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## ***Murder TOWN***

*A Tony Quinn  
Mystery Novel*  
By G. WAYMAN  
JONES

## **THE JACKPOT SPILLED DANGER**

*A Novelet*  
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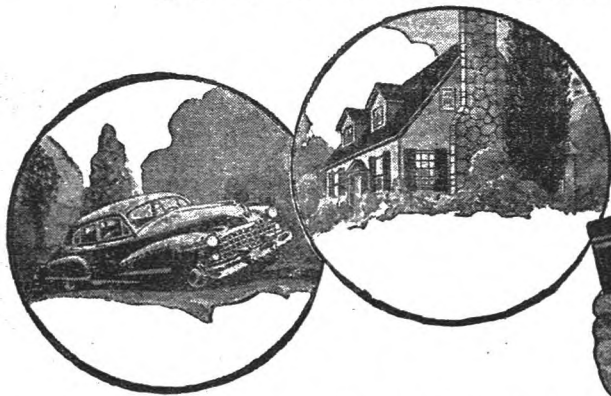
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# BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

Vol. XXVII, No. 2

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

Winter, 1950

A COMPLETE TONY QUINN NOVEL



## MURDER TOWN

By G. Wayman Jones

Tony Quinn, nemesis of crime who is known as the Black Bat, probes the strange mystery of a suicide that did not take—and its alarming aftermath of widespread violence and disaster!

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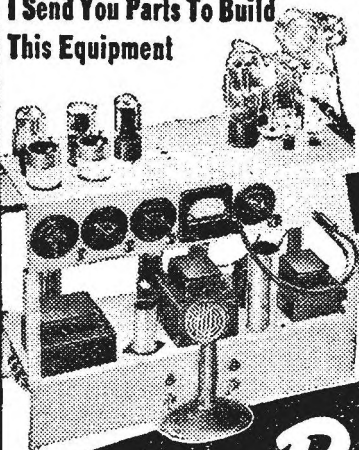


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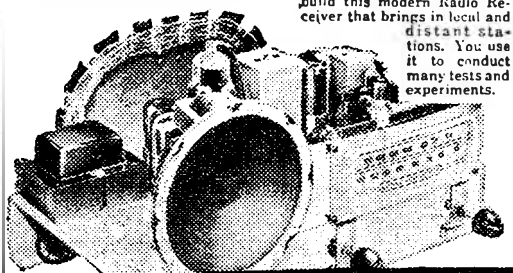
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# OFF THE RECORD

A DEPARTMENT WHERE READERS  
AND THE EDITOR MEET

**T**HERE were seven men in the plane besides the lone pilot. They were cheaply dressed—mostly in dark suits, white shirts and somber neckties. Two things each of these seven men held in common. They were nervous, for this was their first flight. And they were cruel looking men.

Singly, this trait of cruelty might not have been noticed. One pair of ice cold eyes or grim lips hardly stand out, but when seven men in a single group possess these characteristics they are emphasized.

They smoked cigarettes chain fashion, stamping out the butts on the aisle floor. Each man had a suitcase, every bag exactly the same. They didn't talk much, and when they did, it was in monosyllables.

## Things Move Fast!

The plane banked slightly and the door to the pilot's cabin opened. The pilot shouted over his shoulder.

"Okay. Get ready. We'll be on target in twenty minutes."

One of the chill-eyed men said, "Four hours and we're here? How fast has this crate been going anyhow? Four hours . . . It used to take me twenty-six hours on the fastest train."

"You were out of circulation too long," one of the others laughed. "Things move fast these days."

The men seemed to lose part of their harshness then and to become smiling individuals ready to go on a lark. That fallacy vanished, however, when each man took out a short barreled machine gun from his suitcase. . . .

Thus is launched the most amazing

crime wave this country has ever known! It was a new technique in robbery and murder! Everything was planned and carried out with a precision that made lawbreaking a science. Seven men, all hardened criminals, who by some mysterious means had won parole from prison, had banded together. Soon their crimes, vast in scope and netting millions of dollars, were to rock America!

## Calling the Black Bat

Tony Quinn, the famous "blind" Assistant District Attorney, wasn't long in getting to work on the case. The paroled convicts traveled to and from the scenes of their crimes in an airplane, but Tony knew they must have a headquarters somewhere. With the aid of Butch, his powerful and loyal helper, he searched for and found this hideout—an isolated warehouse. Then Butch reported that the convicts had left the place—in a big, closed truck.

It was an ideal time to search the warehouse for hidden loot—perhaps for vital evidence as to how the gang was organized. So, donning his regalia of the Black Bat, Tony and Butch went to the warehouse.

The lock on the place was modern and just about impregnable, but the door fitted loosely. While Butch stood guard, the Black Bat opened his thin kit of tools and selected a flexible piece of fine steel. He manipulated this until he felt it touch the lock tongue. Then he bent it hard, applied more pressure and felt the latch sliding back.

When it was clear, he had the door  
(Continued on Page 8)



# Is High School High enough?

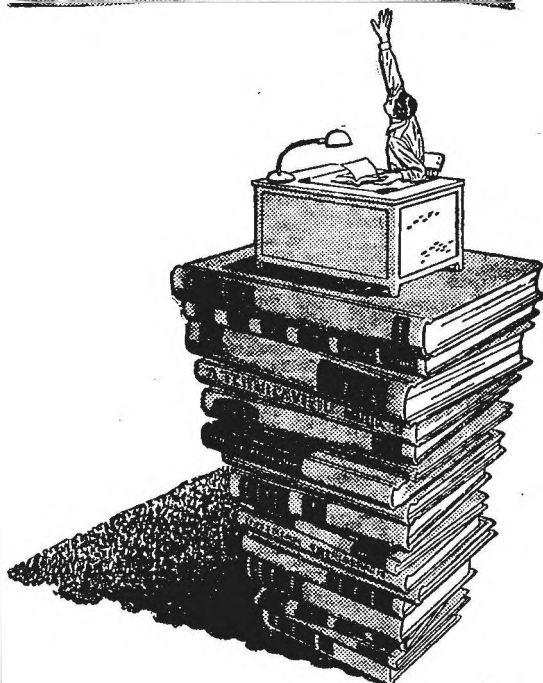
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## OFF THE RECORD

(Continued from Page 6)

open. Then he paused to whistle and Butch soon appeared out of the gloom.

## A Strange Setup

Together they prowled the various floors of the deserted warehouse. On the fifth floor, the Black Bat made an amazing discovery. In the middle of the floor, an entire nightclub had been set up. But it was all just a false prop—made of thin board like a movie set. Each window and door in the walls was labeled and numbered.

"What does it mean?" Butch whispered.

"You recall the stickups this gang has been pulling?" the Black Bat answered. "Each job is done so neatly that everyone present has sworn the stickup men were very familiar with the layout of the place."

"Holy smokes," Butch gasped. "These crooks set up the framework of the place they're going to raid and practise everything before they tackle the real place!"

That seemed exactly what had taken place. And then it happened. . . .

The Black Bat hissed a sudden warning. Unexpectedly a big van had turned in toward the warehouse door. The convicts had come back!

The Black Bat did not know which way to turn. But what he did know was that even if he met the criminal band and in a deadly exchange of gunfire killed them all—his problem would not have been solved.

## Who Is the Big Brain?

"What I've seen so far," the Black Bat whispered hurriedly to Butch, "has convinced me these tough convicts aren't smart enough to have figured out and planned these big crimes for themselves. Behind them must be a big brain. There has to be! And if we wipe out this bunch here now, the Big Brain will still be

(Continued on Page 127)





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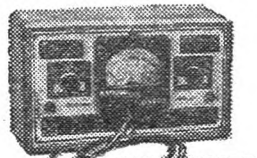
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You build several T.R.F. Receivers, one of which, a 4-tube set, is shown here. You learn construction, alignment, make receiver tests, and do trouble shooting.

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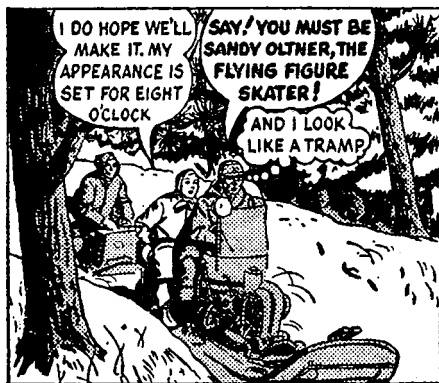
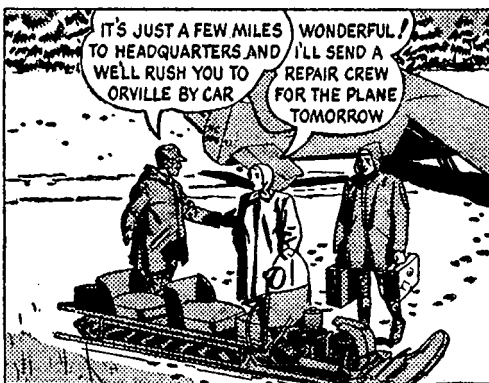
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# ... AND THEN DAN SAVED THE DAY





# Murder TOWN

Quinn's blank eyes  
remained blank  
(Chap. XII)



*A Novel by*  
**G. Wayman Jones**

## CHAPTER I

### *Self-Confessed*

**A** CASUAL passerby might have estimated his age as sixty and would certainly have said "there goes a mighty sick man."

Paul Garvin wasn't thinking of the days when he struggled to start and build a factory, build it into a massive production line and give employment to several thousands of people. Though he had often decried the moment of weakness, during which he thought himself entitled to a rest and had sold out the

*The Black Bat probes the strange mystery of the suicide that didn't take—and its alarming aftermath of widespread crime and violence!*

## Tony Quinn Fights to Learn the Answer to a

business, he wasn't thinking of that now.

Retirement hadn't made an old man of him and he was in reasonably good health according to Dr. Howard Fox, who wasn't merely his physician but the husband of his niece as well.

Heading toward the entrance of Central Park, at West 72nd Street, Paul Garvin crossed Central Park West, oblivious to the heavy traffic, the squeal of brakes and the snarls of cab drivers. He walked slowly into the park, shoulders sagging, head down, fingers clenched so hard the nails bit into the flesh of his palms. It was early spring, still cold, but under the band of his hat was a profusion of sweat. Some of it trickled down beside his nose and he brushed it off.

He sat down on one of the benches, leaned forward and stared at the sidewalk. Nobody paid any attention to him. New York is a city of individuals, a city where people mind their own business in the strictest sense of the word.

Paul Garvin slowly removed the glove from his right hand. He unbuttoned his coat, hunched forward a trifle and reached for his hip pocket. Fingers touched the butt of a gun.

A man suddenly sat down beside him and Garvin quickly let go of the gun. The man spread open a newspaper and began to read. Then Garvin noticed just how many people were nearby. There were babies in carriages, young mothers, apartment dwellers seeking sunshine. Blowing his brains out in front of them would be a ghastly thing to do.

Garvin arose abruptly. He had made up his mind. The thing had to be done and soon—but not here. Not in public. He wanted to die alone with no interference, no questions. Just a bullet through the brain, quick, mercifully complete. Garvin half trotted down a path, seeking a quieter section of the park.

He skirted the lake finally and found rough paths almost like those he'd known as a child when he rambled upstate forests. And—pushed well back, completely secluded—he found the right bench.

THERE was something else he had to do too. He'd almost forgotten it before and if he had—and died—his death would have been completely in vain. He took a notebook from his pocket. He had bought it in a stationery store somewhere on Columbus Avenue. For several minutes he wrote steadily in that old fashioned, somewhat flamboyant hand so familiar to his friends.

Finished, he turned back to the first page and carefully read what he had written. His lips moved as he formed each word silently.

My death is at my hands alone and no one is to be blamed for it. I am taking my life because I forfeited it a week ago when I murdered a man. He may have been a particularly low breed of animal—blackmailers usually are—but he was a living, breathing person with every right to go on living despite his profession and his hold upon me. I could not submit to his demands. There would have been no end to them so I killed him. Now I must take my own life. Please inform Howard Fox, M.D. of Lakeview. Being a physician and the husband of my beloved niece, he will know best how to break it to the others.

Garvin was satisfied with the note. He signed it, clipped the pen back in his vest pocket, stowed the notebook away carefully and reached for the gun once more. He placed it on his lap and looked down at the nickel plated horror.

Suddenly he whipped off his hat and placed it on top of the gun. Two boys, about five years old, came scrambling down a bank. They clutched double dip ice cream cones, balancing them precariously as they slipped and slid down the grass.

One of them tripped. His ice cream cone stayed in his hand but the ball of frozen confection slipped its moorings, formed a beautiful parabola and plopped into a disagreeable looking mess directly at Garvin's feet. Some of the concoction splashed his trouser cuffs.

The boy watched all this with rich interest until the ice cream squashed. Then his lips trembled and he began to cry.

Garvin's lips moved too. In a weak smile. The first semblance of mirth he'd felt or exhibited in days.



## Baffling Big-City Riddle of Stalking Death!

"Now now," he said scathingly, "there's nothing to cry about. I'm sure there must be a whole lot more ice cream where that came from."

"But I ain't got any more dimes," the boy sobbed.

Garvin reached into his pocket, found a couple of coins. He was careful about

away, yelling some undistinguishable name. Garvin knew he'd made a mistake. There must be an adult with the boys and when all that money was seen, the adult was bound to make some sort of an investigation.

Garvin placed the hat beside him, lifted the gun and before he allowed



THE BLACK BAT

the gun on his lap, covered by the hat. He started to give the boy a quarter and then hesitated. He had better than two hundred dollars in his pocket and he certainly wasn't going to spend any of it. Neither boy was too well dressed. On impulse he took the bills from his pocket, divided them and handed them to the boys.

"Now then," he said, "run along and have all the ice cream you want. There is only one thing you must not do. Don't come back here. Do you understand me? Don't come back *here!*"

"Gee—gee, yes," one boy gasped. He couldn't count that money but he knew it would buy far more than a double dip cone. They turned and scampered

himself to think, he pulled the trigger. The gun made surprisingly little noise. Garvin's head jerked to the left under the impact of the slug. Blood began to trickle down his temple. He sagged forward slowly. The gun fell out of his limp hand and dropped squarely on top of the lump of melting ice cream.

As Garvin sagged forward, a small, skinny man scampered around a bush, behind which he'd been kneeling. He ran stiff legged, like a man unaccustomed to running, but he covered ground because of the urgency of his mission. He was puffing badly after even this small exertion.

He looked around quickly, saw nobody running up and decided the shot

hadn't been heard. Rather deliberately he seated himself directly beside the limp form. He was whistling "The Marine Hymn" in an off key. Bending he scooped up the gun and cursed as his fingers became sticky with ice cream. He took a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the gooey stuff from the gun and from his hands.

**H**E put the gun into his pocket, took a grip on Garvin's collar and hauled him into a sitting position. He balanced the man there, put his hat back on and tilted it so the wound wouldn't be readily seen. All the while he kept whistling shrilly.

He waited a moment or two now, bright little eyes darting around, ears listening. He moved a little closer to Garvin, taking care not to let him sag forward or sideways. He reached out one hand, slipped it down beneath Garvin's coat without troubling to unbutton the garment. He seemed to be an expert at reaching inner pockets without mussing any clothing.

He slid the notebook out, flipped it open and quickly read the note of a man intent upon suicide. He smiled crookedly, never missing a note of that song in his constant whistling.

He arose now, stood there looking down at Garvin and then he gave an angry curse. He pulled back his hand and struck Garvin hard. Garvin merely lay down on his side on the bench. The little man, whistling cheerfully again, walked off. The weight of the gun made his side coat pocket sag slightly.

As his whistle died away a woman leading two boys by their hands appeared. She walked so fast that she dragged them along. They were smeared with ice cream and sticky candy. Their blouses bulged with loot and they were trying to hold onto a sack of popcorn, a bottle of pop and sundry bars of candy as they were pulled along.

Both boys saw Garvin lying on the bench and they shouted and screamed that he was the man. The woman, excitable and shrill, had a wad of bills tucked

into the pocket of her coat. Some of them showed above the top of the pocket.

"You," she addressed the man on the bench. "Hey—you. Bum!"

Garvin didn't move. She bent down. "What you give my kids money for? Two hundred dollars, maybe more. You crazy?"

She lifted off the hat which had slid around to cover Garvin's face. Her eyes saw the blood, saw the wound and the grayness of Garvin's face. She grabbed both boys, raised her head and the sylvan quiet which is supposed to be Central Park was shattered by one scream after another.

But the mother of those boys was mistaken.

The small man who'd stolen the gun and the notebook—he'd been mistaken too. Seriously so.

Garvin was groaning about the time the park policeman galloped up in answer to the yells. He was far from being dead at that moment, though not far from death itself. He didn't know that.

## CHAPTER II

### *Missing Evidence*



**C**APTAIN McGRATH of the Detective Division, Central Bureau, straddled a straight backed chair in his office. He regarded Paul Garvin critically. Garvin's head was neatly bandaged, he was smoking one of McGrath's cigars, and he was completely relaxed in a comfortable leather chair.

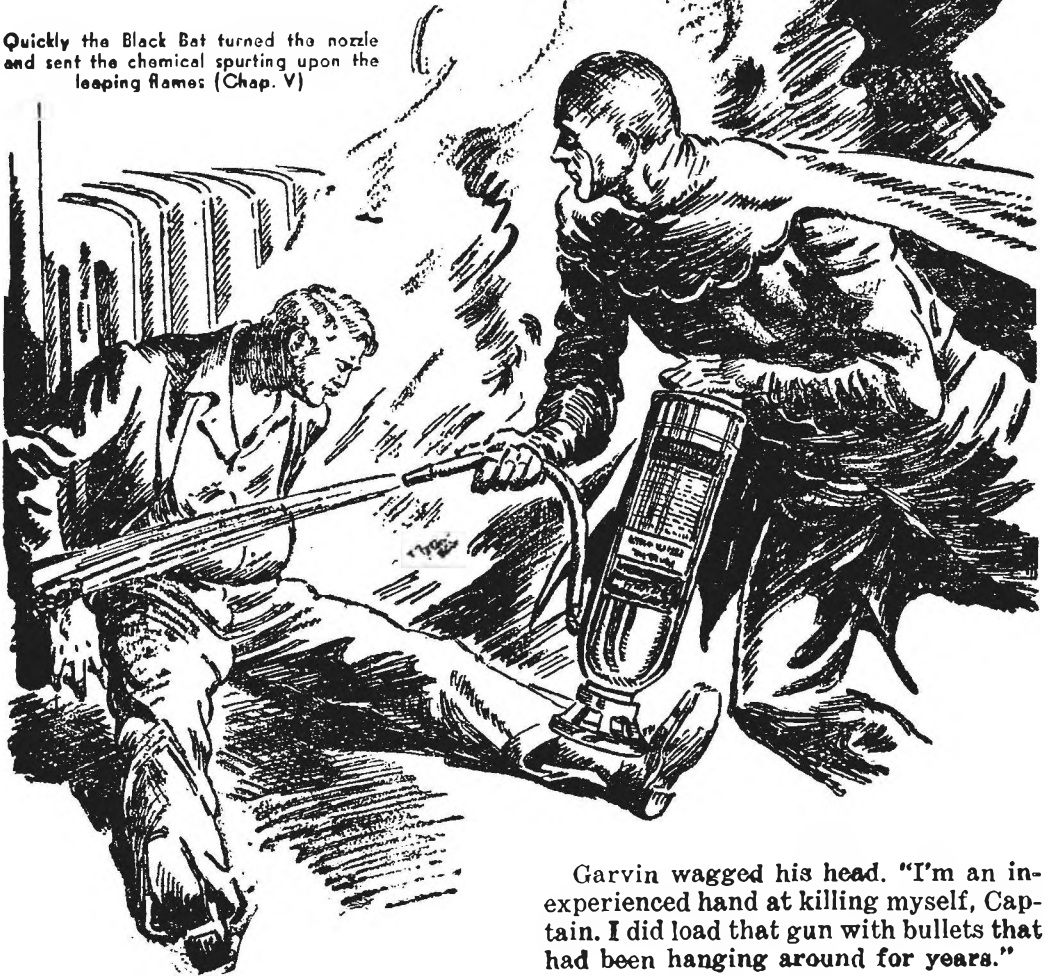
McGrath said, "Mr. Garvin, cops meet all sorts of characters. Most of them have no brains. But here you are—a wealthy man. A successful man. The kind of a man I admire. And you tell me a story that's more cock-eyed than the dreams of a hophead."

Garvin sighed. "I've told the absolute truth. I tried to kill myself. Why I failed, I can't imagine because I put the

gun against my forehead—pulled the trigger."

McGrath twisted around, picked up a bullet on his desk and rolled it between his fingers. "This was found beneath the bench. Here is what happened, according to our ballistics experts and they don't often make a mistake. The bullet is hardly nicked even though it's a soft nosed slug. The gun was fired either on contact or almost on contact with your temple. But at the last minute it was slanted a bit. However, that didn't save your life. Those experts dug enough burned powder out of your head to prove it was old, impotent stuff and didn't have enough power to make that a killing bullet."

Quickly the Black Bat turned the nozzle and sent the chemical spurting upon the leaping flames (Chap. V)



Garvin wagged his head. "I'm an inexperienced hand at killing myself, Captain. I did load that gun with bullets that had been hanging around for years."



"Okay," McGrath sighed. "We'll skip that. Now you claim it was your gun and that you deliberately shot yourself. I won't ask why—yet. Now, if you're telling the truth, where is the gun?"

"Didn't you find it?" Garvin gasped.

"No, we didn't. And we didn't find that notebook in which you wrote a suicide note, either. Garvin, if you're trying to protect someone who made an attempt to kill you, stop playing around. Next time the bullet might have live powder behind it."

Garvin's eyes were wide and round. "But Captain McGrath, I did have a gun. I did write that note. I wasn't dreaming. Why, hang it man, I was contemplating suicide as coldly as I used to figure out some of the deals that made me a rich man. I knew what I was doing. I merely made a mistake about the quality of the cartridge, that's all."

"The gun?" McGrath said patiently. "The suicide note?"

"I don't know. I simply don't know. I suppose the gun could have been stolen but the notebook was in my pocket, hidden from sight. I hadn't been searched. You said that."

"Okay." McGrath still exuded deliberate patience. "For the time being we'll concede you're telling the truth. Now, why did you try to kill yourself?"

"Why? Because I'm a murderer. I killed a man, Captain, and I was too cowardly to face the consequences. Believe me, a man who takes his own life is the worst sort of a coward. I knew it as I pulled the trigger."

"Yeah?" McGrath exhaled slowly. "You said you murdered somebody. Why—when—and where?"

"I don't know the man's name. He was a blackmailer. Captain McGrath, I earnestly warn you not to try and make me tell what he had on me because I will not. I won't even comment on that."

"Get on with it, Garvin."

"This blackmailer made his demands. If I refused to accede some rather terrible things were bound to happen. The opportunity was there, so I killed him. I shot him to death. His body lies behind a half collapsed shed in an abandoned

brickyard about two miles from my home."

McGrath glanced at his notes. "That's in Lakeview, just upstate a bit?"

"Thirty-six miles north of here. Yes, that's right. It isn't my home, really. My brother-in-law owns it and lives there with his daughter. You don't believe me, do you?"

"Can you expect me to?" McGrath asked. "You said there was a gun and there wasn't. You talked about a notebook containing a suicide note—and that is non-existent too. Now you say there is a corpse."

"Suppose I take you there, now?"

McGRATH rubbed his chin. "You're not kidding, are you? Of course, Lakeview is out of my jurisdiction. Suppose I call in one of our assistant D.A.'s."

"You may do anything you like," Garvin shrugged. "I'm a murderer, I admit it, and I'm willing to take my punishment."

"This D.A. isn't exactly an assistant," McGrath explained. "He's listed as a Special D.A. When the Big Boy gets a case that he can't budge, he calls in Tony Quinn."

"Quinn? I've heard of him. He's blind, isn't he?"

"Yes," McGrath said with mental reservations. "I can have him here in half an hour. He bites on interesting stuff like you represent, Mr. Garvin."

"Then bring him here by all means," Garvin said.

The man who entered, some time later, was tall, husky of build and very well dressed. His eyes were blank, dead eyes and he carried a white cane. His face was strong, with a square chin and a firm mouth. There were deep pits around the eyes as if from severe burns. His hand, holding the cane, was slender and sensitive looking. The fingers moved, as if he had difficulty keeping them quiet. As if they wanted to explore the darkness about him.

His other hand was on the arm of Silk Kirby, slim, fifty years old, bald-headed and utterly bland of face. He

served Tony Quinn in many capacities but none of them began to equal what really held him in the service of a blind man. It was Silk Kirby's friendship for Quinn.

Quinn's cane tapped the floor as he moved forward. McGrath placed a chair for him and with Silk's help, Quinn sat down. Without preamble, Captain McGrath began outlining the case.

Before he was half through Quinn sharply called a halt. "Captain, my car is outside. I think we can continue the conversation while Silk drives us to where Mr. Garvin claims he left a dead man one week ago."

"I was going to suggest that," McGrath mumbled. "Wanted you two to get acquainted first. Okay, I'll bring Garvin along. I'm sorry I have to use cuffs, Mr. Garvin, but an admitted murderer rates them."

"I don't mind," Garvin smiled a little. "As you say, I rate them."

Silk drove the sleek sedan at a fast clip up the West Side Speedway and onto Saw Mill River Road. He really gunned it there and only slowed when they approached the toll gates. Then he was off again, occupying the fast lane and holding the car around seventy.

Quinn, his dead eyes staring straight ahead through the windshield, spoke without turning around.

"Mr. Garvin, you don't care to tell me what brought a blackmailer to you?"

"I refuse to discuss it," Garvin said flatly.

"Very well. The crime happened out of my province anyway. I'm only interested because you surrendered to my office—or were brought to my attention, I think is more like it. When did you kill this man?"

"One week ago yesterday," Garvin said without the slightest hesitation.

"You shot him and left his body in an abandoned brick yard," Quinn went on. "Odd he hasn't been missed or found. But it could happen. We'll suspend questioning until we actually see the corpse."

"There won't be one," McGrath grumbled. "I don't know what this job is about but he lied about a suicide gun

and a suicide note. I think somebody put that gun against his head, figured on killing him and then ran off. Garvin knows who it was and won't speak up."

Quinn said, "You know, Mr. Garvin, that if we do not find a corpse or any evidence of murder you will likely find yourself in a psychopathic ward?"

"I'll be in jail," Garvin declared smugly. "Where I belong. I'm not crazy, nor am I a liar. As you say, let's wait and see."

THEY finally left the parkway, traveled over a narrow ribbon of cement and then onto a macadam road. Topping a hill they came into view of the town. To the left, once the outskirts had been reached, they rolled past the house where Garvin said he lived. There was a modest sedan parked at the curb with MD marker plates on it.

Under Garvin's directions, Silk cut east through the town, hit a dirt road that plainly hadn't been used much in years and then the sprawling and dejected structures of the once busy brick yard came into view.

Garvin told Silk where to pull up. They all got out of the car, Quinn standing with both hands on the crook of his cane until Silk was at his side to guide him.

Garvin impatiently tugged at the handcuffs linking him to McGrath and walked a very straight path toward what seemed to have been some sort of a tool shed. He half pulled McGrath around the corner of it.

Quinn, leaning on Silk's arm and using his cane, covered the uneven ground far more slowly, but an amazing thing had happened to his eyes. They were no longer dead looking, but sparkling brightly in the light of full vision.

His voice was a whisper. "Garvin isn't kidding us, Silk. He knows exactly where he is going."

Then the eyes became blank and dead once more. Silk led Quinn up to where Garvin and McGrath stood looking down at a pile of half rotted straw. Flies, fat and colored blue, were buzzing like bees

through the sun warmed air. Garvin seemed astonished, McGrath only bored and a little sore.

"This," McGrath said with open sarcasm, "is where he says he left the corpse. It's a pile of straw, Tony. He claims he threw it on top of the body. I just finished poking around and there is no corpse."

"But I tell you there was. I killed him. I left him there, covered up."

Quinn said, "Mac, a man shot to death bleeds a lot. Flies go for blood and I seem to hear a surprisingly large number of them buzzing. It's early in the spring for them to be so thick, unless something draws them."

Silk said, "Most of them are swarming around that fallen down shed."

McGrath yanked Garvin into motion. When Silk and Quinn reached the spot, McGrath was backing out of the half caved-in shack.

"Yeah," he said morosely. "Yeah, there was something to draw them all right, Tony. It's a dead man."

Quinn said, "Silk, go to the car and use the telephone in it. Get in touch with the police radio and have them notify the authorities of Lakeview to come here at once. Captain, Mr. Garvin is charged with being a fugitive and is now officially under arrest for the Lakeview authorities."

McGrath made the handcuff links clink slightly. "I sort of anticipated that, Tony. But I'll admit I'm surprised. Now all we have to do is find the gun and the suicide note to prove you aren't a complete liar, Garvin."

"They must have been stolen while I lay unconscious," Garvin declared. "I'm telling the truth all right."

Silk returned to say that the Lakeview cops would be here as fast as they could roll. Quinn said, "Silk, take me into that shed, or whatever it is. Tell me exactly what you see. Mac, your job is to guard the prisoner."

Silk carefully led his apparently blind companion to the entrance of the shed. The door had fallen off one hinge and Silk moved it further back. It was dismal and half dark inside the shed. Tony

Quinn's blank eyes came to life again.

"Flashy clothes, expensive shoes and wrist watch. A gun beside the corpse. Ever see the man before, Silk?"

"Never, though I'm not saying I didn't meet him. He isn't exactly pretty, sir."

Quinn said, "Watch McGrath and Garvin."

HE moved away from Silk's side, hanging the crook of the cane on his arm. These were not the steps of a blind man. Quinn bent down, disregarding the gruesome scene and concentrating upon the nickel-plated gun. He took a bit of string from his pocket, slipped it through the trigger guard and lifted the weapon.

"Odd," he muttered.

"Find something, sir?" Silk asked.

"I don't know. If this gun killed that man, something happened to it afterwards. The muzzle is half plugged with some cream colored substance which couldn't possibly have stayed there while the bullet passed through the barrel."

Quinn took a metal pencil from his pocket, gently poked at the odd substance and a good sized chunk of it clung to the end of the pencil. He transferred this to a bit of paper torn from a notebook.

Quinn then cocked his head slightly. "The Lakeview authorities are on their way, Silk. I can hear the sirens."

Silk showed no surprise in the fact that he couldn't hear the wail of the sirens. Quinn's hearing far exceeded that of a normal person. Eyes dead, clinging to Silk's arm and tightly holding his white cane, Quinn moved out into the sunlight again.

A radio car arrived first and then a sedan driven by the Chief of Police, whose name was Anderson. With him came a younger man with black horn rimmed glasses which gave him the look of a wise old owl. He walked up to Quinn, smiling broadly.

"Tony," he said, "I'm glad to see you again. This is Matt Taylor. Remember me?"

Quinn laughed. "I should. We lived next door to one another in a campus



dormitory. How have you been doing?"

"I'm the D.A. here," Taylor said with a chuckle. "That puts me one cut above you, Tony. You're nothing but a Special D.A. Though," he added softly, "I've heard you're pretty special. What have we here?"

Quinn outlined the events and when Taylor saw Garvin he whistled sharply. "Say, he's just about the most important man in this town, Tony. Why didn't you bring me someone I could really work on? Look—the radio cops can take care of things here until the medical examiner arrives. The rest of us will go to Headquarters. How about that?"

"This is your bailiwick," Quinn said. "You're the boss. But make certain nothing in that shed is touched and have your photographers go to work."

Chief Anderson came out of the shed, gulping for air and looking none too steady on his legs. He walked over to Quinn. "I've heard about you, of course. I respect the kind of work you do, too, Mr. Quinn, but this certainly seems like a cut-and-dried affair. We even have a confession."

"Just the same," Quinn advised, "take as many precautions as if this were an unsolved mystery. Silk, will you drive Matt and me to Headquarters. McGrath and Garvin can ride with the Chief."

Police Headquarters looked like a pleasant home on the park-like green in the center of town. It was made of red brick, trimmed with white wood. The porch had pillars, there were shrubs planted around it and the lawn was beginning to turn its bright green after winter's rest.

At the back were tall windows which were barred, the only indication that this wasn't the home of some wealthy family. Silk commented on it, describing the building for Quinn's benefit.

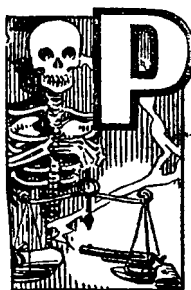
Matt Taylor grinned proudly. "We've got a strange town here, Tony. There are no slums, no people living on charity. In fact there is more money represented here than any other town this size in the whole nation. Our citizens like peace, quiet and beauty. They're willing to pay for it. Let's go inside and

start this thing rolling. First murder we've ever had—if you can call shooting down a blackmailer murder."

Quinn chuckled. "Matt, you always took things for granted and I guess you always will. There are certain aspects of this case I don't like. I'd advise you to go slow and be thorough. Accept nothing without ample proof."

## CHAPTER III

### *Prescription Blank*



AUL GARVIN, haggard-eyed now, repeated his confession, this time before a police stenographer and under D.A. Matt Taylor's questioning. There was no variation. He stuck by his story and never tripped on any of the trick questions.

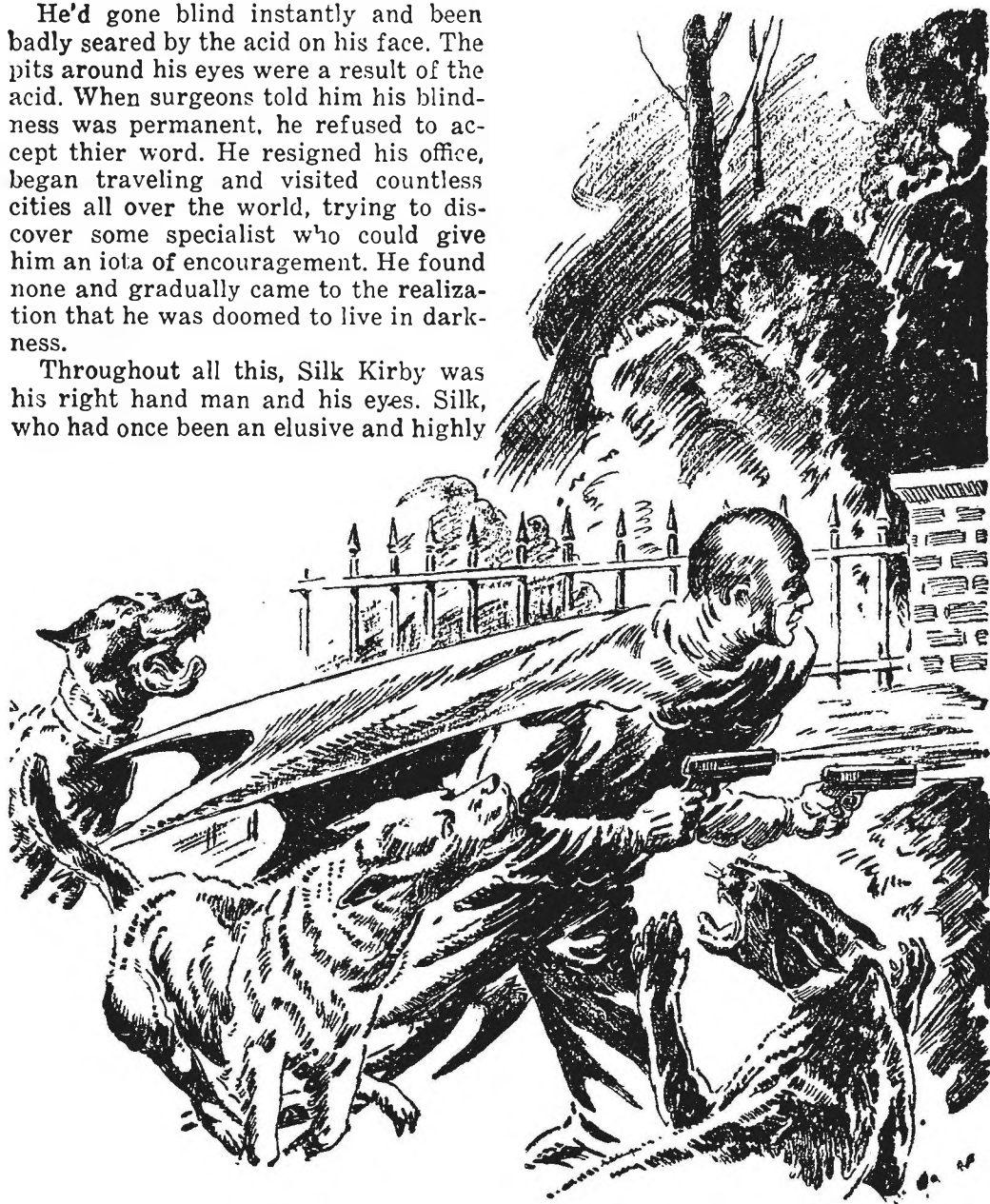
Quinn listened to it all very carefully, half sensing that behind this grisly tale of blackmail, murder and attempted suicide, lay something far more important. It was Garvin's manner more than anything else that convinced him. For Tony Quinn never missed a facial quiver or a trembling of Garvin's lips.

Tony Quinn wasn't blind. The fact that he could see was a secret shared by very few and those people were close to Quinn and worked with him. Once he had been blind—and without hope of being cured. Prior to that his sight had been quite normal. Then he'd been young, rising rapidly and as District Attorney, proved himself hard hitting and capable. There was talk that he'd go farther. The Senate, perhaps or the Governor's chair in Albany.

That never came about. In one brief instant all his hopes and ambitions were wiped out. It happened when he tried to protect vital evidence from destruction by crooks. They'd attempted to throw a powerful acid on certain documents and in trying to stop them, Quinn had taken the corrosive liquid full in the eyes.

He'd gone blind instantly and been badly seared by the acid on his face. The pits around his eyes were a result of the acid. When surgeons told him his blindness was permanent, he refused to accept thier word. He resigned his office, began traveling and visited countless cities all over the world, trying to discover some specialist who could give him an iota of encouragement. He found none and gradually came to the realization that he was doomed to live in darkness.

Throughout all this, Silk Kirby was his right hand man and his eyes. Silk, who had once been an elusive and highly



clever confidence man, turned honest though he never quite lost the touch to con a man if the opportunity arose. He was as light fingered as the best pickpocket in history and an expert at talking himself out of trouble.

Characteristically, Tony Quinn began adapting himself to the life of a blind man. He studied and mastered Braille. He discovered that his senses of hear-

ing, of smell and touch, all became acute in nature's endeavor to make up for his lack of sight.

He never lost interest in his study of crime and criminals, but there was little he could do about it. In his favor was the fact that he was independently wealthy.

There were times when black despair overwhelmed him and it was at just such

Butch was still busy with two guards at the gate, and the Black Bat cut loose with his gun at the third [Chap. XVII]



a time that a girl named Carol Baldwin came to see him. She was a total stranger and had been sent by her police sergeant father to make Tony Quinn an offer.

Her father was dying of a gangster's bullet in the back. Without a chance to survive, and knowing it, he offered Quinn his eyes and had even found a little known surgeon who thought there was a chance that such an operation would be successful.

Quinn grasped the opportunity. He

submitted to an operation which later became standard in some cases of blindness, but which was then unknown. Carol's father died and Quinn returned home to wait out the healing period. When the bandages were removed, he found that he could see again. Not only as a normal man but with a unique power of being able to see as well in jet darkness as in the brightest sunlight.

He saw Carol Baldwin then, for the first time, and found her to be blond, petite and completely lovely. Quinn then made his plans. He proposed to keep the recovery of his sight a secret so that he could operate anonymously against crime and criminals. He would battle them without being compelled to stay



on an eternal alert against reprisals. So the Black Bat was born.

**T**HE acid had etched pits in his face and forced him to wear a hood which enveloped his head completely. With this he donned black clothing and before long he'd been dubbed the Black Bat. The underworld came to know him as an antagonist who cared no more for law and rules than they did. He fought them with guns and knives—fought them with their own brand of stealth and cunning and went them a shade better at it.

There was a price on his head but it had never even come close to being claimed. Carol Baldwin joined forces with him and proved that she was resourceful, smart and clever. Silk, of course, avidly entered the fight. One other man formed the Black Bat's small band. He was an enormous individual called Butch O'Leary. With big shoulders, two hundred and sixty pounds of solid muscle and bone, he was a savage enemy to gangsters.

Butch didn't possess Silk Kirby's quick thinking abilities, nor Carol's cunning but he more than made up for these by his brute strength, his ability to follow orders and most of all his dogged devotion to the Black Bat.

Before long the Black Bat had violated so many laws that the police believed him almost as bad as the crooks he pursued and a warrant for him was issued. Gradually the police dropped their ideas that he was dangerous to anybody but dangerous men. All except Captain McGrath, who had sworn to rip the hood off the Black Bat some day, expose him and throw him into a cell.

Suspecting that Tony Quinn had a dual identity and wasn't blind, McGrath sometimes put Quinn on the defensive, but Quinn enjoyed it and always claimed that, if McGrath ever did corner him, he'd never remove the hood. On two such occasions, it happened that way. McGrath turned his back, though five minutes later he was on the hunt again.

Quinn's city home was a private residence on a quiet street. It was the last

house and the street beside it was dead end, serving only for his cars to enter the large yard. Secreted within the house was a perfect crime laboratory, rivaled only by that of the F.B.I. A tunnel connected the lab with a garden house at the back of the yard. This enabled Quinn to secretly arrive and depart. It kept Captain McGrath in a constant state of confusion.

Tony Quinn's record as a D.A. had never been forgotten and when he was asked to take over the duties of a Special D.A. handling only important cases, he accepted. It gave him a chance to operate with the powerful backing of this office and to augment that by working as the Black Bat.

Therefore, his interest as Paul Garvin unfolded his grim story, wasn't exactly academic. Quinn knew several things that had escaped the police and even Garvin himself.

A patrolman knocked and entered at Chief Anderson's command. He placed the gun which Quinn had already examined, before the Chief. Garvin stared at it and a look of horror came over his features. He barely suppressed it in time to avoid being seen by Matt Taylor. But Quinn had noticed it.

"This gun," Chief Anderson said, "is the murder weapon. Can you identify it, Garvin?"

"Yes. That is the gun."

Matt Taylor said, "I guess that's all. Garvin, you are charged with murder. There is, of course, no bail allowed but if you want to see your attorney that can be arranged."

"I'd appreciate it," Garvin said. "I've tried to cooperate and I'm grateful for the way I've been treated. Oh, yes—could you send my niece's husband to me? Dr. Howard Fox. It's a heart condition I have. Acts up now and then and I'll probably need some medicine before this is finished with."

"I'll summon them personally," Taylor promised. "Your lawyer is Bob Gray, isn't he?"

"Yes, that's right. You won't have any trouble about this, Mr. Taylor. I'll plead guilty and take my punishment."

Taylor nodded in the direction of the chief who picked up a phone and summoned two men.

"Search him, right down to the skin," Anderson ordered.

GARVIN, badly shaken now, was led away. Taylor sat down with a sigh. "What do you think of it, Tony?"

Quinn said, "Something odd happened here. When Garvin saw the murder gun, I heard him inhale sharply, as if he was badly surprised and almost terrified. Were there any prints on the gun?"

"Are there ever?" Anderson asked wearily. "The only place fingerprints are found on a gun is in radio crime plays. There were some funny smears on it—greasy marks—not gun oil—but they haven't been identified and probably mean nothing."

Quinn said, "Just to be on the safe side, Chief, why not ship the gun to the F.B.I. laboratories? Have them check the burned powder in the barrel and see if it happens to be any different from the usual residue."

"What's the idea?" Taylor demanded.

"Remember how Garvin said he had a gun and it disappeared? That gun fired a shot at him but the cartridge happened to be old and its power gone. I'm wondering if this is the same gun, planted near the corpse after it had been used on Garvin. Perhaps by a killer who still believes Garvin is dead."

"But how—why?" Taylor and Chief Anderson chorused.

Quinn laughed. "Put it down to a blind man's extra senses. When Garvin displayed panic at the sight of the gun, there was something about it that startled him. He didn't lie when he told us about the dead man, so why should he have lied about having used a gun on himself—and it vanished?"

"I'll ship it right out," Anderson declared. "Like you say, Mr. Quinn, a cop who takes chances with stuff like this, stays on a beat until he is retired."

"What about the dead man?" Quinn asked.

"Unidentified so far," Anderson said.

