting behind the typewriter desk doing nothing. A young law clerk looked up with startled

surprise, jumped from his chair and practically fawned on Police Commissioner Warner.

"Hold it," Warner said. "I'm a friend of Mr. Quinn, not a client. There isn't a thin dime in me."

The clerk looked disappointed.

"Yes sir. I'll tell him you're here if you'll give me your name. And would you do me a favor too? I'm just out of law school.

"I needed a job and this looked like a windfall to me, but I didn't know I was going to work for a blind lawyer. I need experience, but what kind of a practice would a blind man have anyway? I'm not trying to be supercilious about this, sir. It's just that I have my own welfare and future to look out for."

Warner opened the gate, pushed the young man back in his chair and looked down at him.

"You're not a native of New York, are you? You'd have heard of Tony Quinn if you were. Listen, youngster, there isn't a better criminal lawyer in existence than your boss. He used to be the District Attorney—the very best we ever had.

"One day he was rendered blind when some crooks threw acid into his eyes, but the loss of a man's sight doesn't necessarily mean that his brain has also gone blank. Before you decide what kind of an attorney he is, wait until you see him in action. This is the first day he's been in practice, isn't it?"

"Yes sir—I'll take your advice too, sir. Now I'll announce you if you will give me your name."

"I'm Warner, Police Commissioner Warner, but it won't be necessary to announce me. I'll just prove to you how capable Tony Quinn is. Let me go in, unannounced, and just listen."

"The Police Commissioner! Gosh, sir, I hardly need a further recommendation."

Warner walked to the closed door, opened it and started to walk across the carpeted rug. A man sat behind

a big desk in one corner of the spacious office. Each wall was lined with law books.

A mural had been painted on the wall above the desk, a portrait of justice, blindfolded and holding her scales. The furniture was sleek, comfortable and nicely arranged. The rug was deep, mahogany in color and worth a lot of money.

The man behind the desk looked up. His eyes were pale and lifeless with the complete blank stare of the totally blind. There were numerous deeply etched scars around his eyes, marks of the acid which had been hurled into his face. He spoke in a pleasant voice and his lips parted in a welcoming smile.

"Hello, Commissioner. You've the honor of being my first visitor."

TONY QUINN arose and stretched out his hand. It wasn't pointed straight at Warner, but for the gesture of a blind man its aim was good.

The clerk at the door closed it softly and whistled.

"Hey, June, you should have seen that. Warner just walks across the rug hardly making a sound, and the boss knows him right away."

June Marlowe, the stenographer, just looked slightly superior.

"I could have told you that. You see, my father was a cop. He got killed about a year ago when he was chasing a bunch of crooks. As soon as Mr. Quinn went into business again, he looked me up, and here I am.

"I'd bust my right arm for him. What's so funny about his knowing the Police Commissioner? Blind people can hear better than those who have eyes. He just listened to Warner's footsteps and recognized them, that's all.

"Now sit down and pretend to work. We may have a client any time now. Mr. Quinn is pretty well known in this town, believe me."

Inside Quinn's office, Warner sat down.

"Tony," he said, "you can't imagine how good this makes me feel—to see you back in harness even if we're now on opposite sides of the fence. I suppose you'll be in court pounding away at my poor detectives and patrolmen from now on."

QUINN chuckled. "If I'm lucky enough to have any clients entrust themselves to a blind man."

"Nonsense," Warner answered. "They'll flock here as soon as the news spreads around. I wish you the very best of luck and victory in all your cases—almost all, anyway."

"Commissioner, you didn't come here just to wish me well. I'm blind as a bat, but that doesn't impair my other senses. You've been taping the arms of your chair like a nervous kid waiting his turn in a dentist's chair. What's up?"

"Try and keep anything from you," said Warner. "Well Tony, you're right. I've retained a client for you. The craziest, wildest thing you've ever heard of. Perhaps I'll be cursed all over the place before this is done with, but I can't help feeling that the Voice of Justice is the voice of a sincere man."

"The Voice of Justice!" Quinn frowned. "Are you going melodramatic on me?"

"Hardly. Last night I must have been drugged—cleverly too, because I don't know when it happened. I awoke in a very comfortable bedroom.

"My clothes were neatly hung up and I was clad in silk pajamas. The moment I sat up, a voice, piped into the room somehow, told me to get dressed and not to worry. I obeyed. Then I was instructed to enter another room which I did. I found an excellent breakfast waiting for me. Don't ask me where I was. There were no windows and the room must have been soundproof or far out in the country where there was no noise."

"That's highly interesting," Quinn

broke in. "How does it affect me? A client, you said."

"Exactly. That same voice spoke from a hidden amplifier. It was a man's voice asking for advice. He said I might call him the Voice of Justice, that he had dedicated his life to helping the police arrest criminals.

"At first I thought it was a hoax performed by the Black Bat. Now I'm sure it wasn't. At any rate the voice indicated that this mysterious personality needed an outside contact man—one he could trust absolutely.

"It wanted a man who wouldn't ask too many questions, wouldn't see too much and would obey the advices given him. This Voice of Justice swears he knows more criminals than any other person alive and wishes to turn them over to justice."

"What's his gag?" Quinn asked. "What's there in it for him?"

"Nothing—or at least he said so. I was in a funny spot, Tony. I had to make some answer, so I gave him your name. I told him you were blind, honest and would be cooperative if this thing was on the level.

"He thanked me, doped me again, and I awoke in my own car somewhere in Central Park. Now wait—I wasn't having a nightmare. This thing really happened and I thought I'd better warn you before the Voice of Justice contacted you."

"Well thanks," Quinn said. "If it's true, and not just the act of some smart alec, it sounds promising. I'll await with interest the Voice of Justice.

"All I hope is that we're not being led into something bigger than we can handle and that the Voice of Justice doesn't turn into the Voice of Injustice and make us a couple of dopes. You mentioned that you thought at first this might be a trick of the Black Bat. What made you change your mind?"

"Well, I made a quiet investigation of your whereabouts last night. Seems you spent the earlier part of the eve-

ning right here in your office and the rest of the night at home.

"Now I'm not accusing you of being the Black Bat. Captain McGrath would be a great deal less direct than I, Tony. However, the Black Bat does seem to get around and know what's going on.

"You'd make an excellent Black Bat. In fact, if there were no warrants out against the Black Bat, I'd sincerely hope you might be he. For one thing, his work is perfect and for another, it would mean that you were not blind."

THE inter-office communicating system buzzed. Quinn fumbled with the box as though he were unfamiliar with it. Finally he snapped down the proper button and the clerk's voice spoke.

"A client, sir. Mr. and Mrs. James Drake."

"Send them in in two or three minutes." Quinn rubbed his hands. "Thanks, Winkie." He snapped off the system and looked somewhat to the left of where Warner sat.

"This doesn't sound much like the Voice of Justice calling, but clients are clients. You'll excuse me, Commissioner?"

Warner got up. "The bum's rush, eh? All right, Tony. I'm glad you're getting started so promptly. By the way—that law clerk of yours—Winkie, I think you called him. Is he all right?"

"I hope so. He graduated from law school a few months ago, couldn't find a job and advertised for one. I hired him because I like his voice. What's he look like, Commissioner?"

"Like a dope. Exactly as you'd picture one. He's thin, almost scrawny. He wears big, black shell rimmed glasses and looks like a second cousin to a book worm.

"Impressionable too. He bowed to me as if I were four kinds of a dictator. You won't have to worry about him, Tony. I noticed the stenogra-

pher too—nice of you to take in Bill Marlowe's kid. She needed a job."

Warner walked out, and two people entered. Quinn's eyes were utterly blank. The best surgeons had pronounced the hopelessness of their ever seeing again, but Tony Quinn *could* see. In fact his eyesight ranged far beyond that of any average man. Now he critically examined his first clients although neither they nor anyone else would have thought so.

Tony Quinn saw a man of about forty, with mild blue eyes, and hair that was turning grey at the temples. His height was about an inch less than Tony Quinn's five feet ten, and he was slender, almost dapper. He wore expensive clothes very well indeed and carried himself like a man of affairs.

The woman might have been three or four years younger and, in comparison to her husband, was rather on the plain side although she was intelligent looking and neat.

"Please sit down," Quinn said. "I'd gladly help you to a chair, but I'm a little unfamiliar with the layout of my office. You see—I'm blind."

The woman gave a sudden intake of breath and whispered to the man at her side. "Do you think he's all right, Jimmy? There's so much at stake."

Tony Quinn heard this, for his hearing was exceptionally sharp. He didn't betray the fact however. The man gave a savage nod of his head, helped the woman into a chair and sat down himself.

"My name is James Drake, sir," he said. "This is my wife, Mary. I need an attorney urgently, someone to convince a judge or jury that a man isn't quite as bad as he may be painted. I'm going to confess a crime because I want to give myself up, yet I don't want to serve a long term in prison.

"I'm the vice president of the Thrift Trust Company. I've been there for several years. My weakness is the stock market. I stole two hundred thousand dollars to place on a sure

thing. Like all other sure things this one folded up.

"I'm in a rather bad predicament, as you can see. I'm sure I could arrange the books so this discrepancy wouldn't be discovered for years, but there is such a thing as a conscience—and a wife who trusts in you."

Drake leaned closer to his wife and patted her hand gently. Then he went on.

"Fortunately, I'm not completely broke. I think, by selling everything I own, it's possible to make restitution, and that's what I wish you to handle, besides taking care of the criminal end of the case. I don't know how much of a fee I'll be able to pay you. It all depends on what is left."

"There will be no fee," Quinn said quietly. "Not in your case. Willingness to expose yourself and make restitution to the best of your ability should sway the mercy of any judge or jury. I might not be able to get you off scot free, but I doubt there will be any stiff sentence. Are you ready to be arrested now?"

"I've been ready for weeks." Drake passed a hand across tired eyes. "I needed Mary's courage to help me do it. You see, if I kept on this way, I'd probably steal much more, and when I was caught, it would be the end of me. You may call the police."

QUINN reached blindly for the phone, but before he had it off the cradle, the inter-office communicating system buzzed again. He flipped the button, and Winkie spoke.

"A big package just came for you, sir. Heavy thing, too. There was a note with it—says you must be sure to open it at once. Shall I bring it in?" 9

"Yes." Quinn frowned. He hadn't ordered anything.

Winkie staggered in, his eyes looking like those of an owl. He carried a brown paper package about two feet long, a foot thick and, perhaps, eigh-

teen inches high. At a gesture from Quinn, Winkie stripped away the paper.

"Well I'll be doggoned," he said. "It's a radio. A short wave set and a honey too. What'll I do with it? There's a tag tied to one of the dials. It says they aren't to be touched. Just plug the radio in, turn on the switch and wait. Looks like somebody's having fun with you, sir."

"Put it on my desk," Quinn said. "Do as the instructions indicate and then leave. I'll be busy until further notice."

There was a steady hum as Winkie sent current through the radio. Jimmy and Mary Drake looked at one another in a helpless manner. Jimmy gestured with the palms of his hands upraised in a silent, eloquent gesture. Then the radio crackled. A resonant voice came from it and all three persons in that room froze to attention.

"Mr. Tony Quinn. If things have turned out as I planned, you are now listening to me. Absorb every word carefully because I cannot repeat. Do not try to arrange for tracing the source of this broadcast. I'll be gone before such a thing could be done.

"When I contact you again, you will first receive instructions how to set the dials. Each time it will be over a different wave length. I am the Voice of Justice, about whom Commissioner Warner must have told you.

"My mission is to make crime non-profitable. When I locate a crook who has pulled a financially successful job, I shall turn him and the loot over to you. Nothing petty will be handled, for the police are capable of taking care of minor crooks.

"If there is a reward involved, well and good. If there is none, it will be up to you to arrange that one shall be paid. No, I'm not seeking this reward for myself. It is to be brought by you, to a certain place I shall later designate.

"You will turn it over to a man—an

inventor whose work will benefit the entire world. He will convince you that he is honest and does not know me. My powers are vast and I must not be challenged. To prove what I can do, let me tell you about the two people now present in your office, Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Drake.

"He has confessed, or is about to confess, to the crime of embezzlement. He may try to convince you this is his first slip, but ask him about the time in Chicago, when he systematically looted money entrusted to him when he was cashier of the Langsner Theatre Chain.

"Keep the radio and wait for my messages. Tonight I shall speak again and tell you about a murderous crook, far out of Jimmy Drake's class. He is not a minor criminal but he does not resort to violence. Drake is not all bad. He deserves a break, but I don't care whether or not he gets it. Au revoir, Mr. Quinn."

The connection was cut off, and for a moment only the steady hum of the radio filled the room. Then Mary Drake gave a gentle cry and collapsed on the floor.

CHAPTER III

The Voice Acts



ANTHONY Quinn fumbled with the radio until he located the switch and cut it off. Jimmy Drake was lifting his wife and trying to make her comfortable on a leather davenport set against the east wall of the office. Quinn's blank eyes stared straight ahead. His mind was turning over furiously.

Of all supremely mysterious things he'd seen or heard of this romped home a winner. The Voice of Justice came from nowhere, exposing crim-

inals, demanding a reward and ordering it to be given to someone in need of it.

The whole thing had a false ring to it, but Quinn never underestimated the Voice of Justice. Not for one second. The way he'd kidnapped Warner, the method of communicating with his selected contact man and his knowledge of Jimmy Drake's past, all bespoke of the man's cleverness. How did he know that Drake and his wife were here anyhow?

Mary Drake recovered consciousness and clung to Jimmy. He soothed her for a moment, squared his shoulders and walked up to Quinn's desk.

"I don't know what kind of a trick that was, but I'm blown if I like it. Yes—I did steal before. I ran away that time because I had no Mary to advise me, no wife to show me the difference between right and wrong. I'll confess to the Chicago job, too. In fact, I'm glad it's going to be all over with."

"Sit down," Quinn said. "This was no trick. It surprised me as much as it did you. Now remember this. I'm your lawyer. I think you deserve a break because you have proven it by coming here to surrender.

"If you will promise to get another job when this is over, save your money and pay back that theatre chain gradually, I shall not mention your first offense even though it violates my duties as an attorney to some extent. Forget you ever heard that broadcast.

"Now I'll get a man down here from headquarters. Leave the rest to me and by the way, how are you fixed for money? I'll gladly advance Mrs. Drake some."

Drake rubbed his eyes. "I came to the right lawyer, Mr. Quinn. You'll never know how much I'm grateful."

Twenty minutes later, Captain McGrath of the Headquarters Squad barged into the office with Winkie frantically hanging onto his coat tails. Quinn arose, apparently confused by the commotion, quite unable to see

just exactly what was going on.

"Quinn," McGrath bawled, "will you tell this gnat to remove himself from my coat. I paid forty bucks for this suit."

"Oh—it's you, Captain. All right, Winkie, let him go and return to your desk. Thanks for trying to obey orders though about not admitting anyone. I forgot to warn you about Captain McGrath."

McGrath was chunky, but not fat. Those were muscles that bulged out his suit. He had a closely cropped mustache, a broad, determined looking face and an aggressive manner.

"Well," he asked, "what's the beef? You said something about having a prisoner for me to take back. There's something phony about this. You're a lawyer again and lawyers try to get crooks out of jail, not put them in."

Quinn calmly explained it all. McGrath sighed and motioned to Drake.

"Okay, pal, we'll go down and book you. Before the ink is dry, Quinn will have you sprung or I'm a tubful of maple syrup right out of a tree. Let's go."

MARY Drake, after they'd gone, came closer to the desk. "I'll never forget this, Mr. Quinn," she said. "You've been terribly kind. Jimmy isn't bad—not really. I never knew about that Chicago affair. Please do what you can for him."

"Immediately. As luck would have it, I know some of the directors of the Thrift Trust Company. I'm inclined to think that after I've talked to them, they will refuse to prosecute and Jimmy's going to jail for a short time won't hurt him. It may do some good, in fact.

"It will make him realize that the end of a crooked row is apt to be unpleasant. Leave me your address and then go home. He'll be with you by nightfall if I have to bail him out myself."

Quinn leaned back when he was

alone again. He pursed his lips in a whistle of amazement. What did the Voice of Justice mean? Those exceptionally keen ears of his had detected a slight scratchy sound during the broadcast. Possibly the voice had been a recording. Then, after awhile, his thoughts reverted to Jimmy Drake, and he grinned pleasantly. Not very much profit in his first case, but plenty of satisfaction.

He also reflected that Captain McGrath had been more than polite in not voicing his suspicions that Tony Quinn wasn't blind and that he was the Black Bat. Those suspicions were more or less of a profound duty with McGrath.

He'd sworn to toss the Black Bat into a cell if it took a lifetime. Not that this worried Quinn even though he really was the Black Bat. McGrath's efforts spiced his double life of a blind man and a relentless pursuer of criminals.

For McGrath was, above all things, honest. If he finally did land the Black Bat, it would be done fairly. There had even been several truces between McGrath and the Black Bat, and the doughty police captain had abided by his promises each time.

Tony Quinn became the Black Bat in a rather astounding manner. Blinded by acid at the very peak of his career, he'd become a virtual recluse. Luckily he was rich so that he wanted for nothing, but even his money couldn't help him in that world of complete darkness.

He'd found that his other senses became increasingly sharp, but he possessed no idea that some day this would serve him well. Then a girl had come to him—Carol Baldwin—whose father had been shot by crooks while making his rounds as a police sergeant.

Dying, her father wished to donate his eyes to Tony Quinn so that Quinn might again combat crime. A surgeon in a little town had performed the



SILK

operation. He died shortly afterwards as did Carol's father, so that there were very few who knew that the operation had been performed.

It was an astounding success. With the return of his sight, Quinn discovered that some kind fate had endeavored to make up for his long months of darkness. Quinn found that he could see as well in utter darkness as he could in light. Even colors were visible in apparent blackness to those strange eyes of his.

PREFERRING to be thought of as blind and helpless, Quinn had told no one of his recovery except the three persons who became his aides. One was, of course, Carol Baldwin for whom Quinn had developed a feeling of love and appreciation.

Then there was Silk Kirby, an ex-confidence man who had derived his nickname from the smooth way in which he functioned. Silk came to rob Tony Quinn one night, saved his life instead and remained to become his invaluable aide and servant.

Later a huge giant of a man named Butch O'Leary proved he was worthy to be one of the Black Bat's trusted associates. Butch made up in brute strength what he lacked in brains, although Butch was never a fool.

Quinn thought of them and wondered what they'd say about this Voice of Justice and how they'd like to help track him down. It was going to be odd tracing a man who tried to help the law, but not for an instant did Tony Quinn decide to let the Voice operate with impunity. Until he was positive that no money or power making scheme lay behind the ambitions of the Voice, he'd go on trying to ferret him out.

For the next several hours he was very busy working to free Jimmy Drake. Those efforts were successful, and Jimmy, brought before a judge, was allowed to go free in Quinn's custody. He shook hands with Quinn after it was over, thanked him a dozen times and then hurried home to his wife.

Quinn returned to the office.

Winkie and June Marlowe had left for the day and Quinn threw aside his mask of blindness for a few moments while he examined that short wave radio. It was a standard make, probably fixed to receive certain wave lengths.

An expensive piece of scientific perfection, it indicated that the Voice was no cheapskate. He'd announced that another message would come through soon, and Quinn sat there wondering when it would start.

He heard someone in the outer office, picked up a cane and walked there, tapping a path before him. A messenger boy handed him an envelope, guided his hand to sign for it. Quinn handed him half a dollar.

"Would you mind reading this to me?" he asked. "I'm alone here and—I'm blind."

The boy ripped open the flap, extracted a plain white card and read the few words typed on it.

"Funny message," he said. "It says 'Between five and seven o'clock. First dial thirty-one, second dial sixty-four, third dial twenty-nine.'"

"Hey mister—are you a G-Man and is this a code message? It came to the office kinda funny. We were busy, see, and when the crowd cleared out, this envelope was lying on the counter with a buck clipped to it and an order to deliver it here."

"No G-Man," Quinn smiled. "Just a little business arrangement. Thank you very much."

Quinn locked the office door this time and hurried back to the radio. He carefully set the dials, sat down and lit a cigarette. It was five forty-three when the monotonous hum of the radio was broken. That same resonant voice spoke to him.

"Mr. Tony Quinn. This is the voice of Justice again. You handled the affair of Jimmy Drake very well indeed. It proves your capabilities, and I am most grateful to Commissioner Warner for recommending you.

"Now listen carefully again because I can never repeat myself. There is a certain vicious character named Junky Malone. He got his questionable title because he used to take dope. They broke him of that in prison, but they didn't break his criminal tendencies.

"Six months ago he staged the robbery at the Allied Machine Company's plant. He got away with a payroll and a large sum represented by certain bonds which happened to be in the place.

"Those bonds are still intact because Junky doesn't know much about finances and thinks they might be traced to him as they very well might be. He is hiding in an old shack at the foot of Carmody Street. You can't miss it.

"Capture him—with the aid of the police. There is a five thousand dollar reward on his head. You will collect that and hold it, in cash, until you hear from me again. That is all."

Quinn switched off the radio.

"That," he said solemnly, "is what you think. It won't be all until I know who you are and what you're getting out of this."

He reached for the phone and got Captain McGrath. He rapidly sketched what had happened and asked McGrath to get a squad and meet him at once.

CHAPTER IV

The Black Bat's Doubt



THE two police cars disgorged seven men armed with machine guns. Quinn and McGrath were in the first car. They found Junky Malone's shack easily, and the detectives carefully surrounded it. Mc-

Grath looked at Quinn.

"You'd better stay here. If this

business isn't the biggest hoax I ever heard of, we might run into a curtain of hot lead. Junky killed a man during that stickup, and he's very apt to shoot it out. You can't see and even if you could, slugs are tough babies to duck. See you in a few minutes.

Drawing his service pistol, McGrath approached the shack. It was dark, and McGrath was highly skeptical. He waved his gun in a signal for attack, and the detectives closed in. There was no fusillade of death, no angry shouts of a trapped man. McGrath finally tried the door. It was locked.

HE drew keys from his pocket, tried to fit one into the lock, but when it didn't slide in, he turned a flashlight on the door. Then McGrath gave a grunt. The keyhole was plugged up with bits of newspaper. The crack beneath the door was similarly wadded.

"Bust her down," McGrath ordered. "And make it snappy. I just got the smell of gas."

The door crashed in and plenty of illuminating gas came pouring out. There was a man seated in a corner next to a two burner gas stove. A rubber hose was hooked to the gas pipe, and the man held the other end in his hands.

He had been dead for two or three hours. Strewn all over the floor were gold edged documents. The stolen bonds which Junky had been too afraid to cash.

McGrath heard the tap of Quinn's cane and hurried out to help him over the door.

"Junky was here all right," he said. "You got a good tip only Junky is dead. He took the gas route out, which is just as well for him and for the state too.

"The bonds were thrown all over the place. I imagine Junky spent all the cash on women, booze and the ponies. Then, with fifty grand in



McGRATH

bonds which he couldn't spend, he went nuts thinking of the spot he was in.

"I'm telling you, Quinn, this Voice of Justice knows what he's talking about. I say, this wouldn't be the Black Bat operating under a nom de plume, would it?"

Quinn smiled.

"Hardly, Captain. I don't know the Black Bat, but I do think his reputation is such that there would be no reason for him to work under another name."

"Yeah," McGrath said. "Yeah, that's right and if anybody should know it's you. Someday I'm going to prove you're the Black Bat. Oh, I know I've said it often enough and sometimes I get confused when things make it seem you can't be the Black Bat but just the same—"

"Leave it unsaid," Quinn chuckled. "I know that speech by heart. Well, I guess this takes care of Junky and the Voice's first tip. Will you have somebody drive me home?"

McGrath did that himself, leaving a sergeant to clean up the details. Silk Kirby, slender, bald and immaculate

in the quiet livery of a butler, opened the door, grimaced at McGrath who had helped the erstwhile blind man up the steps and led Quinn inside.

"What happened?" he asked eagerly. "What's this Voice of Justice business?"

Quinn stared at him.

"Now how in the world did you know anything about that?"

"The radio is full of it. So are the newspapers. Seems the publicity boys were tipped off. I've been chewing my nails for the last couple of hours. So have Butch and Carol. They're in the lab."

Quinn's lips tightened.

"So the Voice of Justice likes to read about his little campaign, eh? Suppose you serve dinner in the lab, Silk, if there is enough of it. We'll talk things over there. Be sure to lock the doors and pull down the shades in the study."

WHEN Silk finished obeying these latter orders, Quinn slowly tapped his way into the study. Once there and secure from any possibility of prying eyes, he threw off his mask of blindness, stepped up to a section of the wall and touched a hidden control.

A panel slid silently back, and he walked into a spacious laboratory where every instrument used in the detection of crime, was kept ready for instant use. Carol was there, bright and eager in her blonde loveliness. She linked an arm beneath Quinn's and smiled happily up at him. He patted her hand, glad to feel her close and know that she cared for him as much as he did for her.

Butch stood awkwardly in a corner, fumbling with his hat. His head reached to within a few inches of the ceiling. His bulk filled the whole end of the lab. His shoulders were unbelievably broad, and he had hands that looked as though he constantly wore boxing gloves. Those hands could

maim and kill if necessary, but a kinder man than Butch hardly existed.

"Hi, boss," he grinned widely. "Got yourself mixed up in something pretty big this time. What are you gonna do about it?"

"Yes, Tony," Carol sat down beside him. "What? Who is this Voice of Justice, and is he really on the side of the law?"

Quinn didn't reply just then for Silk entered carrying two trays of food. He disappeared and came back with still another, heaped high with enough food for a small army.

"Here's your snack," he told Butch somewhat disdainfully. "When you show up for dinner, the grocer and the butcher tuck a neat little sum in their cash registers."

"Never mind, Butch," Quinn laughed. "You're worth that and more to me. Now to spoil our digestion let's talk about murder."

"Murder?" Carol gasped and the others stopped eating very abruptly. "Has someone been killed?"

Quinn buttered a biscuit and carved himself a chunk of steak.

"I think so. The Voice of Justice tipped me to the whereabouts of Junky Malone, who was hiding out as a result of a holdup job. In that stickup fifty thousand in bonds were swiped—nice negotiable bonds which any ordinary crook would have tried to sell.

"Of course they were hot, because the numbers were listed, but a fence might take a chance if he could buy them for about ten percent on the dollar. I know about Junky. He was a fool. Perfectly capable of staging that stickup, yes, but not the type who'd be willing to let fifty grand in bonds rot on his hands when he might get some cash for them."

"But you said murder," Carol broke in.

Quinn nodded and dropped two sugar cubes into his coffee. He stir-

red it vigorously as he spoke.

"That's right, I did. Junky was found dead. Apparently he committed suicide by inhaling illuminating gas, but I think he didn't kill himself, which adds up to murder, doesn't it?"

"My belief is that Junky was restrained while the gas was administered to him. Then he was propped in a corner, left holding the rubber tube through which the gas still flowed, and the murderers proceeded to stuff the window, the keyhole and the door with newspapers.

"I noticed something that slipped by McGrath. The newspapers under the door had been jammed there from outside the shack. No pieces protruded on the outside and plenty did on the inside."

"What are you gonna do about it?" Butch asked.

"I think," Quinn said, "that the Black Bat is going to forage around. Thanks to the fact that the Voice of Justice wished all this publicity on himself, I can go out as the Black Bat. Otherwise I'd have been forced to hold myself in check because the Voice would have then guessed that Tony Quinn and the Black Bat are synonymous.

"First of all I'll investigate the shack where Junky met his death. There is one other clue, a weak one, but it might develop. A fellow named Drake came to the office today and gave himself up to me as a confessed embezzler. While he was there, the Voice spoke to me for the first time and told me all about Drake and his trouble.

"In fact he went even further than Drake dared to by telling of another offense Drake had pulled some time ago. Such knowledge could only have come from someone associated with Drake, so I want him investigated.

"I want to know his friends, his enemies, where he eats, whom he sees, if his home life is as agreeable as he and Mrs. Drake seem to make it.

That will be your job, Carol. You and Butch handle that while Silk and I look over the scene of a suicide which may be murder. Any questions?"

"Yeah," Butch grinned. "What's for dessert?"

CHAPTER V

Weird Rendezvous



IT would have been impossible to recognize Silk an hour later. During his career as a confidence man, Silk had fashioned disguises for himself. They came in handy when he didn't want to

leave town after skinning some sucker with more larceny in his soul than Silk possessed.

Now, in his association with the Black Bat, they were even more useful. Silk looked like a country bumpkin, but not too much so. There was nothing exaggerated by the disguise, but its cleverness gave the exact impression Silk wanted to give.

Carol and Butch had left minutes before to tackle the problem of Mr. and Mrs. Drake. Tony Quinn donned sheer, light clothing over his business suit. A black shirt and tie, black socks and black crepe soles finished his dressing except for a hood that went over his head, right down to his shoulders.

It was a strange cloak that was ribbed until it looked like the wings of a bird and buckled around his shoulders.

He put the cloak and hood on just for experimental purposes while in the lab. These were removed, rolled up and tucked away in a specially created pocket of his suit. He put a wide brimmed black hat on his head, pulled the brim far down to hide the telltale scars around his eyes and

signalled Silk that he was ready.

Silk opened a trap door, descended a short ladder and entered a tunnel. This led to a garden house well behind the main dwelling, on the rim of Tony Quinn's spacious estate. Silk slipped to the nearby gate, looked up and down for a moment and then walked casually north until he came to a coupe parked at the curb.

