

A N C

# BLACK BOOK

25¢  
WINTER

# DETECTIVE



A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION

FEATURING: **HOT, WILLING-AND DEADLY**  
A NOVEL OF A COME-ON GIRL BY **STEWART STERLING**



# LOOSE FALSE TEETH?

The makers of **POLIDENT** offer you  
**Double Your Money Back** unless this

*Amazing New CREAM  
Holds Plates Tighter, Longer  
THAN ANYTHING YOU EVER TRIED*

Many tried powders,  
found they failed!

Read what they say  
about this new way:



"For ten years my teeth wouldn't stay tight for more than two hours a day. I tried powders, but nothing worked till your new cream, Poli-Grip, came along."

Mrs. T. W., Medfield, Mass.

"I like the cool taste of Poli-Grip and the smooth way it holds my teeth. It is easy to apply and holds tight for so long."

Mrs. L. W. N., Ottumwa, Iowa

"I found your new cream, Poli-Grip, very pleasant and mild-tasting and it held my loose plates very tight, longer than anything I've tried."

Mrs. H. D. M., Beadentown, Florida

"I like the wonderful holding strength of your new cream better than anything I've ever used. I like Poli-Grip's refreshing taste, too."

H. B. V., East Canaan, Conn.

"I definitely prefer Poli-Grip to other products I've tried. It holds my plate tighter and feels comfortable longer. Poli-Grip is cooling, soothing, never gritty."

Mrs. K. L., Los Angeles, Calif.

# POLI-GRIP

Double Your Money Back Unless it Gives You  
**MORE COMFORT, MORE SECURITY**  
THAN YOU EVER HAD BEFORE

Yes, the people who make Polident, the world's largest selling denture cleanser, are standing right behind their new adhesive cream, Poli-Grip, with an ironclad guarantee. You get double your money back, if Poli-Grip doesn't hold your plates tighter, longer than anything you've ever tried.

And that's not all. See if you don't find that Poli-Grip does all these wonderful things for you, too:

1. . . . form a cushion between your plate and gums to eliminate the friction that makes gums sore and raw.
2. . . . hold shallow lowers, despite lack of suction.
3. . . . seal the edges of plates so food particles can't get underneath to cause irritation.
4. . . . enable you to eat hard-to-chew foods in comfort, like steak, apples, celery, even corn-on-the-cob.
5. . . . give you full confidence to laugh, talk, sing without fear of embarrassment due to slipping plates.

6. hold plates tight even during strenuous sessions of coughing or sneezing.

Won't life be wonderful with all these torments behind you? Be sure to be among the first to learn the glorious comfort of holding loose false teeth tight and snug with Poli-Grip! Buy a tube at your drugstore as soon as possible.

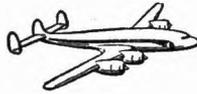


Made and  
**GUARANTEED**  
by the makers of  
**POLIDENT**

# Take a tip from "Mr. Industry"



**E. V. RICKENBACKER**  
President and General Manager of  
Eastern Air Lines



Eddie Rickenbacker cashed in on an I. C. S. course and natural leadership to win the *top man of industry* title for 1951.

Mr. Rickenbacker took an I. C. S. course in automotive engineering when he was a kid working in a bicycle shop. That was the start of the famous Rickenbacker formula for *making* opportunity, being ready when it came. Last year a *Forbes Magazine* survey—polling business executives, securities analysts and others in the world of finance—found him top man of industry for 1951. Of total votes received, his name led all others.

Hero of two world wars, top-drawer racing driver and automotive engineer, the hard-won success of the dynamic head of Eastern Air Lines is an inspiration for all who have the determination to get ahead and the intelligence to go about it in the right way. Think through, then follow through.

To *make* your opportunity—to be ready when it comes—obtain specialized training through I. C. S. With more than 400 courses to choose from, it's easy to increase *your* knowledge and aptitudes. Fill in and mail the coupon below today!

## INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS



BOX 3969-Y, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me the booklet about the course BEFORE which I have marked X:

Please send information about I.C.S. employee training for companies.

- |  |   |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| <p><b>ART</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Art</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Magazine and Book Illustrating</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Snow Card and Sign Lettering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fashion Illustrating</li> </ul> <p><b>AUTOMOTIVE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Automobile, Mechanic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Auto-Elec. Technician</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Auto Body Rebuilding and Refinishing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diesel—Gas Engines</li> </ul> <p><b>AVIATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aeronautical Engineering Jr.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aircraft Engine Mechanic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Airplane Drafting</li> </ul> <p><b>BUILDING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Architecture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arch. Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Building Contractor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Estimating</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Carpenter and Mill Work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Carpenter Foreman</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reading Blueprints</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> House Planning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Heating</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Steam Fitting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electrician</li> </ul> <p><b>BUSINESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Business Administration</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Certified Public Accountant</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accounting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Federal Tax</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Personnel and Labor Relations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advertising</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Retail Business Management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Managing Small Business</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sales Management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management</li> </ul> <p><b>CHEMISTRY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chemical Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Analytical Chemistry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Petroleum—Nat'l Gas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pulp and Paper Making</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plastics</li> </ul> | <p><b>CIVIL STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reading Blueprints</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Construction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sanitary Engineering</li> </ul> <p><b>DRAFTING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aircraft Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mine Surveying and Drafting</li> </ul> <p><b>ELECTRICAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electrician</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Maintenance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electric Power and Light</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lineman</li> </ul> <p><b>HIGH SCHOOL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> College Preparatory</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Good English</li> </ul> <p><b>MECHANICAL AND SHOP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Supervision</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Foremanship</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Machine Design-Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tool Design</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Instrumentation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Inspection</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reading Blueprints</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gas—Electric Welding</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment—Metallurgy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Pattern Drafting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration</li> </ul> <p><b>POWER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Combustion Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diesel—Electric</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electric Light and Power</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stationary Steam Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stationary Fireman</li> </ul> <p><b>RADIO TELEVISION COMMUNICATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> General Radio</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Radio Operation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Radio Servicing—FM</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Television</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electronics</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work</li> </ul> <p><b>RAILROAD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Locomotive Engineer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Locomotive</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Air Brakes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Car Inspector</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Administration</li> </ul> <p><b>TEXTILE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Textile Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cotton Manufacture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rayon Manufacture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Woolen Manufacture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Loom Fixing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finishing and Dyeing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Textile Designing</li> </ul> <p><b>HOME ARTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dressmaking and Designing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cookery</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tea Room Management</li> </ul> |
|--|---|---|---|--|

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Working Hours \_\_\_\_\_ A.M. to \_\_\_\_\_ P.M.

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces. Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

EVERY STORY IN THIS ISSUE IS BRAND NEW!

# BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

Vol. XXIX

No. 3

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

WINTER, 1953



● **FEATURED NOVEL**

**HOT, WILLING—AND DEADLY** Stewart Sterling 10  
Big dough was at stake, and the girl leading Quinn to that shady motel would do ANYTHING to get it!

● **A NOVELET**

**RIGHT GUY** William Degenhard 54  
Danny wouldn't trust a cop . . . Would you?

● **OTHER STORIES**

**ENOUGH ROPE (True)** Harold Helfer 9  
He seemed all broken up over his wife's death

**THE EYES OF MURDER** Philip Ketchum 45  
Why were those men watching Evans so furtively?

**A PLACE TO HIDE** Richard Deming 72  
His murder victim recommended a perfect sanctuary

**HOLDUP AT TWIN PALMS** Roger Dee 81  
The killer stopped at a service station—for help

**CRAZY** Murray Leinster 85  
What would you do if attacked by a strangler?

**GIRL IN TROUBLE** Robert Sidney Bowen 89  
She was pretty—and in a pretty pickie!

**HE KILLED 31 (True)** Freeman Hubbard 97  
He had an idea to sell—and did it the hard way

**KEEP IT QUIET** Edward Ronns 99  
The blonde was found murdered—in her bedroom!

● **SPECIAL FEATURES**

**CRIME CONFIDENTIAL** Norman Renard 6

**A SLIGHT CASE OF GRAFT** Manly E. David 25

**WHAT IS IT? (A Quiz)** Joseph C. Stacey 53

**WHAT—NOT AGAIN!** Carter Critz 77

**ROUGH ON CATS** Bill Clegg 84

**CLEVER, THESE RACKETEERS** Fred M. Maul 103

**LINE O' CRIME** Jack Benton 113

DAVID X. MANNERS  
Editor

BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE. Published quarterly by Better Publications, Inc., 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. N. L. Pines, President. Entered as second-class matter July 12, 1948, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1952, by Better Publications, Inc. Subscription (12 issues), \$3.00, single copies, \$.25; foreign and Canadian postage extra. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of any living person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence. Manuscripts must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope and are submitted at the author's risk. In corresponding with this publication, please include your postal zone number, if any. Winter, 1953, issue. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

# Lee

*America's  
Best-Made, Best-Known  
Work Clothes*



## The Talk of the Locker Rooms!

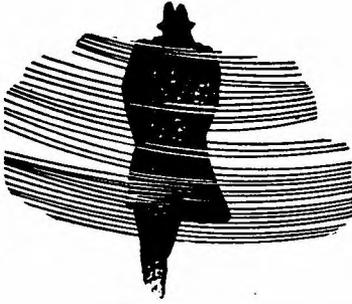
**JOE (in Lee Shirts and Pants):** I wear my Lee Chetopa Twill Shirts and Pants everywhere. They're good looking and easy to work in! I keep a fresh pair in my locker for street wear.

**PETE (in Lee Overalls):** Never wore an overall longer, or made of a tougher fabric, than these Lee Jelt Denim Overalls!

**BOB (in Lee Dungarees):** Lee Work Clothes sure have 'em all beat for looks and wear and comfort!



**UNION-MADE • SANFORIZED • GUARANTEED THE H. D. LEE COMPANY**



# CRIME CONFIDENTIAL

## How Sharpies Try to Get Rid of Evidence

**A** NUMBERS writer in Philadelphia thought he had the problem of engaging in his illegal business and at the same time being able to dispose of incriminating evidence well in hand.

He did, but he was wrong!

In his calculations, he forgot to take into account the curiosity of officers. Thus two of the latter, who knew the "sharpie" by reputation, naturally wondered what kind of racket he was now pulling off so boldly and openly on a street in the city of brotherly love.

The two officers, who had been watching him for some time, had seen him take money from various persons. What's more, they had seen him make notes right after each transaction. Their suspicions aroused, they took him into custody.

### In the Palm of His Hand

Although there were no incriminating slips of paper on the suspect's person, there were notes all right. For on the palm of his left hand was a whole series of numbers put there with a ball-point pen.

The prisoner was on the spot, but he knew that a mere down-swipe of his hand on his clothing would completely destroy, or at least smudge, the evidence inked on it. The officers knew it, too. One of them kept a firm grip on that hand while they hauled the prisoner off to jail. There his hand was immediately photographed and the evidence secured.

The prisoner, charged with maintaining an illegal lottery, was subsequently found guilty on several counts.

An alleged bookie was recently arrested in Los Angeles with a similar crime on his hand. Officers there had been watching him make phone calls in a public booth, write notes on the palm of his hand with a ball-point pen, and then take a trip to the men's room.

There he would wash his hands, then return to the phone booth and go through the same act again.

### Cryptic Numbers

After several such trips between wash-room and phone booth, the coppers stepped forward and took him into custody. On the palm of his hand they found these cryptic notations: "Andy Intent 2" and "5 Challtack 6." The hand was photographed, and the evidence thus secured was introduced at his trial.

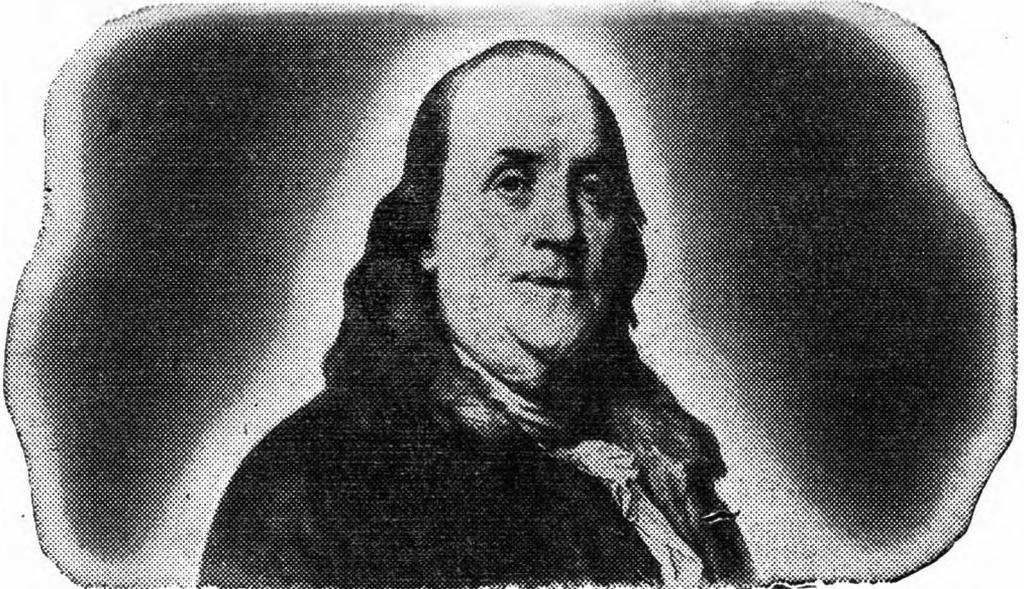
The deputy district attorney quite easily interpreted the recordings to mean that a man named Andy had placed bets on a couple of nags running at Santa Anita on the day of arrest, February 2. The bets were \$2 to win on Intent in the seventh race and \$6 to win on Challtack in the fifth.

The defense maintained that taking the evidence from the prisoner's hand had not only constituted an unlawful invasion of his bodily privacy but had forced him to testify against himself in violation of his constitutional rights.

The horses?

Well, Intent paid \$12 to win, \$5.30 to place and \$4.70 to show. In the fifth, Challtack also ran.

# WHAT SECRET POWER DID THIS MAN POSSESS?



**Benjamin Franklin**  
(A Rosicrucian)

**W**HY was this man great? How does anyone—man or woman—achieve greatness? Is it not by mastery of the powers within ourselves?

Know the mysterious world within you! Attune yourself to the wisdom of the ages! Grasp the inner power of your mind! Learn the secrets of a full and peaceful life! Benjamin Franklin—like many other learned and great men and women—was a Rosicrucian. The Rosicrucians (NOT a religious organization) first came to America in 1694. Today, headquarters of the Rosicrucians send over seven million pieces of mail annually to all parts of the world.

*The Rosicrucians*

SAN JOSE • (AMORC) • CALIFORNIA



## THIS BOOK FREE!

Write for YOUR FREE COPY of "The Mastery of Life"—TODAY. No obligation. No salesmen. A non-profit organization. Address: Scribe M.A.V.

## SEND THIS COUPON

Scribe M.A.V.  
The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)  
San Jose, California  
Please send me the free book, *The Mastery of Life*, which explains how I may learn to use my faculties and powers of mind.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
ZONE \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

# BERT OUTSMARTS RIVER PIRATES WHEN...

A SWEET HAUL. NOW I'LL TIE YOU UP AND WE'LL SCRAM

NIX, THE COPS WOULD GIVE ME THE THIRD DEGREE. I'M GOIN' WITH YOU

WITH THE HELP OF A 'BRIBED' PIER GUARD, THE RIVER PIRATES PREPARE TO MAKE OFF WITH A PRIZE HAUL...

NEAT, EH? WE HIDE IT UNDER THE COAL, SINK OUR BOAT, AND TOMORROW WE'RE THERE

NEAT? YOU SAID IT!

THAT'S BERT'S SIGNAL!

I'LL RADIO THE LAUNCH TO INTERCEPT THEM AT KINGS POINT

POLICE

COME ON, TRY THESE FOR SIZE!

SO YOU'RE A COPPER!

BIG STUFF, BERT. THE OLD MAN HIMSELF IS ON THE WAY UP

WOW! I'D BETTER GET RID OF MY COAL DUST AND WHISKERS

BLADE? TRY A THIN GILLETTE

SAY, THIS IS THE BLADE I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR! WHAT A SWELL, SMOOTH SHAVE!

OUR BOYS GO FOR THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE EXTRA KEEN

YOU'VE SAVED MR. ELKTON'S FIRM A LOT OF MONEY, WALDEN...

— AND EARNED YOURSELF A FAT REWARD

HANDSOME AND ALERT, I CAN USE A MAN LIKE THAT

ENJOY GOOD-LOOKING SHAVES AND SAVE MONEY, TOO. USE THIN GILLETTES...THE KEENEST, LONGEST-LASTING BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICE FIELD. THIN GILLETTES PROTECT YOUR FACE FROM NICKS, AND IRRITATION AS WELL, FOR THEY'RE MADE TO FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES IN THE CONVENIENT NEW 10-BLADE PACKAGE

10-25¢  
4-10¢

TRIN Gillette 10 BLADES THIN Gillette

TEN-BLADE PACKAGE HAS COMPARTMENT FOR USED BLADES

# ENOUGH ROPE

A True Story

By HAROLD HELFER



**T**HE cries and groans of the young farmer shattered the stillness of the peaceful Swanton, Ohio, community. Neighbors found Fred Lehman down the road from his home. His clothes were bloody. He'd been shot in the fore part of a leg and the fore part of a shoulder. Apparently he'd been crawling for help when his strength failed.

Some of Lehman's neighbors ran into his house to phone for help. But the phone had gone strangely dead. Then they noticed the bedroom door was ajar. They looked in to behold a sight that caused them to gasp. Grace, Fred's pretty wife, lying in bed in her nightgown, was covered with blood. She'd been shot also.

When the doctor arrived at the Lehman home on that chilly night in September, 1917, there was nothing he could do for Grace. She passed away without regaining consciousness. But he was able to patch up Fred, and this is what the young farmer told Sheriff W. S. Boone:

After attending a church social, he and his wife had retired to bed, but Fred had awakened during the night. Something had disturbed him—some noises from the barn.

He hurriedly dressed and went out. As soon as he opened the door he was seized by three men, who searched him and removed \$55. Then they told him that they intended to hang him so he could never identify them and produced a rope. Fred struggled anew, broke loose from his captors and started running. They shot him as he fled.

Meanwhile, the sheriff's deputies, after searching around the Lehman homestead, reported they'd found the rope that Lehman had mentioned in the barn and, by the chicken house, a gunny sack such as chicken thieves used. Also, they'd discovered that the phone wires had been severed on the outside.

"Who do you think could have done this terrible thing?" Fred Lehman anguishedly asked the sheriff.

"You," replied Sheriff Boone.

Swanton was shocked at the arrest of Fred Lehman for his wife's murder. It was so unpopular a thing that some people refused to talk to the sheriff any more. They simply couldn't believe that the well-liked farmer could have committed such a heinous crime. The Lehmans had been such a devoted couple, too. No one had ever heard them exchange a cross word.

The sheriff stuck by his guns, though, and little by little bits of information began to trickle in to him. For instance, at a recent church social someone had noticed Fred and a certain neighbor's wife chasing each other around the church and gaily trying to put ice cream down each other's back. Somebody else had noticed that Fred had stuck by the side of this neighbor's wife during a huckleberry picking affair like "bark on a tree." Another someone was sure he'd seen Fred trying to kiss this woman once.

The sheriff had a talk with the woman. She admitted that Fred had pursued her, had been intimate with her, had told her that he didn't expect his wife to live too long.

It was clear now that Fred Lehman wasn't quite the nice young man his neighbors had always supposed him to be. Then the murder gun that "the three men" were supposed to have used was found hidden on Lehman's grounds. Finally twelve of his peers sentenced the young farmer to the penitentiary for life and thus completely vindicated the sheriff's judgment.

Now what had made the sheriff suspicious of Lehman all along? Well, explained the sheriff, Lehman had told a pretty good story and had rigged it all up pretty expertly, too, what with the rope, the cut phone lines, and, of course, his wounds. In fact, only one slip led to his downfall.

Did you, like the sheriff, detect it?

Well, Lehman said he'd been shot while running away from the men—but he'd been shot from the front.

A NOVEL OF A COME-ON GIRL

# HOT, WILLING—



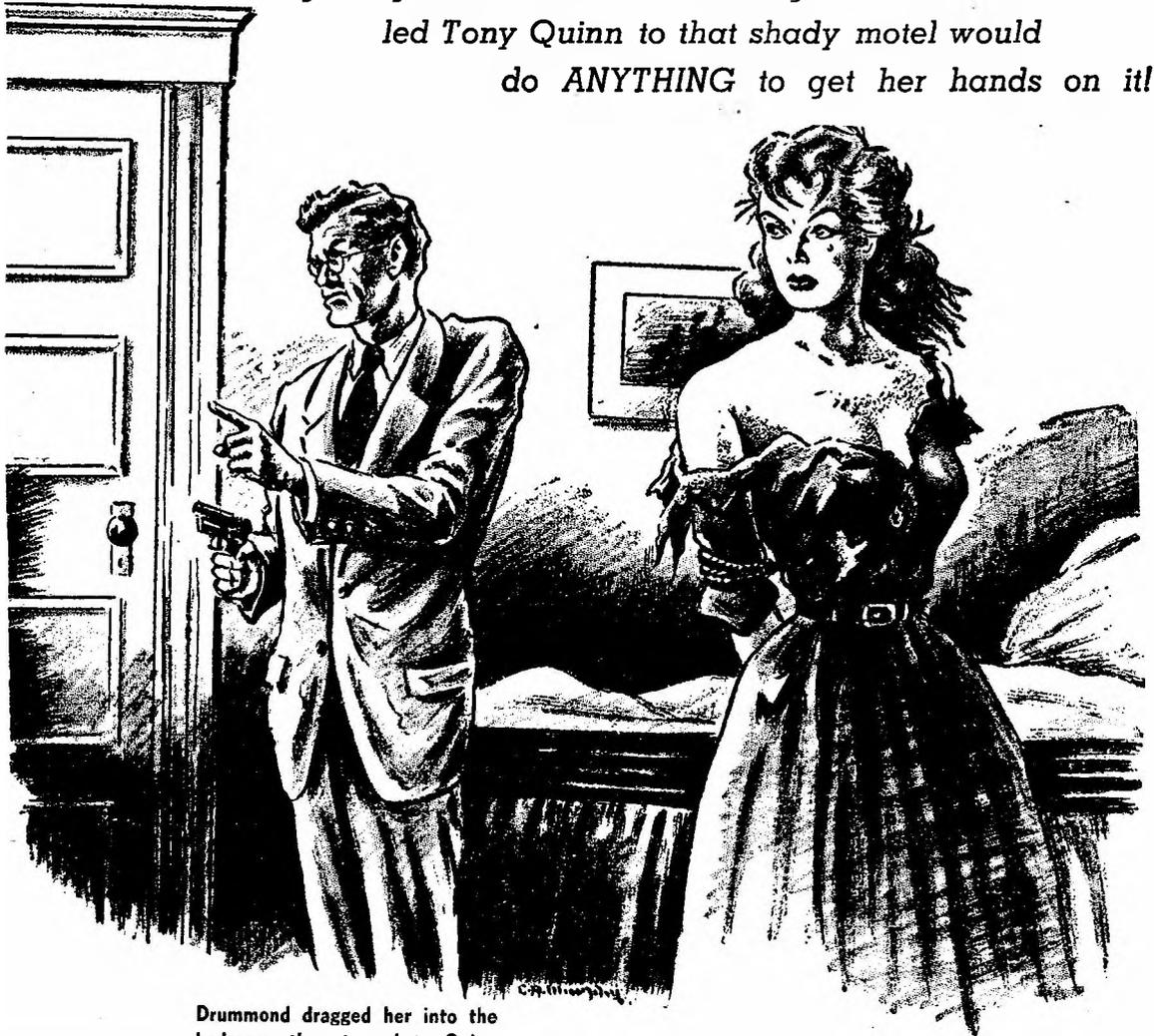
## Chapter I

**T**HE girl might have been a teen-ager. There were no lines about the slightly pouting mouth, no shadows beneath the dark and brooding eyes. There was a certain juvenile angularity in the sulkily handsome face. The chartreuse scarf bound about her chestnut hair, in high-school fashion, set off the delicately arched charcoal of the long brows, the raspberry oval of her lipstick. Only her figure suggested she might be more mature than a glance would have indicated.