"If he was a professional blackmailer, something will turn up. We've printed him and that'll help."

"Let me know," Quinn suggested, "so I can close my end of this case. And give Captain McGrath a receipt for Garvin. If that man ever decides to fight, he can put up a terrific battle with all the money and power he controls."

"Quinn is right," Taylor said with a note of worry in his voice. "Let's do this right, Chief. No slips, eh?"

Chief Anderson said, "Mr. Quinn, why don't you stick around a little longer? The dead man's print classification was teletyped to Washington. We should get an answer soon."

"Of course!" Quinn nodded. "Silk and I will be around front somewhere. I like to feel the sun and the breeze these spring days."

They smoked cigarettes and stood at the base of the steps leading to Police Headquarters. They talked in generalities, hardly referring to the case which was apparently now a closed issue.

An outstanding looking limousine pulled up behind Quinn's sedan and a thick-set chauffeur hopped out. He opened the car door and a lanky man emerged. He stood on the sidewalk for a moment, as if posing with the big car for a backdrop. He was tall, erect as an arrow. There were touches of gray at his temples, he wore a black homburg, an expensive suit and exuded respectability and self-confidence.

Quinn said, hardly moving his lips. "That's the eminent Robert Gray, Attorney-at-Law. He was ahead of me in college but they used to call him Foppy. It seems to still fit."

"Stuffed shirt," Silk muttered.

Robert Gray walked past Quinn and Silk without a glance in their direction. His nose was built for up-in-the-air. It tilted that way.

Silk whistled softly. "Boy, will he take Garvin for all he's got! Want to bet I couldn't con every dime of it off him, sir?"

"You could con J. Edgar Hoover out of his identification papers," Quinn said and grinned. "I make no bets that way."

And **who** are you conning except me? I'd lose the bet."

"I could take him. I'd love to do it, with or without a bet. He's the kind of a mark we used to fight over in the old days. It's a pleasure to take a man like him. Hey! Look! This one is in a hurry."

**Q**UINN watched the modest sedan come to a squealing halt. The man who popped out was about thirty-five, good looking enough to be called handsome and built well.

Quinn said, "That will be Dr. Howard Fox who married Garvin's niece. I noticed that car parked outside the Garvin home. No wonder he's worried."

Quinn expressed a desire for a short walk and Silk led him down the street. It was an amazing town. The store windows rivaled those of Fifth Avenue. Cars were of the most expensive makes and well kept up. There were ten Cadillacs and Lincolns to one Chevvie.

They stopped in a drug store for a cup of coffee and lingered over it for awhile. Then they ambled back to find out if anything new had developed. Everything seemed very serene at Headquarters. Attorney Gray's swank limousine was gone and so was Dr. Fox's sedan.

Behind Silk and Quinn came a boy in a white coat carrying a small wrapped package. He laid this on the desk before the uniformed lieutenant.

"Two bucks sixty, collect," he said. "And be sure to give me the prescription Doc Fox left. You can't buy this kind of drug without one."

The lieutenant frowned. "What's the idea? Garvin's medicine was delivered ten minutes ago."

Quinn opened his mouth and shouted, "Chief Anderson! Captain McGrath! Matt Taylor! Hurry!"

NEXT ISSUE

## BLUEPRINTS OF CRIME

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## CHAPTER IV

### *This Time Dead*



HE turned vaguely toward the desk lieutenant. "The keys to the cell room. Something has happened to Garvin. That first delivery of medicine was a fake."

The lieutenant turned pale and began pushing a button on the desk. A red faced turnkey lum-

bered into the room and the lieutenant was giving orders when McGrath, Taylor and the Chief came running down the corridor. They hurried to the cell room. Quinn was the last to enter and before he passed through the main door, Chief Anderson was shakily announcing the fact that Paul Garvin was dead. There was a box of white pills on the cot and Garvin was crumpled on the floor.

McGrath said, "Well, this time he made it."

"No, Mac," Quinn said. "That was murder. Apparently Dr. Fox issued a prescription for certain medication but somebody knew about it and sent over a box of poison instead. The real prescription arrived only a couple of minutes ago and the desk lieutenant has it."

Chief Anderson stormed out of the cell, followed by Matt Taylor. McGrath shook his head. "I'm glad this didn't happen on Centre Street, Tony. I'm afraid Chief Anderson is going to have his nice badge replaced by one inscribed *Sergeant*. If he's that lucky."

"No one could have stopped this," Quinn remarked slowly. "It was too cleverly handled. Mac, we ought to give these people a hand."

"Yeah," McGrath smiled wryly. "You—me—and the Black Bat. But my badge is only good in New York city and your office doesn't have jurisdiction any farther than that. But take the Black Bat now—he isn't limited by any such triviality as laws."

"You're boring me again," Quinn warned. "I meant what I said. There

must be a New York angle to this. How about that blackmailer?"

"They tagged him, Tony, and Garvin wasn't wrong. His name was Bill Cravath. The F.B.I. had him on a one-two rap for extortion in 1937, a suspended sentence on the same crime in 1940. He spent the next three years doing time for intimidation but after his release he was a good boy. Right smack up until the moment when Garvin plugged him and made him really good."

"Go back to New York," Quinn ordered. "Send out legmen to question everybody who knew him. Find out where he lived and take the place apart by the inch. If for no other reason than to find the evidence he had on Garvin—and destroy it. At least we can spare Garvin's memory that."

"I guess it's a good idea," McGrath agreed. "Somehow, even though Garvin confessed to murder, I could never really dislike the guy. That never happened between me and a killer before."

"Maybe he wasn't a killer," Quinn said calmly.

In Chief Anderson's office, Quinn learned the simple details of the murder. Anderson explained, "Dr. Fox wrote this prescription for a heart stimulant. He phoned the drug store, told them to send the stuff over and pick up the prescription. A few minutes later some guy in a white coat collected cash and the prescription blank and left that box of poison with the desk lieutenant. The lieutenant sent it to Garvin right away, as Dr. Fox had ordered."

Matt Taylor was much calmer and there was a strange gleam in his eye. "Tony," he said, "raise your right hand."

"My right hand? What do you mean, Matt, except that you want to swear me in as something or other."

"You can be a special D.A. here too. Without pay, because no civil servant can hold two jobs. Tony, this is new to me. Deep to me. All I can do is piddle around with it. You're big-time and I got an idea that this crime is big-time too."



McGRATH

QUINN stood up and raised his right hand, blank eyes staring at nothing while Taylor administered the oath which gave Quinn D.A. powers in this town of influential and wealthy people.

"I feel better now," Taylor said as Quinn resumed his chair. "Go ahead and start it off, Tony. How would you handle this if it happened in New York?"

"By having Captain McGrath track down the dead blackmailer," Quinn said. "And he is already doing just that. Next, I'd like to see Garvin's people after a visit to your medical examiner."

"I wish I'd thought of it first," Anderson said glumly.

"I'll keep you fully advised," Quinn told him.

"I don't mean that. I mean about swearing you in. I could have made you a sergeant, at least. Well, I'm with you right through it, Mr. Quinn. Anything this department has that you need, sing out and it's yours."

"Try to trace the source of those poisoned pills," Quinn suggested. "This couldn't have been planned far in advance because no one could foresee what



occurred here and made plans ahead of time. Things happened too fast for that. Have a P.M. performed, of course, and identify the poison. Keep the wrapping paper and the box the pills came in. Now, Matt, if you'll tell Silk how to reach the Medical Examiner's office."

That official was a wise old man who had heard of Quinn and was glad to be of help.

He said, "The man died of bullet wounds. There was one through the throat, another through the left shoulder, a third penetrated the left thigh. A fourth hit him in the right lung and numbers five and six were lodged in his abdomen. Whoever shot him certainly wanted to be sure he was dead."

"When was he killed, Doctor?"

"That's difficult to say, even within a day or two. Taking into consideration the temperature, humidity and rate of decay, I judge he died about two weeks ago."

Quinn nodded, his sightless eyes betraying none of the interest that surged through him.

"It couldn't have been one week ago, Doctor? Not under any circumstances?"

"No, I can swear to that. Besides we found a New York newspaper beneath the cadaver. It was dated thirteen days ago."

"I see. Did he drop where he was found?"

"He did not. We found him stretched out. A man with wounds like that simply crumples. Somebody used him for a target and probably kept him standing as long as possible. He bled a great deal."

"Could he have crawled into that shed?"

"Absolutely not."

"Thank you, Doctor. There is another job for you. Garvin, who confessed to killing this man and swore he did it one week ago, was murdered in his cell."

"Great heavens!" the doctor cried.

"Then Garvin didn't do it?"

"We're not certain yet. Keep this quiet and do an immediate autopsy on Garvin. If I sound officious it's simply because

of my new office. Matt Taylor swore me in as his assistant."

The doctor chuckled. "I don't blame him. Good thing he did. Matt's a nice boy, but he can make a hole-in-one better than he can catch a crook. What a mess this will make. Garvin was a mighty important man in a town of nothing but important people. Wait until this breaks in the newspapers. Oh, my! Got to put on a suit with a press in it. They'll be snapping my picture all over the place."

Silk drove over to the estate where Garvin had lived. Dr. Fox's car was parked in front again. When Quinn, led by Silk, approached the porch, a girl stepped out to greet them.

She was about twenty-two or three. Her hair was long and auburn. She wore a pale blue hostess gown with slippers of the same shade. She was carefully made up and undeniably attractive.

"You are Mr. Quinn, of course," she said. "My husband returned from Headquarters a few moments ago and told us you were there and might come to ask a few questions."

IT was apparent to Quinn that she hadn't heard of Garvin's murder. "I'm trying to help," Quinn said. "You are Mrs. Fox?"

"Yes. Let me take your arm. My father is inside. He's waiting to see you. Of course this business about Paul is absurd. It is—" her under lip trembled slightly and her voice became weaker—"isn't it?"

"Quite absurd," Quinn assured her. Silk let go of Quinn's arm, surrendering him to her care, and stepped back dutifully. As always he missed nothing, and when a window curtain fell into place on the second floor, he saw it. Someone had moved fast when he glanced up.

In the living room, Quinn saw Wilfred Lee, though no one present could have guessed that those staring eyes saw anything. Lee was a chunky man, hard as steel and with hair that color. His handshake was the kind to make a man wince.

"Glad to have you here," he said. "Flora, I think you might leave us alone."

She pouted at him but it was clear that Wilfred Lee was accustomed to being obeyed. When she reached the door, he said, "Flora, ask Jack to come down here. And the doctor, if he can."

"Yes, Dad." She closed the sliding door.

Lee resumed his chair. "I just heard about Paul. Flora doesn't know yet. Hearing he was a confessed killer was bad enough. They told me he was murdered. Is that the truth?"

"I think I might safely say so, Mr. Lee."

Lee drew a sharp breath. "Paul was a good man. No matter what he said or what he signed, he didn't kill anyone. Killing was not in his makeup."

"Perhaps," Quinn said. "Has he been away recently?"

"Yes. He traveled a great deal. He returned—let me see . . . a week ago last Tuesday. Eight days ago."

"The man he confessed to killing was shot to death thirteen days ago, at the very least," Quinn said.

"Oh?" Lee seemed to be doing some mental arithmetic. His face lighted up. "Then that clears Paul. At that time he was a thousand miles away and I can prove it. This is the break I hoped we'd get. I—" Lee stopped short, covered his eyes and lowered his head. "But then, proving Paul's innocence, doesn't mean much now, does it? Forgive me, I'll be all right in a moment."

Quinn arose. "I won't bother you any further now, Mr. Lee. You told me what I came to learn. Paul Garvin lied to save someone. He was even willing to take his own life so that this person would be fully protected. That phase of the matter must be gone into, but not now. We'll return after you people have adjusted yourselves to this shock."

The sliding door was moved back suddenly and violently. Someone who must be a big man, came storming into the room, pounding heavy feet across the floor and breathing like a bull facing a matador. He walked past Quinn,

pivoted like a soldier and walked up to him, waving a finger under Quinn's nose.

"I'll answer no questions. I'm a subject of the Government of Australia. I will not be browbeaten. I'll get Paul out of jail if I have to blast the place apart. I'll not let him be blamed for anything!"

"Jack," Lee shouted sternly. "Jack, this man is blind. He can't see your mighty waving fist and he wouldn't care if he could. Jack, calm down! You can't help Paul now."

"Why not? Why can't I? Paul is my friend."

"Paul is dead," Lee said gently.

"Dead! Dead, you say? The devil he is! Howard saw him only a little while ago and said he was fine. Taking it very well indeed. Dead is he!"

"He was murdered, Jack," Lee cried. "Now will you shut up?"

"Murdered?" The red-faced, paunchy giant of a man seemed to wilt. "You did say—mur-murdered? I heard correctly?"

HE didn't want an answer. He was just talking words as he sat down. Lee believed some sort of an explanation was in order.

"This is Jack Ramsey, an old friend of mine. He comes from Australia and he has been—ah—living with us for some time. He is very excitable and he thought the world of Paul."

"Of course," Quinn said. "I'll be going now, if you don't mind."

"I want to help you," Lee said in a sincere voice. "Do everything you can. I know about you, Mr. Quinn. I'm glad and proud to have you here."

The phone on an ornate desk buzzed quietly. Lee walked over to it. "Mr. Quinn, it's your call."

Silk instantly piloted Quinn to the table and the apparently blind man fumbled for the instrument. He spoke and a voice answered him. A voice that had a weird monotone to it.

"Quinn, you might like to know that a blind D.A. often has bad accidents. You wouldn't like anything to happen to you. Stay in New York. There's enough

there to keep you busy."

The phone clicked. Quinn hung up without comment. He thanked Lee and with Silk's aid started for the door. Someone came running down the steps. Quinn stopped and Dr. Howard Fox hurried up to him.

"I just told Flora. She's taking it very hard but she had to know. Quinn, what in the name of heaven happened over there?"

"Someone knew you sent for a prescription, Doctor Fox. That person succeeded in having a box of poisoned capsules delivered before your druggist sent over the medicine you had prescribed. That's all we know so far."

Fox shook his head slowly from side to side. "How did they know? How could they have acted so fast—so cleverly?"

"Quite a few people knew," Quinn said. "Various police officers, Matt Taylor, that attorney probably knew."

"He did. He left before me to start work on obtaining Paul's freedom. To think he was a murderer—Paul, I mean—whether confessed or not, is ridiculous. If you knew Paul you'd say that too."

"It seems that's correct," Quinn said. "We can prove he was innocent but we'd like to find out why he confessed, why he tried to take his own life and what happened to the gun he claimed he fired at his own temple. Also, what became of a suicide note he swore he wrote. There are many unexplained things about this matter, Doctor. It will take some doing to run them all down but—they will be. Silk, we'll go now."

On the ride back to New York, Quinn told Silk about the phone call.

"I don't like it," Silk said. "They know our moves as we're making them. This thing is being run too slick. It's big—and important, and the men behind it won't scare easily."

They were silent then as they neared the approaches to the Saw Mill River Road. A light truck with a closed body hooted for Silk to get out of the way and he obediently moved over. Quinn sat there, just staring. They swung onto the ramp to the speedway.

Then Quinn gave a startled cry. "Silk! That truck! No trucks are allowed on the Saw Mill River Road. It's a trick of some kind! Watch out!"

Silk was swerving the sedan when the first flame came from the tiny windows set high in the back door of the truck. A rifle bullet knocked a piece out of the open ventilator window, passed inside the sedan and ricocheted crazily before it bedded down somewhere in the upholstery. The second shot went wild, for Silk had the sedan actually off the road now and was guiding it toward the shelter of some low brush set on the otherwise smooth hillside. At the same time that he fought the wheel, he was drawing a gun from a shoulder rig.

The truck had stopped and was backing. They were apparently intending to get very close before opening fire again. Silk pushed the safety off, leveled the automatic and began firing a fusillade at the back of the truck. The bullets smashed through the thin paneling. Somebody screamed. The truck backed up wildly, made a crazy turn and rolled away at high speed. Silk was frantically trying to get a fresh clip of bullets into the automatic.

"It's no use now," Quinn said. "They've escaped, but I think you winged one of them, at least."

"They weren't fooling," Silk panted. "They meant that—about the phone call."

"Apparently they did," Quinn said. "I didn't have a chance to see any of them but they'd be hired men anyway. Let's go home before they set another trap."

When Silk pulled up in front of Quinn's house, he stepped out of the car and thrust a hand into his pocket where he held the automatic ready. He took Quinn's arm and they went up onto the porch. Quinn unlocked the door, drew a gun and stepped back. He kicked the door wide. Nothing happened. The house was quite dark.

Quinn had his head cocked to one side. "Nothing stirring in there, Silk," he said. "I think we can go in."

Silk turned on lights, closed the door

and heard Quinn gasp. Silk hurried into the long, spacious living room. Quinn was standing beside a table and fumbling for a pipe and tobacco.

He said, "Look at the long mirror above the mantel, Silk."

Silk stepped over to it. Someone had drawn, crudely and in what seemed to be brilliant red nail polish, just four words:

SEE WHAT WE MEAN!

## CHAPTER V

### *Figure in Black*



**S**ILK preceded Tony Quinn into the library and there he promptly drew the window shades. Quinn, using his cane, tapped his way down the hall to the room and entered. He closed the door behind him and abandoned his pose of a blind man.

He walked straight toward one section of wall that seemed to be solid bookshelf. Hanging his cane on his left forearm, he manipulated a well hidden control and opened a narrow door. He entered a medium-sized but perfectly equipped tile laboratory. His eyes, no longer blank and staring, penetrated the darkness of the lab, examined every corner and possible hiding place. Then, and only then, he heaved a sigh of relief. Silk, behind him, slid the automatic back into his shoulder rig.

"They got into the house but they probably had no idea that a lab existed," Quinn said. "That cute message painted on the mirror is meant only to scare us."

"Yes, sir," Silk said. "I don't see you shaking, sir."

"Nor you!" Quinn retorted, and laughed. "We've work to do. First, call Carol and Butch to come over at once. Then fix me a tray of something to eat and serve it in here."

"Lab work, sir?" Silk asked in a puzzled voice.

"Yes. On the smear of something or other I took from the gun near the body of that blackmailer. I want to see if I can analyze the substance."

Quinn removed his jacket and hung it on the back of a chair. He laid his cane across the seat of it, rolled up his sleeves and carefully opened the bit of paper to which the substance adhered. It was partly dry now. He smelled of it and got a strong vanilla odor.

He assembled his reagents and apparatus for a fast qualitative analysis and went to work. Before long he was satisfied that he didn't deal with poison and he tasted of the stuff. It had a faintly oily taste, probably from the barrel of the gun. Silk bustled in with a tray of sandwiches and hot soup.

"I just had dessert, thanks," Quinn told him with a smile. "Know what that stuff was, plugging the barrel of that gun? Plain ordinary vanilla ice cream. I just tasted of it, besides analyzing

[Turn page]

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it and getting all the reactions for ingredients that go into its manufacture."

"Ice cream?" Silk frowned. "I don't understand."

Quinn picked up a sandwich, walked over to a phone on the lab bench and called police headquarters. He asked for a man named Ryan, got him and requested that Paul Garvin's story of attempted suicide be read.

Quinn listened, munching on the sandwich. Then he grunted and said, "That part again, Ryan. The part about the two boys to whom he said he gave all that money."

Ryan read the words he'd taken down as Garvin spoke: "'—these two boys each had an ice cream cone and one of them tripped. The ice cream landed at my feet. It even splashed my trouser legs a bit.'"

"Thank you," Quinn said. "That's all."

"Carol and Butch will be here immediately," Silk said.

"Good. This is becoming slightly complicated, Silk. It seems that our blackmailer was murdered with a gun that somehow came into the possession of Paul Garvin. He tried to use it on himself. His story was the absolute truth. The gun was loaded with old cartridges, didn't kill him but knocked him out. While he was unconscious, and probably believed to be dead, somebody picked up the gun. Garvin had dropped it right on top of the ice cream those boys spilled. This man then hurried up to Lakeview and placed the gun near the corpse."

"Sort of a traveling gun," Silk commented.

"For some reason that gun had to be found beside the corpse, which incidentally had been moved, if we are to continue to believe Garvin's statements. And Garvin was cleverly murdered. Certainly he knew too much—or wait! Did he?"

"He kept it to himself if he did," Silk said. "I recall him refusing point blank to talk about why he was a subject for a blackmailer."

THE blind prosecutor nodded his head in confirmation of this statement.

"He did," Quinn agreed. "We've got to learn something about that man, Silk. He told the truth when it served him and lied just as easily. His story of killing the blackmailer was pure fabrication. He was protecting someone."

"Maybe," Silk suggested, "Captain McGrath located the home of that dead blackmailer and found something there."

"Suppose you call his office and see," Quinn suggested.

Silk went to make the call from the living room. When Quinn worked in the lab, Silk liked to be around the front of the house in case there were visitors.

Quinn made some routine notes about the analysis he'd completed and was cleaning up the instruments and flasks when he heard someone moving along the tunnel from the garden house.

A trap door was already opening and Carol Baldwin climbed out of it. Quinn hurried over to help her. Well behind, discreetly so, was Butch O'Leary. He knew how those two liked to welcome one another and Carol was still in Tony Quinn's arms when Butch appeared.

Carol, smiling in excited anticipation, led Quinn over to a leather davenport and they sat down side by side. Butch came through the trap door in sections. First one thick arm, then a shoulder, that looked padded and wasn't. His head came next, a big head set on a short, almost non-existent neck. His other shoulder followed and then he hoisted himself up and out.

He stood there, a giant of a man with a surprisingly slim waistline, with long arms and huge hands and a grin a mile wide on his more or less ugly face.

"What is it, Tony?" Carol asked.

"Yeah." Butch straddled a chair which was promptly lost under his bulk until he appeared to be sitting comfortably on nothing but air. "Silk sounded excited when he called."

Quinn gave it to them fast, skipping nothing no matter how unimportant it



seemed. He finished the story while they listened with unabated interest.

"So we have a self-confessed murderer who is already proved innocent and has been himself murdered. A suicide who didn't make it, a gun dipped in ice cream, a city upstate composed of very wealthy families. We've a young doctor who is married to the dead man's niece. She, by the way, is quite attractive."

"We'll leave her to me, won't we?" Carol smiled.

"We will not," Quinn told her good-naturedly. "What we need up there, more than anything else, is information. About this Dr. Howard Fox and his wife. About her father and an excitable Australian who lives with them. Sponges on them—if I understand the hesitation of Wilfred Lee. That's just for a beginning. Those people may have nothing at all to do with this. Oh yes, there's an attorney named Robert Gray. One of those handsome men who knows it. I knew him at school, by sight. Nothing wrong with him except vanity, so far as I ever heard."

"Maybe we can sorta take him down a little," Butch suggested hopefully.

"It wouldn't hurt him," Quinn acknowledged. "Carol, I'm going to arrange for you to go to Lakeview as a very wealthy girl looking for a permanent home. There will be a town car with a uniformed chauffeur, if he can fit behind the wheel."

"Meaning me," Butch nodded. "That's okay. We run into something tough, I'll be there to back up Carol."

"That's why I'm sending you," Quinn said. "Carol, you'll dress like a million. It's seasonally too late for furs, except maybe a sable neckpiece. But your sport clothes and formal dresses must reek of money. I'll arrange for them, too."

"Sounds as if it might turn out to be an interesting job." Carol snuggled closer to him and held his arm tightly. He grinned down at her.

"I can read your mind. Yes, the stuff will be yours to keep afterwards. Now here is the pitch. You check in at an inn up at Lakeview. They'll probably

charge you forty dollars a day but tell them you'd like something better if they have it. Then visit some real estate men and inquire about estates."

"I understand." Carol was serious now.

"You will ask countless questions. You intend to settle down in that town and you want to know all about it and everyone connected with its government. Get around to Wilfred Lee and Dr. Fox if the opportunity arises. When I see you again, I want you to be a walking directory of Lakeview."

Carol got up. "I'd better get started then. I know some exclusive shops which are open this late—or will open if I ask. Butch needs a chauffeur's uniform."

QUINN went to a wall safe at the other end of the lab and took out a thick wad of bills. He peeled off a generous portion of them. "This should do it. More if you run short. Remember, I want this handled without arousing the slightest suspicion on the part of anyone."

She stood on tiptoe and kissed him lightly on the mouth. "Don't stay away too long, Tony. Remember that handsome lawyer."

It was Silk who broke it up. "I've tried to reach Captain McGrath, sir. Headquarters says he went down to Eleven-Forty-nine East Kimberly Street where that blackmailer, named Bill Cravath, was supposed to live. They thought he went directly home from there but his wife hasn't heard from him either."

Quinn moved fast. He sent Carol and a now reluctant Butch on their way. Butch sensed excitement and hated to miss any of it. Quinn hurried over to a steel locker and he was unbuttoning his shirt as he moved. In less than five minutes he had changed from the sporty plaid suit to one of jet black. His shoes, socks, shirt, tie—were all black. He strapped on a pair of .38 automatics, rapidly folded a hood of thin silk, and stowed that into a pocket that would escape any ordinary search of his person.

He put on a rather wide brimmed black hat and pulled the brim well down so that the acid-etched scar pits around his eyes were hidden.

While he dressed he gave orders to Silk, who promptly got his hat and hurried to the rear of the estate via the tunnel. Silk came out in the garden house, stood there in the darkness for a moment listening and watching. This was dangerous because someone had actually entered the house to scrawl that message on the mirror.

Once certain no one watched him, Silk made his way somewhat casually to the gate which led to that dead end street beside Quinn's big house. Silk stopped to light a cigarette, his eyes looking over the flame, scanning the street carefully.

Then he moved rapidly toward a car which was parked at the curb. It was a rather old looking car, not too clean and on the surface there was nothing at all about it to make anyone remember it. Beneath the hood, however, was a souped up engine that could overtake almost anything on the road. Silk got behind the wheel and waited.

The Black Bat left the house by the same means and he had a decided advantage over Silk. The Black Bat's unusual eyesight penetrated the darkness and saw no signs of anyone lurking about.

He moved across the yard, through the gate and toward the coupe. He wasn't much more than a dark blur in the gloom. Silk had the motor started and without a word, he rolled to the corner, made the turn and went on past the big house.

It required twenty-eight minutes to reach East Kimberly Street and neither man spoke during the ride. Silk needed all his attention on the traffic in order to make time. He had an uncanny knack for judging traffic lights and made few stops. The Black Bat was busy trying to sort out the meager clues he'd so far developed. Mostly though, he worried about McGrath.

The gruff detective captain sometimes made the Black Bat's life misera-

ble but the Black Bat liked him and worried for fear that McGrath had gone to the blackmailer's place and found that someone else had the same idea. Someone with a gun who didn't mind using it, even on a policeman.

Silk drove past the address which turned out to be an odd looking hotel. It had a frontage of about sixty feet and shot upwards ten or more stories. Silk went around the block and this time he pulled in toward the curb just after he passed the lobby entrance. Both he and the Black Bat had spotted the service entrance on their first ride past.

Silk parked further down the street and calmly made his way into the hotel lobby. He saw the desk clerk bending over a racing sheet and a telephone operator busy repairing her makeup.

Silk walked over to a pair of phone booths, made sure he could observe the desk clerk from the booth he selected and then he telephoned the hotel switchboard.

THE operator put down her vanity, spoke into the mouthpiece. "Hotel Greymore."

His eyes on her, Silk said, "This is Cravath—Bill Cravath. Look and see if my room key is in the mail slot, like a good girl."

"Sure, Mr. Cravath," the girl said. "So you finally got back, huh? You heel."

Silk grinned a bit. The operator had passed his question to the desk clerk who straightened up, turned and thrust his hand into the narrow slot of Room 804. He said something to the operator.

"The key ain't there, Mr. Cravath. And maybe if you keep on breaking dates the way you do, you won't be here either."

Silk murmured, "Be seeing you, baby." He hung up, left the booth and the hotel. He walked down the street toward the service entrance and as he passed the dark spot he spoke in a half whisper which couldn't be heard two feet away. But the Black Bat was listening and his acute hearing caught the number of Bill Cravath's room.

The Black Bat moved as rapidly as he dared and he was poised for a quick draw and fast shooting. He found the service elevator and decided to risk using it. When the car had risen to a point between floors four and five, he stopped it, removed his hat and folded it into a compact wad. This went under his coat into a specially made pocket. He took out the silken hood and pulled this down over his head.

He started the elevator again, brought it to a stop on the eighth floor and opened the door a crack. He stared at blank wall across the hall. Sliding the door further back, he half stepped from the car. There was some kind of a movement to his right and he twisted around in time to see a man step out of 804.

He was a man of about thirty-five, loudly dressed but expensively, too. His suit was a checked affair, his shoes almost a yellow color and he wore a rakish hat far down on one side of his head. He began pulling the door closed.

The Black Bat reached for a gun. "You!" he shouted. "Freeze!"

The man turned. His face became a pasty gray. He stepped back a pace. "Don't shoot," he begged. "Please don't shoot. There's a fire in that room and a man lying in there. I think he's dead but the whole room is burning. I passed by and the door was ajar. I saw the smoke. I was going after a fire extinguisher in the hallway."

The Black Bat shifted his eyes slightly. The man wasn't lying. Smoke had started to come from the room. And a man was supposed to be in there, perhaps dead. It almost had to be Captain McGrath.

The man in the loud suit turned and ran toward the fire stairway. The Black Bat let him go. He reached the room, kicked the door wide and saw a pair of legs through the smoke.

There wasn't much question about the identity of that man. His shoes were square toed, his trouser cuffs worn down in back from being stepped on. Captain McGrath had never pretended to be a fashion plate.

The Black Bat pushed the latch con-

trol so the door wouldn't lock. Then he closed it and sped toward the fire stairway himself. The man in the loud clothes hadn't lied about there being an extinguisher here but the man himself had disappeared.

The Black Bat wrenched the extinguisher out of its moorings and ran back to the room. He stepped inside and tilted the brass container down. Chemicals hissed out. The flames seemed to be confined mostly to one corner where a lot of newspapers had been crumpled and thrown. Fire had licked up the wall, eaten the curtains and was progressing along the worn rug and starting to encompass a stuffed chair.

The Black Bat had the fire out in a matter of seconds. He put down the extinguisher and hurried over to the side of the man who was propped against the radiator, his arms extended behind him. Handcuffs had been passed around the radiator pipe and then closed about both of the man's wrists.

It was Captain McGrath. He was breathing, but there was a deep cut on his scalp and his hair was matted with blood. The pulse was good. The Black Bat went to the window and raised it. Now fresh air swept into the room.

The Black Bat fetched a glass of water, raised McGrath's head and let some of the water trickle into his mouth. McGrath coughed and groaned. His eyelids gave spasmodic twitches. The Black Bat moved around the room.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Picture of a Crime*



McGRATH groaned once but the Black Bat paid no attention to him. He saw what had been done to the room once the smoke cleared away. There was nothing left intact. Padded chairs had been ruthlessly slashed open, the mattress was in pieces. Pictures were smashed, their backs ripped

off. Someone had searched that room and missed nothing.

Perhaps it had been McGrath, or perhaps he'd only done part of it before he was attacked. At any rate, if the room had held any secrets, they were gone now. But why then the fire, he asked himself. To kill McGrath? When another blow on the head would have done it and given the murderer a better chance to escape?

A searched room set on fire meant one thing—whoever had torn it apart hadn't found what he was after and started the blaze to destroy it so that no one else would ever find what Bill Cravath, blackmailer, had hidden.

McGrath muttered something and was trying to pull his legs up so he could arise. The Black Bat went over to him.

"Take it easy, Captain," he said, and his voice was terse and clipped, not at all like Tony Quinn's, placating tones.

McGrath clanked the cuffs as he tried to move his hands. Then he seemed to remember something and relaxed.

"Rat!" he snapped.

The Black Bat chuckled. "Captain, you never called me that before. I'm surprised at you, after I saved you from being roasted alive."

McGrath twisted his head and blinked up at the hooded man. Blinking for one full minute before he lay back quietly.

"First a guy who slugs me and now—you. This is not my lucky day."

"You're wrong," the Black Bat said. "When I came in here, the room was blazing merrily. Two or three minutes more and you'd have been dead. Now suppose we sit down and exchange confidences."

"Sure," McGrath grunted. "My name is McGrath. What's yours?"

The Black Bat laughed at him. "If I remove those cuffs, Captain, have I your word to behave?"

"Can I argue the point?"

"No, I suppose not." The Black Bat rapidly searched McGrath and found his keys. He unlocked the cuffs and helped the detective to his feet. McGrath looked around the room and shuddered.

"You weren't kidding," he said.

"Thanks, Black Bat. This is one I owe you."

"What happened to you, Captain?"

"I came down here to see if I could find anything about Cravath. He occupied this room and was a blackmailer."

"I've been working on this case a week," the Black Bat lied smoothly. "I know all about Mr. Cravath. Was anything found?"

"How should I know?" McGrath went into the bathroom and soaked a towel in cold water. He applied this to his aching head. "I opened the door with a passkey, stepped through and the roof fell in on me. I woke up once and heard somebody moving around. I guess I groaned because the guy came over beside me, bent and slapped me on the head again. All I saw were his shoes."

"Nice color of light brown, weren't they?" the Black Bat broke in. "I saw the man. Stranger to me, but he was a fast thinker. Told me there was a fire and a dead man in here and he was going after an extinguisher. He just kept going."

"What do you know about all this?" McGrath asked. "In a week's time you usually get things done."

"Not this time, Captain. See here, you had no chance to search the room. The man who struck you down did, but if he found what he was after he wouldn't have resorted to fire. Therefore, it's possible the room still holds its secret."

Someone banged authoritatively on the door. The Black Bat's automatic seemed to jump into his fist. McGrath waved him toward the bathroom. The detective opened the door.

"What's going on in here?" a bulky man demanded. "I'm the manager. We had a report of smoke."

McGRATH showed his badge. "There was a small fire. I put it out. Now I'm putting you out. Good day."

He slammed and locked the door. The Black Bat stepped into the room. "Thanks, Captain. You might have trapped me that time."

"I told you I owed you one," McGrath growled. "And just shooing that guy



### SILK

away wasn't it. You were talking about Cravath's blackmail evidence."

"Yes. I think it is still here, if it ever was. Now this room has been searched. All except three things, Captain. The floor, the ceiling and—the walls."

"I'll order a wrecking crew," McGrath grumbled.

"Just relax!" The Black Bat laughed under the hood. "That headache will go away soon and your sunny disposition will return. I've already checked the floor. There are no secret hiding places. The ceiling is out. Too high and just painted plaster. But the walls, Captain—they are papered."

The Black Bat drew off one silk glove, put the flat of his hand against the nearest wall and began lightly fanning the surface. McGrath lumbered to the opposite wall and did the same thing. It was McGrath who found it. He gave a hoarse shout.

"Hey, look! See how the soot from that fire has lodged. In a straight line. There's something projecting a hair's breadth from the wall!"

The Black Bat hurried over. His hand touched the spot and he nodded. "You've sharp eyes, Captain. Suppose we try to dig this out, whatever it may be. You

can see now where Cravath peeled off some of the paper and stuck it back again very, very neatly."

McGrath had a knife in his hand. He slit the wall paper, pulled it down gently and in a few seconds he had withdrawn a thin photograph. He turned it over and emitted a gasp of astonishment.

The Black Bat almost gave away the fact that he knew Dr. Howard Fox. The picture was quite clear, though apparently taken at night. It showed a part of a car. Under it lay a man, his head lying in a pool of what seemed to be blood. He was obviously dead, and bending over him, was Dr. Fox. There wasn't the slightest question as to his identity and it was just as clear that he was making sure the man was beyond help.

"What do you think of it?" McGrath asked. "That guy—the live one—is Dr. Fox up at Lakeview. I take it, you've worked that town if you've been on this mess a full week."

"Yes," the Black Bat replied. "This could be a picture of a doctor administering to an injured man or examining him to see if he lives. But why would an innocent picture like that be so well



hidden? I'm betting, Captain, that Dr. Fox is a hit-and-run driver, and he is the man Cravath was blackmailing."

"You're probably right," McGrath grunted. "Tony Quinn will be interested in this. Don't you think so, Black Bat?"

"There isn't much doubt about it. And I'm not Quinn, Captain. You always give me the impression that you think there is a blind man beneath this hood."

"Let's get on with it," McGrath said. "What are we going to do about this?"

"You may keep the picture," the Black Bat said. "There isn't much we can do tonight. Show it to Quinn in the morning."

"Okay," McGrath nodded. "I'm done in anyhow. Let's go!"

The Black Bat had been moving toward the door as McGrath still studied the picture. When there was no reply, McGrath turned. He was alone in the room. McGrath lunged for the door, groaned as his head ached all over again and then he hurried to the passenger elevators.

The Black Bat had used the same freight elevator, reached the basement and hurried toward the sidewalk. He wouldn't have long to wait. Silk always kept circling the block, always ready for a fast getaway. The coupe came into view and the Black Bat sprinted for it. Silk stepped on the gas hard.

"Home—and in a big hurry," the Black Bat said. "McGrath was in there. I probably saved his life. He is very, very grateful, but I'm inclined to think he is also very, very curious and will try to reach the house in time to find that Tony Quinn is out somewhere."

**S**ILK never drove at breakneck speed, but maintained a steady pace, rarely stopping for lights. To be arrested for some traffic violation now would have been serious. He ran along the dead end street and the Black Bat was out of the car before it stopped, and streaking for the garden house and the tunnel.

Silk wasn't far behind him and, as Silk rushed through the secret lab, the Black Bat was removing his somber regalia and exchanging it for the plaid

suit he wore as Tony Quinn.

A purple bulb, part of a bank of colored lights on one wall, showed that someone was on the porch. Quinn picked up his cane, left the lab and heard the secret door snick into place behind him. He went over to a worn leather chair in front of the fireplace, applied a match to an already filled pipe and puffed furiously enough to manufacture a good sized cloud of smoke that made it seem as if he'd been seated here, puffing on the pipe, for some time. That strange look of blindness came over his eyes.

McGrath walked in, looking neither surprised nor disgusted. He was accustomed to this. No matter how many times he found Quinn at home while the Black Bat was abroad prowling, McGrath never changed his opinion that somehow he'd been beaten in a race.

Quinn said, "Sit down, Mac, and tell me how you made out with your blackmailing friend. I—Mac—have you been near some sort of a fire?"

"Near it?" McGrath grunted. "I was almost a part of it. We won't go into that. Somebody beat me to Cravath's room—he's the dead blackmailer. I got sapped when I stepped in. This guy then tore the room to pieces and set fire to it when he didn't find what he was after. We did though."

"We?" Quinn asked.

"Yeah, the Black Bat showed up, but of course you'd know nothing about that. Anyway, we located a picture hidden beneath the wall paper. It shows Dr. Howard Fox either treating a man who is dead from a car accident, or just examining him before fleeing the scene of the accident. I think it's probable that he was fleeing. Otherwise, where did Cravath have any reason to intimidate the family?"

"That's very interesting," Quinn said. "What do you make of it?"

"Cravath didn't go to Dr. Fox for his blackmail. Maybe the Doc hasn't much cash. Instead, he went to Paul Garvin who was really loaded with dough and who would do anything for his niece. She happens to be married to Dr. Fox—and there your little circle is complete.

It gives Garvin a motive for killing the blackmailer."

"But he didn't," Quinn said. "That's a bit of evidence I developed this afternoon at Lakeview. Cravath had been dead for two weeks or so. Up until one week ago Garvin had been out of town and his whereabouts well established."

"Then Dr. Fox knocked Cravath off," McGrath declared, "and Garvin decided to take the rap. Can you think of anything else?"

"Not at the moment," Quinn admitted, "though it seems Garvin went very far in trying to protect a man guilty of manslaughter. We'll talk to Dr. Fox about it tomorrow. Incidentally, I've been sworn in as an assistant D.A. up there in Lakeview. I have the authority now to question people."

"They won't like that up in Lakeview," McGrath warned. "But it's your headache—which reminds me I have one of my own."

## CHAPTER VII

### *Gun in the Darkness*



IT WAS well after midnight when the Black Bat drove the shabby looking coupe into Lakeview. He was alone, despite Silk's protests, but someone had to remain in case there were visitors. Blind men aren't in the habit of being out in the small hours of the morning.

The Black Bat drew the hood over his head and replaced the wide-brimmed hat. He had stopped along a street that almost seemed out of place in this town of wealthy families. Both sides of the street looked like any modest suburban community with small frame houses, postage stamp sized yards and a clutter of children's toys in every one.

This, the Black Bat knew, was where the working people of Lakeview lived. Those who served as police, firemen, mailmen, clerks. Except for this one

small section, the city consisted of sprawling estates.

Every house was dark. The Black Bat had already located Chief Anderson's home. Now he quietly entered the yard. In this darkness, his eyes served him well for he avoided a coiled up garden hose, a canvas chair and a hoe dropped near a flower bed which had apparently just been dug or seeded.

The Black Bat took a look into a window, tried another one and finally saw Chief of Police Anderson in bed. He seemed to be alone in the house, a break the Black Bat hadn't bargained for.

The window had been raised and the Black Bat pushed it all the way to the top. Anderson stirred restlessly, but didn't awaken until the Black Bat was in the room, had closed the window, run down the shade and turned on the bed lamp.

Anderson sat bolt upright, his sleep-filled eyes trying to determine what was going on. He saw the grim looking, black clad figure standing at the foot of the bed and an automatic was pointed at Anderson's head. He raised his hands slowly.

"Thank you," the menacing figure said. "I'm the Black Bat."

"I can see that," Anderson snapped. "What do you want with me?"

"I'm working on the murder of Paul Garvin and a blackmailer named Cravath. I think those murders also interest you, Chief. Do we co-operate or are you pig-headed and refuse to work with a man merely because he wears a hood?"

"I—don't mind." Anderson swung his legs off the bed and reached for a bathrobe. "You can put your gun away, Black Bat. I know about you. I know you try to help the law, even if you have to shatter it into a million bits to get what you are after."

"Fine." The Black Bat put his gun away, but he watched the Chief narrowly. Anderson tied the belt around his middle, went over to a thermos decanter and poured himself some cold water. He sat down in a chair, holding the glass in his hand.

The Black Bat said, "A certain pho-

tograph, in the possession of Cravath, the blackmailer whose body now lies in your morgue, shows a dead man lying beneath the wheels of a car. Have you had any unsolved hit-and-run accidents lately?"

"Two or three. Three, to be exact. Two of them resulted in fatalities. Never found out whose car killed those men."

"Was one of the victims bald with a fringe of gray like a halo around his head? Thick set, I judge. His neck was anyway. Had a fattish face, looked about fifty, maybe a few years more. That's all I can tell you from the picture. Most of him was beneath the car."

"That would be Wally Montel. The description of the hair proves it. He was found on Clarkview Road three months ago. He'd been hit, instantly killed and his body dragged off the road and thrown into a ditch. If you know who did it, the law requires that you inform me."

"The law?" the Black Bat said with a laugh. "I don't abide by laws very often, Chief. But perhaps I will tell you who was bending over the dead man. In return I'll need information."

"I'm willing to exchange it," Anderson declared.

"The man was Dr. Howard Fox."

**A**NDERSON sat bolt upright. "Now I see it. Garvin would have given his life cheerfully if it meant Flora's happiness. And if her husband, Dr. Fox, was mixed up in anything like this, Garvin would have gone to all lengths to stop it. Even to killing the blackmailer."

"But he didn't kill him," the Black Bat argued. "I've known that for some time. Garvin was out of town when it happened. He wanted it to look as though he was the murderer, but he knew little about such things and only blundered."

"Oh." Anderson ran fingers through his tousled hair. "You know more about this than I do, Black Bat. What do you want from me?"

"Any clues, if you have them."

"I haven't even a ghost of a one. Look here—as Chief of Police of this ritzy

town I'm paid almost as much as the Commissioner gets in New York. This is a rich town. They pay well and they expect results. Two unsolved murders aren't classed as results. By tomorrow, they'll come down on me."

"Who are 'they'?"

"Two officials first. Like Bromley, who is Chairman of the Police Board. Like Wilfred Lee, who is City Manager. Judge Cabot—everyone."

"Lee is City Manager? The same Wilfred Lee whose son-in-law is Dr. Fox?"

"That's correct. Now can you see the mess I'm in? They'll have my head for this. Our citizens pay for and demand efficiency. We have the most efficient tax system, building inspector, roads commissioner. Everyone connected with the government is super-efficient and hired because of that. Our people here don't promote men to executive offices—they go out of town and hire the best men they can get."