It was a popular priced model on the surface, but several times the original cost of the car had been placed beneath the modest hood. A motor that would drive it over a hundred miles an hour purred smoothly under Silk's foot. The rest of the car had been weighted down so cleverly that not a sign of this work could be seen from outside.

Silk drove it toward the gate. A fleeting shadow glided out of the darkness and popped into the car beside Silk. In silence they drove to the vicinity of Junky's shack. The Black Bat got out, disappeared down an alley and kept following back yards until he reached the shack. Through this intense darkness, the Black Bat moved quietly and with sure steps. Impediments which might have tripped any average person, were brought into bold relief by his uncanny eyesight.

Then the Black Bat came to a sudden halt. There was no shack! Where it had stood were only pieces of debris and burned uprights. Sections of wall, uncharred, were twenty feet from the site of the shack.

"An explosion did that," the Black Bat muttered, "followed later by fire. Now I'm sure Junky was murdered and the place blasted and burned to remove any possibility of clues remaining. First clue is dead end which means, unless Carol and Butch hit onto something, I must wait until the Voice of Justice moves again. That may be soon."

The Black Bat returned to the car and joined Silk.

"Drive back to the house," he ord-

ered. "Junky's shack was blasted to bits. Hurry, Silk, the Voice may give me instructions over the radio about the reward money at any moment, and I don't want to miss it."

But there was no message when they returned. Silk removed his disguise quickly, and Tony Quinn doffed his regalia. It was only a few minutes after eight o'clock, but Quinn was worried. He sat in his accustomed chair before the fireplace in his study. Pipe in hand, cane between his knees, he stared straight ahead with the vacant expression of a totally blind man. Silk busied himself about the house.

TONY QUINN asked himself, what the Voice was after? Had Junky been killed and the holdup framed on him to protect the real killer? Perhaps the voice was handing solutions of murder and holdups on a silver platter to the police, framing the jobs on stooges so the actual instigators went free, with a considerable load off their minds.

Such deeds might prove profitable for the Voice, but there would have to be a great number of them, and the Voice would have to be the greatest crime investigator in the world to contact the real criminals and get them to admit their guilt.

The doorbell buzzed. Quinn knew someone was coming long before that. His sensitive ears detected the footsteps of a stranger. It proved to be another messenger boy with a wire. Silk brought it to Quinn. The message was from the Voice of Justice and as terse as his first one.

NINE O'CLOCK TO TEN, FIRST DIAL NINETY. SECOND DIAL FORTY-SEVEN. THIRD DIAL EIGHT.

"Get the big car out of the garage, Silk," Quinn ordered. "You and I are going to my office to receive certain instructions from our new found friend or enemy. Hurry. We haven't too much time. And Silk—better take along a pair of guns. We might not

have an opportunity to return here for them."

Silk drove the car straight to the big office building where Quinn had his suite. With Silk leading, Quinn stepped into the elevator and was whisked to his floor. Silk opened the door, locked it after they passed through, and Quinn used his cane to help him reach the desk. He picked up a pencil and scribbled something on a pad. It was a note which Silk read without apparently doing so.

"Must be very careful. Might be someone watching with glasses. There might be a mike hidden around. Never forget that I'm blind."

Quinn took the telegram from his pocket, handed it to Silk.

"Dial the radio according to those numbers, he said. "I'll have to ask you to wait in the other room. I don't believe the Voice would like it if you heard his instructions."

Silk moved the dials, bowed slightly like a well trained servant and then withdrew. Quinn lit a cigarette and leaned back in his chair to wait. He didn't have long. The Voice came, speaking slowly so that Quinn wouldn't miss a word.

"You did very well in connection with Junky Malone. The reward is probably now prepared. Get it and have your servant drive you out of the city. Reach Route Fourteen and follow it for precisely seventeen and one-quarter miles after you hit that highway.

"You will then see a side road. Have your driver turn down that and proceed for six-tenths of a mile exactly. You will get out there and wait.

"The man to whom you are to deliver the money is an inventor. He is at work on something that may help the defense of this country to a remarkable extent.

"That is why I have selected him as the recipient of the first several rewards that are bound to come. Later there will be someone else, equally as deserving. Be sure that your servant drives your car away and doesn't return for exactly one hour. That is all."

Quinn shut off the set, reached for the phone and got Captain McGrath. To his query McGrath answered,

"Yeah. The Allied Machine Company directors held a special meeting early this afternoon. They cut all red tape. The five thousand dollars is down at Headquarters now. My orders are to turn it over to you, so any time—"

"I'll meet you in front of Headquarters in ten minutes," Quinn said. "Have the money."

He called Silk back, had him give the usual assistance a blind man needs and soon they were driving toward Headquarters. Captain McGrath was standing on the steps and immediately got into the car.

"Why drag me out here?" he asked.

[Turn page]



Pepsi-Cola is made only by Pepsi-Cola Company, Long Island City, N. Y. Bottled locally by authorized bottlers.

"Isn't my office good enough?"

"Of course it is, Captain, but my orders are to work with strict secrecy. I'll take the money now. Good fellow. Thanks.

"About the Junky Malone business—did you examine the shack for any clues afterwards? Junky might have had pals in the deal, you know."

"Examine it?" McGrath grunted. "There isn't enough left to make a good toothpick out of. Seems one of those dumb cops I left on guard forgot to shut off the gas. Or it still continued to leak out somewhere.

"Anyway about an hour after Junky's body had been removed, the shack blew up. I don't know what caused the spark, but she sure is blasted to bits."

"Oh," Quinn said softly. "Well, anyhow, thanks again. I've got to deliver this money at once and don't ask me where. I can't break the confidences of the Voice."

SILK pulled away from the curb and left McGrath scratching the back of his neck and wondering if the Black Bat was so broke that five thousand dollars might interest him.

Tony Quinn, whom McGrath was certain was the Black Bat, could have staged all this just to get his hands on the money. Then McGrath made a wry face. The Black Bat had often found opportunities to get far more than five thousand dollars and always passed them up.

Silk followed Quinn's orders, heading first to the city line and then following the designated route. They passed through Dobb's Ferry, Irvington and finally, as they put the outskirts of Tarrytown behind them, the speedometer indicated they were nearing the proper spot. Silk saw the side road, turned down it and stopped when the meter indicated they'd covered exactly six-tenths of a mile. He helped Quinn get out.

"Funny spot for a meeting place," he grumbled. "I don't think you ought

to go through with it, sir. This is desolate country right here. Darker than pitch and I can't see a sign of a house."

"I'll follow my instructions," Quinn answered quietly. "You may drive away now, Silk and return in precisely one hour. Please go."

Silk got back into the car, turned around and disappeared. Five minutes after the tail light passed out of sight, a powerful beam of light centered directly on Quinn. It took all his efforts to keep from blinking those dead looking eyes.

"A car is coming for you," a voice said gently. Not the tones of the Voice of Justice, but less firm, like those of an older man highly excited.

"Please get in. I know that you are blind, and because I can see you through powerful glasses, I shall instruct you just how to proceed."

Two minutes later Quinn saw a car rolling down the road. It made no sound whatsoever except for the grinding of tires against the rutted, dirt lane. It was the strangest looking car Quinn had seen in years, one of those old fashioned electrically propelled buggies that passed out of existence years ago. Only this was different to a certain extent. There seemed to be no windows in it and no windshield.

Quinn cocked his head as though he heard the approach of the vehicle, but he didn't look in its direction. Above all, he must keep up the illusion of his blindness for the Voice might get over-confident and agree to meet his contact man face-to-face, banking on the fact that he was blind. Quinn hoped for that moment.

The strange car stopped four or five feet from where Quinn stood. For a second he thought the thing would run him down. The nervous voice came from a speaker hidden in a tree just above him.

"Turn to the left. Now walk until I tell you to stop. That's fine. Now reach out and you will discover door

handles. Open the door and get inside. No one will be there. The car will automatically drive you to your destination.

"It is radio propelled. Yes—you're doing it exactly right. Raise your foot a trifle more. I don't want such a valuable man hurt, you know. Good. Just close the door now and sit quietly until I help you out."

CHAPTER VI

Pierlot's Secret



It was the strangest ride Tony Quinn had ever experienced. It was like riding on the inside of a metal box with no possibility of seeing where he was going. Radio impulses took command of the vehicle, but it proceeded at about a five mile an hour clip so that perhaps twenty minutes were consumed in the ride.

Then it stopped, so abruptly that Quinn was half thrown out of the seat. He heard a big door slide shut. Then the door of the car was yanked open. Quinn just sat there, staring blankly ahead although he studied the man who stood beside the car with a hand ready to help him alight.

The man was short, almost dapper, but it might have been the goatee, carefully trimmed and black as coal which gave this impression. Certainly it wasn't the pair of run down shoes nor the tousled hair nor the stained, mended laboratory gown which the man wore.

"You have arrived," this man said with a laugh. "It is too bad you are blind, Mr. Quinn. A ride in my little carriage is quite something to behold. Please get out now. My arm is waiting to assist you. We shall go into the house."

Quinn took the proffered arm,

climbed down and walked beside the strange little man. They left what seemed to be a spacious garage, climbed a ramp which the inventor illuminated with a small electric torch and finally entered a big house. All around it were tall, thickly branched trees so that the place must be completely hidden from any inquisitive eyes.

It was furnished in modest style and reeked of the smell of chemicals. Quinn sat down in a chair which his host pushed under him. Gripping his cane, he stared straight ahead.

"This is all very odd," he said in a voice near the whining point. "I can't say I like it very much, but then—one can't say that the Voice of Justice operates in a usual manner. You are the man I am supposed to see, of course?"

"*Oui*—but yes. My name is Pierre Pierlot and I have been in this country many, many years. I am an inventor, and since 1923 I have worked, slaved and exhausted my money on something which will revolutionize this or any other war.

"I sought a well hidden place to work because I am constantly in fear of spies or people who might like to snatch away my dream and profit by it. Also I am a very sick man. I cannot go abroad much. My heart is very weak. You have the money?"

Quinn removed the sheaf of bills from an inner pocket and thrust it in the general direction of Pierlot's voice. The inventor took it, rubbed the bills between his hands and sighed in ecstasy.

"Good! Very, very good. I can now continue my experiments. You are interested in how I knew you had arrived? The lane is never used except by those who come to see me, and they are few. I trust no one.

"The road is equipped with warning signals that flash on in my laboratory. Where you get out, I have a searchlight trained and I can see you with the aid of glasses from this house. However, even if you could

see, you would never find this place again after you leave here.

"I received a radio not long ago like the one he sent you. My instructions came over it. But I am worried a little. This Voice seems to know all my tricks. He must be a very brilliant person to handle things as he does, but if he meant me or my work any harm, certainly he would not furnish me with money."

"That's right," Quinn answered. "I suppose I'll be coming here quite often if the plans of the Voice carry through. I'm rather pleased to be selected for this work, Mr. Pierlot. I feel as though I'm doing something to help justice. I'll go now if you don't mind."

Quinn was piloted down the ramp and into the garage. His blank appearing eyes studied the location and memorized it as well as he could. On the way back he determined to open the car door a trifle and trace the route. Pierlot spiked that.

"This is a very clever piece of work—my little car," he said. "It enables me to bring people here—those I trust—and yet they cannot find out where I am. Not unless they scour the countryside, and I would know that instantly because of the various alarm signals I have installed. When you enter my car, the doors are sealed electrically, and radio drives the car where I want it."

QUINN backed up against the car. As Pierlot spoke, Quinn managed to get a knife out of his pocket. Now, as he talked to Pierlot, complimenting him on his work, he carved a cross into the right rear tire. Not very deep, but effective enough to leave a tell-tale track in the road. The narrow, old fashioned smooth type tire cut easily.

Then he got into the car. The door closed, and the strange contraption backed itself out of the garage, turned completely around half a dozen times

to confuse the passenger, then proceeded on.

Five minutes later Tony Quinn stood on the spot where this eerie adventure had begun. The electric car drove itself away and vanished around a bend in the lane. Promptly, Silk drove Quinn's limousine up, got out and helped Quinn into the car. That brilliant spotlight still brought the whole proceedings into relief.

"Turn around and head for the road," Quinn said in a whisper. Don't ask questions. There may be sensitive mikes to pick up our conversation. I'm getting out. You continue and wait for me a mile down the road.

"Hand me one of those guns as I step in. This inventor may or may not be an innocent pawn in the Voice's game and I mean to find out just where he stands."

Silk dropped a gun on the seat with as much stealth as he might have exhibited if a crowd was around the car. As soon as he started to turn, the light beam winked out. Quinn hastily opened a hidden compartment in the car, extracted the regalia he used as the Black Bat and quickly put it on. Then he opened the door of the car and with a word of warning to Silk, jumped out.

He was invisible in this darkness for every inch of his clothing matched the gloom. Keeping well off the lane to avoid Pierlot's vaunted alarms, he passed by the spot where that electric car had dropped him. Cautiously he moved back toward the road. Without the use of any light whatsoever, he knelt and studied the tire marks in the road.

He spotted the tiny mounds in the shape of a cross, the pattern of which he'd cut out of one tire. Following this trail was easy to a certain extent. The trail continued along the lane for perhaps three quarters of a mile, and while the tire marks continued on, there were no further signs of that give-away cross.

The Black Bat sensed Pierlot's trick. The electric car had been driven up and down the road many times, leaving its tracks so that if anyone tried to trace them, he'd be led well beyond the spot where they actually turned off.

On hands and knees, moving inch by inch, the Black Bat examined the side of the road. Then he grunted in silent admiration for Pierlot's genius. Real grass had been replaced with artificial grass attached to a plate which matched the coloring of the sod. This false grass was of a peculiar consistency so that it sprang erect again even after the car had passed across it. Absolutely no marks were left.

Ten yards beyond the edge of the lane, the Black Bat found the tracks again. Now the trail was easy to follow, for the tires had rolled over grass, flattening it and leaving a clear trail. His abnormal eyes followed the trail until he knew he must be very close to the house.

Parting very thick brush, he spotted the place, outlined vaguely against its background of tall trees. Not a light showed.

Evidently the windows were blacked out as completely as the windshield in that electric car.

Not knowing what kind of a reception he'd get, the Black Bat drew his gun, eased off the safety and stole forward. He kept away from the ramp over which he'd traveled before and reached the rear of the house. Admission to the place seemed practically impossible.

The windows were sealed up with steel shutters. They must have been bolted from inside, and even though the Black Bat could open locks with a skill that rivaled a crackman burglar, he could in no way influence bolts. Yet he sensed that Pierlot's sleeping quarters must have a window that



The prisoner took a quick look at the gun and started to run (Chapter VIII)

opened, and he looked for it. It was set high, a dormer window in one of the gables, but he could see the faint reflection of stars on the glass.

THE Black Bat swarmed up a nearby tree, climbed over a thick branch and managed to get within easy jump of that gabled roof. He landed softly as a cat, balanced on the edge, and quietly went to work on the window which was within easy reach.

It required five minutes to get it open because the Black Bat operated very carefully. Pierlot, with all his precautions, showed he was highly nervous and might use a gun before he knew the identity of his target.

The Black Bat slipped across the bedroom floor, opened a door and looked down a long corridor. He reached the stairway to the bottom floor and there was still no sign of Pierlot.

The Black Bat reasoned that the inventor must be at work in his lab. That would be on the north side of the house so he proceeded in that direction after negotiating the steps without creating any alarm.

He saw a door, ajar about half an inch and light streamed through it—the only light inside this grim house. Reaching this he paused to listen intently. Nothing! He gave the door a gentle push, peered through it and then dropped all pretense of stealth.

Pierre Pierlot was seated behind a ramshackle old desk, highly out of place in the long, narrow laboratory fitted with all modern apparatus. The desk must have been fifty or sixty years old. Pierlot looked like a bearded little gnome behind it. His eyes were riveted on the door, his hands rested on top of the desk.

"Come in," he said in a tense voice that seemed strangely muffled. "I have known of your presence for some time. You can't get out of here unless I allow you, and you cannot harm me so why should I be afraid?"

Yet his voice indicated that he was afraid, greatly so. The Black Bat stepped in full view of the man and Pierlot started up in a gesture of wild terror.

"Before you attempt any of your scientific tricks," the Black Bat warned, "hear me out. I didn't come to harm you nor to steal any of your inventions. I came only for information. If you don't recognize this costume of mine, I might say that I'm the Black Bat."

"How—how did you find me? Who told you where I lived and worked? How did you get in? Answer me or by heaven I'll—"

"You won't do much," the Black Bat snapped and his gun arose to cover the goateed inventor. "Just sit down again and take it easy. I said I only wanted to help you. How did I get here? By following a blind man—one of the easiest tasks possible.

"I've learned something about the Voice of Justice, and it's my desire to get proof that he really means to help the authorities and not line his own pockets. He is helping you, and part of my answer should come from your own lips. Don't move—I'm coming closer."

PIERLOT began to laugh, stridently, but with more confidence. The Black Bat kept his gun ready, not knowing whether or not to trust this man. Pierlot seemed to be laughing mostly at the gun.

The Black Bat advanced slowly, aware of the possibility of pitfalls, but he wasn't prepared with what he finally did meet. A dozen yards from where the inventor sat, an invisible force stopped the Black Bat cold. It seemed that he had walked up against a steel barrier, created of substance from the fourth dimension.

He could feel it, cold and hard as metal, but his eyes saw no substance. He banged his fist against the invis-

ble barrier, and Pierlot laughed louder. The Black Bat stepped back.

Pierlot howled in glee and renewed confidence.

"The first test—the first real test. You will put your gun down on that bench and advance. I shall permit you to pass through my invisible barrier because I trust you. I have heard of the Black Bat many times and I have nothing to hide.

But the gun I will not permit. And don't threaten me with it. You could shoot a .50 calibre machine bullet and it wouldn't reach me."

The Black Bat placed his gun on the bench as instructed. He advanced again and this time nothing stopped him. He felt no barrier whatsoever. Then he noticed that Pierlot had a small switch panel on the side of his desk.

"Sit down," Pierlot said and laughed some more. The scientist's voice was no longer muffled. "Has it occurred to you that I have the Black Bat at my mercy? Oh yes, you could kill me easily enough, but you couldn't get out of this room unless I willed it. What do you think of my invisible wall?"

"Let's understand one another." The Black Bat accepted a chair. "I'm only interested in getting information from you about the Voice of Justice, from whose activities you seem to be profiting. I saw Tony Quinn receive the money from a detective.

"I followed him out here. I know all about your radio controlled electric automobile. The invisible wall is beyond me, I'll admit, but, first, about the Voice. Do you know who he is?"

"I do not—except that he must be a very kind patron of science. Isn't it fitting that reward moneys should be put to a useful purpose? Take me, for instance and my invisible glass. You must admit it's good, but it's not good enough.

"I simply lowered a curtain of it to

stop you, raised it to allow you passage. The glass is three inches thick and can stop the heaviest machine gun bullet at one hundred yards. The bullet shatters, sometimes powders the glass all around the point of impact, but its force is lost through the energy dissipated by friction.

"That glass is already on the market, but it is not as invisible as mine, though mine may be a trifle weaker. I'm trying to perfect an invisible glass which could stop a heavy shell and I'll do it—given enough money and time. The Voice seems to be providing the money and in a highly legal manner too. You don't think he's a crook, do you?"

"How could he be?" the Black Bat countered and soothed Pierlot at the same time. "Crooks don't give away five thousand dollars. This glass of yours would find highly useful purposes today in manufacturing new types of offensive and defensive machinery. Don't you keep the nature of your work a strict secret?"

"I do. No man other than you knows of it, which shows how much I trust the Black Bat. I know you must be he because no one else could have gained admittance or even found me.

"I'm afraid of enemy spies—of unscrupulous manufacturers who might try to learn my secret and, by putting their scientists to work, perfect the substance before I could. That is why I undertake all these protections."

"Then," the Black Bat asked pointedly, "how does it happen that the Voice of Justice knows about your work?"

"He doesn't," Pierlot protected. "A radio was delivered at the railroad express office, and I received a notice to go get it. I did. There were certain instructions accompanying the set and I obeyed them.

"The Voice of Justice spoke to me, outlining his plans, indicating that he knew I was doing some kind of work important to the future welfare of

this nation, but he didn't admit that he knew just what it was. He wanted to help me and outlined his plans to do so. That is all I know. I swear it."

The Black Bat's hooded head moved up and down slowly. "Yes, I believe you, Pierlot, and you've told me all I came to find out. Whoever this Voice of Justice may be, he has displayed no dishonesty. The profits from his work, which he hands you, are legally obtained. I don't think his actions call for any interference on my part."

"Heaven forbid." Pierlot threw up both hands. "Would you rob me of the only source of income I now have? If I took my work to a financier, he'd rob me of it. That has happened to me before. I trust no one."

"Before I am finished, there will be perfected a purely invisible glass so dense and of such quality that machine parts may be made of it. Then you will really know what an invisible aeroplane is like."

"I am well on the road to complete success. A few more weeks, even days, if my luck holds out, and I shall exhibit my work to the proper authorities who will use it, but keep its composition a secret."

"You are ready to go. The way is open, and I am very happy you called on me. If I can help you again, I shall be glad to serve you. I see no way to keep you out anyway. Not after the manner in which you reached me tonight."

The Black Bat offered his gloved hand and Pierlot took it in a firm grasp. Walking away, the Black Bat was suddenly banged against the invisible partition again and Pierlot howled in glee.

"I merely wished to see if it would fool you again. It did. I'm proud of my work. Now—I have raised the curtain."

As the Black Bat made his way out of the house through easier channels than his entrance, he didn't blame Pierlot for being proud. The man had reason to be, but—his work betrayed

his exceptional cleverness and genius.

Was he also using this to garner an income for himself, one which he'd be under no obligation to anyone for? Was he the Voice of Justice? He was thinking in those lines when he reached the highway and Silk picked him up.

CHAPTER VII

Tomb for the Living



CAROL and Butch separated when they reached the neighborhood of Jimmie Drake's home. Butch went to check on Drake's activities through drug stores, cigar shops and a pool hall not far from where he lived.

Carol studied the house and managed to approach it closely without giving away her presence. Drake and his wife were in the small, neat little parlor. It was provided with cheap furniture, but looked comfortable. Drake had a pair of red leather scuffs on and was slumped lazily in a chair reading the newspaper. Mrs. Drake was mending what seemed to be one of her husband's shirts.

To Carol this picture was one of ideal domestic simplicity. If these two people were criminals, they were acting very second and this was almost too genuine to be even clever acting.

She had armed herself with a large ledger. Putting on a pair of shell rimmed spectacles, with plain glass for the lenses, she rang the door bell of the house across the street. She identified herself as being employed by the school board, checking on children eligible for next season's term. Casually she indicated the house where the Drakes lived.

"Oh no," Carol's informant said, "the Drakes have no children. Awfully nice people though. They've

lived there only a short time. They sold their big house. Mr. Drake is in trouble—he actually stole money from the place where he works, but I understand he has a clever lawyer who will get him out of it.”

Carol mentally agreed with the clever lawyer part of it, thanked the woman and departed. She met Butch three blocks away.

“This Drake is a funny guy,” Butch reported. “First of all, I find out he smokes fifty cent cigars and plenty of ’em too. He hangs around the pool-room—a regular shark who will take anybody on for a decent bet. The bar-rooms never heard of him. A couple of grocery stores in the neighborhood were open, and they knew Drake’s wife. She must be a pretty nice sort of a dame the way they speak about her. You find anything?”

“Only things which substantiate what you learned, Butch. On the surface the Drakes seem to be quiet people. Drake himself may have stolen money because he had high priced tastes, as the expensive cigars indicate. I think we’re finished here. Let’s find the car and go back.”

They had to walk directly in front of Drake’s home to reach the spot where the car was parked. Just after they passed the house, a sedan pulled up to the curb. Butch took a quick look around.

“Keep walking,” he warned. “That buggy is parked so a street light shines right through the windows. There are four mugs inside—and I mean mugs. They’re waiting until we get out of sight. Something is gonna bust wide open. Take the next corner.”

After they were out of sight of the house and the newly arrived car, Butch spoke tersely.

“You watch the front. I’m cutting through a couple of yards and if them bums try anything, I’ll get myself a little action. Watch out for the rats.”

Butch stepped over a hedge that most men would have been forced to make in a running leap. Not equipped

with the Black Bat’s superlative eyesight, Butch had to proceed more slowly and twice he got tangled up in clothes lines strung across back yards. Therefore he was a trifle late when he finally did reach Drake’s property, and his reception came in the form of gun blasts.

BUTCH ducked rapidly until he realized the shots came from inside the house. Then he advanced at a run, crouched and was ready for action. He heard a woman scream. Another gun banged and the scream was abruptly cut off.

A man, blurred by the darkness, came out of the back door, and there was a gun in his hand. Butch didn’t require any further invitation to join the fight.

He ran lightly to the shelter of the thick trunk of an apple tree, tried to hide behind it and succeeded only because of the darkness. His body was considerably rounder than the tree trunk.

As the gunman approached, Butch gave a leap. It was amazing how fast his huge frame could move. The gunman heard him coming, whirled and tried to bring his gun to bear. Butch used the edge of one mighty hand to knock the weapon from the man’s grasp. He made a pass at the crook’s chin and missed. The gunman let out a wild yowl of terror. Then Butch had him.

Gripping the man by the nape of his neck, Butch flattened his nose with one blow and the gunman hung limp in his grasp. He picked the man up bodily. A branch of that apple tree had been broken off some time before and its jagged tip protruded invitingly. Butch merely hung his unconscious prisoner on it. Then he headed for the house.

The back door was wide open as he barged in. Seizing a fairly hefty kitchen chair, he moved toward the living room. He was too late. The gunmen had left, but there was a grim

token of their visit in the middle of the floor. Mrs. Drake lay on her back, eyes staring glassily at the ceiling. A bullet had crashed through her right temple.

There were a series of shouts outside the house, more shots and then someone vaulted up the front steps, fled into the hallway and slammed the door. It was Jimmy Drake. There was a bad scratch on his cheek, his hair was tousled and his shirt ripped. He panted heavily and then sank to his knees against the wall, like a man utterly exhausted.

Butch didn't want to be seen. One of the Black Bat's instructions was for his aides to take cover when anything like this happened. Butch took a last look at the corpse, and his eyes became cold and grim. He retreated through the back door and put on full steam to reach Carol and the car before neighbors closed in.

THEN he thought of that gunman he'd hooked to the tree branch and returned for him. The man was half conscious, but Butch sent him back to dreamland with a short punch to the jaw. He draped the crook over his shoulder and performed that same leap across the hedge, despite the added burden he carried.

Carol wasn't in the car. Perhaps she was somewhere on the street around the corner, where she might observe what was happening. Butch hastily opened the baggage compartment of the car, stuffed his prisoner inside and closed it again. Then he got behind the wheel, turned around and drove sedately toward Drake's house.

There was a crowd of people around, all highly agitated. Butch pulled up. "Somethin' happen?" he queried with a bland, innocent look.

"I'll say it did," one man retorted. "Some murderers just invaded Jimmy Drake's house, fired a lot of shots and kidnapped his wife. They threw her into their car and got away."

Butch felt his spine tingle. Drake's wife was dead—not kidnapped. But it seemed that no one had come out of the house with that news. Therefore the woman who had been kidnapped was Carol!

There could be no doubt about it. She was nowhere around, and it wasn't like Carol to move out in a spot like this. Butch heard a siren and decided this was no place for him—not with an unconscious prisoner in the back of the car.