# *and* **DEADLY**

by STEWART STERLING

*Big dough was at stake, and the girl who  
led Tony Quinn to that shady motel would  
do ANYTHING to get her hands on it!*



Drummond dragged her into the  
bedroom, then turned to Quinn

As she sat gripping the wheel of the Chevy the tight high-necked chartreuse jersey outlined the nipples on her full breasts as if she had been naked. Her short heather skirt was pulled up over her knees; her legs were long and slim and a compliment to the nylons.

She took the sharp S curve just before the bridge over the East fork with the nonchalance of one who knew this lonely part of the main highway well. At the top of the long grade which dipped down to the river she slowed. There was no traffic coming. The car made a sharp U turn, heading back up the hill a hundred yards from the crest. She ran it off onto the right-hand shoulder, cut the ignition.

From the glove compartment she took a sheet of coarse sandpaper, a red mesh-bag containing three oranges, a pair of sport-weight binoculars. She slid over to the right-hand side of the front seat, opened the door, put her right foot down on the brown clay of the shoulder. Then she pulled up her skirt, tucked it up beneath the waistband so her right thigh was bare to the lavender rayon scanties. With the sandpaper she began to scrape at the pink and tender skin of her thigh.

A truck-trailer combination zoomed over the peak of the rise, thundered down past her. She pulled down her skirt swiftly.

After a dozen puffs on the cigarette, she laid the abrasive sheet aside, began to pound the redly inflamed area on her leg with the oranges, swinging the bag with short and punishing blows.

**A**T INTERVALS she would stop, pick up the binoculars, turn to inspect the rise of the highway on the opposite side of the little valley. The late afternoon sun caught each westbound car as it topped the distant hill; splinters of reflected light from windshield and hood were clearly visible among the golds and reds of the September foliage. But it was difficult to be sure of the make and model at that distance.

After a quarter-hour's alternate peering through the glasses, and pounding with the oranges, she swore beneath her breath, thrust the sandpaper into the net bag, hurled the whole thing into the dense thicket at the right

side of the road. She slid beneath the wheel, leaving the right hand door open. When she had the motor running, she ran the car up the grade a few yards further and off the shoulder so its front hubs were hidden in the underbrush.

A pickup truck came bowling up from the river. It slowed as the husky overalled driver saw her standing forlornly beside the ditched Chevy. The youth in overalls braked, pulled off the road ahead of her.

"Need any help?"

"No. Thanks a lot." She shook her head. "My husband just got a lift into town. He's going to bring a wrecker back. I'm all right."

The youth was disappointed. "Lucky you didn't take a header through that windshield." He jerked a thumb at the Chevy.

She said coldly, "It didn't hurt anything except that front axle. My husband'll be back in ten minutes."

"Okaydokus." He waved, revved up, rolled on.

She used the binoculars once more.

On the grade across the valley the sun glittered on a swiftly moving car with much chrome to reflect the light.

She touched a finger-tip to one of the small raw spots on her leg, smeared a thin streak of blood across her cheek-bone beneath her right eye. Quickly she concealed the binoculars beneath the cushion of the front seat. Slowly she limped to the edge of the concrete.

The car crossed the bridge over the river, roared up the hill toward her.

She began to cry. Her lips quivered.

The speeding Cadillac swung to the middle of the road, but didn't slow.

She could see the man at the wheel clearly—a middle-aged man with no middle-aged plumpness but a hard, winter-tanned firmness of flesh in the solid, squarish face.

She waved, hesitantly, hunching her shoulders as if afraid to ask for help.

The Cadillac cut down to fifteen but rolled past. The man squinted at her, suspiciously; his eyes flashed to the ditched Chevy.

Thirty yards past her, he stopped. The big car rolled back toward her slowly. Its right-hand whitewalls glided onto the shoulder.

She made no move to approach him, but bit her lips as if to keep from bawling.

He got out.

"Seems to be the trouble, sis?"

"One of those big trailers," she wailed. "It came right at me, over the top of the hill. It was right in the middle of the road. It wouldn't give me an inch. I had to go off the r-road." She turned away, sobbing.

"That's lousy." Sympathy came into his voice. "Bust anything?"

"I—I don't think so." She blinked away tears. "It threw me right out when I hit that ditch. For a while I thought I might have broken my wrist, but it was only numbed, I guess." She flapped it, worriedly.

"Meant the car. You bust a wheel or anything?"

"I don't know." She shuddered. "But even if it's all right, I wouldn't drive it now for a million dollars. I'm too shaken up. I just want to get back to town. I'll get someone to come out and bring the car."

"No difficulty about that. I'll take you in to town."

"Oh, if you *would!*"

"Sure." He opened the door of the Cadillac for her. "You live in Vulcan City?"

"Oh, no."

**S**HE winced as she climbed in. Her skirt rode up to show the black and blue marks, the clotted spots of blood.

He said: "Say, by God, you did get banged up pretty bad!"

She lifted the skirt gingerly to let him see the extent of the injury. "I guess I'm lucky not to have broken my neck. But it gave me such a shaking up. I feel all—kind of quivery, inside."

"Sorry I don't happen to have any liquor in the car." He got the big car rolling. "But maybe we can find a place down the road. Little drink would drown those butterflies for you."

She murmured demurely, "All right—if you think so."

"Say you don't live in Vulcan City?"

"No, I'm from Niles. My name's Lulie Jessop."

"Miss Jessop?"

"That's right. I've been up to Easton, de-

livering some hunting dogs. My brother and I breed Bassets."

"That so?" He glanced at her with interest. "I do a little shooting, now and then. Maybe you and I can make a deal for one of your hounds."

She smoothed down the jersey over her breasts, aware that he was watching her out of the corners of his eyes. "Do you come from around here?"

He smiled. "I'm from Buffalo. Name's Deland. Ralph, to you, Lulie. Say, how about that place ahead, there?"

"Oh!" She seemed flustered. "It's a motel, isn't it?"

"Ye-up." He read the green neons, "'Ravenwood Lodge.' But they have a bar and café. What's the difference?"

She said, "It's all right with me."

The Cadillac swung into the parking crescent.

The middle-aged man driving it could not guess that he was heading directly into a trap, baited by the sex lure of this teen-age girl—or that when next seen, he'd be a mangled corpse. . . .

## Chapter II

**B**Y TILTING back in his swivel chair Tony Quinn, newly elected D. A. of Vulcan City, could look down across the air-shaft from his third floor office to the narrow, barred windows of the city jail. Every time he did a curious intentness came into his expression. He turned his head a little to one side as if he was trying to catch the meaning of some indistinct murmurings.

If he was listening to anything in those moments, however, it was to his own conscience. The vague white blur of faces pressed against those distant bars—they were there because he had put them in durance vile to wait trial for their crimes, or because they had been picked up by police and were waiting disposition of their cases by the Grand Jury at which he would make presentments against them. Yet, save for the capricious spin of the wheel of fortune, there, but for the grace of God, would he be prisoner, too—instead of public prosecutor.

That curious concentration, an incongruous

fixity of expression on features changeable enough to be described by one reporter for the *Enterprise* as that of a scholar, a professor, perhaps or a doctor—and, on the same day, by a cameraman for the *Record* as the rocky-hard face of a commando, the grimlipped mask of the relentless fighter, came from Tony Quinn's fierce fixity of purpose. "Get tough with the top shots of the underworld, go easy on the minor criminals." Sometimes, for public consumption, he put it another way—"Bear down on the big boys and you won't have so many of the little crooks to worry about."

In effect, he'd been elected on that platform, and he meant to carry it out, no matter how rugged the going. It was bad enough already after three months in office, and there were plenty of signs it was going to get rougher.

The upper layer of criminal scum—the men he'd promised to drive out of town or into jail—were still doing business. They still had the main wheels in the Police Department running their way. And the judges of the lower courts. Behind them, looming ominously, the powers who ruled his own political party.

They had wanted him in office, oh yes. They'd worked to elect him, certainly. They'd had to—or lose control of the town, after the mucky disclosures about his predecessor as district attorney. Now he was in, and since he'd had to help their man land in the mayor's chair, they hoped he'd be reasonable enough to forget the promises he'd made to the voters. Tall talk was all right, before election. But nobody seriously expected a candidate to live up to what he'd said.

The shadowy figures behind the throne had intimated as much, gently at first, but now pouring on the pressure. Tony had been obstinate. He meant to keep his word to the letter. They had told him in no uncertain terms that he'd better not try it, if he wanted to keep Mrs. Quinn's youngest son above ground.

So now it was war, without an official declaration, of course. They'd get something on him, something sufficient to discredit him completely, so he'd be a good boy. That failing, they'd just plain get him. And make it

look as if it was the work of one of those upper-bracket racketeers he meant to clean out.

The wise heads in the horse parlors and the poolrooms where the numbers runners took in the slips were already giving six, two and even he wouldn't last out the month. Except for one thing. Tony Quinn would have been inclined to agree with them.

QUINN swung his chair around, glancing with sardonic amusement at the ceiling-high bookshelves where his regiments of fat brown law books were marshaled in such impressive dignity. Time *had* been—and not too long ago—when he had been accused of breaking half the laws in those pudgy tomes. Not all the accusations had been accurate or honestly inspired, to be sure. Some had originated in the desire of certain criminals to foist off their own misdeeds on a will-o'-the-wisp character the sensational press had liked to refer to as The Black Bat.

Yet there had been some justification for the claim that this night-flitting creature had gone well beyond the limits of legality on numerous occasions. His infractions of the statutes had—so the legend went—always been to the disadvantage of the criminal element. The thefts, burglaries, assaults, even kidnapings, might have been engineered by a man who believed that sometimes the Criminal-Higher-Up, secure in his own certainty he is beyond the reach of the law, can only be reached by going outside the law.

He smiled, a hard, wry smile. The legendary character was dead now. Dead and buried, except in the memory of a few who suspected the creature had been Tony Quinn's alter ego. No one had ever proved that. Three there were who knew it, but those three would as soon have their eyes gouged out as admit it, now that Tony was in such a position of authority.

A ruby bead glowed on a small mahogany panel. He touched a button. "Yes?"

Silk Kirby's voice said, "May I see you a moment, Mr. Quinn?"

"Sure."

The heavy walnut door swung open quietly. The tall, thin, pale man who padded in softly on the thick carpet was egg-bald,

"I haven't time to horse around with you, sister. Deliver!"



deprecating in manner as a movie butler, sharp-eyed as a fox. He was one of the three who knew Tony's past. A former suave confidence man, with occasional fliers as a pick-pocket, he was now Tony's official chauffeur and unofficial secretary. He came toward the desk holding out a buff-colored memorandum slip.

Tony didn't look at it. "Young and pretty, isn't she?" His voice was low.

Silk wheeled to glance at the open door behind him. No one was visible in the outer office. He craned his neck to peer at Quinn.

"I guess she must've been walking around on that linoleum out there. High-heeled shoes, huh? I know that spell of doing without your eyes made your ears sensitive as hell. But damned if I heard her."

"She wasn't walking around," Tony said softly. "But the catch of a girl's handbag makes quite a click when it opens. And one of those powder compacts has a fairly distinctive 'snap', too. I just heard both in the proper sequence to indicate some female was

opening her bag to look in her mirror. If she were sixty—or homely—she probably wouldn't care enough about the impression she might make, to do that."

Silk stared in something approaching awe. "I bet you could tell which card a guy drew out of a deck by the noise the spots made rubbing against the card below it!"

"I've known gamblers who could." Tony grinned. "Who is she?"

Silk put the slip on the desk. "A Mrs. Mona Prosser. From Buffalo. She's got plenty of that old pizzazz, since you ask me."

"What's her trouble?"

"She wants to speak to you about that body they fished out of Saylor's Creek yesterday. At the morgue they told her she'd have to see you."

"Oh?" The look of intentness came into Tony's eyes once more. "She thinks it might be someone she could identify?"

"Yes, sir. Her husband. You know."

"Coley Prosser? The dog track duke? Well?"

Silk bent closer. "She doesn't seem to be very unhappy about it, sir."

"Bring her in," Quinn said.

He bowed her to the chair beside his desk.

Pretty wasn't an adequate description for her, he realized. The heart-shaped face; the wide, dark eyes beneath slightly slanting brows; the glossy chestnut hair; the pertly uptilted nose; the generous mouth—these added up to genuine beauty. Yet he was puzzled, as Silk had been. She should have been "Beauty in Distress," but clearly she wasn't. She was simply angry.

**H**E WENT straight to the point. "You think the remains recovered here yesterday might be those of your husband, Mrs. Prosser?"

She surprised him by retorting, "No, I don't. But I want to make sure. Because there are people who'd like to think that was Coley's body."

"The inference is that your husband is one of those people. You have some reason to believe he might want to—temporarily disappear?"

"Perhaps permanently, so far as his wife and child are concerned, yes." The resentment in her tone was emphatic. "I'll have to take you into my confidence a bit, for you to understand how I feel, Mr. Quinn."

"This office has heard a good many things, off the record. We try to keep them that way, unless it's against public interest to do so."

"It would be against my interest, if you let it be known I've come here to talk to you. More than likely he'd try to kill me. Or some of his ratty friends would, if he really is dead. You know the Government's after him for tax fraud?"

"I know they indicted him in Federal Court. He's waiting trial now, out on bond, isn't he? Evasion of half a million or so?"

"Seven hundred thousand. You can see why it would pay him to vanish—if he could skip with most of his money."

"Hard thing to do. Particularly for a man as well known as Coley Prosser. You must have some definite reason for supposing he's tried to pull a disappearing act."

"Indeed I have." Her eyes narrowed with

bitterness. "This is Friday. Monday afternoon he left our home in Buffalo to drive to Newport, Kentucky, where he has a bunch of friends and associates, too, I expect. Of course he never let me in on any details of his business, but I think he owns an interest in one of those gambling clubs right across the river from Cincinnati.

"Anyhow, he told me he meant to stay in Toledo Monday night, then drive down through Vulcan City here on Tuesday, reaching Newport Tuesday night. I never heard from him, though he always calls me when he's away more than a day or so, to see if there have been any phone calls or wires for him. The only news of him came yesterday from a bank treasurer in Buffalo. His wife is one of my closest friends. He told me Coley had drawn out all but six hundred dollars of his funds—two hundred thousand dollars, to be exact."

"Quite a mite of expense money for a short trip."

"He left me with thirty dollars in cash," she said venomously. "And our boy's tuition is due. He's in a private school in New Jersey and I haven't even enough money to keep him there unless I can get in touch with Coley right away—or find out what's happened to him."

"Did he have all that cash with him when he left Buffalo?"

"Oh, no. He cashed a check for it here at the Vulcan City National."

"Ah! When?"

"Wednesday morning."

"That would suggest he hadn't meant to drop out of sight when he left home, wouldn't it? It would've been so much easier to draw out the money before he left. Not customary to walk into a bank and collect a fifth of a million in cash just by presenting a piece of paper."

"The bank here called up my bank treasurer friend in Buffalo to make sure the check was good." Mona Prosser tossed her head indignantly. "I get so mad every time I think of what a fool I've been—to stick by him through all his troubles, to try and be nice to his peculiar friends! It wouldn't have been so bad if he cared the least bit about me, but he's never even bothered to hide the fact

that he doesn't."

"Has he ever suggested divorce? Or a separation?"

Men sometimes did run away from their wives as a last resort—if it was the only way to get free from an unwanted mate.

"No. I've thought of it. Even mentioned it. But he wouldn't—for Eddie's sake, he said. He thinks the world of Eddie. That's one reason I'm so upset about not hearing from him. I called up the school in New Jersey to find out if he'd telephoned Eddie. But he hasn't. So either he's trying to hide out, or something has happened to him."

"Isn't it possible he did get to Newport and—maybe on account of the nature of his business—is simply staying under cover for a few days?"

"I guess it could be." She nodded impatiently. "But he's not registered at the hotel there where he usually stays. I'm going on down to Newport, to get in touch with one of his friends who'd be sure to know about him. But before I do that, I want to see that body I read about in the paper here, this morning."

QUINN did his best to appear sympathetic. "Afraid that wouldn't do much good, Mrs. Prosser."

"Oh!" She seemed suddenly frightened. "He was—it was mangled?"

"I'd like to spare your feelings, but the truth is the remains were frightfully crushed. The limbs had been dismembered from the body—"

"Oh!" She winced. "It didn't say anything about that in the paper!"

"It wouldn't have made nice reading. But the fingers, for instance, were mashed so any identification from prints would be out of the question."

"But surely"—she looked sick—"his face? His head?"

"I'm terribly sorry, Mrs. Prosser. You'll have to believe me when I say there's nothing distinguishable."

"His clothing?!"

"Had all been removed before the body was—mutilated. About all they've been able to determine so far is that the corpse was that of a man about forty-five."

"Coley's forty-two."

"What would you say he weighed?" Tony recalled the medical examiner's guesstimate of one hundred and eighty pounds.

"I don't know for sure. Around one hundred and seventy-five, I think. Was the dead man as heavy as that?"

He couldn't add to her burden of worry without something more definite. "Doubt if they can be sure of his height or weight."

"But I *have* to know!" she cried. "You must see I can't be left like this, not knowing! My hands would be simply tied. I couldn't get any money. Or even his insurance, without being *sure*!"

"I understand. It's a bad spot. We'll do everything we can to relieve your anxiety as quickly as possible, Mrs. Prosser. But I can't hold out too great hopes. What kind of a car was your husband driving?"

"A Cadillac. Black. This year's model."

He made notes on a pad. It always seemed to help people in distress to know that the official machinery was taking over.

"License?"

"New York KM 916-221. It had white-walls."

He wrote that down. "Sometimes it's easier to trace a big car like that, than a man." He stood up. "Our Police Department's hot car squad will get right on it. What is the name of your banker friend in Buffalo?"

"John Siwenoe. He's with the Drovers Trust. You can call him and tell him I'd like him to help you, if he can."

"That may be necessary. You'll let me know what you learn in Newport?" He went to the door with her.

After she'd gone, Silk came into the office. "It's gettin' to be an epidemic, sir," he murmured.

"You got another good-looker waiting to see me?"

"Uh-huh. I got a call from Doc Gresch. He's got another of them."

"A dead man?"

"All mushed up like the body had been worked over by a steam hammer—just like the one they dragged out of Saylor's Creek. This one was in Harris Run, that little riffle out by the West Fork. Couple of kids play-

ing hookey found it."

Tony went back to his desk. The press photographer who had described him as a grim-jawed fighter would have recognized the look of concentration on his face. "I wonder," he said musingly, "whether any other lords of the underworld have been reported missing within the last forty-eight hours. Let's find out."

### Chapter III

**G**LANCING up from a pile of dossiers Tony Quinn smiled at sight of the spun honey bob beneath the perky red hat.

"Hi, gal! Beginning to think something'd happened to you."

"They trapped me,"—Carol Baldwin, one of his three intimate confidantes grinned—"beneath a hair dryer. Sorry I'm late."

"Hmmm." He let her see he approved of the result. Carol—Special Investigator on the D.A.'s staff, complete with credentials if her hair-trigger mind ever needed any!

"All members now being present," Tony said, "the Board of Strategy will come to order." He rustled a telegram crisply. "I have here a wire from the Chief of Police in Norristown, Pennsylvania, concerning the mysterious disappearance of one Jules Verchamps. May I inquire of our statistical expert what data he may have on hand concerning *Monsieur Verchamps*."

Silk Kirby and Carol looked inquiringly at Butch—O'Leary, the man who completed the trio of Tony's assistants—Butch, a cave man with a shave and a houndstooth sports jacket. That ponderous-shouldered individual stared blankly at Tony. Then he did a double-take.

"Statistician? That's me! Yeah, sure. I got the dope on this Jules. He's the shifty nifty who's been importing all them pint-size foreign cars. Fifty miles to the gallon, run all year on two quarts oil, all that hooley. Only the last one he brings in, them Customs boys get more'n fifty miles out of it. They crack open the cylinder block and come up with a million bucks' worth of unset ice. He claims it's all a surprise to him, still I hear they figure to pin his ears back for about ten years at the October session of the Fed-

eral Court."

Tony nodded. "That'll do for Smuggler Verchamps. Very concise, Butch."

"Was I wrong, Boss?" Butch tugged uneasily at the knot of his flamboyant four-in-hand.

"You're just right," Tony said. "Except you failed to add that, since Tuesday, when *M'sieu Verchamps* left to drive his snazzy convertible to Chicago for consultation with parties unknown, he has not been seen or heard from."

Silk glanced up at the map of the state of Ohio on the wall. "He might have routed himself through Vulcan City, going from Norristown to Chicago."

"He could have," Tony agreed. "We now come to the interesting particulars about Myron Attar of Newark, New Jersey, and various other points on our Eastern seaboard. Anything on Attar, Butch?"

The big man colored. "Begging your pardon, Carol—"

She gestured nonchalantly. "Go right ahead, Butch. I'm a big girl, now. Besides, I'm Special Investigator. If you can tell me anything I haven't heard about that stinker, I'll buy you a double demerara next time you're thirsty."

Silk said, "This Attar is a new one to me."

Butch cleared his throat, half closed his eyes, recited as if from a police flyer, "Attar, Myron, alias Mike Brecher, Michael Hatta, John Myron, so on, so forth. Four convictions pandering, procuring. Time in Great Meadow Pen, Comstock, New York, Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury, Connecticut, couple others. Runs string of so-called sanitariums from Asbury Park, New Jersey, to Miami, Florida. Takes drug addicts, promises to cure 'em. Hires nurses who"—he ran his finger around under his collar—"who sleep with male patients. Nurses have some venereal disease."

Carol said, "There is a more ordinary term for it, Butch. Don't spare my girlish blushes."

"Yeah." Butch squirmed. "Well, so the guys get infected. Have to stay in them sanitariums for treatment. Treatment consists of blackmail. Attar is supposed to be plenty well fixed in the bucks department."

Silk murmured, "Of all the lousy, low-down rackets!"

Tony said, "This nice, clean-cut citizen was last heard of in Newark last Friday when he started to drive his Buick to St. Louis, purpose of visit unknown. The district attorney of Newark reports much consternation in criminal circles due to this unexplained disappearance."

Silk went to the wall map. "Newark to Philadelphia. Philly to Pittsburgh over the speed pike. Pittsburg to Vulcan City. And so to St. Looney. If he got past our fair city, that is."

QUINN looked stern. "He might have got as far as Saylor's Creek—or Harris Run." He briefed Carol on the Prosser matter. "Here we have three hot shots dropping out of sight in a space of five days. In each case they either came to this town or were heading in its general direction. Also, within the last three days, we have—or, more accurately, the autopsy surgeons over at the morgue have—two unidentified and presum-

ably unidentifiable bodies. Whether there may be a third lying in some pond out in the county is anybody's guess. But that the two sets of circumstances are tied in together seems more than a probability. What do you make of it?"

Silk said, "One thing for sure, it's not going to make the prosecutor's office look too good if we have a bunch of unsolved torso murders right off the bat."

Butch smacked a ham-sized fist into the palm of his other hand. "All kidding about this statistical business aside, I'd say the percentage was on some kinda kidnap and ransom setup. Them three schmoos, they're meat for the grab-and-hold crowd, because they're loaded with pay-off coin and they can't squawk or go to the cops. Only maybe in this case the snatchers collect and then don't let the schmoos go, but run 'em through the meat-chopper and dump 'em in the brook."

"Reasonable," Tony admitted, "as far as it goes. But it doesn't go far enough to give

[Turn page]



*oh-oh, Dry Scalp!*

"... IMAGINE ME dancing with a scarecrow! How can he be so careless about his hair? It's straggly, unkempt, and . . . Oh-oh—loose dandruff! He's got Dry Scalp, all right. He needs 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic."



*Hair looks better...  
scalp feels better...  
when you check Dry Scalp*

HE TOOK HER TIP, and look at his hair now! 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic can do as much for you. Just a few drops a day check loose dandruff . . . keep hair naturally good-looking. It contains no alcohol or other drying ingredients. Gives double care to both scalp and hair . . . and it's economical, too!

**Vaseline HAIR TONIC**  
TRADE MARK ®

Listen to DR. CHRISTIAN,  
starring JEAN HERSHOLT,  
on CBS Wednesday nights.

us a line on the murderer. Any suggestions, Carol?"