"I see. It is an unusual town. Are there many strangers here? I mean newcomers who have taken up what seems to be permanent residence here?"

"No, sir. There are a few places for sale, but the prices are so high any average person simply couldn't be interested. And part of the department's job is to check on people who want to move here. We're a select community, Black Bat. Not snobbish, and we don't care anything about a man except that he comes within the range of wealth and culture all our other citizens possess. Religion, heritage or background have nothing to do with it. The man must come up to standards entirely on his own."

"What a place for a cheap blackmailer to have been murdered," the Black Bat commented wryly. "Just remain exactly as you are, Chief. And thank you for all this information."

The Black Bat snapped off the night table lamp, plunging the room into darkness. He opened the door and closed it again, without leaving the room. Pressed back in a corner, he breathed lightly and watched Chief Anderson. The man arose swiftly, sped to the night table and yanked open a drawer. He

took out a police service pistol, hurried to the window and raised the shade a trifle. He rested the gun on the window sill and waited.

The Black Bat waited too. Moving now might cause Anderson to guess he hadn't left and to begin spraying the room with bullets. Anderson grunted when no one appeared, got up and started for the door. As he reached for it, a gloved hand came out of the darkness. It closed around Anderson's wrist

THE Black Bat scooped up the fallen gun. He forced Anderson into a clothes closet and locked him in. Things were moving faster than he liked. The Black Bat hurried back to where he had parked his car and drove it at a fast clip to the elaborate estate of Wilfred Lee.

He entered the darkened grounds on foot, wary of dogs. Some of these estates kept many of them. He went around to the back and entered the ga-



CAROL

and gave it a sharp twist. The gun fell to the floor.

"Apparently," the Black Bat said, "you don't appreciate my kind of help. I thought you might do this. You tried to look calm, but the vein in your throat was pounding too hard."

"All right," Anderson snapped, "you know now. Sure I'll get you. Why not? You're a criminal. All that stuff about helping the law is only a trick to reach the murderer first and make him pay. Don't tell me you don't cut in on those jobs you investigate. Well, Lakeview doesn't need a hooded man to solve its crimes. If I have the chance, so help me, I'll either kill you or throw you into a cell."

rage. This was only a one-story stucco structure with no servants' quarters included. He stood there in the darkness, looking at the three big cars and Dr. Fox's smaller and more economical sedan.

There was a phone on one of the workbenches with a switch by which outside calls could be made. The Black Bat dialed the number on the phone, knowing it would also ring inside the house.

The sleepy voice of a servant answered. The Black Bat said, "This is the hospital. Tell Dr. Fox to get here immediately. One of his regular patients has just been brought in."

The servant mumbled that she would and hung up. In a few moments a light

was turned on in one of the upstairs rooms and soon after Dr. Fox came sleepily down the short path to the garage. He was holding his professional bag under one arm and trying to knot his tie at the same time.

As he reached for the light switch in the garage, it was turned on for him. He gave a startled gasp of sudden terror when he saw the black clad and hooded figure.

"Get into your car, Doctor," the Black Bat ordered. "I phoned, not the hospital. I'm sorry to frighten you this way, but it's necessary."

"You're the Black Bat, aren't you?" Fox asked gravely.

"I am. My business with you is very important. In fact, it concerns your welfare and reputation."

"What do you want me to do?" Fox asked. "And understand this. I'm not double-crossing you. I know you fight against crime and you are probably trying to help me. You have my word that I'll do exactly as you say."

"We'll drive north a bit, change cars and then go somewhere to talk. I've just had a mild run-in with your Chief of Police and he is apt to take some rather strong measures to try and capture me."

"Anderson is a fool," Dr. Fox said. "We'll go to my office downtown. We'll be safe there."

"Good," the Black Bat said. "Let's get started then."

Dr. Fox drove to where the Black Bat's car was parked. They changed to it and proceeded downtown. At this hour the center of the town was deserted. Not even a cop could be seen. The Black Bat drove around to the back of the five-story office building. He found a good-sized parking space there and backed his car up against the building wall.

They entered through a side door which Dr. Fox knew about. There was no elevator service and they walked up three flights of stairs. Fox unlocked a door lettered with his name, switched on the lights in the pleasant waiting room and led the Black Bat through an examination room and then into the comfortable private office.

Dr. Fox sat down behind his desk. "Now," he said, "why did you drag me out of bed at this unholy hour of the morning as if you were just one of my patients with a stomach ache?"

Behind the hood, the Black Bat laughed. "I'm glad you take it this way, Doctor. Here are the facts. A blackmailer was murdered, as you know. Garvin swore he was the killer, but that happens to be impossible. Garvin's lips, in turn, were permanently sealed by poison. Now, who was this blackmailer after? Who was it that Garvin gave his life to protect and conceal?"

"Am I supposed to know?" Fox asked with a deep frown.

"A search of the dead blackmailer's room revealed a photograph, Doctor. A picture of a man lying dead beneath the wheels of a car and you—bending over him."

"That's an infernal lie!" Dr. Fox jumped to his feet. "I'm not saying you're a liar. If you tell me so, that picture does exist, but it's a fake. Some sort of trickery. I didn't run down anyone, let alone abandon anyone to die as the result of an accident I caused."

**K**EENLY the Black Bat was studying the physician who appeared to be telling the truth.

"You were involved in no accidents at all?" the Black Bat asked.

"I was not. And even if I had been, don't you think I'd have noticed a photographer at the scene?"

"This picture was taken at night," the Black Bat said. "By black light. You wouldn't have noticed if the photographer didn't want you to. Did you ever hear of this black light process for taking pictures in the dark?"

"Yes. I had several taken, in fact. Why did you ask me that?"

The Black Bat said, "If you'd denied ever having had such a picture taken, I should have believed you guilty of a fatal accident. Because if a superimposition was made, to get your face in the photo at the scene of the accident, the



negative used had to be done with black light too. The name of the victim, incidentally, is supposed to have been Wally Montel."

Dr. Fox nodded. "I remember that. I was at the hospital when they brought him in. But he was dead—had been for some time. He wasn't exactly a citizen of Lakeview. I understand he lived just beyond the limits and made his living by collecting and selling junk."

"But you, Doctor, were never approached by this man Cravath, or anyone else regarding this blame for killing Montel?"

"I swear that I was not approached. This is the first I heard of it."

"Would Paul Garvin have been willing to give up his life to save you from being accused as a hit-and-run driver?"

Fox moved his head from side to side. "I think not. I liked Paul and he liked me. That was as far as it went. But he would have given his life a dozen times over to save Flora from any sort of trouble and—I am married to Flora."

"Then we have a motive for Garvin's strange action," the Black Bat said. "Not a strong one. Even if you were sent up for manslaughter that wouldn't be so serious that your wife might have died from it. Have you any other ideas about Garvin, Doctor?"

"He was a sick man," Fox said slowly. "Chronic myocarditis, progressing with alarming swiftness these last few months. He knew he didn't have long to live. I told him so."

"Did you arrange that he be sent that poison, Doctor?" the Black Bat asked unexpectedly.

Dr. Fox smiled wanly. "I did not. I didn't kill the blackmailer and I wasn't involved in the death of Montel. I'm not offended because you asked me."

The phone buzzed. Dr. Fox reached for the instrument and then paused with a frown. "Now who would be calling my office at this hour?" He put the phone to his ear, listened a few moments and then laid the phone on the desk.

"You're in a rather bad position, Black Bat," he said dryly. "That's Chief

Anderson on the wire. He came to my house, figuring you might also have gone there. He learned of the fake call from the hospital and sent out an alarm for me—and for you, of course. I was seen riding in your car. A patrolman saw the lights go on in my office. The windows front the street, you know."

The Black Bat picked up the phone. "Chief?" he asked.

Anderson's voice was smug and content. "When will guys like you ever learn?" he asked happily. "I've got the building surrounded. The roof tops are covered. I've set up searchlight batteries and I've got every available man here, armed with tommy-guns, tear gas and riot guns. You're coming out, Black Bat, or I'm coming in after you."

"Come on in," the Black Bat invited. "But come shooting, Chief."

"I'll be glad to. How about using some sense and sending Dr. Fox out unharmed?"

"That will take some thinking," the Black Bat replied.

"You can have three minutes," Anderson snapped, and the wire went dead.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Siege*



DOCTOR FOX must have guessed what the Police Chief had said over the telephone, for he looked worried. "Anderson told me to get away from you and stay away," he said. "They'll try to blast you out of here, Black Bat. Anderson hates

any kind of interference on the theory that our city fathers may think he doesn't earn his salary."

"I wonder how far he will go?" the Black Bat said softly.

He had an immediate answer. The windows were suddenly illuminated from powerful searchlights which bathed the whole building in brilliant light. Anderson had rigged a loudspeak-

er to one of his cars also and he was calling the time over it.

"One minute. Two minutes to go, Black Bat."

The Black Bat went over to the window and risked a quick glance onto the street. What he saw wasn't encouraging. Anderson had called out the fire department and assembled a formidable crew in a very short time—and done it silently. The Black Bat was rapidly acquiring considerable respect for this short-tempered, selfishly inclined Chief of Police.

It looked as if Lakeview was plentifully patrolled by police for there were more than thirty of them deployed around the front of the building and there would be as many at the sides and in back. This seemed to be an air-tight trap.

"What are you going to do?" Dr. Fox asked.

"I don't know. Try to get away, I suppose. I don't want to jeopardize your life."

"Two minutes," Anderson's loud speaker roared.

"Never mind me," Fox declared. "Anderson is a fool. You're trying to help us and just because your methods are more direct and get quicker results, he doesn't like it. But he will shoot you down, Black Bat."

"He will try," the Black Bat amended.

"All right—try, then. Maybe you've been very lucky up to now, but luck always runs out some time or other. Look here, maybe you could remove that silly hood and put it on me. I'd let them take me, try to keep them from snatching the hood off while you make your escape."

The eyes shining through the slits in the hood glittered for a moment. "Of course if I remove this hood to take advantage of your very generous offer, you will know who I am."

"And if I do, does it matter? Consider yourself my patient, Black Bat. No doctor can be made to talk about his patients. You're quite safe."

"Three minutes," Anderson's voice

came over the loud speaker. "Throw the gas, boys."

A tear gas rifle sent one of its big shells sailing through the window. It landed and exploded, throwing thick white smoke over the middle of the room. The Black Bat sped to the door, urged Fox to more speed and closed the door behind them just before the tear inducing fumes really began to spread.

This was only a temporary relief. The police would throw those shells through every window in the building, if necessary. Just for purposes of intimidation, a machine-gun rattled and bullets smashed the windows. Dr. Fox shuddered and began biting at his lip.

Then the Black Bat moved up to his side and jabbed a gun against his ribs. "Doctor, you can truthfully say I forced you to do this. Turn around and face the wall. Hurry! They'll lob more of those tear gas shells in here at any moment."

Fox obeyed, keeping his hands raised. The Black Bat went over to a cabinet containing adhesive and selected a large roll of it. He brought Dr. Fox's hands down behind his back and taped the wrists securely. Then he slapped a wide piece of tape over the doctor's lips. This was followed by two generous patches carefully affixed to cover the doctor's eyes.

The Black Bat worked fast but before he was through a gas shell exploded in the room. He rushed Fox out of there, through the waiting room and into the hallway.

HE hustled his prisoner toward the elevators. None seemed to be operating. He left Fox there, raced down the steps to the basement and became wary for fear that Anderson might have infiltrated some of his men into the building.

The Black Bat found the elevators in the basement, took one of them and rode it to the floor where he'd left Dr. Fox. The doctor was still there, stumbling aimlessly about, keeping one shoulder against the wall for guidance.

"I'm sorry," the Black Bat said. "Per-

haps I can make it up to you, Doctor. At least they can't say you willingly helped me."

He piloted his prisoner to the elevator, rode it to the lobby and opened the door. Peering out, he saw two uniformed sergeants gingerly trying to unlock the glass doors. The Black Bat fired four fast shots, aiming them high. The two men got out of the way very fast indeed.

"Stay right here," the Black Bat said. "If you move out of the car you may get riddled. I'll be right back."

The man in black stepped from the car and raced toward the stairway. He ran to the second floor, which was by now well filled with tear gas. He choked on it, worked fast and put his back against the hallway wall beside one of the windows.

He fired two shots through it, aiming them at the stars. Then he called Anderson's name.

The fusillade which started up, died off quickly. The Black Bat called out, "Chief Anderson. Are you listening?"

"I'm here," Anderson answered grimly. "And you seem to be too. It's no use, Black Bat. I'll make no deals, but if Dr. Fox is hurt because of your stupid unwillingness to surrender, I'll hold you responsible."

"It's because of Dr. Fox that I'm giving up," the Black Bat said. "Cease your shooting. Give me three more minutes. I'll stand in the middle of the lobby waiting for you. I'll throw my gun up close to the lobby doors."

"Three minutes," Anderson said.

The Black Bat hurried back to the stairs and ran down to the lobby floor. The searchlights had been swung upwards and the lobby was dark. He stepped into the elevator and spoke to Dr. Fox.

"Your idea of taking my place is a good one but despite your generosity to assume my identity, I can't let you see my face. I'm placing my hood over your head, pulling up your coat collar to hide the white shirt. I'll stand you in the lobby. Chief Anderson will do the rest. Thanks again, Doctor, and I hope I can return the favor."

All Dr. Fox could do was nod his head vigorously that he was in full agreement with the plan. The Black Bat removed the hood. It was the first time in his dangerous career that he'd ever done so under fire. He felt naked without it and quickly pulled on the wide brimmed hat which he took from beneath his coat.

There wasn't much time left. He found a wooden wedge used to hold the elevator door open. It also roughly fitted the slot along which the elevator control lever moved. He left the door wide open, pushed the control to the slow position and wedged it there. When he closed the door from the outside, the car would begin to move upwards at a very slow pace and not stop until the automatic brakes took over at the top of the building.

He led Dr. Fox into the corridor, scaled his automatic along the marble

[Turn page]



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floor until it came to a stop five feet in front of the glass doors to the street.

The Black Bat said, "Just stand there, Doctor. Don't move at all and you won't get hurt. Chief Anderson would much prefer to take me alive and snatch off the hood when he has a lot of spectators. He seems to possess a flair for the dramatic."

Dr. Fox made noises through his nose and nodded his head again. The Black Bat looked at his wrist watch. Half a minute left. He closed the elevator door and watched the floor arrow begin to track the car upwards. It was barely crawling. A good three more minutes would elapse before it reached the top.

**T**HEN the Black Bat sped to the basement. A second gun was in his hand though he knew he'd never use it against a policeman. He knew the service exit led to the space behind the building, where his car was parked. If they hadn't seized it, he'd have a chance. If it was gone, he'd still have more of a chance than if he merely gave up.

His keen hearing detected the sound of shouts upstairs. He heard Chief Anderson talking triumphantly over his broadcasting system to the effect that the battle was over. The Black Bat had surrendered and was now under arrest.

The Black Bat opened the service door. A young cop was standing just outside it. He held a riot gun under his arm, the muzzle pointed at the ground. Two more cops came running up out of the darkness.

One of the newcomers said, "Hey, Jimmy, they've got him. He's surrendered."

"Okay, so he's caught. I'm staying here until I get orders to move," the policeman with the riot gun said.

The other policemen kept on going. What were orders when the man they were after had given up. When he'd thrown away his gun and surrendered? The Black Bat gave them one minute and then he stepped out into the open, his second automatic level, his hat brim pulled far down.

"Don't move," he said sternly. "I didn't give up, you see. And I'd hate to put a bullet through your back. G.I., aren't you?"

The policeman let the riot gun drop to the cement parking space. "Yes," he said bitterly.

"Thought so. Orders are orders to you. If those other two had stayed, I'd never get away with this. Walk backwards toward me. Easy now—you're dealing with a desperate man."

The cop gave a hollow laugh. "What'll you bet if I turn around and take a swing at you, you won't pull the trigger. You never shot a cop yet, Black Bat."

"I've never had to," the Black Bat said slowly. "But I've never been at bay in such a tight spot before. Don't gamble on what I will or will not do."

The cop said, "My hands are high. If I held the riot gun and it was trained on you, I'd never shoot. We got a kind of rough Chief here. Looks out for himself. He's his own Number One boy. I say you help a cop much more than you damage the law. I say more power to you. Now beat it, before somebody comes along and I have to explain all this."

The Black Bat said, "Turn around now. I want a good look at you."

The young patrolman pivoted neatly and he was grinning. All he could see was a shadowy form in the gloom near the basement door.

The Black Bat said, "Thank you. I've an excellent memory for faces. Especially those I like."

"You can't see me," the policeman argued. "We're both standing here in the dark."

"You have brown eyes. Your hair has a reddish tinge. You've a mole in the middle of your right cheek. Your badge number is Three-Seventy-seven. I can see in the dark, officer. Good night."

He wheeled, turning his back on the policeman who was still armed and even had a riot gun at his feet. The Black Bat walked to where the car was parked, got in and started the motor. He didn't switch on any lights. In a matter of seconds now they'd have the black

hood off Doctor Fox and realize they'd been tricked. The fact that the elevator had been moving and didn't stop until it reached the top floor might give him a few extra seconds of grace.

As he sped away he saw the young policeman throw him a snappy salute. The Black Bat laughed contentedly. It was a pleasure meeting someone like him after dealing with Chief Anderson.

When the hue and cry broke, the Black Bat was already hitting the outskirts and on the deserted road he opened up that odd looking coupe which did ninety without the slightest effort.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Murder Gun*



RELAXED comfortably in the cushions of an easy chair, Silk was dozing in the laboratory when the Black Bat emerged from the tunnel. Silk came awake instantly and turned on some lights. The Black Bat quickly removed the black regalia and

stowed it away in the locker. He put on the clothing of blind Tony Quinn and picked up a loaded pipe. He put flame to it and sat down with a sigh.

"We'll have to break out another hood," he told Silk. "I left mine over the head of Dr. Fox up at Lakeview. Seems they have an enterprising man in Chief Anderson. He tried to shoot me in the back first and then he trapped me and organized a perfect manhunt. I got away by the help of Dr. Fox, a young patrolman and the last measure of my luck."

"I didn't want you to go alone, sir," Silk said. "I don't know why, but I keep thinking we're up against something big and mighty dangerous in Lakeview."

"What do you base such a hunch on?" Tony Quinn asked.

"I wish I knew, sir. It's like some invisible cloud that hangs over us whenever we're there. Like something—may-

be out of my past. I don't know. Maybe I'm just foolish."

Quinn shrugged and puffed on the pipe. "I haven't made much headway. All we know is that Garvin tried to kill himself so he'd take the blame for a murder he couldn't have accomplished. Then he was murdered himself. Dr. Fox is involved because we found a picture in the room of that blackmailer, Cravath. Dr. Fox denies the picture can be of him—at least under the circumstances it pretends to show."

"This Dr. Fox—how did he help you?" Silk asked slowly.

"Well, we were both trapped in his office building. They lobbed tear gas at us and a few rounds of tommy-gun ammunition. They were afraid to really let go for fear they'd kill Dr. Fox too. I imagine though, that if I'd held out they'd probably have blasted the place."

"But Dr. Fox—and his help?"

"He merely sympathized with my predicament. You know, Silk, he offered to keep my identity a strict secret if I had to remove my hood. He darned near sold me the idea of changing clothes with him, even though it meant exposing my face to do so. Dr. Fox must be a good physician. He certainly has a way with him to get your confidence."

Silk nodded glumly. "He struck me that way too. Are you going up there tomorrow, sir?"

"Yes, I'll request a short leave and try to spend as much time as possible up there, until we have this thing licked. Any ideas, Silk?"

"No, sir. I've been sitting here by the hour, with all the lights out and just thinking about it. I can't see one thing to hang even a clue on. The only mug mixed up in it was Cravath and he didn't exactly fall into the hooligan class."

Quinn said, "You're right. Whatever it is—whoever is behind it—the affair has maintained sedate lines. Even crime refuses to become sensational in Lakeview."

"Yes," Silk said glumly. "I've noticed that."

"What's the matter with you, Silk?"



Silk arose and smiled. "Nothing, sir. I guess I'm a bit tired. Carol and Butch are already in Lakeview. They must have had a nice time hearing about the Black Bat being trapped. I wonder how Carol held Butch in check."

"I was worried about that," Quinn said. "Let's go to bed. We have to be at the office in four hours."

Captain McGrath was Quinn's first visitor the following morning. He had a Cheshire cat grin on his face.

"Did you sleep well, last night, Tony?" he asked with magnified innocence.

QUINN'S apparently sightless eyes were directed somewhere to the left of where McGrath stood. "Why, as a matter of fact I did—yes. Don't tell me this business up in Lakeview is keeping you awake?"

"Not me. Last night the Black Bat gave Lakeview a time like it's never had before. They actually had him sewed up. Yes, sir, neatly boxed and ready to slam the lid on. They did that too—only the box was empty. They're still trying to figure out how you—that is, the Black Bat ever got through the cordon of men thrown around the building."

"Oh, he's clever," Quinn said very seriously.

"Yeah, ain't he?" McGrath growled. "You heading that way by any chance?"

"I promised Matt Taylor I'd try to help. As much as a blind man can be of service."

"Okay, then you can save me a trip." McGrath sat down. "First of all I turned that photo of Dr. Fox and the dead man over to an expert. They checked it pretty close and have decided that Dr. Fox's face was superimposed."

"I thought so," Quinn said. "From your description of it, I had an idea the thing seemed to be posed."

"It probably was," McGrath said. "One thing though," he warned, "Dr. Fox's mug was also taken in black light. They could have sneaked it but I think Dr. Fox ought to start checking back and trying to remember if anybody ever took his picture with black light."

"Probably you'll discover that such a picture had been taken," Quinn said.

"One more thing. Chief Anderson gave me that murder gun to check up on. He figured we could work faster in New York than he could in that little town and he was right. The gun was bought on April tenth, Nineteen-Twenty-six, by Wilfred Lee."

Quinn pursed his lips. "Very interesting, Mac. Thanks for telling me."

"I also sent out about fifty legmen to check on Cravath, the murdered blackmailer. Seems he arrived in New York only seven months ago and he liked to work St. Louis for the most part. Had some kind of a fix there and it's very unusual for a crook to run out when he has influence to help him in his work."

"Perhaps Cravath thought blackmailing Dr. Fox would be more profitable than working in a fixed town," Quinn suggested. "There is even a possibility that it turned out that way. Paul Garvin could have been paying off. They usually do, and experience a blackmailer's avidity before they decide on such steps as Garvin took."

"Cravath used to take a bus up to Lakeview every Monday like clockwork. Came back the same day—but late. After that he was loaded with money and had a fine time spending it."

"It's too bad," Quinn said sadly, "that people give in to blackmail, no matter how bad their position is. Paying off for silence only makes it worse. Thanks for telling me all this, Mac. I'll relay it to the proper people."

At noontime Silk pulled up before the Lakeview police station, got out and ran around the car to help blind Tony Quinn alight. Apparently Matt Taylor had observed them coming for he emerged from Headquarters and welcomed Quinn with enthusiasm.

"We're up in the air here today," he said. "Had an exciting night. The Black Bat was our guest for a time. An elusive one, I might add, because he didn't stay."

Quinn laughed. "I know. Captain



## BUTCH

McGrath told me. He's rather hot on the idea of locking up the Black Bat, too, Matt."

"Chief Anderson swears he'll never stop until he gets that hooded man, Tony. He means it too. But that isn't of any especial interest to you. Frankly, I haven't much to offer in the way of news."

"I have," Quinn said. "The murder gun was traced to Wilfred Lee. I think we ought to have a talk with him."

"So do I," Taylor agreed.

"Also, Dr. Fox. It's been determined that his face was superimposed upon a photo showing a man bending over a hit-and-run victim he'd apparently just killed."

**T**HEY got into Quinn's car and Taylor directed him to City Hall, an imposing building with a colonial motif. It was red brick with tall white pillars and a steeple ending in a tall lightning rod.

"All the civic offices except the police department and the fire houses are in this building, Tony," Taylor explained. "We built it three years ago. It's been listed as one of the five most attractive city halls in the country."

"You people take a great pride in your town," Quinn said. "From what Silk has told me of it, I don't blame you."

Taylor said, "We can afford to outstrip other towns our size. Citizens of Lakeview will kick in for anything that makes the town look better or function better. That's the beauty of a town composed mostly of millionaires who can pay high taxes and special assessments and not mind."

They entered the building and walked along a corridor paved with smooth red blocks. The lighting was hidden and indirect. Office doors indicated each civil branch. Tax collector, Water Commissioner, Assessor, Town Clerk, Bureau of Finance, Probate Court. The officials were the same as in any town. Only their offices differed. Instead of the usual plain oak desks and hard chairs, these rooms were done by an interior decorator with an unlimited budget.

Silk marveled at the place and told Quinn about it. Taylor beamed with rightful pride. "Let's go see some of the boys," he suggested. "Phil Ormond is Tax Collector. Nice chap—from Winston-Salem. You'll like him."

Silk followed Taylor, leading Quinn

through the door which Taylor held open. A clerk was sorry but Mr. Ormond had been called away. They talked to a very old, very deaf man who was in charge of the Town Clerk's office and had been in that capacity for half a century. The assessor was out of town and two other commissioners were home ill.

"We seem to be operating with a skeleton staff," Taylor grinned. "Well, I know Wilfred Lee is here. Saw him an hour ago."

Lee's office was done in dark green. Against a backdrop of a huge American flag crossed with one that must be something created for Lakeview, sat Wilfred Lee. He looked more imposing in this large and fancy office. But he was glad to see Tony Quinn and said so along with a hearty handshake.

Silk helped Quinn into a chair. Quinn said, "Perhaps you'll be sorry I came, Mr. Lee," he said. "You see, we've been busy and we've determined that the gun which was found beside the body of the murdered blackmailer happens to be yours."

Lee blushed slightly. "The only gun I own, or ever did own, is a thirty-eight Smith & Wesson. I bought it years ago. Don't think I ever fired the thing. Last I knew it was kicking around the house."

"You haven't see it since the murder?" Quinn asked.

"I didn't even look," Lee shrugged. "But if you say the murder gun was mine, then I think some sort of an investigation at my home is in order. The gun might have been stolen."

"You mean it must have been stolen," Taylor corrected good-naturedly. "We're not suspecting that you or any of your family murdered the blackmailer."

"I don't see why you refuse to suspect us," Lee exclaimed. He was beet red now. "I can't explain that gun. I want this cleared up, no matter who it hurts. The fact is, I've a confession to make. I'd have told you about it before, but I thought if any member of my family was involved, they'd admit it to me first."

Quinn said, "You're about to tell us

that you saw the blackmailer before. Perhaps prowling around your home, or near it?"

"You could be a mind-reader," Lee grunted. "Yes, I saw him. Twice! Of course I didn't know that until I viewed the body at the morgue. I caught him leaving about a month ago and again, several nights after that. It couldn't have been many days prior to his murder."

"You don't know whom he visited?"

LEE raised his hands in a vague gesture, then shrugged his shoulders.

"I have no idea. Last night I asked Flora and she denied he came to see her. Dr. Fox denied it too, though not as vehemently as he might have. Ramsey refused to make any sort of statement. He sulked because I had the temerity even to ask him."

"What about this man Ramsey?" Quinn asked.

"I met him—eight or ten years ago. We had a lot in common, it seemed. Later he came to visit me and—he just stayed. Oh, he pays his way. The man is wealthy. Owns mines in Australia. He regards himself as a member of the family now. Sometimes I want to get rid of him and then again, I don't. My family consists only of Flora. She isn't home too often and I get lonely. Besides I've sworn to trim Ramsey at chess before I die."

"Would you have any objection if I talked to your daughter, Mr. Lee? And to Mr. Ramsey?"

"Why should I? Matt tells me he appointed you to his staff. I thoroughly agree with the procedure. You're an expert in this sort of thing. Talk to anyone you like, ask for anything you require. I'll back you to the hilt. All I ask is results—and fast results."

Quinn stood up. "No matter whom it may hurt, Mr. Lee?"

The City Manager winced as if he knew exactly what Tony Quinn was driving at. "People who get mixed up with murder deserve to be hurt. No matter who they are."

The redness had descended to his

neck by the time Quinn, Silk and Matt Taylor were leaving. Nobody commented on it. Outside, Matt Taylor excused himself in a somewhat abashed way. As if he didn't want any part of questioning the City Manager's family.

With Silk guiding him, they strolled down the street and entered the Ram's Head Inn. It was a new building, three stories high and set on a small estate. A fair-sized fortune had been spent on giving the place a very old look. There were tennis courts, a nine hole golf course and a swimming pool. The lawns were sweeping, carefully trimmed and landscaped with bushes and trees.

The dining room was done in Colonial style, the prices were high and the food excellent. Tony Quinn especially enjoyed his luncheon because Carol Baldwin sat across the room, lovely in a white suit with a gold belt. Now and then her gaze centered on Quinn and Silk, but it was only a mildly curious gaze that blind people get so often.

She called over the waiter and asked him to find out what her room number was as she wanted to sign the check. The waiter returned from the desk in a moment.

Carol said, "Three-Oh-Nine? Thank you very much."

## CHAPTER X

### *Murder on Wheels*



WHEN Silk and Quinn returned to their car, Quinn lit a cigarette before Silk started the motor.

"Do you have the same feeling I've had all morning?" Quinn asked.

"That we're being watched?" Silk said quickly. "Yes, sir, and I've tried to find out if anybody was on our trail. Never saw a sign of a shadow, so I figured I was just jittery."

"We're hearing footsteps, seeing shadows," Quinn said. "We're heading

for Lee's home. It's quite far out. On the way try some evasive tactics."

Silk did his best, doubling back, making unexpected stops. Memorizing the marker numbers of cars that passed them. It all gained nothing. If they were followed, it was being done by people who were masters at the art.

"It could be they know where we're going, sir, and haven't bothered to follow us. All they have to do is pick up the trail at the Lee home."

There was certainly no one suspicious around that house. Flora Lee Fox let them in and seemed genuinely glad to answer questions.

"I'm sorry about the last time you were here, Mr. Quinn. Howard—Dr. Fox—had just told me about the murder of Uncle Paul. I guess I turned sissy and fainted. Now I want to help. I want to do all I can."

"Good," Quinn said. "Suppose we start with this dead blackmailer. His name was William Cravath, he came here from St. Louis and must have had a very special mission because he was strictly a home boy."

"What about this Cravath?" Flora Fox asked. She reached for a cigarette and Silk quickly held a lighter for her. The cigarette trembled just the slightest.

"How often did he come here to see you, Mrs. Fox?" Quinn asked calmly.

"Eh? What in the world do you mean?" The cigarette was really trembling now.

"Your father saw him around here, Mrs. Lee. Your husband denies being approached. Your father wouldn't have admitted recognizing Cravath if he'd been blackmailed. Your Uncle Paul Garvin was murdered, which shows he knew what was going on. But he was hardly Cravath's victim. There's no one left except Mr. Ramsey—and you."

She took a very long drag on the cigarette, exhaled slowly and her eyes were slightly narrowed. "You're a very observant man, for being blind, Mr. Quinn. Cravath did approach me. I gave him five hundred dollars."

"Why?" Quinn asked quickly.

"I—can't tell you that. I won't. Nothing you can do will make me tell."

"I already know." Quinn stopped her steadily rising voice. "There was a photograph of Dr. Fox and—a dead man."

"How did you ever find that out?" she cried in horror.

"The photo was found in Cravath's room, Mrs. Fox. We don't know where the negative is, but it doesn't matter. Dr. Fox has seen the photo and denies all that it implies."

"Then I was being duped?"

"I'm afraid so," Quinn told her. "You see, we believe your husband because the photo was a fake. His features had been simply superimposed upon the body of the man who'd actually been at the scene. Why didn't you tell him about Cravath?"

**S**HE broke down and cried then, mostly in sheer relief. Quinn let her cry it out. She finally smiled weakly, as if she weren't used to smiling any more.

"I couldn't tell Howard. He has so much on his mind. The sanitarium, his practice and, most of all, his pride. I had to ask him to marry me, Mr. Quinn. It seems my family had too much money."

"You say he has a sanitarium, Mrs. Fox?"

"Yes. It's two miles beyond the city limits. You can see it from the highway to Albany. It's atop a low hill, a rather sprawling building painted white. It's more or less a rest home. My husband specializes in psychological treatment."

"I see. I'd like to talk to him so perhaps we'll visit the sanitarium. Where is Mr. Ramsey?"

"He saw you drive up and went to his rooms. He's terribly shy. Never wants to meet people, but I think he keeps Dad from dying of boredom. He's really a nice old man, Mr. Quinn."

"Old, am I?" Ramsey stalked into the room, chuckling. "Shy, am I? Flora, I was sure you thought better of me than that. But I daresay you're right on all counts."

He walked over to a sideboard and began mixing himself a light drink. Quinn

said, "Mr. Ramsey, you and my good friend Silk here, ought to get together now and then. He visited Australia several times and has relatives in Melbourne and, where else, Silk?"

"Sydney, sir. It's a wonderful country."

Ramsey put down the glass. "Indeed it is," he said in a weak attempt at hearty agreement. "Excuse me just a moment. I'm sure I left the hose on at the rose garden."

Quinn and Silk returned to their car after a brief excursion around the side of the house. When they were driving away, Quinn said, "The soil around that rose garden is highly absorbent. It looked perfectly dry to me and I didn't hear any sound of water running when Ramsey said he left the hose on."

"He's never seen Australia," Silk said slowly. "That man is a sure fake. I think he's pulling one of the oldest con rackets in the world. Getting himself accepted as a member of Lee's family and living off him."

"But Lee said he was wealthy and paid his own way," Quinn objected.

"That's how it is worked—by swindlers who want to make a good thing of it. They haven't money enough to maintain the standard of living they like, but enough to bluff their way along. Lee wouldn't permit him to pay for the rent of his room, for instance. Nor pay for his food. The two major items in cost. I think Ramsey rates a very thorough investigation."

"He's going to get it," Quinn promised.

"He knows we're wise to him, also," Silk said. "He'll be on his guard if he doesn't attempt to make a run for it."

They saw Dr. Lee's sanitarium soon afterwards. Flora's description of the place hadn't done it justice. If the building had been situated in the heart of Lakeview, none of the wealthy citizens could have objected in the least.

Atop this sprawling hill, it was a white building of good size. Lawns rolled down to be replaced by thick shrubbery and trees which hid the high steel mesh fence that surrounded the

whole hill. A very modest bronze sign read HILLTOP RETREAT and there was a wooden arrow nailed to a post set in the ground. The arrow pointed up a narrow tree hemmed lane.

They turned the car off the smooth cement highway, drove about four hundred yards and encountered a formidable looking gate. It was locked. There was a bell on one of the gateposts, but below it was taped a sign, printed on a piece of cardboard.

VISITORS WILL PLEASE USE GATE 100  
FEET NORTH ON THE HIGHWAY

"Funny, I didn't see any gate or driveway to it," Quinn muttered.

"And look at this." Silk pointed to a small park to one side of the lane. Around it was a wide driveway of gravel and another sign read:

PARK ALL CARS HERE

Quinn said, "We might as well obey. Some of these rest homes have peculiar rules. Park the car and we'll try to find the other gate."

They walked along the lane, Quinn using his white cane constantly and also depending upon Silk's arm for guidance. Silk seemed to be thinking very hard.

"What is it, Silk?" Quinn asked. "What's bothering you?"

**S**ILK gave himself an impatient shake. "I don't know, sir. Just a feeling. I can't seem to get rid of it. I had it yesterday when we were here and today it's even stronger. Just little things. Probably would mean nothing except to someone like me."

"I've noticed nothing, Silk. Be more explicit."

Silk laughed. "Give me a little time, sir. Until I'm more certain I'm not a fool. After we talk to Dr. Fox, I'd like to question Ramsey again and pay another visit to City Hall. Well, here is the highway. All we have to do is locate that other gate."

They started up the highway, Silk walking along the soft shoulder and Quinn keeping on the cement pavement, but well over to the right. They saw no

signs of another lane or gate. Somewhere behind them a car was coming fast. Silk gave a quick look over his shoulder.

The car was low slung, black and there was one man in it. Silk took Quinn's arm to pilot him off the road. He looked around again. The car had the whole highway to itself, but the driver seemed to be edging in, as if he meant to run down Quinn.

Silk knew that Quinn had to maintain his pose of a blind man no matter what danger arose. Silk put both hands against Quinn and shoved him as hard as he could.

Quinn staggered sideways, almost losing his balance. He saw the car coming, though he gave no indication of it. He was waving his white cane, trying in one instant to think of some way to avoid being run down without revealing that he could see.

The car didn't veer his way. Silk was running, well off the cement by now. The car left the cement too. Silk tried to dive into the brush, but he wasn't quite fast enough. The fender of the car hit him with a sickening crunch. Without showing the horror that surged through him, Quinn saw Silk lifted and hurled into the brush.

The car careened back onto the cement and the brakes were squealing as the driver brought it to a stop. That accident had been deliberate. Quinn knew the murderer had disposed of Silk and was about to come back and run down this man he believed to be blind.

Quinn, using his cane, moved across the highway, in the general direction of the spot where Silk lay, a silent, terribly still form. The sedan had stopped and was now turning around. Quinn knew he didn't have long. He called Silk's name in a plaintive voice, stumbled into the shoulder and almost fell over Silk's body.

As if the prod of his cane told him things, Quinn knelt beside Silk. The murder car had straightened out now and was roaring toward him, on the wrong side of the road murder bent.



Quinn had his head raised, sightless eyes staring down the road. Then he frantically turned Silk over and slid a hand beneath his coat to find the gun in its shoulder sling. He drew it, squatted there beside the form of his friend.

The murder car, rolling faster and faster, was set to careen off the highway and smash into Quinn. The blind man dropped his cane, lifted the gun and appeared to be listening to the increasing roar of the car motor. Suddenly the gun in his fist began to kick.

He couldn't shoot straight without revealing that he wasn't blind, but he could make those bullets come dangerously close by appearing to shoot at the sound of the car. One slug hit the windshield, another smashed into the hood and Quinn was prepared to put one dead center through the brain of the driver.

But that driver had enough. Even a blind man might get in a 'lucky shot. The sedan hadn't left the cement highway as yet and now it moved to the left slightly and the driver stepped hard on the gas pedal. Quinn, turning as the car whizzed by, pumped four more fast shots. They all missed by wide margins, as he intended they should. He wanted to kill that man. Riddle him for what he'd done to Silk, but throwing away the ruse of his blindness simply to stop him, wasn't worth it.

**Q**UINN had identified the driver. He'd seen him before, with his loud suit and near yellow shoes, leaving Captain McGrath in Bill Cravath's room to die in flames.

Quinn turned his attentions to Silk now. The shots were almost bound to draw someone from the sanitarium and Quinn fervently hoped so. Silk's face was covered with blood. There was a bad cut behind his ear, another streaked jaggedly and redly across his forehead. Some blood came out of his nose and a little ran from the corner of his mouth.

Quinn slid a hand beneath Silk's shirt. The heartbeat was there, not too strong but quite steady. His breathing was labored, as if it pained him even in his unconsciousness.

Tony Quinn could do nothing but wait. No cars were coming by, everything seemed peaceful and serene. But a situation like this was what someone like Chief Anderson might be hoping for. If Quinn showed that he could see, under the stress of this awful moment, the Black Bat might be lost.

Quinn kept sensitive fingers against Silk's pulse. If it became thready, he was determined to get help even if it meant the whole world discovered he was not blind.

Far back in his mind rested a memory photo of the driver of the car. That would-be murderer was going to be brought to swift justice somehow. If ordinary legal ways wouldn't work, the Black Bat would have to use some methods of his own.

Someone was moving just inside the fence about fifty yards behind the road shoulders. Quinn called out plaintively. Called and called for help.

## CHAPTER XI

### *A Killer Comes Calling*



**U**SING great care, they carried Silk to where the car was parked. Dr. Fox took over then and the car was driven to the sanitarium. Dr. Fox was efficient and capable, though he left the actual examination and first aid work to an interne.

The sanitarium was equipped with X-ray and the plates showed no fractures. Dr. Fox commented on this later, in his private office where Quinn had been installed.

"He's extremely fortunate, Mr. Quinn. There is a bad concussion. He may remain unconscious for some time—perhaps days. The cuts and bruises aren't bad. A few stitches were taken in the one behind his ear. He was given tetanus injections because the wounds were filled with dirt. I'm sure, though, that he is going to be quite all right."

"I've been doing a lot of praying in that direction," Quinn said softly. "That murder attempt was aimed at me, you know. Silk saw the car coming, pushed me out of the way and took it himself."

Dr. Fox leaned back in his swivel chair and brought the ends of his fingers together. "I don't know if Silk mentioned it—certainly you could not see it—but there was a sign on our gate telling any new arrivals to use another entrance. That is the one and only gate, Mr. Quinn. The sign was a fake."

"Silk told me about it." Quinn seemed to marvel. "He was getting very suspicious when we didn't find the second gate, but that car came too fast for him to take any precautions. They apparently knew we were coming, beat us to the gate and put up that sign so we'd park the car and walk along the highway. It wasn't a bad trick, Doctor Fox."

"Who knew you were coming?" Fox asked. "Flora did. She phoned me to expect you. But who else?"

"Ramsey overheard us, I believe. No one else, though we could have been followed and when we headed this way, they guessed where we were going."

"At any rate," Fox said, "things aren't as bad as they might have been. We'll take care of Silk—give him the very best of care. But you, Mr. Quinn—how will you get along?"

"I telephoned Captain McGrath. He's on his way now. McGrath will take over for Silk. I need someone who knows killers and who can shoot fast and

straight. I doubt they'll stop because their first attempt on my life failed."

"Why should they be trying to kill you, Mr. Quinn?" Dr. Fox asked.

"I don't know. I've nothing definite on anyone, but apparently I came too close at one time or another. Can you supply me with a driver, Doctor? I'd like to visit Silk and then go back to town and check in at the hotel. McGrath is meeting me there."

"I'll drive you in myself," Fox said. "Come along. We'll see how Silk is. Don't expect much though. He's pretty badly banged up."

Quinn nodded and gripped his cane tighter as Fox took his arm. "Perhaps there are certain times when a man doesn't mind so much being blind."

Silk was cleaned up, bandaged, but there wasn't much difference between the color of his face and the pillow against which he lay. Dr. Fox bent over him for a few moments.

"He'll do," he told Quinn. "The pulse is stronger. Perhaps tomorrow or the next day he'll come out of it. With luck he'll be able to leave in a week's time."

Dr. Fox had an orderly drive Quinn's car to the Ram's Head Inn and he drove Quinn there in his own modest sedan.

"Flora told me about Cravath," Fox said with a trace of bitterness. "She was wrong, though I'd never let her know I thought that. She paid him five hundred dollars merely because she didn't want me upset. Women are

[Turn page]



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strange, Quinn. Even though that shot made me out to be one of the worst types of killers our modern day world knows, even though she must have believed the photo, she wanted me to have peace of mind and nearly drove herself crazy keeping it from me."

"She's in love with you." Quinn smiled a little. "I could tell that from her voice and the anxiety she betrayed."

"But to pay blackmail for something she didn't even know I'd done! Oh well, it's finished with anyway."

"I wouldn't be too sure," Quinn said. "The man to whom she gave that blackmail was murdered and another man who loved your wife as if she were his daughter, not merely a niece, tried to take the blame for it."

**D**OCTOR FOX removed his foot from the gas treadle and half twisted in the seat to look at the blind man beside him. "Quinn, in heaven's name, are you trying to tell me that Flora killed that blackmailer?"

"No," Quinn said quietly. "But she could have, and an investigation is bound to involve her."

"I see." Fox got the car rolling again. "I suppose I should have expected this, though I never gave it much thought. Things have moved rather fast for me. Last night I was compelled to take the place of the Black Bat."

"I heard about that," Quinn said. "Personally, I've always found the Black Bat a valued friend. He doesn't—ah—operate exactly as I am allowed to approve, but he gets results."

"The way he gets them," Dr. Fox chuckled. "Chief Anderson almost had apoplexy when he removed the black hood from my head. He was so sure he'd captured the Black Bat and then to find me. I'll never forget his face."

Dr. Fox stayed with Quinn until he'd checked in at the Inn. Then he excused himself and turned blind Tony Quinn over to a willing bellhop. Quinn was taken to a room on the second floor. The bellboy meticulously described the room and showed him where each piece of furniture was located.

Ten minutes after the boy left, Quinn stood near the door listening. His extremely sensitive ears picked up the rustle of a dress and the familiar tapping of Carol's high heels. He opened the door and she swept into the room without pausing.