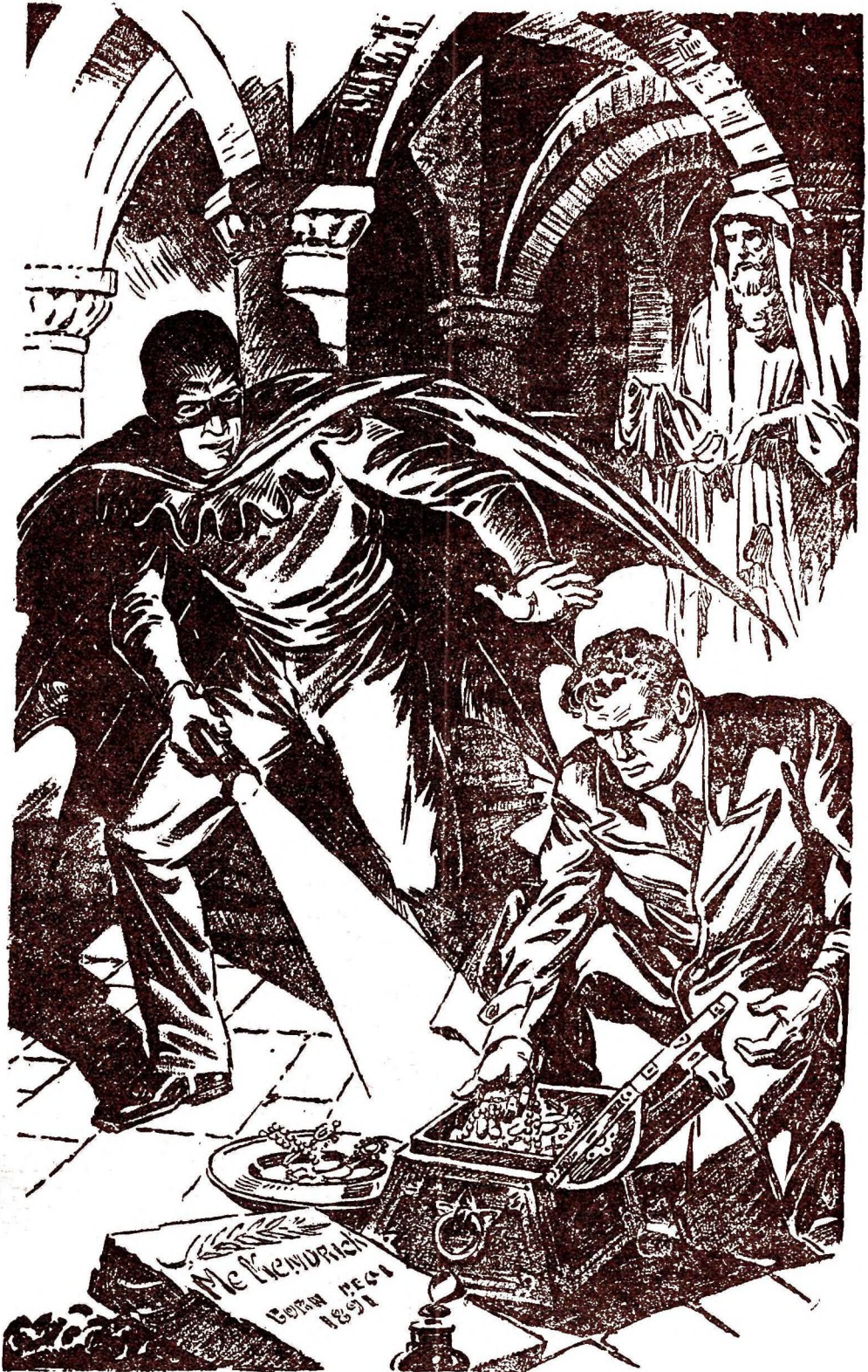
He got away without being spotted by the radio cars that raced to the scene. He was unnerved at Carol's disappearance and wasn't quite sure what he should do. The Black Bat would know, but Butch had no idea how to contact him.

One thing this giant of a man did realize though, was the fact that he held an ace in the hole. That gunman would talk—or he'd suffer until he did. Butch was not a pleasant man when he became angry and Butch was thoroughly mad. He headed for Tony Quinn's home to wait for his return.

There was nothing else he could do right now. If Quinn didn't come back shortly, Butch planned to extract certain information from his prisoner and tackle the job of rescuing Carol alone.

CAROL, while Butch headed for Drake's house, rounded the street corner and started for the same destination. She wanted to get close enough to read the registration plates on the car and get a good description of the marauders, if that was what they were. She had her answer to that in five seconds when the shooting started.

There was a bungalow next door, with several lilac bushes in the front yard. Carol sprinted toward one of these where she might hide and observe at the same time. In her desperate hurry to reach a hiding place she failed to notice that the driver of the car was getting out. He had spotted her round the corner and kept



The casket was filled with jewelry (Chapter VIII)

his eyes on her every moment. When she disappeared, he went in pursuit.

Carol stood erect, depending on the shelter of the lilac bush to shield her. Twice she saw men pass by the windows of the living room. Then she heard a dry laugh, the whiz of a weapon as it sailed through the air, and a curtain of intense darkness settled over her brain.

She dropped without a sound. The thug put his gun back into its holster, picked her up and raced for the car. She was inside on the floor of the tonneau, when the others bolted from the house. One man clutched Jimmy Drake by the arm. Windows and doors were popping open all around the neighborhood now.

SOMEONE called out an alarm. It spurred the thugs on. Jimmy Drake suddenly gave a quick yank, tore himself free at the expense of his shirt, and made a wild dive back toward the house.

"Never mind him now," someone shouted from the car. "Get in here. We gotta scram. There'll be a million coppers here in two minutes."

The car darted from the curb, took the next corner with a crazy lurch and vanished. Carol woke up—probably from the jolting she received as the sedan raced away into the night. She tried to sit erect and instantly two hands seized her. She had been covered with a dirty, worn auto robe and this was removed now.

"Well! Look what we got here." A thug with a wide face, sloping forehead and the malicious eyes of a gorilla squinted down at her.

"It's gonna be just too bad to knock off a nice looking little lady like this. Maybe we won't have to. Get up and sit between us, sister, while we have a nice little chat, huh?"

When Carol didn't respond to the invitation, she was unceremoniously hoisted to the seat and jammed between two husky crooks. The one who had spoken first, seized her wrist and

twisted it experimentally. Carol groaned and doubled up in pain. He let go.

"That's a sample of what we can do, baby. Suppose you tell us just who you are and why you were hanging around the neighborhood, peeking into Drake's window. It couldn't be that you work for the Voice of Justice, could it?"

Carol massaged her aching wrist.

"I don't know what you're talking about. I live up the street from the Drakes and I was on my way to the grocery store."

"Sure you were," the other man laughed harshly and held out Carol's pearl handled automatic in one big hand. "Maybe you ought to join a gang like us, huh? Is this roscoe what you were gonna use to get the groceries? Or do all the dames around here pack gats? Come on—talk."

Carol had one last play to make, weak and probably quite ineffective, but she tried it anyhow.

"Okay, wise guy," she snarled. "So what if I did case the joint. Some of them bungalows got plenty of dough in 'em. Those kinda people don't trust banks none too much. I was just looking around."

"Listen to her, Heister," the second man said. "She sounds just like a moll, don't she? Musta seen too many movies."

"Stop lying," the crook called Heister snapped. "Who paid you to prowl around? Talk—or you get more of that strong arm treatment."

He grabbed for her wrist, but the other crook snapped a command.

"Lay off. If she yells, we're in no spot to scram from the cops. Anyway I think we can use her to draw her pals into a nice quiet trap. Hey Joe," he addressed the driver, "head for that quiet little spot we found yesterday. She can yell her lungs raw there."

Carol was prepared for almost anything, but not the piece to which she was driven. The car rolled upstate,

in the general direction of Pierre Pierlot's strange workshop and dwelling, though Carol didn't realize this.

To her amazement the car pulled up close to an old, moss covered church at the edge of a small town. One man got out, prowled the area for a moment and then drew a single key from his pocket. The land surrounding the church was shielded by a very tall brick wall with an ornamental gate set in it.

The crook opened this gate with his key, stepped aside and the car went through. Carol gave a brief cry of alarm. They were in an ancient burying ground.

TOMBSTONES and the mausoleums of wealthy families rose like grim grey ghosts in the night. They drove without lights, and the driver seemed to know all the intricate turns. This was a large cemetery and the car proceeded to the further side of it. The same crook used the same key on the door of a large vault. The crooks drew searchlights from their pockets, gripped Carol firmly by both wrists and forced her to enter that house of the dead.

She had a momentary glimpse of the name engraved above the door. It was in foot high letters and read simply "McKENDRICK." Inside she discovered the vault seemed to contain no niches behind which coffins could be sealed. It looked more like a small, formal waiting room than anything else. There was an ornamental iron bench along one wall, two iron chairs moulded in the same design and a cement stand upon which flowers could be placed.

One of the thugs grinned at Carol and turned the ray of his flash against the further wall. There she saw a solid iron gate, its engraved design matching the furniture. This was opened with the same key, and Carol was forced to walk down a short flight of cement steps.

They were so narrow that she was permitted to walk alone, but the crooks were more than reasonably safe in allowing this because Carol soon found that the dead of the McKendrick family were buried in a crypt below the vault. There were no exits except those narrow stairs which were now crowded by two of the thugs.

The flashlights illuminated the place brilliantly and now Carol shuddered at the sight of almost a dozen niches, all sealed and each one bearing an inscription which described the corpse that lay behind the sections of marble.

One of the thugs had secured rope somewhere and a piece of dirty cloth, probably used to clean off the windshield of their car. Carol was tied up expertly and the dirty cloth tied between her lips as a gag. She was pushed into a corner and the trio hurried back up the stairs. Carol heard that heavy door close and she was alone with the dead.

She backed against one wall and allowed herself to slowly sag toward the cold floor. At least she could rest. When those crooks returned, she'd need every ounce of strength she could muster. The ropes around her wrists and the ankles were firmly tied.

No chance of getting them loose, but the gag offered possibilities. The man who tied it in place had seemed uncommonly gentle about it for one of his breed. In less than three minutes Carol managed to move the gag out of her mouth, down her chin and then, by careful manipulation of her jaws, the gag dropped loosely about her throat.

At any rate she could scream, but though her eerie surroundings encouraged this, she kept quiet. The time for screaming was when she had a chance to arouse someone besides those gangsters.

One thing Carol didn't know however, was that the gag had been pur-

posely placed so that she could get it loose. Heister addressed his fellow thugs. They were hidden behind another mausoleum about thirty feet from the McKendrick tomb.

"Manny must have been caught," he said grimly. "Maybe by the giant who met this dame down the street. Manny knows what to do if that happened. He'll spill the works about this place and whoever the dame works for will come here in a rush.

"She'll have the gag loose pretty soon. When her pals enter the first floor of the vault, they'll hear her yell and they'll go down to the subvault in a hur y.

"All we gotta do is push the door shut, lock it and leave. They'll all rot down there. Nobody ever comes to this place. What a swell idea to get rid of guys we don't like. Boy, have I got brains!"

CHAPTER VIII

Treasure Hunt



WITH his hood and cape removed, and that wide brimmed hat concealing his features the Black Bat rode beside Silk. They headed down the street which ran beside Tony Quinn's estate. The Black

Bat started up.

"Stop, Silk," he said. "Butch's car is parked just ahead of us. He's alone in it. Get out and find out what's up."

Silk returned in a moment, pale with worry.

"It's Carol, sir. Some killers snatched her. Butch has one of the mob in the baggage compartment. Maybe he'll talk."

"Maybe, eh?" the Black Bat said bitterly. "He'll talk all right. Have Butch carry him far back on the estate. It's dark as pitch there and he'll

never know where he's been. I'll get out at the gate."

Certain no prying eyes watched, the Black Bat slipped out of the car, glided across the sidewalk and vanished in the darkness. Butch carried his half conscious prisoner through that same gate. Silk waited just beyond the estate, prepared for swift action.

Butch flung his prisoner on the ground and faced the Black Bat, who was now wearing hood and cape.

"Boss—they got Carol. I don't know exactly what happened, but I know they snatched her. I grabbed this bozo. Lemme go to work on him. I'll make the rat sing like a canary or bust his neck."

"We can't waste time," the Black Bat said. "Lift him up. If he refuses to answer my questions, go to work on him."

The thug, blubbering in terror, grew absolutely frantic when he saw the eerie figure that looked more like a bird than a man. He knew who this man was and he shrank away.

"Don't kill me," he blubbered. "I'll talk. I'll tell you everything I know. If they got the dame, I know where they took her. You gotta promise I go free after I show you where she is."

"You have that promise," the Black Bat said. "Where is she? Why was she kidnapped? Whom do you work for?"

"Ask him why his mob gunned out Drake's wife," Butch put in.

The Black Bat made a sharp quarter turn and behind the hood, his eyes grew wide.

"They killed Mrs. Drake? Are you sure? What happened to Jimmy Drake?"

"She's dead all right, boss. Bullet right through her head. Drake was okay last I knew."

The Black Bat seized his prisoner by both shoulders and shook him.

"Well? Why was Mrs. Drake murdered?"

"I dunno, honest, I don't," the man quavered. "Heister is in charge of us. He said we was to grab Drake, but he didn't say anythin' about knockin' off no woman.

"I guess she musta got in the way and Heister let her have it. He's got an awful nervous trigger finger and the gat he uses is filed down. They took the other dame to a cemetery.

"It's outa town, but I can take you there. Remember—you gotta let me go free for this. Heister'll cut my heart out for talkin', and I'm gonna scam."

"Use his cravat and belt to tie him up with," the Black Bat ordered. "Then gag him. Carry him to the other car. We'll follow. Hurry!"

Two minutes later Silk had a well trussed passenger seated beside him. Acting under the thug's instructions, Silk proceeded to follow the route over which Carol had been taken. Behind the sedan came Butch and the cheap coupe, which could show her heels to a car of much more expensive make.

The Black Bat sat silently beside Butch. Paramount in his mind was Carol's peril, but he also wondered why on earth Mrs. Drake had been murdered and why anyone would want to attack Jimmy Drake.

TRUE, the Voice of Justice knew that Drake was in Tony Quinn's office and why.

It indicated the Voice knew what was going on, but why did that make Jimmy Drake or his quiet, lovely wife a target for these crooks?

Had Jimmy Drake held out? Were there other crimes to which he hadn't confessed? Was he associated with the Voice and were these crooks after him because the Voice threatened to upset an underworld empire?

"That mug in Silk's car sure was scared of us," Butch interrupted the Black Bat's chain of thought. "I never saw a rat squeal so fast before."

The Black Bat frowned.

"I thought of that too. It seems to me he talked too easily, as though plans had already been made for just such an emergency. Keep your eyes and ears open, Butch. We won't walk into any trap if we can help it."

They reached the ancient church and its burying grounds. It was nearly three A. M. and the village was deserted. Silk stepped out of the sedan, with his hat brim low and his collar turned up to shield his features from the crook. He dragged the man out and the Black Bat joined them.

"I ain't got no key," the crook gulped. "Heister's got one that opens the gate and the tomb too. We'll have to go over the wall."

"Give me a boost," the Black Bat said, and Silk helped to hoist him over the wall. Butch arrived in time to life the trussed up thug very high and ease him gently over into the Black Bat's waiting arms. Silk came next and finally Butch, who scrambled over easily.

"Our friend," the Black Bat said softly, "tells me the girl must be locked up in the McKendrick vault. It's at the further end of the cemetery, and I think I can find it from his directions. I'll leave our prisoner here. You stay with him."

The Black Bat indicated Silk. With Butch at his side, they started forward in the direction of the tomb. Wary of traps, they moved carefully and paused every two or three yards to listen. The Black Bat's eyes penetrated the darkness and finally read the inscription on the vault which had now become a tomb for the living.

They approached it and then Carol's voice reached them, faint but definite. The sound of that voice and its implied horror, spurred the Black Bat into swift action. Gun ready, he raced toward the vault.

The grilled door was open and he went in, closely followed by Butch. Neither of them saw three figures rise

up directly to the right. All that mattered now was Carol's safety.

Silk, left behind with his quivering prisoner, eyed the man speculatively. He seemed to be almost frozen in terror, and Silk didn't like it. This might mean that the crook was afraid of the consequences if the Black Bat and his giant aids were trapped.

"Listen, you," Silk whispered. "there's something wrong. I think this is a set-up, and you know it. So just to make sure everything is on the level, you and I are going to that tomb too—right now. Move or I'll knock you stiff and drag your carcass there."

The prisoner made ineffectual sounds before he found his tongue. He knew what was about to happen and if he was taken into that vault, he'd be left to die there too.

"No-no, pal. Don't go there. Yeah-yeah, it is a trap. When the Black Bat goes inside, some guys will shut the door on him. They'll leave him there to rot. Don't take me in. They'll kill us too."

SILK whipped out a knife and the prisoner started to give a bleat of alarm before Silk cuffed him into silence and slit the ropes around his arms and legs.

"We're going there all right," he said. "How many of your pals are hanging around?"

"Three anyway—and they got guns. Listen, I did my part. Lemme go. I don't want to die now."

"Walk!" The knife penetrated the prisoner's clothing and pierced his spine. "Head for that vault fast or I'll sink this blade right up to the hilt in your stinking hide."

The prisoner moved rapidly. Silk knew that in a battle with three well armed thugs, he'd probably be out-matched. If he failed, they'd certainly kill the Black Bat, Butch and Carol before they left the graveyard. Silk had an idea. He drew a gun and

then gave the prisoner a hard shove forward.

"Before I tackle your pals, I'll finish you off," he grated. "You deserve something for bringing us here so I'll give you thirty seconds to get clear. Then I start to shoot, and, brother, I don't miss very often. Get going. Your time has started all ready."

The prisoner gulped, took a quick look at the gun and started to run. In his haste, he tripped over a footstone, fell heavily and yelled in fear. Up again, he charged straight through a dry bush that crackled loudly in the silence. He kept on going in as straight a direction as he knew, toward the main gate.

Silk, lying flat to conceal himself, saw three men suddenly materialize out of the night and go in pursuit. He made very sure there were three of them too before he streaked toward the vault.

The grilled door was open. Silk called out softly and received no reply. Sweat poured down his face. He fumbled for a match, struck it and took in his surroundings. He spotted the steel door and sprang toward it.

The latch worked, but the door held fast. His friends must be somewhere beyond this door. Silk had to get it open. In a few moments the thugs might return. Another match showed him the lock and Silk jammed the muzzle of his gun against it.

He pulled the trigger. Pieces of lead flew back to cut his cheeks, but he paid no attention to this. He tried the latch again. It wouldn't open. He fired another shot. This time things happened. The door swung wide.

A dark figure came swarming up the narrow staircase. It was the Black Bat. Behind him came Carol and Butch was the last.

"Good work," the Black Bat said. "What happened to the men who locked us in?"

"I made our prisoner dust for it,

knowing he'd make so much noise he'd attract his own pals. I—"

"Quiet!" The Black Bat stepped out of the tomb and listened. His keen hearing detected the sound of a motor roaring into life and then tires grating against gravel.

"They've gone," he said. "Or at least I'm pretty sure of it. Probably those shots frightened them away, but I doubt there are any people close enough to this graveyard to be awakened by the noise. Carol—you're not hurt? Sure of it?"

"Just my dignity." Carol brushed off her dress. "Those mugs were not especially gentle. And being locked in a vault with nothing but a lot of coffins around you isn't pleasant either."

"Wait," Butch growled. "Wait until I lay my mitts on those rats. If I grab 'em on Forty Second Street you'll hear them yell around Spuyten Dyvil. We better get outa here, huh?"

"Wait," the Black Bat said. "I'm going back down. Butch, you stay with Carol. Silk, use your flash, shield the lens and look around the immediate vicinity. See if you can find any traces of cement and mixing tools."

"One of the niches below was recently sealed. The cement isn't completely dry yet. Look at the floor where Carol is standing. They used it to mix fresh cement. Watch out for the return of those killers, Butch."

BEFORE he descended into the crypt again, the Black Bat glanced at the lock which Silk's bullets had shattered. Part of it was blown out. The Black Bat picked up a section of shiny, new brass. That lock hadn't been a part of the original door, but a much more modern safeguard, placed there within the past year or two.

Below, he went unerringly to the right niche despite the intense darkness. Using a narrow piece of metal

which he carried with him most of the time and used to open difficult windows, he dug at still wet cement until he had removed most of it. He called to Butch, and the giant entered the tomb, hunched over like a huge gnome.

"See if you can take that slab of marble away," the Black Bat said. "I'll help with the other end."

Butch got a grip on the slab and pulled it free without much effort. But the big fellow, standing in the glare of a flashlight held by the Black Bat, was prepared to see a casket behind that slab. There was one too—of a strange type. No more than a foot long and five or six inches wide. Butch licked his lips and decided the Black Bat should handle the rest of it.

The casket was a wooden box with big brass ornamental hinges on it. Raising the lid, the Black Bat grunted in amazement. The box was almost entirely filled with jewelry. He picked up several pieces.

"Odd," he said. "This stuff isn't the most valuable jewelry in the world—even despite its quantity. The stones aren't genuine in every case, and there is considerable gold plate too."

"I wonder who hid it here and why? These crooks we routed entered this niche. Perhaps they secreted the stuff here, or were after it in which case they must have decided it wasn't worth taking—which is quite true."

The Black Bat examined the interior of the niche carefully. When he straightened up again, he was positive that no casket had ever been enclosed. The marble slab showed that one Hazel McKendrick had been born on April 10th, 1892 and died December 1st, 1916.

Silk called down from the vault above.

"I found half a bag of cement, sir. Some sand a pail full of water too. They were mixing cement all right."

"Go up and bring it to me," the Black Bat told Butch. "I want Silk

to remain on guard with Carol."

It was within an hour of dawn when Butch and the Black Bat finished cementing the marble slab into place. The gems were left in the niche, and all traces of their work cleaned up.

CHAPTER IX

The Blind Man Sees



BUTCH and Carol returned to their respective homes, while Silk and the Black Bat used the tunnel from the garden house to the lab. As they entered the house, a phone was buzzing insistently.

The Black Bat hastily stripped off his regalia and became Tony Quinn once more. Picking up his cane, he moved to the secret door and his eyes became utterly blank again. He reached the telephone, picked up the receiver and gave a sleepy greeting.

It was Jimmy Drake.

"I've been trying to get you for hours," he said, almost angrily. The shock of his wife's death had probably worn off to some extent, although Drake sounded excited.

"I'm very sorry," Quinn replied. "My man is off for the night. I heard the phone ring, but I couldn't reach it before you hung up. I move rather slowly, you see."

"Makes no difference now," Drake groaned. "Around midnight a bunch of men came to my house. They tried to kidnap me. My wife butted in, and they murdered her—shot her down in cold blood! I've got to see you right away. I can come over."

"Please do," Quinn advised. "I shall be waiting."

He hung up, turned to Silk and gave orders.

"Get me pajamas—wrinkle them up first—and a robe and slippers. Then keep out of sight. You're supposed

to be out for the night. Remember!"

Quinn let Drake in and led the way to his study. Drake was haggard-eyed and pale. He looked years older. He began to pace the floor and give all the gruesome details of the murder. The man seemed to be on the verge of collapse.

"There is a liquor cabinet near the book case," said Quinn. Help yourself. I think you need a drink."

Drake got a bottle of brandy and poured himself a copious drink. He bolted this and seemed to relax a bit.

"I can't understand it," he said for the tenth time. "Why should they want to kill my wife? Why did they try to kidnap me? And what will I do now? I'm all alone. They might as well have killed me too."

"I can't answer your questions," Quinn said quietly. "Perhaps if I undertake to try and refresh your memory, you might do so. You will recall, Mr. Drake, that you were not exactly frank with me when you first confessed to stealing money from your present employer."

Drake looked even more downcast.

"I know it. It was because of her—my wife. I didn't want her to think she married a crook. Well I'm not a crook—not the type to hurt any one at least. I was tempted. I suppose I'm weak, and I took the money, intending to pay it back.

"I have a theory though. Suppose this man who called himself the Voice of Justice knows all about me—as it seems he does.

"Suppose certain crooks whom the Voice is fighting believes I'm in with the Voice, maybe known who he is. They'd try to make me tell, wouldn't they?"

Quinn sucked his chin and stared at the blank wall.

"Yes—that's logical. Should have thought of it myself. Because of his intimate knowledge of your affairs the underworld believed you know him.

"That must be the reason and it proves the Voice of Justice really is

on the level. Of course, there is no other answer. Do you know him, Drake?"

"I've tried and tried to think," Drake groaned. "I've even written down the names of everyone who could possibly have learned of what I did in Chicago. I've got about twenty names, but I can't imagine which one of these persons could be the Voice.

nothing to do now but wait. Wait and hope."

"I'm afraid that is all, Drake," said Quinn. "I'll have your trial postponed for a month or two. Under the circumstances that won't be very difficult. Keep your wits about you.

"If you should happen to spot any of those killers, call a police officer. Don't risk your life to try and nab them. Good night. If there is any-



CAROL

"Listen—can't you help me? Ask the Voice to expose those murderers and avenge my wife's death. I shall be beholden to you and to him for the rest of my life. All I want is to see those rotten killers where they belong—in a murderer's cell."

"I can't do that because I don't know how to contact the Voice. He always takes the initiative, but I'll try to help. I'll spur the police on. You can identify these killers of course. We'll conduct a roundup and you can attend the lineup. It's our best bet."

"Thanks," Drake said sadly. "Captain McGrath already has made plans to do just that. Well, I suppose there's

thing I might do in connection with your wife—"

Drake didn't answer. He just walked out into the approaching dawn. Quinn locked up and climbed the stairs to his bedroom.

HIS first visitor, when he reached the office, was Commissioner Warner.

"Rotten thing that happened to your client last night, Tony. I hope it isn't an omen—for the sake of the rest of your clients."

"If it is," Quinn grunted, "I'll retire. I've another case, Commissioner. Oh yes, I'm coming right along. This

one is in connection with a rather involved estate. Do you know the McKendrick family?"

"I should," Warner grunted. "Went to school with Paul McKendrick, and I helped to arrest his son, Randolph. I see by that bright look on your face that you wish all the details. They aren't so many.

"The McKendricks used to be extremely wealthy people. The bulk of their fortune was made before the Civil War. Steel rails, I think it was—just when so many were being used to lay new railroad tracks. Anyway, each succeeding generation dwindled the income.

"Paul did a pretty good job of it and Randolph finished the business. Seems Randolph operated a brokerage house and took a lot of money from his clients. He got them mainly because of his name, not by the hard work such an enterprise usually involves.

WELL—it's the usual story. Randolph was broke, used to living high, and he began paying dividends from the money entrusted to him. The rest he spent until things caught up with him.

"He got a one to two year rap. Got out of prison—now wait just one minute, Tony. Are you sure you aren't pumping me? Are you really handling this estate?"

"Why?" Quinn queried with a grin.

"Because this Randolph McKendrick is one of the best possibilities for our Voice of Justice. He's educated, comes of a very good family and spent time in prison. He must have met plenty of criminals there.

"Perhaps he got religion or something, and now he's attempting to expose crooks—finish them off by revealing their jobs and taking their loot away. It's a mighty good answer to our puzzle."

"Isn't it?" Quinn said. "By the way, when my clerk arrived this morning, there was a note under the door. I had him read it to me. I'm to tune in

on my very private radio in just two minutes to learn how another criminal is to be exposed.

"Will you snap on the switch? This thing is so complicated. And dial the numbers in this note too. I could do it. My sense of touch enables me to follow the indentations of the dials, but there isn't much time."

Warner set the dials, and they leaned back to wait. Quinn asked one more question.

"About the McKendrick family again—did you ever meet Hazel? She died in 1916 at the age of twenty-four."

"Hazel? There was no McKendrick named Hazel. You've been digging into the wrong family, Tony."

There was no time to argue the point. The Voice of Justice spoke again, his tone ringing with triumph.

"Now you realize that I am not a fool—that I know what I'm talking about. Junky Malone was found as I indicated, even though the stupid creature took his own life.

"Here is another for you. Remember that large scale burglary of the Holden Estate down in Florida a year and six months ago? Those eccentric people kept a lot of cash in the house and a great deal of jewelry which was worth more as heirlooms than cash.

"I can tell you who did that job and where to find him. He is Siggie Fox, another moronic creature like Malone. For the past week Siggie has been holed up, living in fear of death at the hands of his own type of people.

"I don't know what Siggie did to make them pursue him with murderous intentions, but you will find him in a basement room of a large apartment building at 1169 Allerton Boulevard. The reward is ten thousand dollars which, Mr. Quinn, you will arrange to have immediately turned over to you by Holden's New York bank.

"I shall contact you further as to its disposition. May I thank you for the able manner in which you handled last

night's episode? That is all."

Warner snapped off the radio and reached for the telephone. He ordered a squad to close in on Siggy's hideout and then he jammed on his hat.

"I'm coming along, Commissioner," said Quinn, rising. "A little excitement in my life is like honey to me. I'm really beginning to live again."

Warner's chauffeur used the siren to clear traffic, and they raced up Allerton Boulevard, only half a minute behind the squad cars. It was an exclusive section, where apartment rents were high. Certainly it was not a place where police would search for Siggy Fox without being first tipped off.

"What will you bet," Quinn said, "that Siggy is dead when you reach him?"

"Eh? What?" Warner whirled around. "Why did you say that, Tony?"

QUINN smiled. "I'm just guessing, but I'm rather good at it. Run along. Your chauffeur will guide my steps to Siggy's place, and I'm not especially anxious to run into a fight. Doubt I'd be much good at it."

When Quinn, holding the arm of the Commissioner's chauffeur, walked down a driveway between the huge buildings, his staring eyes functioned



even though they looked completely blind. He saw two detectives covering a doorway into the basement, saw them jump at the sound of a gunshot,

then rush in. Quinn and his guide entered too. Warner saw them coming and appeared through the shattered door.

"Tony," he said, "that was too good a prediction to be a guess. We found the door locked, demanded entrance and Siggy yelled something about we were too late and he wouldn't be taken. Perhaps the poor sap thought we were those crooks bent on killing him.

"At any rate, just before we crashed down the door, he fired a shot into his own head. Just how were you so sure he'd commit suicide?"

"Did I mention suicide?" Quinn asked blandly. "Don't ask me any more questions right now, Commissioner, because I'm not prepared to answer them. Are we in the room where Siggy lies now?"

"No—I'll help you through the door, Tony. Watch out—one of my men broke it to splinters, and you might tear your coat. Now you're through. Edge to the left slightly or you'll trip over him. You can stand there now and listen while we make a check of things."

"Thanks. I—Commissioner, am I stepping on something? Feels like a marble."

Warner bent down and picked up an earring.

"I'd like to be a kid again if I could play with marbles like these. That was a piece of jewelry you stepped on, Tony. Siggy stole a lot of the stuff, you remember. Like Junky Malone, he couldn't cash in on it because the stuff was hot as hades itself, and not worth the risk for any fence to handle."