She studied her slim ankles. "If Silk is right about all three men coming to Vulcan City, and if Butch has hit it anywhere near the mark about kidnaping, then it's only fair to assume we have a branch of Murder Incorporated right here under our nose."

Tony said, "Close. Maybe even close enough to win the great big, gorgeous, woolly panda bear. But there's a difference, Carol. That Brooklyn crew of cutthroats disposed only of crooks who'd got in wrong with their own crime syndicate. As far as we know, that isn't true of Prosser, for instance. He's on the bad books of the Revenue Bureau, but not of his own gambler pals—at least, not on the surface."

The phone on the desk purred. Silk took it.

"Hello? Oh, yes, Captain, he's right here. Just a second." He held his hand over the mouthpiece as he handed the instrument to Tony. "Yabor, sir. Homicide."

Tony quirked one eyebrow. "Afternoon, Captain."

The head of the Homicide Bureau grunted, "We just got an identification on that chewed-up bunch of bones over at the morgue. Thought you might like to know."

Tony asked, "Which one?"

"Saylor's Creek victim. Name was Pete Cuanzalini. Lived out in Berkeley Extension."

"How'd you identify?"

"Dental work."

"Thought none of his teeth had been found."

The captain snorted. "We keep looking, here at Headquarters, Quinn. And we don't waste our time running down cockeyed leads like some guys sucking the city teat."

"Who verified the teeth for you?"

"His wife. And his dentist. Doctor Arthur Dryden, Alloy Building. Affidavits covering everything."

Tony frowned. "The woman have any idea why Pete was killed?"

"Yeah, yeah. He got in a fight with a couple fellows about six or seven dollars due him for a paint job he helped do on a car. She says they threatened to cut him

up into ribbons if he made any trouble. It's all in the affidavit. I'll shoot it over."

"She know the names of the other men?"

"Nah. She never even seen 'em. Pete told her about it, is all."

"Are you holding her?"

"Hell, no. What for?"

"Material witness in a murder case, Captain."

"Crysave, you can make her spiel to the Grand Jury. What's the difference? Chances are you'll never go to trial with it anyhow. Those fellers are probably in Mexico by now." The captain's sneer was too flagrant to be ignored.

Tony said, "I'll give you good odds I go to trial on that murder, Captain. And better than even money I get a conviction. Send those papers over right away, will you?"

Carol asked, "A phony?"

TONY was solemn. "Planted bridge-work, sure. Most likely the Headquarters boys have something on the dentist who helped 'em plant the stuff and check the records. The woman who made the identification was probably paid." He scowled from Silk to Butch, back to Carol. "They must want to keep us away from this thing pretty badly, to run a risk like that."

Butch thrust out his heavy underjaw. "You ain't gonna let 'em get away with nothing as raw as that!"

"No," Tony said evenly, "we're not. Since somebody wants so badly to have us look the other way, we'll go into the Prosser business to the exclusion of everything else, time being. Butch?"

"Statistical Section ready for assignment, sir." The big man showed his teeth in a grin.

"You go after Prosser's Cadillac. Here's the data." Tony gave him the memorandum. "Never mind getting out hot car descriptions on it. I have an idea it might still be here in town. Maybe that's one of the reasons they want to sidetrack us, temporarily."

Butch gave a mock salute. "How's for hitting the petty cash for a little beer change? Sometimes these grease monkeys around the garages squeak better when they're oiled with brew."

"Take ten bucks. And stay sober. Silk?"

Tony turned to the map.

"Way ahead of you, sir." The ex-confidence man was delighted to show off his ability to anticipate Tony's next move. "You figure those birds must've stopped overnight somewhere between Norristown or Newark or Buffalo and here. Right?"

"If you could only read a juror's mind as well as you read mine, you'd be a great help in a trial, Silk." Tony shook his head in amazement. "You hit it first pop out of the box. What I hope to find is that they all stayed in the same town, the night before they drove on toward Vulcan City. I don't need to tell you how to go about digging up that information. Hop to it."

### Chapter IV

**T**HE two men left Jim's private office. Carol said, "Everyone's being so cagey and smart about assignments, let me try to be a brain."

He laughed. "You couldn't guess yours if I let you ask twenty times twenty questions. Look at this."

From a small wooden box he pulled a tissue-wrapped packet. Inside the paper was a glass slide, three inches by two. Stuck on top of the slide a small, torn fragment of greenish-yellow paper with a line of printing just visible against the discoloration.

She read :

—inks with grace  
come in this place—

He asked, "Recognize it?"

"No. Should I?"

"Not necessarily. If you'd spent as much time bar-hopping as I have, you probably would. It's part of a couplet you sometimes see on placards hanging up against the back-bar mirror :

He who drinks and drinks with grace  
Is always welcome in this place.

"Oh, yes." She remembered. "But what's the connection between this"—she pointed to the slide—"and a bar sign?"

"Sometimes they print those cute verses on cocktail napkins."

"That's what it is. Coarse paper. A bar napkin. But where—"

"From a dead man's stomach, Carol."

"Ugh!" She shuddered.

"Yes. This is absolutely all the medicos came up with after the post mortem. They didn't see any significance in it, but they sent it over from the morgue, anyhow."

"You mean the man ate it?"

Tony regarded it stonily. "Possibly as a means of letting the authorities know where he was being kept prisoner, where he expected to be tortured and killed. That would indicate a victim with a high degree of intelligence and plenty of imagination. Not many crooks have both. I'd say it was more likely he'd been fed a sandwich because his hands had been tied, and the person who did the feeding was a bit careless, shoved some of the paper napkin in the victim's mouth along with the sandwich."

"Nobody can say *you* haven't plenty of imagination!"

"Until someone comes along with a better suggestion, I'll let it ride." He slid an arm around her shoulders. "All you have to do is find out where they have cocktail napkins like that."

"But," she protested, "I might have to visit every single joint in town."

"Under those circumstances,"—he pulled her to him, tightly—"you'd better take twenty dollars from petty cash. . . ."

**T**HE imposing white limestone building that was the Vulcan First National Bank dominated the center of town as its influence dominated the commercial life of the city. It stood like a monument to financial integrity in the heart of the downtown business district, its freshly sanded exterior an aloof rebuke to its grimy red-brick neighbors, its partition-free interior an open invitation to public scrutiny.

Tony Quinn sat behind one of the low, bronze railings, waiting for the return of the assistant cashier. Like the bank building, Charles Drummond had impressed the district attorney as tall, pale and freshly-scrubbed. He was coming back now from the president's cubicle with the slow, deliberate pace of one accustomed to allow subordinates

to wait on him. His suit was gray, his shirt was white, his necktie drab. His black shoes squeaked when he walked.

"Now then, Mr. Quinn," he said. "How can the bank be of service to you, sir?"

"A man by the name of Prosser came in here a few days ago to cash an extraordinarily large check. Do you happen to recall the occasion?"

"God bless my soul, I should say so." Drummond took off his spectacles, began to polish the lenses with a little rectangle of pink fabric. "Two hundred thousand dollars. Yes, indeed. I trust you are not suggesting there was anything amiss with that transaction?"

QUINN laid his cards on the table. "Just inquiring. Prosser seems to have disappeared right after he got that money. His wife is worried about him, asked us to look into it a bit."

"I don't understand. Do you mean he ran away from her?" Light gray eyes regarded Tony Quinn uncertainly.

"That's one of the possibilities. There are others. Did he seem under any strain when he came here to cash that check?"

"Offhand, I shouldn't have said so. He sat right in that chair for forty-five minutes it took me to get the information I needed from his bank in Buffalo. He seemed quite at ease, though of course I couldn't tell how his actions might have differed from those under any other circumstances. He talked business with Mr. Wizlow most of that time—something about the purchase of property for a drive-in theatre out on the road to Akron, I believe."

"Would that be John Wizlow, the junk dealer?"

A pained expression came into the assistant cashier's eyes. "Mr. Wizlow used to be in the scrap metal business. Of late he has made investments in—ah—a good many other enterprises."

"So I understand."

John Wizlow was well-known to the public prosecutor's office. There were half a dozen unsuccessful presentments against him on file in Quinn's own desk. In certain sections of the city he was known as Jack-the-

Wrecker, a *nom de crime* gained during the period in which he had been reputed to have knocked to pieces and reassembled for sale some ten thousand stolen cars and trucks.

"I hear about some of those other enterprises every few days," Quinn commented.

Drummond said stiffly, "The bank has nothing to do with any of his ventures. But Mr. Wizlow carries a large checking balance here. If it had not been for his introduction of Mr. Prosser, we would not have considered cashing paper for any such amount, naturally. It was absolutely necessary to be sure of the payee's identity, you see."

"So Wizlow brought him in here?"

"Please do not misquote me, Mr. Quinn. I said they were here together, that is all. I presume they came in together though they may have met by chance here in our lobby. I didn't ask. It was none of my business." His manner said it was none of Tony Quinn's, either.

"They went out together?"

"I believe they did. I paid no particular attention, once I'd verified the fact that funds were earmarked to meet that particular check."

"Have you seen either of them since that time?"

"My dear fellow," Drummond said peevishly, "I really couldn't say as to that. I may have. I see so many hundreds of people here every banking day of my life."

"But not so many who've cashed two hundred-thousand-dollar checks."

"No, that's true." Drummond replaced his spectacles firmly on the bridge of his long, thin nose. "As a matter of fact, I suppose I should have remembered Mr. Prosser if I had seen him again, so I think it's safe to say I haven't. But Mr. Wizlow—I couldn't be at all sure about him. He's in and out all week."

Tony Quinn stood up, held out his hand. "I'd better transfer my quiz program to Mr. Wizlow's office. Thanks a lot for your assistance."

"I hope there's no disagreeableness involved in this business." The assistant cashier looked unhappy. "In any event, I'm sure you'll try to keep the bank's name out of it, if any unpleasantness should arise."

Quinn chuckled. "I wouldn't want to impair the bank's standing. I've got a thousand or so on deposit here, myself."

But the chuckle was purely mechanical. The fact that Jack-the-Wrecker was mixed up in the affair was nothing to laugh about.

**T**HE redoubtable and elusive junk dealer was one of the principal string-pullers down at headquarters, as well as at the precinct houses. Jack-the-Wrecker had never bothered to run for political office, but his hand was in every polling booth and ballot box—though that undeniable fact might have been difficult to establish in a court of law.

He was rich; how rich very few knew. Certainly not the income tax deputies. He was largely unknown, since newspapers and radio stations were cautious about references to free-spending advertisers, but Jack-the-Wrecker was "in" at least one large department store, a couple of haberdashery shops and a number of the city's late-closing cafés.

On his way back to the prosecutor's office, Tony wondered about those cafés and cocktail lounges. Were any of them setting Daiquiris and Manhattans out on squares of paper bearing that little jingle? Would Carol be in one of them, chatting with the bartender, right that minute? He regretted having sent her on the search.

His anxiety wasn't lessened by the receptionist by the telephone switchboard, when he opened the corridor door to his own suite of offices.

"Oh, Mr. Quinn! You're wanted at Memorial Hospital right away!"

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know, sir. They didn't say. All they said was, that you were to come to the Emergency Ward as quickly as possible."

It took him six minutes. He sweated it out every single second. If anything had happened to Carol—

At the Emergency entrance a starchy nurse eyed him stonily. "Mr. Quinn, you say? Oh, yes. This way."

Down a cement staircase reeking of iodiform. To a bright-lighted antiseptic ward. In one of the narrow cots, with another nurse and a white-jacketed intern standing by—*Butch!*

Butch's eyes were black, green and purple blue. His ear was a clotted mass of gore. One side of his face was caked with blood.

"Jeeze, Boss!" The big man stuck up a bloody-knuckled paw. "I hated like hell to get you over here."

The doctor said sharply, "Lie till. Keep quiet. How do you think I can get these stitches in your scalp with your head wobbling like a kid on a pogo stick?"

Tony said, "Anything serious, Doc?"

The doctor nodded at the four-inch scalp gash. "Concussion. Two ribs, green fractures. More contusions than I could count. We'll have to do something about that lacerated ear, too."

The nurse murmured, "It's a wonder he's alive."

Butch grumbled, "Reason I sent in that harry call, Boss, I was afraid these hospital creeps would give me that old whifferoo on the op'rating table and I'll pass out before I could tell you about this Jack-the-Wrecker—"

The doctor cursed fervently. "Damn it, you dumb bastard! You just ripped a stitch loose, shooting off your big mouth. You want me to hook your scalp back on or not?"

Tony Quinn said, "Hold it twenty seconds, Doc, then I'll guarantee to keep him quiet."

The nurse muttered, "That'll be the day!"

Tony bent over the cot. "Did the Wrecker fix you up like this?"

"Hah!" Butch snorted. "That baby won't fix nobody up no more, you ask me! He's breakfast food for the buzzards by now. Just lemme tell you—"

Quinn put a palm over the wide mouth. "Go ahead, Doc. If he opens his trap again before you're finished, you can put a few stitches in his lips." He scowled down into Butch's eyes. "I'll give you an ether pad myself, if you don't pipe down until they've finished patching you up."

Butch winked one purplish, puffy eyelid.

## Chapter V

**B**UTCH watched while the doctor plastered the last strip of adhesive across his hairy chest.

"Probably you think because you're big

as a moose and strong as a bull," the doctor said, "you can get up and start heaving pianos or iron safes in the morning. Let me tell you, fellow, you better park your fundum on a mattress for a few days or you might start to come unstuck. You've been *hurt!*"

"Telling me," Butch grunted. "Thanks for the darning needle and everything."

The doctor made a face. "Mind what I say. Keep quiet or you might be on your back a good long time."

Butch moaned. "Y'mean I can't *talk!*"

The nurse answered. "That's all right, talking. The doctor means you're not to get excited or anything."

The doctor added, "We're checking you out as an ambulatory at Mr. Quinn's request, but if you don't take it easy you'll come back here on a stretcher."

"If I do," Butch declared, as he stalked across the ward stiffly, "I'll have company with me. So long, now."

In Tony's car, the big man leaned back against the cushions. He began immediately to talk.

"I better go back to the time I left the office, Boss. When you say we got to get a line on this black Caddy, right away I think of the Melody Club. A lot of them grease monkeys for the garages and used car lots hang around in there. But the joint is practically empty when I get there. There's only this skinnymarink of a bartender. He's seen me three, four times but he don't know me from Adam.

"He puts down his racing paper. 'Kind a muggy,' he says. I tell him it's good weather to be burned in, and that I'm expecting to get patted in the puss with a shovel any time, so would he so kindly pour me a shillelagh, double, Irish and a long beer chaser. So he does, and just making the time pass, he asks what is my trouble. I tell him I ruin the big heap I drive for my employer and I have to have a car in Dallas by Saturday or I'm a dead duck, but I can't move without a whole new transmission. Course the Caddy dealer could get the parts but it'd take a week, ten days. By then I'm in wrong up to my chops because it's my fault for not checkin' the transmission grease job.

"So he says that's too bad and one thing

and another. I have another shillelagh and give out a little guff about money being no object if I could only get them parts for the new Caddy. I'm on the third shillelagh when he finally makes the suggestion why don't I go see Jack-the-Wrecker. Sometimes this Jack gets hold of a new bus, been in a wreck or something, no good for anything except to get parts from. I tell him much oblige and maybe I'll give it the try. So I taxi out to this junk yard—you know where it is, Boss?"

"Out on North Buckeye." Tony nodded.

"Yea. It's big's a circus lot. High board fence all around it. Door's shut when I get there, but while I'm scheming how to scale that barb-wire on top of the fence, somebody inside opens the doors and this pickup rolls out.

"Before the yuk who's driving spots me, I'm inside the yard behind a broken-down school bus. He stops his pickup, locks the doors from the outside and drives off. I take a peek around.

"There must be two, three hundred heaps in that boneyard. Jallopies, jeeps, busses, trailers, hot rods, tractor combos, rotary concrete mixers, even one of them sixteen-wheeler Diesel jobs. New, old, rusty, busted glass, some with no tires, no wheels, some ain't even got motors. Across the back of the lot is a shed about the size of a freight station, and they's a dazzling white light in there, so I figure somebody's using an acetylene torch. I go over and there's two Joes in there with glass masks and gloves on. They're cutting up a snooty new Cadillac. Torching it to pieces, body, frame, the works.

**B**UTCH hesitated for a moment, then went on, a little apologetically. "Maybe I shoulda beat it then, but the way it looks to me, we want some identification of this bus, so I walk right up and make my pitch about wantin' to buy transmission parts. They want to know how I get in. I tell 'em, but they don't buy it. They put out the torch and look me over good.

"One of 'em says, 'How'd you happen to come way out here in the first place, Buster?' I mention the Melody and the skinnv

bartender, but still they're suspicious. They got the body of this Caddy all dismantled. The hood is off but the motor's still on the chassis and I'm edgin' closer to see if I can read the numbers stamped on the frame or maybe on the motor block, when they really catch wise what I'm after.

"One of 'em breaks out a gun from somewhere in his coveralls. I go for mine, too, natch—but the other ginzo pulls the trigger on his torch and that flame blinds me. Besides which I'm tripping over my own feet getting back outa the way of that white-hot

much, because they finally get together on one point. Which is, I'm to be tied up and put in cold storage until such time as the Wrecker does come back. If he don't, they pop my balloon anyhow.

"I'm getting fed up with that muzzle itch anyhow, so the next time the one with the grip on that gas-jet squirts a flash of lightning in my direction, I take a chance and belly my weight on the spitting end. It rocks the reasonable bugger right back on his heels. His tail gets a touch of that flame. He lets out a screech that would drown out a

## A SLIGHT CASE OF GRAFT

Judge Robert Davis, Bristol, Virginia, saw no reason why he shouldn't be agreeable when a man charged with trespassing asked to be let out of jail pending his trial.

"Certainly," the judge said. "Post a twenty-five dollar appearance bond and it will be all right." That suited the prisoner, but he asked the judge to go see a pal who would give him the money, adding, "Tell him the bond is thirty dollars. That way I'll have an extra five dollars for spending money."

The man was promptly shuttled back to his cell.



by

Manly E. David

jet. When I get so I can see a little better, the first thing I make out is the hot end of a thirty-eight hooked right into my belt buckle.

"I give out with the old bluff, but it's no sale. They skin my pockets, read the identification in my wallet. One of 'em wants to push the button on me right then and there. But the other one disagrees, an' he's the one at th' controls of th' thirty-eight.

"They have a son of a bitch of an argument, th' one with the gun hollering, 'He won't stand for no rodding and you know it!' and the other—the one who wants to blast my nuts with that jet flame—shouting, 'Hell with what he'll stand for and won't stand for! You know well's I do he's a lost ball in high weeds and nobody's ever gonna see him no more!'

"It's not hard to dope out they're beller-ing about Jack-the-Wrecker, and that they think he's either flew the coop or is hiding under a headstone. But it don't help me

fire siren. Drops the gun. I get it.

"The one who got his ass fried is down or the cement doing spasms. I poke the gun at the other one. March him out. Into the first car he claims'll run. A jeep. I prod him in, get in after him. I can't horse around with him getting out and unlocking those doors, all that waste motion. I want out. I tell him so. 'Get up speed, I tell him. 'Sock into those doors. Bang 'em open. Or I'll bang you open.'

"He has trouble getting the motor going, and I'm stupid enough not to guess why. Then he has to back up to get headway so we'll have enough oomph to bust through. But I feel pretty jake, while I'm ramming that thirty-eight in his navel. Finally we get zooming. We make so much noise I never do hear the other sucker get the wrecking truck roaring. But he does, while my joker's covering the noise with the revving up of the jeep. Make it short, both cars get to the door simultaneous.

"Boss, you never hear anything like that crashup! Like in the song, the two locomotives were a-going to bump. We hit the door in the jeep. The wrecker hits the jeep on my side. We go through—and over. The wrecker rolls right onto us. I get glass splinters in my hair, my mouth, my eyes.

"My driver's screeching like a wounded weasel. I must let go with the gun when we rolled over. The jeep's gas tank comes apart. We catch fire.

"Don't ask me how I got out. I don't know. I remember crawling out through what was left of the windshield. Next thing I remember, a couple boys in white coats are sliding me onto a stretcher."

Tony said, "I wonder what you'd have done with a fourth shillelagh underneath your belt."

**T**HEY drove home and, once in the library, Tony Quinn left Butch for a few moments. He returned with a silver tray which he placed on the Circassian walnut coffee-table.

"There's your medicine, Butch. One bottle every twenty-four hours."

Butch Leary made a guffawing sound through his bandages at sight of the quart of Irish whisky and the flanking array of beer cans.

"You're making a great mistake, Boss. You keep on treating me like this, you're liable to have a permanent guest on your hands."

Tony bent down, touched a match to the paper crumpled beneath the birch logs in the wide brick fireplace. "At least I can see to it you don't get into any more rough-and-tumbles, then."

Butch sampled the whisky, sighed with satisfaction. "You ain't kidding me. You brought me here because you figure those ginzos might come after me again, if I holed up in my room."

"I want you to be in shape to go before the Grand Jury in the morning. You'd more likely be ready for the undertaker; if they thought it would be necessary to stop you from testifying about Prosser's Cadillac."

"Only thing I can say, honestly, is that it was a black Caddy with whitewalls."

"This year's model. Right. There aren't too many of those expensive boats in Vulcan City, so if we send the hot car squad around there to check and there isn't any black Caddy in Jack-the-Wrecker's, it would leave it up to them to explain what had happened to it since your little 'accident'."

"Aw, by now they probably carted it out in the woods somewhere, dumped it."

"Expect they have, Butch. Wouldn't surprise me if we failed to locate that lad with the bullet in his digestion, too. Chances are they carted him to Columbus or Portsmouth, with some hooked-up yarn about a gun-cleaning accident. Otherwise one of our hospitals would have reported a gunshot patient before this."

"Didn't the guy who picked me up and run me in to the hospital see either of them boys in the bust-up cars?"

"No. He was a telephone company lineman. Said he saw you crawling along on your hands and knees in the middle of the highway, leaking blood as if you were painting a new red center line. He didn't see any smashed-up cars or any other injured men. It's possible the man you shot died, of course."

"Cry-sake! I never thought of that!" Butch gestured with one bandaged flipper. "I guess I fuggled things up good for you, huh?"

Quinn watched the flames curling up against the soot-blackened brick. "You did all right. Very likely you found the car we're after. You picked up a red-hot lead to Jack-the-Wrecker. And you spotted that cement mixer."

"Huh?"

"That truck with the rotary mixer on it. Be hard to think of a better scheme for pounding a corpse to an unrecognizable pulp than to cut it up, toss it into one of those things with a half-ton of stones and boulders, start it churning."

"Now ain't that a lovely idea! Don't gimme no credit for thinking of that!"

"Purely speculation on my part," Tony Quinn admitted. "But we'll have the hot-car boys take a squint at that vehicle to see if it could have been used as a sort of whirlwind hearse."

He was moving toward the phone the instant the bell began to ring.

"Yes?"

## Chapter VI

**I**T WAS Silk calling. "Message here at the office for you, sir."

"From Carol?" Tony was anxious.

"No, sir. Telegram from Norristown."

"Let's have it, Silk." He smothered his worry, momentarily.

"Starts, 'Regarding previous inquiry Jules Verchamps belief is he has left this area, will not return. Reason for this, he is reported to have closed out checking accounts in three local banks, total withdrawals rumored to be in neighborhood of one hundred ten thousand. Do you wish me keep you informed further unverified gossip this sort?' It's signed 'Jacob Asmussen, Chief, Police Department.'"

"Shoot him a straight wire, Silk." Quinn thought for a moment. "Ready?"

"Go ahead, sir."

"Information concerning Verchamps much appreciated. Can you determine endorser of checks signed by him and place where same were cashed? Get it off right away, Silk."

"Okay, sir. By the way, I may have got something out of an hour and a half long-distancing."

"Such as?" Quinn inquired.

"The desk clerk at the Koppner House in Pittsburg remembered that a John Myron from Jersey City registered there last Friday night."

"Ah. The evening of the day Myron Attar left Newark!"

"That was one of the aliases Butch said Attar used, sir. But there was a funny thing. He checked in all right and checked out the next morning before breakfast. But he was a sleep out."

"Didn't use the room at all?" Quinn's eyebrows went up.