He closed the door and she came into his arms. "I heard what happened to Silk, Tony. There are all sorts of rumors. How bad is he?"

"Bad enough, but in no danger of dying." Quinn wasn't pretending to be blind any longer.

"He deliberately pushed you out of the way and knew he'd never be able to avoid being hit. Tony, I'm very proud of Silk."

"For that matter, so am I. Silk did push me away and fully believed that the attempt was being made against my life. But it wasn't, Carol. I think even Silk knew it just before he was hit."

"What do you mean, Tony?"

"The attempt was on Silk's life, not mine. The driver of that car could have pulled the wheel and aimed at me. There was time and distance enough for that but instead, he stepped on it even harder and drove straight at Silk. Oh, he came back to finish me off and I had to do some fancy blind man shooting to scare him away, but my death was secondary in importance to Silk's."

"But why, Tony?"

"I wish I knew. Silk has something on his mind. It's been bothering him since yesterday, but today it grew even stronger. Whatever it was, he couldn't have been sure. He was waiting for some kind of a development and murder came at him too fast."

"Perhaps when he recovers consciousness, he'll be able to tell you," Carol said.

"I'm not banking on any fast recovery for Silk. Dr. Fox has indicated that it may be days before he even regains consciousness. Meanwhile, I sent for McGrath. Had to because someone must lead me around and there was no one else."

"But, Tony, how will you operate as the Black Bat?"

"I don't know yet. One idea came to me. McGrath always eats heavily and of things he isn't supposed to have. Especially when he's away from home. It gives him indigestion every time and he takes a tablet before going to bed."

Carol nodded. "Captain McGrath could be made to sleep well. Is that it, darling?"

"Yes. Have Butch go to New York alone, by train. Have him pick up a bottle of sleeping tablets from the medicine cabinet in my house. I haven't used them for years and I wouldn't recommend those things to anyone, but this is an emergency and I doubt they'll hurt McGrath. Also have Butch drive back in the coupe and park it behind the Inn."

"I'll send him off right away," Carol promised. "Tony, I've made a little progress. One of the houses offered me is the home of that very handsome attorney you warned me against. It seems that Robert Gray, barrister, is on the verge of bankruptcy."

QUINN whistled in surprise. "The last time I saw him he drove up in a town car. We've got to consider him, Carol. A man who enjoys and is accustomed to wealth, hates to lose it and might resort to dangerous measures to keep himself in the money. Bob Gray never did adhere too closely to ethics and complete honesty."

"He's taking me to dinner," Carol said. "I went to look at his house and he gave me to understand he was selling because he was tired of it. The real estate agent said the bank was tired of Bob Gray's stalling. At any rate, he thinks he impressed me."

"Good. Find out if he knows anything about St. Louis. That's where Cravath came from. The history of that blackmailer shows he was a type who liked to play a sure thing and take few chances. He rarely left home because he knew his way around there, so something very impelling brought him here. Or someone—very convincing."

"Don't worry," Carol said. "Bob Gray will tell me. I find it hard to make

him shut up, and even harder to listen to his prattle. His use of the first person singular gets monotonous."

"Another thing," Quinn said, "we've got to maintain contact somehow. When Butch returns, either you or he should be in the lobby. But until he comes back, we're a bit handicapped."

"I'll tell him to get started," Carol said. "Then return here and stay with you, Tony. Butch won't be gone too long and then we can arrange some sort of vigil so one of us will be on tap all the time."

"That's a good idea," Quinn agreed. "Frankly, it's a bit lonesome without Silk, and inconvenient because I'm supposed to be blind and helpless."

Carol went to the door, opened it and took a quick look up and down the corridor. She gave Quinn a smile and disappeared. In ten minutes she was back.

"Butch is on his way," she reported. "He wanted me to tell you that if he ever did you a favor in the past, now is the time you can repay him. Butch wants a crack at the man who ran down Silk."

"Not if I meet that man first," Quinn said in a tight voice.

They discussed the case then, for more than half an hour. Made certain plans and talked about suspects.

Quinn said, "Frankly Carol, I don't even know what this is all about. What these people are after. There must be something—and it runs much further than plain blackmail. Also, I can't understand why Cravath was murdered. Or why they had to kill Paul Garvin."

"Unless they figured that Garvin's death might be attributed to suicide or his heart condition," Carol ventured.

"No, because they must have been fully aware that the real box of tablets would be delivered and the first delivery shown to be a fake. They didn't care, Carol, if it looked like murder, or they were so desperate the importance of killing Garvin warranted the risk."

"Could it be that Cravath was horn-ing in on something? Muscling his way into a racket?" Carol asked.

"Perhaps. He was small time and

there is nothing small about whatever lies behind these two killings. We have a few ideas. This man Ramsey, who lives at the Lee home as one of those guests who never leave—well, he's a fake of some sort. Silk swears he never saw Australia except on a map and I think so, too. Then we have Chief Anderson who seemed mighty glad to have the help of Tony Quinn, but who resented the Black Bat so much he went all out to capture him."

"I've talked to Bob Gray about the case, of course," Carol said. "That's all anybody in town talks about so I wasn't different. Bob told me that Dr. Fox does little medical work except that connected with his sanitarium. He isn't on the hospital staff here. In fact he point-blank refused to join the staff in any capacity."

"Maybe he figures his sanitarium is in direct competition with the general hospital—" Quinn suddenly stopped talking and listened. By the set expression on his face Carol knew he was hearing something that her ears would not detect for seconds yet.

**H**E lowered his voice to a whisper. "Having a visitor, I think. There's a shower stall. Hide there, quickly."

There was a knock on Quinn's door as Carol hurried away. "Who is it?" Quinn asked.

"Message from Matt Taylor, Mr. Quinn," a man's voice said. "He wants an answer."

Quinn masked his eyes with that blank look of the blind. He hesitated only a moment before tapping his way across the room to the door. He was quite certain that Matt Taylor had no idea he'd checked into this hotel and that the man outside the door was merely working a ruse to get the door opened. Quinn had to go through with it.

He turned the latch, then the knob and pulled the door wide. The man who stood there, grinning broadly, was the man he'd seen twice before. Once as the Black Bat when this man had left McGrath to burn. The second time was as

Tony Quinn, when this killer had manned the wheel of the car that ran down Silk.

"Yes?" Quinn sounded impatient. "The message, please." He extended his hand. "I'm blind. Put it in my hand, please."

"Sure," this man growled. He slapped the flat of his hand against Quinn's chest and pushed him back into the room. Quinn reeled back and almost fell. The man closed the door and laughed at him.

"What a set-up," he exclaimed. "I could knock you off without any trouble at all. Maybe I will."

"Who—are you?" Quinn asked querulously. "Who are you? What are you talking about?"

"I'll make it plain so even a blind dope like you can understand. You're leaving town, is that clear? You're packing up and getting out, before tomorrow morning."

"You can't intimidate me," Quinn cried and stumbled toward the table where the telephone was placed.

The man grabbed his arm, whirled him around and slapped him hard across the mouth. Then he pulled him across the room and threw him onto the bed. Quinn's blank eyes apparently could see nothing, but the appearance of that killer was being etched in his mind with almost the same searing pain that the acid had eaten into his flesh years ago.

Quinn thought he'd never seen a man with colder eyes or a more uncompromising mouth. This was a man who'd been born to kill because a conscience hadn't developed along with his body. A deadly dangerous man who would follow orders to a certain point but if he felt like killing, he'd kill.

"What do you want?" Quinn asked plaintively. "I'm helpless. You don't have to hit me."

"I like hitting you," the man said happily. "I hate cops and I hate D.A.'s even more. Maybe before this is over, I'll slap you around until your brain goes silly. Yeah, that would be a good idea. Only I'll give you a chance first. Are you getting out?"

"No," Quinn said.

The man smiled that crooked smile of his and advanced on the blind man. Quinn was seated on the edge of the bed. He was knocked over like a ten pin with a savage blow to the jaw.

The man said, "Maybe this will convince you. This afternoon you nearly got bumped off and your pal got smeared good. I was driving the car that did it. You began shooting—some fancy stuff for a blind man. Got me thinking maybe you ain't blind."

He leaned over the bed, seized Quinn's necktie and pulled him into a sitting position. He reached into his pocket and brought out a lighter. He snapped it on. Holding Quinn's head so he couldn't move, he brought the flame closer and closer until it reflected the dullness of Quinn's right eye. The man laughed and pushed the flame nearer. Quinn tried to jerk his head back.

"So you ain't blind," the man exclaimed. "You're scared of flame, but you got to see fire to be scared of it."

## CHAPTER XII

### *Human Target*



QUICKLY Carol Baldwin had opened her small handbag when she heard the first sound of a slap. She extracted a compact little automatic and flipped the safety to the off position. Her determination to help Quinn grew greater as his visitor became more violent. She told herself that Quinn could take that sort of punishment easily enough. So far, it wasn't worth exposing herself for. Once she did, that visitor would either have to be killed, or kidnaped and kept quiet. Either idea would mean too much trouble.

She heard Quinn struck on the jaw. Heard his visitor warn him to go away, tell how he was the man who'd almost killed Silk. Then she heard him mention

flame and the fact that Quinn moved away from it because he wasn't blind.

Carol stepped out of the stall shower, gun level. She was actually hoping that man would either go for a gun himself or think she was bluffing and try to take this automatic away from her.

Then she heard Quinn's voice. "You idiot, a blind man doesn't have to see a flame when it's searing his flesh. What are you trying to do, burn me alive?"

The killer grimaced, recognizing the fact that Quinn was probably telling the truth. But just to make certain he drew the lighter flame a foot away and then suddenly pushed it forward until Quinn's eyelashes and eyebrows were singed. The blank eyes remained blank.

The killer put the lighter back into his pocket. "I'm paying you a visit in the morning," he said. "If you're here, I'll kill you and then go get that pal of yours at the sanitarium. I'm a fussy kind of a guy. When I start out to knock a man off, I like to do it complete. So long, you funny looking excuse for a D.A. What a laugh! The guy can't see and they made him a D.A."

The killer swaggered toward the door, laughed again and went out. Carol was at Quinn's side in less than three seconds. He was speaking as she approached him.

"I want that man," he said savagely. "I want him right. It's dangerous, but trail him, Carol. Come back and tell me where he holes up. Don't lose him and be careful he doesn't spot you."

Carol nodded. "You're all right, darling? He didn't hurt you?"

"Not a bit except possibly my pride. But he did his best to murder Silk and that I won't forget."

Carol tossed the gun into her bag, waited a few more seconds and then hurried out of the room. She slowed up near the corner and when she turned it, she was walking slowly and sedately. The man who'd just left Quinn's room gave her a sharp glance.

The elevator came at that moment. He stepped aside and she moved past him into the car. At the lobby he went out first and hurried off. Carol knew



he'd be suspicious. She went over to the desk, inquired about mail and then went to one of the writing desks and sat down.

Through the windows overlooking the street, she saw the man standing at the curb. Carol slid a plain piece of paper into an envelope, went to the tobacco counter and bought a book of stamps. She pasted one onto the blank envelope, went to the big lobby mail box and dropped it into the slot. Then she started for the elevators again.

Nearing them, she looked around. The man was gone. She hurried to the street in time to see him walking briskly east. Carol let him turn the next corner and then started trailing him. She knew what was at stake. Perhaps Quinn's life, most certainly Silk's, who would be at the full mercy of this cold-blooded killer.

Apparently he'd lost all ideas that he was being followed for he never tried any evasive tactics, just kept walking rapidly along with a destination in mind.

Carol stayed as far behind the man as possible, wishing she'd worn a black dress instead of this white one. It was dusk, but that white dress was as vivid as in mid-afternoon. She wasn't surprised when the killer turned down a street along which there were nothing but good-sized estates. He proceeded along this for about half a mile and then he reached into his pocket for keys, walked up a fairly long path and onto the porch of a large house.

**H**E unlocked the door and went in. Carol waited a few minutes before approaching the place. No lights had been turned on. She reached the porch, stepped out of her shoes and walked on tip-toe up the stairs and toward a brass name plate below the doorbell.

As she bent to study it, a bell jangled somewhere in the house and made her jump nervously. Then she heard that killer talking on the phone. Carol read the name plate and emitted a gasp of astonishment. This was the home of

nearly bankrupt Attorney Robert Gray. The house he wanted to sell.

Carol turned and beat a hasty retreat, only stopping to pick up her shoes. When she was on the sidewalk behind the tall hedge which half concealed the premises, she stopped long enough to pull on the shoes again. Because she wasn't on the move, she heard the front door stealthily opened and through a small space in the hedge saw the killer emerge with a gun in his hand.

Carol wondered what sort of a chance she'd have in a gunfight with such a man. And it would serve nothing even if she killed him, for then Tony Quinn would lose a probable source of information. Carol thought that retreat was anything but ignoble under the circumstances.

She realized, however, that getting away from him wasn't going to be easy. In fact, she might not make it. Once he saw and recognized her as the girl he'd been suspicious of at the hotel, he was bound to take drastic action. Carol saw him begin prowling around the side of the house.

Suddenly she thought she knew what that phone call had been about. While she followed this man, someone had followed her and phoned the killer that he'd been spotted.

Carol opened her purse to reach for the gun and saw the book of stamps. An idea came to her. Perhaps it would be best to insure the fact that her information reached Tony Quinn. She carried more of the hotel stationery in her purse, mostly to make notes on. She found a pencil and wrote the name of Robert Gray and this address on a piece of paper. She put it into an envelope, sealed it and wrote the name of Janet Lash, care of the Ram's Head Inn, adding her own room number. Janet Lash was the name she was registered under.

Then she affixed a three-cent stamp, added five more of them and printed Special Delivery below the row of stamps. She recalled seeing a mail box just down the street and she moved quietly toward it. There was still enough light so that she could read the time

table for collections. Another would be made within an hour.

She reached for the slot, pulled down the cover and the rusty mail box emitted a mighty squeal. She raised the envelope and then an arm curled around her throat and a hand snatched the envelope from her grasp. She was pushed against the mail drop and held there.

The killer was grinning at her. "Well, well," he said, "if it ain't the doll who rode down in the elevator with me."

"What do you mean?" Carol said indignantly. "I'll scream for help."

He stepped back, reached beneath his coat and his hand came out with a gun. "If you do," he said, "I'll give them something to find. You—with a bullet through your beautiful face. Why did you trail me?"

"Trail you? Why on earth should I?"

"I'm asking you. And while I'm at it, what's in this envelope?" He turned it over and the cheap glue hadn't congealed yet. He lifted the flap easily and took out the sheet of paper, read it and grinned.

"You saw me go into that house so you write down the address and try to mail it. That's okay with me. See, I'll show you."

He moistened the flap, sealed it and dropped the letter into the mail box. "That'll be delivered in a couple of hours. Meantime you can come into the house with me and tell me all about it."

"I think you're insane," Carol snapped. "That house you just waved the gun at, happens to interest me. I want to buy it. I know Mr. Gray who owns it. If he is inside, I'm sure he will explain."

"Nobody lives there except me. Gray ain't got the kind of dough it takes to keep a place like that going. But we'll go in anyway. You can walk in if you like or I'll slug you and carry you in. I don't care much either way."

CAROL moved away from him. "I prefer to walk," she said stiffly. "It also happens that you made a bad mistake in mailing that envelope. I addressed it to myself at the Inn where

I am staying. My chauffeur will get it, recognize my writing and know I meant the letter for him. He will open it and come here."

"Yeah," the killer said in that oddly happy voice of his. "I been figuring on that. I want to see who does answer it. Get moving."

The front door was ajar and Carol pushed it open. When it slammed shut behind her, she made a play for the gun in her purse but she forgot that there was still enough light left in the sky to faintly illuminate the house. As she got the handbag open, the killer struck her with the muzzle of his gun. Struck her a blow across the back of the neck. Carol slumped to her knees, clutched at the stairway bannister and then collapsed with a weak moan.

She thought she was being crushed to death when she opened her eyes again. It was very dark now. She found it hard to breathe and realized she was very firmly tied up and lashed to some sort of a post.

Gradually her eyes focussed again and she saw that she was in the hallway at almost the exact spot where she'd been struck down. She was tied to the tall newel post at the bottom of the stairs and she faced the front door squarely.

Her mouth was covered with strips of adhesive and when she struggled, she only pulled the knots tighter and aroused the killer who'd been sitting in the darkened dining room off the hallway. He came in to stand before her.

"See what it gets you—going for a gun like that. What's a nice doll like you traveling around heeled for? Just to look at houses you want to buy? Lady, real estate agents do the hijacking and without guns. They don't expect their clients to get a low rent or price by shoving a persuader under their noses."

Carol gurgled and struggled again. The killer laughed at her.

"Look," he said, "I could be wrong about you. I been checking up over the phone while you been sleeping off that tap I gave you. Seems you really are a rich doll looking for a big house like

this and the place was mentioned to you. Maybe rich dames go around carrying guns. I don't know. But I'm going to find out. Know how?"

Carol gurgled and stamped her feet. He lit a cigarette, holding the match close to her face for a moment.

"You sure don't look like no lady copper," he admitted. "Well, we'll soon see. That letter you mailed is at the hotel about now. You say your chauffeur will get it and come here for you. If he does, okay. I'll do a quiet powder out of here. This is just a hideaway for me. But if anybody comes with a gun, if the cops show or that chauffeur of yours is set to blast me, you're going to be in a mess you made all by yourself."

He puffed on the cigarette for a moment before resuming. His eyes had gone cold and grim as he spoke now.

"You're squarely in line with the front door. It ain't a very thick door. Bullets will smash through it easy. When somebody comes, I'll be watching. I'll throw a slug at them. If they are armed and start blasting, I'll get down the end of the hall and shoot through the door. They'll shoot back—through the door. Only you'll be in the way of their lead, not me. Think about it. If you want to talk, make noises and I'll take off the gag."

Carol stayed silent. She was too horrified to make a sound. For Butch might come alone and be killed when he tried to crash down the door. Or Quinn might come with Captain McGrath, who'd shoot at the lock and through the door panels if he was fired upon. Or the Black Bat might come alone, set to shoot fast.

Carol had heard that professional killers have very few brains, but she was beginning to think this cold-blooded creature was shrewd and clever enough to perhaps get away with this.

Somewhat grimly she relaxed and tried to locate the rope knots with her fingertips. She wasn't having much luck with it. Minutes crawled by. The killer was kneeling beside the dining room window, never taking his eyes off the street.

Suddenly she heard him make a move and he whispered to her:

"Better start praying," he said. "There's a guy heading up the walk and he don't look like a chauffeur to me."

## CHAPTER XIII

### *"Get Out of Town"*



ONCE more alone in the room, Tony Quinn looked himself over to see how badly he'd been hurt. Except for a slightly swollen chin, he could find little damage. He checked the big suitcase he'd brought along. Secreted in it was his black regalia

and he had an idea he'd be using it soon.

It was rare that Tony Quinn's rage took such complete possession of him. Being slapped around didn't bother him but the callous attempt to murder Silk made his anger cold and calculating. He'd hated to send Carol after a man as dangerous as that killer but there'd been no one else available and she would have gone anyway.

Half an hour went by before there was a sharp knock on the door. He assumed his blind pose, unlocked it and Butch came in. He handed Quinn a bottle.

"These are the sleeping pills," he said. "I parked the coupe behind the hotel in a nice dark spot. Everything okay?"

"No," Quinn said curtly.

"You don't mean Silk is—is—dead?" Butch asked in horror.

"He was doing all right when I left him, Butch, but the man who tried to kill him came here to intimidate me into leaving town. Carol followed him and I haven't heard from her. You'd better go downstairs and wait in case she calls you."

"Yeah," Butch said. "We had it rigged so if she wanted me she'd have me paged. Soon as I know, I'll come back up here."

"Be careful though. Captain McGrath is on his way."

"One thing." Butch turned as he neared the door and his wide, almost ugly face was a study in quiet anger. "When you go after the mug who sent Silk to the hospital, I'm asking to go along."

"You have my promise, if you're around and it can be arranged. First, though, we have to find this man and that means Carol must report."

"I'll get on the job right away," Butch said. "We can't take any chances."

Five minutes after Butch left, Wilfred Lee telephoned Quinn and asked him to come to City Hall at once. Quinn demurred, saying he needed someone to guide him there and Lee agreed to send a man.

It turned out to be Matt Taylor who looked very worried. He closed the door after Quinn let him in.

Taylor said, "They're raising the roof, Tony. Anderson is getting it in the neck because he hasn't showed results and I'm being put on the spot for keeping you here. They say my swearing you in proves I don't think I'm capable of handling things myself."

"What sort of nonsense is that?" Quinn demanded. "Certainly I'll see them. I expected Captain McGrath to be here before now but you can escort me there. Who, by the way, are these men who want to see me?"

"The City Fathers," Taylor grunted. "That's our name for them. Super-efficient men brought here from out of town and hired on the strength of their records and certain written examinations. The whole group is powerful and our eminent City Manager, Mr. Wilfred Lee, generally goes along with them."

Quinn said, "I don't believe Lee will this time. Matt. He and I have a mutual respect for one another. Just take my arm, please. I'll leave word downstairs for McGrath."

Passing through the lobby, Quinn's eyes were blank and empty as usual. They gave no sign that he saw Butch make a slight negative motion with his head to show that he hadn't heard from Carol. That worried Quinn and he had a hard time not showing it. Carol had

been gone too long for a simple job of shadowing a man.

Matt Taylor kept up a running conversation and Quinn had to concentrate on it. Taylor said, "This meeting tonight was primarily called to vote on a bond issue. We're going to really do this town over. To the tune of four million dollars. I don't think a town ever had better prospects for raising such a sum. You see, the issue will be floated by the bankers and brokers who make their homes here. Naturally they'll profit a little on it too, so everybody is quite happy."

THEY reached City Hall, walked up the stone steps and into the building. The meeting was being held in City Manager Lee's office. As Taylor led his apparently blind companion into the room, a burly man shouted Taylor's name. Taylor left Quinn standing just inside the door and hurried over to the long conference table.

Another man said, "So you're Tony Quinn. Come in, man. Sit down. We can't have you standing there. . . . Well, blast it, I clean forgot you're a blind man, Quinn. I'm sorry. Let me help you!"

Quinn was escorted to a seat at the long table and introduced to the men around it. The burly one who'd called Taylor, was Assessor. The man who'd helped Quinn was Water Commissioner. The Park Commissioner, Tax Collector, Head of the School Board, a health officer, the fire chief, two male stenographers and City Manager Lee were there.

The burly assessor was named Babcock and he seemed to possess a particularly acid tongue. When everyone was seated, he started the meeting with an open thrust at Matt Taylor for swearing in Quinn.

"While I know Mr. Quinn's reputation for honesty, I don't believe he is capable of operating here. In the city, with plenty of assistants at hand to serve him, he may do well. But we must consider the fact that he is totally blind."

"He certainly didn't do much to help

that butler or—ah—valet, or whatever he was," the town's tax collector observed, dryly.

"Call him my friend," Quinn broke in smoothly.

"Very well, your friend then. He was almost killed in saving your life. Worthy of him—he deserves a medal—but I'm driving at the fact that we've got to be frank and a blind man is a liability."

Quinn had a feeling that he was the target of a great conspiracy. He fervently hoped so. Someone was bound to slip.

The tax collector, a lanky man with a hammer-head chin, used the voice he reserved for tax delinquents. "In my opinion, Mr. Quinn, for all his great reputation, actually brought a crime wave to Lakeview with him. Garvin was murdered, the Black Bat invaded our limits, Chief Anderson was made a fool of and now this man of Quinn's is nearly killed. If you call that some kind of a record for a crime specialist, I'd hate to see him operate when his luck wasn't good."

Quinn moved restlessly in his chair. "In other words, gentlemen, you want me to retire from the investigation. You resent the fact that an outsider has been called in. May I remind you that all of you gentlemen are outsiders, too?"

"We've been here a long time!" Babcock cut in angrily. "We became permanent residents of Lakeview. It is now our town and we want to keep it serene and law abiding. Personally, I believe that Garvin took his own life. He tried it in New York and failed. It was to be expected he'd try again."

Quinn made no attempt to qualify or deny these statements. He looked vaguely in the general direction of Wilfred Lee who so far hadn't done much more than grunt.

Quinn said, "Mr. Lee, this problem might well be left to you. If you believe I have accomplished enough to warrant my staying here and helping Matt Taylor, say so."

Lee cleared his throat. "I believe you should go back to New York where your efforts are more acceptable. I'm order-

ing Matt Taylor to revoke your appointment as an assistant district attorney. The sooner you leave, the better we'll like it."

Their fangs were really showing now. Even Lee had turned against him. Quinn gave them one final blast.

"Not long ago a man with a gun came to see me. He told me if I didn't leave town, he'd kill me. He actually beat me up some. He bragged that he drove the car which almost killed Silk Kirby. You gentlemen, and this hoodlum seem to have a great deal in common. You are all afraid of what I might find out. In his case I can see a reason. In yours, I cannot. But perhaps I shall before this is over with."

**W**ILFRED LEE turned his usual beet red. He arose slowly. "Mr. Quinn, if you tamper in this case again, we shall be compelled to take action. You would do well to leave town at once."

"Oh, no I won't!" Quinn shouted. "I'll stay here until Silk Kirby is released from your son-in-law's sanitarium! Until the authorities you take such pride in have captured the murdering scoundrel who ran Silk down! And if you don't catch him, I shall take steps to see that the State Police are called in. Matt, will you take me out of here, please?"

Taylor, his jaw set pugnaciously, helped Quinn to arise and piloted him to the street. He apologized for the treatment but didn't try to alibi it.

"Those professional vultures can't stand having anyone take any glory which they might share. They are sending you away because they're afraid of you, Tony, not because they don't believe a blind man could do a good job here. I'm quitting as soon as this mess is over with."

"Don't do that because of me," Quinn said. "They are right, in a way, you know. In New York I have a whole staff to help me; to be my eyes. Here, I have no one since Silk was run down. I am, however, greatly surprised at the way Wilfred Lee acted. I thought all along

he was on my side. He certainly encouraged me up until the moment of the meeting."

"Lee takes his orders the same as anyone else," Taylor shrugged. "He wants to stay as City Manager and he knows that unholy alliance of every other city official could smear him until he was fired. I'll keep you posted. If you want any kind of an investigation made, let me know and I'll try to handle it."

"Thanks," Quinn said. They walked faster now until they reached the hotel. Just inside the lobby door Quinn offered Taylor his hand. "I'm very grateful. I can manage from here on. Good luck, Matt, and I'll do all I can to help you."

Taylor hurried off and Quinn tapped his way across the lobby. It had grown dark outside. His staring, blank eyes looked straight ahead but the moment he stepped into the lobby he scanned it for any sign of Carol. He saw Butch waiting near the elevators, impatiently plodding up and down, his chauffeur's coat unbuttoned and wrinkled.

Quinn rose to his floor, knowing that Butch would soon follow. He made his way down the corridor, stopped in front of a door and passed his fingertips across the metal numbers. He went on to the next door and this one was his. He opened it with a key, half expecting that he might be met by that stony-faced killer.

Butch came as quickly as he dared and he had a letter in his hand. "This was delivered special a little while ago," he said. "They called Carol's room and when she wasn't there they put it in her mail slot. I told them I'd been ordered to open it when it arrived. Take a look at what it says."

Quinn read the few words. "Robert Gray's residence at Twenty-two-Oh-Seven Tremont Drive." He crumpled the letter and thrust it into his pocket. Then he went to the clothes closet and pulled out the big suitcase.

"That note was written by Carol and I doubt it was done under duress. But it could have been found on her by that killer and mailed here to see who'd answer it and fall into a trap."

Butch headed for the door. "You'll find me there," he said simply.

"No, wait!" Quinn was already removing his clothes. "This job calls for two men. Carol must be in a jam or she'd have phoned before now. If she has been captured, she is bound to tell a story which jibes perfectly with the pose she has assumed of a wealthy girl looking for a big house in town. She might even say that her chauffeur will answer that letter."

"Yeah," Butch said shortly. "He will. Look, this guy nearly bumped Silk and tried to rub you out. What do you suppose he'll do to Carol? He's a killer. He probably likes to kill."

"You'll wait," Quinn said sternly. "Or perhaps walk into something even you can't handle."

In less than five minutes Tony Quinn had disappeared and the black clad, black hooded crime fighter was slipping a pair of guns into shoulder holsters. Butch went on ahead, to scout the way out of the hotel. They used the stairway and the basement exit.

Butch had stopped at his own room long enough to exchange his uniform coat and hat for regular clothing. He started the coupe, swung it around and drove past the rear exit. A shadowy form moved silently through the gloom and the coupe picked up speed as the Black Bat closed the door beside him.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Fists in the Dark*



BOUND, helpless and tense with dread, Carol Baldwin heard the heavy footsteps coming up the walk. The killer passed by her with a harsh curt laugh and sped further into the house where he could lay in wait in the darkness. Carol tried to figure out who this could be. She wished then, that she had Tony Quinn's abnormal hearing.



The killer had taunted her with his plans for the last hour, and even acted them out so he'd be able to move fast and smoothly. He intended to let any visitor ring the bell. If that visitor went away, nothing would happen. If he made any attempt to get in, the killer was going to fire through the door.

From his position far down the corridor he was quite safe but Carol, lashed to the newel post squarely in front of the door, would be a prime target in an exchange of shots.

When the newcomer crossed the porch, Carol was certain it must be Butch because of his noisy approach. Butch would crash through the door in a moment if he thought anything was wrong and if he did, Butch would die.

Even his great bulk would be no match for the bullets that killer would start firing into him. Carol heard the doorbell ring. There was a moment of silence, broken only by the killer's harsh breathing. Then the bell rang again, a long ring this time, followed by a series of short rings indicating the insistence of the visitor that someone must be home.

Carol raised one foot to stamp it hard. Perhaps it would warn Butch. Certainly it would draw a bullet from that killer lurking back there in the gloom, but she was doomed anyway and if Butch got clear, Carol wouldn't mind.

The doorknob was turned roughly and the door shaken hard. Then a fist pounded against it, hard, fast, and very noisily. The killer crept a bit closer, his gun level, finger tight against the trigger. The racket was getting on his nerves.

Butch began kicking the door at the same time he pounded it. The killer's lips were drawn back now. He was going to shoot, though he wasn't certain if this noisy visitor was after him or not.

Suddenly a gloved hand moved down before his face. Fingers with the tenacity of steel, wound around his wrist and gave it an expert twist. The gun crashed to the floor. An arm curled around his throat and a knee was driven hard into his back.

He was dragged along, hauled through a door and into the kitchen of the house. The killer heard a mighty crash and knew the front door had been smashed down, knew also that the constant racket had been made for the sole purpose of covering the sounds made by this man who now held him in a back-breaking embrace.

The clatter of high heels reached both men, followed by the lumbering steps of Butch. Then there was a grim silence. The killer was suddenly hurled against the wall. He hit it with his arm outspread and the collision knocked the wind out of him. He leaned weakly against the wall but his mind was clear and his strength was rapidly returning. In a leather sheath, below his belt, he carried a knife and he meant to use it.

Turning, he tried to identify his enemy but there was only a darker blur in the gloom. The killer bared his teeth again. The fool should have finished him off. Now it was he who would do the finishing. With a wild yell he hurtled across the kitchen toward the dark form.

A gloved fist hit him in the face. An impossible blow, delivered only by sheer luck for if he couldn't see this man, how could he in turn be seen?

The killer wiped blood off his chin with the back of his hand. Then he lowered that hand and drew the knife. A voice came out of the darkness. It chilled him to the bone.

"If you come at me with that blade, I'll kill you!"

The murderer warily stepped back. This man, whoever he was, could see every move he made. He had eyes that swept away darkness. The killer let out a cry of terror. Only the Black Bat could see in darkness.

**T**HE Black Bat moved forward slowly. He dodged the killer's rushing attack, whirled and leaped at the man before he could turn and raise the knife that he'd slashed through the air.

The Black Bat hit him again in the face, smashed a hard blow to the heart region and then leaped for the knife

hand. He wrested the blade loose and threw it into a corner. Then he advanced slowly, ducked a wild blow and doubled that killer up with two punches that buried deep into his stomach.

The killer, bent over in pain, staggered away until he stumbled against a tall metal stool. He seized this, swung it high and rushed in. His eyes were used to the darkness now and he could detect the dim form of the Black Bat.

The descending stool struck the Black Bat's shoulder and the killer howled in glee, dropped this clumsy weapon and bore in fast. He succeeded in landing one solid punch and then he gave a strangled howl as a fist hit him in the throat and another landed against the tip of his nose.

He turned and started to run. There were quick steps behind him. A hand landed on his shoulder, brought him to a halt and twisted him about. He was hit again full in the face.

He screamed in pain, put his back against the wall and kept on screaming. The Black Bat slapped him hard and the killer's yells subsided. He began to speak in a croaking gasp.

"Don't hit me again. Don't hit me. I can't stand it. I'll die. Don't hit me, please. I'll tell you anything you want to know. I'll tell you who hired me. Yeah, who my boss is."

"I'm listening," the Black Bat said coldly.

"It was the Big Shot in town. The mayor or whatever he calls himself. He gave me a grand to get rid of that blind D.A. from New York.

"Who killed Paul Garvin?" the Black Bat commanded.

"I don't know. Honest, I don't know. I never heard of the guy."

"Who killed Bill Cravath? He was one of your breed. You knew him."

"Honest I didn't. Me, I'm just a strong-arm punk from Philly. I get paid to do what I'm told. You could kill me and I'd not be able to tell you anything more."

"You tried to kill Tony Quinn."

"No, honest. I was just throwing a scare into him but that guy he was with

got in the way. I didn't mean to hit him."

"Wilfred Lee paid you to do that too?"

"He didn't say how I was to get rid of Quinn. Just get him out of town. I was trying to earn my money."

"Where is the car you used?"

"I—I drove it into a pond."

A terrific slap across the face rocked the killer. He bleated a more honest reply. "I left it in a parking space near the hotel. I was afraid to keep driving it. The fender was bent bad."

"Is it your car? Registered in your name?"

"It's got phony plates on but it's my car. The real registration is inside. My name is Walton. You can look and see. I'm telling the truth. Let me get outa here. I won't come back, honest."

"I think people would prefer that you stayed awhile," the Black Bat said. He pushed a fist into Walton's midriff, doubled him up and straightened him with a hard left hook. As Walton came erect, the Black Bat cocked his right and delivered it from a point near the floor. Walton dropped like a wet sack and with hardly more noise.

The Black Bat bent over him, stripping necktie and belt off. He used these as bonds to tie the man's arms and legs. Then he removed a sash cord from a living room drape, looped this around Walton's neck and rigged it so every time he moved, the noose became tighter.

**H**E hoisted the man to his shoulder and carried him through the back door. The coupe wasn't far away and he threw Walton into it. Then he gave a low whistle and Butch and Carol hurried toward him from an arbor beside the house.

The Black Bat said, "First I'll dump this carcass in front of Police Headquarters with a little note telling them where they can find the car he ran down Silk with. They'll tie him up to that car all right. Later, I'm going to the sanitarium to see Silk."

Butch said, "How about me taking one poke at this guy?"

"One more and he's likely to die. Carol, start circulating when you get back to the hotel. Somehow have the various city officials pointed out to you if they show up. Buy a small camera and start taking pictures of these city officials. Right from the City Manager down to the dog catcher. Let them see what you are doing. I want to know their reaction to having their pictures taken."

Carol stepped closer and whispered to him, "Tony, be careful. If this man you captured is a sample of the people hired by our murderer, the danger is only beginning."

"Take care yourself," he replied softly. "The job you and Butch will be doing is important and dangerous too."

"Do you know what this is about?" Carol asked.

"I believe so. Silk can prove it for me if he recovers consciousness. That's why I'm going to invade that sanitarium tonight and try to reach him without anyone knowing it."

She smiled at him and then joined Butch. He watched them walk away and disappear at the next corner. Then the Black Bat returned to the coupe and his still slumbering prisoner. He prepared a block letter printed note explaining about Walton, tied this around the killer's neck and drove slowly past Police Headquarters.

Certain he was not observed, the Black Bat pushed Walton out and left him lying in a huddled heap on the lawn beside the entrance to the building.

## CHAPTER XV

### *Midnight Foray*



THE Black Bat parked the coupe and made his way into the hotel by the same route he'd used in leaving it. He quickly changed clothes, phoning the desk as he finished dressing.

There was a telegram from McGrath saying he would arrive at ten o'clock. It was almost that

now, but Quinn was under the wire by a safe margin. If McGrath had arrived to find Tony Quinn not in his room or near the hotel, he would have ample reason to wonder how a blind man could move about a strange town unescorted.

While he waited for McGrath, Quinn sat down near the window of his room, loaded a pipe and smoked slowly. There was a definite shape to all those devious trails now. They all led to one place.

The attempted suicide of Paul Garvin and his perjured confession to the murder of Cravath were easily explained. Garvin was taking the blame for the sake of his niece, whom he loved so much. Garvin might not have adopted these desperate tactics except for the fact that he was very ill and knew he hadn't long to live anyway.

But a complication had arisen in Garvin's simple plan for taking the blame. He'd removed the gun from near Cravath's corpse, reloaded it with old cartridges and tried to use it on himself. Undoubtedly he had figured that if the gun he used for his suicide was the same gun that killed Cravath, there could be little doubt as to his guilt.

Yet that gun had been stolen, along with Garvin's suicide note. The gun had then turned up beside Cravath's corpse. Quinn tried to figure out the answer to that one. There seemed to be only a single motive for the return of the gun. Whoever was responsible didn't want Garvin blamed for the murder. Quinn asked himself why and firmly believed that the master minds behind all this wanted someone else to be blamed.

Wilfred Lee's sudden change of heart and tactics were difficult to explain. He'd been highly co-operative, only to reverse himself and side with the other city officials who wanted Tony Quinn to leave town and abandon the investigation.

Chief Anderson's bulldog determination to get the Black Bat could be accounted for in the same manner that Captain McGrath had sworn to arrest this marauder in black. Furthering Anderson's motive was now the fact that the Black Bat had made a fool of him.

Anderson could be a crooked Chief of Police but if he was, he certainly didn't live up to any of the usual big profits from graft. If he was honest, he still remained a dangerous enemy of the Black Bat.

Quinn gave some thought to Attorney Bob Gray, the sartorial splendor of Lakeview and a man living on a bluff that was catching up with him. Bob Gray might go to extremes to maintain his usual lavish standard of living, but somehow he didn't seem to possess enough brains to handle whatever deal prompted murder and near murder. True, that killer named Walton had found easy refuge in the home Gray had abandoned, but that didn't prove Gray was implicated.

Even Matt Taylor came in for a certain amount of suspicion. He'd been almost too quick to enlist the aid of Tony Quinn. Perhaps because he wanted to indicate to the whole town that he wanted this mystery cleared up and didn't mind asking for help. And now, when the Black Bat had also moved in and things were getting a trifle hot, Matt Taylor could have set the stage to force Quinn to leave town.

Quinn thought about Flora Lee Fox too. She was involved somehow. Ramsey, the everlasting boarder at the Lee home, was in an excellent position to direct all this. Certainly he was a crook of some kind.

Dr. Fox came in for his share of suspicion too, though he seemed to be nothing more than a hard working, ambitious doctor who wanted to establish his own sanitarium and build up both a business and a practice. He'd been willing to help the Black Bat escape though Quinn recalled with a chuckle how Silk had offered the opinion that Dr. Fox had almost conned the Black Bat into removing his hood.

Up to a certain point, Tony Quinn had established the theory that all of this stemmed from a blackmail plot. When a killer named Walton had deliberately run down Silk, Tony Quinn changed both his mind and his tactics. Walton had been so intent upon killing

Silk that it was evident his orders concerned Silk first. Furthermore, Silk had been highly suspicious of something. Unsure enough of himself not to offer an explanation; but whatever he had learned, those men behind the scheme knew it and ordered Silk's removal.

Walton had to know that Silk and Quinn were headed for the sanitarium. He had to reach it first, set up the fake sign which would lead them back to the highway on foot. Three people knew that Silk and Quinn were headed for the sanitarium. Ramsey had overheard Quinn telling Flora Fox about it and Flora had phoned Dr. Fox, her husband, informing him of it.

Quinn realized that others might have learned of it through either of those three people, but the speed with which Walton worked was an indication that very little time had elapsed between the moment Quinn had stated his intentions of visiting the sanitarium and the time when Walton had received his orders.

ALSO the same time element was present in the murder of Paul Garvin. Dr. Fox had phoned the drug store to send over a certain prescription. The killer had worked so fast that he'd beaten the drug store messenger. Therefore, the killer had been told very quickly. This again meant that Dr. Fox could have issued the murder orders. Or it could have been Matt Taylor, or perhaps Flora or Wilfred Lee whom Dr. Fox phoned.

A sharp knock on the door broke up Quinn's reverie and he called out a command to enter. McGrath came in, standing there in the light from the hallway and trying to peer through the dark.

"You there, Tony?" he asked.

"Why, of course I'm here." Quinn stood up. "What's the matter? Mac, I'm sorry. The lights aren't on. I rarely think of lights. You can see how embarrassing it would be for me if I moved about very much without someone like Silk or you."

"How is Silk?" McGrath snapped the light switch, closed the door and went around turning on other lights.

"They tell me he will live, but he is still unconscious. Mac, I'm very grateful to you for coming here to help me."

McGrath snorted, "Why shouldn't I? We're friends, aren't we? To be truthful, I was plenty surprised you asked me, Tony. And maybe my reasons for coming are more selfish than you think. Suppose I'm standing by to help you. Suppose you're the Black Bat. How can you operate? I'm curious to know if the Black Bat goes to work while I'm at your side."

"Do you think I'd have asked you if I were the Black Bat?" Quinn asked, then laughed. "Mac, I'm very hungry. There's a tap room in the lobby, they tell me, and the food is very good there. Suppose we go down and discuss this."

"Now you're talking." McGrath nodded happily. "My wife keeps me on a diet. Says I'm getting old and I can't handle food the way I used to. That's a lot of nonsense. I've got a strong stomach. I can eat anything and I'm hungry enough to try."

McGrath removed his coat, hung it on the back of a chair and washed up. Quinn extracted a flat tin of tablets from McGrath's coat pocket, emptied it and compared the shape and size of the sleeping tablets with the pills McGrath brought. They were close enough so he'd hardly notice any difference. Quinn filled the tin with the sleeping drug.

He was seated near the window, smoking another pipe of tobacco when McGrath was ready. They went down to the lobby and into the tap room. McGrath selected a booth, consulted the menu and began ordering. Quinn didn't think he'd have to talk McGrath into eating anything more to give him a case of indigestion. There was one thing about McGrath. He always ran true to form.

They began with onion soup, heavily spiked with parmesan cheese. There was a salad somewhat more redolent of spices than Quinn went for. Then McGrath tackled a huge steak, practically raw and hidden under a blanket of onions. This was backed with a gigantic

schooner of beer and assorted vegetables. McGrath finished pie, ice cream, two pots of coffee, and gave a long drawn out sigh of complete satisfaction. He fumbled in his pocket, took out the tin box of pills and laid one of them beside his glass of water.

He leaned back and said, "Tony, you've been here for awhile now. What's it all about? How do you account for the fact that Garvin claimed he tried to kill himself, very probably did too—and was promptly murdered as soon as he was brought here?"

Quinn went into detail. He rarely held anything back from McGrath, who was astute and often as deep into a mystery as Quinn. McGrath listened and made some intelligent comments.

"Looks to me," he said, "as if Garvin tried to protect this niece of his. But you can't tell me it was from a blackmailer who had a picture of her husband bending over a dead man."

"I think," Quinn said, "that we'll visit Mrs. Fox tomorrow and see if we can't make her talk. I'm also anxious to find out why her father turned against me so suddenly."

McGRATH picked up the pill, rolled it between his fingers and bent across the table. "Know what I think? That something a lot bigger than a manslaughter rap against her husband, kept Mrs. Fox quiet. I think her father found out what it was too and it scared him into trying to get rid of you."

Quinn nodded. "Sounds logical, Mac. Perhaps he was even ordered to get rid of me. But how can you explain why all the city officials feel the same way?"

"They follow the boss," McGrath grunted. "If Lee says you go—they slap him on the back and agree. Well, let's hit the sack. I've got the room next to yours."

"Fine," Quinn said. McGrath had put down the pill and didn't pick it up as he left the table to help Quinn arise. McGrath escorted him outside for a short walk and complained about a burning sensation in his stomach. He thought a beer or two would cool it off so he had

three at the hotel bar.