QUINN was facing a single window in the small room. He guessed how Siggy had found this refuge. It was a janitor's room, probably used by the superintendent's assistant, who could have been Siggy.

The window was open about half an inch from the top, and sunlight came through it brilliantly. Without mov-

ing his eyes, Quinn spotted a round mark on the wall, just inside that window. It was a wet stain about the size of a quarter—or one of those small rubber suction cups that are used to adhere to smooth surfaces.

Quinn saw something else that startled him so that he almost gave an involuntary cry. A man was slowly approaching the rear of the place. He was about thirty, well dressed and intelligent looking. No cheap crook this.

He was crouched and flitted from behind a refuse box to the end of a row of garages. Then he stood erect and on his face was a look of the most intense surprise Quinn had ever seen. The stranger must have spotted a detective or patrolmen in the driveway. At any rate he turned and fled as if Satan were behind him.

"What are you looking at?" a voice spoke harshly in Quinn's ear. The speaker meant to get an answer from sheer surprise, but Quinn didn't fall. He just turned slightly and looked over Captain McGrath's right shoulder.

"Looking at, Captain?" he asked. "Heaven knows I'd give my last dollar to be able to look out at that sunshine which warmed me just now. I'm sorry, Captain. I can't—as you say—look."

"All right," McGrath grunted. "Chalk that one up to your side again, but some day—"

"You'll really pin me down and remove a hood and cape to show me up as the Black Bat," Quinn finished for him, and McGrath flushed a dull red.

"I'm complimented in the fact that you even think I might be the Black Bat because he is shrewd, Captain. Clever enough to outwit you, eh? Let's forget it. Tell me just how the body is lying, which hand holds the gun. Is there much blood?"

"His feet are directly in line with you," McGrath said. "There's a cheap nickel plated thirty-two in his right hand. There's a hole in his right

temple, and it isn't bleeding much. Bullet is still inside, I guess. Say—why are you asking me all these questions? Anybody would think Siggy hadn't taken the old suey route."

"Perhaps he didn't," Quinn said enigmatically. "Just to be sure, why don't you search the building?"

"Aw nuts!" McGrath strode away, cast a backward glance at Quinn and rotated a finger near his head. Quinn didn't indicate that he could see all this. Yet Quinn knew just how this murder had been accomplished.

He would have liked to point it out to Warner, but how could he? Tony Quinn was blind and could see no clues. The police were blind too, in that the clues stared them in the face and they didn't recognize them.

According to Quinn's calculations Siggy was supposed to be hiding out with his life in danger every moment. Then why would he leave a window open, even from the top? Secondly, there had been no rich smell of cordite in the room, and if Siggy shot himself an instant before the police broke in, that odor would have persisted despite the open window.

Quinn thought he knew the significance of that window too—and the round wet mark which was already rapidly fading away. A wire might have come through the window opening. The wet mark might have been where a tiny amplifier was attached to the wall. From somewhere above a man had spoken to represent himself as Siggy, who was already dead.

THE shot Warner heard could have been fired high above this room and in a manner which muffled its sound except through the amplifier. This done, the police, positive they had heard Siggy's voice and the fatal shot, the amplifier had been easily yanked loose from the wall, hauled through the window and up the outside wall.

There were times when Quinn deplored the fact that he must pose as a blind man.

CHAPTER X

The Man in Hiding

RETURNING to his office again, Tony Quinn really did find clients waiting. It was routine stuff, but it showed that people were perfectly willing to trust a blind lawyer. For a while Quinn

wondered if clients were going to interfere with his work as the Black Bat. There was little time to think over this latest phase of the case, Siggy Fox's death.

Jimmy Drake showed up with some insurance papers which Winkie, Quinn's law clerk, filled out. Then, at five-thirty, Quinn was alone in the office. He leaned back and exhaled in relief. That spell of comfort didn't last long. Quinn's phone rang. A shrill voiced young boy was on the wire.

"Is this Mr. Tony Quinn, the lawyer?" he asked and, receiving an affirmative reply, went on. "A man just gave me a dollar to read a paper to you. He says you should have a pencil and paper handy to take down some figures. Have you got a pencil and some papers?"

"Let her go," Quinn invited and knew just what was coming. The Voice of Justice was becoming increasingly ingenious with his devices to contact Quinn.

"It says," the shrill voice spoke rapidly, "to turn dial one to twelve, dial two to twenty-nine and dial three to seventy-four. Wait between five forty-five and seven o'clock. You got that, mister?"

"I've got it," Quinn answered. "By the way what did the man who gave you the note look like? Where did he meet you?"

"I'm in a drug store at the corner of Fourteenth Street and Fourth Ave-

nue," the boy explained. "I was walking by a car when a man called me. I couldn't see his face on account of too many shadows and he had his hat pulled down. He was a nice man though. Gosh I got a whole dollar."

Quinn thanked him deeply, hung up and turned on the radio. This thing was beginning to irk him. More and more he believed he was being made a dupe of—that the Voice of Justice was politely forcing him to aid in the commission of crimes which included murder.

The Voice of Justice came on the air at six-ten. His message was brief.

"So Siggy killed himself too. No matter—the man wasn't worthy of the privilege of life. Tonight, at midnight, you will be near Pierre Pierlot's place. The same procedure is to be followed, and I trust you will adhere to my faith in you. The ten thousand dollar reward is to be paid over.

"Ask Mr. Pierlot to describe his invention to you some time. You will be most interested and understand just why I am trying to help him. I shall inform Pierlot you will be there. Don't forget the reward—which I presume you collected according to the instructions I gave you. That is all."

Quinn shut off the switch and squeezed out a cigarette butt with considerable violence.

"You presume rightly," he muttered. "I've got the reward. One of these days I'll get you too."

SILK called for him shortly after and escorted his blind employer to the car. It was parked directly in front of the building with a no parking sign almost blocking one door. A patrolman was writing down the plate numbers on a ticket, but when he saw Quinn, he crumpled the ticket and helped him climb in.

"Imagine," he grinned, "I was just about to plaster a summons on your bus, Mr. Quinn. You can tell your chauffeur he can park here any time

when he calls for you. I remember a couple of things you did for me when you were the D. A."

Quinn sank back.

"At least," he said to Silk as the car pulled away, "somebody appreciates me. I tried to tip McGrath off to a juicy murder today, and he very indiscreetly indicated I was slightly balmy.

"Oh well—we've work to do. Another trip to Pierlot's for one thing I've got ten thousand dollars tucked in my pocket. Ought to make the old boy's eyes light up."

"If you ask me," Silk retorted, "Pierlot knows plenty about this Voice of Justice. I heard a broadcast about Siggy Fox's death. I suppose that's the murder you refer to."

"Right—and it was murder. Cleverly done too. You know, Silk, I think we've bowed to the orders and whims of the Voice long enough. Beginning now we'll take the offensive and see what happens."

After a hasty dinner, Silk donned a disguise, left through the secret tunnel and got the coupe which was parked not far from the garden gate. When he pulled up in it, the Black Bat's shadowy form slipped from Quinn's estate and entered the coupe.

"We'll go to Linden Place and look over the territory. There's a certain man named McKendrick who lives there. I'd like to have him explain just why his family vaults contain a crypt without a coffin engraved with the name of a family member who never existed.

"You recall the jewelry hidden in that crypt? It turned up this morning—strewn all around Siggy Fox's cadaver. Maybe Randolph McKendrick can account for it."

The McKendrick estate was huge and dismal. It needed repairs badly. The roof was peeling, huge porch uprights, once white, had turned to a dirty grey. Weeds had grown up through the spaces between the sidewalk flags.

The lawn was overrun with brush and the many trees were sadly in need of a trimming. Rotted branches lay all around.

In contrast to the neighboring estates, the McKendrick place was definitely on the seedy side.

"Rum looking joint," Silk grunted. "Looks like nobody took care of it for months."

"A year to be exact," the Black Bat put in. "McKendrick, the only survivor of an illustrious family, spent that much time in prison. I imagine there was no money to keep the place up.

"Turn around, Silk, and drop me right in front of the place. This time I'll use the front door. McKendrick is in. I saw a light in one of the back rooms."

SOME of the porch floorboards were curled up and most of them loosened by rain and wind. The doorbell had no button, but there was a hefty brass knocker, and the Black Bat rattled it hard. He heard someone approach the door.

It was thrown open by a man who started back in fear of the hooded visitor who confronted him. McKendrick didn't know it, but his visitor almost started back in the same degree of amazement. McKendrick was the man Quinn had seen approaching Siggy Fox's hideout that same morning.

"What do you want?" McKendrick gasped. "I know who you are. I heard some of the boys—" he stopped as if he thought he'd said too much.

"Do you mean the gentlemen in prison?" the Black Bat stepped into the immense reception hall. It contained no furniture, not even a rug.

"I imagine some of them remember me inasmuch as I put them behind bars. Please close the door, Mr. McKendrick. You don't have to fear me—unless you are criminally involved in the business I happen to be investigating. Is there some place we can talk?"



BUTCH

McKendrick gulped. "The kitchen. It's the only room left with any furniture in it. I sold the rest of the stuff. Had to. A man must eat."

He led the way into a spacious kitchen and sat down. The Black Bat put one foot on the seat of a straight backed chair and eyed McKendrick with some doubt.

"There are two questions I'd like you to answer," he said slowly. "The first one concerns Siggy Fox. Just what were you doing in the vicinity of his hideout on this particular morning?"

"How did you know that?" McKendrick started up and then sat back again with a groan of disgust. "What's the use? The boys at the Bib House were right. You go everywhere and see everything. You never miss a trick.

"All right, I'll tell you. Siggy was my cell mate in prison. I wanted to see him because I thought—well, it was just a personal matter. I spotted the cops and beat it. Later on, I

heard Siggy was dead and the holdup of the Holden house in Florida pinned right in his lap.

"I had nothing to do with his death. We were friends. Siggy was a nice little guy, never hurt anyone, but he was like me, trying to make a living the easy way."

"Siggy," the Black Bat said, "didn't commit suicide, McKendrick. He was murdered. Are you surprised at that statement?"

"No," McKendrick looked up defiantly. "I knew darn well Siggy never took his own life. He was too much of a coward. And just to prove to you I wasn't implicated, I'll also tell you that Siggy never pulled that Holden job. It was a physical impossibility."

"Ah! Now we're getting somewhere." The Black Bat edged his chair closer to the ex-convict. "Go on."

"The Holden job was pulled in January, 1940. I checked and that's accurate. That same month—all of it—

Siggy was in a small town hoosegow out west. The Sheriff picked him up as a vagrant.

"Siggy got thirty days and figured it as a big joke. The reason he thought it so funny was because the Sheriff was a little careless or slow about things.

"He didn't send Siggy's fingerprints to the F.B.I. until just before Siggy got out. There was a 'wanted' sign posted on Siggy's record, but by the time the news got back to the Sheriff, Siggy was gone.

"They picked him up later on though, right here in New York, and he got a year in stir. So how could Siggy have pulled a job at the same time when he was in jail a couple of thousand miles away from Florida?"

"Fine," the Black Bat approved. "Now let's see if you can really take it. In your family vault at the old cemetery, is a niche engraved with the name of Hazel. I know that there never was a Hazel McKendrick. Who or what really is buried there?"

This time McKendrick really did jump to his feet and his face turned alternately beet red and alabaster white.

"You were there. Blast you! You did it! The boys always wondered what you got out of your racket. Now I know. I ought to—"

McKendrick suddenly grabbed the chair in which he'd been sitting and hurled it at the Black Bat. This action was very quick, wholly unexpected, and the Black Bat hardly prepared for the assault. He managed to dodge the chair, but McKendrick reached a table, yanked open a drawer and held a gun in his fist a second later.

"Reach," McKendrick raged. "I'm not afraid of you. You're not a cop. I won't be reported to the parole officer for this. You can't face the cops any more than I can.

"You're the dirty slinking rat who stole what belonged to me—what I earned up there in prison. You took

it all and left me to starve!"

"So there was money hidden in that crypt." The Black Bat didn't move. "I thought you might admit that if you became riled enough. Now use your head and put that gun down. I didn't take your money."

"Nobody else knew about it except Siggy and he didn't steal it," McKendrick howled. "What if I did steal that money? I served my time and paid for it. I hid that cash in the vault to tide me over when I got out of prison.

"It was mine, I tell you. I worked for it. I'll kill you. I'll say you sneaked into my home. I have a right to protect myself. I'll—"

The Black Bat had been standing with both hands on the back of his chair. Suddenly he went into action. Seizing the chair, he lunged sideways, hurled the chair high. It struck the domed light which illuminated the kitchen. It crashed, and the room was in darkness.

"Now what good is your gun?" the Black Bat snapped. "Two can play the same game, and I have a weapon of my own. I can see you, and you don't know where I am. If you open fire, McKendrick, I'll wing you. Be sensible—I didn't come here to harm you. I wanted information and you gave it to me."

But McKendrick seemed obsessed with the idea that the Black Bat was responsible for what had happened. He was half crouched behind the kitchen table, as evident to the Black Bat's eyes as if a white spot played on him.

McKendrick heard a stealthy movement and fired. The bullet whizzed about two feet to the right of the Black Bat. McKendrick yanked trigger again and missed by a still wider margin.

Then a slug spanged against the table top, nicking it inches from his nose. The Black Bat has missed purposely, but McKendrick didn't know that. This close brush with death

seemed to take all the fight out of him and nothing remained but terror and the thoughts of flight.

He whirled, knocked aside chairs, overturned the table and took a headlong dive out of a wide, large window. The glass smashed to bits, but his weight and the impetus of his rush carried him right through. The Black Bat spotted McKendrick dodging crazily amid the trees and bushes.

He could have shot the man down, but he held his fire. Nothing would be gained by killing or crippling McKendrick. The man had told him all the information he needed. Yet the Black Bat had doubts. Perhaps McKendrick was acting a part for his benefit, intending to lend the idea that he was just a helpless pawn in the net of circumstance. McKendrick, as Warner had mentioned, could have made a perfect Voice of Justice.

The shooting was bound to arouse the neighborhood, and it was no place for the Black Bat. He risked a few moments during which he examined the rest of the house. It was practically empty. The only furniture left was old, decrepit and not worth while hauling away.

Silk picked him up, and they dodged curious neighbors and a couple of patrolmen running toward the scene.

CHAPTER XI

Council of War



FIVE minutes before midnight, Tony Quinn's limousine turned slowly off the highway into that narrow, little used road from which Pierre Pierlot strange electric car picked up visitors. As the limousine was guided along this lane by Silk, the left rear door opened and Butch O'Leary jumped out to dive into the brush

without the slightest pause. Butch had certain orders to follow.

Tony Quinn sat in the back seat, both hands on the crook of his cane. He was a blind man again—and the Voice of Justice's contact agent with ten thousand dollars to lend an inventor.

Silk stopped short as the milage reached the proper position. Tony Quinn got out and waited. Soon the strong light beamed down on him, and the funny little black car came rolling up. Quinn followed Pierlot's directions on how to locate the door handle, got in and was taken to the garage again.

"Thank you, thank you." Pierlot accepted the packet of bills. "If this keeps on, I shall have more than enough to finish my experiments. The Voice of Justice must be a great man. Clever too, in the way he traps criminals.

"Oh yes, before I forget, there is a mild warning, Mr. Quinn. Last time you came here, you were followed. By the Black Bat! Of course I know he is as cunning as the Voice and you are—well—certainly not hard to keep track of.

"I can hardly be so inconsiderate as to accuse you of carelessness. No matter anyway. The Black Bat is on our side. I merely wished to point out that someone else might follow you here."

"I shall instruct my driver to be most careful," Quinn said. We shall take roundabout ways to reach you as well. I wish I could be more alert, but my eyes—"

Pierlot patted Quinn's shoulder.

"Forget it, my friend. You have been very kind assisting the Voice this way. I am most appreciative. And now, if you wish to return, my radio controlled car is at your convenience. Or will you come into my house for a drink first? I have—"

Pierlot stopped short for somewhere. in the darkness of his large estate, a branch cracked very loudly. Pierlot

reached for the light switch, and doused the garage in gloom. He drew a gun and moved toward the door.

"Please do not move, Mr. Quinn," he said softly. "I am afraid there are trespassers. I must go out and see."

Pierlot disappeared among the thick forest growth and Quinn gave him about three minutes before he started moving toward Pierlot's house.

It was easy to enter because Pierlot was sure enough of himself not to have locked the front door. Quinn went straight to the laboratory, kept one hand stretched in front of him in case that glass curtain was in place.

It wasn't, and he came to Pierlot's laboratory benches. On one of these was a radio somewhat similar to that which the Voice had sent him. It was larger though, more complicated. A quick look told Quinn the real story.

With this set a man could send as well as receive. It meant that Pierlot might be broadcasting those messages from the Voice, altering his own rather strident tones to match the mellower ones of the Voice.

On the inventor's desk was a silver framed photograph. Two people were in it, and one certainly Pierlot, although he was much younger in the picture. The other was that of a very pretty woman dressed in the fashions of about fifteen or eighteen years ago.

There was no further time to examine the premises. Pierlot might return to the garage at any moment, although Butch, who lured him away, had orders to keep him busy.

WHEN Pierlot did return, puffing badly and hopping mad, Tony Quinn sat on the running board of the electric car. He smoked a cigarette, and there were two butts on the floor to indicate just how he'd been spending his time.

"Is that you, Pierlot?" Quinn asked nervously.

"It is. There was someone prowling, but he got away. Some tramp who blundered on my property, I suppose.

You may get in the car now and be most careful next time you come. There are certain people who may know what I'm working on and they would sell their souls for my invention.

"I know how they operate. My experiences have been most bitter. Other things I perfected were stolen from me, but this one—it must not be. Good-night and thank you again."

Silk drove to the appointed spot, and Quinn got into his car. They picked up Butch in one of the darkest spots in the road, where trees masked the site from Pierlot's house.

"Did I do it okay, boss?" Butch chuckled. "Say, that old bird can move pretty fast. A couple of times he almost had me."

"It worked splendidly, Butch. We'll all go to the lab now. As soon as we get there, I'll call Carol over and we'll hold a council of war. This has been a profitable night."

Later, with his three aides gathered around him, Tony Quinn explained what he knew so far.

"The Voice of Justice is, as I suspected, out to garner a tidy sum for himself. How is he doing it? I'm not positive, but I have ideas.

"First of all we have Junky Malone, dead from gas poisoning. I believe he was murdered although there were few clues evident, and the shack where he died was destroyed before it could be examined thoroughly.

"Then Siggy Fox died. I know *he* was murdered and the business set up to simulate suicide. Now both Junky and Siggy were accused by the Voice of being the men who robbed a business firm and a home, respectively.

"Part of the loot was in cash and this was never found. Another part consisted of bonds and jewelry that were too hot to be easily disposed of. The Voice isn't turning back any of the cash involved, is he?"

"Tony," Carol said thoughtfully, "are you trying to tell us that the Voice contacts the real criminals who handled those jobs, takes the cash

from them and then arranges to throw the blame for those crimes onto innocent men. Men who are known crooks could have done it, but didn't?"

"Exactly." Quinn leaned forward. "Turning the reward money over to Pierlot may be just a window dressing to make the police and the public believe the Voice has no financial interest in this business.

"Yet it seems to me that the Voice really does expect some material gain from Pierlot. How, I can't say, and I'm most interested to find out. In fact Pierlot may be the Voice. He has a short wave sending set in his lab.

"McKendrick is a peculiar chap too. He has given me to believe that he had some money hidden in that crypt. In fact, because I knew of the place, he thinks I took the money."

"What can we do to locate the Voice?" Silk queried. "He must have something pretty big on his mind. There isn't enough profit to risk so much for just what a couple of crooks will turn over to him."

"I'm afraid you're right," Quinn answered. "The Voice won't be satisfied with small profits, and I think he's just setting the stage for something very big. We've got to stop him before he gets into action, and there may be one way to do it. I'm sorry to say

it will be very dangerous, and Silk is the only man who could handle the matter."

"Yes sir," Silk said. "Tell me."

"The Voice, no matter how powerful or all knowing he may be, cannot provide himself with cases like the ones Junky and Siggy were alleged to be involved in. If something turned up, he will probably bite at it.

"Suppose we set a trap for him. In disguise, Silk can rob someone, making sure to take jewels and cash. I can arrange the robbery easily, I'm sure."

"Any time at all, sir," Silk offered. "That's old stuff to me. If the Voice is looking for another sucker, I'll make sure he finds one. When do I start?"

"Tomorrow night," Quinn said. "At about ten o'clock. Mr. and Mrs. Britt are giving a war relief party. They have a nice collection of jewelry and plenty of cash. We'll work out the details later. Now let's talk about young Drake. Did you learn anything about him, Carol?"

"Very little," she said. "Everything favorable too. No drinking, liked his home and seemed quite contented with his wife. Everybody thought well of them both even though the neighbors know that Drake was under arrest. Butch discovered he hangs around a

[Turn page]

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pool parlor a lot, smokes expensive cigars, but he doesn't drink."

QUINN thought of the way Drake had put down a hooker of very strong, very old brandy, neat, without batting an eye. Of course Drake really did need a drink at the time and was so excited the fiery liquor might have had little effect on his throat.

Butch and Carol left shortly thereafter. Silk busied himself around the house, and Tony Quinn sucked methodically on a pipe as he sat before the fireplace. The trap he was ready to set, with Silk's able help, might bring results.

If it did prove to be successful, he might find a trail which led direct to the mysterious Voice of Justice. At the very least, even if Silk failed in contacting the man personally, it would prove that the Voice's motives were not the sincere ones he broadcast.

Just why Pierlot was benefitting, was beyond Tony Quinn's ken. There must be a definite reason. Such men as the Voice did nothing without a concrete purpose.

If it was just publicity that he wished, something to make the public really believe he was a humanitarian and a philanthropist, then it would have been better and easier to allow recognized charities to benefit and not some obscure inventor whom few people knew.

In fact, Pierlot offered the best possibilities of being the Voice. Drake was undoubtedly just a chessman in this game of life and death while McKendrick played with fire and was in grave danger of getting his fingers burned.

The only thing that really nettled Quinn was the fact that Warner had named him as the go-between. Naturally, Quinn felt somewhat proud that Warner should have proffered his name as an honest and reliable person.

But now, if he learned anything through his bizarre connection with

the Voice, that information couldn't be used to help the Black Bat's investigation. Above all else neither the Voice nor any other person must realize that Tony Quinn wasn't blind and that he was the Black Bat.

CHAPTER XII

Attorney for Crime



Three minutes of nine the following evening, Silk Kirby ducked onto the spacious grounds of the Britt place. He could hear an orchestra playing and the sound of gay voices. The party

was in full progress.

Silk's closest friends would hardly have recognized him. He was no longer the nearly bald, somewhat impassive featured person who worked for Tony Quinn. Rather, Silk seemed to have aged ten years. There were deep, coarse lines on his face. His nose was broader and his skin more of a sickly hue, like a man who is unaccustomed to sunlight.

A perfectly fitting wig, glued firmly to his pate, was black as coal, and false eyebrows were of a similiar color. His clothes were far more flamboyant than those which Silk Kirby was used to wearing. The suit was brown with fine white bordered blocks. His tie was an unpleasant red and he wore a shirt that would have been the pride of Harlem.

Inside the house, Tony Quinn was busy. He knew where the wall safe was located and he also knew the habits of Mrs. Britt. At a party of this kind she selected her jewels according to the gown she wore, and she rarely decided upon the gown until just before the party. Therefore, most of her jewels were taken from the bank vaults, and those not used were merely stowed in the wall safe. Britt

usually kept a fairly large sum of cash on hand too.

The wall safe was in the study, practically deserted during the affair. Quinn reached it without attracting any attention. He went to work immediately. The wall safe was an old one affair, and Tony Quinn's fingertips have developed an extremely acute sense of touch. He could feel the tumblers drop into place.

He cleaned out the safe, stowing its contents into various pockets. Closing it again, he made his way back to the reception hall. Although he betrayed no emotion whatsoever, he was considerably surprised to see McKendrick just entering. The ex-convict gave him a quizzical glance.

Quinn reached the steps and climbed them, moving stiffly and keeping his cane extended to ward off objects which might be in his path. In the privacy of a bed room, he appropriated a pillow cover, filled it with the loot and took a quick glance out of the window. Silk was there and waiting. Quinn raised the window shade all the way to the top.

Silk was eager to get started. He reflected that this was going to be one of the easiest acts of thievery in history. He skirted a group of chauffeurs who were playing rummy near the garage, reached the back of the house and gazed thoughtfully at the many windows. In one the shade was rolled all the way to the top. Silk glanced at his watch. In about thirty seconds he'd be on the first lap of a race with the Voice.

The window was wide open. At precisely ten, a white pillow case came flying out of it. This landed on a bush, and Silk spent a minute or two disentangling the thing. Holding it in one hand, he headed toward the row of parked cars. His next act was a trifle more dangerous. Drawing a gun, he approached a car that was headed for the street. The driver sat behind the wheel, reading a magazine in the soft rays of the dome light.

"Don't make a sound," Silk said gently. "Just open the door and get out. I'm borrowing this wagon, pal. Yeah—that's a gat in my mitt and I know how to make it go boom. Come on—stop stalling."

THE chauffeur obeyed, but he was a much bigger man than Silk, and he seemed to be imbued with a certain foolhardy bravery. As his feet hit the ground, he lunged toward Silk, heedless of the gun. Silk sensed his attack and he was ready. The sack of loot which he held in one hand, swung up and out.

It hit the chauffeur full in the face with enough force to split the pillow case open and spill part of the contents on the ground. But it served very well as a weapon of defense, for the chauffeur went down with a crash. Silk picked up a few pieces of jewelry, jumped into the car and drove off in a hurry.

He ditched the car several miles from the house, walked ten blocks and then took a cab. He paid off the driver near a subway station and a few minutes later swaggered into a brilliantly lighted tavern.

Silk knew this place from past experience. In his days as a con man he'd been told of it. Here a known crook could find refuge from the police or a spot where he might spend his stolen loot freely without worrying about the cops learning of it.

The tavern was open to the public, and the smaller room out front was frequented by people who hadn't the vaguest idea that not many feet away, behind a row of palms that masked a wall, was still another room, much larger, better equipped and humming with activity.

Silk went through the outer tavern without a pause. Two men in tuxedos barred his path further down a corridor, however. Silk smiled knowingly and gave them certain names. They were the names of men Silk knew frequented this place occasionally,

but would not be there then. The racing season was going strong in the South and West. Silk's former pals haunted those places at the height of the seasons.

"Wait a minute, buddy," one of the tuxedoed men snapped, "you're carrying a roscoe on you. No gats allowed in there. Check it with us."

"Okay." Silk fished out the gun. "Not a bad idea at that, if you mugs keep your eyes peeled for cops and stool pigeons. Say, suppose a guy has something to sell. You know, at a discount. What's the best way of getting rid of the stuff in this town?"

One of the men handed Silk a numbered tab with which he could reclaim his pistol. Then he led Silk to a narrow door and tapped on it. The door opened, as if those taps had been a signal. Silk's escort stepped inside, guided his eyes toward a table in a far corner and spoke in a whisper.

"See that guy? He's right. Knows everything too—smart as a whip. Talk to him."

Silk, wise in the ways of the underworld, didn't approach the indicated man at once. Instead he ordered drinks for everyone and, while he sipped his own, studied the man. He saw a droopy-eyed, thick-lipped individual about forty years old and bulging slightly at the waist line.

Those half lidded eyes moved around the room constantly and were appraisive in their glances. This man, whoever he might be, was no fool. Silk was going to have to play his little game with all caution.

THE surest way to attract attention in a place like this was by spending money fast. Silk did so and took care to exhibit the roll of money stolen from the Britt house. Finally he decided the time was ripe. That sleepy-eyed stranger kept watching him, as if in approval. Silk sent a bottle of champagne over and followed it himself after a few minutes.

"My name is Juren," he said softly. "I'm new in these parts, but there's soft pickings here if I say so myself. I been nosing around, mister. They tell me you're a good man to ask advice from. Is that a fact?"

"It all depends, Juren. I used to be a lawyer before I bucked the cops and bid out a few guys. They got sore at me, and I was kicked out of the bar. I know how things are done, if that's what you mean. You're trying to get rid of stuff lifted from a family named Britt, aren't you?"

Silk reached for the champagne bottle and took a firm grip on its neck.

"Listen pal," he growled softly. "Smart guys are okey, but wise guys..."

"Relax. I'm Johnny Stafford. I heard the cop's broadcast just before you showed up here. Take my advice, friend. Get rid of those clothes. The chauffeur you knocked stiff couldn't describe your face much, but those duds—he got 'em down to the last thread.

"You got a lot of cash, which you've been blowing around here. Good—money is meant to be spent. But there's a matter of certain jewelry pieces you want to get rid of. Calm down, will you? Hand me that bottle and we'll both have a drink. I can do you a lot of good."

"Okay." Silk passed over the bottle. "I did pull that job, and I shoulda bumped that fool chauffeur. I got two grand left in cash, but the other stuff looks as though it's worth a small fortune. Looks like I'm on the lam so I've got to get rid of it quick. Would a percentage interest you?"

"Not in the least," Stafford said indolently. "Five hundred dollars would, but you don't have to pay me now. I'll give you an address. Go there and somebody will look at your stuff. I'll meet you later."

Stafford scrawled an address, passed the paper to Silk and indicated that the interview was finished.