"Not the bed, anyway. The clerk remembered it because the floor maid mentioned it when he reported the check-out to her so she could make up the room for another guest. She told him it wasn't necessary, that it was

still made up."

"Maybe this Attar's a somnambulist and spends the night sleepwalking," Quinn said. "Nothing on Verchamps?"

"Not yet. I'm still at it."

"Good boy. You might nose around a little on the trail of the Unreverend John Wizlow."

"Jack-the-Wrecker?" Silk sounded surprised.

"Butch thinks he's the lad who has Prosser's Cadillac. Butch has a nice, new set of seventeen stitches and a brace of green fractures to back up his opinion. I'm inclined to take it seriously."

Silk said, "So the party's getting rough. I better dust off my brass knucks."

Tony said, "Lead will be of more help than brass, I expect. Buzz me the minute you get any word from Carol."

"Yes, sir."

Tony sprawled in the club chair before the fireplace, feet stretched out, head thrown back so he was apparently staring at the faint plaster cracks in the ceiling.

Butch knew better than to interrupt the Quinn mental processes with comment or inquiry. He helped himself to whisky, opened another can of beer.

The long hand on the mantel clock had almost completed a full circuit before there was any sound in the library except the crackling of the logs and the occasional burble of liquor into Butch's glass. Then the phone jangled.

"Yes?"

"Don't bark at me, darling!" Carol protested.

Quinn apologized, "Natural result of worry. What's what, my lovely?"

"I'm half tight, Tony. I've been hitting the high spots, and some of the low ones. But I think I'll pause here at Ravenwood Lodge for a bite to eat."

"Whatsit? A motel?"

"With the nicest bar. And the prettiest cocktail napkins."

"Wherezit?"

"Just beyond the city limits, on Route Forty. Can't miss it."

"I'm on my way."

"Don't keep me waiting. I've had so many

quick ones I'm likely to fall off the bar stool."

"Put some salt in your beer and keep your pants on. Take me ten minutes."

**I**T TOOK him seven.

But when his Ford swung off the highway to the parking crescent, there wasn't any sign of her blue Chevy coupé. The only other car there was a beat-up, stripped-down Model T.

He was looking for trouble when he opened the door to the Bar and Grill.

No one was in the dimly-lighted café when Tony Quinn strode in and up to the small, half-moon bar.

Hooded blue bulbs cast small, deceptive reflections against back-bar mirror, rows of glittering sherry and cocktail glasses, a showy array of liquor bottles with chrome-tipped pourers. It was the sort of discreet semi-darkness favored by couples wishing, for one reason or another, to remain virtually unseen in the shadowy booths. To Tony it was an alert, putting his special keenness of hearing instantly on guard.

He would have been on guard anyhow, since Carol wasn't there. It wasn't like her to say she'd wait for him, then run off before he got here. Yet if she hadn't done just that, the most likely alternative would be much more alarming. Across his mind flashed the ominous parallel—no car, no gal; the dismantled Cadillac, the dismembered body in Saylor's Creek. The mutilating murderers who'd not been afraid to destroy powerful netherworld figures wouldn't even bother to think twice about putting Carol Baldwin out of their way, if they thought she was wise to them. He didn't like it.

Neither did he like what he heard. He heard, for a full half-minute, absolutely nothing. Yet if there was anyone in the café kitchen, the sound of the door he'd slammed behind him must have been clearly audible. The silence gave him the sensation of being watched by someone who was keeping abnormally quiet, as unseen observers were apt to do, according to his experience.

If he was being scrutinized through some peep-hole, it could only mean that he was under suspicion. That, in turn, suggested either that he was known, or at least that he

was presumed to be the man Carol had phoned from that booth over there beside the twin rest-room doors. It might be important to make sure about that. If Carol had been abducted, and was being held prisoner, his chances of helping her would be nil if her captor knew his identity.

"Hey!" he said loudly. "Anybody home?"

Immediately the swinging door beside the bar banged open. The woman who waddled through it, wiping immense red hands on a ridiculous little frilly white apron, was a freak of fatness. If the gross creature had been a little shorter, he thought, she would certainly be making her living in a circus sideshow as the world's fattest female. Her small head seemed to be emerging from a blubbery coil overlapping pink inner tubes. Her face was pretty, but the bright merry eyes seemed to be perpetually squinting between puffy, swollen lids.

"What'll ya have, mista?" She edged sideways behind the bar, of necessity. Her breasts, beneath a dainty pink-rosebud gingham, looked like distended cow udders.

He pretended deliberation. "Oh—Scotch on the rocks."

She rested a forearm plump as a horse's thigh on the bar. "Any special brand, mista?"

"I can't tell the difference between one kind of Scotch and another, after it's down." He grinned disarmingly. "Where is everybody?"

"We don't get much suppertime trade." She poured liquor deftly. "Crowd generally begins drifting in along about seven. You stick around. Be plenty going on. Chaser?"

"Just creek water." He noticed she didn't put any cocktail napkin beside his glass. Nor did he see any pile of them on the back-bar anywhere. Could she have overheard Carol's phone call to him? "How's about a hamburger?"

"Sure." She made change. "How you want it?"

"I don't want it straight across the board, if you know what I mean."

She showed nice teeth in a small, decisive smile. "We don't serve horseburgers here. You want onions?"

"No. I might see my girl later."

"Lettuce and mayonnaise? Or mustard?"

"Mustard, please. Could I have it on toast?" That would take her a couple of minutes more, give him that much time to case the joint.

"Toast, coming up." She crab-stepped out, into the kitchen.

**H**E STROLLED toward the door marked "Kings." His eyes searched the narrow booth tables, the floor beneath. No dropped handkerchief or glove. Not even a lipstick-reddened butt of the special brand of hollow-tipped cigarette Carol favored.

In the lavatory he listened for possible sounds from the adjoining cubicle. None.

He tried to think of some contingency which might have made her leave without waiting for him. If she'd spotted someone she'd thought it urgently important to follow, she might have gone on, intending to phone the house later. But she couldn't have learned anything about Jack-the-Wrecker's connection with the case, could she?

Perhaps she'd meant it when she'd told him she was getting tight. Tony'd never seen her that way, but if she'd been buying quickies in a score of bars, in the line of duty, she might be feeling the effects by now. Still, under those conditions she wouldn't have been likely to have driven her car away.

He went back to the bar.

A young couple came in, slid into a booth with the familiarity of patrons well acquainted with Ravenwood.

The swinging door opened a foot. Fat lady hollered: "Be right with ya, kids."

The youth, a greasy-haired sharpie in a coat with lapels reaching to his belt, waved airily: "Take your time, Maggie-O. We got all night." He laughed boisterously, leering at his companion, a timid teen-ager. "Ain't we, Annie Lou?"

In the back-bar mirror, Tony saw Annie Lou glance quickly in his direction, then away, as if ashamed. So Ravenwood Lodge was one of those hot-pillow motels that didn't inquire too closely into the marital status of its overnight guests! It didn't surprise Tony Quinn much, but still, that was small-time lawbreaking which didn't quite seem to be in the same bracket as kidnaping and kill-

ing prominent hoodlums.

The blubbery behemoth served his hamburger. He had another Scotch on ice cubes, finished the sandwich. Then he drifted into the phone booth, closed the folding glass door.

On the shelf beneath the instrument was a paper napkin. He unfolded it.

Beneath a pattern of cocktail glasses with stems interlaced was the corny old couplet he'd quoted to Carol. He wondered how welcome *he* was, in this place!

As he slipped the folded square of paper into his coat pocket and dropped a nickel in the coin slot, his acutely sensitive ears caught a whispered:

"Sssssh! He's in there, now!"

Instantly he realized that one side panel of the booth formed part of the flimsy partition separating kitchen from barroom.

He gave the operator the number of one of the typists in his deposition department, put his left ear against the thin wallboard panel.

## Chapter VII

**S**HORT, clip-clop footsteps came through clearly—that would be the waddling woman. Then a man's voice, faint and muffled as if the speaker was talking with a cigar in his mouth.

"Are you sure he's the D. A.?"

The woman's irritated whisper again. "I saw his picture on all those window posters before election, didn't I?"

The typist said, "Hello?"

Quinn kept his voice low enough so he'd sound like a man conducting an intimate conversation. "Listen, sweets, I'm sorry I was such a heel about—well you know, last night—"

The girl at the other end of the line exclaimed, "Who is this? Who do you think you're talking to, anyway?"

Quinn gave it the business. "I guess I must of had one too many, sweets, or I wouldn't have done anything like—you know. But y'oughta understand, when a feller really thinks the world of you—"

She stammered, "Is this Mr. Quinn? You sound like Mr. Quinn."

He went on, "Well, I certainly am relieved to hear you say so, sweets. Yeah, yeah—sure. I'll be around for you in two shakes.—Oh, I'm out at a place called Ravens Roost or something. See you in no time. By, now."

He hung up, wondering what in the hell that poor kid would make of his dizzy conversation. But at least he hadn't said anything to confirm the suspicions of the two behind that sounding-board partition.

He wanted to stay in the booth to hear the *sotto voce* comments which would follow his ringing off, but that might have been a give-away. It was difficult to make himself stroll out, finish his drink and depart, too, when every instinct urged him to bust through that swinging door and confront the owner of that muffled voice.

But there was Carol to think about first. First and last. Even before his sworn duty. Because the undeniable truth was that nothing, nobody, in Vulcan City or anywhere else mattered half so much to him as she did.

He got in his car, turned, headed back toward town. Half a mile in, he swung off the highway to another roadside juke joint: "*The High Hat.*"

There were three or four people in the café. The purple-red-green-lighted contraption was giving out with *The Wheel of Fortune*, and that suited him fine. No one would be likely to overhear what he had to say in this phone booth.

He dialed his office.

"Silk?"

"Yes, sir. Where are you, sir? Carol left a message at your home—"

"I got it, Silk. Now, listen—"

"Excuse me, sir. She phoned in a second time."

"Oh! When?"

"About five minutes after her first call, Butch said. You'd barely left to drive to Ravenwood Lodge."

"What'd she say?"

"I didn't like the sound of it, sir."

"Give!"

"Well, sir, as Butch reported it, she said she was sorry to have missed you, but she'd got off on the wrong foot entirely and was going directly to the *Thirty-eight Club* to

follow up the right lead. She'd be looking for you there, as soon as you could get there."

"The *Thirty-eight Club.*"

"Yes, sir. I know. There isn't any such place in town."

"I'm not so sure." Tony's face hardened into sternness. Thirty-eight was the Vulcan City police radio car signal for a homicide alarm. "There may be, at that. You drop everything else, Silk, and zoom on out here, on the double. And say—"

"Yes, sir?"

"Don't forget those lead knuckles."

SILK made a fast trip to the rendezvous. His battered De Soto pulled off the highway. Tony Quinn got out of his own car, went over.

"Signals over, Silk. We're going to have to be a little cagey about this. We'll have to risk going slower than I had in mind, at first."

"You think they may already have taken her away from that Ravenwood place, sir?"

"I doubt it. They were too careful to whisk the car away, even after they knew she'd telephoned me about the motel. If they'd taken her elsewhere, I expect they'd have left her car there as a decoy."

Silk hesitated. "You don't think they may have—disposed of Carol?"

"I don't know." Hard lines were etched deeply in Quinn's face. "They may have. That's one of the things we have to find out. If we don't get her, alive and unharmed, I'm going on a little gunning trip. There might be somebody in this town who'd like to keep me in line by keeping Carol alive and under his control."

"Let's hope so. I mean—"

"I know. Now here's the deal. You go hire a *Drive-Yourself* buggy. Buy two or three of those big metal sample cases, fill 'em with phone books or old newspapers or whatever, and lock 'em, and leave 'em in the rear seat. Then pile your own suitcase on top, after you pack it as if you'd been away on a week's selling trip."

"I've just finished a tough week's trip. I'm ready for a little relaxation at the Ravenwood. That it, sir?"

"And a lot of liquor. Don't forget the

hooch, because you're going to have to stay over tomorrow night, and in a riding academy like that, they won't be used to single guys staying over the second night. But it's going to take a while for me to get my trap baited, Silk."

"No oyster's ever been as completely stewed as I shall be, sir."

"Change your suit. Put on a colored shirt. And a noisy necktie."

"Dress like a successful peddler of cosmetics, in short."

"Exactly. And didn't you used to have a pair of binoculars—for keeping cases on some good prospects and how they lived and acted, before you braced them?"

"I have kept them—as a memento of the unlawful period of my life."

"Pack 'em in your suitcase. They'll help to keep track of the comings and goings at the motel, particularly the goings. If you have to get in touch, phone Butch. He'll stay at the house."

"And you, sir?"

"I'm going to make like a piece of cheese,

Silk." He punched his assistant's shoulder lightly. "In the hope some rat will snap at me."

"I wish I was going with you, sir."

"I'd rather go back to the Ravenwood with you, far's that goes. I'd like to tear the place apart, find what they've done to her. But that might be the very thing that would make them kill her. I'll have to depend on you to look out for her, best you can."

He watched the De Soto speed back toward town, got his own car going. Ten minutes later he sat, shirt-sleeved and perspiring, at the telephone in his library, growling brusque commands to Butch while waiting for the operators to complete the long-distance connections.

"Lay down that shillelagh a second and give me some more dope on this Ha-Ha customer you've been telling me about."

Butch tried to scratch his bandaged skull with a bandaged hand, groaned in disgust. Real name's Fuddy Ommlee. Got this here Ha-Ha moniker because he always comes up

[Turn page]



**Round-Up Fote Seg:**  
Nobody ever got  
hurt on the corners  
of a square deal—

... AND THE BIGGEST SQUARE  
DEAL IN WORK CLOTHES IS STILL

**Carhartt**  
MASTER CLOTH  
**Overalls**

✓ **BROWN DUCKS . . . FOR TOUGH, HE-MAN JOBS**

These Brown Duck Overalls (bib and waist type) with coats to match, are amazingly popular with linemen, electricians, welders, steel workers, foundrymen, truck drivers, plumbers, etc. They appreciate the heavy, high count, 11 oz. Carhartt brown duck that guarantees extra protection on the job. They're rain repellent, full cut and roomy for added work ease, are built to outlast several pairs of ordinary overalls. Insist on Carhartt Brown Ducks by name . . . get all the extra features of this famous make of work clothes.



**These NEW Carhartt  
Work Caps Are Tops, Too!**

Here's the last word in a neat, smart, big peak! Halsey-style workcap that is tailored for comfort and good looks. Ideal for sports wear and mighty inexpensive.

**HAMILTON CARHARTT OVERALL CO.**  
Detroit 16, Mich. Atlanta, Ga.  
Carhartt Park, Irvine, Ky. Dallas, Tex.

**MAKERS OF UNION MADE  
WORK CLOTHES FOR 63 YEARS**

with the great big giggle every time he made a pass with the dice for a gee or so. Used to be a pro gambler. Turned hijacker of his own game one time when some other crook slipped in a pair of no-seven dice on him. Took a New York bunch of bookies for a fancy grab of seventy, eighty thousand a month ago. Gut-shot one of 'em. Got away clean. Since then everybody's been after him. The boys in the back room want him worse'n the cops do, if that's possible."

QUINN asked, "Ever see him, yourself?"

"Sure. He use to run one of these three truck carney outfits—Ferris wheel, couple dizzy rides, six, seven toss game booths. I run into him in Norfolk one time when a gang of gobs was using him for a punching bag because he gypped 'em on a pitch-the-penny setup."

"What's he look like?"

"About your build, Boss. Skinnier, as I remember. Used to flash one of them South-of-the-Border mustaches."

"Hm. Know where we can get hold of some crooked dice?"

"Huh?"

"Nothing crude, like the stuff they sell in these novelty stores. Some of those passers that look oke when you test 'em in a glass of water, but warm up after you hold 'em in your fist a while, maybe."

Butch came as close to grinning as his bunged-up face would permit. "Boss, you grieve me. Y'really do. To think you'd descend to such treacherous de-vices.—Yeah, I guess I can borrow a pair or so. Only I warn you, you better let me get you one of them bullet-proof vests to wear."

"Soon's I finish talking to New York, get busy on the phone and rustle up those trick cubes." Quinn began to unlace his shoes. "Yes? Mr. Carrigan, this is Anthony Quinn in Vulcan City—that's right. Like to ask a small favor, if you don't mind. Well, thanks. I'd just like to have you send a wire for me." It was ten minutes before he hung up.

He was in the shower when the phone rang again. Butch hollered:

"It's the airport. They got that charter job for you, Boss."

"Tell 'em I'll be there in twenty minutes. And Butch—"

"I got it fixed, about them never-sevens. They'll be here in no time."

"Fine. But give that long-distance operator a goose about that car dealer in Harrisburg, will you?"

Half an hour later, as the checkered pattern of lighted towns began to unroll smoothly five thousand feet beneath the chartered Beechcraft, Tonny Quinn tried to check over the points he might have overlooked in his hasty preparations.

He'd dreamed up the scheme, right, off the top of his head; it would be crazy to expect it to be foolproof. But it was either try to sneak in by the back door—as he hoped to—or crash in the front door. That would have meant dependence on a police force which was, to put it charitably, not disposed to cooperate with him too willingly. And a raid on Ravenwood, or on Jack-the-Wrecker's junkyard, wouldn't have netted much, if there'd been a leak from Headquarters or a tipoff in advance.

Momentarily he wished most earnestly that he might for one final appearance, show up as the Black Bat again. That black-clothed apparition might have succeeded in getting past the guard of Carol's captors, might have accomplished her rescue—assuming she was still breathing. The excessively dressy pin-stripe he was wearing probably would never be as effective.

But it had been largely at her insistence that he'd agreed to drop his dual rôle of public prosecutor and private avenger for once and forever. He couldn't break his promise to her now. Always she had contended, so stubbornly, that it had been his nerve and his knowledge of the criminal mind which had brought about his most amazing coups against the vicious and the vile. Now he'd be forced to put her belief in him to the utmost test!

## Chapter VIII

OVER his shoulder, the pilot spoke to Quinn.

"Those are the bridges over the Monongahela, sir. We'll be down in five minutes,

unless they give us a standoff at the field.”

Tony Quinn looked down at the glowing rows of chimneys, the flaring flames of the coke ovens at the great mills. Somewhere below there, in that devil's cauldron of fire and smoke, might be the key to a killer's closet, with its grisly corpses.

The pilot said, “Are you expecting a car to meet you at the airport, sir?”

Quinn laughed. “Sure am, son. And I'll be lucky if there isn't a troop of F. B. I. boys there to meet me, too.”

The pilot looked around, startled. He had no idea who his passenger was.

Tony smiled. “Relax, son. I haven't any Fort Knox gold in that suitcase.”

The gaudily uniformed doorman at the Koppner House quickened his pace as he saw the maroon convertible glide in to the curb. He rested one hand on the door, bending low.

“Yes, sir! Reservation, sir?”

Quinn shot him a surly look, stepped out of the car, walked around to the rear, jingling his keys.

“Here.” He took a long alligator billfold out of his inside coat pocket, extracted a fifty, held it out casually. “I'll bet this you can find my reservation. Frank Osterman, Hartford, Connecticut. Suite, high up. And bring the registration card out here. I have some stuff to look after here. Save time. Catch?”

The doorman beamed. “Yes, sir. Be right back for your bags.” He goggled at the bill in his hand. Thank you, Mr. Osterman.”

Quinn disdained replying. He unlocked the rear compartment, took out a pigskin attaché case. He was busy with a topcoat and a hatbox when the doorman hurried back.

“Everything set, Mr. Osterman. Some misunderstanding about your reservation, and the house is full. But I arranged for you to have the governor's suite on the eleventh—if that'll be all right, sir?” He held out a pen with the white card.

Tony scrawled “Frank L. Osterman, Hartford,” without appearing to notice the typed rate of \$27.50 *per diem*. “Get someone to run this bus in the garage, hah?”

“I'll call them right away, yes, sir.” The

doorman lifted out the expensive suitcase, noting the case of imported brandy stowed away in the luggage compartment.

Tony shut the trunk lid, locked it. “Tell 'em to make it snappy. I don't want this bus standing here all night.”

“No, sir. I'll take care of it, sir.”

In the lobby, a bellman was waiting to seize the suitcase. “Carry the brief-case, sir?”

Tony said coldly, “You handle the suitcase. I'll take care of this.”

His eyes searched the lobby swiftly, picking out at once a gray-haired man with a stolid, dead-pan face. He stood—mouth clamped over a thin Pittsburgh stogie—by the bank of house phones beside the cashier's desk, and he was watching Tony intently.

Like all house dicks, Tony thought, you stand out like a black eye on a preacher.

The bellman hustled the suitcase into an elevator. “Nice evening for driving, sir.”

“Humph.” Tony was curt. “Traffic was lousy.”

“That's right. Friday night's a bad time for traffic.” The bellman led the way down the eleventh floor corridor. “Going to be with us for a few days, Mr. Osterman?”

“What's there in this town to keep me!” Tony followed the bellman into the luxurious living room, set the attaché case on the mantel.

“I guess you can find pretty near anything you want in this town, sir.” The bellman hustled about, switching on lights, checking windows. “Shows, fights, women, a little game if you care for it.”

Tony shrugged, disinterested. “Here, buy yourself a good time.” He dropped a ten-dollar bill on the table.

“Thank you, sir! Were you expecting any mail or telegrams, Mr. Osterman?”

“No.” He was short.

“If there's any little thing I can do for you, sir?”

“Oke. Night.”

The bellman left.

TONY opened the suitcases, tossed silver-backed military brushes on the bureau, toothpaste and shaving gear in the medicine cabinet in the bathroom.

Give 'em time to get the grapevine working, he told himself. By the looks of that house dick, he's so thickheaded it'll take him a while to check on that Wanted bulletin his locals must have passed on to him.

It was ten minutes before the phone rang. The hotel operator said, "I have a long-distance call for you, sir."

"Oke."

Butch came on. "Lissen, Freddy—"

Tony snapped, "You clunkhead! How many times do I have to tell you I'm not Freddy."

Butch sounded hurt. "Yeah, yeah, Frank. I just forgot."

"Well, don't."

Quinn prayed that the hotel operator had left her key open. He thought it likely she'd already have heard about the generous gent in 1124-1126 who handed out such lordly largesse. Sometimes even phone girls got tipped by free-and-easy spenders.

Butch went on, "About that ring-around-a-rosie we set up for Akron, Frank."

"What about it?"

"We got to be careful about that, Frank. I might even need a wad of fix dough—just for insurance, you know. Somebody might get hep you were operating out in this part of the country, and gum the works."

"Well damn it to hell, then fix it. Don't be calling up about it. I don't like to talk business over the telephone, catch?"

"Yeah, yeah, Frank. But—"

"Square it! You hear! I'll see you tomorrow." He banged up the receiver, smiling. Butch had made a real production number out of it. It ought to be good enough to fox a house dick anyhow.

He sprinkled a little cigarette ash on the mantel, set the attaché case on it, blew the rest away. Then he pulled the jaunty snapbrim down a bit lower over his eyes, went out and down the lobby.

He shot one purposely furtive glance in the direction of the dead-panned individual, stalked briskly to the street. There he refused to let the doorman call a cab for him. The convertible was no longer at the curb.

By now, theoretically, every policeman in the city should be on the lookout for one Freddy Ommlee. Description, as much like

Tony Quinn as was possible. Car, a new convertible with New York pads. Wanted for armed robbery, grand larceny, etcetera.

It wouldn't do for him to be picked up by some alert plainclothesman. That would monkeywrench the machinery for fair. He drifted into a grind movie, watched a cops-and-robber melodrama in which a desperate gunman and killer was suddenly reformed by the influence of a sweet young thing. It was pure entertainment; he'd never known anything like it to happen, off the screen.

At one-thirty A. M. he left the theatre, had scrambled eggs and milk, and went back to the Koppner House.

The gaudy doorman was off duty. The bellman who had been so helpfully suggestive had been replaced by another, older employee. The poker-faced house dick wasn't in evidence.

Tony unlocked the door of his suite, sniffed. Cigar smoke! He snorted scornfully. Think of the guy's being stupid enough to smoke his stinkadora while he came in to make a surreptitious search!

Apparently the attaché case hadn't been touched. But when he lifted it, the cigarette ashes had been smudged all along the lower edge of the pigskin!