He even pulled down Quinn's bed before he said good night. Quinn sat down near the window and wondered if McGrath was going to take one of those sleeping tablets. McGrath awake and on the prowl would be decidedly dangerous to Quinn's plans. And yet he couldn't postpone them.

At eleven-thirty he rolled out of bed and put an ear against the wall of McGrath's room. He could hear the steady rumble of a heavy sleeper and nodded in satisfaction. Ten minutes later the Black Bat left the hotel, reached the coupe and drove quickly away.

At midnight, Captain McGrath's telephone rang. He answered it sleepily. The hotel phone operator said, "It's midnight, sir. You wanted me to call you then."

"Thanks," McGrath said. "Thanks very much."

He arose, stretched and grinned at the box of what he thought were digestion pills. He was sure now that his wife was all wrong. His stomach was as tough as he was.

McGrath strode rapidly through the lobby of the hotel, giving heart palpitations to Butch and Carol who were posted there. After McGrath left, Butch hurried to Quinn's room, let himself in with a pass key he'd prepared for himself and saw that the room was empty, that Quinn's clothing was there, and that it had been the Black Bat who left.

Butch hurried to the lobby again. "He's gone," he told Carol. "And McGrath is either wise or he wants to make some kind of an investigation on his own. I think Tony is headed for the sanitarium."

"Then get over there as fast as you can," Carol urged. "I'll stay here in case you need help. Hurry, Butch."

## CHAPTER XVI

*Rifleman*

FINDING a suitable place, the Black Bat drove the coupe off the highway half a mile from the sanitarium, shut off the headlights and guided it between trees until the car was completely hidden but still ready for a fast getaway. He checked his

brace of automatics, stowed the wide-brimmed hat away and put on the close-fitting black hood.

He approached the high steel fence, examined it without coming into contact with the metal and decided it was wired to start an alarm if touched. He found tiny wire terminals close to the ground.

Moving rapidly now, for it was midnight and he had to cut this as short as possible, the Black Bat sought some means of getting over that fence without sending a signal to any guards posted in the sanitarium. He discovered a tree growing close to the fence. Branches which would normally have hung over onto the grounds, had been carefully cut off but there was still a chance.

He climbed the tree quickly, moved out along the stump of one of the lopped off limbs. When he could go no farther, he stood erect on the limb, holding onto branches above him. Then, still holding these branches, he swung out, sailed over the fence and landed with his knees bent. He rolled over twice and then lay perfectly still for a moment while he listened for any sounds that would indicate he'd been heard.

Finally he arose and peered through the darkness. Now that uncanny ability to sweep away the night, really served him. He moved forward, toward the rear of the sanitarium and then came to a very abrupt halt. He was close enough to see half a dozen kennels. There were dogs and they'd hardly be pets.

NEXT ISSUE

THUEWAY

THAM'S

VEILED

LADY

BY JOHNSTON McCULLEY



He retreated quietly, praying those dogs slept well. He made a wide half circle and came at the building again from the opposite direction. There were a few lights on. The back door led into a large kitchen and he passed through this.

Pushing open the swinging door he gazed into a large dining room, where the table was already set for breakfast. Then he saw a white uniformed man saunter past the door to the hallway. Only one thing about him detracted from his role as a hospital guard. He wore a holstered gun on his hip, quite openly, as if he didn't worry about any of the patients coming downstairs to see him.

The Black Bat was forewarned and promptly drew one of his automatics. He reached the door, peered along the empty corridor and silently moved toward the stairs. He went up them, staying close to the wall where the boards would be more firmly nailed.

At the top he headed for Silk's room. There was no one on duty at any point on the floor. There was only that weird institutional silence broken now and then by a low moan from some room—or heavy snoring. The Black Bat reached Silk's room and listened outside it for a moment. He tried the knob and found the door locked, but only by one of those old-fashioned locks with an open keyhole.

From an inner pocket he drew a compact kit of tools, selected what seemed to be a thick key. He worked this into the door, withdrew it and studied the faint marks made by the lock mechanism. Now he examined several master keys in his kit and selected the right one. The door opened easily and he relocked it after he was inside.

The room was in darkness, which meant nothing to him. He moved to the side of the bed and bit his under lip. Silk looked paler than ever. The Black Bat bent over him. Silk's eyes were wide open and staring as blankly as the eyes of blind Tony Quinn.

The Black Bat hastily pulled down the covers, pushed up the sleeve of the

hospital gown that Silk wore and carefully studied both arms. He saw two points where injections had been made, both old. Silk wasn't being kept drugged by hypos at any rate and the Black Bat knew that concussion cases often acted as if they were drugged.

He put his lips close to Silk's ear. "Can you hear me?" he whispered. "Silk, can you hear me?"

THERE was no response although the Black Bat thought he heard a faint scratching sound. He tried again and this time he noticed Silk's right hand moving very slightly across the starched linen. When the Black Bat straightened up, the hand turned over and the fingers slowly uncurled. It required a full two or three minutes before the palm was exposed and on it lay three small white tablets.

The Black Bat picked these up and put them into his pocket. Silk's fingers were scratching against the sheet again. He was trying to move his hand. He succeeded in raising it and he curled all fingers under except the index finger which remained pointed at the small table beside the bed.

"All right," the Black Bat whispered. "I know you want something on that table. Is it the glass of water?"

The hand didn't move.

"Is it the glass sipper? The napkin? There's a safety pin."

The hand fell to the bed. The Black Bat picked up the safety pin, opened it and placed it in Silk's hand. The fingers closed around it as if in a gesture of thanks.

The Black Bat said, "They've got you under a hypnotic, Silk. I know the symptoms. You can't talk. It's a wonder you can move your hand. If you want me to stay, scratch with your fingers."

There was no sound. The Black Bat nodded. "I'll come back, Silk. They won't dare hurt you. We're making progress. I think I know what you wanted to tell me before you were run down. I found the man who drove that car and I beat the daylights out of him. He's locked

up now—or should be—unless Chief Anderson is as much a crook as this killer.

Silk's fingers were scratching. The Black Bat chuckled softly under the hood. He didn't feel mirthful. Seeing Silk helpless like that, completely a prisoner, gave him a near case of nerves, but he didn't dare move Silk now. It might give away the whole game and being so close to the end of it, the Black Bat didn't want to risk losing.

He thought Silk was trying to tell him something. The scratching was slow, weak but insistent. The Black Bat bent over Silk again.

"Do you want me to stay? Or take you away?"

The scratching went on.

"Do you want me to leave?"

Instantly the fingers stopped their moving. The Black Bat nodded.

"Have they something rigged so that my presence may be known? Am I in danger?"

The fingers scratched, a trifle faster, as if Silk were trying to make it very plain that danger existed.

The Black Bat whispered, "They've got a microphone, perhaps. Don't worry, Silk. I hope they try to get me. I've been hoping for that for a long time. And you're going to be all right. I'm sending Captain McGrath here as soon as it can be done."

The Black Bat laid a gloved hand across Silk's forehead for a moment. Then he moved rapidly to the window and peered out. He saw four men hurrying off into the night, each one rifle armed. He heard the muffled excitement of the dogs, which he didn't like at all. They knew he was here all right and they were going to see to it that he never got beyond the steel fence.

He went to the door and unlocked it quietly. The hallway was just as deserted as before, but he knew they'd spring their trap as quickly as possible. Capturing him inside the sanitarium would be quite simple and they were bound to attempt it.

But the Black Bat had noticed something else when he peered out of the

window in Silk's room. From a room down the hall, there was a sloping roof over a delivery entrance easily reached from the window of that room.

NOW he moved fast and silently. The door to the room that he wanted was not locked and there was no patient in it. He raised the window softly and stood beside it to listen. The dogs were yapping, but they'd apparently been taken as far from the hospital as possible so that patients would not be too much disturbed.

The Black Bat's strange night sight enabled him to be certain that no one lurked close by to pick him off no matter if he emerged from a door or a window. It seemed evident that they hadn't fully mustered their forces yet and were bent on covering all exit points away from the building first.

He crawled through the window, slid down the sloping roof and gave himself added impetus with a hard shove that sent him hurtling off the roof, through the air to land on soft lawn. It wasn't much of a drop and he landed lightly, was up fast and sprinting toward the shelter of trees and brush.

Still there wasn't a sound. Even the dogs had stopped their whining. The Black Bat sensed the danger that was closing in around him. They had expected this visit and prepared for it. They had wired Silk's room. Then the Black Bat had betrayed his presence, by whispering, and they started to spring the trap.

Only the darkness was his friend now. His enemies could shoot him down on sight and never be called to task for it. He was an intruder, an outlaw. There was a price on his head in the underworld and a warrant for his arrest lodged with the police. He could depend upon no help. Silk was beyond call. Carol and Butch were probably at the hotel and wouldn't move without orders. McGrath was sleeping off his enormous meal and his sleeping pills.

The Black Bat drew one of his guns. He had an idea he was going to need it.

Off the main driveway to the sanitarium, a man lay prone in a shallow gully. From his position he had a clear view of the approaches and there was a sweeping lawn almost all the way down to the gate. This was the easiest exit and one the Black Bat might very probably use.

The man lying there, picked up a rifle with telescopic night sights. He squinted through the telescope and nodded in satisfaction. If he got the Black Bat in that sight, there'd be a dead man beneath that black hood.

Chief Anderson of the Lakeview Police, was feeling quite elated about the whole thing. He had suspected the Black Bat would visit Silk. He knew he was probably on the premises right now because sanitarium employees had begun moving around quickly, as if to take up prearranged positions.

Chief Anderson patted the stock of that deadly rifle and smiled. In a very short time, with luck, he would cut down the Black Bat and nothing else seemed more important.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *Narrow Escape*



LIKE a fitting shadow the Black Bat scampered across an open area of about twenty yards. Nothing happened. He decided to head for the main gate. They would expect him to seek what he would believe to be a more deserted section of the premises. Perhaps he'd have a chance there.

A dog set up a blood curdling clamor very close by. The Black Bat snapped the safety off on his automatic. Men were running in this direction now, bringing up more dogs. They would form a circle about him if he didn't move fast.

He broke cover and sprinted down the grassy slope with the sprawling

sanitarium well behind him now. A gun cracked. He didn't even hear the whine of the bullet and decided they were shooting at shadows. He did a nose dive beneath some bushes and lay there until he stopped panting.

The dogs had picked up his scent and things were moving rapidly. There was nothing in his favor except the darkness and the dogs overcame that. He didn't know how many men were closing in, but he thought there might be enough to trap him securely.

There was a long portion of open lawn ahead of him. If he could negotiate that, reach the brush near the entrance gate, he might have a chance. It was impossible to double back to veer off to the right or the left. They were driving him toward the gate, probably depending upon the men posted there to stop him.

The Black Bat felt the first twinge of worry and a fine film of sweat was forming under his hood. This was a time to take chances. He was rested now and ready. Rising, he moved forward, again utilizing that uncanny night sight so that he stepped on no dry twigs nor brushed against any branches to give away his exact location to the dogs.

It seemed ten miles to the next shelter or darkness and trees, but he had to risk it. He would be a wide open target but because none of the men were really close, perhaps he would also be an elusive one. Waiting would only shorten his chances. He took a long breath, bent double and began running.

He had the advantage of moving downhill, which lent him speed, but while he didn't realize it, he was proceeding straight into the path of Chief Anderson's rifle and telescopic sights.

Anderson saw him as he broke from the shelter and the rifle rose to be pushed hard against his shoulder. He squinted through the sights. The running figure was coming closer, well in the sights, but another second or two wouldn't matter, only bring him within better range. Anderson's finger began to squeeze the trigger.

He held his breath. This was it! The moment when he'd avenge the embarrassment he had suffered when he had swaggered up to the hooded man in the lobby of the downtown office building. When he waited for a good-sized crowd and then dramatically yanked off the black hood, only to find that Dr. Fox was his prisoner and that the Black Bat had made good another incredible escape.

A slow smile came over Anderson's face. He had never wanted to shoot a man down so much in his life. Then the Black Bat suddenly seemed to vanish from sight. A blaze of light came from the fringe of brush almost opposite. The Black Bat had taken a header and was no longer silhouetted. He had vanished in the maw of darkness.

Anderson cursed the man who fired that shot. But he could wait. The Black Bat had to get started again and very soon. The figure in black arose and Anderson wet his lips. He began squeezing trigger again.

Something cold was pressed against the back of his neck. He almost screamed in horror. A voice, as cold as the metal of the gun, spoke softly in his ear.

"Cowards use an ambush, Chief. You're not fit to wear the badge of your uniform."

ANDERSON started to turn his head. A gun butt crashed down on his head. He slumped forward and lay still. Captain McGrath grinned tightly and picked up the rifle which Anderson had dropped. He sighted it, but not on the Black Bat.

Someone fired another shot from across the open expanse of lawn. McGrath swung the telescopic sights in that direction and pulled the trigger. There was a wild scream.

McGrath hesitated a second and then he laughed. From a pocket he took out an envelope and extracted from it a small sticker fashioned in the shape of a bat in full flight. It was a souvenir of one of his many encounters with the Black Bat, for this was the insignie that marauder left behind him so no one

else would be blamed for his law breaking.

McGrath wet the sticker and pasted it in the middle of Anderson's forehead. He whispered, "Let's see you explain that away, chum." Then he scampered through the brush, still clutching the rifle.

He saw two men dart out to intercept the Black Bat. McGrath promptly knelt and fired. One man did a header. The other turned and fled. The Black Bat hadn't checked his speed at all.

From this point, McGrath overlooked the main gate and saw the three men waiting there, armed with revolvers and clubs. They knew all this activity was rushing at them, for the sanitarium guards were calling to one another now and closing in on the gate.

McGrath knelt once more, peered through the sights and waited. The Black Bat realized someone was backing him up, though he had no idea who it might be. He also knew that the most most dangerous part of his escape was just ahead of him, but he couldn't even pause for breath.

He saw the three guards, backs against the high iron gate, guns raised. He had to charge straight into the path of those weapons, for the rush of feet behind him indicated he would soon be trapped.

He dodged off the driveway, plunged through the brush, and when he broke free of it, both his guns were ready to open fire. He barely checked his trigger fingers in time. For two of the men had dropped their guns and were clawing at their throats.

Butch stood on the other side of the gate, his enormous hands rapidly choking two of the men into unconsciousness. But the third guard was turning and ready to shoot. The Black Bat's guns cut loose. The third guard grabbed at the fence and slowly slid down until cross bars broke his grip. Then he fell heavily.

The Black Bat didn't check his advance, but he stowed the guns away just before he made a leap at the gate. He got a foothold on the cross bars, hoisted himself up and at that moment he was

as clear a target as a clay duck in a shooting range.

The dogs had been freed and were tearing toward him. They cringed away as the Black Bat fired at two men who had revolvers in their hands. Butch was still busy with the pair he held. The Black Bat needed both hands to maintain his grip on the gate.

A rifle cracked. One of the pair who were ready to shoot, doubled up and fell. The other man swerved to the left, trying to find a target. When he saw nothing, he fled for the shelter of the brush.

At the top of the gate the Black Bat took time to turn his head and survey the grounds. He saw the form of the rifleman who had backed him. There was no question about his identity. Captain McGrath, it seemed, was paying the debt he owed the Black Bat for rescuing him from the fire in Cravath's room.

The Black Bat cleared the top of the gate, jumped and landed safely. Butch pushed both his captives two feet away from the gate, yanked them back and hit their heads against the bars. He let go, grinned hugely and went after the Black Bat.

**B**UTCH had the rented town car parked nearby. The Black Bat piled into it and Butch drove him toward the spot where the coupe was waiting. The Black Bat said, "That was McGrath back there. I owe him my life, Butch."

"So that's who it was," Butch grunted. "I figured maybe Silk was okay and had slipped out to give you a hand."

"Silk is drugged. I've got to go back to the sanitarium as soon as possible. Head for the hotel and have Carol stand by. McGrath will hurry back too and I've got to be there ahead of him."

"Carol and me," Butch said, "did like you wanted. We looked up the big shots in town and started taking their pictures. You know, I never seen a bunch of shy guys. Every time Carol would raise the camera, they'd turn away."

"Good," the Black Bat nodded. "I expected a reaction like that. I wanted to be sure. Slow up here, Butch."

The Black Bat leaped out of the slowly moving car. Three minutes later he was guiding the coupe onto the highway and speeding toward town. He passed Butch near the outskirts, took to darker streets and soon he was parking the coupe behind the hotel.

He let himself into his room, stripped off the black clothing and put on the business suit he wore as Tony Quinn. He sat down near the telephone table and made a long distance call to St. Louis. There he talked with a captain of detectives on night duty.

"This is Tony Quinn, Special D.A. in New York," Quinn said. "As you may have learned from the New York police, a blackmailer named Cravath was murdered here. We think he was killed because he had something on someone who also came from St. Louis. I'm going to read off a list of names. If any of them is familiar, please tell me."

"Go ahead, Mr. Quinn," the detective captain said. "I talked to your Captain McGrath about Cravath. He was a cheap con man."

Quinn read off the names of everyone so far implicated in the case, including all the city officials of Lakeview. None seemed familiar to this detective. Then Quinn added the name of Dr. Howard Fox.

"Now wait a minute," the detective captain cried. "Let me check my records."

It took him less than five minutes and he seemed puzzled when he came back on the wire.

"Dr. Howard Fox is dead. He was what we call a doctor to the underworld. He was killed during a raid to capture several bank robbers about four years ago. Fox was taking care of two of those robbers who had been wounded."

"You're very certain?" Quinn asked. "The Dr. Fox I refer to graduated from Washington University in Nineteen-Thirty-nine, and from an Illinois Medical School in Nineteen-Forty-three."

"That checks with the record we have on this Dr. Fox who was killed," the St. Louis officer exclaimed.

"Thank you," Quinn said. "I think you've just helped me solve two murders and one of the biggest contemplated crimes I've ever come across."

When McGrath knocked later on, Quinn sat in the chair near the window, turning the air blue with pipe smoke.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *Explanations*



**N**OT a trace of emotion showed on McGrath's face as he pulled over a chair and sat down. "Been a little excitement at the sanitarium, Tony," he said. "Seems the Black Bat paid Silk a visit and got himself into a neat trap. Blasted his way out and got clear, I think. Even Chief Anderson was there taking spot shots at him. Just thought you'd like to know."

"What about Silk?" Quinn asked quickly.

"I saw him after the excitement was over. He's unconscious, Tony. Dr. Fox was called from his home and came while I was still there. He told me Silk was coming along and it was just a matter of time."

Quinn gave a sigh of relief. "I can't help thinking that Silk being run down that way meant more than just a plan to get rid of me. Mac, in my opinion Silk knew something and someone else realized this."

"But I thought that car was aimed at you."

"Maybe it was. I couldn't see, of course, but I can hear extraordinarily well. Silk pushed me onto the highway, not off it, because the oncoming car must have been shooting off the road too. Why then, if the driver wanted to kill me, didn't he pull back onto the road? I just stood there, helpless."

McGrath pushed his tongue against

his under lip. "You got something there, Tony. But what could Silk have known that you didn't know—or he wouldn't tell you?"

"I wish I had even a hint," Quinn said sadly. "Possibly Silk wasn't sure, or thought I'd believe he was being silly. Mac, suppose you and I go to see Silk tomorrow morning. Early!"

"That's a good idea," McGrath fumbled in his pocket and took out the tin box of pills. "All the excitement up there gave me shooting pains. Or it could have been the French fried onions at dinner. One of these will fix me up nicely."

He swallowed the pill without water, got up and said good night. Twenty minutes later Quinn phoned McGrath's room. There was no answer. The sleeping pills had finally worked.

Quinn changed back into the garb of the Black Bat. It was almost two o'clock in the morning when he approached Wilfred Lee's home. There was a light in the study and he risked a quick look into the room. Wilfred Lee sat there, a highball in his left hand, his right covering his face as he bowed his head.

The Black Bat investigated the garage, saw that Dr. Fox's car was not there and found the back door open, apparently for the doctor's convenience when he returned home. The Black Bat moved silently through the house, stepped into the study and closed the door behind him.

At the snick of the latch, Lee looked up. He dropped the highball glass and leaped to his feet.

"Don't be alarmed," the Black Bat said. "You know who I am. Sit down, Mr. Lee. We've a great deal to discuss."

"You can't talk to me," Lee cried. "I refuse to let any masked man question me. You're nothing but a cheap crook!"

"Sit down," the Black Bat snapped imperiously and advanced toward Lee. The City Manager obeyed, bending to raise the glass he had dropped. The Black Bat stood above him.

"It has come to my attention, Mr. Lee, that you had a sudden and very mysterious change of heart about the

investigation of your brother-in-law's murder. Will you tell me why?"

"I'll tell you nothing," Lee snapped. "Not one thing!"

"Very well," the Black Bat shrugged. "Tomorrow morning you'd best turn in your resignation as City Manager and surrender to the police on a charge of withholding evidence in a murder case. If you do not do so, Quinn is prepared to have you locked up."

"Quinn? He'll leave town. I warned him already."

"Quinn doesn't warn, Mr. Lee. Don't let his blindness fool you. Tonight I delivered to your police department a man named Walton, a professional thug whom I can just about prove attempted to kill a police officer. Not here, where you can protect him, but in New York where Mr. Quinn is in charge. This thug also ran down Silk Kirby. He is going to get himself a very long prison term and his kind is always willing to dicker. He will talk, Mr. Lee."

"What can he talk about?" Lee demanded. "What's this to do with me?"

"Not as much as it concerns your daughter," the Black Bat said quietly.

**L**EE gulped and wet his lips. "How much do you know?" he asked.

"First of all there is your gun to explain." The Black Bat carried over a straight backed chair and straddled it. "Garvin swore he used it to try and kill himself. He actually did and it was stolen by a man who fully believed Garvin was dead."

"And why on earth was that done?" Lee asked. "I understood they found the gun near that blackmailer."

"That's true. The man who stole it from Garvin put it there and I'll tell you why. They didn't want Garvin to take the blame for killing the blackmailer. They wanted to pin it on someone else. Garvin, they believed, was dead and his death would be listed as a murder. But Garvin lived and talked and would have talked more. That is why they sent those poisoned tablets to him."

"Do you know about my daughter, Flora?" Lee asked.

"I know that this dead blackmailer came to Lakeview quite often and returned well heeled with money. He got that from your daughter."

Lee nodded. "Well, I can't deny it. There was some sort of a picture showing Flora's husband near the body of a man who'd been killed by a hit-and-run driver."

"No," the Black Bat said softly. "That picture was a fake and Dr. Fox could prove it was a fake. The blackmailer had more than that on Fox. Much more. Otherwise why would your daughter have shot that blackmailer to death?"

"Shot Cravath? That's not true!" Lee half arose. He saw the glitter of those cold eyes through the slits in the hood. He dropped back into the chair. "What's the use? You know everything."

"Not quite. I know your change of heart so far as Tony Quinn was concerned was induced by something that came up rather suddenly. Only one thing could have made you knuckle under to this band of crooks. Your daughter's safety. What did they show you? Another picture?"

Lee nodded. He arose and went to a table, pulled open a drawer and came back to hand the Black Bat a large photo. A very startling photo. It showed Flora facing Cravath. There was a smoking gun in her hand and Cravath was doubling up ready to pitch headlong to the ground.

"That," Lee said, "isn't faked. I asked Flora about it and she confessed. They had driven her mad, Black Bat. Paul Garvin knew and tried his best to save her. Paul was a dying man. It didn't work. Finally, Flora told me. She said she had been ordered to show me this picture and tell me to order Quinn out of town. I—did. I had to."

"Would you let me talk to Flora?" the Black Bat asked.

"Of course. She wanted to go to the police before. Howard—Dr. Fox—said he'd never permit her to face all that. He'd rather take her far away, beyond the reach of this blackmailing gang. I'll



ask her to come down. I know she isn't asleep. She hasn't slept for days."

Flora, dressed in a silken white robe, seemed as pale as the gown. She looked at the Black Bat with eyes set deep in hollow sockets.

"Dad told me you know," she said. "I'm glad. I couldn't have gone on."

"Tell me just what happened," the Black Bat said in a kindly voice. "Remember that I'm not a policeman. All I want to do is help you."

"This man—Cravath—came to see me. He had this picture showing my husband near the body of a man who'd been killed by his car. Cravath said he only wanted money enough to live on. I gave him some."

"Did you ask your husband's advice?" the Black Bat asked.

"Yes," she said. "Howard advised me to pay and stall off Cravath until he could check on the man and perhaps get the negative."

"Your husband did not deny he was the hit-and-run driver?"

"He—admitted it."

"You paid then—and kept on paying. Something else happened. You can tell me about it."

FLORA nodded, wiped away her tears, and took a deep breath. "This man Cravath insisted that I get together ten thousand dollars and he'd give me the negative. I refused and he threatened me by saying my husband would be in much more trouble than merely a hit-and-run driver. He hinted about murder and impersonation. I told him I would meet him and he made the date at the old brickyard. I—I took along Dad's gun."

"Before you continue," the Black Bat said, "was the gun loaded when you found it?"

"No, but there was a box of bullets beside it and I put six bullets into the chambers."

"Can you show me where the box of bullets is now?"

"Of course—right in that desk." She went over and pulled open a drawer, rummaged around and returned hold-

ing a familiar box of bullets in the palm of her hand.

The Black Bat asked, "Was this box unsealed when you found it?"

"No. I had to cut the seal. What has all this to do with it?"

The Black Bat opened the box. There were twelve cartridges missing. He placed it on a table, took out his kit of tools and selected a pair of small pliers. He worried loose the leaden slug and then spilled the powder onto the table.

"It's beginning to make sense," he said. "Who took a picture of you shooting down that blackmailer?"

"I don't know," she said. "Cravath was drunk and ugly. He wanted the money, and he said I'd have to get more. He said he could send Howard to prison. He came at me, leering at me. I was frightened and desperate. I had the gun. I warned him but he laughed and kept coming. I pulled the trigger until—until the gun didn't go off any more. Then I turned and ran."

Lee said, "Apparently this man Cravath had friends who didn't care if he was killed and took a picture of Flora shooting him. I—went up there. The body was under a pile of straw. Paul Garvin had been there before me and taken the gun. I dragged the body to a shed, hoping it wouldn't be found for a long time. I wanted to protect Flora."

"You showed poor judgment in your methods," the Black Bat chided him. "But perhaps I have news for you. Garvin also took six bullets from this box of cartridges. He fired one at himself and it didn't kill him because the cartridges were so old they'd lost their potency. Therefore, Mrs. Fox, you did not kill Cravath."

"But I shot at him!"

"True, and he probably doubled up as the bullets hit him, but he wasn't badly hurt. There was no force behind the slugs. You dropped the gun and ran. Then somebody else came along, put good slugs into the same gun and this time Cravath really died."

"Who—who could have done that?" Lee cried.

The Black Bat took a long breath. "I'm afraid I shall have to temper good news with bad. The murderer is Dr. Howard Fox."

Flora sat down and covered her eyes. Lee sat aghast for a moment. Then he said, "Why, man, what are you talking about?"

"Did Dr. Fox ever practice here? Did he ever perform an operation, for instance?"

"No, he didn't. He said he hated that kind of work."

"Let me ask another question. Many of your city officials are fairly new here, aren't they?"

"Why, yes. Most of them are."

"And isn't it true that the city is in the midst of obtaining a large bond issue?"

"Four million dollars." Lee frowned. "The deal has been floated already and the money arrives tomorrow."

"Four million!" the Black Bat said in an awed voice. "No wonder they didn't stop at murder. Mr. Lee, will you telephone St. Louis right now? Ask for the Chief of Detectives. Ask him what he knows about Dr. Fox."

LEE nodded and went over to the phone. In a surprisingly short time he had his connection, identified himself and made his request. He hung up a few moments later and turned around, a sorely puzzled man.

"Dr. Howard Fox is dead. He was killed by police in a raid on the hide-out of some bank robbers. The man we know as Howard Fox must have this dead man's diplomas and papers. It's pretty hard to take."

"Until now," the Black Bat said, "I didn't know your Dr. Fox came from St. Louis but I knew that Cravath did and that Cravath had something on Dr. Fox. Something much more than being a hit-and-run driver. Dr. Fox probably gave Cravath that photo after allowing his head to be superimposed upon the body of the man bending over the corpse. I expect that Fox told Cravath your daughter could pay far more, and to use that shot to get it. Cravath did that but

he became greedier and he had to die. When Flora shot at him, Fox saw his chance. Or the men who were with Fox did."

"The picture! They must have been prepared to take it!"

"But not for what Flora did. What they wanted was a black light shot of Cravath getting blackmail. That would hold him in check. But they got something even better. I can prove that. Flora, who else knew you were going to meet Cravath at the old brickyard?"

"Only—only Howard." She raised her head. "I'm all right now. I've sensed something wrong with Howard lately. I've been almost afraid of him."

The Black Bat moved toward the door, "If he returns say nothing of this to him. Shortly, Tony Quinn will arrive accompanied by Matt Taylor and some policemen. They will pick you up and take you to the sanitarium. Silk Kirby can throw further light on this affair. I'm bowing out. My work is done. All of this Quinn will know when he arrives. You can trust him."

## CHAPTER XIX

### *Confidence Men*



EARLY the next morning the party to visit Silk Kirby started out. Flora and her father were silent as they rode with Quinn and Matt Taylor toward the sanitarium. A carload of police armed with tommy-guns followed. Near the sanitarium, Matt

Taylor gave the police lieutenant in charge orders to round up every man on the grounds. Then Taylor drove his car up to the entrance to the building.

Taylor guided Quinn up the stairs. Two detectives followed. Flora and her father trailed behind the others. Dr. Fox came out of his office and stared at them in surprise.

Quinn said, "Dr. Fox? I thought I recognized your footsteps."

"Yes, Mr. Quinn. What in the world? Flora? Mr. Lee?"

"We want to see Silk Kirby," Quinn said. "It's very important."

"But he isn't conscious," Fox protested. "I can't allow him to be disturbed."

Taylor growled, "We're going to see him. Is that clear?"

Fox shrugged and led the way to the elevator. They all crammed into the car.

Fox kept watching his wife in the mirror beside the elevator controls which he was operating.

They filed into Silk's room. Quinn asked to be led straight to the bedside.

Matt Taylor looked down at Silk.

"His eyes are open, Tony," he said. "I think he knows us."

"Pull down the sheet," Quinn ordered.

Taylor obeyed. Silk's right hand clutched the safety pin. Under that hand lay a stiff piece of paper. It was an ordinary store bag which had apparently been pinned to the side of the bed for ready disposal of tissues.

"Is there some sort of paper there?" Quinn asked.

Taylor gently moved Silk's hand, lifted the paper and studied it. "Yes," he said. "It looks as if Silk was sticking pin holes in it."

"Please lay the paper flat on the bed," Quinn said.

Taylor obeyed and Quinn put his right hand on the bed, moved it until he encountered the paper and then his fingers began tracing the pin holes.

"This happens to be crude Braille," he said. "Silk knows it. He taught it to me long ago. You see, the Black Bat was here and realized that Silk was drugged. But not completely. Silk managed to pretend he was totally unconscious. They used pills to dope him because too many hypo marks might look suspicious. But Silk didn't swallow the pills. He gave them to the Black Bat. They were hypnotic tablets, to keep a man in deep sleep."

Taylor could contain himself no

longer: "If that's Braille, what does it say?"

"That Dr. Fox deliberately kept Silk under drugs. That he ordered a trap set in case the Black Bat appeared. That Silk recognized the set-up in this town as something called the Big Store. That is confidence men's parlance with which Silk is very familiar, having been a con man himself. Your city officials, Mr. Lee, are all con men. They were afraid Silk would recognize them and stayed out of his way."

"By heavens," Taylor gasped. "Yesterday Quinn, Silk and I went to City Hall and I wanted to show them around. Not one of the city officials was in his office. Now I see why."

"They sent a man named Walton to kill Silk. He almost succeeded and I expect that Dr. Fox would have completed the job," Quinn said. "What is your true name, Fox? And don't tell me you're a doctor because I know better. So does your wife and your father-in-law."

**F**OX made a break for it and got as far as the door. One of the burly detectives shoved him back inside the room and then followed to search him. Fox was unarmed.

Quinn said, "In a confidence game, sometimes years and thousands of dollars are spent to set the stage for a big steal. In this case they promoted a four-million-dollar bond issue. When the cash arrived it would have vanished and so would all your city officials. But Cravath showed up and began spoiling the deal. He was done away with and the blame placed on Flora very neatly. So well was it done that Paul Garvin moved in and further upset things by trying to accept the blame."

"They had Garvin followed. His gun and suicide note were stolen by some con man who thought Garvin was dead. Then Fox had to begin taking risks, for Garvin was brought back here. When Fox learned of it, he knew Garvin would want medicine for his heart, or could be persuaded to ask for it. Fox then arranged with one of those con

men to pose as a drug store messenger and deliver poison instead."

**M**ATT TAYLOR frowned. "Tony, can you prove this?"

"I think so. The poison which killed Garvin was an ordinary type but all poisons are hard to get, especially in capsule form. A doctor would have some on hand, or could get them quickly. Fox had to have set the stage because it was done so fast that I knew it was pre-arranged. Only Dr. Fox could have planned it because only he could have rigged the affair so his plan would be carried out."

"Then you knew it was him all the time?" Lee asked.

"I suspected him. I also suspected your Chief of Police, the lawyer whom Garvin called in, even Ramsey who lives with you. Because Ramsey is a sort of confidence man himself."

"I know," Lee nodded. "He didn't fool me long. But despite the fact that he lied and sponges on me, I like him and he keeps me company. Ramsey wouldn't harm anyone."

"I can understand that now," Quinn said. "But he was pretty high on my list. So were you, Mr. Lee—and you, Matt. I wondered if you hadn't been a trifle too anxious to keep me here, so you'd know what was going on."

Taylor grinned. "That's exactly how I felt. What about this thug who was turned over to the police by the Black Bat?"

"He is a cheap gunman. He told the Black Bat that Lee was his boss. When a man like this gunman says that, he means just the reverse."

"He was talking fast and heavy when I saw him last," Taylor said. "And he was using the name of Fox instead of Lee."

Fox gave a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders. "I can't deny all this, of course. I'm too easy to expose. But I killed no one. Walton, the gunman, did the killing against orders. Silk is unharmed. I wouldn't have injured him. He had the best of care."

"The best of drugs," Quinn said soft-

ly. "If I could see, I'd have the satisfaction of beating you up. As it is, I'll have to be content with watching you sent to the electric chair. You tried to frighten me into quitting the investigation. You called me on the phone at Lee's home. You were upstairs in the same house. Flora had just been told of Garvin's death and she'd fainted. So you called the number of your own phone, warned me in a stage voice and then sent somebody to enter my home and double the warning by printing a message on my mirror. To back this up, you had Silk and me almost killed by one of your men—most likely Walton. No one else knew I was at Lee's home. Lee was with me and so was Ramsey, so it had to be you making that phone call.

"The picture found in Cravath's room was planted there by Walton so his death in Lakeview could be explained and the threat against Flora furthered. After all, this entire deal was to place Mr. Lee in such a position that he could do nothing to stop these crooks. Lee was the fix. In this case a forced fix, but no con gang operates without someone to front for them. Chances were good you'd discover their scheme to loot the city, but you'd be in no position to tell anyone or take any sort of action."

"But how did they get the picture of the man who'd been killed by a car?" Lee asked.

Quinn said, "I'm not sure. I wouldn't doubt but that one of the con men ran this victim down. Or at least witnessed the accident. Anyway they had one of their number pose so that any face could be superimposed later if they needed to intimidate anyone."

Matt Taylor said, "I'll have a real doctor take over here and bring Silk out of it. I'll take Fox, or whatever his name is, back to town and round up our precious city officials. What about Chief Anderson? I understand he had a row with the Black Bat."

Quinn said, "Anderson showed bad judgment, that's all. To him the Black Bat was just another crook. Some police officers learn the hard way."

**C**APTAIN McGRATH wasn't very happy about the whole affair. Later he told Quinn, "I don't understand how I slept so well. Guess I must have been very tired."

"After all that food you ate, Mac, I'm surprised you slept at all," Quinn said. "I wouldn't mind having some of those stomach pills you use."

McGrath put the tin of sleeping tablets on the table beside Quinn. "Take them all. Nothing like them. Eat anything I like and sleep like a babe. Silk is okay, Tony. They brought him out of it very fast. I suppose we'll all be going home now?"

"As soon as Silk can travel," Quinn said. "You seem sad about it."

"I am—a little. They fired Chief Anderson and there were a few strong hints that I might fit in nicely."

"And why not?" Quinn asked.

"Not me. No, sir. I'd have to give up my hunt for the Black Bat. As of now

I owe him nothing and some day—~~so~~ help me—I'll trap him!"

"When you nail him," Quinn said with a laugh, "bring him before me. I'll see that he gets nothing short of life."

McGrath curled his under lip. "Yeah—yeah, sure. Right now I got a date with another steak. I can pick up more of those pills at any drug store. I'll see you later, Tony."

Ten minutes after he left, Carol Baldwin slipped into the room. She sat on the arm of Quinn's chair, glad to be close to him, happy that they could find a few moments together. She ran her fingers through his hair while he talked about the case. After awhile he didn't talk any more.

They had to seize these precious moments. The Black Bat's crusade would go on, for crime never slept for long. Somewhere, soon, a gun would bark. A man would die and the Black Bat would be prowling the night again.



### *"You Got Somethin' Comin', Quinn, and Here It Is!"*

**T**HE big, ugly man yanked the door of the Black Bat's car open and said, "Well, well, if it ain't Tony Quinn! The big shot who ain't got eyes but likes to put people in stir for years and years. Remember me, Quinn?"

Tony Quinn seemed startled. "I . . . can't see you. How can I recognize you. . . ."

"My name is Hunt. Petey Hunt. Now maybe you remember."

"Yes," Quinn replied tightly. "Two years ago I prosecuted you and sent you to prison for a long term. . . ."

"That's right. You were responsible and you got somethin' comin', Quinn—somethin' I saved up while in stir—"

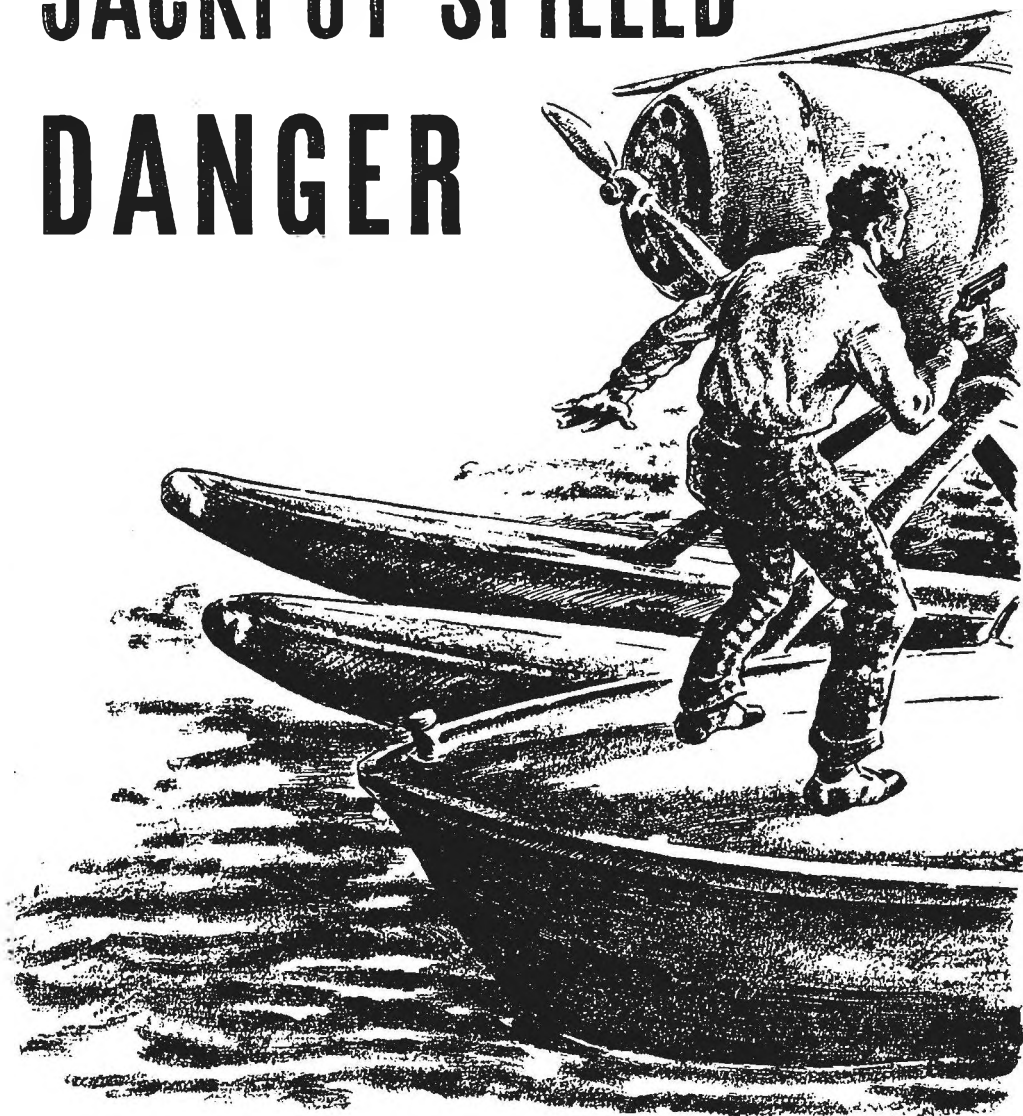
Quinn's eyes didn't flicker, he didn't try to dodge the punch. He just took it, full in the face. The pain made him giddy—but it was one punch Quinn was glad to take and he let his assailant get away with it! Because it gave him an idea—an idea that helped him solve the strange case of the BLUEPRINTS OF CRIME in the exciting novel of that name by G. Wayman Jones coming next issue!

It's a smash novel featuring Tony Quinn and his aides at their best—as they tackle an entirely new type of mystery! Look forward to BLUEPRINTS OF CRIME for a detective yarn that's "different" and packed with thrills from start to finish!

the

a novelet by

# JACKPOT SPILLED DANGER



## CHAPTER I

### *Gramps' Giveaway Guess*

**I**F there is a dent and a long scratch on the bottom panel of the Pearly Gates, Grandpa Waldo and I did that one day when we brushed it with a wingtip.

Gramps claims that if he hadn't banked when he did we'd have flown right through without pausing to ring the golden bell. I was too scared to hear

# F. E. RECHNITZER



"Come on!" Butch  
snarled. "Bianco wants  
to talk with you guys!"

*When they discover the corpse  
at Elbow Lake, Gramps Waldo  
and Calvin must know all the  
answers . . . or else!*

anything but my own yelling, but Gramps still insists he heard harps making with sweet music as we went by.

With Gramps at the controls of his

Slickwing Aircruiser, we were on our way to Elbow Lake which could only be reached by air and, as a consequence they claimed, was full of fish as a freshly



soldered sardine can.

After checking a town wedged in a railroad junction I penciled a ring around Lawrenceburg and settled back. Lawrenceburg meant the lake would be pushing over the horizon some time within the next half hour or so. I must have dozed off then. The next thing I knew Gramps was nudging me. I woke up expecting to see Elbow Lake. But instead, there was a very ominous cloud towering right across our course.

"You're gonna fly around it, aren't you?" I asked, hoping I didn't know the answer already.

Grandpa is stubborn about a lot of things. But the thing he's most mulish about is weather. According to him, anybody who allows weather to prevent them from doing something they had planned is a blue ribbon pantywaist. Instead of answering he pointed his white tuft of chin whiskers at the approaching storm and braced his feet against the rudder pedals.

Whether the storm hit us or we hit it I'll never know. All I recall is being in the clear one minute and then being wrapped up like a Christmas present in a swirling mass of woolly stuff. Something reached out of the soup and snatched the controls away from Grandpa. Even with him pushing the wheel forward I could feel we were going practically straight up. Just before it got black as the underside of a crow's wing I caught a glimpse of the altimeter. It was reaching for the high numbers as fast as the speedometer needle on a high school kid's hot rod. I had no means of checking it, but I'll bet a jet job would have seemed to be standing still compared to the way we went up.