Silk got up, went back to the bar for another drink and saw Stafford summon a gimlet-eyed crook. When Silk produced his check for the gun, it was refused.

"We got orders you ain't to carry a roscoe tonight, pal. Tomorrow we'll hand it over. Sorry."

Silk shrugged and recognized Stafford's fine hand. The disbarred attorney didn't want Silk armed because he planned to meet him later on. It showed that Silk's deception had worked beautifully.

THE address proved to be that of a small candy store, wholly unprepossessing in appearance. It was located a block from a big public school and did most of its business during the daytime. There were lollypops and penny candy in one of the small windows. A few boxes of colored chalk, pencils and tablets adorned the other. A bell tinkled musically as Silk pushed open the door, and a burly man with thin, gold rimmed glasses thrust up on his forehead, came from a back room.

Silk shoved the paper across the counter.

"Maybe you know this writing, pal. It's from a friend of yours."

"I know," the storekeeper bobbed his head. "Come into the back room. You have the stuff with you?"

Silk patted his coat pocket and followed the fence into the living quarters at the back of the store. He dumped the jewelry on a table. The storekeeper shoved a jeweler's glass against his right eye, took a quick look at several pieces and then peered closely at Silk.

"This is hot—very hot, eh? It was stolen not more than three or four hours ago at the most. And you want me to handle it? Nothing doing."

"Aw, listen to reason," Silk begged. "Suppose it is hot. What's the difference if you hang onto it or I do—except you can buy it now plenty cheaper than in six months."

"Two hundred dollars," the fence offered tentatively.

Silk gaped at him and seemed to have difficulty finding his voice.

"Two hundred measly bucks?" he yapped. "What kind of a snap do I look like? This is worth five grand. I expected to take a beating of, say, four grand, but you don't buy it for what you offered. I'd rather hand it back."

The fence gestured with both hands. "Then I think we shall do no business. I make but one offer. Good night."

Silk cursed softly and gathered up the gems. He dropped them into his pocket and stalked out. The attitude of this fence was so peculiar that he knew it must be trumped up.

Someone didn't want Silk to dispose of the jewelry. When he stepped on the sidewalk again, he had an answer. A car pulled up and Stafford called to him. Silk got into the front seat beside the disbarred lawyer.

"How'd you make out?" Stafford inquired with a broad grin.

Silk cursed again. "What kind of a guy is he? Two hundred bucks he offered. I'll toss it down the nearest sewer first. Say—are there any other fences who don't want to own the mint in the next couple of years?"

"I'm afraid not." Stafford shifted gears and drove north. "You see, there is a new regime in town. Men like that fence take orders. Anyway the stuff you swiped isn't so good. In the first place it's too hot, and, secondly, it has more of a sentimental than intrinsic value."

"You talk big words," Silk countered. "You mean the stuff ain't worth much? Holy Smokes, I must have pulled a boner. That's what you get trying to work a strange town."

Stafford's eyes were glued on the road.

"Just the same, Juren, you showed considerable pluck and skill in getting your hands on that stuff. Men like you don't come along every day

and I think I know someone who could use you. Ever work for a boss?"

"Nope—never will."

"But that's where you're wrong. It's true you only get a percentage of the take, but in the long run your profits will be bigger. But we'll talk about that later. Say—how about a little drink?"

Stafford pulled a flask from his pocket, told Silk to remove the stopper and then took a long pull at it. Silk watched him out of the corner of his eyes. Stafford's tongue was pressed against the neck. He didn't drink a drop. Silk did, however. He was prepared for almost anything to happen, and he had to go through with it.

CHAPTER XIII

The Voice Shows His Colors



SILK never did know quite what happened after that. When he opened his eyes again, he was seated in a very comfortable chair all alone. He stood up, but his knees felt wobbly and he sat down again fast. His mind was clear as a bell though, and he had an eerie feeling that he was being watched.

Slowly, like a man both afraid and surprised, he turned his head to examine all corners of the room. It was an elaborately fitted out place with expensive trappings. Silk's watch was intact and it told him he had been unconscious for a little less than two hours.

Finally Silk got up again. He approached one of the two doors in the room and he kept twisting his head as if expecting an attack from behind. The door was locked. Silk growled something and kicked savagely at the panels.

"Please, Mr. Juren," a voice said. "Don't try to ruin my house. Just sit down. You're among friends. Stafford brought you here because he thought you were an able, intelligent man without too many scruples.

"It seems you robbed a house tonight—cleverly, too. I'd like to hear the details some day. That act proved to me you are a man I'm interested in."

"Yeah," Silk sneered. "What kind of a third degree is this? Why don't you show yourself so I can talk back?"

"But you can. I hear every word, Juren. Rather an aggressive person, aren't you? So much the better. Now listen and don't interrupt me. You have two thousand dollars in your pockets—also some jewelry of questionable value.

"Don't bother to look. We haven't touched it, and if you refuse to accept my offer, it will still be yours. The police have an excellent description of you. The chauffeur you struck is badly hurt. He may die and that means the chair. Will you stop being so jittery? There is a way out."

"How do I know this is on the level?" Silk looked in all directions madly. "How do I know you're not a copper, and this is a nice little plant?"

"Would Stafford have been apt to to turn you over to the police? No, Juren, this is quite on the level. Here is my proposition. Turn that money over to me and I'll arrange things so that another man—some stupid fool—will take the blame for your job.

"I never fail. For instance, you may have heard how the Voice of Justice revealed that Siggy Fox was a crook. Siggy didn't pull the job he was accused of. Siggy was just a foil and I'll get another to accept the blame for your crime."

Silk had definite orders from the Black Bat for just such an opening as this.

"What," he asked, "do you get out of it? The two grand I got? That ain't much for what you're giving.

And who are you? I'm not working for anybody who is afraid to identify himself."

"I have a plan," the Voice said. "A very definite one. You see, I choose my men most carefully. To join my organization a man must have first proven himself, as you did with that Britt job.

"Alone, you invaded a house full of people and made off with loot. That not only takes nerve, which is essential to me, but you displayed extreme cleverness, which I hold as an even greater asset."

"Oh," Silk looked thoughtful, "I'm beginning to get it. You pin the blame on somebody else so I don't have to worry about being picked up for the job. Then I join your mob. You're cooking up a gang that's like nothing the cops ever were up against before. Am I right?"

"Correct—and shrewd," the unseen man responded. "That's it exactly. The men who work for me will all be specialists in their own lines. We'll plan the biggest jobs ever known, and pull them off without a hitch. Now I'll tell you who I am. Have you heard of the Voice of Justice?"

Silk looked up quickly.

"Have I! That rat is working right with the cops. He must have a lot of stool pigeons planted around.

"Hey! Wait a minute. You're the Voice of Justice! That's how you make the cops believe those saps you plant, are to blame for the various crimes. Good gosh, that's a perfect set-up.

"Will I join your mob? I'll say I will! There'll be plenty of dough working for a guy like you. When do I start?"

"Now," the Voice chuckled. "First of all I want you to think back and tell me of any men whom you already know, who would make good adherents to our cause. Clever men like yourself. And let me warn you, Juren, there is no backing out.

"You'll take orders like the rest.

Obey them blindly if necessary. Should you feel inclined to tell what you know, you won't live three minutes.

"You will also remember that I can always prove you did that Britt job, and I shall arrange things so that it won't be hard to prove that you killed someone so that he'd take the rap for you. I hope such measures are never necessary. We'll forget all that temporarily.

"Look in the corner—right in front of you. See that cabinet? It contains the choicest liquors I could get. Help yourself. Drink to the success of our new organization. Drink to the moment when we strike first."

SILK went to the cabinet, poured himself a full measure of rye and held the glass high. Then he downed it, knowing full well the stuff was drugged. Silk never even made the chair. His knees buckled and he collapsed on the floor.

The Voice laughed and the hidden amplifier was cut off with a click. Two men entered, carried Silk out to a garage, put him in a car and he was driven to Central Park. In one of its darkest, most deserted spots, he was placed on a bench.

Silk awoke there and marveled that the drug left no aftermath of dizziness of nausea. The gems which had been in his pockets, were gone. So was all but a hundred dollars of the loot from the Britt job. Silk smiled wryly. This was a fairly expensive little trap Tony Quinn had set. That money, and those jewels would have to be replaced. The Black Bat was not a crook.

His watch told him it was nearly dawn. At anytime after, midnight Silk could contact Butch, and he decided to do this at once. Then he'd find some cheap hotel, get a room and establish himself there so that when the Voice sent for him, he'd be easy to find.

Butch, according to plan, had set up

a crude newsstand on Fifty-Ninth Street, just off Park Plaza. It consisted of a couple of boards supported by boxes. Butch hadn't sold many papers. His heart wasn't in the work, and he kept looking for Silk constantly. As the hours went by, he became more and more worried.

Then Silk, in a disguise which Butch already knew, sauntered up, dropped a half dollar on the stand and picked up a newspaper. His lips didn't move as he spoke to Butch.

"Everything going off without a hitch. Voice planning big gang of picked men. Pass the word along and be here tomorrow night. Tell the boss a disbarred lawyer named Stafford fronts for the Voice."

"Thanks, bud," Butch handed over the change. Silk thrust the newspaper under his arm and walked east. A block away he pretended to study the headlines, but he managed to slip a message from between the sheets of the paper. He read it and gulped.

"Exercise all caution. Randolph McKendrick at Britt party. Knows I was there and may suspect something. Chance he might be the Voice, so be prepared if you are asked any questions. Good luck."

THE ex-con man saw the logic of the Black Bat's warning. McKendrick, if he was the Voice or connected with him in any way, might suspect that Tony Quinn had helped to pull that rather astounding robbery to trap the Voice.

If that were true, Silk was in a difficult spot. Still apparently engrossed in the newspaper, he crushed the note and, as he passed by a sewer drain, flipped it through the metal spaces. At least that was out of the way.

Suddenly Silk was aware of two men who were rapidly coming up from behind. His wrists were seized, hands patted his pockets in search of a gun, and then he was pushed against a wall. Held there firmly, yet in such a manner that any passerby would only

think this was a friendly conversation between a trio of night owls, the newspaper was yanked from his hand. One of the men opened it and looked carefully at all the pages.

Finally he flung the newspaper into the gutter.

Silk had much more than these two thugs to worry about. It was clear that he'd been shadowed every minute since he left the park. Now, two blocks away, he could see another pair of thugs approach Butch at his newsstand.

He saw an argument start and Butch, losing his temper and his wits, grabbed both men, held them by the scruff of their necks and banged their heads together with a thump that was clearly heard even where Silk stood. Butch dropped his victims, peered down the street and started running in Silk's direction.

This dead giveaway was more than enough. Silk was hustled to the corner.

A taxi driver, cowed by a gun, shot away from the curb after Silk and his two guards piled in.

Silk made one desperate attempt to grab the door handle. A gun muzzle smacked him across the back of the neck then crashed down on his skull. Silk folded up in a heap.

Butch saw the cab vanish around a corner, looked in vain for another and realized that even if he got one, the chances of trailing Silk were very few.

The getaway cab had too much of a start.

There was only one thing to do—warn the Black Bat. Even the pair of thugs Butch had brained, were gone. Whether they'd left under their own steam or with the assistance of more members of the mob. Butch didn't know.

He hailed a taxi and had himself driven to a spot where he had parked the coupe. Then he streaked for Tony Quinn's estate with the bad news.

CHAPTER XIV

The Black Bat's Fear

TONY QUINN heard Butch out, and as the giant explained what had happened, beads of sweat formed on Quinn's forehead. The laboratory felt stuffy, and at the same time Quinn's blood was running icy cold.

"Bad," he told Butch. "The worst possible thing that could have happened. I don't blame you. Seems the Voice never trusted Silk anyway, and his men were filled with enough suspicion to question Silk's purchase of a newspaper from a news stand and that just happened to string up at that corner tonight. I hadn't figured on his being so carefully watched."

"You find out where he's at," Butch promised, "and I'll wade right in if I have to eat a bucket of hot lead doing it. If they hurt Silk, I'll bust their necks."

"Yes—that might be most delightful for both of us," Quinn said. "Unfortunately it won't work, because I haven't the faintest idea where they might have taken Silk."

"He said something about a guy named Stafford fronting for the Voice," Butch offered hopefully.

"Stafford?" Quinn gasped. "I know him. He's a two legged rat. Kicked out of the bar because of crooked dealings. Smart too—smart enough to, even be the Voice. Clever enough to act as his own front so as to confuse members of the gang."

"At least we have a vague lead, and we know what Silk uncovered. The Voice is the biggest crook of them all. He's getting together a gang of the most vicious criminals in the nation, framing their misdeeds on others and then murdering these saps

so they can't deny the charge he placed on them as the Voice of Justice.

"Justice! That man doesn't know the meaning of the word. We've got a ghastly situation on our hands, Butch. Silk is in very serious danger, and the Voice is getting ready to unleash a gang that will murder and plunder to their heart's content."

"What are you going to do about it?" Butch asked.

"I don't know," Quinn groaned. "If McKendrick suspects that I, as Tony Quinn, had anything to do with the robbery last night, he must also suspect that I am the Black Bat."

"No one has ever come quite as close to my dual identity before, not even Captain McGrath. Butch—for the first time since I adopted the form of the Black Bat, I'm afraid. Unless we beat the Voice to his guns, we're licked."

It was grey dawn outside, and the lighter it became, the more dangerous it was for Butch to leave via the tunnel and the garden house.

"Stay close to your phone," Quinn told him. "Warn Carol too. She must be on guard. I'll contact you as quickly as I can. Gas the car up and be ready for action."

When Butch left, Quinn sat down heavily and tried to figure out his next move. Tackling Stafford might have severe repercussions, especially if McKendrick was the Voice and already suspected Quinn.

There was a net, as invisible as Pierlot's glass curtain, gradually closing in, and for the Black Bat there seemed to be no exit. The Voice was the most subtle crook he'd ever bumped up against. It was going to require all his tact and cleverness to outwit this crime czar.

There were two courses he might take. He could grab Stafford and make him talk—which was highly dangerous—or wait, and depend on Silk's natural ability to stall. Perhaps the Voice would tip Tony Quinn,

via his radio messages, to pick up Silk for the Britt job. That too, was fraught with plenty of peril. Quinn remembered how Junky Malone and Siggy Fox had been found.

WHEN Quinn left the lab, it was almost time for him to start for the office. He took a chance and called Butch, giving him detailed instructions. Then he cautioned Carol to stand ready and gave her orders too.

Breakfast didn't interest him, but he had to change his clothes. Passing through the hall on his way to the staircase, he saw a white envelope pushed beneath the door. He picked it up, ripped the seal and read the terse message it contained.

"For another very interesting case, tune dials as follows: One to fifty-three; two to sixteen; three to one eighty-eight. Listen between nine-thirty and eleven this morning."

"A very interesting case," Quinn mused. "There are hidden words behind those printed ones, I'm afraid. At least I know where I stand anyhow."

Quinn dressed and phoned for a cab. When he reached his office, there was a large packing case there, addressed to him. Winkie, the law clerk explained how it arrived.

"Big guy just brought it in. Says it's a special delivery of some books you ordered. Big case too—plenty heavy."

"Oh yes, I've been expecting them," Quinn said. "Don't bother about them. I'll take care of the matter later on. By the way, I ran into a rather important and highly confidential case last night. I'll be very busy from about noon on so we must clean up all details before then."

Quinn's growing practice kept him busy during the morning. He kept the radio tuned in between the arranged hours. The message came late this time. It was almost eleven o'clock when the monotonous hum was shattered.

As the time had elapsed, Quinn grew more and more worried for fear that the Voice had tumbled to Silk's identity and now refused to expose himself to Quinn again, even through the non-traceable route of the short wave set.

He was actually relieved when the Voice spoke.

"Mr. Quinn, I have the pleasure of turning another criminal over to you. This one shows just how promptly I work sometimes. It's the Britt job of only last night.

"I haven't read about any reward offered, but because of the sentimental value attached to the stolen gems, I rather think Mr. Britt will be more than willing to pay, shall we say, five thousand dollars. At three o'clock this afternoon, please arrange for the police to pick up the criminal.

"He will be in the old Verona Metal Works plant, an abandoned building at the very end of White Street. Tell the police to use caution. This man is dangerous and may be armed. Later you will hear when to take the reward money to Pierlot. That is all."

Quinn clicked off the radio and considered the situation for two or three minutes. The Voice had never given him so much leeway before. There were four hours before the time when that abandoned factory should be raided.

Why? Because the Voice suspected Tony Quinn was the Black Bat and might don hood and cape to rescue Silk? There seemed to be no other reason. If the Bat did appear at that factory, then the Voice would be positive that he and Quinn were one and the same.

To save Silk meant probable exposure of his dual identity, but Quinn never hesitated. Silk was worth the exposure, and much more. The Black Bat was going to swing into action no matter what the consequences were.

But Quinn had a prearranged plan which might throw some doubt about



Butch, losing his temper, grabbed both men (Chapter XIII)

his being possessed of full sight and also being the Black Bat. He stepped to the window and let a piece of white paper flutter to the ground. That was a signal. Five minutes later his communicating system buzzed, and Winkie made an announcement.

"Lady here to see you, sir. Says she has an appointment."

"Oh yes. She's here about that important matter I encountered last night. Send her in, Winkie. I'm

going to lock the door and cut off this annunciator for perhaps two hours. If anyone comes, please have him wait or return later this afternoon."

THE door opened, and Carol came in. Quinn met her, acting his part of a blind man to the hilt. He closed and locked the door. Then he sat down behind his desk, cut the annunciator and waited two or three

minutes during which time he talked to Carol as though she were a client.

Finally he got up, walked over to that packing case which had arrived via Butch, who had acted as an expressman and quickly opened it up. There were many law books inside and he hastily discarded these. Hidden beneath them was the Black Bat's hood, cape, shoes and black clothing.

These were neatly rolled into compact wads. There was a pair of overalls, and a jumper inside too. Also a cap and a leather harness such as window washers use. He stuffed the Black Bat's regalia into his pockets, put on the overalls and jumper.

From the packing case he also took a pail, chamois and a rubber squeegee. Carol carried the pail into the adjoining wash room and half filled it while Quinn went over to a mirror and applied a pasty substance which filled in those deeply etched scars on his face.

He was no master at the art of disguise and his features were particularly difficult to erase, but Silk had taught him enough so that he managed to change the color of his skin to a much swarthier hue. His hair became coal black with a dye that would rinse out in a hurry. He put on a pair of glasses, inspected himself and decided this must do.

"If I fail, Silk is lost, and so are we," he told Carol. "That's why I can't miss. Stay here and talk out loud every once in awhile, as though we were carrying on a conversation. Wish me luck, darling."

He kissed her, very briefly, and then went over to the window. Raising it, he leaned out, hooked the safety belt into place and then climbed to the sill. He actually washed the window, although the time it required made him worry and fret. Every second brought Silk that much closer to his doom.

Finally he maneuvered to the window of the next office, washed that and kept on doing this until he came

to a vacant suite. He slipped inside. Moving fast, he stripped off the overalls and jumper, left them in a corner with the rest of his window washing equipment and then brought out an old, soft hat from under his shirt.

He pulled the brim of it well down, prayed those scars were not visible, and slipped into the corridor. He went to the elevators, reached the lobby and walked boldly through it.

A block away Butch was waiting in the coupe, more nervous than Quinn had ever seen him. As Butch headed for the river front and that abandoned factory, Quinn left his disguise on, but drew the light, somber clothing of the Black Bat over his own garments. It was broad daylight—the time when bats roost in some dark place and never venture out. Quinn felt more like a bat today than he ever had before.

"Pull up in some alley," the Black Bat ordered. Listen carefully because I need your help. You are to walk directly toward the factory. When you get near it, begin to duck for shelter, but if anybody is watching, I want them to see you.

"After a few seconds of this, begin to retreat. That will draw any guards after you. Don't let them catch you, Butch—not even if you have to enjoy yourself and break a few heads. Get busy."

BUTCH blundered toward the place and then went into his act. If anyone was hiding near the door, or even inside, they'd be watching Butch intently. The Black Bat, hood in place, guns ready for action, went into crouching approach.

He disdained the front door—that would be too well guarded. Instead he circled the place and headed for the shipping platform at the rear. He reached this and ducked beneath it, certain he had been unobserved.

He heard the big door slide back. There were voices. Someone said,

"You two fan out and try to take

that big lug. The others are going to force him right into your arms. No shooting. Use a knife if you must, but don't attract any attention or give any alarm. When you get back, kick the door four times fast and then two slow kicks."

Two men jumped off the platform and without a backward glance raced to their assigned posts. The Black Bat waited three minutes, counting the seconds on his watch. Then he clambered onto the platform, prayed he wouldn't be spotted and kicked the door in the prearranged signal.

It slid back. There was one man guarding it, and he made a desperate effort to reach his gun and screech an alarm at the same time. The Black Bat's gloved fist hit him squarely on the point of the chin.

There was a crunching sound because the Black Bat had put all his steam behind the plow. He was playing with dynamite now, and the fuse grew shorter with every passing instant. He couldn't afford to take the slightest chance.

He closed the door as softly as possible, disarmed the unconscious crook and then moved toward the center of the old factory.

It had been used as an iron foundry. Skylights were broken, windows thick with grime and the light inside was grey. There were shadows everywhere and these suited the Black Bat perfectly. There were old moulding forms stacked high and they offered a good shield for his approach. Behind them, he studied, the situation.

By raising a couple near the top of the pile, he had a clear view of the large interior. There were big supporting pillars at various architecturally strategic places. To one of these—near the northwest corner, a man had been tightly bound. There was a gag between his lips too.

Average eyes, in this grey gloom of the old building, might not have been enabled to distinguish the identity of the prisoner, but he was clearly

revealed to the Black Bat. It was Silk!

CHAPTER XV

Strike First



It was a trap after all, one calculated to draw Tony Quinn out of his guise as a blind attorney, put him in the raiments of the Black Bat and force him to expose himself. There would be men waiting and watching too. There was very little time to waste. The Black Bat knew that Silk was gagged so he couldn't give an alarm.

Behind the spot where the Black Bat stood was a small machine shop. He ducked into it and looked around. There were a couple of old, two quart beer bottles on the floor. A tin can half full of gasoline was on a bench, and there was a drum containing a small quantity of motor oil.

The Black Bat smiled grimly behind his mask and went to work. First he filled each bottle with three parts of gasoline to one of motor oil. He plugged both bottles, found some oily waste and tied this to the bottom of each bottle.

He saturated the waste with gasoline and then carried his home made bombs back to that shelter behind the moulding frames. The Black Bat had fashioned a favorite weapon used in recent wars. It was termed the Molotov Cocktail. By setting fire to the gas soaked waste, the fuse was ready.

Then, when the bottle was hurled against some hard substance it would break, release the highly inflammable liquid inside, and this in turn would be set afire by the burning waste. Such fire bombs have proven themselves highly effective, even against heavy tanks.

But the Black Bat didn't know

where the killers were hidden, and such information was necessary. A streak of faint sunlight came through one of the broken skylights and hit the cement floor just behind those packing cases.

The Black Bat drew a small tin container from his pocket and extracted a paper sticker in the form of a bat with his wings in full flight. Usually he pasted these on victims or near the scenes of violence he was forced to commit. They labelled the act as the Black Bat's and drove Captain McGrath slightly mad.

Stepping back, the Black Bat held this cut out form so that the sunlight would hit it and cast a weird shadow across the floor. It would be grotesque because the light wasn't right. Yet the Black Bat hoped Silk would recognize it.

He saw Silk suddenly lift his head. Then Silk caught on swiftly. He began to tug at the ropes and kicked the floor with his feet. To anyone else's ears those kicks were just the frantic struggles of a desperate man, but to Quinn they were signals.

He and Silk often communicated with one another in this fashion, especially when Quinn was posing as a blind man and had to send a message without the knowledge of any visitor. He used his cane then. Now Silk used his feet to equally good effect.

"Four men and machine guns behind furnace," he spelled out. "Ready to let you have it. Five more outside. Get away while you can. Don't mind me."

The Black Bat laughed softly, harshly. He got his Molotov Cocktails ready, lit a match and applied it to both gasoline soaked wads of waste matter. They flamed. He grabbed one bottle by its neck, stepped from behind the cases and hurled it straight at the wall behind the furnaces. The second one followed.

They hit the brick wall, ignited and hurled flame in all directions. A

machine gun chattered. The shots went wild though because the gunner suddenly realized his clothing was afire. Four men came racing out, beating at their blazing clothes.

The Black Bat's automatics roared. Two of the men went down. There was no mercy in the way the Black Bat fired, only a cold hatred that made every bullet count.

THE machine gunner swerved to rake Silk with a fusillade of death. His finger only caressed the trigger lightly for he died suddenly, the back of his head blasted off. The remaining thug threw his gun away, raised both hands and yelled for mercy.

The Black Bat raced up to him, struck the man across the forehead and sent him sprawling. Then he cut Silk loose.

"Grab the machine gun," he said curtly. "The others will come back."

Two of the other men came through the front door and met Silk with the rifle. They surrendered without an argument. The other pair stumbled over the unconscious form of their rear door guard. Then they looked into the yawning muzzles of the Black Bat's automatics.

Ten minutes later those who still lived, were securely trussed up. From the pockets of one, Silk removed the jewelry stolen the night before. He dropped the loot around the victims, grinned at the Black Bat, and then both of them hurried out the front door. Butch was waiting. His facial muscles worked with rage.

"Doggone those lugs," he raged softly. "They wouldn't come close enough so I could bang 'em one. You got all of them, boss? Hey Silk! You okay?"

"Except for a few lumps here and there," Silk managed to grin. "They weren't too gentle when they hit me. But, sir," he faced the Black Bat, "your coming here like this is exactly what the Voice hoped for. Now he

knows you're Tony Quinn."

"Not quite yet." The Black Bat peeled off his hood and replaced it with that soft hat. "We'll drop you close by the house. Let's go, Butch."

Silk got out and slipped into the house via the tunnel. Butch drove back to Quinn's office building. By now the black clothing of the Bat was removed. Quinn was ready to enter the building. He did so without arousing any attention, reached the vacant suite and let himself in with a key. Two minutes later Butch came in too.

Quinn donned the overalls and jumper, strapped the safety belt around his waist and went to the window.

"Silk is safe," he said with grim satisfaction. "That's something. Now if the Voice wants to make sure that Tony Quinn is the Black Bat and really left his office, he'll be in the waiting room on some pretext or other. Perhaps I've given myself away, but he'll do the same thing. Follow the orders I gave you, Butch."

Butch was putting on overalls and jumpers which matched those Quinn wore. He also strapped a safety belt into place and picked up a duplicate pail and equipment. Butch had stored them in the vacant suite two or three hours before.

QUINN clambered out of the window, reached his own office and went inside. The moment he disappeared, Butch, dressed exactly as Quinn had been, hooked his safety belt outside the window and began working.

Carol was there to help Quinn inside. He answered the question that glistened in her pretty eyes.

"It worked. Any trouble on this end?"

"I'm not sure," Carol answered. "You were gone only an hour, but someone is outside. I heard your clerk answering a lot of questions."

Quinn hastily removed the makeup,

rinsed out the black dye and straightened his clothing. He picked up his cane. The mask of blindness came over his eyes.

"Meet me in the lab tonight," he told Carol. "Now the interview is over."

Quinn tapped his cane across the floor, unlocked the door and bowed to Carol. For a moment he almost jerked erect. He expected that the Voice would come to the office and prove that Tony Quinn hadn't been there when the Black Bat was in action.

He even hoped that by this means the Voice would give himself away. Quinn hadn't banked on the extreme cleverness of his opponent. There were four men seated in the waiting room. McKendrick, Drake, Pierlot and disbarred attorney Stafford.

Quinn gave no indication that he saw or recognized them.

"Anyone to see me?" he asked Winkie.

All four suspects started up, but Winkie used some firm diplomacy and made them take their turn.

McKendrick explained that he had received a phone call to see Tony Quinn at exactly one o'clock.

Quinn looked surprised. Then he had Winkie send in the others. They identified themselves and also explained that they had received messages, presumably from Quinn, to be at his office.

"But there must be some mistake," Quinn looked annoyed. "I don't even know you men, except for Drake who is my client. McKendrick, did I hear? Oh yes, we've met at social affairs."

"You know me also," Pierlot put in. "I thought something had happened about the Voice. I should not have been asked to come here, I am a sick man—my heart. . . ."

"Quiet," Quinn warned. "That matter is strictly confidential. And did I hear the name of Stafford? I used to know a lawyer—"

"What is this—some new way to be

funny?" Stafford growled. "I'm a busy man. I cooled my heels for half an hour, and now this guy says he didn't send for me. Somebody did and when I find out who, I'll bust him one."

Quinn got rid of them after awhile, closed the door and sat down.

"Blest!" he muttered. "Now which one of those men came voluntarily? Which one called the others here? Which one is the Voice of Justice?"

More and more he knew that the Voice had almost conclusive evidence that Quinn was the Black Bat. He'd attempt another trick soon just to make certain, and then would come the blow off.

Before that happened, the Black Bat must run down the Voice. What would happen then was highly problematical. If captured, the Voice was bound to roar out the Black Bat's true identity. He might have enough facts to warrant an investigation, and once Captain McGrath really got on the trail, he'd be harder to shake off than a leech.

The Black Bat had never killed a man in cold blood. He wondered if he could do it when he met the Voice face-to-face. Something would have to be done, without much question about it.