He unlocked the case, wondering how much trouble it had been for the intruder to pick the lock.

The decks of cards hadn't been unsealed. The expensive silk muffler was still wrapped around the heavy automatic just as he'd left it. There was nothing to indicate that the little cardboard box with its tissue-wrapped contents had been tampered with.

**H**E lifted the lid, slit the tissue carefully with his penknife. The crystal cubes were nestled there, almost as he'd arranged them. But instead of three pairs with the fours showing—two with the three dots uppermost and one set with a five and one—there were now four dots with their "three" sides on top.

He smiled grimly, spoke aloud.

"The rats have smelled the cheese, all right."

He left a room call for eight, but at six he was up, dressed and calling for a bellman.

When the elderly one arrived, Tony was at the door with suitcase and attaché case. "Ring up the garage. Tell 'em to zip my bus around here fast. Get it? Pronto!"

The bellman did as he was told. On the way down in the elevator, Tony fished another fifty out of the long alligator billfold.

"You pay off, chum. Keep the rest for bubble-gum."

It was crude, but he wanted to remain in character right up to the point of departure and he had no doubt it would all be reported to that dead-pan house officer.

He made his getaway seem as hurried as possible, having the bellman merely toss his suitcase in on the seat beside him, revving up her motor until it sounded ready for a racing start.

Once across the river and out of the city, he settled the convertible to a steady forty-five. He didn't want to get too far ahead of schedule. He had no idea when the "contact" would be made though he was now fairly sure it would be.

The overall picture was beginning to emerge. Prosser and Verchamps had probably stopped at the Koppner House on their way West. Silk hadn't been able to identify that fact because, in all likelihood, both men had registered under an alias, as certainly Myron Attar had. As Tony himself had, he added with an inward smile.

It was a natural stopping place, the lush old-fashioned luxury hotel which would have meant respectability in the eyes of the unrespectable. The three "vanished" criminals would have attracted the attention of that house dick by their manner, their free-tipping—again as he had, with malice aforethought. Quite possibly Attar had fallen for the not-too-subtle suggestions of that greedy little bellman and had been put in touch with some call girl who would account for Attar's having been a sleep out.

After going through the luggage of the three criminals—while they were out of the rooms, naturally—that house officer would have been able to tip off someone in the Vulcan City area as to their probable time of arrival.

All three of the men thus far officially reported missing had been individuals who

were on the run from legal pursuit. All had had large sums of money, either with them or obtainable, given sufficient time and torture to make arrangements for transfer of funds. None had been the sort to hold out under such pressure. Tony Quinn hoped that his overnight impersonation of Freddy Onmlee had put him in the same class with those others. He thought it probably had.

But as to how his capture would be effected, and whether it would lead him to Ravenwood Lodge, the fat woman and the whispering man—this he couldn't conjecture.

He tried to keep from thinking about Carol. It made it too difficult to reason logically. It had been more than twelve hours since she'd been in the hands of the bastards who'd already dumped two macerated corpses into the shallow streams within his jurisdiction.

## Chapter IX

FIFTEEN miles east of Vulcan City, Quinn had to revise his accounting. The twelve o'clock radio news included a brief mention that various disjointed portions of a third body had been discovered in an abandoned quarry four miles south of town. The newscaster mentioned such unsavory parallels as the St. Valentines Day massacre in Chicago, the exploits of Murder Incorporated in Brooklyn. A citizens committee had demanded instant and drastic action to keep Vulcan City from being known as Slaughterville, USA. A blue ribbon grand jury would be impaneled.

Quinn thought he might not be able to make the presentment to that group of twenty-three specially selected citizens, but if he could do something about getting one blonde girl out of the hands of the killers, he would be satisfied, no matter what the cost.

He slowed the convertible on a long upgrade. There, a hundred yards this side of the crest, was a Chevy in the ditch. Beside it, holding her right arm tightly and leaning weakly against the back of the half-tipped-over car—a teen-ager.

He pulled up behind her, called, "You all right?"

She hobbled toward him, the chartreuse

scarf about her head slanting rakishly down over her right side of her face. She was young, all right, but not quite as much of a kid as he'd thought at first. Those budding breasts beneath the tight yellow-green jersey were evidence of sexual maturity, if nothing else.

"He ran me right off the road!" she wailed. "The big bum."

Tony noticed the mascaraed tear streaks on her cheeks. "Hurt you."

"Pete's sake. I should say it did! It was one of those damn trailer trucks. It held smack in the middle coming over the hill there."

She rested her weight on her left leg, plucked at her skirt nervously, pulled it up to show him her raw and blood-splotched thigh. She held the skirt tightly, high enough so the lavender panties could be seen clear to the crotch.

"I don't think I broke anything"—she moved her arm painfully, rubbing it—"except the car."

"Smash a wheel?" He got out to survey the Chevy.

"The motor won't start, and there's gasoline leaking all over it, so I guess it's just as well. I might have blown up. Gee"—she made a face—"I wish I could get somewhere I could lie down for a minute."

"You want me to run you in to town?"

"Oh, *would* you?"

She's overdoing it a little, he told himself, but he'd certainly never have suspected any frameup if he hadn't been looking for one. "Sure thing. Hop in."

"Gee—thanks." She climbed in, half-hobbling. In the car she leaned against his shoulder weakly, for just an instant, before getting control of herself once more.

"You live in Vulcan City?" He got the convertible rolling.

"Uh—uh." She pulled the skirt up again to dab at the spots of blood with her handkerchief. "I live in Niles. I'm Lulie Jessop."

"You ought to have some attention for that leg. It's badly bruised." How had she managed that, he wondered. It looked like the McCoy.

She sniffled. "Generally my legs get too

much attention." She stifled a giggle. "But I know you didn't mean it that way."

"Not at all." It was quite a come-on, he concluded.

"You don't mind my riding with my skirt up this way? Because it hurts when the cloth touches my skin. But if it makes you nervous or anything to have me do it—"

"I've seen bare legs before." He saw he would have to play up to her. "Not many as good-looking. I may add."

She threw her head back, put a hand to her throat, swayed against him. "Gee, I feel all dizzy. Maybe you better stop and let me lie down somewhere a minute."

"There's a motel just ahead a bit." He tried to sound as wolflike as possible. "Wouldn't it be better if I took you in there?"

"Oh, gee!" She squeezed his arm gently. "If you wouldn't mind—getting a place for me to lie down for a while, if you don't think it would look *wrong* for you to be bringing me here."

"I'd feel like a heel if I didn't." He wondered if the others who had vanished had fallen for the sex lure. "Suppose I just take a cottage, then I can take care of that leg properly."

She closed her eyes as if about to faint. "I'm awful lucky to have a nice fellow like you come along and pick me up."

"I'm kind of lucky, too."

**H**E swung off into the circular drive which ran behind Ravenwood Lodge and in front of the dozen neat, green and white cottages.

It was too early Saturday afternoon for more than three or four of the cottages to have autos parked in front of their neat railed-in porches, but there were seven cars ranged in the parking crescent near the Lodge. There'd be more week-end merry-makers dropping in on their way to football games, so Maggie-O and company wouldn't want any rumpus raised publicly. But then, neither did he, on Carol's account—if it wasn't too late to take her into account.

He had no intention of underestimating the risk he was running. Those mutilated bodies were proof enough of the ruthlessness of



"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Quick!" He grabbed her arm. "I'm not going to stand here gabbing until your gang goes to work on me. Deliver! Where is she?"

"I don't know!"

QUINN spun her around, tapped her behind the ear with the flat of the barrel. She sagged, would have pitched on her face in the shower compartment if he hadn't caught her. But he took the precaution of rapping her once more behind the ear.

"That's one for you, Carol," he muttered as he slid up the window, removed the screen. "I never knocked a girl out before. But if it were a question of her life or yours, I'd have her put away for keeps!"

He hoisted Lulie's limp body up onto the sill, held her by the armpits, let her drop to the patch of weeds and grass behind the cottage.

Then he dropped the screen, closed the window, holstered the gun, and hurried to the front door.

A swift reconnaissance showed no one approaching the cottage. Undoubtedly they'd seen him, were trying to figure out what he was up to. Possibly they thought Lulie would be able to handle him by herself. But he was working on borrowed minutes and he knew it.

He trotted briskly out to his car, unlocked the trunk compartment.

A slat in the Venetian blind of the front, westerly window of Cottage 9 moved almost imperceptibly.

To the tune of *I've Been Working on the Railroad* he sang softly, "Can you understand me, Si-illk? Da dadum dee dee—"

"Coming over good and clear." The whisper from the open window couldn't have been heard by any but the keenest pair of ears in Vulcan City. "Haven't seen hide nor hair of Little Goldilocks."

"There's a dame behind the cot-tage," Tony sang, gathering up a trio of brandy bottles. "She is out, stone cold."

"Still with you."

"While I'm ba-a-ack-ing the car out, you collect the dame. If you keep down low, I'll screen you. Exit by your bathroom window,

heave her in by same."

Silk whispered, "Then what?"

"Hold her incommunicado, da dadee dum-dun." He shut the trunk lid, got in the car, put the brandy bottles on the seat beside him, and started the motor. He backed the Chrysler until it stood between the Lodge and the space between Cottages 9 and 10.

## Chapter X

LEAVING the motor running. Tony Quinn got out to carry his attaché case and the three fifths of cognac up on the porch and inside the cottage. If somebody, as he expected, was watching every movement from the Lodge, it ought to seem as if Lulie was still inside Number 10 and not anxious to be disturbed for the time being.

He left the cottage door open slightly to further that impression, and hurried back to the car. In the rear-view mirror, as he backed around to point the front bumper at the Lodge, he caught a stealthy stirring of the tall weeds at the rear of the cottages.

He let the motor speed up while he went to the hood, lifted it, made an unnecessary adjustment of the carburetor. Then he closed the hood, cut the motor, and went inside Cottage 10.

Lulie no longer lay on the ground beneath the bathroom window. But when he came back to the bedroom, he saw a tall, rangy youth with a jutting jaw and a thin slit of a mouth come loping across from the Lodge office. He ran with his legs apart, as if he were chafed, or had saddle sores.

Tony told himself this might be the lad who'd had his butt blistered by that acetylene torch when Butch shoved him into the flame.

He went to meet the youth.

"Hey, you!" the rangy lad growled irritably, and halted. "What right you got to occupy a cabin you ain't even paid for!"

Tony said crossly, "I know, I know. But this was an emergency. I got a sick gal on my hands." He produced a ten. "Here's your dough. I'll be over in a few minutes to register."

"What's the matter with your wife? If she is your wife!"

"She passed right out in the car. I was

afraid she was going to croak or something. You know a doctor I can phone?"

The rangy man stalked up on the porch. "Nah. And we can't have no sick people staying here. This ain't no sanitarium." He went into the bedroom.

Quinn held out the money. "What the hell can I do!"

He seized the man's wrist as the fellow reached for the tenspot. He jerked the youth toward him, dragging the weight of the rangy figure over his shoulder.

The man catapulted over Tony Quinn's head, crashed full length on the floor.

Quinn was on him instantly, clubbing with the butt of the .45.

He never did see anything but the sudden shadow which appeared on the floor at his side.

The rest was bright and blinding light, a dazzling eruption with no sound accompanying it at all. . . .

Faraway drums. Distant trumpets. A wailing voice, somewhere in the darkness, becoming steadily louder as the drums and trumpets approached:

*It's all over town, that you threw me down,  
You shouldn't let such a story go 'round—*

He swam up out of the black depths to consciousness. The coin-slot radio across the room was blasting at top volume:

*—but it's all o-ver  
All—l—l o-ver, now*

Someone was dousing water over his head. He was flat on his back, his head resting on a pillow. He twisted his face away from the cascading coldness, blinked dazedly at the bright bulb in the ceiling. It must be dark, then. He'd been dead to the world for five hours or more!

They'd moved him while he was unconscious. Cottage 10 hadn't been papered with this atrocious purple-rose pattern at his side. He blinked again. The fat woman loomed monstrously at the side of the bed. She splashed beer on his head from the glass pitcher in her hamlike fist.

She bent over him, a cigarette drooping from one corner of her small, pretty mouth.

She took the cigarette between two pudgy fingers, put it so close to his left eye he recoiled instinctively from the heat.

"You want to wake up and make like the birdies, or do ya need a little more stimulant?" The puffy eyes were venomous.

Tony tried to roll over on the bed, but he couldn't move his arms. "I don't feel much like singing, Maggie, but I always like to oblige a lady."

"No kidding!" She touched the tip of the cigarette lightly against his eyelid so he jerked his head away with the painful reflex. "You'll oblige me by telling me what ya did with Lulie, then."

SO SILK had managed to stay undercover all this time. Maybe now that it was dark, he'd even been able to spirit the sexy come-on away in his car.

"I'm the one who's in the dark, about her, Maggie."

"Don't gimme that guff."

"Truth. Soon's she found out I was wise to her, she went out the bathroom window of that cottage. I haven't seen her since."

She poked the cigarette at him savagely. He rolled his head. The glowing tip ground into his cheek-bone. "Y'won't see *anything*, any more. If ya don't give me the straight—and give it fast!"

"There are worse things than being blind, Maggie. Things such as having a couple of murders on your conscience."

She laughed nastily. "Shows how much you legal beagles know. The first two or three just sorta whet ya appetite. F'r instance, it ain't gonna add to my mental burden none whatever to watch you turn into cold meat. Only a matter of whether you wanta go quick and easy, or the hard way."

"I'm in no hurry about going. Longer I wait, more chance there is that some state troopers might even pick Lulie up, squeeze a confession out of her. She got a first-class scare when I told her how much we knew about the operations of your butcher business."

"You son of a bitch!" She struck at him viciously with the pitcher.

He rolled his head but the heavy glass half stunned him, so her words came through a

tremendous roaring inside his head.

"Lulie wouldn't ever run out on her ma! No matter what!" She raised her voice. "Hey!"

Tony heard the bathroom door open, but there was no answering voice.

Maggie cried, "This stubborn bastard won't squeak! He don't seem to give a damn what happens to him! See if he feels the same way about *her!*"

Still no reply. But the roaring in Tony's ears decreased enough for him to hear familiar footsteps on the tiled floor of the bathroom. He couldn't be mistaken about that deliberate pacing, even though now the man had taken only three or four steps, probably toward the shower compartment.

A high, keening moan of anguish came from the bathroom.

Carol! She was still alive! What unimaginable things might that devil be doing to her? To make Tony talk. Well, he would!

"Maggie, I'll make a deal with you." He couldn't give Silk away, even to save Carol, but he might convince these cold-blooded killers he could make them a fair trade, nevertheless.

"Oke! Where's Lulie?"

"She'll be safe, and so will you and the hush-hush boy in the bathroom, if you let Miss Baldwin go. You won't be, if you don't. Because she's the only one who can save the three of you from the chair!"

"Bullshoes!" Maggie sneered.

"Fact! She's special investigator in my

office. She prepared the presentment against you for the Grand Jury tomorrow." Tony held his breath to listen for more moaning, but there was not the slightest sound from the bathroom.

Maggie was shrill. "Presentment, my backside!"

"Yes. A bill of particulars. Relating how you and Lulie decoyed three wanted criminals—maybe more—here to Ravenwood, forced them to sign checks, ransom notes, so on."

"Ho, ho!" she jeered. "A lot of particulars there'll be. Nobody's even identified the bodies, and never will!"

"Oh, sure. Not even a phony identification by false bridgework could prevent the truth coming out on that. The bit of cocktail napkin tying up your bar to one of the dead men, the testimony of that dick at the Kopper House—the Pittsburg cops will have him in custody by now—even the forged signatures on the checks presented to the banks and honored so readily by the gent hiding there in the bathroom, they're all in that bill of particulars Miss Baldwin made out."

THE assistant cashier of the Vulcan First National Bank came out of the bathroom, still maintaining his deliberate and dignified pace. "I warned you, Maggie. We have been shillyshallying with Mr. Quinn much too long already. It's time to put an end to this."

Tony looked up at Drummond. "Past

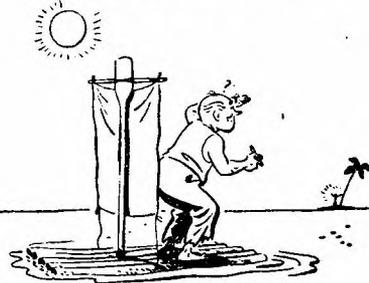
## THE ADVENTURES OF

### IT SMELLS GRAND



AROMA SWEET AS ANY ROSE -

### IT PACKS RIGHT



PACKS TO PLEASE YOU -  
GOODNESS KNOWS!

time, if you ask me. It's too late to save my own life—I realize that. But it's not too late for you to make a bargain—your life and Maggie's for Miss Baldwin's."

Drummond smiled skeptically. "I don't think we need to fear any indictment on the basis of such—shall we say, sketchy—evidence as you have been able to prepare."

"I think you have." Tony's sharp ears had caught a slight *skreeking* sound as if someone were scratching chalk on glass, or using a glass cutter. It came from the rear of the cottage. It could be Carol, trying to get loose from her bonds, of course. But it might also be Silk, working on that bathroom window from outside. "Unless Miss Baldwin or I countermand the order for that presentment, it will go before the blue ribbon panel tomorrow and then Lulie, among others, will know what happened to her father."

Maggie slapped him across the mouth with her huge hand. "Nothing happened to him!"

"Oh, yes. He's dead. You killed him."

Quinn swallowed blood from the cut his own teeth had made on his lips. He was going to have to do some gambling now, and if he guessed wrong it might be "Lights Out" for him and for Carol within minutes. But there was no alternative; he had to stall.

And he had some grounds for his guesswork. They wouldn't have trusted a kid like Lulie unless she had close ties to someone in this murder ring, and Drummond wasn't the kind of man to allow *his* daughter to take such chances.

"You wouldn't have been so free about mentioning John Wizlow's name unless you'd been sure I couldn't check up on what you said about his accompanying Prosser to the bank." He saw the assistant cashier's eyes narrow. "You couldn't have been sure I wouldn't do that unless you knew Jack-the-Wrecker was beyond my reach. You knew he was dead, because you killed him, and when Lulie reads *that* in the newspapers, I wouldn't give a beer-cap for your chance of living out the week, Drummond."

Maggie scowled at the cashier. "You warned *me!* What'd I tell you! We should've fixed up something to tell her, long ago, Ralphie." She slapped Tony again, using a stream of lavatory wall expressions. "You'll write a note to the right party, Mr. Snooper-doooper Quinn, and you'll have them papers sent here, on the double. Or I'll let you hear the kind of screeches your Miss Baldwin gives out when she's really hurt in a sensitive place!"

Tony parried, "Will you let her go, if I do?"

Drummond said, "Yes. But you stay."

Tony thought, You must have a low opinion of my savvy if you don't suppose I'd be expecting a doublecross! He said, "All right. Bring her out here so I can see for myself she's all right."

The heavy rumble of a slow-moving truck penetrated the barbershop quartette on the radio.

[Turn page]

## UNCLE WALTER

IT SMOKES SWEET



WITH EVERY PUFF  
YOUR PLEASURE GROWS!  
*with Sir Walter Raleigh!*

IT CAN'T BITE!

SIR WALTER RALEIGH'S BLEND OF CHOICE KENTUCKY BURLEYS IS EXTRA-AGED TO GUARD AGAINST TONGUE BITE, AND SIR WALTER RALEIGH NEVER LEAVES A SOGGY HEEL IN YOUR PIPE. STAYS LIT TO THE LAST PUFF.



*It costs  
no more  
to get  
the best!*

—*looking all over for a four-leaf clover  
That I overlooked before.*

The concrete mixer, Tony realized! That was something he'd overlooked, all right. Reinforcements for the enemy! Probably that mean-visaged, rangy customer he'd clouted on the crown with his gun butt, on the driver's seat. That would offset any possible intervention by Silk, certainly! But Quinn would have to chance it. There was no other way, now.

### Chapter XI

**D**RUMMOND dragged Carol into the bedroom.

She was pale. The blonde tresses hung damply over her forehead. A black and blue bruise showed at her temple. Her posture was strained because her hands were bound so tightly behind her back. But she held her head high, and her voice was firm.

"I won't go unless they free you, too, Tony!"

He smiled wryly. "I made a deal, my lovely. I mean to keep my word. That's the way I want it. Good-by—and drink to me once in a while, for *auld lang syne*."

The truck motor rumbled, idling, right outside the door.

Drummond said, "Untie him, Maggie." He dangled Tony's gun casually.

"Cut those cords on her," Tony growled. "Get her out of here, or I don't write."

He knew she'd only get a dozen steps before that driver on the concrete mixer would recapture her, still it was better than having her here in the bedroom for the next sixty seconds. That way she *might* have a chance.

Maggie used a penknife on the cords binding Carol's wrists. Drummond opened the door for her, bowed with mock politeness.

"You have Mr. Quinn to thank for your rescue, Miss Baldwin."

Carol cried, "Tony!" She swung her arms to get the circulation going.

Tony snapped, "Don't argue, lovely. *Get going!*"

She stumbled out onto the porch, ran.

Maggie slashed the ropes holding Tony's wrists.

Tony sat up.

Drummond warned, "Don't get up. Stay right there." He lifted the gun threateningly.

Tony rolled to one side, slid his feet to the floor. "How'll you get that note written, if you gun me?"

Maggie struck at him with the knife.

He ducked.

The gun roared.

Something punched hard at his left shoulder, spun him around. Outside, Carol screamed sharply.

He braced himself against the bed, moved in on the cashier.

The gun exploded again, almost in his face, but he didn't feel the shock of the bullet. He had his fingers on the hot barrel of the weapon, was wresting it away from Drummond.

Tony felt a jagged streak of pain at his right side, and realized without turning that Maggie was stabbing at him with that penknife. He butted Drummond in the chin with his head as the cashier kneeed him. They crashed together over a chair, went to the floor in a flailing tangle. But Tony had the gun.

Glass smashed, wood splintered, at the bathroom window. Silk's voice came, sharp and hard.

"Drop it, now! Drop that knife!" His gun barked, twice.

Tony lashed Drummond between the eyes with the muzzle of the .45. The jolt jerked the trigger: the muzzle blast blinded him, momentarily. Drummond's body sagged beneath the D.A. like a sack of beans.

Silk shouted: "Watch it, Tony!"

Maggie, grabbing at her chest, howled, "Shoot—shoot—shoot!"

Tony wrenched free of the cashier's dead-weight in time to see the mean-faced, rangy lad standing straddle-legged in the doorway, leveling a T-gun at him.

Silk fired at the man.

Rangy Boy reeled, staggered off-balance. The tommy stuttered up at the ceiling. Sudden brilliance—the mixing truck's headlights—lit up the bedroom like a flash bulb, made the rain of plaster look like a dazzling snowfall. Through it Tony saw a ghostly figure materialize from a crawling position on the porch, its head swathed in white so only eyes and mouth were visible. The mouth emitted

an enraged growl—Butch's war cry!

"Want shooting, huh? Try this on your juke!" Butch held a .38 with both bandaged hands, shot Rangy Boy carefully in the stomach three times, swiveled the gun around toward Maggie.

Quinn shouted, "Hold it, Butch! We can't convict any corpses!"

Butch came in, seized the submachine-gun from the rangy man who was trying desperately to lift the muzzle off the floor. Butch bent over Tony solicitously.

"Boss, you gotta get to a blood bank, quick! You got a hole in that shoulder you could hide a orange in!"

QUINN felt of the blood streaming down his side from the knife slash. "Look after—Carol—first."

"Hell," Butch said, and knelt beside Silk, "she's full of fizz and vinegar. She's out there ready to run that damn truck right through this shack if it looked like they were getting to you!"

Silk snapped petulantly, "I'm all right, Butch. One of those machine-gun slugs ricocheted and broke two of my front teeth, but that's all!" He spat blood. "Butch, you get the boss out of here in that Chrysler—zoom him to the hospital."

Tony felt of Drummond's heart. It was still beating. "Get these people in the bus first, boys. Take us all to the same blood bank."

Outside Carol cried, "Stay back! Don't go in there, any of you! Call the police! Get an ambulance out here!"

Butch turned. "Looks like they're going to mob us, boss."

Tony said, "Don't fret about it, Butch. Just excited bystanders. None of this gang left to do any mobbing—except a guy up in Pittsburg, maybe. Carry the woman out to my car, if you can lift her."