Then that cloud suddenly pulled the string and opened its whole bag of tricks. Lightning streaked past us and tied up the job of scaring me. Thunder appeared to be trying to shake the universe right off its foundation. Gramps had always bragged on how he had never been scared in his life. So when he switched on the instrument panel lights I expected to see him calm and collected as if he were about to sit down to sup-

per. But right then his white chin whiskers were bobbing like the last view you get of a rabbit disappearing into a briar patch.

**B**UT Gramps wasn't a quitter. He kept fighting back. Every time he yanked on the control wheel the wings of the little cabin job groaned like they were ready to drop off. I'd like to have fainted when he yelled, "Nothin' I can do, Calvin. We're in the hands of the Almighty now!"

When everything we had stowed in back began waltzing around my ears I figured we were done for. So I did what came natural. I closed my eyes tight and yelled. I didn't open my eyes until I heard Gramps yell, "Glory be! We just squeaked past the Pearly Gates, Calvin."

All I could see through the plexiglass was a revolving blur. Then as Gramps fought the controls the spinning top gradually slowed up.

"There we are," Gramps said poking me with his elbow. "Hit it right on the nose. Wouldn't been here yet if I'd been sissy enough to fly around that storm."

At the moment I wasn't too interested for I was battling to keep my breakfast where I had put it that morning. When my eyes began to focus, I saw a big lake forming a blue V in the barren terrain below us. It resembled a crooked elbow all right. But according to the map the point of the V should have been pointing east instead of west. I was about to mention the fact to Grandpa when he nodded toward a cluster of cabins and a wharf. He slid the panel on his side open and waved to a man who waved back and jumped into a rowboat. Opening the panel on my side I stuck my head over the edge and commenced feeding the bass they said could hardly find elbow room in the lake.

Gramps was grinning while he banked and came into the wind. "Some navigating, eh, Calvin?"

I swallowed and blotted my lips with the back of my hand. Right then was when I realized I hated these radio raffles where somebody gives with a stupid

answer to a fourth grade question and wins everything from a package of pedigreed pansy seed to maybe a third interest in the Cleveland Indians.

Sure I know more people than voted in the last election sit close to their telephones every night hoping it will ring and offer them a crack at one of the super-duper jackpots. Used to do it myself. But that was before Grandpa Waldo, on my mother's side, won himself a stack of merchandise ranging from an automatic needle threader to the brand new Slickwing job with Edo floats. But after what happened to Gramps and me at Elbow Lake I get goose pimples every time I accidentally tune in a quiz program.

We used to be what a psychiatrist would probably call a normal family except maybe that we were all a little crazy about radio. Pop bent an ear to every commentator, the more pessimistic the better. Mom spilled tears over every soap opera while Sis went up to her room and huddled starry-eyed over her little portable while some goon made noises like he needed the slack in his tonsils taken up. While I studied I kept one ear cocked on sports programs.

My favorite was the Wednesday evening session about fishing and hunting. I'd get bug-eyed whenever some lucky guy recounted how he had landed a record breaking fish. After that I usually hit the sack and dreamed of catching something larger than the white perch we caught in the University pond. A six-pound smallmouth was my favorite dream.

When I said we were all normal I was forgetting about Grandpa Waldo. Although he was head of the zoology department at Clayborn University just outside of town and an authority on herpetology, snakes to you, Gramps was daffy about whodunits. He read every story he could lay his hands on about detectives and gangsters and listened to everything from the Thin Man to the Fat Man. The tougher and gorier the better.

If only he'd been satisfied with reading about these characters or listening

to their highly fictionized counterparts on the radio. But no. Gramps had to go and develop a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde neurosis. When he thought he was alone he'd commence pretending he was a private eye about to crack down on the current Number One toughie.

His room was right next to mine and some of the solo conversations I overheard would curl the fuzz off a plastic monkey. Mom must have heard him too. I heard her talking to Aunt Minnie about it one day. They had it all figured out that overwork was causing his brain molecules to skid slightly.

Once Mom tried pleading with him to give up his interest in underworld characters. Forgetting he had just read the first installment of a super thriller, Grandpa would promise and then promptly forget the minute he spotted the second instalment on a newsstand rack.

WHEN these dizzy give-away programs began cluttering loudspeakers Gramps had company. With over twenty thousand bucks to be won by just answering a phone call it wasn't long before we were all balmy as a Caribbean zephyr. Even after Gramps had proved mathematically how big the odds were against one of us ever being called, we kept on listening in hushed expectation for our phone to ring. And when the Slickwing Aircruiser was added to the jackpot of the "What's Making this Noise?" program I began experimenting with everything in the house in the hope I would be able to recognize the mysterious sounds they put on the air. With one eye on the mink coat they were offering Sis began to help me figure out weird sounds.

It was just our luck Aunt Minnie's birthday supper had to fall on the night that gabby announcer picked our telephone number out of a basket. But Aunt Minnie's birthday supper was a family tradition. Only Gramps had an excuse. He claimed he had papers to mark. I knew better though, for I'd seen him sneak the latest issue of *Smart Detective* up to his room.

After supper we all crowded close to the radio in time to hear the "What's Making this Noise?" program come on. The announcer began to get hysterical as he read the list of prizes they were offering for whoever could put the tag on the queer buzzing sound they had been broadcasting for the past month. Starting with the automatic needle threader the list included a deep freezer full of T-bone steaks, a completely equipped modern kitchen with a Zero-case refrigerator, a chest of Sterling silver, a mink coat, a True Temper bait casting rod and an anti-backlash reel and of course this Slickwing Aircruiser and flying lessons.

**A**FTER some moron said he thought the New Deal had come into power in 1776 they put the mysterious sound on the air.

"It's an eggbeater," Sis squealed. "I just know it is."

I didn't say anything, but I had it doped out. Anybody who had ever done any fishing would recognize it as the noise made by a reel if a cast was made with the drag on.

We all started arguing about the noise when Aunt Minnie let out a squeak like the time she found a dead mouse in her dish of rice pudding. "Clara!" she gasped at Mom. "It's your number they're calling!"

You could have heard a hummingbird's breast feather fall into a bowl of whipped cream while we listened to the announcer repeat our number. Making a game try for that mink coat, Sis rushed to the phone and tried to wheedle the operator into switching the call over to Aunt Minnie's wire. But it was no soap.

Sis was bawling by the time Grandpa answered the phone.

Helpless, we listened while the announcer tried to explain who it was. "Guess maybe you got the wrong number," Gramps said. "Yup . . . Yup this is the number. . . . You say you want me to identify some fool racket you're makin'. Okay. Make you feel any better I'll listen."

They put the noise on again. "Hey, there, young fella!" Grandpa interrupted. "You got that thing in a cage? Better be careful if you haven't. 'Course I know what it is. That's a diamondback rattler. Seven rattles an' a button I'd say."

That tied it as far as I was concerned. I didn't bother listening to the announcer's corny routine of making Gramps think for one short moment he'd come up with the answer. Then my heart tangled with my tonsils as the M.C. yelled that Gramps had correctly identified the sound and then gave a recap of the prizes he had won. Mom and Aunt Minnie were heading out the door before he was half way down the list. I was right behind them.

**G**RAMPS winning those prizes started a beautiful family rhubarb. It would take a book to list the cousins alone who phoned or wrote to tell Gramps how much they loved him and wanted him to come to their house to live. Everybody but Mom started advising him how to split the loot.

Things were sure hectic!

Grandpa didn't say much for about a week. Then he sprang a real surprise by stating that he was arranging to take flying lessons with one of the instructors at the University flying club. That still gave me a chance, so I concentrated on the fishing gear and got it. Mom got the new kitchen and the deep freeze. Aunt Minnie got the automatic needle threader and Sis had to settle for the chest of silver to put in her hope chest. The mink coat, Gramps said, would have to be sold to pay the income tax on the other stuff he'd won.

It didn't take too long before Gramps was taking off from the lake and setting down like a Navy ace. His learning to fly was proof, Aunt Minnie insisted, that Gramps had gone completely off his trolley.

But Mom was satisfied because he seemed to have forgotten about his private eyes and gangsters. She didn't even seem to mind his Rogering and Wilcoing all the time.

## CHAPTER II

*Just a Gag*

HORTLY after he'd got his license Grandpa announced his intention of flying to Elbow Lake during his summer vacation to spend a couple of weeks fishing. A Professor Trenholm had friends who owned a fishing camp on the lake and he was fixing it for

Gramps to visit them. When I hinted about going along, Gramps said it would be okay with him *if*. Then he added the gimmick. He'd take me if I graduated with my class which, at the moment, seemed a very doubtful possibility. Did I pass? Give you three guesses, and the first two don't count.

Everybody in town came down to the landing to see us take off that morning. Well everybody but Aunt Minnie who was still peeved about only getting that needle threader. Just before we were ready to climb aboard, this Professor Trenholm hurries up and grabs Gramps by the arm.

"I had no intention of telling you, Waldo," he said. "But my wife insists I'd better. These Lewises are gagsters."

Gramps' eyes popped. "Gangsters, eh. What's their racket?"

Professor Trenholm shook his head. "I said gagsters. You know, folks who take delight in playing jokes on a stranger. They'll go to no end of trouble to rib a newcomer to their camp. Don't take them seriously. No matter what they try to pull, play along with them. If they see you're a good sport they'll let up and show you a royal time. Remember, I warned you, Waldo."

Still scared after being storm bounced, the warning slipped my memory completely while I watched the man row out toward where Gramps had just landed. When I saw a 30-30 rifle resting close to his knees I poked Grandpa and pointed. He gave me a big wink. "Don't forget what Professor Trenholm said, Calvin. Be ready for anything."

These Lewises must have gone to a lot of trouble to find a tough looking mug to act as our reception committee. This guy looked like something you might see in a Frankenstein movie.

"You de Perfesser?" the character growled when he nudged his boat against the pontoon on Gramps' side.

"Expectin' anybody else, chum?" Gramps grinned.

"Nope," the character said. "But we wasn't expectin' youse fer a while yet. How come youse got here early?"

"Took a short cut," Gramps scowled. "Any objections?"

"Okay by me," the big guy muttered. "But Bianco had a letter from Barney sayin' youse was havin' trouble gettin' a pilot to bring you out."

"I got one, see," Gramps jerked his thumb at me. "Where'll we tie this kite up?"

The ugly looking bird motioned with his rifle toward a log anchored a few yards off the end of the little wharf. "I'm Butch," he mumbled. "Guess youse has heard about me."

When we began transferring our gear to the rowboat Butch unbent a little. "Played it like youse was startin' on a fishin' trip, didn'tcha?"

"Yeah," Gramps said out of the corner of his mouth. He looked over the cabins and grinned. "Nice little layout you got."

Butch was looking at me so hard I felt goosebumps breaking out. "Didn't Barney tell youse how Bianco won it from a sucker in New York?" His eyes came back to me. "Are youse de pilot?" he asked suspiciously.

I caught the wink Gramps tossed me and nodded. If Gramps wanted me to go along with a gag, I'd do it.

Butch shrugged. "Bianco don't run no kindergarden outfit. So don't try actin' wise. Understand?"

"Don't worry." I grinned. "I'm just the professor's chauffeur. Say, how's fishing around here?"

Butch just gave me a dirty look and started to row toward the wharf. When we reached it he said to Gramps. "A couple of de boys will unload dis junk

and take it to your cabin. Come on wid me, Bianco's waitin'."

We were about half way up the rocky path leading to the main cabin when Butch jerked his rifle to his shoulder. I nearly crawled out of my skin when he fired. "I got him," he growled and pointed the rifle barrel toward a headless rattlesnake squirming in the path ahead of us. "It's crawlin' wid dem things around here. We all got the jitters."

The sight of the snake brought a light to Gramps' eyes. "That why you carry a rod, Butch?" he asked.

"There's other kinds a snakes," Butch leered. "A Fed would git a hunka lead around here quickr'n one of dem buzzers. But de Feds don't know where Bianco's hidin' out. Ever meet Tony back in da big town?"

**G**RANDPA looked up from the snake and shook his head.

"I forgot," Butch said leading the way toward the main cabin. "Tony said youse is one of dem specialist guys dat works by hisself. Dat right?"

Gramps slid a look on his face like the one he used to practise in the mirror back home. He sure looked mean when he snapped. "You're doin' a pile of talkin', Butch. I came here to listen to Bianco."

Butch was a first-rate actor too. He put on a scared look and turned to Gramps. "Excuse me, perfesser. Guess I'm all hypood on account of dis is de biggest deal Bianco ever cut me in on. I figure he's doin' it on accounta de clean job I pulled when I rubbed out Gimpy Orlan for him. Besides I'm kinda hot for him to leave me in town. But even wid Orlan's boys an' de cops lookin' for me I'd rather be back East. Gits terrible monotonous way out here wid nothin' but snakes to bump off. You can have de west. I'll take Third Avenue any day."

Faces peered at us out of the big window. One of them was grinning like he was getting a wallop out of the gag. I had already decided somebody had tipped them off about Gramps being nuts about detectives and gangsters.

When the cabin door opened a stocky

guy, dark complexioned with a pencil mark mustache, stepped out. He looked slippery as a can of gear grease.

"Howya, perfessor?" he said. When he stuck out his hand I saw the butt of an automatic sticking out of a shoulder holster. "I'm Tony Bianco."

"Howya, Tony," Gramps said and grinned back. "Meet my pilot, Cal, meet Tony."

Bianco gave me a look that had me feeling like a scroll saw had been drawn across my eyes. "Come on in an' meet the rest of my boys," he said.

Some boys! There was a plug-ugly Bianco called "Dingo," another one he tagged "Jo-Jo", a bird called "Monk", and a leering character he labeled "Lewie the Finger." From the way Lewie kept grinning I put him down in my catalog as the bird who owned the fishing camp and liked to pull gags.

"Bourbon?" Bianco said reaching toward a bunch of bottles on a side table. I noticed him give Gramps a hard look.

"Never touch it," Gramps said, and scowled.

Bianco smiled sheepishly. "Just testing you, Perfessor. Barney said you never hit the bottle. Bad for close work, ain't it?"

The way he looked up at the ceiling I figured Gramps was trying to dope an angle of his own on the gag. "Didn't Barney tell you I was on my way?" he finally asked.

"Mail's kinda slow out here," Bianco said pouring himself a slug. "Last I heard from Barney he said you might be held up a couple of days. Said the Government boys were tailing you so close you might have trouble getting a pilot. I expected you to come in a bigger plane. How many will that one carry?"

"Four," Grandpa said. "Maybe five with no luggage."

"But we'll have luggage," Bianco growled. "Say, how about eatin' an' talkin' business after?"

Most of the meal came from cans. The only thing that didn't was a fish that practically blanketed a two foot platter. "What kind is it?" I asked Butch who squeezed in next to me.

Butch shrugged. "Lewie catches one like dat every morning on a line he's got tied to the wharf. Youse would think everyday was Friday here."

"It's a bass," Gramps said kicking me under the table to keep my mouth shut. "All right if my pilot does a little fishing?" he asked Bianco.

"Okay by me," Bianco said. "Long's he doesn't let a plane spot him."

"Youse better keep your eyes peeled for snakes," Butch broke in. "Gotta rod?"

"Sure," I said before Gramps kicked me again. "A True Temper."

"One of dem foreign things," Butch sneered. "It better shoot straight around here if you don't want a snake to nip ya."

"He's not afraid of them," Gramps spoke up to change the subject. "He's seen me handle them too often for that."

A look of revulsion came to Dingo's face. "How come you handle them?" he asked taking a quick drink.

"I study them," Gramps said going out of character for a moment.

Butch nodded toward Dingo who was having himself an encore on the drink. "Rye is the best thing fer snake bites, ain't it, perfesser?"

Gramps shook his head. "Only make it worse. I depend on serum. Carry a kit wherever I go."

"If one of us was to git nicked," Butch demanded, "would dis serium stuff cure us?"

"If you came to me in time," Gramps said and smiled.

**W**HEN we had finished eating, Bianco called Gramps to one side. I could see he didn't want me around so I said I was going to our cabin to get my rod.

"I'll tag along," Butch said. "Always wanted to git my mitts on one of dem fancy rods. Betcha it won't outshoot mine."

I came near laughing in Butch's ugly face as he followed me out of the cabin. I was wishing they'd give up this dumb act.

While I sorted through my tackle box

for a plug I thought one of those big bass might hanker for, Butch sat around and asked dumb questions. I'd lost interest in the stupid gag, so I kept still.

"Da perfesser sure picked a clam in youse," Butch grumbled as Gramps came in. Gramps jerked his head toward the door. "Leg it, Butch. We got business."

Butch gave Gramps a wink. "Gonna work over here so we won't bother youse. That it, perfesser?"

When Butch closed the door Gramps began to chuckle. "Now all we have to do is wait for the pay-off," he said to me.

I snapped a Doodleflash to a bronze leader. "Be more fun fishing. Gramps, do you suppose Aunt Minnie got this Professor Trenholm to tip them off about you going for this detective and gangster stuff?"

"Wouldn't be surprised," Gramps said. "Look at this." He handed me a slip of paper. I'd never bought one but I recognized it as an Irish Sweepstake ticket.

"They're pretending to be a bunch of counterfeiters," Gramps said with a grin. "Claim they're ready to turn out bales of queer tickets and make a big cleanup. Trying to build me up as some phony counterfeiter from New York known as the Professor. According to the way they are playing it some blank copper plates and engraving tools are arriving by mail from this man Barney."

"Yeah," I said handing the ticket back. "How long's this going to go on?"

"Maybe they'll pull the snapper tonight," Gramps said. "Wouldn't surprise me if we weren't raided by a bunch of phony FBI men tonight. I'll be pointed out as the leader of the gang. Then'll come the big laugh. Golldarn it, Calvin! I've just got to figure out a way to turn the laugh on them. Got any ideas?"

"Only about fishing," I said.

Grandpa pulled his bait casting rod out of its aluminum carrying tube. "Maybe I'll think of something while we're fishing."

"Didn't they slip up about getting this stuff by mail?" I asked.

"Post office at Preston," Gramps said.

"Run down a couple times a week in that runabout I saw under the wharf."

Fishing wasn't too bad. I got four nice ones and Gramps latched onto six, one a five-pounder. But what burned me was this Butch character following us along the shore with that rifle of his. Every time I looked up I saw his homely face peeking from behind a rock.

Gramps nodded toward a rock behind which Butch had just ducked. "Can you imagine a dumb bunny like him trying to make us believe he was the one who bumped off Gimpy Orlan?"

"Was there a Gimpy Orlan?" I asked.

Gramps snorted. "Couple of weeks ago the papers were full of how he'd been found in a cemetery with his hide looking like a sieve."

"Just the same I'd hate to find myself in a cemetery with Butch shooting at me," I said. "Remember how he popped off that snake's head?"

Gramps gave me a quiet smile. "He wouldn't have the nerve. Just a big bag of wind."

"Gramps," I said after a while. "Let's call it quits."

"Not till they spring the gimmick," Gramps said stubbornly. "Besides, if we start squawking, they'll think we're poor sports. Wait an' see. Tonight will come the big laugh."

Instead of a big laugh, the angle they added that night scared the living daylight out of me. We were in the main cabin after supper. Gramps was over in a corner trading tough talk with this guy who called himself Bianco. I had found some dog-eared comic books and was trying to read one when I happened to look up in time to see Bianco nod toward Dingo. Then he winked at Butch while he pointed his finger and made his thumb go up and down like us kids used to do when we played "Cops and Robbers."

"How about a game of Chinese checkers, Dingo?" Butch yelled across the room. "Fifty bucks a game."

"Make it best three outta five for half a grand," Dingo sneered.

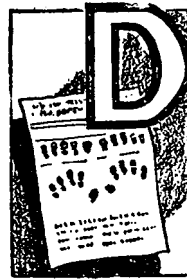
"Okay," Butch said. "Catch ya cheat-in' I'll kick your teeth in."

"You're too dumb to catch anybody cheatin'," Dingo growled while Butch put the board on a little table and began arranging the yellow marbles.

I dropped the comic book and went over to stand behind Butch and watch. Gramps caught my eye and grinned. I knew he was thinking what I was as Dingo made the first move with the blue marbles. Tough guys wouldn't go for a game like Chinese checkers. As to playing for five hundred, well they didn't look as if they could dig up the price of a 1½ cent stamp to mail a Christmas card. What a gag!

### CHAPTER III

#### *Something Goes Sour*



INGO won the first game.

Then Butch took the second with marbles to spare. I thought they were spoiling the act when Dingo suggested their raising the ante to a thousand dollars.

Even when I was certain the game wasn't on the level I got itchy pants as Butch's marbles began to arrange themselves in a pattern which would result in Dingo's clearing the board if Butch made a mistake and moved just one marble into the right hole. Disliking the guy as I did, I still wanted to give Butch a warning nudge about that key marble. But he just went along and, like a dope, kept getting set up for Dingo to spring the trap.

When Dingo began squirming I knew he had spotted it too. Then Butch moved that yellow marble. His fingers were hardly off it before Dingo was jumping. He went clear around the board and ended up leaving just two yellow marbles and both of them blocked.

"Remember, I ain't got no cuff on this shirt," Dingo sneered.

Butch stared at the board for a moment. Then his arm moved. I thought he was going for his wallet. But instead of a wallet Butch's hand came up with



an automatic. His mouth twisted in a snarl. "I saw you pick up that marble, Dingo. Don't say I didn't warn ya."

When Dingo jumped to his feet and reached for his left arm pit, everybody got in the act. They hit the floor just like they do in the movies. I guess Gramps and I were the only ones left standing when Butch fired three fast shots. Dingo got a silly look on his face and crumpled. "You shouldn't done that, Butch!" he said hoarsely. He dug his fingers at his chest like a flea was biting him. I felt like retching when red stuff began oozing between his fingers. I turned to Gramps to see if this was the expected gimmick.

Gramps stretched and yawned. "Come on, Cal. We'll leave the boys to play charades." With that he steps over Dingo, who was still now, and walks with me to the door.

"Jeepers, Grandpa!" I said when we reached the cabin and I had my knees and chin under control. "Imagine killing a guy over a game of Chinese checkers. Let's get out of here, Gramps. Please."

"And let them give us the horselaugh when we reach the dock," Gramps said and grinned. "No siree. I can go along with the gag as long as they can."

"But Dingo!" I argued.

"Probably laughing himself sick right now over the way you turned green," Gramps said starting to undress. "That gag's moldy."

I didn't get it and told him I didn't.

"Well," he said running his pocket comb through his whiskers like he always did before hitting the sack. "When a bunch of crooked gamblers have hooked a sucker for a wad of money and want a guarantee against his squealing, they rig a phony murder. The sucker, thinking he'll be implicated in a killing takes it on the lam and keeps his mouth shut. It's an old gag."

"But the blood?" I asked.

"Ketchup in a little rubber sack," Gramps assured me. "Dingo broke it while he pawed at his chest. Now go to sleep. I'm getting up early to hunt rattlesnakes. Might be fortunate enough to find an albino around here."

Even when Gramps blew out the oil lamp on the table by his bed I could still see that gooey red stuff trickling between Dingo's fingers.

"You awake, Calvin?" Gramps called. "I just happened to think of something. Don't get nervous if a bunch of strangers come trooping in."

"Will it be another gag?" I asked wearily.

"Probably," Gramps replied. "Might have it fixed for a fake sheriff to drop in to investigate a murder. Good night, Calvin."

There wasn't a thing good about that night. I lay wishing a fake sheriff would show up just so I'd have something to help pass the time. I hoped, too, that would end it and leave us to our fishing. Toward dawn I heard voices outside. Then a little while later the sound of a motor.

It woke Gramps. "It's the runabout. Likely heading down the lake to Preston. Guess I'll get up and hunt snakes!" He yawned.

When Gramps left with his sack to hunt snakes, I decided to go down to the wharf and have a look at Lewie's set line. As usual, and with the rifle in the crook of his arm, Butch suddenly appeared. When I sat down Butch sat down beside me. "You and de ole man is a cool pair," he said after a while.

"How come?" I asked looking at our plane moored to a log a few yards from the dock.

"De way youse took what I did to Dingo last night," Butch said. "Did youse know it was a frameup?"

"Of course." I felt of the set line and let it fall slack.

"Gosh," Butch murmured. "None of de others did. Lewie's next. Bianco says we got to cut down on de crowd so we can all pile into your plane when we're ready to head outta here. Youse and da perfesser, Bianco and me and maybe Monk. Youse can take five, can't ya?"

"Yes," I snapped, fighting the impulse to tell him I was wise to the foolish gag.

"Gettin' edgy over last night, huh?" Butch grinned. "Maybe youse and de perfesser don't like no rough stuff like

dat. Make youse feel any better I'll take care of Lewie when youse is fishin'."

**I** WAS about to answer when a whopping bass broke water over by the rocky point. I marked the spot for a try that afternoon.

"Dis perfesser got a screw loose or somethin'?" Butch suddenly asked. "I mean dis catchin' snakes. Or is it a gag?"

"He'll be back before noon with a bagful of rattlers," I assured him.

Butch shuddered. "I don't like dat angle. Others don't either."

"That's swell," I frowned. "Maybe if you fellows will lay off, he will."

"Lay off what?" Butch demanded. "I getcha. No more rough stuff."

Butch bored me so I got up. "Want to come with me and look for the professor?" I asked him.

"Not me!" he blurted. "I'm not foolin' around that rockpile behind de cabins. But if youse and de perfesser wanta hunt snakes, it's all right by me."

When Gramps came back he had fourteen nice rattlers. One was an old lunker with eleven rattles. He found some quarter inch wire netting in the shack behind the cabins and soon had built a sturdy cage for the hissing snakes. After putting the cage under the rear window of our cabin, he dumped in the snakes and latched the lid with a wedge of wood.

It took me an hour after lunch to drag him away from that cageful of snakes and get him started toward the wharf. Tailing us was Butch and that blunderbuss of his. I told Gramps about the big bass I'd seen over by the point so we headed there first. We tried an assortment of lures without even getting a strike.

Finally Gramps took a thermometer from his tackle box. He's one of these scientific anglers who believes moon's phases and water temperature has a lot to do with whether fish like to be caught. He lowered it over the side on a piece of string and let it hang a while. When he finally took a reading he said the water was too warm and we'd have to fish deeper.

After rummaging around in his tackle-box he came up with the fanciest hunk of piscatorial hardware I'd ever seen. It flashed in the sun like a pinball machine running wild.

"It's a Flashoreno," Gramps said proudly. "Paid five dollars for it."

Gramps cast and after letting the shiny gadget sink, reeled in slowly. On the third cast his rod suddenly bent double. I thought he had connected with a whopper until Gramps said, "Dang it! Snagged on a rock or something." He gave a couple of gentle tugs and shook his head. He handed his rod to me. "Hold it while I dive down and free it."

We only had shorts and sneakers on, so it only took him a second to dive overboard. If you think Grandpa Waldo was too old for diving you got another think. When he wasn't too busy back at the University, he helped coach the swimming team. I held the line taut while he went down. With only about twenty feet of water under us I figured it would be a cinch.

The splash he made had hardly settled before he hit the surface and came thrashing back to the boat. "Couldn't you locate it?" I asked while he clung to the side of the boat and stared up at me.

"I—I located it, all right," he chattered.

"Was it a log?" I asked and wondered if the water could be as cold as he seemed to be making out.

Gramps took a deep breath. "I'm hooked into Dingo, Calvin. And believe me he hasn't got any ketchup on."

Here we go again I thought.

"Don't just sit there!" Gramps sputtered. "Drop that fool rod and help me into the boat."

Certain he was working up a new angle I helped him over the side. But when he cut the line I knew he wasn't in a gaggy mood.

"Is Dingo really down there?" I found the courage to ask.

"Deader'n a quick frozen oyster and tied to a stone," Gramps said looking bug-eyed at me. "Dang it, Calvin, I've gone and talked you into a fine kettle of

trouble. We must have landed at the wrong camp."

Then I recalled how the point of the V shaped lake had seemed to be turned around. "Why in thunderation didn't you tell me?" Gramps said after I'd told him. "We went and landed at the wrong end of the lake."

I finally got my tongue untangled enough to ask: "Do you think this Bianco and the others are real gangsters, Gramps?"

"Sure as shooting, Calvin," Gramps said, putting his sneakers on. "I remember reading about a Tony Bianco once. Used to be in the Capone gang."

GOOSE PIMPLES were shoving each other around trying to make room for themselves on my hide. "Jeepers, Gramps," I said. "There's Butch watching us with that gun of his. And you said he wouldn't have the nerve to kill anything bigger'n a snake."

"I know—I know, Calvin," Gramps said, reaching for the oars. "We haven't time to discuss that now. We've got to get out of here, and fast." He swung the boat toward our plane. "If Butch says anything, we'll tell him we're just going to test the motor. Soon's it's warm you hop out on the float and cut the mooring line. We'll head down the lake to Preston and tip off the authorities." A grin broke over his face. "Calvin, can you imagine what they will say back home when they learn how we were instrumental in capturing a gang of counterfeiters?"

With Dingo tied to a rock at the bottom of the lake and Butch watching us from shore with that rifle on the alert, my imagination was in high gear. But it didn't include any hero stuff.

"We're going to test the motor," Gramps called when Butch walked out on the dock. "Cylinder missing when we came in yesterday."

I began to breathe easier when the starter whined. The motor sputtered and caught. "Get ready to move fast when I nod," Gramps said. "I'll start taxiing while you scramble in."

We were both sweating while we watched the temperature needle quiver.

Then as Gramps began easing the throttle forward I suddenly went cold. For there, coming around the point at full throttle was the speedboat. Bianco was standing up waving to Butch and then pointing at us.

The boat roared up, swung in a tight circle that brought it up to the side of the Slickwing. "Should have warmed her up by taxiing," Gramps said as he looked down into the barrel of Bianco's automatic. Monk was leaning in the door pointing a gun at me.

"Come on, get outta here!" he snarled. "Bianco wants to make talk with you birds."

Gramps killed the motor and motioned for me to get out. "In here with me," Bianco ordered and pushed his automatic against Gramps' ribs.

When we reached the dock, Bianco ordered Jo-Jo and Monk to tow the Slickwing under a big pine tree that leaned out over the lake. "They're looking for that plane," he said with a scowl. "Tie it good so it don't drift out." Then he motioned us to start walking toward the cabin. "And put that fishin' stuff in their cabin," he called over his shoulder.

"Dey was just testin' de motor," Butch said after we had entered the cabin. "Wot's wrong wid dat?"

"Shut up!" Bianco barked. Then he turned to Gramps. "Now what's your game? Are you and this squirt cops?" he asked nodding toward me.

I didn't like the way Butch's trigger finger twitched when Bianco mentioned cops.

"It's all a mistake, Tony," Gramps said with an unconvincing grin. "We thought we were landing at Lewis's fishing camp. We'd been warned they would likely try to play a joke on us. So we thought you and the others were part of a gag. We were only trying to play along. Why I even thought rubbing out Dingo was part of the act."

"How do you know it wasn't?" Bianco shot back.

When Gramps hesitated, Butch spoke up. "Where'd you plant Dingo dis mornin', boss?"

"Over by the point, in about twenty

feet of water," Bianco replied.

Butch looked intelligent for a moment. "Dey was fishin' over dere. Suddenly I sees dis ole geezer dive overboard. Right away he comes up and dey lam outta there and head fer de plane. Maybe dey spotted Dingo."

"Did you?" Bianco demanded.

When Gramps nodded, Butch grinned. "Want I should give Dingo company?"

Bianco shook his head. Taking a newspaper from his pocket he tossed it on the table. "Lucky thing I went to Preston today." He motioned us up to the table with the gun. "Read that."

Under a big black headline was a story about how some underworld character called Barney the Gyp had escaped after a runing gunfight with a couple of FBI men. The story concluded by saying it was thought that Barney and a well-known counterfeiter known as the Professor had headed for a Jersey airport and were heading west in a plane.

"Talk about gags!" Bianco said and grinned. "Lookit this." He flipped the page over and there was a picture of Gramps and me. The paper said we were missing on a flight out west and then went on to tell how it was Gramps who had won the big "What's Making This Noise?" jackpot.

"It was a million-to-one shot," Bianco sneered. "Some hick college perfessor turns up when we're expectin' this pal of Barney's." Bianco's face suddenly darkened. "Maybe this is a gag, Butch. Things like this just can't happen." He whirled angrily on Gramps. "Come clean. Are you with the FBI?"

"Of course not!" Gramps insisted. "I told you we got twisted up in a storm and blundered in here by mistake. Let us get out of here and we won't say anything about having been here or having seen you. I promise."

**M**Y knees had been shaking plenty but when Butch began to raise his rifle and said, "Now, Tony?" they turned to jelly.

"Hold it, you dope!" Bianco growled. "Barney'll be showing up soon. Maybe he'll have an idea."

"Ya need any ideas when I around?" Butch said with a hurt look.

"Dontcha get it?" Bianco said. "They're lookin' for these mugs. I want them to be found. But not around here. And the sooner the better. Maybe Barney's pilot can rig it so the plane crashes about fifty miles from here with them in it."

Butch pondered the idea a moment and then grinned. "You mean dis pilot will take dem up already conked. Den he jumps out wid a parachute, just like I hear dem do on a radio program oncet. You're smart, Tony. How about me conkin' dem now?"

"Got to make it look natural," Bianco frowned. "No slugs for the cops to find. We'll wait for Barney. So take 'em over to the cabin. Keep a guard on them. Understand?"

"Don't worry," Butch smiled and caressed his rifle. "Oh, I come near forgettin'. I ain't had a chancet to take care of Lewie yet."

"Skip it," Bianco said. "Maybe Barney an' the Perfessor will come in a bigger plane. But keep your eyes on these two."

A worried look flashed to Butch's face. "Okay if I let Lewie take over after it gets dark? We wouldn't miss him so much if one of dem snakes was to make a pass at him."

"All right," Bianco muttered impatiently. "Get going."

## CHAPTER IV

### *Too Many Bullets*



**B**ELIEVE me, I know now how a condemned man feels as he spends his last few hours in the Death House. That cabin was the quietest and loneliest place I've ever been in. Gramps didn't have much to say to me and I had less to say to him.

"There ought to be a law against quizz programs," I said after a while.

"Perhaps," Gramps nodded. "Might be a good idea to do something about folks who are dumb enough to give the correct answers. We wouldn't been in this fix if I'd been smart enough to be dumb."

"Yeah," I couldn't help retorting. "And you thinking you were an expert on gangsters hasn't helped any." An idea hit me and I went over and sat down beside Gramps on the bed. "Look, Grandpa. These detectives you're always reading about and the ones on the radio—they're always getting into tight spots, aren't they? Can't you recall one who got out of a fix like we're in?"

Gramps laid his hand on my knee. "I been thinking about them until my head aches, Calvin. But not a situation seems to fit the predicament we're in."

I got up and went to a portable phonograph on a table in the corner. I tried the spring and found it worked. There were plenty of needles but only one record. For want of something better to do I started playing the two sides in rotation.

"That music sounds mighty dreary, Calvin," Grandpa finally remarked. I shut the thing off and sat down.

When it got dark Grandpa lighted the oil lamp. We sat watching a moth flutter around the hot chimney and listening to Butch walking around the cabin. Then Lewie appeared. I heard them talk for a few minutes and then the only sound was Lewie's feet crunching gravel as he took up his tour of guard duty.

I felt sorry for the moth when it finally got too close and fell into the flame of the lamp. With nothing to watch, the sound of Lewie's footsteps seemed to reach us more distinctly.

It was past midnight when the crunch of Lewie's feet finally got me. I began playing the record again. The squeaky record was hard enough to take, but the thought of what they wanted to do to us in the morning made me grab for the needle and yank it out of the groove. In doing it the arm slipped and the needle dug into my thumb.

"Did it go deep?" Grandpa asked when he saw me sucking my thumb.

I showed him the puncture. He reached for the bottle of iodine he always carried in his tacklebox. His hand stopped in mid-air. "Let me see that again, Calvin. Say!" he murmured while he examined my thumb. "Might pass for the bite of a one-fanged rattler."

Disgusted over his picking a time like that to let his interest in snakes take priority over the jam we were in I started to yank my hand away. But I saw a look in his eyes that meant something was noddling around inside his head. "Bring me that envelope of needles," he ordered.

GRAMPS got out his pocketknife—the one that's a miniature machine shop—and opened it to a thin gadget like an awl. Then he took a practise plug out of his tacklebox and began boring two tiny holes in the thick end. He had to try a lot of tricks before he was able to make two of the phonograph needles stick solidly in the holes which were spaced about a quarter of an inch apart. He hefted the plug in his hand. "Needs a little more weight I think," he said and began to wrap a couple of strip sinkers around the plug. He tried the needles and nodded. "Get me my rod, Calvin. They left it over by the door."

I was certain the strain of waiting had set Gramps wacky, but I got him the rod and watched him tie the plug to the line. "Even Dick Tracy would never have thought of trying this one," he grinned as he picked up the long aluminum tube he carried his rod in and walked over to the rear window. Holding the lamp in one hand and the tube in the other he called softly for me to let him know when Lewie was out front.

When Lewie appeared around the corner I gave Gramps the signal and waited. I could hear Gramps struggling at the back window. Then there was a soft thud. I thought he had jumped out and turned in time to see him blow out the lamp. Then as I watched him silhouetted against the open window I heard the snakes rattling like mad in the cage out back. "Lewie!" Grandpa called softly as our guard reached the rear of the

cabin. "Be awful careful out there. I think the snakes have escaped. Look out! There's one right at your feet."

I heard a loud whirr and then Lewie squeaked. Then he yelped. "He got me. He got me in the leg. What'll I do?"

"Quit yelling," Grandpa ordered as he lighted the lamp again and tossed his bait casting rod over on my bed. "Come in here quick, Lewie and I'll give you a shot of snake serum."

White-faced and sweating in terror, Lewie burst through the front door. "How much time have I got, perfesser?" he babbled.

"Shut up!" Gramps ordered. "You've got to be quiet if you wish to prevent the venom from spreading through your whole body. Lie down on the bed while I get things ready. I'll pull you through."

Lewie collapsed on the bed. Moaning, he pulled up his pants leg to look at the two punctures high on the calf of his right leg. Gramps took a bottle and a metal case from his traveling bag. I knew the case contained serum and a hypodermic needle. I didn't know what the bottle held until Gramps had given Lewie three capsules and handed me the bottle. I couldn't recall ever having heard Gramps mention sleeping pills being any good for snakebite.

While Gramps fiddled with his hypodermic needle Lewie kept waving his automatic around and telling us not to escape. Gramps assured him he had but one thought in mind and that was to prevent his dying a horrible death. I thought Gramps was kind of clumsy in taking so much time to get the hypodermic out of the lid clamps.

"Won't need it after all," Gramps said nodding toward Lewie. Lewie was sound asleep and beginning to snore when Gramps disengaged his fingers from the automatic. "Dick Tracy or the Fat Man have got nothing on me, have they, Calvin?"

"You clipped him with that plug," I grinned and pointed to the bait casting rod. "When those two phonograph needles went in he thought sure a snake had him."

"You should have seen him dance when

I began to reel in," Gramps chuckled. "He heard the plug rattle against the stones and thought another one was after him. I'd pushed the cage over to start the real snakes rattling good. Would never have thought of it if you hadn't stuck yourself. Say, it'll be morning soon. We better see about getting the plane started."

I was heading for the door when he grabbed my arm. "Listen!" he whispered. "There's Butch calling for Lewie. Quick, help me roll him under the bed."

When we had shoved Lewie out of sight Gramps tiptoed to the door. "Butch!" he called softly. "The snakes got out of the cage. Don't go around back whatever you do. One of them just got Lewie. Come to the front door."

Then he began making motions for me to hand him his fishing rod.

**I** HEARD Butch moving cautiously along the path leading to our cabin. Then Gramps' arm lashed out. With the drag on, the reel made a nasty sound, especially if your mind was on snakes.

"One got me!" Butch suddenly squealed. He hit the porch and the door in one jump. "I'm gonna die. Oh, the pain is somethin' awful." He grabbed at Gramps' arms. "You gotta help me, perfesser. I was only kiddin' about bumpin' youse off. Honest. Please, perfesser, give me a slug of dat serum youse was tellin' us about. Quick, de pain's gettin' worse. I'll die if de poison gets to me heart, won't I?"

"If you've got a heart," Gramps said under his breath while he led the panicky man to the bed and ordered him to lie down. He handed him three pills and a glass of water. "Take them," he said. Then he began his fumbling routine with the hypodermic case.

When Lewie moved under the bed, Butch sat up bug-eyed. "Wot's dat?" he demanded clutching his rifle close. "Is one of dem snakes under da bed?"

"May be a snake under there," Gramps said quietly. "But I suspect you are beginning to hear strange sounds. That's a symptom of snake bite."

"Am I gonna croak, perfesser?"

Butch blubbered. "Tell me de trut."

"Not from snakebite," Gramps said soberly. "More likely be from high temperature in the seat of your pants."

It seemed an eternity before Butch closed his eyes. Gramps watched him a moment and then handed me the rifle. "Okay, Calvin. If we aren't interrupted again we're on our way."

Nobody appeared to bother us while we worked to shove the Slickwing out from under the tree and turn it around.

"This time we'll warm it up while we taxi out," Gramps said as he got in. "Better make it fast. It's beginning to get light."

Any other time I might have thought the streak of pink in the east pretty. But not then.

Grandpa was reaching for the starter button when Bianco began bellowing for Butch and Lewie. "Yell all you've amind to!" Grandpa muttered. "Behours before they get back from dreamland."

When Grandpa started the motor Bianco got wise to what was up. He began blazing away at us with his automatic. Then Jo-Jo came out and started shooting. It was light enough now to see the slugs kicking up little geysers around our plane. I ducked when one hit a strut and whined away into the dawn.

By the time Gramps had taxied out on the lake Bianco and Jo-Jo were down on the dock. Monk was shooting at us from the path with a gun like the one Butch had owned up till a short time before.

"Shoot back at them," Grandpa yelled. "Drive them to cover."

I didn't know how to work the safety so I couldn't shoot back. I didn't think it was necessary because Bianco was making motions toward us like he'd gone completely batty over our escaping. When Gramps poured on the coal the Slickwing really started moving.

"We made it, Gramps!" I yelled "We made it!" Believe me, I felt better than I did when I got my final marks and knew I had finally graduated.

We were in a climbing turn when a loud *wosh* made me duck. When I looked

up Gramps was pointing to a big gray two-engine plane banking ahead of us. And maybe his whiskers weren't twitching.

"It must be Barney and the Professor!" He shouted. "Look out! Here they come again."

Why that other plane didn't smack us I'll never know. Gramps claims he outmaneuvered the other pilot. Then a second later a long gash appeared in the plexiglass in front of us. Crash! Something smashed into our motor cowl and I was scared all over again.

"They're shooting at us," Gramps yelled as if I didn't know it. "Here, you take the controls. Keep kicking rudder."

To say I took control would be an overstatement. I just hung onto the wheel and kicked the rudder pedals while Gramps emptied a clip from the automatic he'd taken from Lewie. When only clicks came, he threw the gun out the window.

I tried my best to zig-zag down the lake. Only when I zigged the other plane was zagging right into us like the pilot didn't care where he was going. A couple of times Gramps had to grab the wheel to keep us from stalling.

GRAMPS suddenly grabbed the mike of the Slickwing's two way radio. "May Day! . . . May Day!" he yelled. "May Day! This is Professor Waldo. We're being attacked over Elbow Lake . . . If somebody wants to captured Barney and the Professor they're here with Tony Bianco. Hurry before they shoot us down . . . May Day! May Day . . . We're headed toward Preston."

Gramps took over and really started throwing the Slickwing around. In between zooms I tried to get my safety belt buckled. When I finally succeeded, I fastened Gramps'. When they weren't shooting at us, they were trying to get in close to force us down.

Gramps did all right. But that other plane was faster and although Grandpa will still argue the point I suspect the other pilot was a little more experienced. He kept forcing us closer and closer to the water. And with somebody taking



pot shots at every opportunity it wasn't long before our pontoons kissed the water at the end of practically every maneuver.

My heart bounced and then looped when our motor sputtered at the top of a zoom. I thought sure our fuel tank had been ripped by a bullet. But Gramps nudged me and pointed to the fuel gauge and I saw we had run dry.

"I'm going to attempt to set down close to the far shore," Gramps yelled as the big gray job bored in again. "Be ready to jump."

It was a good try. But Gramps admitted afterwards that he had cut it a little fine. We set down close to the beach all right. But we bounced twice and kept right on going. We hit the sand and piled smack into a clump of cottonwoods. Talk about a racket! You should hear a Slick-wing tearing into a couple of trees. Wood, metal, plexiglass and instruments pinwheeled around us. But when we finally settled all we had to show for the crash was a flock of bruises and a couple of scratches.