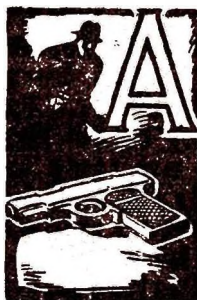
Circumstances would have to decide the Black Bat's final action—if he ever got the chance to act. Quinn found himself hoping, for the first time in his life, that an enemy would face him with blazing guns. Man to man, he could shoot back and never have to reflect that he'd murdered a man without giving him a chance.

He settled down to routine business, but his mind hardly stayed on legal matters. The race was coming up to the finish line very soon now. The Voice was bound to strike, and victory lay with the man who hit first and hardest.

Quinn decided that very soon, ex-attorney Stafford was going to have a visitor he might not enjoy.

CHAPTER XVI

The Voice Takes an Inning



AT nine o'clock that night Silk, Butch, Carol and Quinn were assembled in his secret laboratory. Silk looked none the worse for his bitter experience.

"They knocked me cold," he explained, "and dragged me back to that mystery house, where the Voice rules. They accused me of being an agent for the Black Bat and every time I denied it, a couple of them went to town on me.

"The Voice kept demanding that I tell the truth. I insisted that I was a lone wolf and they were making a mistake. Then he said I could help prove that. They took me to the factory, tied me to that post and set the trap. I knew you'd come and yet I prayed you wouldn't.

"I prayed you'd act as Tony Quinn might be expected to act—that at three o'clock you'd tell the cops what the Voice's message was. I'd have been dead, of course. The Voice was through with me. I knew that if you came, the Voice would know you were the Black Bat."

"But he can't be sure," Quinn said. "The man was spawned in hell with all the devilish cunning of Satan himself, but he still isn't positive Tony Quinn is the Black Bat. I'm afraid he'll try to prove it though, and we've got to take precautions. He may watch the house. This meeting was so necessary that it deserved the risk, but from now on don't come near the place. We'll keep in touch by phone."

"Could I offer a suggestion, sir? I saw a lot of Stafford last night and today. The more I watched him operate, the more I think he is the Voice. The man has every qualification. He's educated, knows more crooks than any

average person and knows how to handle them, too."

"But the other three," said Quinn, "are equally suspicious. First of all we have Drake. Men who came to kidnap him, murdered his wife because she merely got in their way. Why didn't they let Drake have it?"

"And when Drake first appeared in my office the Voice of Justice told secrets about him. I've checked to the best of my ability, and I doubt that Drake ever told anyone in the East

before. Obviously the tones are disguised. As for the last part of your question, Carol, I agree. It hardly seems likely that Drake would go to such extremes.

"We'll consider Pierlot next. There's a strange man for you. He's clever as they come and he really has almost perfected something of huge potential value. An invention plenty of people would sell their souls to get.

"Now Pierlot needs money, which seems to be no outstanding feature

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about those misadventures in Chicago. How then did the Voice know about it?"

"But Drake was right in the office when the Voice spoke to you," Carol put in, "and Drake was in love with his wife. How could he have ever plotted her death? Why, she was sticking closer than ever to him despite the trouble he was in."

"The first part of your doubts can easily be explained. The Voice might have been a recording, as I told you

when we compare him to the other suspects. However, we know he is profiting by the activities of the Voice. It's possible he doubles for our big shot criminal."

"Know what I'd like to do?" Butch said heavily. "Nab each one of those guys and go over 'em with a rubber hose until the right one squawks. Heck, maybe the whole bunch is in together."

"No — hardly that," Quinn said. "Let's consider McKendrick. Like

Drake, he's a known crook. I know he hid money in the family crypt. The way I see it, McKendrick stole and knew he'd have to pay the penalty, so he prepared for it.

"Part of his stolen money was left hidden in the vault. He told Siggy, his cell mate, about this stake. Foolish, yes, but men do foolish things in prison to break the monotony. Now Siggy was grabbed by the Voice to be used as a foil for the Florida robbery.

"Suppose Siggy realized what was going to happen and tried to bargain. What would he have to bargain with? The knowledge that McKendrick had concealed a small fortune in the crypt. So he sold McKendrick out for hope which didn't materialize. Siggy died anyhow.

"McKendrick thought Siggy had robbed the crypt and went to have it out with him, but he was too late. The Voice sent his men to get that money. It seemed like a swell spot to hide those gems temporarily. Remember they were plenty hot. So they left them there."

"You're putting McKendrick in the clear, Tony," Carol reminded him.

POSSIBLY. However, we don't know. We're not certain, and we must be as quickly as possible. Before the Voice smacks us down, we've got to deal him a death blow. Now I have two things to do. Your help is needed in both.

"Carol, when I visited Pierlot's house secretly the other day, I noticed a silver framed studio portrait on his desk. There were two people in it. Pierlot was one, and the other was a woman whose features I have seen before, but I can't seem to place her.

"While this may have little bearing on the case, it should be investigated. The photographer who took the picture is named Steiniger with a studio at 6580 Lenox Drive. He's still there. With good luck he'll have filed the proof of that picture under Pier-

lot's name. See if you can find out who the woman is."

"I'll call you back as soon as I get the information," Carol said and headed for the tunnel. "Then I'll go home and wait." She stepped closer to Quinn, put one hand on his arm.

"I know just how bad this is, darling. Count on me—even if it's a photofinish, and both you and the Voice are exposed. One more thing—I'd like to be in at the end too."

"There," Butch yawned sleepily, "is a gal for you. How about me, boss? Got a job where I can tackle a few of those mugs and clean 'em up?"

"Perhaps, Butch. Right now I want you to drive me. We're going to Stafford's place. He lives in a bachelor apartment and I know just where it is. Silk, you've had enough for one day. Stay here and rest."

Stafford lived in a neat little building in Greenwich Village. It was not extremely modern, for a fire escape ran along the east wall between buildings. Butch entered the place on a pretext of looking at rooms. When he emerged, he knew the whole layout.

The Black Bat, clad in his dark clothing, but minus the hood and cape, waited in the car. Butch made his report.

"Stafford lives on the sixth floor. The window of his living room faces the fire escape. A two cent sneak thief could bust in."

"Good," the Black Bat approved. "Stay with the car, Butch. I see a light in one of Stafford's windows. Not in the living room, but that doesn't matter very much. Stand ready for a quick getaway in case there is trouble."

The Black Bat glided down the alley and was instantly lost in the darkness. Hood and cape in place, he scaled that fire escape as fast as a hand organist's monkey looking for pennies. The window of Stafford's living room was dark and closed too.

He saw that the window latch wasn't locked, reached for the frame and

then hesitated. This was too much like an open invitation. His keen eyes peered through the darkness of the room. There was a high, solid backed chair in the further corner and jutting a couple of inches above it was the rounded dome of some kind of a metal tank.

The Black Bat took a diamond glass cutter from a small, compact kit of tools he carried on jobs of this sort. He made a large circle in the pane of glass, affixed a suction cup and gently withdrew the section of window pane. Now he could insert his head and shoulders to study the situation. He whistled softly, for the window was wired for something or other. The door too carried slender little wires into the middle of the room. Quinn reached down, broke the connection to the window and then raised it gently.

IF anyone was in the next room, he gave no sign of his presence, and so far the Black Bat had worked noiselessly. Drawing a gun, the Bat moved across the floor. He saw a small mound of grey powder with wires from the door and the window smothered beneath it.

A quick examination told him the story, and he made for the straight backed chair with the tank behind it. Working rapidly, the Black Bat twisted the supply valve and cut off the escape of colorless and odorless gas. It was pure hydrogen, impossible to detect by the sense of smell or sight.

It probably filled the room, for the Black Bat found breathing a bit difficult, as though the air was rare and lacking its normal supply of oxygen. So the Voice knew he'd come to visit Stafford. This death trap was one which might have fooled an ordinary detective.

When the window was raised, or the door opened, an electrical impulse would send a spark through that heap of powdered magnesium. It would flare up, and the saturated air of the

room would explode with all the violence of a charge of T.N.T.

There was no one in the next room. That light had been left burning as a lure. The Black Bat sat down on the arm of a chair and considered matters. The hydrogen tank intrigued him. Such tanks are always numbered and the name of the owner stenciled. The tanks are collected from customers, refilled and resold. It required only a minute to determine who had title to this tank and what its number was.

There was a phone on the desk. The Black Bat looked up the number of the firm supplying the tank and gas, called them and blandly identified himself as Captain McGrath at Police Headquarters. This name brought magical results.

"Oh, yes," someone reported. "We have a record of that tank. It was installed about three weeks ago at the laboratory of a man named Pierre Pierlot. By the word 'install' I mean this and seven other similar tanks were dropped from our truck on a side road and left there for Pierlot to pick up. He uses a lot of the stuff."

"Thank you." The Black Bat hung up. So Pierlot owned that tank. Until now the Black Bat hadn't seriously considered the inventor as a good suspect because he was so completely engrossed in his work.

He'd displayed results too that proved he had little time to fool around with a crime plot such as that which the Voice of Justice was preparing. Yet, strangers would have a difficult time just finding Pierlot's place, let alone gaining entrance and stealing one of these very heavy tanks of gas.

The Black Bat searched Stafford's room, but there was little left to present any clue. The ex-lawyer seemed to have practically moved out. Disengaging the wires from that trap, the Black Bat climbed out of the window, descended the fire escape and headed toward the mouth of the alley, where the coupe should have been parked.

It wasn't there any longer.

The Black Bat knew that Butch wouldn't have driven away of his own free will for any reason whatsoever. Therefore Butch must have been attacked, overpowered and kidnapped. The Voice had struck again. Apparently Butch's kidnappers hadn't waited to hear the explosion, for that alone would have brought Butch into action and attracted a horde of police besides. They'd been confident the trap couldn't miss.

STRIPPING off his hood and cape, the Black Bat stowed this away and donned his wide brimmed hat. It was risky business to take a cab, but the circumstances made it necessary. He gave the driver orders to drop him about four blocks from Tony Quinn's home.

As the cab rolled through traffic, he thought over what might have occurred. There were two things, one of which gave him cold chills. The Voice's men might have been watching Stafford's place and tackled Butch so that after the explosion occurred, he wouldn't be able to save the Black Bat. That was the easy explanation.

The more dangerous one lay in the fact that the Voice might have planted men near Tony Quinn's residence who saw Carol emerge from the garden house followed shortly by Butch and the Black Bat. This latter idea meant that the Black Bat's identity was well established by now.

He walked briskly away from the cab, darted through the yard and reached the small garden house. The hidden trap door was just as concealed as ever. He opened it, hurried along the underground passage and reached his laboratory. Without stopping to remove his hood or cape, he burst through the secret panel into his study.

"Silk," he called out loudly. "Silk!"

There was no answer. Sweat poured down his face. He searched the whole house and there was no sign of Silk.

No traces of violence either, but that wasn't to be really expected, for if they took Silk, it must have been done with considerable stealth.

The phone buzzed. Quinn practically leaped for the instrument.

"Yes," he barked.

"Whew!" Carol's voice came over the wire, calm and sweet, "you nearly bit my head off. I've got some dope—and is it rich. The photographer had the proofs of that picture and also a file on the subject. It was Pierre Pierlot and his younger sister.

"Another photograph was taken that same day of the sister and her daughter, Roseann. Now guess who she is. I won't keep you in suspense, darling. She—ohhh!"

Then someone quietly hooked the phone. The Black Bat went suddenly limp. They had Butch and Silk and Carol. It was a clean sweep—victory for the Voice. With these hostages the Voice must know he could force the Black Bat to bow to his will.

A slow rage began to permeate the Black Bat's soul. The limpness of defeat vanished. He wasn't licked yet. He knew what Carol had meant in naming Roseann as the niece of Pierlot. He knew just what the Voice of Justice was up to. The fact that he was completely handicapped by the loss of his aides, grated on him, but he prepared for action anyway. This situation called for extremes.

Inside his lab again, he opened a wooden box and removed three small, thin glass walled bulbs. With a pipette he allowed three kinds of chemicals to merge. Then he sealed the tiny necks of the bulbs in a bunsen flame.

He placed them in a metal box, thrust this into his pocket and opened a large cupboard to reveal dozens of guns of all makes. He selected two forty-five automatics with hair triggers, filled their ammunition clips and dropped a couple of extra loaded clips into his pocket.

Excited, desperate, he had paid lit-

tle attention to unusual sounds, but now he slowly turned himself around the room. There was a steady humming sound somewhere, a familiar sound. Then there was a distinct click, and the hated Voice came on the air. Quinn sidarmed a stack of books aside and revealed a short wave receiving set hidden behind them.

"Good evening, Mr. Black Bat. This is the Voice of Justice, and truly I may be called Justice tonight for I have solved one of the great mysteries and exposed the Black Bat. That is, I have exposed him for my own personal amusement.

"I alone hold your secret, but unless you do exactly as I say, this will not be for long. I have three good friends of yours with me at this moment. Their presence makes up, in part, for the destruction you wrought on my own band this afternoon.

"Trickily done, Black Bat. Splendid work, in fact. Now just in case you don't believe me, I shall permit the girl to scream just once. Twist her arm. Twist it hard! The tigress deserves it."

THERE was no scream, just a moan of pain that must have escaped through tightly closed lips. But it was enough. Tony Quinn's hands clenched and unclenched. The actual twisting of her arm couldn't have hurt Carol any more than that moan affected Quinn. He felt himself quiver with anger. Then he was all attention again. The Voice spoke with glib satisfaction.

"Not a very satisfactory scream. The little lady is extremely brave. Lovely too—or hadn't you noticed that with your poor blinded eyes?"

There was raucous laughter for a moment. Then, "You and I, Black Bat cannot exist on the face of the earth at the same time and fight one another. You are equal to me in almost everything except perhaps, ruthlessness.

"Unless you obey me to the letter, these friends of yours will find out what I mean. Here is my proposition, sweet and simple. You join forces with me, which I desire far above anything else, and we take over the rule of all crime in the nation. We become powerful and rich.

"Or perhaps you are saying 'No'. Then here is the other alternative. I have my headquarters in town. The address is 590 Irvington Place. Several of my men will be there to receive you. Stafford will also be present and by the way, Stafford knows your double life. I told him just in case something happened to me.

"Stafford will see to it that you die, painlessly and quickly. This ac-



complished I promise to free your three friends. They haven't seen me. No one has seen me. They are in a room which I can watch.

"One of my men twisted the pretty girl's arm. I shall wait for your answer, and you have until three A. M. At that time your friends will die, one by one, the lady last—out of courtesy of course. For the last time I now say to you, 'That is all.'"

Quinn shut off the radio and felt like smashing it. He faced two terrible alternatives—joining the Voice to become a full fledged criminal, or seeing death at Stafford's hands.

"No," Quinn said aloud. "I'll be blasted if I take such orders. I'll see Stafford, and I'll see the Voice. When I'm done, I'll either be dead fighting for Carol and the others—or there will be no more Stafford, no more Voice of Justice."

CHAPTER XVII

Three Glass Bulbs

THE house on Irvington Place turned out to be a mansion, set well apart from any neighbors and glowing with light. The Black Bat parked one of the cars from Tony Quinn's garage, pulled on his

hood and cape and walked deliberately up to the front door. He pushed the bell and the door opened instantly.

But no one stood inside to greet him. He didn't reach for his guns, just stepped through the door and watched it close and automatically lock. Then Stafford's voice came through a concealed amplifier.

"So you chose to come here, did you? You have decided, eh? Well, you had one of two offers to select from, Mr. Black Bat, death, or obeisance to the Voice and to me. Which is it?"

"How can a man make up his mind so quickly about things like that?" the Black Bat said, and there was pleading in his voice.

"How can I be sure the Voice won't kill my friends no matter what I choose?"

"You can't be sure," Stafford snarled. "But you choose just the same. Walk straight ahead. Go through the door that opens.

"I'll meet you and rip that hood from your head, Mr. great, law abiding, ex-district attorney Tony Quinn, who showed no mercy for me when they chucked me out of practice.

"The tables are reversed, Quinn. I'm on top now, and you'll lick my boots if I say so. March—you double crossing, yellow bellied rat."

The Black Bat marched, slowly, steadily, like a prisoner on his way to the electric chair. A door opened, and he passed into a large room.

There were four men waiting for him. All held guns and looked as though they were ready to shoot.

Stafford entered, swaggering and cocksure. The Black Bat was searched and his guns taken from him. Stafford smiled sardonically.

"Before we go any further with this," the Black Bat said, "did any of your men hear you use my real name?"

"They did not," Stafford smiled contemptuously. "If that was revealed to every dumb crook, you'd be of no use to us. We're smart enough to realize that.

"Well, make up your mind, and no tricks. You don't stand a chance. My men have orders to riddle you if there's so much as a faint false move on your part."

"One question," the Black Bat said. "Are my friends here? Can I see them and be certain they are safe?"

"Later—at another spot," Stafford replied. "Now talk fast. Which is it? Us or death?"

THE Black Bat walked slowly toward the middle of the room and Stafford, who stood there waiting. All eyes were on the Black Bat's hooded face. None of the men noticed his right hand open three times and drop one of those little glass bulbs each time. They landed on the thick rug without making a sound.

Stafford was a little too sure of himself. He even lowered his gun slightly. Then, like a flash, the Black Bat leaped for him. With one hand he knocked that gun away and with the other seized Stafford by the throat in a relentless grip.

The four thugs moved forward, not daring to shoot, because Stafford's struggles spun both men around so fast there was danger of hitting him. Suddenly there was a crunching sound and a column of thick, yellow smoke soared high, hit the ceiling like a waterspout and descended to cover the whole room. Another glass bulb was crushed under the feet of one man

and then the third went off.

Those yellow fumes were choking, searing, blinding. The thugs dropped their guns and tried to press handkerchiefs against their burning eyes. That did no good for the handkerchiefs were saturated with the gas on their way to the faces of their users. Stafford, still being grimly choked, took the full brunt of the fumes.

The Black Bat seemed to be unaffected by them. Beneath his hood was a small cloth mask soaked with a neutralizing chemical. The fumes didn't bother him at all. Even his eyes seemed to be impervious to the action of the stuff.

He thrust Stafford at arm's length and let him have a sharp blow on the chin. Stafford flew back, hit a chair and fell over it. He didn't move.

Now his acute sense of hearing served him well for he couldn't see through this yellow fog. One man veered out of the fumes toward him. The Black Bat slugged the man hard.

Then he moved in to find the others. In two minutes they were stretched on the floor. He recovered his guns, flung theirs through a window, then collared Stafford once more. The ex-lawyer struggled feebly. The Black Bat hit him again, threw the man over one shoulder and went out into the corridor.

HE picked up a phone, dialed headquarters and got Captain McGrath.

"This is the Black Bat. Come out to 590 Irvinton Place. You'll find four of the Voice of Justice's men here—wanted crooks. Make them tell who really committed the jobs which we pinned on Junky Malone and Siggy Fox."

He hung up and hurried out to the car, flung Stafford inside and drove away in a great rush. It wouldn't take long for McGrath to reach the house, and the Black Bat didn't want to be stopped now.

Well out of the city, he pulled over

beneath the sheltering branches of a big oak, shut off the lights and shook Stafford back to consciousness. Stafford blinked, gave a sharp cry and remembered where he was. Then he saw the muzzle of a forty-five looking like a howitzer at short range.

"I'm afraid you waded too deeply in the muck of crime this time, Stafford," the Black Bat said. "You know I am Tony Quinn. Can I be expected to permit a man like you to live and retain this knowledge?"

"Listen. Listen, Quinn. This wasn't my doings. It's the Voice. He made me do it. Honest he did. How could I help myself? If I refused, he'd have sent some of his strong arm mugs to rub me out.

"Listen, please listen, I'll keep your secret. I swear I will. Nobody will ever know. You can cut my tongue out—"

"Stop being foolish," the Black Bat snapped. "Who is the Voice?"

"I don't know. That's a fact, Quinn. I've never seen the guy. He always gives orders by talking into a microphone in another room. Nobody ever sees him. But he's got your friends.

"I'll make you a proposition. Promise me I'll go free, and I'll help you rescue them and knock off the Voice. He doesn't deserve to live anyhow. That guy is crazy, I tell you. He'd mad with a lust for power and it's being sated.

"Half the underworld is crawling to him already. They're all afraid of the Voice of Justice, and he's passed the word along that unless the big shots come to him, he'll expose them.

"He's a killer. He murdered a lot of guys he didn't trust. He'll kill your pals too—no matter what your answer would have been, they were doomed."

"That," the Black Bat said, "isn't exactly news. Where is he holed up, Stafford?"

"I'll show you. It's an old farmhouse—right on this road too. It ain't far. I'll take you there and—"

"Stafford," the Black Bat said,

"you're an unmitigated liar. You'd promise me anything and sell me short at the first opportunity you saw.

"The Voice isn't at any farmhouse. He's at Pierre Pierlot's place and that's where we're going. You hoped to trap me in some forlorn spot when I wasn't on guard."

"I meant that place," Stafford whined. "It's something like a farmhouse. I'll show you the way in. Nobody can find it unless—"

"In know the way in. Shut up and keep that way or I'll put you to sleep again. Mind you—try to grab this wheel or open the car door, and I'll bury a forty-five in your heart.

"You seem to have forgotten, Stafford, that three of my very best friends are prisoners of the man you work for. More specifically, the girl happens to be in love with me and I with her.

"I'd give my life for them, gladly, but first I'll fight. I took you and that quartette of stooges without much trouble. Don't you think I can land the Voice too? Watch and see."

CHAPTER XVIII

Reversed Fate



BUT as the Black Bat drove out of the shelter of the trees, there were still doubts. The Voice had demonstrated his skill. He held the whip hand, in that the Black Bat's three aides were his

prisoners.

With Carol, at the point of a gun for instance, he could hold off the Black Bat yet—even force him to disarm and surrender to Stafford. Try as he might, the Black Bat couldn't see any way out of this unless he surprised the Voice, got him dead to rights and extinguished his warped, useless life. That was going to be very difficult for

the Voice would be hidden somewhere. Even his own men couldn't get at him.

He turned down the lane which led up to Pierlot's hidden place, stopped and nudged Stafford with a gun.

"We'll start hiking now and just a word of caution. I can see as well in darkness as in light. If you bolt, there is no escape, unless you call death escape. I know all about the various signal traps which Pierlot has set out. Don't try to trip one of them. Your life depends on my getting into that house safely and undetected."

Stafford shivered and led the way. They reached the point where the radio controlled car turned off on the fake sod. Stafford skirted this spot, wriggled through brush and finally came out on a path which led up the ramp to the garage and from there directly to the house itself.

The place was shrouded in its usual blackness, for the steel window shutters were tightly closed. Getting in quietly was going to be a problem. But Stafford was known here. He could get through. The Black Bat seized Stafford's arm and held him back.

"How many of the Voice's men are inside?" he demanded.

"Only three. There were just seven left when you got through busting us up at that old factory. The cops got the rest of them."

"Excellent. Now you're going to get me through. If there is any signal arranged, give it. Make them open the door. The guards won't be suspicious when they spot you, and by the time they see me it will be too late.

"Stafford, never lose sight of the fact that so long as you and the Voice live, I'm in grave danger. It would require only a very slight excuse for me to kill you."

"I'll do it. I'll make them open up. I'll even grab the guy at the door if you say the word, Quinn. Honest—you aren't in as much danger as you

think. The Voice can't match you. He'll be dead before morning. You'll kill him. Then there is only me.

"Nobody else knows you are the Black Bat. I swear that's the truth. Let me go when this is over, and I'll take a boat to South America, anywhere you say. I just want to live."

"That chance rests in your own hands. Get going, before the Voice decides he's fooled around long enough with his prisoners and wipes them out. If that should happen, I'll show no mercy to anyone, including you."

Stafford's legs seemed almost too weak to carry him up that ramp. His face was pasty, his lips trembled and his nostrils moved in and out as he breather short gusts of pure terror. Stafford was licked now, but give him one chance and he'd turn like a cobra, ready to strike and kill. The Black Bat knew his men. Stafford was one of the worst.

THEY reached the porch, and Stafford stepped up to the door. He scratched the panels with his nails, a signal that he was a friend. Someone opened a slit set high in the door, peered out and saw only Stafford. Heavy locks turned and the door swung back. Stafford took a single step and then a gun butt crashed down on his skull.

The door guard saw him toppling forward, tried to close the door, then stopped doing anything beyond hold-

ing his shaking hands high up in the air. The Black Bat motioned that he was to turn around. The gun butt came into play once more.

Silently the Black Bat closed the door, drew his second gun and stole forward. He knew the layout of this house, which helped a lot. The laboratory was at the far end of the place, but there were rooms to cross first and any one of them might be a trap.

He stopped and listened. Not a sound reached him. Moving forward, he negotiated the dining room, peered into the darkened study just off it and saw no one. He veered to the left, heading for the other exit and the laboratory. His friends might be locked there, or in the cellar or even on the second floor. His first move was to find them.

The door to the lab was shut tight. Gripping the knob firmly, he pushed it open a fraction of an inch. The room was in darkness. He started to turn away and continue his search. Then he paused, entered the big lab and walked through the blackness without making a sound.

He kept one hand stiffly forward, but apparently the glass door which Pierlot had showed him, was raised. His eyes saw a dozen hydrogen tanks all around the place, some up against the bench and others in that outer section of the lab which was separated by the invisible glass.

The Black Bat spent ten minutes
[Turn page]



there, working hard and perspiring freely. Then he returned to the study just in time to see another guard spot Stafford and the door watchman. He raced over to them.

The Bat gave a silent leap, throttled the man and knocked him out. Stafford was groaning. The Black Bat seized him to stifle the sound. He raised the man up, shook him and Stafford opened his eyes.

"You had a slight accident," the Black Bat whispered. "The door guard tried to slug me and caught you instead. Don't speak. Don't make a sound. Where are the prisoners?"

Stafford pointed upward. At the Black Bat's orders, he went up the staircase slowly and on tiptoe. At the top he turned left, passed by a couple of closed doors and then indicated a third one.

The Black Bat motioned with his gun. Stafford opened the door a crack, looked scared and then, with a wild shout, leaped through the entrance and slammed the door in place. A bolt shot home. Stafford's derisive laugh reached him. There was a click and the Voice spoke.

"What's going on? What's happening?"

"Plenty," the Black Bat shouted. "Perhaps you recognize my voice. Yes—I'm here. So is Stafford. You're finished, done. The only way to save your life is by turning my friends over to me."

The Voice laughed and the raucous sound rang through the corridors. As it stopped, the Black Bat heard a gentle step below, swerved and saw the third and last of the thugs sighting a pistol at his back. The Black Bat's guns replaced that wild laughter. The thug landed on his face and lay still.

"That takes care of your staff," the Black Bat said loudly. "Stafford is next and then you—unless those three hostages are released. What's your answer?"

"No! Unless you throw down your

guns and surrender, I'll wipe those three lives out during the next ten seconds."

"Try it!" the Black Bat challenged. "They'll die, yes, but you and Stafford will never get out of here alive. You still haven't killed me and you can't do it. You're afraid to show yourself and shoot it out. You know I'm faster on the trigger and straighter with my aim. Kill them and you die too. Think that over."

It seemed that the Voice did so. Finally he spoke again.

"We'll bargain. I'll turn your friends loose. Take them away from here and keep your mouth shut about what you know. If you talk, so do I. If I go to prison, so does Tony Quinn alias the Black Bat. Is it a deal?"

"Where and when will you produce my friends?" Quinn asked sharply.

"In the laboratory downstairs. You go there now. Walk straight over to the benches and remain there. You may keep your guns on Stafford. He'll bring the prisoners. You don't know who I am, so we'll keep that little secret for the present. I'll even throw in Pierlot and wager you thought he was the Voice of Justice."

"I'm going down," the Black Bat answered. "I'll wait three minutes."

He descended the stairs. The thug he'd shot was dead. The other two were completely out and would be for probably an hour yet. The Black Bat moved silently into the laboratory, pausing for just a few seconds before he walked through Pierlot's invisible glass wall.

AFTER two or three minutes, Carol walked in, gave a cry that was both glad and unhappy, and ran toward the Black Bat. Butch and Silk came next, followed by Pierlot and Stafford who carried a brace of guns.

Pierlot was badly shaken. There were bruises on his face, and one hand dangled limply as if it were broken. He could barely totter along and Silk kept an arm around his waist.

All five of them lined up against the laboratory bench. Stafford, a sneer on his face, moved toward the wall. His hand touched a small switch. There was a whirring noise, but that was all. Nothing seemed to happen. Stafford lowered his guns.

Then the Voice of Justice reached the five people. It sounded like the Voice of Doom.

"So we are all very comfortable now, eh? Fine! At last, Mr. Black Bat, I've cornered you just like a rat. When you saw Stafford move that switch, you didn't think anything happened, but it did."

"The glass door. It is shut. They have changed the switch," Pierlot yelled. "We cannot get out of here."

"I know that," the Voice remarked in glee. "I also am aware that those several tanks of hydrogen gas have been open for some time—ever since you started downstairs, Mr. Black Bat.

"I jammed the valves so you can't close them and shut off the flow of gas. In about five minutes that small room will be filled with the stuff. Then Stafford has only to close the other switch. A tiny spark will blow all of you to bits. This is exactly as I would have it."

Stafford moved back, the light of murder in his eyes. Pierlot fainted.