Silk exclaimed, "Hell sake, I damn near forgot about that other kid, in my cottage. I better go check on her."

Tony shook his head weakly. "Get the big ones. We won't have to worry too much about the little ones, Silk. We've got the big ones right here. We can look after Lulie later."

To himself he added, After we get the confessions of these three and find out whether she was directly implicated in the murders. If she was, of course he'd have to prosecute her, but if she'd been only a stooge—

He found himself too weak to concentrate on it further. He had a vague recollection of being carried to the car, of Carol's saying, "Let me drive. You'd hold her down to sixty, Silk!"

The next thing was whiteness—walls, sheet, table, uniforms.

There was a blurred interlude. Then a starchy intern murmuring, "Three minutes. No more. And don't excite him."

Butch chortled, "Excite him, the man says! We got bedtime stories for him."

Silk nudged the third member of the trio. "Tell him, Carol."

Carol came to the cotside with shining eyes. "We thought you were ready for the last rites and ceremonies, darling. But you must be made of plastic and piano wire. They say now you'll be up and doing in two weeks."

"Two weeks nothing. I'll be out for bass next weekend." Tony smiled up at her. "Can you hold off the blue ribbon boys until then?"

She nodded solemnly. "Maggie didn't pull through. But she made a full confession, and we got it on tape. She said she did it to put her daughter in the clear, but I think at the end she had an attack of remorse for helping Drummond murder her husband." She stroked his hair gently. "From what she said I don't think there's much doubt Drummond cooked the scheme up pretty much by himself, and didn't have any difficulty getting the others to help him, because it looked like a foolproof way to knock off a lot of money without much danger of a comeback."

"I'll give reasonable odds—" Quinn grinned at the gap in Silk's front teeth—"that a checkup will show Drummond was a defaulter from his bank, probably for a sizable sum. He'd been a respectable citizen for years, or he'd never have been put in such a responsible position. It wouldn't be rational to believe he just went haywire and bloodthirsty all of a sudden. But if he'd been speculating, say, or playing the horses, he

might have dipped into the till until he couldn't replace what he'd stolen. Then it would have occurred to him that a man in his position, with the authority to okay the payment of cash for checks, could easily get away with a mint of money. All he had to do was locate an individual who had plenty of money in the bank and who couldn't contest a signature on a big check. Only one answer to that."

"A big time baddie." Silk nodded. "And after he'd tried it once, it was too much of a temptation for him to stop. But how'd he know when these hot-shots like Verchamps and Prosser and Attar were coming to our fair city? You must have known how the machinery was greased, but we don't."

**T**ONY said, "At some time or other, on some business trip, Drummond must have stopped at the Koppner House in Pittsburgh. There he made the acquaintance of a dishonest house dick who ran a little blackmail racket on the side by ransacking the rooms of guests and getting the lowdown on some of them who didn't want their presence in the city known. Maybe this bird put the bee on Drummond himself, first. Anyhow, when Drummond found he was in need of a finger-man to point out possible suckers for the sexy come-on game he'd arranged with Mrs. Maggie Wizlow and her daughter who was—well, uh—" He glanced at Carol.

"Go on"—she smiled—"say it. 'A luscious lay.' She must have been, to cozen all those hard-boiled Harrys."

"Yep," he admitted, "Lulie was all of that. So when Drummond needed suckers for this setup, he turned to the house detective, who must have made a nice piece of change for himself by telephoning the description of cars and prospects to Maggie, who gave them to Lulie, so daughter could go into her 'accident' act. Now it's my turn to be quizmaster. What happened to you, Carol?"

She shivered. "They doped my drink, I guess. One minute I was at the bar, the next

I was sitting on the cement floor of a shower bath with a taste in my mouth like the bottom of a bird cage. In the washbowl were a cleaver, a couple of hacksaws and a sponge. I—I don't want to talk about it, Tony."

Silk cut in, "You know about me, sir. Except that I had to wait until it was dark before I dared to make any try to get in Cottage Four where I'd seen them take you, carrying you as if you were drunk. But I came as soon as I could make it."

"You hit it right smack on the nose," Tony Quinn praised. "A few minutes earlier would have been fatal. Three minutes later, I'd been ready for that cement mixer, myself."

Butch said, "No, you wouldn't, Boss. I'd have seen to it you never got in that contraption. Because I was riding it, all the way in from Jack-the-Wrecker's."

"You were?" Quinn was astonished.

"Yowzah." Butch beamed proudly. "I figured the bastards would holler for that spinning buggy when they were fixing to slit somebody's gizzard. So I got tired waiting there at the house. I went out to that junkyard, shimmied over the fence and climbed up into that damn mixer, rode right to the motel inside it!"

Tony said, "Nice timing, all around. Almost as neat as Drummond's."

Carol shuddered. "He had things working to a pretty sharp schedule, didn't he!"

"Guy really had a red thumb," Tony said. "Like some people have a green thumb and can make anything grow. He was sort of a red thumb genius at murder."

Silk said, "In a way it's too bad we had to stop him. He was putting a lot of nasty characters out of the way, sir."

Tony sighed. "There'll still be a few left for us to work on, Silk. Find 'em under any damp rock."

He put his arm around Carol. "Can't you lunkheads tell when a man wants to say good night to his girl? Scram!"



**NEXT ISSUE: Another great novel featuring—Tony Quinn!**

**THE LADY of DEATH** by G. WAYMAN JONES



*Those men lounging in the shadows who were watching Johnny Evans—what were they going to do, and when?*

# THE EYES OF MURDER

By PHILIP KETCHUM

**J**OHNNY EVANS turned out the light in his room just before nine o'clock, crossed to the window, and raised the shade. He stood for a time staring through the curtain into the street below.

One of the watchers was there, just as he had expected. It was the short man to-

night. He stood across the street in the doorway of the electric shop, a vague and indistinct figure almost hidden in the shadows. There was no menace in his attitude, yet Johnny's muscles tightened as he stared at the man.

"I'm going to bed, Shorty," he said under

his breath. "You won't see anything out there. You might as well go home yourself."

But the man wouldn't go home, he knew. At midnight the man would still be there. And at two o'clock. And at four. Toward morning he sometimes disappeared, but Johnny had the feeling he didn't go far away and that from a parked car or from the corner he still maintained his watch.

Since it was the short man who was outside tonight, either the slim man or the old man would be on hand at eight o'clock in the morning, when Johnny left for work. Whichever it was would follow him to the subway and uptown, keeping a careful distance behind and never looking directly at him. Never. At five-thirty, the same man who had followed him to work would follow him home.

There were three watchers. That is, Johnny had identified three. There might be more. There might be someone to watch him at noon when he had a half hour for lunch, but of this he wasn't sure. There might even be someone watching outside the office building all day, although he had never spotted a daytime watcher. He was sure only of the men he called Shorty, Slim, and Grandpa.

Johnny got into bed and closed his eyes and after a time was aware of the radio playing in the next room. The walls in this old apartment house were thin and sounds carried from one room to another. In the apartment where the radio was playing, a girl lived alone. Johnny had seen her but hadn't met her. She was a slender, frail looking girl, probably in her early twenties. Not exactly pretty, but not unattractive, either. The name in the nameplate on her door was E. F. Haymaker. Johnny sometimes wondered what the E.F. stood for.

She never played her radio so loud it annoyed him. In fact, he often went to sleep, listening to it. That is, he had often gone to sleep listening to it before he had discovered the watchers. Since then, about ten days ago, he hadn't slept very well.

Johnny tried to listen to the music. He tried to imagine what the girl in the next room was doing. Not because he was interested in her. He wasn't interested at all.

But thinking about her took his mind off the the man outside. Her apartment, he knew, was much like his. It would be furnished much like his but the arrangement would be opposite. Her bed would be against the same wall his bed was against. He wondered if they were both lying on their respective beds now with only the wall between them. Johnny grinned. He reached out, touched the wall, and said, "Hello, E.F. How goes it? Lonesome?"

Such a game was ridiculous. Johnny got up and looked through the curtain again. The watcher was still in the shadows of the doorway across the street, a motionless figure lounging in the shadows. Grimly patient, waiting. Waiting for something to happen.

"Millions of people in this city," said Johnny under his breath. "Millions. How did they ever find me? What are they going to do and when?"

A shiver ran over him. He went back to bed and after a long time fell into a restless sleep.

**M**MORNING dawned bright and clear. Through the curtain Johnny could detect no sign of the watchers. He had his breakfast and shaved and then stood in front of the mirror, staring at his reflection. He was tall, thin. Possibly too thin. The hollows of his cheeks could stand a little filling, and he had lost the tan he had brought from Iowa, three months before. Of course, a thing like that wasn't important, but Johnny thought he had looked better with a tan.

He heard the sound of footsteps clicking past his door as the girl from the next room started off to work. She always left about ten minutes before he did. In which direction she went, he had no idea. The girl's departure was always a sign to Johnny that it was about time for him to go.

"I wonder who it will be this time?" he asked himself. "Slim or Grandpa?"

It was Grandpa who followed him as he walked toward the subway. Grandpa was an old man who sort of dragged his feet as he walked, and his shoulders were hunched, and his hair was almost white. His face was deeply wrinkled. It wasn't an ugly face, but Johnny had a notion it could look ugly.

Grandpa stayed with him to the office and picked him up again when he left at five-thirty and was right behind him when they crowded into the same subway train and when they left it. Sometimes, in the evening, Johnny stopped at a corner grocery for supplies, but tonight he didn't. Tonight he went straight home, then remembered he should have stopped and was annoyed with himself. He had no sugar and he had used the last of his coffee.

"I'll eat out, tonight," he decided. "I'll go to a show. I'll give Slim a break."

Slim would be the watcher tonight. Johnny went to the window and looked out. He nodded his head, scowling. The slim man was leaning against a lamp post in front of the electric store, reading a newspaper in the fading light of the day.

The scowl on Johnny's face deepened. He decided, abruptly, that he wouldn't go out. Here in his room he had a margin of safety which he couldn't count on, outside, at night. He could eat in. He could go without coffee.

After dinner, Johnny read the newspaper he had bought on the way home, then set to work on his studies. He was working as junior clerk in an attorney's office since he had again picked up his study of law. In a year, if things worked out as he had planned, he would be ready for his bar examinations.

Two hours later, Johnny pushed his books aside. For several minutes, now, his mind had been wandering. Something had been pulling his attention away from his work. What it was, he didn't know. He sat motionless at his desk for a moment, listening. But listening for what? That was it. That was what had distracted him. He had started listening for something, though what he was listening for he didn't know.

Johnny came swiftly to his feet. He went to the door and stood there but heard no sounds which carried any particular meaning. Traffic noises came in from the street, they always did, and there was nothing unusual in what he heard tonight. He clicked off the light, crossed to the window, and raised the shade. Slim was at his post, a vague, blurry figure. Watching. Just watching.

Johnny had pulled down his bed and now he sat down on the edge of it, puzzled over

his sudden restlessness, searching his mind for a reason.

Suddenly he found the answer. The radio in the next room wasn't playing. Always, every evening, its muted music sifted through the thin wall into his room. But tonight it wasn't playing. That was what he missed. That was what he had been listening for.

HE felt an immediate relief. The girl who lived in the next room, and who never went out in the evening, had probably gone somewhere tonight. Perhaps to a show or to visit with a friend. Johnny chuckled at figuring it out. After a moment he stopped chuckling.

The girl in the next room never went out. She could have gone out tonight, of course, but for a long time she hadn't. Night after night, without interruption, he had heard her radio. He had become so used to it he had missed it. It was probably foolish to check and see if she were all right, but it would only take a minute.

Johnny got up and opened the door and looked up and down the hall. There was no one in sight. Pulling the door shut, he went to the girl's door. A light showed through the transom. Johnny listened at the door for a moment, then knocked.

Footsteps came across the room, the door was opened, and the girl whose name was E. F. Haymaker looked out at him. She seemed a little puzzled but not frightened. Her eyes were steady. She was wearing a robe, and her sandy hair was tight against her head in curlers. She said, "Yes?"

"I live in the next room," said Johnny. "I didn't hear your radio playing and I thought maybe something was wrong."

"The radio's broken," said the girl. "I'm having it fixed. I hope it hasn't bothered you. I try to play it very low."

"It hasn't bothered me at all," said Johnny. "In fact, I go to sleep, listening to it. The reason I knocked on your door was that I missed it tonight. It's never been too loud."

The girl smiled. "Not even the commercials?"

"No," said Johnny. "Is that—do I smell coffee?"

The girl frowned, but her frown was

quickly gone. She seemed to be hesitating over her answer.

"My name's Johnny Evans," said Johnny, quickly. "I work in an attorney's office. At nights I study law. I—what I said wasn't any—that is—"

"Would you like a cup of coffee?" asked the girl gravely.

"I really would," said Johnny.

"Then come in, but you can only stay a few minutes."

Johnny stepped inside and closed the door and looked around. Her room was exactly like his, but opposite in arrangement and nicer, much nicer. There were clean curtains at the window and pictures on the wall. On the table was a vase of flowers. He had never had flowers in his room. The smell of the coffee which had come to him had been a clear smell and not one that reached him through the odor of stale smoke.

"Coffee never keeps me awake," said the girl. "I usually have a cup before I go to bed."

She was tall and slender, almost as tall as Johnny. Looking at her more closely, he saw that she wasn't so frail as he had thought. She had gone over to the kitchenette and was taking cups and saucers from a cabinet. She carried them to the table, saying, "I work in a lawyer's office, but only as one of the secretaries," and told him where. She added, "I'm from Iowa."

"So am I," said Johnny.

"Des Moines."

"Midland City."

"Two tall-corn people," said the girl, smiling.

"What school?"

"University of Iowa."

"Iowa State," said Johnny.

He was suddenly feeling awfully good, relaxed. Without any tension for the first time in days. He watched the girl pour the coffee. He said, "Sugar, but no cream."

"It would have been milk," said the girl. "I don't have cream. Midland City. I've never been there. Why did you frown?"

"Did I frown?" asked Johnny. "I didn't mean to."

He sat down at the table across from the girl. He sampled the coffee and found it

good, much better than any he had ever made, and he said so.

"It's just coffee," answered the girl.

"Brewed by E. F. Haymaker. What does E. F. stand for?"

Elizabeth Francis."

"Liz?"

"I'm afraid so."

"It's a nice name, Liz."

"It's a very ordinary name. If you want to smoke, please do. When you finish the coffee, you must go, for I still have some ironing to do."

**I**N three nights, over three cups of coffee, how well can you get to know a girl? Johnny wasn't sure of the answer but looking at Liz he had the sudden feeling that he knew her rather well. He knew why she had come here and that she was studying law, too. He knew of the boy with whom she had been in love and who had died in Korea. He knew about her people, and what her boss was like, and about the man in the office who annoyed her.

"You never speak of Midland City," said Liz suddenly. "You never talk of your folks."

Johnny scowled. "Don't I?"

"No."

"My name is Evans," said Johnny slowly. "Doesn't the name Evans mean anything to you. Evans and Midland City?"

Liz shook her head.

"Or the name, Big Bill Evans?"

Again she shook her head.

Johnny took a deep breath. He got to his feet and started pacing around the room.

"Don't tell me if you don't want to," said Liz.

But she was frowning, too, and suddenly this was between them. The things he hadn't said were between them. Johnny hadn't wanted to say anything about Bill, or about the watchers, or about the man with the thin, pale, tight-skinned face, yet it had to be said, and it might help to talk about it.

"Will you come to my room for a minute?" he asked abruptly. "We won't turn on the light. We'll go to the window and look outside. I'll show you something, then we'll come back here."

Liz got to her feet, still frowning. "You're sure you want to?"

Immediately Johnny was sure he did. He nodded his head and waited for Liz to join him, and a moment later they stood together at the window in Johnny's darkened room.

"There he is," said Johnny. "In the shadows of the doorway across the street. The slim man."

"What's he doing?" whispered Liz.

"Watching. Just watching. Watching my window and the door to the apartment below."

"Why?"

"To be sure I don't run away again and hide. To be sure they know where I am when Adam gets here."

"Adam?"

"I don't know his other name. He's a tall man, thin, pale, bony. His eyes are like ice. He has a soft voice, but there's nothing else about him that's soft."

"You mean that man's out there every night?"

"That man or another. They follow me to work and follow me home. I call them the watchers for that's all they've done, so far. Just watch. Watch me constantly."

"Do you want to tell me why they're watching, Johnny?"

Johnny nodded. "Let's go back to your room."

"Bill was my brother," said Johnny when they were back in Liz's room. "He was considerably older than me, but as a kid I always tagged along after him. We had some wonderful times together. When the war came, Bill was old enough to enlist and he went to war. I tried to follow him, but my age was against me. Then the war was over and Bill came home, but he was never the same after the war. He was nervous, jumpy, bitter. He got into trouble at home, had a fight with a man in a tavern on the highway near town. He almost killed the man and he ran away. The next I heard of him he was in jail in Chicago. There had been more trouble. A knife fight, this time. He was sentenced to jail for a year but he escaped when they were taking him from the court-room."

"He needed a psychiatrist," said Liz under her breath, "not a jailor."

"MAYBE," said Johnny. "I don't know."

At any rate, a psychiatrist had no chance at him. For a year the police hunted for him. A good many times he made the headlines—around Chicago, down in Florida, on the West Coast. I didn't think he would ever come back to Midland City, but he did. He held up the Midland City Bank and got away with over fifty thousand dollars. He was caught shortly afterward and this time he was sentenced to the penitentiary. He didn't escape, although he tried to. Four months ago he tried again and was killed.

Liz was biting her lips. She didn't say anything.

"Within a week of Bill's death the man I know only as Adam came to see me. There were three others with him—hard-looking men. Adam asked me where Bill had hidden the money he took from the Midland City Bank. It had never been found. Bill would never tell where it was. I didn't know, either. I told Adam I didn't know, but he wouldn't believe me. He said Bill had told someone in prison that he had told me where he had hidden the money."

"That wasn't true?"

Johnny frowned. "I don't think it was true. I went to see Bill once every month while he was in prison. We never had a chance to talk alone. Someone always listened to what we said. If Bill had mentioned the hiding place of the money, the authorities would have heard it."

"Could Bill have told you in—in code? That is, could he have told you without its appearing that he was telling you?"

Johnny shook his head. "I've thought about that. I've gone over and over in my mind all we talked about. If Bill told me where the money was hidden, he told me so cleverly I haven't found the answer."

"And this man Adam?"

"Adam and the men with him were—they were pretty rough. They beat me unconscious one night, and when I came to again, they told me I had a day to think over my refusal to talk. They warned me against going to the police or running away. They said the police couldn't protect me forever and that I couldn't run far enough to escape. I thought I might be safe in a town this large."

For a while I was sure I was safe, then I noticed them—the watchers.”

“Adam’s men?”

“Who else? I haven’t gone to the police. The police have no reason to be interested in me. But Adam has. He thinks I can lead him to a fortune.”

Liz was frowning. She said, “Johnny, what will you do?”

“I don’t know,” said Johnny. “I don’t want to run away again. I can’t spend the rest of my life running away.”

It seemed to have brought them close together, if nothing else. Telling the story was like sharing a secret which welded their friendship. The next evening, Liz asked which watcher was outside, and when Johnny said it was Grandpa, she laughingly suggested taking him a cup of coffee. Then she grew quickly serious and touched Johnny on the arm and said, “Don’t worry, Johnny. It’ll work out.”

“It would definitely work out,” said Johnny, “if the money could be found and recovered for the bank.”

“But would it have been like Bill to tell you where he had hidden the money? Surely you didn’t approve what he had done.”

“Of course I didn’t approve,” said Johnny. “But it would have amused Bill to tell me something right in the presence of the men who listened to what we said. It would have seemed like a game to him, a clever game. I don’t think the money Bill had stolen was important to him. His conflict with the law, the excitement of the chase—those were the important things.”

LIZ sat down in the chair near her radio, which was playing softly. She was wearing a pale yellow print dress tonight and her hair curled softly around her face. A sober, thoughtful face. A darned good-looking face, Johnny decided. He wondered why he had ever thought of her as frail and colorless.

“What did you and Bill talk about when you went to see him?” she asked slowly.

“Mostly of the days when we were young, before the war,” Johnny answered. “Bill never wanted to talk about current affairs or what he might do when he got out. He would start out by saying, ‘Johnny, do you

remember the time you climbed to the top of the barn and couldn’t get down?’ Or he might say, ‘Remember that hunting trip we took the morning before Christmas?’ He did a lot of talking about hunting trips. He seemed to be trying to recapture the feel of the past.”

“Did he ever remind you of anything you didn’t remember?”

“No. Never.”

“Did there seem to be any point to what he was saying?”

“Not that I can put my finger on. But I wasn’t looking for anything in what he said. When I went to see him, Bill did most of the talking, and I let him. He seemed to want it that way. I did little more than listen.”

“You had no hint he was planning an attempt to escape.”

Johnny frowned. “Perhaps Bill did hint at what he was planning. The last time I saw him he said, just before I left, ‘Well, Johnny, that covers our childhood completely. I haven’t left out a thing. It’s been fun, remembering.’ Then he—” Johnny broke off, his frown deepening.

“You’ve thought of something,” said Liz.

Perhaps he had. Perhaps he had found what Bill had been trying to tell him if it were true that Bill had made a game of their talks. He felt suddenly excited.

“Liz,” he whispered, “that wasn’t true. That last statement of Bill’s wasn’t true. He hadn’t covered our childhood completely. In all our talks, he never once touched on the one thing we did more than anything else.”

“What was that?”

“We went fishing. The river was close to our farm, and whenever we could get away, we went fishing. There was a place where we hid our poles and bait so we could sneak off and fish and not give ourselves away by having to carry our poles with us. We never made much of that hiding place, but maybe—”

“Maybe it would be worth a look?”

Johnny nodded his head. He got to his feet. Excitement gripped him. The more he thought of it, the more he was sure he had found the answer. If he could get away, check, and make sure. If he were right, the watchers would disappear. They would have no reason to watch him.

"What will you do?" Liz was asking.

"Go to Midland City," said Johnny, the plan already formulating in his mind. "Go out to the farm and through the woods toward the river. If I'm right, I'll go to the police. But I'll have to fool Slim."

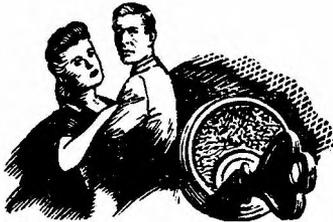
"You mean you'll leave tonight?"

Liz was standing, too, his excitement reflected in her face.

"Why not?" asked Johnny. "Why not

---

## LOOSE AS A CAT!



Steve had never even met the girl—  
yet her torrid love-making was lead-  
ing him straight to disaster. . . .

## MAN SINISTER

by TALMAGE POWELL

Plus four other big-thrill novels in

## 5 DETECTIVE NOVELS

---

tonight? I can get out the back way, Liz. The watcher won't see me. When I come back—"

He paused, aware of the sudden warm rush of color to his face. But it was all right, for Liz was flushing, too, and her eyes had widened. Johnny took a step toward her, and then another, and then he was holding her in his arms. He whispered, "Liz, when I come back—"

Liz nodded. "Yes, Johnny," she promised. "When you come back."

HE needed a few things from his room for the trip and went there to get them but didn't click on the light. A light in his room, which had been dark, might indicate something unusual to the man outside, and he didn't want that. Grinning, he stepped to the window and looked outside. Immediately, his grin was gone. The watcher wasn't there!

Slim wasn't in his place in the shadowed doorway across the street!

Johnny's muscles tightened. An icy chill raced up and down his spine, and he could feel perspiration all over his body.

What did it mean? For the first time in days, the watcher across the street was gone.

The door behind Johnny swung shut—the door to the hall. He had left it open but he heard the click as it shut and another click as the lights went on, and he jerked around, knowing whom he would see even before he turned, knowing he would see the thin, pale-faced man who called himself Adam.

It was Adam. He stood against the closed door, thin and pale and unsmiling, a gun in his hand, a gun leveled straight at Johnny. There were two others with him this time. Two hard-faced men who were watching Johnny closely.

"Move away from the window, Evans," came the order. "Rick, pull the shade."

Johnny stepped away from the window. He moved to the edge of the bed and stood there. One of the men pulled the shade.