Gramps was saying something about being glad he had the plane insured when we heard the speedboat. "Where's that rifle?" he yelled. "Here comes Bianco and the others."

Grandpa crouched behind a rock and waited. I was behind another rock making the sand fly. I'd made up my mind to dig a deep hole, crawl into it and then pull it in after me.

I peeked around the rock as Grandpa let go. I didn't see any splash. But when the speedboat swerved sharply I knew he had put the slug Butch had been itching to put into one of us into the boat. Bianco shook his fist at us and then headed back to the wharf.

"Where's the plane?" Gramps called to me.

"It's circling above us," I replied.

Grandpa looked up and then jumped from behind the rock. "That's not it. That's a National Guard plane. Remember, that newspaper said they were going to commence searching for us this morning. Look, there's another across the lake. It's forcing down the one that was after us. And here comes an amphibian from down the lake."

**S**PEECHLESS, I stood beside Grandpa and watched another plane appear and immediately go to the aid of the one which was trying to force the big gray job down on a level stretch behind the cabins. After a few scattered shots and a lot of yelling I saw the amphibian land and nose up to the dock where Bianco, Jo-Jo and Monk stood with their hands high above their heads. A little later a group of men appeared from behind the cabins.

"The Professor'll probably get a degree out of this," Gramps told me and smiled.

"A degree?" I asked while I watched the speedboat head across the lake toward where we stood. This time it carried friends.

"Yup," Grandpa chuckled. "A third degree. Maybe a neckpiece to go with it. Soon's we've showed them where Dingo is, we'll gather up our luggage and fishing tackle and get somebody to take us to Lewis's. I promised you some good fishing, Calvin, and dangit, you're going to get it. But heaven help 'em if they try pulling any of their gags on us."

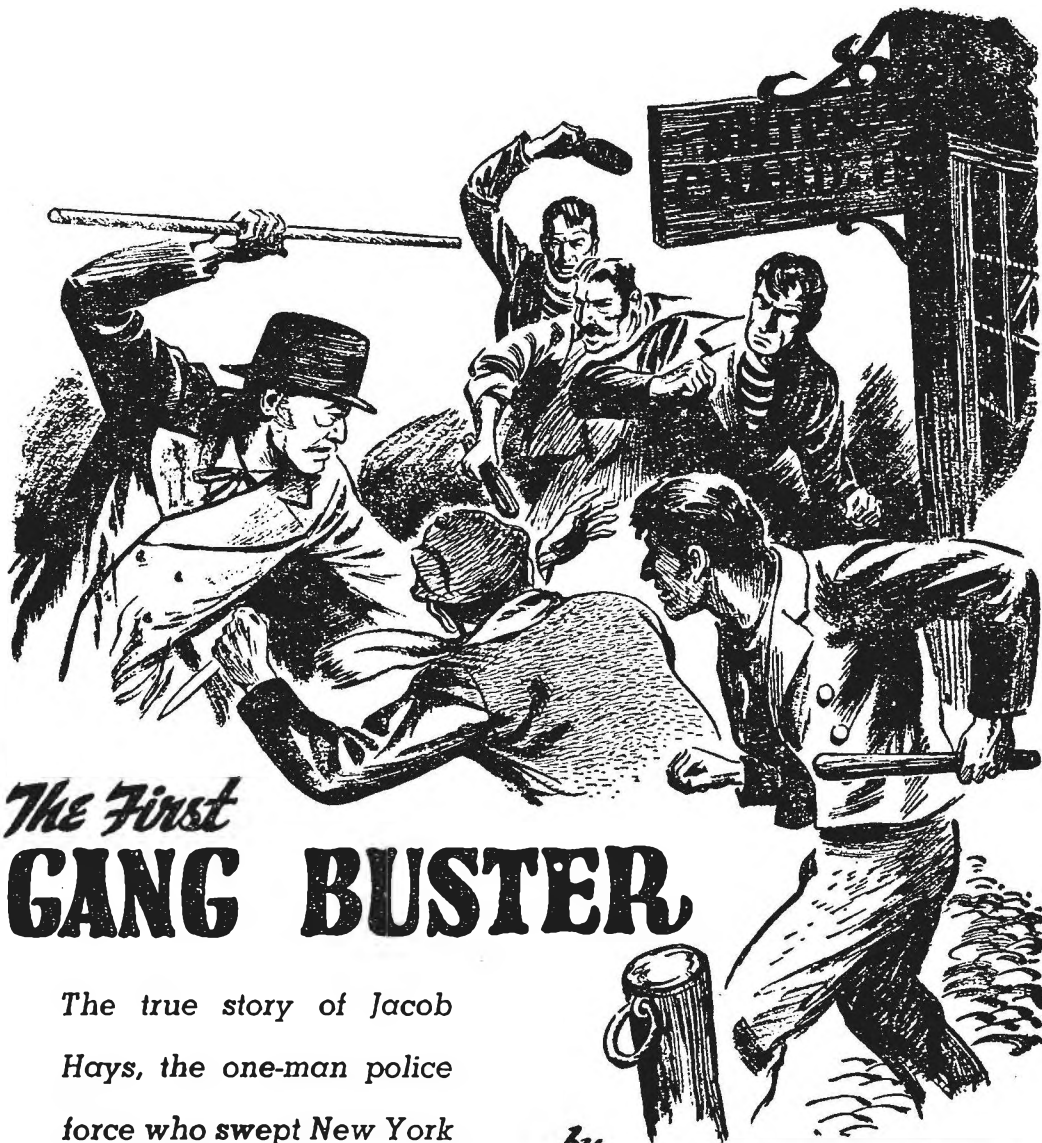
I endorsed that with a silent amen. Having come safely out of the mess I was already feeling a little kindlier toward everybody—well, everybody but gabby quiz program announcers and air wave jackpots.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

## MY LIFE TO GIVE

*A Suspenseful Complete Novelet*

By NORMAN A. DANIELS



# *The First* **GANG BUSTER**

*The true story of Jacob  
Hays, the one-man police  
force who swept New York  
of hoodlums back in 1820!*

*by*  
**Robert Wallace**

**O**LD Jacob Hays strolled slowly down New York's Water Street, twirling his short, thick staff of office in knotted, powerful hand. Ship chandlers stood in the doors of their tarry-smelling shops and greeted him with smiling faces. Portly citizens, respectable in shiny beavers and white-piped waistcoats, paused in their hurry through these malodorous precincts to breathe

sighs of relief at the comforting presence of the law. Others, less respectable and shabbier of dress, smirked sheepishly at old Hays' approach, or slunk down neighboring alleys in stealthy haste.

High Constable Hays returned all greetings; accosted by their names even those whose faces were averted. It was his boast that he knew everyone in New York—honest man and rogue alike; and

his memory had been never known to fail. In spite of casual stroll and idly twirling staff, however, old Jacob's sharp gray eyes darted keenly from the fringing stores and waterfront taverns to the grimy sailing ships that swung at anchor on the river. There was trouble in the air—and old Jacob's Roman nose was said to sniff it from afar.

But even his sensitive nose could find nothing wrong in the present scene. Aside from the usual oaths and cries from the ships, the normal haggling in the shops, not a single wayfarer was being stabbed to death, not a solitary cry of "Stop, thief!" disturbed the air.

Old Jacob shook his shaggy, massive head distrustfully. "It can't be!" he muttered. "There's something brewing. I ain't been wrong yet. But where—when? ... Aha!"

### The Alley of Discord

A little, weazened old man came running out of Coenties Alley, spun on his heel and raced blindly toward the High Constable.

"Mr. Hays! Mr. Hays!" he gasped. "There's mayhem—riot—murder being committed down the alley. I—I—oh, my heart!"

"Take it quietly, Mr. Van Wyck," old Jacobs advised. "You say someone has been murdered?"

"Hundreds!" cried the trembling old man. "They're using dirks and clubs." He covered his face. "Oh, it's terrible!" he moaned.

"Ah, you mean there's a gang fight." The High Constable gripped his staff and started down the cobblestoned street.

"Hey, where are you going?" the old man called after him in alarm. "They'll kill you, too. You ought to get help—call out the militia!"

Jacob Hays turned momentarily. Humor glinted in his frosty eyes, but his voice was grave. "I'm surprised at you, Mr. Van Wyck. Why, if I send for the military, they're liable to kill some one. That means trouble. Then there'll be the trouble of burying him; and that's the

greatest trouble of all! Remember me to your charming daughter."

Then, at an unhurried pace, he turned the corner and vanished into the dark, forbidden alley. The old man started after him, openmouthed; and walked away as fast as he could.

### A Hundred to One

Once inside the narrow thoroughfare the High Constable quickened his step. Down the other end, sandwiched between musty warehouses, milled a howling, flailing, struggling mass of men. The pale gleam of sun that trickled down recoiled from uplifted knives and quenched on crunching clubs. Huge cobblestones, torn from the street, thudded into warehouse walls. There were groans, cries, oaths and yelps of pain.

"Ha!" said old Jacob grimly. "The Knuckle Dusters and the Water Rats are at it again."

These were the two toughest gangs in a city notorious for its tough gangs. New York in the year 1820, especially along the waterfront, was the haunt of bully boys, cutthroats, picklocks and alley lads.

Yet, without a moment's hesitation, the High Constable waded into the very thick of the struggling, murderous mob. He had no other weapon with him than his staff. He never carried a gun, or even a loaded billy.

Exerting his tremendous strength, and with a twist of broad shoulders and elbowed arms, he flung the rioters to the left and to the right. A dirk gleamed and lunged down at him. He flicked his staff deftly. The dagger flew in an arc to imbed itself quivering in the nearby wall. The owner of the dagger cried out as he clapped good hand to the damaged wrist.

"Cripes!" rose a startled shout. "It's old Hays!"

"Yes, it's old Hays!" said the High Constable equably. "Now get out of here, you men, before I lose my temper. I mean you, Lumpy! And you, Strangler! And you, Bully Tom!"

The two gangs, mortal enemies only a moment before, coalesced. There was

an indecisive pause. Hays knew he had to act fast. They were a hundred to one, and the Strangler had sworn to get him ever since he had put the Strangler's pal away.

### Staff of the Law

His staff swung out, darted like an adder's tongue. Bowler hats and peaked caps rose from their owners' heads and fell beneath their trampling feet. Involuntarily the surprised toughs bent to retrieve their precious headgear. As they stopped, old Jacob shoved with brawny shoulders. Caught off balance, they went down like tenpins, rolling, tumbling and clutching vainly at each other in the alley mire.

Like a youth half his age, the High Constable vaulted over the intertwined barrier, straight for the stunned and startled Strangler. He caught him by the collar, twisted. With his other hand he laid hold of Bully Tom.

"All right, you two!" he said calmly. "Do you call off your bully boys or do you want to spend the next five years at the city's expense?"

The two gang leaders glared at each other and at old Jacob. He twisted a little harder. They gasped, choked, spluttered. "You win," wheezed Bully Tom. "Leggo—I can't breathe!"

"Aw!" whined the Strangler, "why're you always buttin' in ta spoil th' fun?"

"Fun's fun, in its place, my lads. New York just ain't the place—not 's long as I'm High Constable. Now git!"

The rival gangs *got!* And old Jacob resumed his quiet stroll, twirling his staff, greeting every passerby by name.

That was how Jacob Hays, High Constable of New York, controlled the toughs and evildoers of a turbulent city. He was a one-man police force and one-man detective bureau rolled into one. His fame was world-wide, and Scotland Yard in England called on him for help when criminal trails led to America.

Jacob Hays was born in the little town of Bedford in 1772 of an old Jewish family. His grandfather, Benjamin Hays, who had farmed there since 1720, was known to his Christian neighbors as

"Uncle Ben, the best Christian in Westchester County!" David Hays, Jacob's father, played a dramatic role in the American Revolution, while his uncle, Judah, commanded a 16-gun ship with conspicuous gallantry during the French and Indian War.

Jacob Hays, who had seen George Washington many times at his father's home, was first appointed Marshal by Mayor Varick of New York in 1798. In 1802 he became High Constable—the Police Commissioner of that day. But it was a titular office without any police force, except for half a dozen men whom Hays hired to assist him.

Until his death, for nearly fifty years, he held the difficult post, ferreting out crime, breaking up gangs, bringing criminals to justice. Whenever some particularly dastardly murder was committed, the good citizens of New York would cry: "Set old Hays on it!" and go about their ordinary business with the comforting thought that their High Constable would eventually ferret out the perpetrators and dangle them from the gallows.

And old Hays usually did. His successes were remarkable. Single-handed, without all the modern aids in crime detection, he would search for clues, solve seemingly insoluble riddles, go after his desperadoes into dangerous dives and pluck them forth from the very midst of their criminal cohorts with no other weapons than his light staff, his ready wit and tremendous strength.

Even the underworld respected him. For old Jacob was never brutal. He employed no third degrees. He broke no heads nor clubbed his prisoners, even when attacked with knife and gun. He relied solely on the quickness of his splendidly coordinated muscles to disarm and capture his antagonists.

And he was fair. No man could ever say that he had been framed by Jacob Hays. Even after a court conviction of his man, if he had the slightest suspicion that there had been a miscarriage of justice, he did not rest until he had unraveled the truth, found the true murderer, and freed the man he had first arrested.

One famous case of the day points this up in particular. A band of skilful forgers had been victimizing New York banks for a long period. Old Jacob entered the case. Knowing the underworld as he did, he suspected three men. One of them, Jack Reed, he came upon suddenly in front of the old City Hall. The High Constable was alone, while Reed was surrounded by his pals. Hays waded in. Reed drew a dirk. Hays dodged the blow and pinned the forger against the wall. Reed's pals jumped upon old Jacob. Holding his prisoner firmly with one hand, the Constable whistled his staff about him to such good effect that the confederates fell back in dismay. Then, as citizens came hurrying over, they retreated sullenly, and Hays marched his prisoner off to jail.

The next man on his list was a man named Stephens. Learning that he was in hiding in a dingy hotel that made a practise of harboring desperadoes, Hays marched boldly to the door and demanded admittance. Stephens made no answer, whereupon Hays put his shoulder to the door and crashed in. Stephens was waiting for him, crouched, pistol in hand.

In one bound old Jacob was upon him; and, before the startled felon could pull the trigger, had knocked the gun from his hand, and marched him off to join Reed in the hoosegow.

The third man on Jacob's list was a chap named Hollgate. But, while the Constable was trying to track him down, another man named Redmond was arrested for the forgeries.

Redmond protested his innocence. But he was positively identified as one of the forgers by both the cashier and the teller of one of the victimized banks. They swore without hesitation that Redmond was the man who had presented the forged checks to them; and his appearance tallied exactly with the description they had previously furnished to the police.

It was an open and shut case, of the kind that a detective dreams about. Redmond was indicted and brought to trial. The evidence was overwhelming, the de-

fense weak. The jury went out, and there was no question in any one's mind that they'd soon be back with a conviction.

But old Jacob had not been satisfied from the very beginning. He still felt that the third forger was Hollgate. It was mere intuition, and nothing else. Even while the trial of Redmond was progressing, he was feverishly trying to find Hollgate, whom he knew only by hearsay and not by sight.

### Hays Gets His Man

On the day of the trial, following a tip, he located his man in a cellar hide-out on Chatham Street. Dragging him out, he hustled his struggling prisoner down one cobblestoned street after another, while passersby gaped in amazement. Breathlessly he rushed him into the courtroom where judge, lawyers and spectators were waiting for the jury to return.

With a gasping exclamation, old Jacob flung the bedraggled Hollgate clear across the room toward the astounded witnesses.

"Look at this man!" thundered Jacob, "and tell me now if Redmond is your forger."

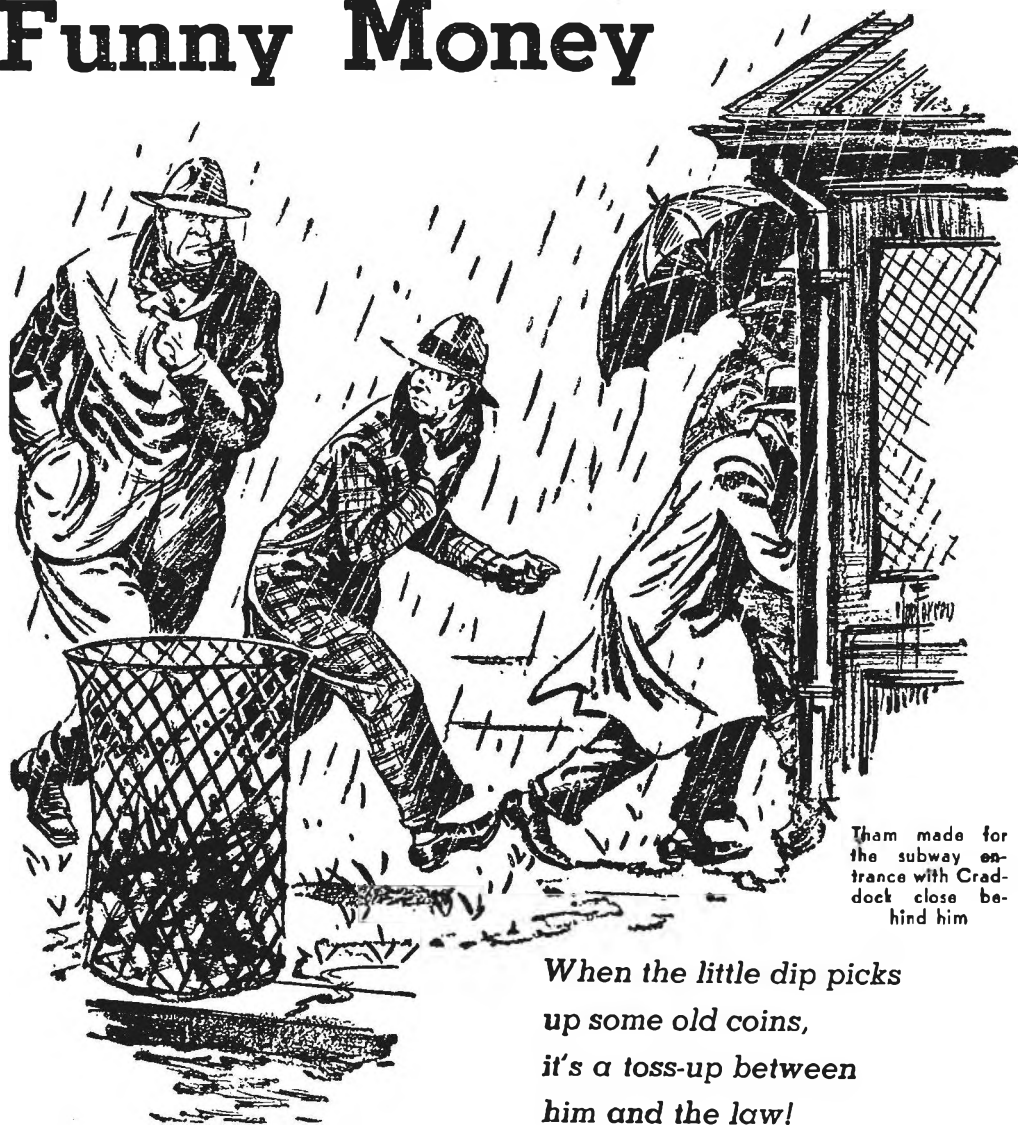
The dignified cashier, the prim teller, rubbed their eyes. The judge gaped. For Hollgate and Redmond were as like as two green peas in a pod.

It had been just another case of mistaken identity.

The jury was hurriedly recalled. Hollgate, in mortal terror of old Jacob, broke down and confessed. Redmond was freed; the three forgers whom Hays had arrested were put on trial and convicted. The High Constable, by his devotion to duty, by his super-detective instinct, had saved an innocent man from disgrace and jail.

When Jacob Hays finally died, at the ripe age of seventy-eight, the whole city trooped to the synagogue where the services were held. No other detective or police chief in the history of this country had ever such a following of dignitaries to his grave; no other has since equalled him in single career.

# Thubway Tham's Funny Money



*When the little dip picks  
up some old coins,  
it's a toss-up between  
him and the law!*

**A**S he strolled along the street toward the small restaurant where he usually ate breakfast, Thubway Tham, the little lisping pickpocket who had earned his sobriquet by working in the crowded subway, was feeling mighty low.

For Tham, the last fortnight had been decidedly on the dark side. If there was any white meat in life, he had missed it during the past two weeks. He had called repeatedly upon his generally buoyant spirits to rescue him from the

**By JOHNSTON McCULLY**

depths of ill fortune, but the spirits had failed to hear his call.

It had started when word had been whispered that the heat was on. The Big Brass of the Police Department, irked by many complaints from citizens, had issued orders to sweep the city clean of pickpockets. Extra men had been detailed for the work. Policemen in civilian garb had exhibited fat wallets—stuffed with sheets of paper—in the hope of attracting a dip to his doom. All the old tricks like that—and there had been some captures.

But Thubway Tham had escaped by the simple expedient of neglecting to follow his calling for a time. If the cops were after dips, it followed that Detective Craddock, who had been after Tham for years, would be hot on the trail. And Tham knew the hot spell would end in a short time, as all hot spells did. The cops would forget dips presently and turn their earnest attention to some other species of malefactor.

The thing had hit Tham immediately after a rather disastrous poker game, and caught him low in funds. And, as the heat died down to only a warm glow and Tham began making plans to recoup his fortunes, he experienced a severe attack of flu that kept him in bed five days in the room he rented in the lodging house operated by "Nosey" Moore, retired burglar.

Doctor's fees and medicines cost Tham considerable cash. Now, well again and able to go forth and do his work, Tham found himself in the position of a man forced to break his last five-dollar bill to pay for his breakfast.

Tham went to the restaurant, ate and paid his check, indulged in repartee with the smart blonde cashier, took several toothpicks out of the bowl, and went out upon the street feeling better.

And he strode into fresh misery.

**S**TANDING beneath an awning was Detective Craddock. The officer's eyes gleamed under the brim of his derby; and a stream of fragrant smoke ascended from the fat cigar in one corner of his mouth.

"Howdy, Craddock!" Tham greeted, as if this meeting pleased him greatly. "Fanthy theein' you here. Bithineth thure mutht be good with you. The thmoke of that thigar tellth me that it mutht have cotht many penth in coin of the realm."

"It's a good smoke," Craddock admitted. "I like it."

Craddock's manner made Tham slightly nervous. The detective was his old friend-enemy. Craddock liked Tham as a person, found the little dip's lisp amusing at times; but he would grab him and take him in as a felon the instant he caught him with the goods, and Tham knew it.

Stopping beside Craddock beneath the awning, Tham got out a cigarette and lit it. The aroma from Craddock's fragrant Havana engulfed him pleasantly. But the detective's manner gave him a slight chill.

"It occurth to me that I have not theen you for thome time, Craddock," Tham suggested.

"Nor have I seen you, Tham. Where have you been?"

"I have been in bed motht of the time."

"Nice work if you can get it," Craddock commented. "Rich enough from your ill-gotten gains to retire and stay in bed at all hours, are you?"

"I have been very thick," Tham explained.

"Sick? Really, Tham?"

"I can give you the name of the doctor and thow you my empty medithin bottle, if there ith any doubt lurkin' in your mind," Tham said. "I had the flu, but bad."

"Yeah? You'll have worse than flu if I ever catch you at any of your tricks!" Craddock warned. "Keep your fingers out of other people's pockets. If you don't, you'll soon find yourself where doctors and medicine come free."

"Thankth for the advithe," Tham returned. "Jutht what ith the matter with you today, Craddock? You theem to be thoured on life. Could it be that thome of your thuperior officierth have been callin' you on the carpet?"

"Could be," Craddock confessed, "and



is. They seem to think it's my fault that all you dips aren't caught and sent away. So I'd better make a few good hauls."

Tham eyed him. "Are you meanin' that you are goin' to pethter me today, Craddock?"

"That depends, Tham. What is on your agenda for today?"

"Agenda!" Tham exclaimed. "How you do thling big wordth around, Craddock. Let me conthult with mythelf. I may go uptown and take in a newth reel. Maybe there will be thomethin' ecthitin' in it."

"If you journey uptown, no doubt you will travel on our well known subway."

"And why not, Craddock? It ith thwift and thure. And it ith the poor man'th limouthine," Tham explained.

"True, Tham. But some men of at least moderate wealth also ride on it occasionally. And such carry wallets containing what the vulgar call folding money. To lift a leather, extract the currency therein, and then ditch the leather for reasons of security—ah, Tham, some men take a delight in it."

"They do?" asked Tham.

"They do. But not the cops, Tham! To speak frankly, the cops don't like it. And one assigned to the pickpocket detail, which is my poor lot at present, dislikes exceedingly to have his captain bawl him out continually because dips still dip their fingers into wrong pockets. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly, Craddock. I athume that your captain ith a thtern man."

"You'll find I'm one, too, if you don't mend your ways. Personally, Tham, I like you. Professionally, you're a pain in my neck. So friendship ceases here and now, Tham. I am going to catch you with the goods."

"And thend me to the big houth up the river for a long thtretch—I know," Tham completed for him. "I have heard you thay that for what theemth to be a thouthand timeth, Craddock. Even the pooretht dithk jockey will change a record now and then."

"Lead the way, Tham."

"Thir?"

"I'm going to tag at your heels, lad. I'm going to watch your nimble fingers. I'm going to glue to you so closely that you won't be able to steal an extra whiff of air without me feeling the breeze. Pick your route and lead on, Tham. I'm right with you."

Tham shrugged his shoulders in resignation. "Jutht tho you pay your own fare," he said.

If Tham had been in funds, so to speak, he might have amused himself for several hours by leading Craddock a merry chase, dodging and doubling back and all that, but allowing the detective to keep on his trail and maintain pursuit.

But, being in desperate need of the ready, Tham knew it was imperative to shake Craddock off as soon as possible, if he expected to replenish his depleted purse. So he struck off down the street toward the nearest subway station, and Craddock kept at his heels.

The detective ruefully tossed his good cigar into a gutter and followed Tham down to the platform, muttering, like many other men, against the regulation that said no smoking in the subway. They caught an express train for uptown.

Tham remained just inside the middle door of the car they had boarded, and which was crowded. Craddock stood a few feet from him. Tham squirmed and wiggled as the train sped through the bore, and unobtrusively managed to get three or four persons packed between himself and Craddock.

The first stop was Penn Station. There was a rush of men and women to get out of the car and another rush by those hurrying to get in. Thubway Tham allowed himself to be shoved aside ruthlessly—which got more persons between himself and the watching Craddock and allowed Tham himself to get at the open door.

There he stood until the doors of the train began closing. At just the proper moment, Tham thrust out an arm and exerted his greatest strength against

**D**ETECTIVE Craddock scowled at the little pickpocket.

the closing door. He held it an instant as he slipped through to the crowded platform. The door snapped shut as Tham released it, and the train started moving as Craddock fought to get through the aisle and at the door.

Tham grinned and waited. He guessed that Craddock would leave the train at Times Square and watch for him. Tham boarded an uptown local instead of waiting for an express, secluded himself in a corner seat as much as possible and made no effort to leave the train at Times Square. Instead, he remained on the local and journeyed on to Seventy-second Street.

He had bypassed Craddock and shaken him off. But he knew Craddock would be furious, and that it would serve Tham well if he dodged the detective for the remainder of the day. Such a thing looked easy, but was not. Craddock knew Tham's habits and knew the subway, and Tham knew he did.

Up the steps Tham went and into the open air for a few minutes of sunshine. Then he returned to the subway station and loitered at the entrance, acting as if waiting for someone. But what he was waiting for was a prospective victim.

Nobody who entered looked as if he had a fat wallet. Then came a man who did, but one glance was enough to satisfy Tham he would not be a good risk, being of the keenly alert type. Then, as Tham was about to descend to the platform, he spotted the man he considered a likely prospect.

He was a small, gray-haired, rather prosperous-looking and timid-looking man. With him was a woman somewhat younger. They stopped a few feet from Tham, and it became apparent that the man was going to descend the steps alone and the woman go elsewhere.

"You have the money safe, Elmer?" the woman asked.

"Don't worry. I didn't forget to bring it, Eleanor," the little man replied. "I have it in a wallet in my hip pocket."

"Try to finish your business and be back as soon as possible. I'll go home as soon as I get through at the beauty parlor."

They looked like prosperous people, Tham decided. Possibly father and middle-aged daughter. The woman's attire had cost plenty of money, Tham judged, and she had spoken of going to a beauty parlor. So the theft of a few dollars from the man would probably work no hardship on anybody.

They parted, and the man descended the subway stairs, and Tham followed him. The victim caught a downtown express with Tham at his heels. In the crowded car, Tham pressed closely against the other, and felt the wallet in the man's left hip pocket. Anybody who would carry a wallet in a hip pocket deserved to have it stolen, Tham thought.

Tham knew there would be the usual elbowing at Times Square station. And he feared his prospective victim might decide to quit the train there. So he prepared to do his work. As the train slowed at the station and the crowd in the aisle struggled to get to the doors and out, Tham's clever fingers got the wallet and transferred it to his own large coat pocket.

He was through the door in the midst of the hurrying throng, leaving the victim behind. There was no hue and cry. Tham jostled his way along the platform, helped by the fact that a crowd of delegates to some convention happened to be there.

Tham's nimble fingers opened the wallet in his pocket and explored it. And he suffered something like a shock. This did not seem to be the usual wallet.

No currency was therein, no papers. The wallet was lined with something soft. And Tham's fingers encountered only four coins. He removed the coins and kept them in his hand, and in the midst of the jostling crowd took the wallet from his pocket and dropped it on the platform. He was rid of the incriminating "leather."

**S**LOWLY Tham went up the steps to the street. He slipped the coins into a pocket of his vest, and when he came up to the street was busily extracting a cigarette from a pack. He stepped to the curb and ignited a match, and in

turn lit the cigarette and gave a preliminary puff.

"So we meet again, Tham!" said the voice of Detective Craddock in Tham's ear.

Tham turned slowly. "Howdy, Craddock!" he greeted. "What happened to you? I thought you wath goin' to follow me clothly all day."

"None of your lip!" Plainly, Craddock was angry. "Where have you been, and what have you been doing?"

"I jutht took a ride uptown," Tham explained. "Then I thought maybe I'd get off and go to thee the newth reel. But I don't feel like it, Craddock. Maybe the flu ith comin' back on me. I think I'll jutht go home and take it eathy."

"I've a notion to search you," Craddock said.

"I wouldn't do that, Craddock. You have no right to thuthpect me of doin' anything wrong. Did you thee me under thircumthanceth that leadth you to believe I have committed a crime?"

"Turned lawyer, have you? Illegal search, huh? I could take you in on suspicion, you know."

"Thuthpithion of what?" Tham demanded.

"If you're going home, Tham, I'll ride along. I'm going downtown myself."

"But I wath goin' to walk around for awhile and take the air."

"If you feel another attack of flu coming on, boy, you'd better go home. You'll be a walking, sneezing menace to other citizens. Let's go."

They descended the stairs and caught a downtown local. Craddock eyed Tham with hostility until they reached Tham's station. He got off with Tham and went with him to the lodging house of Nosey Moore, and watched Tham mount the stairs.

In his own room, Tham locked the door and sat on the edge of the bed and took the four coins from his pocket. He never had seen money like this before. Funny money, he thought. It looked old. On one of the coins, he could make out the date, and it startled him.

"A good thing Craddock did not thearch me," he muttered. "What thith

thtuff ith, I don't know, but it would have had no buthineth in my pocket."

He went down to the office, where Mr. Moore was alone reading the sports page of his favorite newspaper. He told Nosey his story and exhibited the coins behind a locked door.

"You may have somethin' here, Tham," Nosey said. "Sometimes, old coins like these are valuable. Collectors pay big prices for them."

"What are theth worth?" Tham asked cautiously.

"Don't know, Tham. Maybe five or ten dollars each. You take them to a numismatologist."

"I take 'em to a what?" Tham demanded. "Say that again."

Nosey repeated the word. "Means an expert and dealer in old coins," he explained. "There's one in the next block on the other side of the street. He's a shady character, so it might be safe to show the coins to him. Give him a yarn about bein' broke and havin' to sell these old coins that've been in your family for a long time."

"Numithmatologitht," Tham said, carefully.

"That's it. Old coin man," Nosey said.

Tham waited for an hour, fearing that Craddock might be lurking in the vicinity. But finally he went out, glanced up and down the street carefully, and made his way to the establishment of the numismatologist.

A stoop-shouldered, hawk-faced man behind a dirty counter blinked at him when he entered the shop. "Well, sir?" he asked Tham. "What can I do for you?"

"I'm buthted," Tham explained. "Got to have thome money."

"Don't we all? Are you begging, by any chance?"

"I am not athkin' for a loan," Tham retorted, with much dignity. "I have thome old cointh that have been in my family for a long time."

"Ah, that is different! You want to sell them? Kindly show them to me. I doubt you can have anything of much value, but I'm not busy now, so I'll take a look."

**T**HAM put the coins on the counter. The man behind it adjusted his thick spectacles and looked. Tham caught a gleam in his eye, but it was extinguished promptly. The numismatologist got an eye glass and screwed it into his eye after removing his spectacles and inspected the coins carefully.

"Old," he admitted. "But not rare."

"How much will you give me for 'em?" Tham asked.

"I'll have to get the latest quotations by 'phone. Wait a moment, please. You may inspect the curios in this showcase."

The man behind the counter retreated to a battered desk and dialed a number. He muttered into the transmitter, and Tham could not understand his words. The conversation went on for a couple of minutes, and then the phone was replaced on its cradle and the old coin man went back to Tham.

"As I thought," he said. "Of some value because of their age, but not scarce. If they were scarce, I probably could give you a lot of money for them."

"How much?" Tham asked. He wanted to complete the deal and get out of the shop. If Craddock was still in the neighborhood and saw him in such a place, he might investigate.

"If you're really badly in need of money, I'll stretch the price a little. 'Live and let live' is my motto. I'll give you fifteen dollars for the coins."

"You thtrech the prith in the wrong direchthion," Tham told him. He picked up his coins. "I think I'll go to another numithma—whatever it ith."

"Wait a moment. How do I know those coins aren't stolen?"

"You thertainly are tryin' to thteal 'em now," Tham accused.

"How much do you want?"

"What ith your limit?" Tham asked.

"Well—fifty dollars. Take it or leave it. You see, I may have to keep them in stock a long time before I can sell them at a little profit."

Tham considered a moment only. He wanted to get out of the shop. And fifty dollars was better than nothing. It would tide him over until he could lift a leather with real folding money in it.

"It ith a deal," Tham said, "even if I do know you are thimply thwindlin' me. But I need money right now. However, after thith I'll do my buthineth with another—whatever it is!"

The dealer counted out soiled currency and Tham gave him the coins and hurried out into the street. He felt that he had sold at perhaps half the value of the coins at the market. But at least he had eating money for a few days.

Tham went to a nearby restaurant and partook of a steak, then returned to the lodging house and told Nosey Moore of his transaction.

"Tham, you've been taken," Nosey said. "That's old Samuel Sleazy. He's a fence, and a crooked fence at that. If he gave you fifty dollars for those coins, it's an even bet they're worth five hundred."

"Why, the dithonetht thcoundrel!" Tham exclaimed.

"He'll think they're stolen, and he won't keep them in his place. Knew what those coins were, all right. 'Phoned, did he? Probably made a deal to get rid of 'em at a profit. I'll make a bet with you, Tham—that after he shuts up shop this evenin' he'll carry those coins and peddle 'em to somebody else. The man he phoned, of course."

"The thkunk!" Tham ejaculated.

"Tell you what, Tham. Go into that vacant room in front and watch this evenin'. Trail the cuss if he leaves his shop. See where he goes."

"I'll do that!" Tham decided. "But I'll thee thith Thamuel Thleathy firht and give him a chance."

"You made a deal, Tham. He offered fifty and you agreed and took it."

"Yeth, but he knew what thoth cointh were worth, and I didn't."

"It's just guess work on my part, Tham—knowin' Sleazy as I do. Maybe the coins are worth only a hundred and it's a fair split."

"That," Thubway Tham replied, "ith thomethin' I doubt."

**H**E went to his room and stretched on the bed to rest. Tham was irked. Being played for a sucker did not appeal

to him. The more he thought of squint-eyed Samuel Sleazy, the more he disliked him. Loss of money was bad enough, but being duped was fully as reprehensible, to Tham's way of thinking. He would have his revenge!

As dusk descended upon the city, Tham turned on his little radio to listen to a broadcast of police reports. He did so almost every evening as a matter of business. A lot of the usual stuff this evening, he found—accidents, lost children, a daylight burglary or two.

And then Tham suddenly sat up straight on the bed, and his eyes bulged as he listened to the broadcaster:

"—either lost in the subway or stolen, four old coins valued at more than a thousand dollars. They were being carried to a collector—"

Tham got up and paced across the room and back and glared at himself in the chipped mirror over his wash stand. He slapped on his hat and went down the stairs, past Nosey Moore's office and to the street, and hurried along it to Samuel Sleazy's shop.

Sleazy was behind his counter, taking trays from his showcase to put into the safe for the night.

"So it's you again," he said to Tham. "Got more old coins to sell?"

"You thwindled me," Tham accused, his eyes ablaze. "You knew thoth cointh were worth a thouthand dollarth. I jutht found it out. I want more money."

"You made a deal, mister."

"You give me more money, or you'll be thorry!"

"Easy, lad! I've got a gun under the counter. Could plug you and say you tried to hold me up."

"Why, you—you rat!" Tham almost choked with rage.

"Lifted those coins, didn't you? Good-by, mister! If you think I've swindled you, tell the cops—if you dare!"

Thubway Tham had a feeling of futility. He glared at Samuel Sleazy again and went from the shop. He knew he could handle the old coin fence physically, but he remembered the gun under the counter.

Back in the lodging house, Tham went

to the dark vacant room in front, from the window of which he could watch Samuel Sleazy's shop. For an hour he watched, but lights still burned in the shop and a couple of men went in and out—men disposing of stolen goods to the fence, Tham supposed.

Then, the lights were extinguished. Tham continued to watch the shop closely. And finally he was rewarded by seeing Sleazy emerge and lock the door and start up the street.

Tham hurried down the stairs. Sleazy was half way up the block, and Tham trailed him at a distance. Sleazy was making for the nearest subway entrance. Nosey Moore had guessed correctly—the fence was going to dispose of his loot to another.

Tham followed Sleazy down to the subway platform. The crowd there was thin, and Tham took refuge at the end of the newsstand to keep Sleazy from seeing him. He turned when he heard somebody approach, and saw Detective Craddock grinning at him.

"Howdy, Tham!" Craddock greeted. "Saw you leave your abode. Outguessed you this time, boy."

"How ith that?" Tham asked.

"Thought maybe you'd lay up the rest of the day and come out at night when you thought I'd be off duty. Going uptown to mingle with the theatre crowds a little later, huh? Bound and determined to get your fingers in other people's pockets, are you?"

Tham's heart sank. How could he trail Sleazy, watch him and possibly have his revenge with Craddock at his elbow? But he could only try to put on a front now.

"It ith gettin' tho a thitithen can't move without you copth annoyin' him," Tham blustered. "You jutht tag around after me all you pleath, Craddock. Thtick your little noth in my buthineth. I feel better, and thought maybe I'd run uptown and thee that newth reel after all."

"Why run uptown? There's a news reel theatre only three blocks up the street," Craddock reminded him.

"They do not have the latetht newth,"

Tham said. "Jutht tag along, Craddock, all you pleath. I can walk the thtreeth ath long ath you, even if you are a flat-foot."

**N**OISILY the train came rushing into the station. Tham watched Samuel Sleazy make for a car, and chose the one behind it for himself. It was slack hour on the subway, and the cars were not filled, and Tham did not wish to have Samuel Sleazy see him.

Craddock followed Tham into the car. Ignoring the detective, Tham watched the car ahead at every stop. At Times Square, Sleazy got off, and so did Tham—and so did Craddock.

Sleazy led the parade up Broadway, passing slowly through the opposite current of the theatre crowd commencing to gather. Tham kept the fence in sight, and Craddock kept a few feet behind Tham. Craddock had no idea Tham was following the stoop-shouldered man a short distance ahead.

Sleazy finally went into the lobby of an office building and got into an elevator. Tham stopped at the curb and lit a cigarette. Craddock went up to him.

"Might as well call it a day and go home and stay there, Tham," Craddock said. "I'm going to stick right with you until you're tucked into bed for the night. And I'll pick you up tomorrow and do the same. I'll starve you out, Tham. I'll see that you don't lift enough to live on."

Tham did not reply, except with a glare. He pretended to be watching the passing throng. But in reality he was waiting for Samuel Sleazy to emerge from the building.

And he was undergoing a mental struggle. Samuel Sleazy had swindled him. There no longer was honor among thieves—if there ever had been. It would irk him for the remainder of his life if he did not outwit the fence. And if he could outwit Craddock at the same time, and get hold of real money while doing this double outwitting, life would again be perfect for a time.

If Sleazy was trading those coins now to some shady dealer for big money, and

came to the street again with that money on his person, Tham wanted to get it, Craddock or no Craddock. If he did, and Craddock or any other cop pestered him, he would simply refrain from his nefarious calling until they got tired of it, living meanwhile on the proceeds of this night's work.

Tham got out a fresh cigarette, yawned, popped the cigarette into his mouth and glanced up and down the street. But his real interest was in the office building lobby, though Craddock did not realize it.

The roar of Broadway drowned the rumbling in the skies. Down the Hudson was coming one of those terrific summer storms which would cause a short down-pour and minor deluge when it struck the city. Tham felt a few drops of rain strike him. In a few minutes, he knew, the crowds on the street would be rushing for shelter.

Then he saw Samuel Sleazy step out of the elevator with three other persons. The three hurried out to the street, but Sleazy stopped a moment near the magazine stand as Tham watched. Sleazy's eyes were glowing. He looked at and counted some currency in his hand. Tham quickly held cupped hands to his cigarette as he lit it, and turned his face away slightly.

But Sleazy was not looking at him. He was gloating over the money he held. And now he rolled the bills and snapped a rubber band around the roll and slipped it into the left hand pocket of his coat.

Tham turned away when he saw in which direction Samuel Sleazy was headed. He brushed against Craddock.

"I am gettin' thick of thith," he said. "If you are goin' to keep on pethterin' me ath you thaid, I am goin' home."

"I'll go right along with you, Tham, and see that you're tucked in for the night," Craddock assured him.

Tham followed Sleazy through the crowd hurrying to theatres and cafés. Craddock kept close behind Tham. Sleazy, Tham could tell, was making for the nearest subway entrance.

"The dirty crook!" Tham muttered.

"'Thtealin' from an honetht pickpocket! Ain't got the nerve to go out and lift a leather for himthelf."

Then the rain came. The sudden down-pour commenced. Sheets of rain smashed against the pavements and on the walks. People squealed and fought to get beneath awnings, into doorways, anywhere to find shelter.

Tham began hurrying also. A drenching might not be so good after his attack of influenza. The doctor had warned him that a relapse might be dangerous.

**C**RADDOCK also hurried, keeping as close to Tham as he could. But people were continually getting between them, and even Craddock, used to forcing his way through crowds, had trouble keeping within twenty feet of Tham.

Sleazy made for the subway entrance with Tham close behind him. The entrance was crowded with people. Already, the floor and upper steps of the stairs were wet and slippery. And that gave Tham a quick idea.

He elbowed and jostled and got closer to Sleazy, who was thinking of getting down to the subway platform below and not taking the trouble to look behind. People coming up the steps were jamming because they could not get through to the street. Tham finally got directly behind Sleazy, with Craddock a short distance in the rear.

A sudden surge in the crowd gave Tham the opportunity he wanted. He tripped Samuel Sleazy deftly, and Sleazy lurched forward and knocked two people against the wall, and a woman tottered and began screeching as she felt herself starting to fall down the steps. Men grabbed one another as the crowd surged again.

Sleazy fell to his hands and knees. The slippery steps betrayed him, and he rolled over and bumped his head against the wall. Tham pretended to slip and fall beside him, sprawled across Sleazy's body, got the roll of bills without difficulty, and as other persons sprawled on and around them, smothering Sleazy, Tham got to his feet.

In the commotion, it was an easy mat-

ter for him to slip the rubber band off the roll of bills and put some of the bills into his vest pocket and the remainder in a hidden pocket beneath his belt. He turned to see Craddock trying to get to his side.

People were yelling that a man had been hurt, and Craddock saw Sleazy on the steps and tried to get forward.