"Wait a minute," the Black Bat said. "Why don't you come down and show yourself, Drake? Why are you afraid of being recognized by five doomed people? Or don't you like it because Stafford just heard who you are?"

There was a strangled oath from the amplifier. One minute later Drake, Tony Quinn's first client, stormed into the room outside that glass panel. When he spoke, his voice could be heard. Apparently the whole house was wired.

"So you guessed it, did you? A fat lot of good it will do. How did you know? How did I give myself away?"

The Black Bat held up the silver framed portrait on Pierlot's desk.

"By this, partly. It's a picture of Pierlot and his sister, who was the mother of your dead wife. She was the sole heir of Pierlot. When he died, you became the heir. You wanted to provide Pierlot with cash enough to finish his experiments.

"Then he would die and you'd inherit the secret of his invisible glass. It was all to be perfectly legal, and nobody would ever suspect you. But Pierlot refused to accept money—any kind of money—so long as he knew who his backer was.

"Pierlot had been tricked out of other inventions too often. He was suspicious even of you, his nephew. Things were going along fine, or so you thought. Then your wife must have got wise to it all.

"You married her only to become Pierlot's heir. You pretended to be a great home body, but you couldn't resist pool halls or expensive cigars. You never drank unless there was a chance of getting away with it. Oh, you were very careful, but she found out anyway."

"Yes, she did," Drake snarled. "I had the gang assembled. I was carrying the bonds which were later planted on Junky Malone. She found them and accused me of stealing more money. I quieted her down, said I was going to bring them back, but I knew she'd squeal.

"I hated her anyway, the pious, law loving fool. So I, as the Voice, told my men to kill her and kidnap me. That was to make them unsuspecting that I was the Voice. They were to take me away, hold me a few hours and then let me go.

"That big ape of yours almost spoiled it. He and the girl. Now I'll spoil all of you. For a time I thought I had you fooled. That was before I knew who you really were. Not even Pierlot knows your true identity.

"I kept it secret so if you joined me, you could go on as you were. I picked Police Commissioner Warner to tell me the name of an honest man.

That was for publicity purposes. I wanted everyone to think the Voice of Justice was a law-abiding, crime-hating person.

"I will still keep up that pose. No one can stop me—not even the indictment drawn against me for stealing the two hundred thousand dollars from the bank.

"I needed that money to organize the nucleus of my gang—those men who would tell me about other crooks so I could expose them and show myself as the Voice of Justice.

"I learned auditors would be at work on the books soon, so I needed time. I had to stall. Once I got my gang together I could drop out of sight. That's why I hired a lawyer.

"I hired you, Quinn, because Commissioner Warner had already indicated you were the best contact man for the Voice. I wanted to stay close to you and be sure you obeyed the Voice's orders.

"Through him I could have my sentence postponed. Through the profits from the gang I could have made restitution easily. I even went so far as to reveal myself as a former crook. No one would suspect me then. And now—if you are quite ready—it is the end."

"Wait," Pierlot raised one hand. "I should have known it was you. The radios should have given it away. You were always interested in them, you even considered yourself something of a scientist. You knew I'd never accept help from you because I didn't trust you, my own nephew."

"You doddering old fool! The only thing that worried me was that you'd drop dead before you finished this work. Now you will die—you and all the others."

"I wouldn't try to blow us up," the Black Bat said coldly. "Sometimes bombs have a habit of reversing themselves. They explode on the persons who try to set them off."

"Bah," Drake derided. He reached for the switch. "Here it comes!"

He sent the switch home. There was a terrific roar. Part of that room seemed to be turned into atoms. The explosion sent the Black Bat and all the others smashing against the lab benches. The concussion was terrific, but that invisible glass wall held firmly. Pierlot had maintained it could withstand even high powered shells, and this proved his point.

WHERE Drake and Stafford had been standing was only debris. The Black Bat sighed deeply and put one arm about Carol.

"I warned them, the poor fools. They tried to set a similar trap for me at Stafford's apartment, and I thought they might use the same means here. That's why I studied the situation first.

"You see, I merely switched the tanks of hydrogen. The empty ones were placed in here, behind the glass wall. The full ones were in that other section of the room. Changing the spark induced by that switch was a simple matter.

"Drake or Stafford didn't smell the gas, for it has no odor, and they didn't hear it hissing out of the tanks. I kept talking too much and tried to coax Drake into raving a bit, too. They were too excited to notice any difficulty in breathing as the hydrogen displaced the oxygen."

"It was ghastly!" Carol buried her face in one crooked arm. Silk looked grim, and Butch's lower jaw was thrust out more aggressively.

"My glass wall works," Pierlot cried, coming to. "And he tried to take it from me. He tortured me, broke my arm, and I had to give him the formula. He knew I'd finished my experiments, perfected my product and he didn't even want to wait until I died so he might cash in on my estate. He killed Roseann. Drake received what he deserved, what he built up to these many years."

"Yes," the Black Bat said. "He killed himself. Well—we'll be on our

way, Pierlot. I'm glad your experiments have been successful. If you need more money, I may be able to arrange that too. Remain here.

"There are two thugs in the front hall. We'll tie them up. In a short while police will arrive and a doctor to take care of your arm. When they come, you may explain the facts of the case.

"Then get the results of your experiments into the proper hands as quickly as possible. There are always men like Drake, who believe they are

greater than law and decency. It's too bad they couldn't all have been here tonight and seen what eventually happens to their kind."

Pierlot watched them walk slowly down the ramp. Drake's car was not far away, and they knew it. Pierlot shook his head from side to side.

"I am glad that I do not know the hooded man's identity. Those friends of his I shall never mention to the police. Such people as those—well, the world could use many more of them."

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A PRESENT FOR BUTCH

By
WILBUR S. PEACOCK

Jim Crane Was Prepared to Face the Bitter and Empty Dark Years Ahead—If He Could Bring Sweetness and Light to Mary Kerrigan and Tommy!

JIM CRANE strode across the lawn with his loose-limbed walk, his firm lips pursed in a cheery whistle, breathing deeply of the crisp fall air. He stopped beside the wheel chair, ruffled the carrotty hair of the freckle-faced boy with his big hand.

"Hi, Butch," he said cheerfully. "Feel like running that race today?"

"Aw, cut it out," Tommy Kerrigan smiled sheepishly, his eyes worship-



Jim Crane

ing the big man towering over him. "You know I can't run you no race, the way my legs are."

He caught the man's hand, drew him down, whispered hoarsely into the friendly ear, his dark eyes watchful of the open window above.

"You wait," he predicted, his voice breaking just a trifle, "I'll be racing you, this time next year! The postman just brung a letter to Mom, and she's in there reading it now."

Jim Crane smiled past the sudden mistiness in his eyes.

"Sure you will, Butch. When that sawbones gets through with you, you can smash that wheel chair into kindling."

"You really think so; you really think I'll be just like other kids some day?"

There was such an intermingling of futility and desperation and hope in the youngster's words that the cheerful sentences in Jim Crane's mind died still-born. He swallowed heavily, ruffled the tousled hair again, and went swiftly up the steps to the porch.

He didn't knock. Two years of every-day familiarity with the widowed Mary Kerrigan had forever re-



Mary Kerrigan

moved the necessity for it. He opened the door and stepped through as he had done a hundred times before, paced swiftly down the airy hall, turned lightly into the library.

"Mary," he called to the woman seated at the desk, "Butch said the letter came! What does it say? How soon can the doctor come west?"

There was a deadness in the delicate features that choked the words in his throat, an expression in her blue eyes that brought a stabbing pain to his heart such as he had never known before.

"He can't come." Mary Kerrigan said woodenly, defeatedly.

"Can't come!" Jim Crane's laughter was but an incredulous whisper of its usual booming strength. "You're joking, Mary. Of course, he's coming!"

"He can't come," Mary Kerrigan repeated stiffly, and then she was in Jim Crane's arms, sobbing heart-brokenly into his broad chest.

He soothed her clumsily, not knowing what to say, shaken by the unutterable torment of her crying. He held her tightly in the circle of his arms, the perfume of her light hair in his nostrils, and he knew then for certain what he had only felt—there was nothing he wouldn't do for this slender mother of Tommy.

At last, she was quiet, spent and shaken by the violence of her emotions.

He guided her gently to a huge chair, tucked an afghan about her slender shoulders.

"Easy does it, Mary," he said, "Let me take a look at the letter. Maybe things aren't as bad as you are making yourself believe."

He read the brief paragraphs twice, the smile going from the depths of his gray eyes, tiny lines etching themselves into his face until it resembled chiseled marble. He glanced at the woman, dropped the letter onto the desk.

Then he sat on the arm of the chair, his fingers tangling them-

selves in the golden puffs of her hair.

"It's not so bad," he said. "Of course, the amount he wants is quite a goodly sum, but we can raise it."

MARY KERRIGAN smiled, and the big room was light again for Jim Crane. She fumbled the handkerchief he offered, dabbed at her eyes with a movement so feminine the ache came back to his throat.

"I'm sorry, Jim," she said softly, "But the thing came as such a shock, after all the plans we've made." She shrugged. "You're a man—you probably wouldn't understand."

"I think I do," Jim Crane said seriously. "I probably love Tommy as much in my way as you do in yours."

"But, Jim"—she caught at his hand with frantic fingers—"what can we tell Tommy? For more than a week, all he has done is plan what he will do when his back is strong again. Oh, Jim, I can't tell him that his dreams are gone!"

"Hey, Mom—hey, Jim!" Tommy Kerrigan's voice swelled outside, billowing in through the window.

"I'll do the talking, Mary," Jim Crane said swiftly, bent and kissed her soft lips. Then he was leaning from the window, scowling belligerently into the boy's anxious eyes a few feet below. "Listen, Butch," he said, "don't you be giving me any of that Irish trouble of yours. I've got enough of my own."

"What'd he say, Jim? What'd the letter say? Oh please, Jim, don't fun with me now. Tell me what the saw-bones said?"

Jim Crane smiled into the boy's eyes, made a decision then that three years before would have been utterly foreign to him. He winked solemnly, lifted his hand before his face, and pretended to read a letter.

"Dear Butch," he read solemnly, "I've got a present for you. I think you'll like it, because it's really one of the strongest straightest backs I've ever seen. I—"

"Jim! No, Jim, you can't!" Mary Kerrigan tugged at his broad shoulders.

"I," Jim Crane read, ignoring Mary's pleading hands, "want you and your mother to come to New York the minute you get this letter. And in three months I'll help you smash your wheel chair. Signed, Doctor Foster."

"Oh, Jim! Oh, Jim!" the boy's words were a whisper.

Jim Crane faced the woman again, gripped her shoulders tightly in his capable hands.

"Chin up," he ordered, "Everything's going to be all right. You have my promise for that, Mary."

"But the money—oh, Jim, it was cruel to tell Tommy that and raise his hopes. When he finds out the truth, it may ruin his entire life."

"Now you listen to me, Mary Kerrigan," Jim Crane said in mock anger, "I don't like the likes of you to be sniveling around me. Hush your wailing, and start packing for a trip to New York."

"But, Jim, the money—" Mary began.

He stopped her words with a swift kiss, held her tightly again, glad that she could not see the fear that he knew must be in his face.

"I love you, Mary," he said. "Never forget that—never."

He released her when he heard the sound of Tommy Kerrigan's wheel chair on the back-porch ramp.

"Not another word," he said sharply. "Just pack for a trip to New York. There's a plane out of here at midnight. Trust me, Mary?"

"I do, Jim," Mary Kerrigan said simply.

And then Jim Crane was gone from the house, closing the door softly, still hearing tangled words of the meeting between the boy and his mother.

He paused for a moment on the porch, then set off at a brisk pace toward the bungalow in which he lived a few blocks away down the street.

There was a dull musty odor to the package, when Jim Crane lifted it from the hole he had broken in the cement on the basement floor. He stared at it for a long moment, remembering his plans of what seemed so long ago, then tucked it under his arm, carried it upstairs into the living room.

He cut the heavy twine, unwrapped the fat bundle of bonds from its layer after layer of oiled silk, fanned them on the polished end table.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars," he mused. "A quarter of a million dollars. Two more years, and—"

He became silent, preoccupied, lighting his aged pipe, sinking back on the divan, regarding the bonds speculatively. It really came to him then what he planned to do, and a cold sweat of fear broke out on his rangy body.

He stirred the bonds with a restless forefinger, seeing the dark years that stretched ahead. . . .

He laughed then, rocking with the ironic humor of the situation.

"Santa Claus Crane!" he said bitterly into the enigmatic face of the Buddha bookend, and smashed his pipe with sudden violence into the fireplace.

Then he came from the divan, walked slowly to the telephone stand, all of the springy zest of life gone from his step. He dialed the airport, made reservations on the midnight plane. His hand was shaking a bit when he cradled the receiver.

JIM CRANE was never to forget that trip in the speeding plane. There were no other passengers, and after a few automatic gestures, the hostess retired to her little cubbyhole in the rear of the cabin.

Tommy was stretched out on a bed made of two seats, and Mary and Jim sat quietly at his feet, across the aisle from each other.

To Jim Crane, then, those fleeting hours were the fruition of his life, the very peak of his existence. He did not identify the two with him merely as Mary and Tommy Kerrigan. To him now they seemed his wife and son—and he knew that never would the three of them be closer.

They did not speak; there was no need for words. And after the excited Tommy had dropped into slumber, Jim Crane's hand sought for and found Mary's slender fingers. She smiled into his eyes, read in them what he tried to conceal, and her fingers tightened with quiet promise for the future.

Jim Crane's heart came as near to bursting then as it ever had—for he knew that promise would never be kept. Hours, maybe but minutes, after they arrived in New York, they would be but memories to each other, never to meet again.

He fought the thought, seeking some loophole to his problem, finding none. He knew that there was but one way to accomplish the thing he wanted, and panic flared briefly again in his mind.

But when he spoke, his tone was even and unruffled, with a lilting undercurrent that had become habitual in the past few months.

"I can't explain everything, Mary," he said quietly. "You'll just have to trust that everything will be all right. We'll go to the hospital first, talk to Doctor Foster and see what he says. And then I'll do what has to be done to raise the money."

"It—it's honest, isn't it, Jim?" Mary flushed deeply. "I mean—"

Jim smiled, winked whimsically.

"It's honesty, Mary," he said, "In fact, the honesty of it is what's bothering me."

"I'm glad. I had the crazy thought for a moment that you might be intending to—well, rob somebody."

"Tommy is worth even that, I think," Jim said gently, then laughed lightly. "Now don't go worrying your

head about what I'm figuring on doing. You begin making plans for three months from now."

She nodded, turned to the port window, so that he might not see the filling of her eyes. A little later she slept. Jim reluctantly loosened the grip of her fingers, smoked cigarette after cigarette, as he sleeplessly watched the twinkling stars strung in endless patterns in the curtain of the sky.

They caught an airport taxi, were whirled into the streaming traffic, young Tommy's eyes ablaze with excitement, his hand pointing and his tongue moving in a blur of excited sound. Mary Kerrigan sat in the corner of the seat, her hands clenched in her lap, her blue eyes fixed on Jim Crane's immobile face.

And Jim Crane felt the net of the city's life settling around him, stifling his thoughts and emotions, crushing him with a brutal thoroughness that he had not thought possible. He answered monosyllabically all of Tommy's questions, was afraid to meet Mary's gaze.

But he and Mary had no chance for a few private words until they sat on the couch in the surgeon's office, while the man's skilful fingers traced the structure of Tommy's twisted back.

Then Mary Kerrigan had looked directly into Jim Crane's averted face, and said:

"Jim, there is something wrong. I can sense it."

Jim Crane shook his head, laughed easily.

"Nonsense, Mary," he scolded lightly. "There's nothing wrong. I'm just worried about what Doctor Foster will say."

SHE turned, her eyes still afraid of something intangible, and came to her feet with a tiny rush of words as the surgeon swung from the examination table.

Dr. Foster stopped her voice with a slight gesture, smiled confidently. "I

think I can do it," he said. "Of course, the convalescence may be a long one. He should have had expert treatment a long time ago."

Mary Kerrigan was crying then, and smiling through the tears, trying to say the words that were framed in her mind. But the doctor was only embarrassed, and Jim Crane had to bring her back to normalcy.

And while she was bent over the table, talking swiftly to the boy whose pain she had borne in her heart, Jim Crane slipped from the office, spoke a few words to Dr. Foster, then caught the elevator to the street floor.

He carried his grip into a small hotel, took a room, was there less than a half hour. Then with a .38 revolver sagging his coat pocket, he hailed a taxi in the crowded street, settled himself in the cushions. He gave the address in a quiet voice, and broke forever the link that tied him with the past.

There was no bitterness in him now, only a sense that things were working out as they should in a predetermined pattern of which he had had no knowledge until the day before.

And then the taxi was parked before the great grim building that was his destination. He paid the driver, looked around at the world that had come to mean so much to him in three years, then pushed through the revolving door, took an elevator to the seventeenth floor.

The secretary told him very politely that he could not see anyone without an appointment, but he sent her into an inner office with one of the bonds he had dug from his basement. Almost immediately she returned with the polite request that he step inside.

He walked heavily, his steps like those of a man dreading to face something inevitable. He stood for a moment before the District Attorney's desk, then sank gratefully into the leather chair at the man's wordless nod.

"This is interesting," the District

Attorney said, lifting the bond. "And I believe I know—"

Jim Crane bent forward. "It's one of the bonds stolen from Carter and Carter in nineteen thirty-eight," he said. "I've got a proposition to make in regard to the remainder."

The District Attorney was a small man, famed for his lightning decisions and knowledge of men, and he was very impressive behind the polished bulwark of his desk.

"Let's hear it, Mr. Crane," he said slowly.

Jim Crane swallowed. "I know where the rest of the bonds are," he said evenly. "And for a suitable reward, I'll turn them over to your office."

"A suitable reward?"

Jim Crane nodded. "There is a law in this state that a finder of lost or stolen property is entitled to ten percent of its value. Am I right?"

The District Attorney lifted his bright eyes, searched the face of the man sitting in the leather chair.

"That would be twenty-five thousand dollars," he said quietly.

"I know," Jim Crane said. "But I don't want that much. I want five thousand dollars, and I want it today—now."

The District Attorney frowned, then his features smoothed.

"You are James Randolph, of course," he said. "You are the man who made the embezzlement."

JIM CRANE nodded briefly, and then the revolver was in his steady fist, the muzzle unwavering. The District Attorney stopped the slow movement of his left hand toward the row of push buttons, his eyes becoming suddenly steely and grim.

"I don't want any trouble," Jim Crane said sharply. "I just want you to listen." He watched the other's expression for a moment, then laid the gun on the desk. "There is the gun," he finished. "I couldn't use it."

The District Attorney lifted the

weapon, saw the glitter of its yellow shells, then laid it aside. Jim Crane watched him, a dumb agony in his eyes that was more horrible than words.

"Go ahead," the District Attorney said softly. "I'll listen."

"Well, it's like this," Jim Crane said. "I've got the bonds hidden out where you'll never find them. You can arrest me, but if that happens, a quarter of a million dollars in bonds will go into circulation. My proposition is this: Give me five thousand dollars in cash, and I'll submit to arrest and turn the bonds over to you."

"Why make a proposition like that?" the District Attorney asked curiously. "Another year or so, and you could have unloaded the bonds for twenty times that amount!"

"That is my business!"

"It's my business, too. You see, I'm not accustomed to making bargains with—er—embezzlers."

Jim Crane leaned forward, his hands white-knuckled on the desk edge.

"Get this straight, sir," he said. "You have me and can hold me, but there's a quarter of a million dollars involved. Don't play ball, and a lot of people will lose that money forever."

"All right," the District Attorney nodded. "I'll play ball. Now, what do I do?"

"Send for a messenger boy."

The District Attorney flipped a switch on the annunciator, snapped a quick order, then closed the switch. He lifted a cigarette from a humidior, pushed the box toward Jim Crane. Crane took a cigarette, smoked it with short, jerky puffs.

"I want your oath on another matter, too," he said.

"On what matter?"

Jim Crane watched the smoke piling in the still air, then looked directly at the other.

"Believe me when I say this," he said. "The person to whom that money is going knows absolutely nothing of my crime. I want your

solemn promise that you will not try to recover the money from her after I'm in prison. Further, I don't want her to know how I obtained the money. And finally, I want to be sent to prison with as little publicity as it is possible for you to arrange."

"A woman?" the lawyer asked thoughtfully, then nodded. "You have my word."

"Fine. Now send for five thousand dollars in cash."

Jim Crane smoked cigarettes chain-fashion, utterly oblivious of the District Attorney, feeling a rush of relief now that his task was so near accomplishment.

He wrote a note on the office stationery, trying to keep all feeling from the few words, telling Mary that he would never see her again, making the note very brief and without sentiment. He sealed the money within the envelope when a secretary brought it from the bank, and then handed it to the boy in the neat messenger uniform.

"Don't," he cautioned, "say where you saw me. Just say that I stopped you on the street and gave you five dollars for delivering this."

"Yes, sir," the boy said, went whistling from the office.

"Now," the District Attorney said, "I've kept my share of the bargain. Where are the bonds hidden?"

Jim Crane crushed out his cigarette, unbuttoned his vest, stocked the embossed paper on the desk. He smiled a bit at the incredulity in the man's eyes, then relaxed in the chair, as the office suddenly hummed with activity.

HE went through the routine of fingerprinting like an automaton, answering monosyllabically all of the questions put to him, unconscious of the appraising glances given him by the puzzled District Attorney.

Later, in his cell within the bowels of the building, he lay on his bunk, counting the spidery cracks in the plaster, never permitting his mind to

wander to the life that he might have had in that western city where he had hidden so successfully.

It was late that evening, several hours after the evening meal, that he was brought upstairs by the phlegmatic guard into the visitor's room.

He went white with shock when he saw Mary Kerrigan standing so quietly at the District Attorney's side, turned as though to run, but halted at the woman's single word.

"Jim!" she cried.

"You gave me your word!" he said accusingly to the District Attorney who stood so effacingly near the door.

"She bribed the boy," the District Attorney explained. "There was nothing I could do but bring her here."

And then they were alone in the room—Jim Crane, the embezzler, and Mary Kerrigan who held him so tightly in her arms.

They talked for minutes, about what they could never after remember, each soothing the other, both saying the things that had been in their hearts for so long. And as the seconds passed, they regained control of themselves, and their speech became more coherent and matter-of-fact.

"Jim, you shouldn't have done it," Mary Kerrigan said bitterly. "There were other ways."

"No," Jim Crane shook his head, used his handkerchief gently on the tears that hung quivering on her lashes. "This is the way that was best. Tommy had to have his chance. I just hastened it for him."

"But the District Attorney said—"

"Hush, Mary, time is a funny thing. The days and weeks and months will pass swiftly by. And I'll always be thinking of Tommy with the straight back that I gave him. That's my reward for doing something for which I can take no credit myself."

"I'll wait. I'll be waiting when you come out."

"No! No, Mary! I've made up my mind. I shan't see you again—ever.

The handicap of having an ex-convict stepfather will be too much for Butch to overcome. And it would degrade you. No, Mary, this is good-by, and, please, Mary—" Jim Crane's eyes were tortured bits of gray fire—"don't make it seem any worse than it is!"

"Time's up, Mrs. Kerrigan," the District Attorney said from the doorway.

He stood aside to permit the woman to pass, touched her gently on the shoulder as she walked by.

"Please wait in my office for a moment," he requested. "I'd like to talk to you."

MARY KERRIGAN nodded, and then there was but the stumbling of her heels on the marble flooring of the hall. The District Attorney closed the door, lit a cigarette, offered one to Jim Crane.

"I talked to Tommy in the hospital," he said softly. "He thinks you're about the greatest man he ever met, other than his dead father."

"Let's get back to my cell!" Jim Crane said harshly. "I can't take much more tonight."

"I've got two children." The District Attorney flicked ashes to the floor, his voice even and musing. "It would kill me if one of them was crippled and there was nothing I could do."

Jim Crane shred the cigarette in strong fingers.

"He's all right," he said, smiled with pride. "We understand each other."

"I think I understand you, too," the District Attorney said. "I talked with Mrs. Kerrigan after she came here. In fact, I've got a pretty good picture of everything."

Jim Crane swung around, half-crouching, toward the stocky little prosecutor.

"I don't want your sympathy. I don't want anything. I've lost something I can never regain! Let's get below."

The District Attorney took three papers from his pocket, handed them to Jim Crane.

"The opposition party," he said, "would raise plenty of Cain if they could see those papers. They're political dynamite!"

JIM CRANE read the words with eyes blurred with emotion, a wild incredulity filling them as he grasped the import of the neat paragraphs. He looked up, tiny muscles tightening in his cheeks, as he read the answer in the friendly eyes of the lawyer.

"I swing quite a bit of weight around this town," the District Attorney said, "so I got the charges dropped against you by Carter and Carter and had a friendly judge sign a release. I think I'm doing right."

"You mean—" Jim Crane's voice was a broken whisper.

The District Attorney nodded. "I like children," he said defensively. "So I didn't see why I shouldn't have a share in the present you promised Butch." He blew his nose violently. "You were being plain selfish giving the present by yourself!"

"She's waiting!" Jim Crane said.

"She's waiting out in your office."

"Of course." The District Attorney opened the door, gestured down the deserted hall. "It's the second door on the right, just around the first turn to your right."

He was saying something else, but Jim Crane didn't hear. He was running down the echoing hall, a soundless cry of gladness in his heart, the papers clenched tightly in his hand.

Mary Kerrigan came lightly to her feet when he burst through the door. She stood quite still for a moment, reading the silent message in his eyes. Then she was in his arms again, knowing they would always be there when she needed them, and he was whispering incoherent words in her ear that somehow made sense.

"Let's go tell Butch," Jim Crane said at last. "I want him to know I'll be around next year for that race we promised each other."

And side by side, their eyes alight with the same glow, totally unaware that the world held more than three people, Jim Crane and Mary Kerrigan went down the silent halls to tell Tommy Kerrigan something he had always known.

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NOW ON SALE AT ALL STANDS

TWO PLUS TWO IS MURDER

By JIM O'BRIEN

Author of "Money, Marbles and Murder," "Handcuffs for a Corpse," etc.



"Stay here," I said. "I'm going to get that popgun."

In a Murder Mystery Investigation a Sheriff's Deputy Finds That Two Heads Are Better Than One, if One of Them Is the Red Head of a Girl Detective!

THE gloomy third-floor corridor of the County Building reeked with the odor of disinfectants and sour mop water. It was hot, too. Perspiration filmed my face, bit into the razor nicks on my chin. But I'd had my orders: "Grab a shave and hustle over to the coroner's office."

I went in and a hook-nosed blonde stopped flicking the keyboard of a typewriter, examined me from the seclusion of horn-rimmed glasses.

"I'm Art Underwood, from the sheriff's office," I said, and removed my cap. "You sent for me."

"Don't flatter yourself, big-boy. You're not my type." She nodded toward a closed door. "Doc sent for a deputy—just any deputy. He's waiting."

The coroner hadn't sent for "just any deputy." He had sent for me, probably because I was the one who had made six dives to locate Pearl

Fay's body and lift it off the gumbo bottom of Little Mirror Lake that morning.

I knocked, opened the door. Coroner Jim Coons turned from a paper-littered desk.

"Come in—come in," he called.

I stepped inside and closed the door. Then I saw the girl as she turned from a window. She was tall and red-headed, with nice lips and a nose that tilted just a trifle. She wore a white suit that emphasized what should be emphasized.

"This is Deputy Underwood who recovered the body," Coons told her. He looked at me. "Miss McHale just came from the morgue."

She gave me a polite little nod, glanced at her watch. I studied her with new interest.

GEOORGIA McHALE, ace investigator of the prosecutor's office. I had heard the boys mention her at the county jail. The mugs she had put in stir would fill two pages of the city directory. Still, she didn't look so hard-boiled to me.

"Deputy,"—she rested her trim body against the side of Coons' desk, studied the toes of her white pumps—"the report you filed isn't absolutely clear to me. Would you mind reviewing your knowledge of this case?"

"I patrol the Little Mirror Lake district nights," I said. "At six-twenty this morning the radio dispatcher instructed me to investigate a missing-person call just received from Mrs. Jon LeMay. She was waiting when I arrived, and—"

"Who was waiting?" the girl asked.

"Mrs. LeMay. She told me that she and the Fay girl had agreed last night to go swimming early this morning. When Miss Fay didn't appear, and failed to answer repeated calls, Mrs. LeMay investigated and found the girl's room empty. The lodge affords—"

"What lodge?" Georgia McHale's voice was barbed. "Please be more explicit."

I took a deep breath, wondering if my face was as red as it felt.

"The LeMay lodge," I said slowly. "It affords a perfect view of Little

Mirror Lake. Failing to see Miss Fay swimming, Mrs. LeMay became worried and notified the sheriff's office."

Georgia McHale's eyes were locked with mine.

"What was Pearl Fay doing at the LeMay lodge?" she asked. "Or didn't you think to ask?"

I was beginning to suspect that I didn't like the prosecutor's ace investigator any more than she liked me.

"She was spending the week-end there," I managed through clenched teeth, then went on: "Jon LeMay and I went down to the lake. On a dock extending about fifteen feet into the water we found a robe of white towel-ing which LeMay identified as belonging to Miss Fay. We got a boat and located the body about eight feet off the end of the dock. I brought it up."