There was a crooked smile on Adam's face. "So we found you," he said slowly. "I warned you we would, Evans. You're time has run out, but maybe you know that. Tonight you're going to talk. Tonight you're going to tell me where the money's hidden."

Johnny took a deep breath. He shook his head. "I don't know where the money's hidden. I told you that before."

"So you're going to be stubborn."

"I can't help you," said Johnny. "That's all."

Adam grunted. He said, "Rick, take care of the girl in the next room where Evans was visiting when we got here. She might hear noises through the wall and get ideas about calling the police."

"Sure thing, Adam," said the man who had pulled the shade. He started toward the door.

Johnny took a step forward but was stopped by Adam's gun. A sudden fear choked him. Liz had no part in this. It wasn't right that she be included.

"What's he going to do?" he asked sharply, as Rick left the room.

"Nothing much," said Adam. "But maybe you've given me an idea. Maybe you don't

want the girl pushed around. How about it?"

"She's just another girl," said Johnny. But that was a lie, a deliberate lie. Liz was something special.

Adam shrugged his shoulders. "You've one more chance to do it the easy way, Evans. Where's the money?"

"I don't know," said Johnny.

The other man in the room stepped up beside him and slapped a fist into his stomach. Johnny tried to block it, but the bed was behind him, preventing him from twisting away. Pain doubled him over, and something, smashed against his head, drove him to the floor. Moments later, he was lying on the bed, his arms and legs securely tied, and Adam was standing above him.

"You're going to talk this time, Evans," the man was saying. "You're going to tell us where the money's hidden if we have to burn it out of you with cigarettes against your face—or against the girl's face. We'll bring her in here. Maybe we'll start on her first."

IT was hard for Johnny to think. Pain was still rocking through his head, but he knew what he had to do. He had figured out Bill's message to him, but he had found the answer too late. A day too late. If it hadn't been for Liz—

"Tell Rick to bring the girl in here, Carlos," said Adam. "I've an idea he'll sing pretty fast after we go to work on her. I think—"

"Don't bring her in here," said Johnny, the words rushing from his lips. "Don't touch her. I'll tell you what you want to know. I'll tell you—"

He stared toward the door. It had opened, and men were coming into the room—men in uniform—policemen. In an instant, half a dozen guns were covering Adam and Carlos; and Adam, his face even more pale, was backing away toward the wall, both arms raised above his head.

"There's a girl in the next room," Johnny shouted. "One of Adam's men—"

"Don't worry," said one of the officers. "We've got him. It's been a good night."

Two of the policemen remained after the

others had gone with their prisoners. Johnny and Liz sat on the edge of the bed in Johnny's room, their hands tightly joined.

"So that's where I think the money is hidden," said Johnny at the end of his story. "In the hollow tree where we used to hide our fishing poles."

One of the officers nodded. "Yes, that's where it was found. I think a chap named Sam Rogers used to fish with you. He had the idea, one day, that Bill Evans might have hidden the money there. He took a look and found it and notified the bank. At the request of the F. B. I., the recovery of the money wasn't announced."

"Why?"

"We knew that Adam Rossiter had tried to pry information about the money from you. An F. B. I. trap, when he went to see you in Midland City, almost got him. He was high on their list of wanted men. When you came to New York and found a room here, we were notified. We've been watching your place, waiting for Rossiter to show up again. Hints as to where you were living were dropped at sources which we thought he might tap."

"Then the watchers were policemen!" gasped Johnny.

"If you mean the men who've been tailing you, yes."

"Slim and Shorty and Grandpa were policemen?"

The officer laughed at Johnny's names for the three men who had watched over him.

Johnny Evans got to his feet. He crossed to the window and looked outside. There was no one in the doorway of the electric store. The man who had been there tonight had called in to headquarters when he saw Adam Rossiter enter the apartment.

"They followed you to and from work just to be on hand in case Rossiter tried a kidnaping," explained the officer. "I hope they didn't bother you too much."

Johnny grinned. "I'll sort of miss them, but I reckon I can stand it."

He looked around at Liz. She was smiling at him. Johnny wondered how long the two officers would stay. He hoped it wouldn't be much longer. He and Liz had things to talk about.



# WHAT IS IT?

A Quiz by JOSEPH C. STACEY

Listed below in jumbled fashion are the names or "nicknames" of 12 persons, places, or things pertaining to cops, criminals, crime, past and present, together with a thumbnail description of each. Match up at least 8 correctly for a passing score; 9-to-11 is good; 12 excellent.



- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. DAISY MAE       | (a) a framework in which an offender was fastened by the neck and wrists and exposed to public scorn.   |
| 2. BOBBY           | (b) an obsolete apparatus of punishment; <i>i.e.</i> , a board pierced to receive the wrists and ankles of a prisoner.  |
| 3. THE MAIDEN      | (c) a drink drugged (usually) with chloral hydrate.   |
| 4. BLACK MARIA     | (d) a heavy wooden collar or yoke, worn around the neck by convicts in China as a punishment.   |
| 5. ROGUES' GALLERY | (e) an English cop.   |
| 6. MICKEY FINN     | (f) a beheading machine used in Scotland in the 16th and 17th centuries.  |
| 7. THE ROCK        | (g) a thin-nosed, plier-like tool, used by criminals in opening locked doors from the outside. It's inserted into the lock from the outside, and the tip of the key is grasped and turned to unlock the door. |
| 8. GENDARME        | (h) nickname of the FBI "dummy" used in training new agents.  |
| 9. PILLORY         | (i) a prison van; a patrol wagon.   |
| 10. CANGUE         | (j) Alcatraz Prison.  |
| 11. STOCKS         | (k) a collection of photographs of criminals taken to aid police in their future identification.  |
| 12. OUSTITI        | (l) a French cop.   |

## ANSWERS

1-h, 2-e, 3-f, 4-l, 5-k, 6-c, 7-j, 8-l, 9-a, 10-d, 11-b, 12-g.

# RIGHT GUY

## Chapter I

**I**T WAS HOT, the steamy, sticky kind of evening that sucked swarms of grubby kids and half-naked men and women from the ovenlike tenements and sprawled them listlessly over the littered sidewalks and the rust-grimed fire escapes and the dirty brown stoops.

Danny walked along like a man in a nightmare, vaguely conscious of the stench of garbage seeping from the uncovered cans in the dark alleys, the stifling acrid odor of burnt oil and gasoline from the rumbling traffic along the avenue behind him, the stink of rotting pressed-out grapes carelessly tossed into the filthy gutter.

This was his home. The way he kept repeating it to himself it might have been the first time he'd ever really noticed. But tonight a hard core of anger pressed inside him, as if the heat were slowly bringing his rage to a boil.

He turned in at the shabby house where he lived. The weary old women and worn old men, sitting on boxes and old kitchen chairs, were like wraiths. A monstrously fat woman was sprawled over the stoop, her

loose quivering bulk obscenely visible under a thin, washed-out, sweat-streaked house-dress. He nodded absently in answer to her greeting and walked inside, grateful for the dimness that hid the unaccountable flush creeping over his fevered face.

He plodded up the stairs, avoiding by habit the loose, cracked marble steps he'd so often thought would surely trip someone some day and send him tumbling down with a broken neck. The house was very quiet, and all the doors of the flats were open, as if the people had hastily abandoned their homes in a rush to escape the heavy, torturing, smothering heat. He could hear sizzling in a frying pan as he came up the third floor and caught the smell of slightly stale fat and meat not quite fresh. It was hamburgers tonight again. He suddenly wasn't hungry any more.

At the open door to the kitchen he stopped. His sister, Cathy, was at the stove, a small, ancient four-burner with the oven underneath, its enamel chipped away and rust showing around the edges. He watched the sweat trickling down his sister's thin

*Would YOU Trust  
a Cop?*



## A Novelet By WILLIAM DEGENHARD

white neck onto the collar of her clean housedress whose flowers had long since been washed out.

His eyes flicked to the round oilcloth-covered table. His father was sitting there, reading the newspaper, an intent look on his seamed, bony face, apparently concentrating on every word. A pint bottle of wine stood in the center of the white oilcloth. It was unopened. For once, his father seemed sober.

The newspaper rattled impatiently, and the old man pushed back a strand of sweat-dampened gray hair, but he didn't look at his son. Danny went over to the sink, conscious of the *drip-drip* that mingled with the sizzling of the fat.

He picked up the brown soap and started washing.

"What's eating him?" he growled to Cathy.

"His gun," she replied in a low voice.



It was no time for fair play,  
and so Danny played it dirty

"That gun he had while he had that watchman's job. It's missing."

A SLIGHT tingle ran up Danny's bare arms. He should have known his father would be looking for it one of these days, since it could, after all, be turned into money. He'd meant to get it back from Nicky.

"It must be around some place," he said finally. "Unless he hocked it while—while—"

"No," Cathy said firmly. "You know he'd never do that. He's always hoping to get another job and—" Her voice trailed off.

Danny shrugged and got the towel and dried himself. From the corner of his eye, he saw his father was still grimly reading the paper. The yellow light from the chandelier made his skin seem more sallow, older, and his eyes duller and more hopeless.

Danny grunted, looked away impatiently, then stared at the frying pan. "Hamburgers again!"

"We'll get a change tomorrow," Cathy said. She bit her lip, then added. "If my unemployment check gets here." She brightened a little, smiled tentatively at her brother. "You'll get paid tomorrow, too, won't you?"

Danny felt himself reddening and he avoided his sister's eyes. "No." He drew a long breath. "I quit tonight."

The newspaper rattled, and the chair scraped harshly as Old Mike jumped to his feet. "You quit!"

Danny swung around. "Yeah, I quit."

The old man's lips drew back, and his face turned scarlet. "You bum. You dirty lazy bum. This is the fourth job—"

"Shut up!" Danny barked.

Old Mike stepped back, as if his son had slapped him. The two stared at each other. Danny's fists were clenched and he was trembling.

"Yeah, I quit," he repeated savagely. "You want to know why? Because I was going to be fired tomorrow, anyway. Pratt—my foreman—he found out. And he kept rubbing my nose in it all day." His voice dropped to a hoarse whisper. "He found out my old man is a *thief*."

Old Mike's face went dead white. His

gnarled, blue-veined hands slowly curled, and he leaned forward, resting his knuckles on the table, his eyes blazing.

"It's a lie," he said hoarsely. "It's a dirty, stinking lie. I never stole anything—nothing—never. You don't believe it, do you? Well, go ask Landray down at the dock. It was Bull—Bull Nelson, the shape-up boss. He's the boy behind that ring of dock thieves. The cops were closing in on him, and he needed a fall-guy. He picked on me because I wouldn't play ball with him. Go up to the insurance company and ask Landray. Sure, the stealing stopped a while after I was fired. But now it's going on just like before. Danny, you *got* to believe me. I didn't fall while I was drunk, the way you said I did. Nelson beat me up because I told him I was going to the cops to tell them the truth."

"You threatened him," Danny said fiercely. "What did you expect? Only a rat runs to the cops. If you'd played ball with him—Okay, so you're not a thief. You're just plain dumb."

Cathy whirled from the stove. "Danny, you mustn't say that. Papa had to do what was right. He had to be honest and decent."

"*Why?*"

The word crashed through the room, seemed to echo violently, then peter away into dull oblivion. There was a long, painful silence. The old man moved first. He reached for the unopened wine bottle, his hand shaking visibly. He hesitated, grunted suddenly, limped over to the sink. He took a thick tumbler from the shelf, drew himself a glass of water, limped back to the table and sat down.

Cathy put the supper on the table. "We'd better eat before everything gets cold," she said quietly.

Danny glared at the food—the hamburgers, shrunken almost to nothing after the fat had been rendered from the cheap meat; the noodles, slimy with fat and sprinkled with too little yellow cheese to make any difference in the taste. He didn't feel like eating. But he was young and he was hungry, and even the heat and the anger and the resentment couldn't take that from him.

**N**OT a word was spoken while they ate. Danny kept his mind a blank. He didn't want to think—about the food, about his father, about his job, about anything. He noticed finally that his father was eyeing the wine bottle with longing.

"Go ahead, Pop," he growled impatiently. "What's the difference?"

Old Mike reached for the bottle. His hand flattened on the white oilcloth, held there a long moment, then drew back, leaving a damp palm mark plainly visible.

"If Mama hadn't been so sick for so long before she died," Cathy said bitterly, "and right at the time Papa broke his knee—"

"If," Danny spat. "Yeah, if. Seventeen years with the same construction company—coming up from ditch digger to cat driver. The cat turns and falls on him, and they say it was his own negligence and he doesn't get a penny. So he's out of a job—thrown on the scrap heap like a rotten banana peel."

Cathy started to say something, flushed, got up, and went for the coffee pot. Danny watched her and suddenly, remembering where this had started, felt that crawling sensation along his arms again.

"That gun," he said softly. "What made you bring that up?"

She avoided his eyes as she poured. "A cop was here. He asked Papa if he still had it." She bit her lip. "He was nasty about it, too."

Danny scowled. "Al Burke, I'll bet."

"Yes, that was his name. He—he said Papa had better find it or—or— Well, he didn't say what."

Danny was conscious that his father was eyeing him. He hadn't seen Nicky since he'd lent him that gun. He wasn't even sure Nicky had gone through with that liquor store holdup with Duke Hubner. He had looked through the papers today and yesterday, but he hadn't found anything about any job that would fit the one Nicky had outlined. He was almost sorry now that he'd backed out at the last minute.

He felt a tightening in his chest. Maybe they'd run into trouble. Maybe that gun was hot now. He was careful not to show the scared feeling that ran through him. He finished his coffee and got up from the ta-

ble, rubbing his wet palms along the seams of his slacks.

"I'm going out," he said brusquely.

"Danny—" Cathy began.

He turned at the door. "Yeah?"

Her eyes shifted quickly. "Nothing."

He scanned her face—pale, drawn, little blue veins showing at her temples. She was growing old long before her time. She was thin, almost skinny.

"Cathy, don't do any washing tonight," he said huskily. "The money they pay is so little it's not worth—" He stopped, felt himself redden. "I'll have another job tomorrow. A good job."

He turned abruptly and, from the corner of his eye, saw his father reaching for the wine bottle. A curious scared feeling swirled through him. As he plunged down the narrow, dark staircase, he felt that the walls were slowly closing in on him, closing in to squeeze him to death.

## Chapter II

**T**HE heat hadn't let up. His shirt clung to his back, and his shoes seemed to be filled with water and to squish with each step he took. He threaded his way through the kids who were playing on the filthy sidewalk. Little kids, naked except for dirty sunsuits, shorts or even sagging diapers, moved over like sluggish insects to let him by.

He stopped at the corner and hesitated, wondering where Nicky might be hanging around. He decided to try Tanner's candy store first. A stocky, square-faced man in a rumpled seersucker suit was coming across the street toward him. Jim Lohr.

Danny's instinct was to start running, but somehow he'd never been scared of Jim, not the way he'd always been scared of other cops. Jim wasn't like the rest.

He waited, but he couldn't return the smile Jim gave him.

"How's it going, Danny?" Lohr greeted.

Danny shrugged. "So, so."

"We miss you. Pete Zochek took your place at second base. He's all right, but he'll never have your speed and hustle." Lohr's eyes narrowed slightly. "How's the job?"

Danny avoided his eyes. "I quit today."

The stocky man smiled. "Who'd you slug this time?" His smile faded when Danny didn't answer. "Danny, that temper of yours gets you in more trouble. You've got to learn how to control—"

Danny broke in, furious. "I did. All day long, I kept my temper. He kept riding me and riding me. And he told me straight out he was going to get me fired. So, I thought it over carefully. I hit him, then I quit."

"Why?" Lohr asked quietly. "Why did he ride you?"

"He called Pop a thief," Danny said fiercely. "Yeah, and that's what they think of me, too. You kept telling me you wanted to help us. Pop believed that crap. That's why he told you about Bull Nelson. Bull Nelson's the guy you ought to—" He broke off, shrugging. "What's the use?"

Lohr's eyes were steady. "Look, Danny, I told your father I believed him. I still do. I still believe Nelson used your father. I told you at the time, and I'm telling you now, we'll get Bull Nelson. And when we do, I'll see to it that your father is cleared and gets a new job—a better one. I promised and I haven't forgotten, Danny. Only it takes time."

"Sure, and meanwhile Pop's got to be hounded by ra— by guys like Al Burke. Yeah, only tonight he came and—"

Lohr grinned and slapped Danny lightly on the arm. "Come on, Danny. It's hot, and we all feel nasty. How about a swim at the Y? I was on my way there."

"Some other time. I got to see somebody."

As he started to turn, Lohr caught his arm. "Drop by my office in the courthouse tomorrow morning, Danny. If it happened the way you said it did—and I believe you—I'll get you your job back. Wickham, the big boss, is a right guy."

Danny shrugged the hand away. "I'll think about it."

He hurried off, faster than he really wanted to, feeling hot and prickly inside. That guy. He looked like a good joe and talked like a good joe, and he was one helluva swell baseball coach. He'd nearly made

the big leagues himself and he'd gotten try-outs for several of the fellows. But he was a cop and when the chips were down, he'd be no different from the rest.

SOME kids were shooting craps in the apron of light that came from Tanner's candy store window. Nicky wasn't among them. Danny crossed the avenue and looked into Moran's Bar and Grill. He was tempted to stop in for a beer but decided he'd better not until after he'd talked to Nicky and found out the score.

There was only one other possible place to look, the Valhalla Club, which was Duke Hubner's hangout and a kind of headquarters for Mort Grundy. Nicky had been talking for a long time about wanting to hook up with Mort Grundy's organization, and maybe Duke had finally fixed it for him.

He crossed the avenue again and headed for the low, dingy brick building that housed the club. He stood outside the wide open doors, peering in. It was cooler inside, for there were big hurricane fans set along the wall of the long store. He spotted Nick way in the back by the card tables, hesitated, then went in. He was aware that the men around the pool table stopped and looked at him as he went by, but most of them knew him from around the neighborhood, so no one challenged him.

Nicky looked sharp in a new silky tan gabardine sports shirt, gray peg-topped slacks, brown nylon mesh shoes. A grin spread over his wedge-shaped face as he caught sight of Danny coming toward him.

"Been looking for you," Danny said.

Nicky nodded, eyes on the poker game again. "Yeah, I was going to stop by at your house, but I been busy." His voice dropped. "You shoulda been with us, Danny. A cinch."

Danny frowned at the card table. "I still think you were crazy, Nicky. A yellow convertible. Every cop in the city could spot you a mile off."

Nicky shrugged. "Duke didn't like it, either, when I picked him up. But it worked out all right. We got rid of the heap after the job. Nobody'll ever find it."

Danny shifted uneasily. "About that gun,

Nicky. I told you I wanted it back."

Nicky hesitated, shot a sidelong glance at his friend. "I—well, it got lost."

Danny felt himself tighten inside. "Is it hot?"

"Naw," Nicky replied.

The denial didn't ring quite true to Danny. Still, Nicky'd been his pal since way back and would have said so if there'd been any trouble. They watched the game in silence for a while. Then, Nicky asked:

"You still got that job?"

"No, I quit," Danny said. He paused, then added bitterly. "The boss made cracks about me and my old man. I slugged him."

Nicky nodded slowly. "Sure, I know how it is. That's the way it was after I came from the farm. Always hounding me." He chuckled. "But that's over now. I'm working for Grundy."

Danny kept his eyes averted. "What doing?"

"Just—just walking around with Duke. He's a salesman for Mr. Grundy. Beer. Strictly legit beer. Some of the bartenders don't want to take Mr. Grundy's beer, so Duke and I have to persuade them. Most take it right off, though. We only had to beat up one guy so far." He smiled at Danny. "It's seventy-five a week—and more later. Want in?"

**D**ANNY tingled. Seventy-five a week! He'd been pulling down thirty—less than twenty-four after everything had been taken out—as helper on that truck. Twenty-four bucks a week and abuse. Seventy-five, working for guys who wouldn't let a man be pushed around.

Nicky jerked his head. "Come on. I'll introduce you to Mr. Grundy. Duke's upstairs with him now. You'll like Mr. Grundy. He's a right guy."

He started toward the side door. Danny found himself trailing along, his heart beating a bit faster. He smiled as he saw the way Nicky swaggered a bit. Nicky was already thinking of himself as a big shot. But then, why not? With seventy-five bucks a week—

The rickety wooden stairs creaked loudly as they went up. Like a burglar alarm, Danny thought. Nicky stopped at the top,

hesitated, then grinned a bit uneasily at his pal. After a moment, he went on up the hall. There was an office at the far end, the door wide open, the drone of the fans noisy in the utter hush.

At the doorway, Nicky stopped and knocked on the door jamb. Duke Rubner was sitting in the armchair by the big oak desk, his long, lanky legs stretched out. Behind the desk, sitting straight, wearing a dark tropical suit and a collar and tie, was Mort Grundy. He was a bulky man, loose-jowled and running to fat, with bland blue eyes behind old-fashioned, silver-rimmed glasses. This man was no mug, Danny was thinking. Mort Grundy was a businessman, a big businessman and a smart one.

"Okay, come on in," Duke drawled. "Hi, Danny."

Nicky grinned uneasily. "I wanted to—I mean, I wanted you to—to introduce Danny to Mr. Grundy. Danny wants a job."

Duke said to Grundy, "This is the kid I was telling you about. He was supposed to go along with us. He backed out at the last minute."

Mort Grundy's bland blue eyes fixed thoughtfully on Danny. He didn't say anything. Danny squirmed inside.

"Look, I was willing to go," he blurted. "But I still say a guy who takes a canary-colored convertible for a holdup ought to have his head examined. If they'd have taken that black sedan, like I said—"

Grundy's expression didn't change. He just kept staring at the young man. After a long moment he swiveled slowly toward Duke.

"Good build on that boy," he said softly. "And he's got brains. More brains than some of the so-called smart guys who've been in the business for years."

"Now, look, Mort—" Duke began.

"Shut up," Grundy said tonelessly. He swiveled back again, smiled at Danny. "Brains is good. But too much is no good. A guy in the rackets has got to know how to take orders."

Danny grinned. "If a guy with brains told me I should take a yellow convertible on a job, so I take a yellow convertible."

Grundy smiled faintly. He sighed and reached over, picked up a snapshot from the desk, and looked at it wistfully.

"Ever see my place, Danny? Beautiful. Hot weather like this makes me wish I could stay up there all summer. Look."

**H**E TOSSED the picture across the desk. Puzzled, Danny picked it up, looked at it. It showed Mort Grundy and a slim, pretty woman—his wife, Danny guessed—and two small kids in trunks. In the background was a clear, smooth lake with a speedboat tied up to the small dock. Danny could almost smell the clean, pine-scented morning air and feel the cool breeze.

"Like to go up there?" Grundy asked casually.

"You bet I would," Danny said with more enthusiasm than he'd intended to show.

"It's right near the Canadian Border," Grundy said. "Can you drive a truck?"

"I got a license," Danny said, nodding.

Grundy nodded slowly. "We like to change off drivers so their faces don't get too familiar. Drop in and see me tomorrow morning, Danny. Maybe we can get together and work out something."

"Yeah—sure."

Danny was staring at the picture, remembering his boss at the wholesale grocery place where he'd been working. Wickham had proudly passed around a picture something like this. Only his place didn't have a lake on it, and his wife wasn't as pretty. There wasn't much difference between the two men. Both were businessmen, sharp, smart businessmen. Only Mort Grundy was square and he understood fellows like Danny. A right guy.

Danny put the picture back on the desk. "Yeah, I'll be in tomorrow morning. Thanks, Mr. Grundy."

He struggled to keep his elation from showing, tried to keep as casual a look as Grundy had. He suppressed his smile when he saw that Nicky looked sheepish, even a little jealous. He nodded to Duke, half turned, paused.

"Look, Duke, Nicky told me that gun I lent him got lost. I have to get it back if I can."

Duke's brows arched slightly. "Why?"

"It's my old man's. He used it while he had that watchman's job down on the docks. It's registered in his name."

"Registered?" Duke asked softly.

"Yeah. And Al Burke was around the house tonight asking my old man about it."

Duke shot a glance at Grundy and opened his mouth to say something. The plump man waved him to silence, smiled at Danny.

"Don't worry about it, kid. We'll get it back for you."