"One side—I'm an officer!" Craddock shouted.

Sleazy managed to sit up on a step and brace himself against the wall. He was dazed and bewildered. The crowd surged again, and Craddock was thrust aside and Tham forced up against Sleazy. The other glanced up and recognized him. The fence's hand had gone to his pocket, and Tham knew he realized his loss.

Tham bent forward quickly, acting as if trying to help Sleazy to his feet.

"Tell it to the copth—if you dare," he hissed at Sleazy. "They'd want to know where you got the dough. They'd check everybody in that offth buildin'. Underthand? Thith thquareth uth, you thwindlin' weathel!"

Tham let people surge between them, and got to Craddock's side.

"Let'th get out of thith," Tham told him. "Nobody bad hurt. I am goin' home and thtay there for the prethent. If you want to tuck me in come along."

"I'll see you safely home, boy," the determined Craddock replied. "You won't step out again tonight in this downpour"

"I thertainly thhall not," Tham promised. "Thith rain might bring back my influentha."

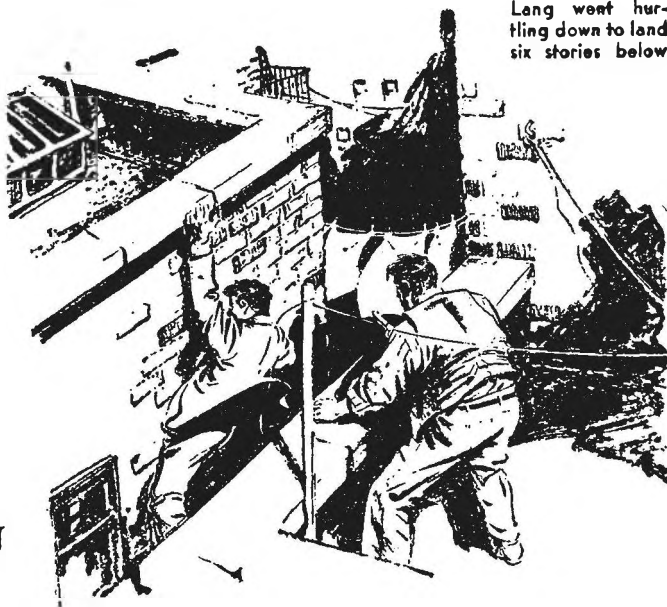
Later, in his room in the lodging house of Mr. Nosey Moore, Tham chuckled as he counted his swag. An even two hundred dollars. Added to the fifty Samuel Sleazy had given him for the coins. it made a nice tiding-over amount.

Tham would take it easy for a few days, and spend plenty of time going around and seeing the news reels he liked. And if Craddock felt like it, he could tag after him. As far as Samuel Sleazy was concerned, he could mourn his loss.



# TOO DUMB to KILL

by  
**C. K. M. SCANLON**



*It takes more than murder to spoil Johnny Glenn's appetite!*

**J**OHNNY GLENN was tired—both mentally and physically weary. When you drove a delivery truck for a furniture store some days were usually tougher than others, even though you were young and husky. This had been one of those days—mostly all heavy stuff, and Hogan laid up with a sprained back so there was no one to help Johnny with the lifting.

Coming home now at the end of the day the voices of the children playing in the block seemed shriller than usual, and the sound grated in his ears. The rows of old walk-up apartment buildings that lined either side of the street had a drabness about them he had never noticed before. They huddled in the shadows as though afraid of light.

"Hi, Johnny," a voice said as Johnny reached the worn stone steps at the entrance of the apartment house in which he lived. "Nice night."

"Yeah, fine."

Johnny stared at the stocky, bald-headed man who sat half hidden in the darkness at the side of the steps. It was

strange about Dan Webb. For the past three weeks he had been sitting there waiting every night just around the time Johnny came home. They usually said a few words as Johnny went on into the house, and that was all.

Ma usually learned quite a lot about the other tenants in 372 and told her only son about them, but aside from knowing that he had a three-room apartment—66 on the sixth floor, where he lived alone, she knew very little about Dan Webb. Johnny was surprised. His mother must be slipping. She could do better than that in gathering gossip about the neighbors.

"Can you spare a few minutes?" Webb asked as Johnny started up the six stone steps. "I want to talk to you, Johnny."

Johnny hesitated and then turned back. He was much earlier than usual tonight. Ma wouldn't be expecting him for a half hour yet. She probably hadn't even started to get dinner ready. He dropped down on the top step, and drew a package of cigarettes out of his pocket. Across from him Webb's bald head

looked like a huge egg in the shadows.

"Talk about what?" Johnny asked. He thrust a cigarette in his mouth and struck a match.

"Could you use an extra hundred bucks?" Webb kept his voice low.

"Who couldn't?" Johnny said as he lighted the cigarette. "What's the gimmick?"

"You know Fred Kenney, who lives up on the sixth floor here?"

"Not to speak to, though I've seen him around. Big, dark haired man, isn't he?"

THE man with the egg-shaped head nodded in confirmation.

"That's right," Webb said. "He owes me four hundred dollars that I lent him a while back. He is bigger than I am and tougher—an ex-prize fighter."

"Middleweight," Johnny said, remembering what Ma had told him about Fred Kenney. "He quit the fight game about three years ago, and has some sort of business now. Works for a jewelry firm I heard."

"He does," said Webb. "And makes good dough. That's why I'm burned up about him not paying me back the four hundred."

"Where does the hundred bucks you were talking about at first come into this?" Johnny asked.

"You're young and husky," Webb said. "I thought maybe if you were to see Kenney and tell him you were collecting that dough for me he might come across. He just laughs at me when I ask him for the money. I'm willing to give you a hundred of the four hundred if you collect."

"The job pays pretty well," Johnny said. "But you forget that Kenney was a middleweight and probably still packs a good punch. I've never fought in the ring."

"I know," Webb said. "That's why I'm afraid to get tough with Kenney. I haven't anything to prove I loaned him the money either—not even an I. O. U."

"What am I supposed to do?" Johnny asked. "Go up to Kenney's apartment and when he comes to the door tell him

that he owes you four hundred dollars, and to hand it over or I'll knock his block off?" He finished his cigarette and punched out the burning tip of the butt on the step beside him. "Is that it, Webb?"

Webb moved restlessly before he answered. Something slipped out of one of his trouser pockets and rolled along the step toward Johnny like a marble. The bald-headed man didn't appear to notice it. Johnny grabbed up the tiny gray-green object and dropped it into his pocket as he got to his feet.

"You better get yourself another boy for that job," Johnny said. "Try looking in a shoe repair shop. That's a good place to find a heel."

He went on inside before Webb could say anything further. There was something decidedly fishy about the whole thing in Johnny's estimation. Webb hadn't been sitting there on the steps every night for three weeks just waiting to get up enough nerve to ask Johnny to do some strong arm work in collecting a loan of four hundred dollars. There was more to it than that.

Johnny went to the row of mailboxes built in the wall of the lower hall of the apartment building. Ma didn't like climbing the stairs any more than she had to, and she expected Johnny to see if there was any late afternoon mail.

He drew out his keys and unlocked their box and peered inside. Nothing for them. Ma would be disappointed. She was expecting a letter from Aunt Tillie telling her about Cousin Jean's new baby. But maybe that had come in the morning mail. Ma always looked for that when she went out to do the marketing.

Johnny turned the key in the lock and then glanced along the row of boxes. There was a box that was open, the key dangling in the lock. He walked over to see who had been so careless. The name on the box was Fred Kenney—Apartment 63.

There were other keys on the same key ring with the mailbox key. A door key, a car key and a couple of others. Johnny frowned as he stared at them.

You'd think that Kenney had discovered those keys were missing, and started looking for them. There was quite a lot of mail in the box, too.

"Maybe I better lock the box and take the keys up to him," Johnny decided. "The way the kids play around down here in the hall they are likely to pull those letters out of the box and scatter them all over the place."

He locked the box and dropped the key ring into his pocket without a second glance at it. As he went up the stairs he was remembering what Ma had told him about Fred Kenney. A former prizefighter who was now in the jewelry business. Had a wife and two children but they had been away for the last week on a visit to the wife's mother and father. Ma thought they were a nice family.

**J**OHNNY reached the door of his apartment, and let himself in with his key. He would take those keys up to Kenney as soon as possible, but he had to let Ma know he was home first. She always worried when he was late.

"That you, Johnny?" she called as she heard the door open.

"Yes, Ma," he called back.

He went on through the hall. She was waiting in the living room, small and gray-haired, but the brown eyes were bright behind the glasses. A little sadness in her face that had been there ever since Dad had died three years ago.

"Fred Kenney left his keys hanging in the mail box downstairs," Johnny said as he kissed her on the cheek. "I thought I'd better take them up to him."

"Of course," Ma said. "Better do it right away, Johnny. Mr. Kenney might need the keys and not remember where he left them." She smiled. "Dinner isn't quite ready yet anyway."

"All right. I'll take them up now, Ma."

Johnny hesitated in the hall of the apartment. It was a bit warm tonight, unusually so for early fall. Still it had been a long hot summer. He drew off his suit coat and hung it on a chair. Kenney wouldn't mind if a neighbor came calling in his shirt sleeves.

Four more flights of stairs to the sixth floor where Fred Kenney's apartment was located. Johnny went on up, still tired physically but a lot more awake mentally than he had been when he first came home.

There was no one in the sixth floor hall. Apartment 63 was over there on the left. The door standing open just a little way. Kenney certainly was careless about doors and keys.

Johnny went to the door and rang the bell. There was no answer, even after he waited a moment and rang again. He peered in through the crack of the door. There was a light in the hall and what looked like a pair of shoes on the floor. Nice tan low cut shoes, but there was something wrong about them. You couldn't make a pair of shoes stand up on the back or the heels like that with the toes pointing toward the ceiling. Not unless there were feet in them, you couldn't.

Johnny pushed the door open wider. Fred Kenney was lying there flat on his back on the floor of the hall. His eyes were closed and he looked peaceful. Surprisingly so for a man with a kitchen knife sticking in his heart. Johnny suddenly felt very sick, but he fought against it.

The door of an apartment across the hall opened and a husky dark haired man stepped out. He saw Johnny standing there and glared at him. He was a stranger. Johnny had never seen him before.

"I'm Detective Sergeant Lang," the man said, and he flashed a silver badge and thrust it quickly back into his pocket. "I've been watching and listening from across the hall and I heard the whole thing."

"That's good," Johnny said.

Lang scowled. "I saw you ring the doorbell, then Kenney came to the door. You told him that you wanted four hundred dollars. When he started to argue about it you got tough, shoved him back, stepped into his apartment and banged the door shut."

"I did not!" protested Johnny. "I came up here a few moments ago to

give Kenney his keys that he left hanging in the mailbox downstairs."

Lang stepped around him and peered into the hall of Apartment 63. Then he uttered a startled curse.

"I thought maybe you might have beaten him up a little in order to force him to give you the money," Lang said. "But I didn't think you'd murder him with a saw-edged bread knife." He drew a .38 revolver from his pocket and covered Johnny with the gun.

"So that's why Webb was so anxious to have me try and collect the four hundred bucks for him," Johnny said, glancing at the corpse. "Only the man who killed Kenney would know that knife has a saw-edge. All you can see is the knife handle now." He looked hard at Lang. "You're no more a detective sergeant than I am."

"Sez you!" growled Lang. "You saw my badge."

"I saw some kind of a badge," Johnny said. "My uncle is a detective sergeant and he carries a gold badge—not a silver one—in a case."

"You would have to get smart," Lang said, drawing the door of the Kenney apartment closed from the outside. "Now we'll have to do this the hard way."

"Do what?" Johnny frowned. "I don't get it."

"You will," Lang said grimly. He nodded toward an iron ladder at the far end of the hall. "Go on, move! We're going up on the roof of this building."

**J**OHNNY knew if he tried yelling for help, Lang might be able to shoot and kill him and get away before anyone appeared. He walked toward the ladder and Lang followed with the gun. They went up the iron ladder and out onto the roof. The roof was flat with a low wall around the edge. There were clothes lines strung around, wash moving like strange white ghosts in the shadows.

"I saw you as you came out of the apartment after killing Kenney," Lang said. "You ran, and I chased you up here on the roof. We fought and I just had to shoot to kill."

"You're not going to try and bluff the police with that detective sergeant gag, are you?" Johnny asked quietly. "They'll wonder what a stranger was doing in that apartment on the sixth floor."

"That's Dan Webb's apartment," Lang said. "I'm a friend of his and have been visiting him for the last few days and nights."

"Sure," Johnny said. "The two of you knew that Kenney was a salesman for a jewelry company, that he sometimes carried samples, valuable jewels, with him when he came home at night. Webb watched and waited, sitting out in front of the house night after night. He knew Kenney's family was away, so you killed him tonight. But you needed a fall guy and Webb picked me."

"Yeah," Lang said. "He figured you were all muscle and no brains."

Johnny glanced toward the entrance to the roof. A head appeared there—a head that looked like a huge egg. Dan Webb coming up on the roof. Abruptly Johnny lunged forward. He caught the wrist of the hand in which Lang held the gun and twisted it.

The .38 roared, the muzzle pointed toward Lang's body. Johnny snatched the gun out of his grasp as Lang staggered back against the low wall of the roof, meanwhile clutching at his blood-stained chest.

"I—I'm shot," Lang muttered. "Got to get away—might shoot again."

Some crazy impulse made him swing his legs over the wall. Johnny tried to grab him but wasn't close enough. An instant later Lang went hurtling down into the air shaft to land six stories below.

Johnny swung around, gun in hand as Webb came toward him.

"Stay back, Webb!" Johnny said. "Come any closer and I'll shoot to kill."

Down below a woman's scream rose high and shrill. Someone had heard the thud and seen the body that had fallen. There was little chance that Lang was still alive.

Johnny circled around Webb, backing toward the entrance to the room. The bald-headed man stood motionless—

afraid of the .38 in Johnny's hand. Evidently Webb had no gun.

"You can have these," Johnny said, tossing the ring of keys at Webb's feet. "Kenney won't need them any more. You must have had them after you killed him, wanted to get rid of them, so you unlocked the mailbox and left the keys hanging there. Kenney wouldn't have unlocked the box and then not even looked at the mail in it."

Johnny reached the iron ladder and then deliberately threw the gun on the roof some distance away from where the bald-headed man stood. Webb uttered an excited shout and dashed for the gun.

Before he could pick it up, Johnny had gone down the ladder.

Johnny closed the roof door and bolted it from inside. There was no way of Webb getting off the roof now, or back into the building. The police would be here soon. They would ask a lot of ques-

tions when they found Webb up there on the roof with the gun that had killed Lang, and the keys that belonged to the murdered man.

"Bet he even has more of those unset diamonds in his pocket like the one that rolled across the steps when I talked to him in front of the house tonight," Johnny said, finding the stone in his pocket as he reached the sixth floor hall. "I don't think the police will believe his story about my killing Kenney. Why would a dumb truck driver do a thing like that?"

He went down the stairs. It was easy to see why Webb and Lang had tried to frame him for the murder. That way no one would suspect them and they could hang around and get rid of the jewelry when they were good and ready.

Johnny moved faster down the fourth floor stairs. Ma always worried when he was late—and besides he was hungry.



## THE CRIME QUIZ

**H**ERE'S your chance to see how much you know about crime! Give yourself 10 points for each question you answer correctly. A score of 60 is good. 80 ranks you as an amateur detective. If you are 100 per cent correct—you're a super-sleuth! The answers are on Page 130—if you must look!

1. Everyone has heard of fingerprints. Name two other kinds of prints a criminal may leave behind as clues.
2. How can the direction in which an automobile has traveled be ascertained from its tracks?
3. A thief who breaks into a house and steals is called a burglar. What is a thief who steals surreptitiously from a store during business hours called?
4. Which is better liquid in which to douse a bomb—water or oil?
5. Right or wrong? An ink's property of dissolving in water may be put to use in determining its approximate age. A drop of water placed on recent writing will immediately dissolve the ink.
6. In order to determine which gun has fired a bullet, police laboratories examine questioned bullets with a— a. comparison microscope? b. tintometer? c. spectroscope?
7. Sound travels 1100 feet per second. How fast would you say a .45 caliber bullet is traveling when it leaves the muzzle of a gun? a. 500 feet per second? b. 1100? c. 1800? d. 4200?
8. When can you boast of having committed a murder, and nothing be done to you about it?
9. For what \$150,000 reason can't counterfeiters hope to equal the perfection of the fine lines on U.S. money?
10. Chloral hydrate is more familiarly known as k----- drops.

# DIRTY HANDS



Schloss reached over the counter and grabbed the clerk by the coat lapel

*When murder stalks, Detective Lieutenant Max Pebble points a finger at—a walking corpse!*

**By B. J. BENSON**

**I** WALKED over as the car pulled up to the curb. "I thought I'd drive down and see how you were doing on it," the chief said to me. "What did you find so far?"

I leaned over to his car window and pushed my hat back on my head.

"Well," I said, "the man's name was Dixon. Niles Dixon. He had a police record."

The chief rubbed his fat thighs for

a moment and twitched a heavy eyebrow. "I don't remember any Dixon. He's not local, is he?"

"No. He came from Kingsfield. Small-time gambler. Has a petty larceny conviction."

"Find anything on the body? Papers, wallet, laundry marks?"

"No, nothing," I said. I pointed through the darkness. "The body was dumped right over here on Arthur Dix-

on's front porch. No hands. Looks to us like they were chopped off with an ax."

"What about that note pinned to the body?"

I told him there was a message cut from parts of a newspaper and pasted on a piece of cardboard. It said, THIS WILL KEEP HIS HANDS CLEAN.

"We haven't found the hands yet," I added.

"I don't like Kingsfield hoods using our town to dump bodies," the chief said. "How's this Arthur Dixon taking it? Bad?"

"It wasn't a pretty sight. After all, Niles was his brother."

"Yes, it's bad," the chief said. "When you running over to Kingsfield?"

"Tomorrow," I said. I looked across the sidewalk, over the patch of lawn and over to the lighted windows of the house. "Right now I'm going back in there and talk to Arthur Dixon again. He may be feeling a little better by this time."

"It's past midnight," the chief said as he motioned to his driver. "Don't work too late, Max. You know how Effie gets when you come home these hours."

"I keep telling her it's only one more year before I retire," I grinned. "Sometimes that holds her. Other times it doesn't."

"I know," the chief said. "Then she calls up and blasts me. There must be an easier way of making a living."

"It's a fine time to find out," I said sarcastically.

I watched the big car drive off and I went through the reporters and photographers and over to the knot of cops on the sidewalk. I spoke to Detective Sanders. Then I went up the walk. The house was shabby and rundown and needed a coat of paint. On the porch, a man in coveralls from the Central Laboratory was covering the floor with a sheet of tarpaulin.

I went by him and put my forefinger in the bell.

I waited. I heard the tap of high heels inside and the door rattled and swung open. A tall, attractive, red-headed woman looked out at me. She had a sullen, vividly painted mouth, and she was wearing a tightfitting, flowered housecoat over a well developed body.

SHE peered at me a moment. I took off my hat.

"Oh, Lieutenant Pebble," she said. "Come in. With that white hair of yours, it's hard for me to think of you as a homicide detective."

"I thought your husband might be feeling a little better now, Mrs. Dixon."

"It's been a terrible shock," she said. "Please don't press him too much."

"I'll be as brief as possible," I said.

I went in through the doorway, past the hall, and into the living room. The furniture was old and worn, but the man sitting on the over-stuffed davenport was well dressed. He was wearing a brown suede jacket and suede shoes beneath gray flannel trousers. There was a stubble of a beard on his face that made him look older than his thirty-five years. He blinked at me through tortoise shelled glasses and his eyes were red and watery.

"Sorry to bother you again, Mr. Dixon," I said. "But the quicker we get started on it, the sooner we can wind it up."

He looked at me dully without answering.

"Maybe I'd better come back tomorrow," I said gently.

"What do you want to know?" he asked in a flat monotone.

I sat down in the club chair opposite him. "You say you heard a car drive by the house about ten o'clock tonight. Just then there was a heavy thud on the front porch. You ran out and saw the car disappearing. Hadn't the car stopped?"

"No."

"And you can't give us a description of it?"

"All I could see were the tail lights."

"You saw the note pinned to him. Do you have any idea what it means?"

"No."

"Your brother have any enemies?"

"I don't know. Niles didn't tell me much about his business."

"See him often?"

"About once a week. He'd drive down from Kingsfield and have dinner with Doris and me."

"What kind of business was he in?"

"I don't know whether he was in any kind of business," Dixon said hesitantly. "He followed the horses a little."

"Make money at it?"



"Off and on. He played cards. Sometimes he won at that."

"Older than you?"

"Younger by a year. He was thirty-four."

"There's a close resemblance," I said.

"What's *your* business, Mr. Dixon?"

"I run a small patent medicine business. Mail order."

"Where is that?"

"Four Three Two Nine Flagstead Avenue. It's called Doctor Burns' Elixir."

I wrote it down. "What are your immediate plans, Mr. Dixon?"

"I really don't know," he said dubiously. "Niles and I were both born upstate in Coreyville. Our folks died some time back and there's nobody left. I want to send the body back there for burial as soon as they release it."

"That shouldn't take long," I said. "Then what?"

"I'm going away with Doris for a long time."

I got up. "I don't blame you," I said. "I'll keep a police guard around your house so you won't be bothered."

"It's not necessary," he said. "We're not seeing anybody."

"You don't know reporters," I said.

I said good by to him and went out to the hall and spoke to Mrs. Dixon. Then I went outside on the porch. Detective Sanders was waiting there for me. His young face looked at me glumly.

"Find anything more?" I asked him.

"No, sir. We searched all the grounds."

"You look tired," I said. "Post a twenty-four hour detail around the house and go home to bed."

"Yes, sir," he said. "You look tired, too, lieutenant."

"When you get as old as me, Sanders, you look like that all the time."

**I** WAS in Kingsfield early the next morning. I went down to the Police Headquarters and spoke to the local cops for a while. Then I drove down to the Hotel Braemore with a short, thin, gray-haired detective, named Herman Shloss.

"This is where they hang out," Shloss said as we went into the lobby. "The big wheel is a character named Gibbett. Moon Gibbett. He fits good with the local politicians and we've

never been able to hang anything on him. We know he runs some big games here, but every time we show up he's been tipped. There's always some small fry left around to take the rap for him."

"This Niles Dixon ever have any trouble with him?"

"Dixon was out of Moon's class, lieutenant. Still, there's a rumor around that he sat in on a poker game with Gibbett and a few others two nights ago. They say it wound up yesterday morning and Dixon walked out of here with fifty grand or more. If that rumor is on the level you've got a motive."

"I'll know a little better," I said. "after I talk to Gibbett."

We went over to the desk and waited a few moments until the clerk contacted Gibbett on the house phone. Shloss took the mouthpiece and spoke into it, making a wry face at me. We left the lobby and went up the elevator to the eighth floor.

The man who opened the door was dressed in slippers and silk robe and he was yawning. He was a big bulk of a man with tousled hair and a heavy florid face. He looked at us with sleep lidded eyes.

"Shloss," he said. "You get up too early."

"I work for a living," Shloss said. "You ought to try it."

"Who's this?" Gibbett asked him. "Your bodyguard? Or is it the other way around?"

"Neither," Shloss grinned. "This man here is from Eastern City. He wants to ask some questions."

"You mean he's a cop? He looks more like a retired banker."

"He's Detective Lieutenant Max Pebble."

"Come on in and sit down," Gibbett said to me. "I've heard of you, but your appearance fooled me."

He waved me over to a modernistic lounge chair. I sat down.

"It's getting harder and harder to fool people these days," I said.

"There's still one born every minute," Gibbett said. "You can ask me. I know."

"Sorry to have disturbed you so early," I said.

"It's okay," Gibbett said. "Care for a drink?"

"It's a bit too soon for me," I said

I took the police photo of Dixon's body out of my pocket and handed it over to him.

"This man was murdered in Eastern City last night," I said. "Do you recognize him?"

Gibbett looked at it and handed it back to me quickly.

"It looks a lot like Niles Dixon," he said.

"He was hit over the head and thrown out from a car onto his brother's front porch. The hands were missing from the body."

"Too bad," Gibbett said.

"Seems like he was in a little card game with you the other night. There was some money lost."

"I wouldn't know."

"Niles Dixon won a lot of money in that game," I said. "When we found the body there wasn't a quarter on him. There was a note pinned to his coat. It said 'This Will Keep His Hands Clean.'"

"That's cute," Gibbett said. "Somebody had a sense of humor."

"His brother doesn't think it's so cute, Mr. Gibbett. We don't think it's cute either."

"My apologies," Gibbett said, bowing. "You must have a crime wave over in Eastern City. Maybe you should get back there and attend to it, lieutenant."

"Sometimes the crimes originate somewhere else," I said mildly. "Sometimes we have to come to the source."

"You won't find the source here, lieutenant. Now if you'll excuse me, I'll take my bath."

"I'll wait," I said, settling down comfortably.

**H**E frowned. "You're wasting your time," he said. "The door is right behind you. Close it gently on the way out." He turned and nodded to Shloss. "So long, Herman."

"I'll still wait," I said.

"What do you mean you'll wait?" he asked.

"That's what I said, Mr. Gibbett. If you won't talk here, maybe you'll talk down at Police Headquarters."

"Don't make me laugh. I throw a lot of money around Kingsfield. I don't know what a police station looks like. Ask Shloss, he'll tell you."

"I didn't mean Kingsfield," I said.

"You going to wrap me up and take

me to Eastern City, lieutenant?"

"That's right," I said.

"All by yourself?"

"If I have to."

He looked at me carefully, then stared at Shloss. Shloss grinned.

"What are you laughing at?" Gibbett asked him.

"I think he can do it," Shloss said. "It's something I'd enjoy seeing."

Gibbett eyed him for a long second. He turned his head back to me. Then he shrugged his shoulders and sat down on the arm of the divan.

"Maybe his reputation scares people, Herman," he said. "You certainly can't tell by looking at him."

"Maybe you'd like to try bucking him?" Shloss asked hopefully.

"Not me, Herman. I've got a hunch you're right. Okay, lieutenant, it's your deal. What do you want?"

"I'll want an alibi for last night, Mr. Gibbett," I said. "Say between eight and eleven?"

"I was in a little card game right here in my suite."

"Can you prove it?"

"I wasn't playing solitaire. There were five others. Want their names?"

"Yes, later. Did Niles Dixon take you for much the other night?"

"Twelve thousand. Johnny Burgos lost fifteen. Altogether Dixon grabbed more than forty gees."

"Dixon was supposed to be a small timer," I said. "It's not right. It doesn't fit."

"I'm not complaining."

"It was a frame," I said. "How did he do it?"

Gibbett laughed shortly. "An old chestnut, lieutenant. Marked cards."

"That's kid stuff, Mr. Gibbett."

"Sure. But he played it real cute. He made a deal with the clerk at the cigar counter."

"How?"

"We sent down for fresh cards when the game started. Those cards had the seals steamed off the packs. The cards had been marked and sealed again. Of course we found out right after the game. By that time both Dixon and the cigar clerk had left town in a hurry."

"I'll want the clerk's name," I said.

"Fred Clapper. Let me know when you find him. I'd like to talk to him, too."

"You told me you had an alibi for

last night. Does that include all your friends?"

"I've got a lot of friends, lieutenant."

"Maybe I'll get around and talk to some of them."

"Good luck to you."

"One more thing," I said. "Did you kill Dixon?"

He smiled. "I was waiting for you to ask me that. No. I sure would have if I'd caught up with him first."

"Thanks for the information," I said.

"I might be back this way again sometime."

"I'll be watching for you, lieutenant."

"Good-by," I said.

WE left the Braemore and drove over to a cheap hotel on West Sixth Street. We got the key from the room clerk and went up to Dixon's room. Shloss and I spent a good hour going through it. We found nothing. We went down to the lobby again and back to the desk.

"How long did Dixon live here?" I asked.

The room clerk ran a finger nervously over his thin moustache.

"About eight months, sir."

"Always pay his rent?"

"Sometimes he was a little slow with it."

"Was he in a hurry when he checked out?"

"I don't know, sir. He checked out yesterday at three in the morning. There was another man on duty."

"Do you have a specimen of his handwriting around?" I asked.

"I guess so. I could dig up one of his laundry slips."

"I'll have it," I said.

He went out back. We waited. He came in again and handed me a yellow slip of paper. There was a hole through the middle of it.

"I had it on a spindle," he said apologetically.

"This will do fine," I said. "Now, one more thing. How often did the girl come here?"

He blinked. "What girl, sir?"

"You know," I said. "The girl. The tall redhead."

[Turn page]

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"You must be mistaken," he said stiffly. "It's not that kind of a hotel."

Shloss reached over the counter and grabbed him by the coat lapel.

"The lieutenant wants to know about a girl," Shloss said softly. "Tell him."

The clerk reddened and cleared his throat.

"She'd come during the day," I said.

"How often?"

"About once a week, sir."

"That's better," I said. "Where did Dixon garage his car?"

"There's a public garage across the street."

"Thanks," I said.

We went out of there and across the street. The car was a thirty-nine Plymouth club coupe. We found nothing in it and Shloss used the office phone to call for the print men. I said good-by to him and left him there. Getting back into my sedan, I drove the thirty-five miles back to Eastern City.

It was just past noon when I headed over to 4329 Flagstead Avenue. I

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pulled up in front of a grimy, sooty gray, limestone building that had seen better times. I went up to the seventh floor in a rickety elevator and walked by a dental laboratory, an embalming school, and two chiropractors. I came to an open door that said *Doctor Burns' Elixir*. I went in. The office was shabby and the few pieces of furniture were cracked and peeling.

A thin wisp of a girl with a sallow face, straggling mousy hair and spindly legs was pasting some stamps on some small brown cartons. She had a brown coat on.

I showed her my leather folder with the badge pinned to it. She stared at it and dropped the stamps. I picked them up for her.

"Closing up shop?" I asked.

"Uh-huh. Mrs. Dixon phoned this morning and told me to. It's been a terrible tragedy, hasn't it?"

"Yes," I said. "Isn't Mr. Dixon coming in to wind things up?"

"I don't think so. Mrs. Dixon told me he'd mailed me a money order with two weeks pay. She said the tragedy had affected Mr. Dixon badly. They're going away for a long time."

"Would you know if Mrs. Dixon has an income of her own?"

"You mean where would they get the money for the trip? I suppose she must have. This business never paid too well."

I looked around. "I can see that. Tell me, does he always pay you by money order?"

"Oh, no. He has a checking account at the First National. It's only a small [Turn page]

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one. I got paid by check every Friday. I'd fill it out myself and he'd sign it."

"Then the checkbook is here."

"Wrong again," she laughed. "He kept it in his breast pocket. On Friday he'd say, 'Nora, pay yourself.' Then he'd hand me the checkbook. I'd fill it out and he'd sign it. It was sort of a little joke between us."

"And you haven't spoken to Mr. Dixon since his brother's tragedy?"

"Well, I couldn't expect to. Not after that."

"Of course not," I said. "You going to lock up now?"

"There's nothing more for me to do. I've taken care of the last of the mail."

She sighed.

"I hope you get another job right away," I said. "If I hear of anything, I'll let you know."

"Thank you."

"What did you say your name was?"

"You didn't ask me. It's Nora Mar-der."

"Would you mind giving me your address, Nora?"

"Not at all. Forty-Three Parkview Street."

I wrote it down. "You'll hear from me," I said.

IT was almost five o'clock when I got back to the Dixon house. I left the sedan at the curb and spoke to the uniformed patrolman on the front walk. Then I went up the long narrow concrete and onto the canvas covered porch. I stood there and looked around for a moment before pressing the bell.

Mrs. Dixon answered the door. She was wearing a short fur jacket and a hat with a bright feather in it.

"Any news?" she asked me.

"Yes, there's news," I said.

I went by her and into the hallway. There were three pieces of luggage on the floor.

"Leaving so soon?" I asked. I went into the living room and looked around.

She followed me in. "Yes. I've made arrangements for an undertaker to ship the body back to Coreyville."

"When are you coming back?"

"Our plans are very indefinite."

"Mr. Dixon around?"

"He's out back somewhere."

"I'd like to speak to the both of you together."

"I'll get him," she said.

She went out of the living room and I sat down. The red, waning sun streamed in through the torn window curtains.

They came back in together. Dixon was freshly shaved and I could still see the talcum powder on his heavy jowls. He was wearing a tan polo coat.

"Sit down," I said to them. Mrs. Dixon hesitated, then sat down on the davenport. Dixon took his glasses off and moved down beside her.

"You caught us just in time," he said.

"I guess I did," I said.

"We were just leaving town. What was it you wanted?"

"I want to bring the both of you downtown and book you for murder."

He looked at me without answering. Mrs. Dixon arched her eyes.

"I think I misunderstood you," she said.

"No. You heard me correctly."

"You sure you have the right name, lieutenant?" Dixon asked.

"Niles Dixon," I said. "That's correct, isn't it?"

"This isn't your idea of a gruesome joke?" he asked. "I happen to be Arthur Dixon. Niles was my brother."

"I don't joke," I said. "Not in this business."

"I'm sure I don't understand what you're driving at," Mrs. Dixon said.

"Yes, you do," I said. "You've been playing games with Niles here. Maybe your husband's poverty got you down. Maybe you were fascinated by the kind of life Niles led. Anyway, you had a habit of sneaking off to Niles about once a week."

"I won't be slandered like that," she said. "My husband won't let you get away with it."

"Your husband is dead, Mrs. Dixon. You and Niles killed him last night. You went so far as to cut his hands off."

"That's the craziest thing I ever heard." Dixon said.

"It took somebody with a crazy streak to do it," I said to him. "The way it looks from here, you wanted to make a quick cleanup and blow town

[Turn page]

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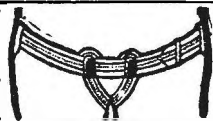
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with Arthur's wife. You framed that card game. Then you came here with your winnings and changed identities. You killed Arthur and cut his hands off. You put that note on his body, put it on the front porch and called the police. Arthur and you looked pretty nearly alike and it could have worked. You thought we'd figure it as a gang killing."

"You sure you feel all right?" Dixon asked.

"No, I feel rotten," I said. "Well, it nearly worked, Dixon. You had Gibbett and the rest of them buffaloed. I guess each one figures the others had something to do with it. But you had to go and make mistakes."

"What mistakes?"

"Oh, several of them. You claimed Niles Dixon was thrown onto the porch from a speeding car. That takes a lot of throwing when you consider the porch is a good twenty feet from the curbstone. Second, there's Nora Marder, Arthur's secretary. You knew she'd recognize his signature and so would the bank. That's why you paid her by money order. That was wrong because Arthur always paid her by check. Third, you were in too much of a hurry to leave town with the body. That's because you knew people would have recognized you if there was a local funeral.

"Fourth, you cut off his hands. You didn't want there to be any fingerprints to check. But that's what got us to thinking. Now we'll have your prints and a specimen of your handwriting and a specimen of Arthur's. We have your car impounded and Arthur's office padlocked and there are a lot of people who can identify you. I guess, all in all, it'll be enough."

I got up and put my hat on. Mrs. Dixon was sobbing into a lacy handkerchief. Niles Dixon stood up. His eyes darted wildly around the room.

"I wouldn't try it," I said to him. "I've got a feeling against a man who'd kill his own brother. I guess it would give me pleasure to put a bullet into you where it would hurt bad. So don't tempt me." I waved my hand at them. "You two can come along now. I've got a car and some men waiting outside."

We left the house and went down

the walk. When we got to the car, Detective Sanders opened the door and looked out at me.

"You don't look well," he said.

"It's a dirty business, Sanders. In all these years I've never gotten used to it."

"You'll be retiring soon, lieutenant."

"One more year," I said. "Maybe I'll ask the chief to put a uniform back on me and put me over at the playground. The kids there have dirty hands, too. But it's a different kind of dirt."

## OFF THE RECORD

(Continued from Page 8)

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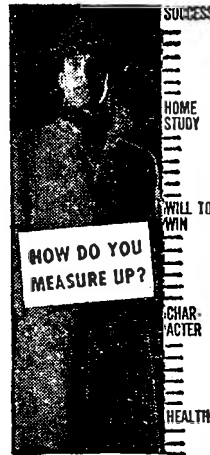
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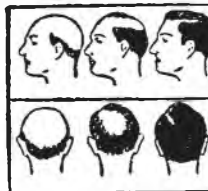
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| 1                         | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8                         | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15                        | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22                        | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29                        | 30 | 31 |    |    |    |    |

THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFANTILE PARALYSIS



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## RADIO-TELEVISION

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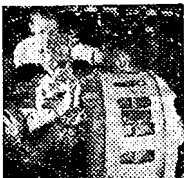
**OLDEST, BEST EQUIPPED  
SCHOOL OF ITS KIND IN U.S.**

**FIVE BIG FLOORS PACKED WITH MASSIVE EQUIPMENT** to train with, to prepare for good jobs and real futures in the opportunity fields of **ELECTRICITY** or **RADIO—TELEVISION**. Thousands of graduates in industry. New developments mean even greater opportunities in the future. Prepare quickly in the great training shops of Coyne. Mail coupon for facts about these **TWO BIG OPPORTUNITY FIELDS**.

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You get actual shop work on full-size equipment plus necessary theory. Whether you had previous experience or not makes no difference at Coyne.

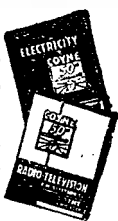
**50th ANNIVERSARY YEAR**

Approved for G. I. Training

**NON-VETERANS WHO ARE SHORT OF MONEY** can finance most of their tuition and pay it in easy monthly payments.

### MAIL COUPON FOR FREE BOOK

Mail coupon now for new illustrated Coyne book on either Electricity or Radio—Television or both. No obligation—no salesman will call. Do it TODAY.



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Send me your **BIG FREE BOOK**—for the course checked below. This does not obligate me and no salesman will call.

☐ **ELECTRICITY** ☐ **RADIO-TELEVISION**

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....

these suggestions? Please write us and let us know. Here is another Black Bat fan, who is also a fan of the Phantom. As you may know, **THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE** is one of our popular companion magazines. If you have never read it, make its acquaintance!

Dear Editor: Have been a reader of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** and **THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE** for a long time and enjoy them better every issue. I have just bought my latest **BLACK BOOK**. I haven't read it yet, but if it is anyways near as good as the other Black Bat stories, it will be a knockout.—*James F. Hunt, Malden, Mo.*

Would you like to see **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** come out oftener? This Black Bat fan would!

Dear Editor: Having been reading **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** for some time now I just want you to know how much I enjoy it. If only you could put the magazine out more often, as I have to wait such a long time until it comes out. Keep up the good work, and good luck—as you are tops.—*Mrs. A. Munson, 68 Astor St., Newark 5, N. J.*

Thank you very much, Mrs. Munson.

We'll be back again next issue with another batch of mail, so why not drop us a letter or postcard that we can include among those we publish? Kindly address all letters and postcards to The Editor, **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

Here's a tip for thrills—readers who follow sports will like "The Big Wheel," the Mickey Rooney film about the Indianapolis Race Classic, just released by United Artists. Jack Dempsey is one of the co-producers and the whole picture's swell. You'll enjoy it—as we did.

So until next issue—happy reading to everybody, and thanks for writing!

—THE EDITOR.

### Answers to Questions on Page 116

1. Footprints. Teeth prints. Tire prints. 2. Dust and are thrown up by the tires to one side of the track in the direction the car is traveling. 3. Shoplifter 5. Right. 6. Comparison microscope. 7. 1800. having once been tried and acquitted of th 9. \$150,000 is the cost of the geometrical lathe making U.S. currency engravings. 10. Knockout

**NEED MONEY?**

**HERE'S PLENTY!**

**I'll Put a "Shoe Store Business" in Your Pocket!**

**SHOE BUSINESS**



**You Don't Invest a Cent!  
I Furnish Everything — FREE**

That's right — I plan to give it to you for absolutely nothing — FREE. You don't invest a penny, now or ever! Rush the coupon Today — be in this splendidly profitable business next week.

You can be the direct factory man handling the line of this 46-year-old million-dollar company — the Leader in its field.



**FIT MEN AND WOMEN**

Over 150 smart styles in Comfort-Fitting shoes for value-wise men and women. You handle this superb line of dress, work, sport shoes with scores of exclusive features. Expanded new women's line opens BIGGER profit opportunities — more sales per call! Leather jackets, raincoats, sport shirts bring extra income.

**EXCLUSIVE FEATURES**



**HORSEHIDE LEATHER JACKETS**

Plenty of buyers waiting in your neighborhood for these fine leather jackets, at far-below-store prices. (raincoats, too.) Included in your FREE Sales Outfit. Simply mail Coupon.



**VELVET-EEZ AIR CUSHIONS**

Exclusive Velvet-Eez Air Cushion shoe cradles foot on 10,000 tiny air bubbles. Ten-second demonstration practically Guarantees profitable Sales. Demonstrator included in FREE Selling Outfit. Mail coupon today.



**REMEMBER . . .**

Mason Velvet-Eez Shoes are backed by the Good Housekeeping Guarantee Seal, so neither you nor your customers can lose a dime — and you have everything to gain. Mail Coupon Today.

**Here's Why It's BETTER**

Everybody wears shoes. You can start your business by selling a pair to a friend, your brother, father, mother, sister or wife — get a pair yourself. That will prove the fine quality leather — superb craftsmanship — exclusive features — fashion-right styling — money saving value — and the UNEQUALLED comfort-FIT!

From then on your income is up to your own ability and determination. Every day is Big Earnings day for happy, established Mason Shoe Salesmen who are fortunate to work with the LEADING line in the field.

**Here's What You Get**

● **Powerful National Advertising**

You get the benefit of big, powerful ads in magazines like the Saturday Evening Post, Good Housekeeping, etc. People know Mason, are eager to get the Special Personal Fitting Service we advertise for your benefit. Remember, we pay for all this advertising to make you known as a Mason Certified Shoe Fitter — it doesn't cost you a cent.

● **Helpful Sales Training**

Whether you have experience or not, our potent program of continuing selling help and training is devoted to putting more money in your pocket. Complete Sales Outfit: Sales Getting Ideas prepared for you by 5,000 Successful Salesmen; Door Opener Gifts for Prospects; Special Selling Events and Prizes each month; advice from the most successful men in the organization. All are YOURS when you tie up with the Leader.



**BIG CASH PROFITS**

LEO DE MATO, who averages six sales per day, says: "I have over 645 customers. The Mason Line with commissions up to \$3.00 a pair is really SWELL!" And L. D. Van Gundy says, "I have averaged \$5.00 an hour profit for every hour selling". These exceptional men show the way to really BIG EARNINGS — what they can do, you may do!

**RUSH THE COUPON NOW!**

**MASON SHOE MFG. CO.**  
Dept. M-499, Chippewa Falls, Wis.

Put me in a "shoe store business". Rush me great FREE Sample Outfit featuring Air Cushion shoes, Leather jackets — other fast-selling shoes and garments. Show me how your National advertising makes more customers and profits for me. Send everything free and pre-

paid. (My own shoe size is .....).

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

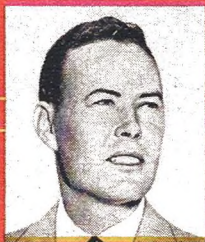
**MASON SHOE MFG. CO.**  
Dept. M-499, Chippewa Falls, Wis.



## DENVER, DALLAS, DREXEL HILL



Ben Garcia, Denver, Colo., knows Calvert tastes better and smoother always.



Earl Gray, Dallas, Texas, enjoys Calvert in moderation, likes its lightness.

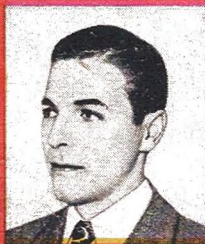


Charles W. James, Drexel Hill, Pa., switched to milder, smoother Calvert.

## SPRINGFIELD, SPOKANE, CAIRO, ILL.



A. C. Guinn, Springfield, Mo., switched to Calvert because it tastes better.



Richard S. Reed, Spokane, Wash., switched to Calvert for today's best buy.



Edward W. Hanna, Cairo, Ill., switched to milder Calvert—and is glad he did!

Wherever you go — It's good to know  
It's **Smart to Switch**  
to **Calvert**  
Lighter... Smoother... Tastes Better



CALVERT RESERVE, CHOICE BLENDED WHISKEY—85.8 PROOF—  
65% GRAIN NEUTRAL SPIRITS. CALVERT DISTILLERS CORP., N.Y.C.