"I noticed a half-inch cut on the dead girl's forehead," Georgia said.

"There are a number of submerged posts rising about twelve inches off the lake bed where I found the body," I observed.

"Probably she hit one driving." Coons offered. He shifted his gaze to me, grinned. "You're to work with Miss McHale. Take your orders from her until further notice. The prosecutor has arranged with Sheriff Gaines to have you temporarily relieved of your patrol and transferred to special duty. They want this drowning looked into."

"Since when do I need an escort?" the girl asked.

"It's just a front." Coons smiled apologetically. "Y'know, the LeMays swing a lot of weight hereabouts. We want them to feel they're getting plenty of attention. A man in uniform adds to the picture."

He tacked on a laugh, but stopped abruptly when no one joined him. I nodded, opened the door for the girl, and followed her down the worn stair-way to the street.

"We'll take my car," she snapped, moved toward a traffic-scarred coupé.

I OPENED that door, too, and got in after her.

"You're new with Gaine's gang,

aren't you?" she asked, as she knifed the car into passing traffic.

I said I was.

"Previous police experience?"

"No," I lied.

I didn't feel like trying to explain my reasons for leaving the Cleveland Police after three years with the detective division. Georgia McHale just didn't seem like the type who would, or could, understand a guy getting fed up with a town and everyone and everything connected with it, and having a yen for the simple life and the open country that topped everything else.

"A bit old to be learning new tricks, aren't you?" she drawled.

"Thirty-two," I returned politely. "How old are you?"

That ended the conversation. Little Mirror Lake sparkled in the sun through the trees ahead when Georgia McHale spoke again. There was an edge to her voice.

"Let's have an understanding. I'm not conducting a school of criminal investigation, so don't bother me with a lot of ridiculous questions. And don't race around sniffing for clues. If I should need your assistance, I'll say so. Until then, just strike your best official pose. You're only scenery. Do as I say and I'll stay out of your hair—and you might pick up a few pointers."

I didn't answer.

She parked under a tree near the LeMay lodge, got out with a display of hosiery that made me grin. I couldn't help it. She was trying so darned hard to keep in character—the lovely-but-hard-boiled lady detective. She saw my amusement and stalked toward the lodge, skirt aswirl.

I tagged along.

Jon LeMay stepped out on the porch as we mounted the steps. He was tall, suave and handsome, with crisp, wavy black hair combed just so. He featured a pencil-line moustache simply by exposing faultless white teeth in a vaudeville smile.

"I'm Georgia McHale, of the prosecutor's office," the girl said.

"Glad you came out. I'm Jon LeMay." He gave me a nod of recognition, returned his gray gaze to Georgia. "You're here to inquire into this morning's tragedy, of course."

"A matter of routine," she murmured.

"Suppose we go inside," LeMay suggested.

The comfortably furnished front room extended the full width of the log structure. A woman turned from a caged canary and moved toward us. Her left leg, long and shapely and muscular, parted the front of a blue lounging affair when she walked. I noticed a crescent-shaped white scar just above her knee. Her page-boy bob was a sleek black helmet framing large blue eyes, a slightly aquiline nose, and wide, sensuous lips.

"Velma," LeMay said, "this is Miss McHale, of the prosecutor's office, and Deputy—"

"Underwood," I reminded him. "Art Underwood."

EVERYONE smiled and nodded and mumbled their pleasure. LeMay pulled up a chair for Georgia, gave her a cigarette and a light when she was seated. No one paid any attention to me. I leaned against the wall and listened.

"Sorry to bother you," Georgia said through a little cloud of smoke. "However, red tape is red tape."

Velma LeMay repeated exactly what she had told me that morning, then Georgia asked if she might see Pearl Fay's room.

"Certainly," LeMay said. "I'll show you the way."

His wife did not come with us."

A black Gladstone was open on a stand at the foot of the bed. Georgia glanced around, casually, went to one of two windows and told LeMay how much she admired the view. He spent two minutes pointing out what he considered spots of interest around the lake below.

I spent the time pawing through the Gladstone.

There were several suits of play shorts, two pairs of shoes, some lingerie, three colored pullover sweaters, three skirts, a rubber bathing cap, and two books—one of which I knew had been banned by police censors all over the country.

I glanced at the dresser, saw an assortment of toilet articles, a large oval-shaped hairbrush with a smooth, heavy wooden back, a comb, and a

leather purse. A lightweight coat was thrown over a chair.

We returned to the front room just as a clock over the fieldstone fireplace chimed four-thirty. LeMay and Georgia and I went down to the lake, where we walked out on the boat dock.

"I meant to have those submerged posts removed within a few days," he said. "I . . . Well, I can't help but feel that I'm a great deal to blame in this matter."

There was nothing to see, so we returned to the house. It took LeMay and his smile almost ten seconds to convince Georgia that we ought to stay for sandwiches and a long cool drink. When Velma LeMay started toward the kitchen I asked:

"May I have a glass of water, please?"

"Of course." Her smile was something to see. "Want to get it yourself?"

I said I did and felt Georgia's eyes on my back as I left the room. I drained two glasses that I didn't want.

"By the way," I asked, "mind if I use your phone?"

Velma LeMay nodded toward a side corridor.

"Straight along to the end room. Jon's den. The phone's on the desk."

I went into the den, closed the door, and called the office. Sheriff Gaines answered.

"Chief? Underwood. There's something rotten about this drowning case."

He wanted to know what Miss McHale thought. I kept my back to the door and spoke softly.

"She seems to think it's accidental drowning. I'm not so sure. Is Coons positive Pearl Fay drowned, or is there a possibility that she was dead when she entered the water? Remember that cut on the forehead?"

Gaines thought that over a moment. He was the only one in town who knew of my past connection with the Cleveland Police. I was counting on that.

"What've you uncovered?" he asked.

I told him about the rubber bathing cap in the Gladstone.

"What's the point?"

"It seems funny to me," I said.
[Turn page]

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"that a girl would pack a bathing cap, then go swimming in one of these gumbo-bottom backwoods lakes without it. Maybe Pearl Fay didn't go swimming. Maybe she was killed with a blow on the head and thrown into the lake dead."

"Maybe. But look, Art—go easy. Don't make any mistakes. Jon LeMay's people would have my scalp. You'd better just sit tight until I talk to the prosecutor."

"Okay," I agreed. "In the meantime, I'm going to get in touch with Coons, see what he thinks."

I hung up, waited a moment, then called the coroner's office. Coons answered. I repeated what I'd told Gaines.

"She drowned!" Coons actually shouted. "Think I don't know a drowning when I see one? Eternal fire, what do you want—an affidavit from every fish in the lake?"

"Never mind the affidavits," I said grimly. "What about an autopsy?"

Coons was silent for maybe five seconds.

"I'll consult the prosecutor," he said quietly.

I put the phone on the desk and turned. Georgia McHale was framed in the doorway.

"Did I hear you say something about an autopsy?" she asked.

Her chin was high, her eyes venomous.

"You probably did," I told her. "Any eavesdropper—"

"That will be enough," she interrupted. "I understood that you were to take your orders from me."

The gag had gone far enough, for my money. I didn't feel like standing still for a conversational mauling just then.

"I take my orders from Sheriff Gaines," I grated. "In addition to that, I'm entitled to an opinion. I believe Pearl Fay died under circumstances entirely different than we've been given to understand."

"Your opinion!" Her eyes widened with scorn. "I saw the body at the morgue. That girl was drowned accidentally. That's my opinion, and my opinion is what counts around here!"

I pushed past without answering and found my way to the front room. Georgia McHale followed. Jon and

Velma LeMay were waiting.

"Miss McHale thought you'd abandoned her," Mrs. LeMay told me.

We all laughed. It was a bit strained. I passed up the sandwiches, had a "long cool drink" that turned out to be iced grape juice. Finally, at six o'clock, Georgia stood up. I'd been leaning against the wall.

"We'll be running along," she said. "Thanks for everything."

We went outside and got into her coupé. Georgia started the motor, and waved to the LeMays as we swung around. I settled back, studying the road ahead.

"What makes you think an autopsy's necessary?" she asked abruptly.

I didn't like the tone of her voice.

"The same thing that makes me think you ought to buy a cook book and quit playing detective," I told her. "Just plan common sense."

THE speedometer needle took a sudden upward jump. After two miles of skidding around curves she said:

"Pearl Fay simply dived into the lake, and struck her head, and drowned. There's nothing unusual about that."

"Are you trying to convince yourself, or me?" I asked.

We made the rest of the trip into town in silence. The girl parked in front of the County Building.

"May I consider myself off duty?" I asked.

She got out, left me sitting there. I watched her go into the building, then got out and walked three blocks to the county jail. Sheriff Gaines was in his office.

"Coons is doing that autopsy," he said. "I had a time convincing the prosecutor it ought to be done, though."

I went down to the locker room, had a shower bath, then returned to Gaines' office and read the paper until Coroner Coons came bustling in at eight-thirty by the clock.

"Well?" Gaines asked.

Coons sat down, mopped his face and lit a cigar. He examined the end for several moments before he spoke.

"She was drowned," he said, without looking up.

Gaines shifted a paper-weight on

his desk, glanced at me.

"In salt water," Coons added.

"Salt water?" Gaines frowned. "But Little Mirror Lake is fresh water—spring-fed."

"I don't give a hoot 'bout that," Coons snapped. "I'm tellin' you that girl was drowned in salt water!"

"Don't boil over, Jim," Gaines advised. "I'm just trying to figure this out."

"That's your job. All I know is that the salt content of the left side of that girl's heart is definite proof she died in salt water."

"Mind explaining that for my benefit?" I asked.

"Well"—Coons' face brightened a bit—"when a person drowns, water is drawn into the lungs. All right. Now, the pulmonary vein connects your lungs with the left side of your heart. By a process called osmosis, water in the lungs seeps through the membranes, dilutes the blood in the left half of the heart. This provides basis for a sure test. If there's water in the left side of the heart, it's a case of drowning. If there's no water, the person was dead before submersion."

I nodded.

"All right, now," the doc went on. "Blood contains a certain amount of sodium chloride—common salt. Salt water, though, contains a much higher percentage of salt than blood does. So if a person drowns in salt water, the dilution of the blood in the left side of the heart by the salt water which seeped through from the lungs would increase its salt content over that of the blood in the right side of the heart. If it were a fresh-water drowning, the blood in the left side of the heart would contain a lower percentage of salt than the blood in the right side. The left half of Pearl Fay's heart contained more salt than did the right. Therefore, she drowned in salt water. There's absolutely no way we can manage to get around that."

No one spoke for several minutes. We just sat there, eyes on the floor, digesting Coons' words.

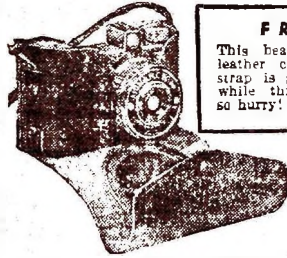
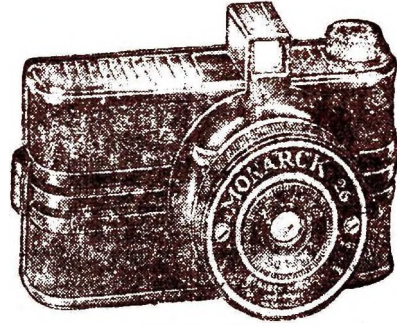
"Looks like you've turned up something, Art," Gaines said finally.

"What about that cut on her forehead?" I asked Coons.

"It's just that—a cut," he told me.

[Turn page]

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"She hit something, or was hit with something, probably hard enough to knock her unconscious. However, it certainly didn't kill her. She was drowned—"

"—in salt water," I finished. "How long would you say she's been dead?" Coons frowned, pawed his chin.

"I first saw the body at nine this morning, and figured she'd been dead three or four hours then."

"Then she died between five and six this morning," I said. "It was seven-thirty when we located the body and brought it up. I received the call about six-twenty, which means Mrs. LeMay notified the office about six-fifteen."

"Seems to tie up all right," Gaines muttered.

"We know how Pearl Fay died. The next thing, is, *where?*" I looked at Gaines. "Okay if I stick with this case until it's cleared up?"

"What about Miss McHale?" he asked.

I settled that with a wave of my hand.

"Well—" He pursed his lips, frowned. "The Lord knows we've reason enough to pry further into this. But don't go off half-cocked, Art. We've no evidence that would support a murder charge in court. Go ahead, but be careful."

I got my own Ford roadster from the parking lot and headed for Little Mirror Lake. I switched off my lights when I left the highway, drove the last half mile in darkness, and eased the car under a drooping pine near the LeMay lodge.

The house windows were dark. I circled, approached from the rear, and paused to listen. There wasn't a sound. I moved forward, reached the back wall, and felt my way along it to a corner. My foot thudded against a rain barrel. I stepped around it, eased along the side to the front, and mounted the porch.

The door stood wide open.

I hesitated, listening. Had Jon and Velma LeMay gone to bed and left the door open for ventilation?

I cursed myself for not having a definite plan of action. Still, I wasn't accomplishing anything by standing out there.

I slipped inside, took a cautious

step forward, and put my foot down on a layer of sand that had been spread on the wooden floor. It crackled, and the sound seemed to echo throughout the entire lodge. Before I could make another move, a beam of light blinded me.

"You'll get yourself shot," Georgia McHale drawled.

I was too surprised to say anything except:

"What're you doing here?"

She turned her light off and I moved toward her. She wore a simple little linen dress and was hatless, as though she had just come out for a stroll.

"Why didn't you tell me about that bathing cap?" she countered.

"You didn't seem interested," I said.

"The prosecutor told me about it when I reached the office, and said that Coons was doing an autopsy. That really was an excellent bit of reasoning, for a beginner."

I DIDN'T answer, just gritted my teeth.

"I decided to come back and have another look at that bedroom," Georgia went on.

"Where are the LeMays?" I asked.

"I don't know. I parked my car down the road and walked up here. They drove away just as I arrived. I waited awhile, then found a porch window unlocked. I crawled inside and opened the door in case I wanted to get out in a hurry. I put a little sand on the floor just so someone wouldn't sneak in and surprise me. I heard you on the porch a moment later."

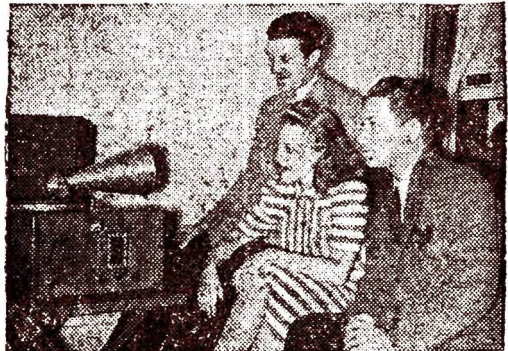
"Let's look at that room again," I suggested.

We went to Pearl Fay's bedroom and Georgia held her flash while I hung blankets over the two windows. Then I closed the door and switched on the light.

Georgia didn't waste any time, and she knew what she was doing. It took her just about ten minutes to find the thin sheaf of newspaper clippings hidden in the Gladstone. The lining of the bag had been lifted and expertly replaced.

Georgia spread the clippings on the
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bed and studied them with a little frown. There were five, obviously several years old, covering the arrest, trial, and conviction of one Irene Wickens on a charge of extortion, and her subsequent commitment to the State Prison for Women at Bedford Hills, N. Y., for two years.

"Those should give us the motive," I said.

Georgia looked up, one eyebrow higher than the other.

"Motive for what?"

"Murder," I said, and told her about the salt water.

"It could be suicide." Georgia bit her lower lip as she picked up the clippings. "Possibly Pearl Fay is Irene Wickens."

"Or Irene Wickens might be Velma LeMay," I suggested. "It seems to me we've two things to do—get pictures and fingerprints of Irene Wickens from Bedford Hills, and learn where Pearl Fay was drowned."

I studied the room, finally shifting my attention to the dresser. The dead girl's large, oval-shaped hairbrush had rested on its bristles during our first visit. I was absolutely sure of that, because I'd noticed the smooth, heavy wooden back. Now, however, the brush lay on its back, bristles up.

I moved to the dresser, wrapped a handkerchief around my hand, and picked up the brush. Georgia McHale watched me, hand on her hip.

"Is it a secret?" she asked.

"Somebody turned this hairbrush over after we left," I told her. "Why?"

"You've been seeing too many movies," she snapped.

I grinned, mounted a chair, and held the brush close to the light. The back was smooth and glossy, like a black mirror. I tilted the brush carefully from one angle to another. There wasn't a mark on it.

I PRESSED my finger against the back, studied it again. The fingerprint couldn't have been plainer had it been engraved.

"This brush has been wiped clean," I said as I put it back on the dresser. "After we left this evening, somebody made sure there would be no fingerprints on the instrument used to slug Pearl Fay."

"Aren't you doing quite a bit of guessing?" Georgia demanded.

"Certainly. Where would detective divisions be if it weren't for guesswork and tips from stool-pigeons? We'll take that brush in and have it gone over for prints. I'll bet you the price of a new hat that my one print will be the only one found. What other reason would anyone have for wiping the back and handle of a hairbrush? Someone entered this room early this morning, slugged Pearl Fay with that brush, then threw her into the lake."

"Which solves everything but one minor point," Georgia said. "Where did she get her lungs full of salt water?"

"There's an answer to that, too," I said grimly, as I flicked off the light. "Let's see if we can find it."

Georgia opened the door and stopped so abruptly that I bumped into her.

"Well?" I asked.

"Quiet," she whispered, gripping my arm. "I heard someone step on that sand."

We stood there maybe ten seconds, listening. There wasn't a sound.

"Your imagination," I had started to say, then closed my mouth, for I had heard it too—the crackle of sand on varnished wood.

I pulled Georgia back into the room and eased the door shut.

"There's no reason for us to hide," she whispered.

"No?" I jerked a blanket off one of the windows. "You'd better study your law books. There's no statute giving us the right to break and enter a private dwelling at night."

I unlocked the window, raised it.

"You first," I said.

She tried to hold back, but I spun her around, gripped her waist and lifted her off the floor. I moved toward the window.

"Up with the feet," I whispered, put her through the opening, and onto the ground.

She was breathing sharply, smoothing her skirt when I dropped beside her.

"There's an areaway beneath the back porch over there." I pointed toward the rear of the lodge. "We can

[Turn page]

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watch for a few minutes and see what happens. Run for it. I'm right behind you."

"This is ridiculous," Georgia snapped.

"So're you," I grated, shoved her toward the back yard.

She balked, dug her heels into the turf.

"I'm not going to—"

My jaws locked. I pushed her again with my left hand, and swung my right in a resounding slap where I thought it would do the most good. She gasped with indignation, and started to run. I followed, directly behind her.

THE shotgun bellowed when we were about ten yards from the lodge. Half a dozen pellets bit into my back and legs. We kept on running, then Georgia McHale dived head-first into the areaway, beneath the steps. I swerved to the side, pulled my .38 and fired once, at an angle into the air.

I heard the shot echo over the lake, then silence. Whoever had fired the shotgun was taking no chances. I moved to the girl's side, my gun still trained in the direction of the shotgun shot. She was sitting up.

"You get hit?" I asked.

"No, but I heard you grunt."

"A couple in my legs," I said. "Stay here. I'm going to get that pop-gun."

I crouched low, gun ready, and circled to the side. When I was past the lodge I turned and skirted the road toward the front of the building. Pearl Fay's bedroom was on the other side. I moved on, down a gradual slope to the drive. A car was parked there, its radiator toward the porch.

It was the same coupé I noticed at the side of the lodge during our first visit. I understood, then, what had happened. Returning to the lodge, the LeMays had coasted down the grade into the drive. Their headlights, sweeping across the porch, had revealed the open door.

I hesitated beside the car, planning my next step. Of course, I could march up on the porch and knock—and maybe get my head blown off. After all, I was satisfied that one murder had been committed there already. Why give someone a chance to make

it two in a row?

I eased forward and crouched beside the front porch. There was no sound. I was about to move again when I heard a faint click just around the corner of the building. I held my big service flash in my left hand, the .38 in my right, straightened, and stepped around the corner. I squeezed the flash button, held the gun forward so the light covered it.

Jon LeMay was on one knee, close to the lodge wall, his shotgun leveled in the opposite direction. He whirled up, froze in a half crouch almost facing me when I barked:

"Don't move!"

His eyes glittered in the light like those of a cornered animal.

"Drop the gun!" I ordered.

He let it fall to the ground and straightened, his hands spread away from his sides.

I took one step forward, heard a scuffling sound behind me and tried to sidestep. A body hit my legs, jerking them from under me. LeMay ducked, came at me from the front in a long dive as I struck the ground. I clubbed at him with the gun, and felt fingernails rake my face. LeMay slugged me in the face, again under the ear, then hooked a knee into my stomach. Hands gripped my throat from behind. They were long-fingered, slender and powerful.

I swung the gun again and again, but held my fire. One of the two deserved to be shot, I knew. But the other was just a sucker, and I didn't want to kill any innocent victims.

The flashlight had gone rolling. I clenched my left fist, twisted away from the hands at my throat and punched twice. I struck soft, bare flesh. I groped with my left and a fist caught me high on the cheek-bone. Then when my hand closed on Jon LeMay's throat, that gave me a check on distance. I swung the .38 again, felt him go limp.

AS I lurched to my feet, I heard a scuffling a short distance away and leaped toward it.

"Art!" a voice exclaimed as my hand clamped down on a slender shoulder.

I maintained my grip, holstered the

[Turn page]



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gun, and struck a match. Georgia McHale sat astride Velma LeMay's stomach, her left hand tangled in the woman's raven hair.

"Hold her, baby," I said, and went back to the man.

I dragged him within coupling distance, snapped handcuffs on his right wrist and on Velma LeMay's left. Georgia stood up.

I struck another match, found my flashlight, and turned it on the couple. There was a large red mark on Mrs. LeMay's cheek, where I'd belted her. She looked dazed. Jon LeMay was still unconscious. Blood trickled over his left ear from a gash on the side of his head. I thought of the rain barrel.

"Keep them covered," I told Georgia and gave her my light and gun. "I'm going to bring Good-Looking back to earth."

I fumbled for a handkerchief as I moved to the rear corner of the lodge. The rain barrel was half full. I could taste blood in my mouth and explored the gash in my lower lip with the tip of my tongue. It was a beauty. I leaned over the barrel, cupped my hands together and splashed water over my face.

Hot needles bit into the fingernail marks on my cheek, made me wince. I showered my face again, clenched my teeth, and shook my head. Talk about rubbing salt into an open wound!

I stood rigid for maybe five seconds, staring into the dark, my hands locked on the edge of the barrel. Then I scooped a bit of water into the palm of one hand and tasted it.

Salt!

I glanced back at Georgia.

"That guy awake yet?" I called.

"No. What's keeping you?"

"Come here," I said.

She moved toward me, keeping the circle of her light on the cuffed pair. I took the flash.

"Taste the water in this rain barrel," I said to her.

"Why—it's salty," she said a moment later, and gasped. "Salty! You don't think—"

"I do," I told her. "Thought maybe it was the blood in my mouth or I wouldn't've asked you to taste it."

We returned to the LeMays. I

squeezed a wet handkerchief over Jon LeMays face, jerked him to his feet when he moaned, and opened his eyes.

"Let's go inside," I said.

Georgia found the light switch in the front room and flicked it on. I pushed the LeMays toward a lounge. He shook his head several times, seemed to be trying to focus his eyes. I waited until his eyes registered surprise before I asked:

"What's the big idea, LeMay?"

He switched his gaze from me to the handcuffs, then to his wife. She seemed just as surprised as he.

"I—we didn't know it was you," he said, moistening his lips. "I'm terribly sorry, Underwood."

"Not half as sorry as you're going to be," I told him.

"This is all a mistake." He fingered the bracelet with his free hand. "When we came home our car lights swept across the porch and we saw the front door open. Naturally, I thought the house was being robbed. I came in and got my gun from that rack and slipped outside to surprise—"

"Never mind that," I snapped. "Do you know that the water in your rain barrel is salty?"

HE looked bewildered.

"Do you know that your wife served time in a New York prison as Irene Wickens?" I went on.

"That's a lie," Mrs. LeMay said, and her voice was hard and tight.

"Where'd you get that rain barrel?" I asked LeMay.

He squeezed his eyes shut, opened them.

"At the meat market, four days ago. Now that I think of it, that barrel was used for salt pork, or something like that. There was quite a crust of salt in the bottom. Now possibly you'll be good enough to explain—"

"Pearl Fay was murdered," I told him. "Your wife killed her to close her mouth."

"That's a lie!" Velma LeMay sprang to her feet. "You can't call me—"

Jon LeMay pulled her down beside him.

"Just a minute, Velma." His voice had regained some of its strength. He looked at me. "If you have no proof, I promise that you'll pay dearly

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"Your wife, Velma, alias Irene Wickens," I said, "served time in the State of New York for extortion. Pearl Fay knew about it and came here to demand hush money. Your wife decided to kill her, fearing that Pearl Fay might talk anyway, and knowing that your people would force you to leave her if the truth about her past became known.

"They agreed last night to go swimming early this morning and talk business. Your wife went into Pearl Fay's room, pretending to want to talk to her, and suddenly struck Pearl with the girl's heavy hairbrush, knocking her unconscious. Your wife's a powerful woman, as I can myself testify. She carried Pearl outside, and the girl showed signs of regaining consciousness too soon to suit her. There was the rain barrel, and since Velma planned on drowning her anyway, she simply lowered Pearl's head into the water. Then she took her down to the lake and threw her in."

"You'll have a grand time proving that in court," the woman sneered.

"I don't think so," I said, smiling. Then I used a stock police fable. "Why do you think we came back here tonight? Simply because we had located an eye-witness who saw you —"

Velma LeMay slumped, covered her face with her free hand.

"You did it, didn't you?" Jon LeMay said.

"Y-yes." She didn't look up. "I've been paying her for two years. That's where my necklace went. I didn't lose it. I sold it to get money for her, but she wasn't satisfied."

"You'll find the phone—" I told Georgia.

"I know where it is," she snapped, and left the room. . . .

I followed Georgia out of the county jail two hours later.

"Just a moment, Miss McHale," I called.

She stopped, but didn't look around.

"What about a steak," I asked.

"What about an apology?" she countered. "You slapped me."

"Apology? Oh, yeah." I grinned as I took her arm. "Please, Georgia,

believe me. I'm really sorry."

"I accept your apology—and your steak." She smiled, and adjusted her hat. "And maybe you'll be good enough to help me with my arithmetic."

"I don't get you," I said.

"Well, you added two and two and the answer was murder. By the way, Sheriff Gaines told me about your former connection with the Cleveland Police. Why in the world did you quit?"

I told her, because right then she struck me as being just the type who could, and would, understand a guy getting fed up with a town and everyone and everything connected with it, and wanting the simple life like this.

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28x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
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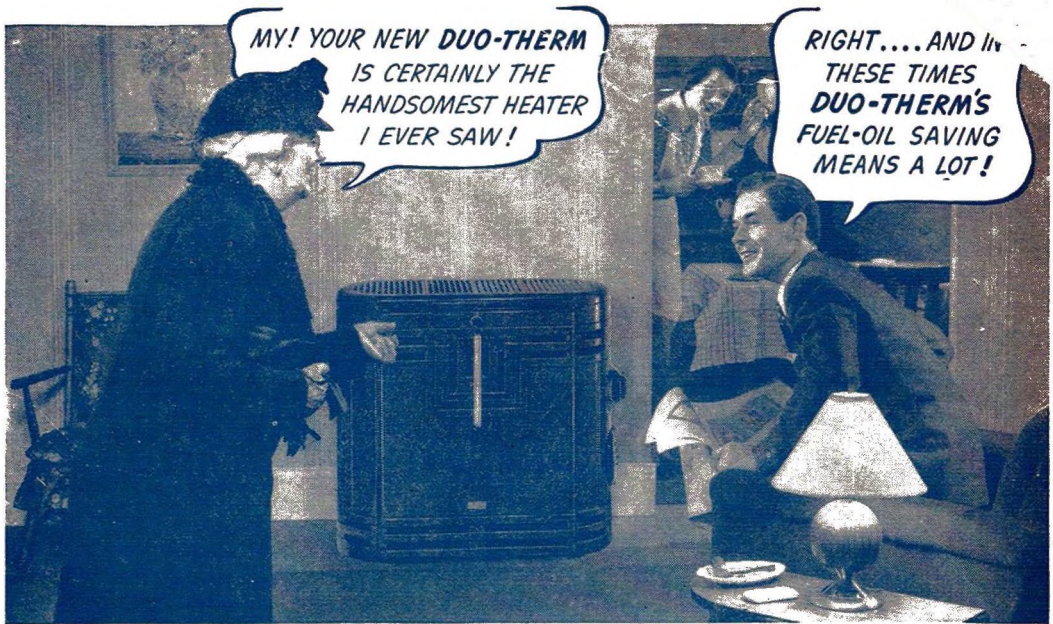
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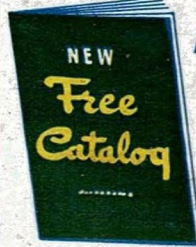
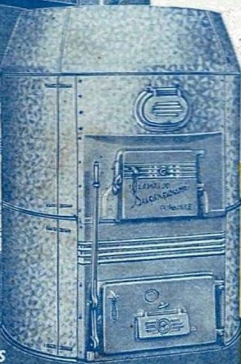


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