Danny nodded again and strolled out, Nicky going ahead of him. He wanted to whistle, but he held it in. Yet, he was a bit disturbed, too. He was sure Grundy would take care of it, all right, but he was curious. He wanted to know what had gone on. After all, this put him into it, too.

### Chapter III

**D**ANNY started to say something, but Nicky turned quickly on the stairs and put his fingers to his lips. Puzzled, Danny followed him down. He didn't say anything until they were outside. Then, Nicky turned and said angrily:

"You dope. You shouldn't have asked Duke about that gun, not in front of Mr. Grundy, anyway."

"Why?"

Nicky's hands fluttered, and he licked his lips nervously. "Mort doesn't like it—losing guns, I mean."

Danny's teeth clenched. "Nicky, you didn't hold up a liquor store like you said you were going to, did you? I looked through all the papers yesterday. I didn't see anything about it. What happened?"

"Nothing." Nicky was obviously lying, for even though he was sweating, he was a bit pale, too. "Look, Danny, just keep your mouth shut about this whole deal and—"

He broke off, his eyes bugging. Danny eyed him curiously, then turned to see what Nicky was staring at. A small black sedan had double parked just across the street. Two men were coming toward them, two big bruisers. One of them had a flat face and a broken nose like a battered wrestler's. A

faint rumbling went through Danny's stomach as he recognized the man as Al Burke, Detective First Class.

Nicky swore violently and started running. Danny had more sense. He stood fast, watched the other detective break into a sprint and draw his gun as he went into action. Danny wondered at the absence of fear in himself. Nicky was being dumb. They could shoot him down like a dog and get away with it. He waited, feeling strangely placid as Al Burke came striding toward him.

"Okay, Weaver, let's go."

"Where?" Danny asked. He didn't feel scared, but there was a lump in his throat just the same. "You got nothing on me. You can't take me in, not without a charge. What have I done? What's the charge? I got a right to—"

Burke's fist caught Danny on the cheek. His head snapped back and hit the brick wall, and stars exploded before his eyes. He felt a rough hand grab his shoulder, spin him around, and send him staggering across the sidewalk. He didn't resist. He didn't want to. He was scared now, all right. He had to admit it. But it was different from any feeling he'd ever known before. The fear and the sullen defiance that went with it had been joined by a calm confidence. He was sure Mort Grundy had seen this from the window overhead. For the first time, he felt he had a friend who could protect him from being pushed around. For the first time, he didn't feel so helpless and alone.

It wasn't far to the station house. Danny sat in the back with Nicky, staring straight ahead. Al Burke was turned on the front seat, elbow over the back, holding his gun down, watching the two warily. The car swung into the driveway alongside the grimy old Victorian police station and pulled into the big back yard.

Then Danny saw it—a yellow convertible parked between a wrecked sedan and a white-topped patrol car. The windshield was a mass of tiny cracks spiderwebbing out from a small round hole—a bullet hole, Danny thought. The door was open, and there was a splash of something brown near the bottom of the yellow panel. Danny felt an eerie

drawing sensation in his cheek muscles when he realized it was blood.

THE car stopped at the back entrance and Burke got out, gun in hand. Nicky heaved himself up and got out, his eyes fixed on that yellow convertible.

"I don't know nothing," he jittered. "Danny, you don't know nothing—"

"He don't know nothing, she don't know nothing," Burke intoned wearily. He punched Nicky's shoulder with the heel of his hand. "Upstairs, sonny boy, and we'll find out."

He dropped behind Danny, prodded him through the massive, wide open doors. Danny headed for the desk, but the big detective swung him around and pushed him toward the broad marble stairs. Danny started to protest, then shrugged and went up. Okay, he could take it. But he wasn't going to have to take it for long.

The detective division was empty, except for the man at the switchboard and another man at one of the desks that cluttered the huge room. No, not quite empty. Danny stopped short when he spotted the old man and the pale, slim young woman who sat on a wooden bench against the far wall. Pop and Cathy! He gasped, pushed through the swinging gate.

"Why did they bring *you*—"

Burke grabbed his arm, shoved him toward the bench to the left of the entrance. "Sit down and no talking. One peep out of you and—" He turned to the swart, black-haired detective at the desk. "Keep an eye on this kid, Sal. See that he keeps quiet. We're taking the other kid first."

Burke prodded Nicky into the side room on the left. Danny stood there, quivering inside. He looked over at his father and sister. Cathy gave him a small, tentative smile. Old Mike just stared, his eyes watery, bewildered, his loose mouth drawn down hopelessly.

Danny's fists clenched. "Why are *they* here? We got a right to know. We got a right to—"

"Sit down!" the swart detective barked. He tossed an almanac over to the edge of his desk. "Here's something to read in the

meantime. The Constitution's on page eighty-nine."

"I've read it," Danny said fiercely. "But you haven't, you dirty ignorant h—" Danny stopped as the detective half rose.

For a long moment, the two stared at each other. Slowly Danny sat down. The swart man kept staring, two vivid red spots on his bony cheeks. He relaxed bit by bit, then seated himself again. He picked up a pencil, toyed with it a few seconds, then set it down carefully.

"You're Danny Weaver, aren't you?" he asked mildly. "Sure, you are. I've seen you around. And from what I heard, you're not a bad kid." He studied Danny a moment. "We're not as bad as you think we are, Danny. Okay, we get rough once in a while and we make mistakes. But we got a rough and dirty job. Our job is to protect people like—like—well, maybe like you. If you're clean, we'll fight for you all the way." He paused, shifted uncomfortably. "You don't believe that, do you?"

Danny shrugged. The detective sighed, picked up his pencil, and went back to the report he was writing. Danny watched him closely. Queer guy. He remembered him now—Sal Largo.

He used to pound a beat in the neighborhood, breaking up stickball games, chasing kids out of those old abandoned tenements, going after them when they stole fruit from Tony's.

There'd been one time—a crazy man had killed his wife with a meat cleaver and was terrorizing the whole neighborhood. Sal Largo had chased him through the panic stricken crowds—without a gun. If he'd shot and missed, he'd surely have hit someone in the crowd. So, he'd pitted his nightstick against that cleaver and had taken the cleaver on his scalp and shoulder. Risked his life—for fifty bucks a week. Maybe seventy-five now, after ten years on the force. It didn't make sense.

WHILE he sat quietly, Danny tried to ignore the confused feelings through him. But the sullen fear hadn't left him, the tenseness was still in his muscles. Through the hush, he could hear the murmur of voices

—Burke's gruff and angry, another sharp voice, a cry every once in a while. He looked over at his father, sitting thin-lipped and expressionless. There wasn't a mark on him. Or on Cathy, either. But then, these guys knew how to do it without leaving marks. He squirmed, wondering when Mort Grundy would come to get him out of this.

The big door popped back finally and Nicky came out, walking shakily yet with a slight swagger, a small, smug smile on his sharp face. He gave Danny a broad wink. Burke pushed him toward the bench where Danny was sitting.

"Come on, Danny, you're next," Burke growled. "Watch that kid, Sal. He's second cousin to a snake."

There was a funny prickling sensation in Danny's legs when he walked into the other room. Burke's broad face was glistening, and the sweat had plastered his close-cropped hair together into small, stiff spines, making him look like a roused porcupine. Danny didn't look at him as he went by. He could feel cold defiance taking hold inside again.

There were three other men in that small, bare room, the other detective who'd been with Burke, a gray-haired man, paunchy and plump, his thin nose a reminder of the slimness of his youth. The third man, perched on the bare walnut table pushed against the far wall was Jim Lohr. He didn't look up as Danny came in. He was giving elaborate attention to filing his nails.

"Sit down," Burke said gruffly.

Danny went to the straight backed chair set in the center of the room and sat down, crossing his legs and folding his hands in his lap. The high ceiling of the room made it seem immense. There was a shaded drop-light over the chair. Burke closed the door, switched off the other lights and the men in the room suddenly became vague, ominous shadows in the darkness beyond.

Burke came over from the door, circled the rim of the shadow, stiff-legged, like a belligerent tomcat measuring an opponent. Danny felt himself tightening inside. He clasped and unclasped his damp hands, crossed and uncrossed his legs, rubbed his palms along

his thighs. The silence was thick and oppressive. Sweat was trickling down his cheeks. Over and over, he kept telling himself: Don't talk. That was the code. Obey the code, and his friends would stick by him and get him out of this, no matter how serious the rap might be.

"Danny," Burke began brusquely, "two nights ago, about eight o'clock, you and Nick were shooting craps in the gutter outside Tanner's candy store. Don't deny it, because I saw you, and my partner saw you, too. We watched you go broke. Then you and Nick talked a while. You walked up to Avenue A together. A car was parked up there, a yellow convertible. You stole that car."

"I—" Danny caught himself and shrugged with feigned indifference. "You're doing the talking."

Burke's heavy face grew taut. He turned abruptly and went over to the table where Jim Lohr was sitting. He came back with a gun. A snub-nosed .38 service revolver. Danny could feel the blood draining from his face. It was—no, maybe it just looked like his father's.

"Four shots were fired from this gun," Burke said grimly. "Those four bullets killed a man."

Danny's hands curled into fists, and he quivered inside. Slowly, with an effort, he raised his head and looked Burke in the eye.

## Chapter IV

**I** DON'T know nothing about it." Danny glared defiance at the big man.

"A great guy, you are." Burke sneered. "You're going to let your old man take the rap, is that it?"

Danny's eyes snapped wide open. "Pop? Pop didn't have anything to do with this."

"Yeah? Suppose you give him an alibi. Where was he that night?"

Danny hesitated, then licked his lips. "Home, in bed. He'd been hitting the bottle. He was—drunk."

"You sound sure of that. Yeah, you must know, all right. While he was lying drunk in bed his son comes in and steals the gun from his bureau drawer."

"I—I— You can't prove it!"

Burke's finger shot out, stabbed at him. "Okay, I won't. I'll believe you—and let your old man burn in the chair for this."

Danny cried out, half rose. Burke stepped forward, shoved him back hard. Danny sat down, and the chair scraped harshly, almost toppled.

He caught his balance, and managed to get out: "Y—you can't prove anything."

"No?" Burke's laugh was grating. "We got your old man dead to rights. We got a case against him—an airtight case. He's not only a thief, he's a murderer, too."

Danny surged up at the detective. Burke's fist whipped up, crashed on Danny's jaw. Danny grabbed frantically at the chair to keep himself from falling, but it slithered away. He hit the floor on his shoulder and lay there, glaring up at Burke.

Jim Lohr stepped into the circle of light, helped Danny to his feet, pulled the chair over, and set him down again. He shot a scowl at Burke.

"Cut out the rough stuff, Burke. That's not going to get you anywhere."

"That punk went for me." Burke snapped out. "What do you want me to do, kiss his fist? Get out of the way, Jim, and don't interfere. Get back to your kindergarten and let me handle these little rats. I know how—"

"Pipe down," the gray-haired man broke in quietly. "You use your fists too much."

Burke whirled. "Lieutenant, you can't slap these dirty little punks on the wrist. You got to use—"

"Pipe down," the lieutenant repeated sharply. He gave Burke a level look, and his voice dropped to a more gentle pitch. "Burke, you're all twisted up inside. Sure, I know what happened to your old man. I heard the story. Shot in the back by a coked-up young hood just two weeks before he was due to retire, and the shock killed your mother. Sure, you got a right to hate them and to be tough. But this one's just a kid. And he hasn't got a record."

"Yet," Burke snapped.

"If he gets a record," Lohr put in angrily, "you'll be part to blame, Burke. You and—"

"Pipe down," the lieutenant cut in again. There was a moment of silence, then, "You know the kid, Lohr. Maybe you can do something with him."

Jim Lohr paced up and down a moment, his square face set, and now he was stiff-legged, too. He got control of himself in a moment, came over, and put his hand on Danny's shoulder.

"Danny, don't judge us all by Burke. He's got his memories, and they've messed him up inside. But he's a good cop just the same. He only wants what's right—the truth. You tell us the truth, and he won't bother you any more—none of us will. Did you steal that car, Danny?"

"N—" Danny bit his tongue, flushed. "I don't know anything," not a thing."

**B**URKE snorted somewhere in the gloom. Lohr scowled at him over his shoulder, then turned back to the young man.

"You gave yourself away, Danny. Now I believe you. I believe you didn't steal that car. But a murder was committed that night, and there's evidence enough to pin that murder on your father."

"He didn't do it! Pop never killed anybody. Sure, he's sore at some guys, but he wouldn't kill anybody. Who would he want to kill, anyway?"

Lohr shook his head. "We're not telling you, not now, anyway. Just tell us what happened that night and you'll clear yourself and your father, too. Tell us the truth, Danny. You stole that gun from your father and turned it over to Nick, didn't you?"

Danny straightened, his jaw hardening. "I don't know nothing. Not a thing. I'm not saying anything until I see—until I see a lawyer. I got a right—"

He broke off, his head swiveling as he heard a shrill, muffled voice outside. Burke stepped over to the door, opened it a crack, then swore lividly, snapped on the lights.

"The kid's psychic. Talk of the devil. It's Walt Sandeman, Mort Grundy's mouth-piece."

"I told you you acted too fast," the lieutenant said flatly. "Better see what he wants."

Burke opened the door wider, and the

shrill voice carried clearly into the narrow little room. "What's the charge? Under the law—"

"Aw, shut up," Burke said from the doorway. "Take that little rat and get out of here, Sandeman."

"I want Danny Weaver, too," the lawyer called out. "And Mike and Catherine Weaver, too—unless you have a charge against them."

"Get out!" Burke roared.

Danny stood up, a smile breaking on his lips. They hadn't let him down. He hesitated, then started for the door. No one made a move to stop him.

His grin widened as Burke stepped aside to let him pass, and he had a hard time suppressing the urge to spit in the man's face. But he could see that Burke was squirming with rage, and that was some satisfaction. He glanced back and when he saw Jim Lohr was watching him, his grin faded and that irritating confused feeling gripped him once more. He expected Lohr to say something, but he didn't. With a slight shrug, he strolled out, whistling softly.

Nicky and the lawyer were already gone, but he found Cathy and his father waiting for him at the head of the broad marble staircase. He thought they'd start asking questions, nag him for explanations. But they didn't. They didn't even look at him as they went down the stairs with him. His elation was ebbing away and the fear and uneasiness were creeping into him once more. They had been battered by trouble, these three, but this seemed like something he was reading in a book or seeing in a movie. He couldn't quite believe they were walking in the chill shadow of murder.

The moment he came out of the station house, he caught sight of Duke leaning against a lamp post, idly swinging a key chain. He glanced to his side and saw that Cathy and his father had seen Duke, too.

"You two go on," he said in a low voice. "I'll be home in a little while."

There was a frightened look on Cathy's pale face. "Y—you're coming right home, aren't you?"

Danny hesitated, then said, "Yeah. I guess so."

HE LEFT them and strode over to the Duke. The tall, lean man put away his key ring, smiled.

"They didn't get a thing out of me," Danny said.

"I didn't think they would," Duke said softly. "I pegged you for a right guy. Mort likes men who keep their mouths shut."

"They got that gun," Danny said. "And the car. It's parked back behind the station house."

"Yeah, we know." Duke frowned, rocked on his heels. "I wish you'd been with us on that job, Danny. That kid, Nicky—just plain dumb." He smiled, showing even white teeth, and punched Danny lightly on the shoulder. "Anyway, don't worry. We'll take care of everything. Mort says to go home and stay there. Understand? That date stands for the morning."

He nodded shortly, gave Danny a broad wink, and moved off. Danny had wanted to ask Duke what had happened on that job, whether there had been a murder. He was burning to know how deep he was in trouble, if at all. But he knew Duke wouldn't tell him. Nicky would, though. He looked around, wondering where Nicky was. Probably sent home, too.

He shrugged and started toward home. Then tensions were easing inside him. He had nothing to worry about. They'd take care of him—and Pop, too—just as long as he kept his mouth shut and obeyed orders. At long last, he was hooked up with the right guys.

When he got home, Old Mike was sitting at the kitchen table, reading his newspaper, just as he had been when Danny had come home from work. Cathy was washing clothes, her faded housedress soaking wet almost to the waist, plastered against the scrawny angles of her shoulder blades. Danny wanted to tell her to stop. But she'd only ask, "How will the work get done if I don't keep at it?"

Listlessly he went over to the stove, then decided he didn't want hot coffee. The kitchen was stifling. He turned to the icebox, got the pick from the holder alongside, opened the top, and chipped off a chunk of ice. He washed it, put it in a pitcher and filled it

with water. There was no sound in the room but the tinkling of the ice in the pitcher and the growl of the clothes rubbing against the washboard. His father set the newspaper down as Danny sank wearily into the chair opposite him. Danny wouldn't meet his father's eyes. He wanted to go out, but he had orders.

"You took that gun, didn't you, Danny?" Old Mike asked in a gentle voice. "Tell the truth. Son."

Danny shrugged, picked up one of the heavy tumblers, and poured himself a glass of water.

"I told the police," the old man said heavily, "that we never lock our door, so someone who knew I had that gun must have come in and stole it."

"That's a good story," Danny said slowly. "Yeah, I guess that's the way it must have happened."

"Danny, this is murder. They don't put people in jail for murder. They put them in the electric chair."

Danny looked up impatiently and resentment went through him when he saw how drawn his father's face was, the plea in his dull, lusterless gray eyes.

"Look, I'm not even sure there was a murder. They didn't tell me who was murdered. Did they tell you?"

"No." The loose flesh of the old man's jowls quivered slightly. "But I think I can guess. And if I'm right—"

There was a hot drawing sensation in Danny's stomach. He could guess, too, and if he were right, Pop might be— He brushed the thought aside angrily and stared sullenly down at his glass of water. It was out of his hands now, anyway. He had friends who would take care of everything.

He was aware that Cathy had stopped working and was standing beside him. "Danny, you didn't steal that car, did you?" Her voice was very soft. "No, you weren't even in on it. I know, because you're not hard to read, Danny. Whenever you've done anything wrong, you show it. You get nervous and irritable and you haven't been these last two days."

She fell silent. Danny didn't look at her. "But you're hiding something, Danny,"

she went on. "You know you're doing wrong. You've got to tell the police everything—the truth. You're not going to protect *them*, are you? And let Papa—"

He swung in his chair. "Look, this is none of your business, Cathy. Keep out of it or—"

## Chapter V

**F**OOTSTEPS sounded on the stairs, quick, brisk steps. He knew almost by instinct who it was. A moment later, he saw he was right. It was Jim Lohr.

The stocky detective nodded pleasantly to Mike and Cathy. He eyed the water pitcher and grinned.

"Mind if I help myself? Those stairs—on a night like this, every step I take wrings me bone dry."

"Help yourself," Cathy said and got a glass for him.

Lohr thanked her, pulled a chair over, and poured himself a glass of water. Danny watched him resentfully.

"Look, I got nothing to say," he said gruffly. "I said all I was going to say at the station house. Can't you leave us alone?"

Jim Lohr frowned a little as he drank his water. "I heard you'd been picked up in front of Mort Grundy's club. That means you've hooked up with him, doesn't it, Danny?"

Danny scowled but didn't answer.

"That's what I came for, really," Lohr added. "Danny, you're making a big mistake."

"My business is my business," Danny said flatly.

"Sure, but—" Lohr bit his lip, turned the cold glass around slowly. "I've talked to your boss—the big boss, Wickham. He didn't blame you for taking a poke at that guy you worked with—Lew Pratt, isn't that his name? He found out Pratt rode you pretty hard today."

Danny just shrugged. There wasn't anything to say.

"Wickham thinks you're a smart boy, Danny. You only worked there four days, but you gave him an idea that'll save him

a lot of money." He chuckled. "Wickham says that's the first time he ever got anything out of that suggestion box but abuse."

Danny snorted. "Any dope could see you can use that baling wire over again on smaller packages if it's cut off right."

"No, not anyone," Lohr said firmly. "Only a fellow who keeps his eyes wide open. He knows you're that kind, so he's willing to take you back. A better job, more money. But the money isn't so important. He likes you. He'll keep an eye on you. He'll keep pushing you ahead."

Danny felt impatient and he wanted to get up and walk out. He poured another glass of water instead.

"Danny," Lohr went on quietly, "take a good look at those two men—Wickham and Mort Grundy. Both are around fifty. Both started at the bottom and climbed pretty near the top. I'd say both are worth, roughly, a half a million. But there's a big difference between them. Wickham doesn't have to hire guns to protect him or his business. He sleeps nights without wondering if he's going to be doublecrossed by a pal or shot in the back or picked up and thrown into jail by the cops."

He paused and there was a long, flat silence.

"Think about it, Danny. Think about it very carefully. You've got a chance to go up, up in safety and security like Wickham. You got a chance to get out of this, starting right now. He'll put you in the shipping department of his branch uptown. You won't meet any of the old gang there. Forty a week."

Old Mike reached for the water pitcher, and his hand was shaking. "Danny, we—we could get an apartment uptown. I'll get a job. I swear I will. Porter, handyman, anything. The three of us—we'll make enough to live like decent human beings. Think of Cathy. If we don't get out of here soon—"

"Wait a minute, Papa," Cathy broke in. "We'd have to settle what we owe first, wouldn't we, Jim? Not money, but—"

Danny shoved himself away from the table and got up. "Sure, now I get it. Words, that's all, words. Trying to soften us up.

They won't ever leave us alone, not even uptown."

LOHR jumped to his feet, his eyes showing anger. "You're acting like a little kid, Danny. You're mixed up in a murder. Sure, you may get away with it, but if you do, your father will take the rap. Do you think that would be fair?"

The light had died in Old Mike's eyes, and the bleak look was returning. "The murdered man. Bull Nelson, isn't it?"

Lohr pivoted, hesitated, glanced at the door. After a moment, he sat down again, leaned over tensely. Danny edged closer, watching him warily.

"I'm not supposed to let it out yet, but it's Bull Nelson, all right. We've been working on that dock case for more than a year. We had Nelson cold. He was the leader of a ring of dock thieves, but he wasn't the big boss. He was ready to start singing. In fact, he'd done a lot of it already. He was supposed to come to the DA's office and go before the grand jury yesterday morning. He didn't show up."

Lohr rose and faced Danny. "Don't you see it, Danny? Your father's gun was used to kill Bull Nelson. We know your father was fired by Nelson for thieving. So, your father hated Nelson. The case against your father would be open and shut. I'm ashamed to admit it, but there are men in the department—big, important men—who will want that murder closed out quickly, the easy way, to make sure the investigation is killed. Danny, you can't let them railroad your father to jail—or the chair."

"Nothing's happening to Pop," Danny said stiffly. "He's got friends. They'll take care of him."

Lohr grabbed Danny by the shirt front, shook him. "Damn it, wake up. Mort Grundy's planning it that way, planning to pin the rap on your father so the case will be closed and the investigation dead. Grundy has men high up in the department—bought and paid for—who'll make sure that frame will stick."

Danny's lips curled with contempt. "Cops—bought and paid for—framing an innocent man."

Lohr dropped his hands and stepped back, a flush creeping over his smooth, square face.

"I don't blame you for being mixed up," he said in a low voice. "Sometimes I wonder myself. Sure, we got crooked cops on the force, cops who'll betray their oaths and sell their souls for Mort Grundy's thirty pieces of silver. But believe me, Danny, there's only a few of that kind, a very few. The rest are like Sal Largo and—yes, and Al Burke. I know what you think of him. But you're wrong. He's honest and if he finds you're clean, he'll go through hell for you."

Danny's voice was flat. "I don't believe it. I don't believe any of it. Not even about Bull Nelson. You don't know he's dead. You haven't got a corpse to show. You're just saying that to scare me into stooling on Mr. Grundy."

Lohr started to say something, then a bitter, hopeless look came over his features. He stared at Danny a moment.

"Mister Grundy," he said at last. "All right, Danny, play it your way. Go along with Mort Grundy, and you'll find he's your pal just as long as he can get something out of you. Just as soon as he has no more use for you—" He broke off, cocked his head as he pivoted.

Through the sudden hush, they could hear heavy footsteps coming up the stairs. Lohr automatically unbuttoned his rumpled coat, ran his hand along his waistband. It was sheer habit, for he wasn't wearing a gunbelt.

A moment later, a huge man loomed in the doorway.

It was Al Burke.

His heavy, crooked face was set in grim lines. He glanced contemptuously at Danny, gazed straight at Lohr. His red tongue ran across his thick lips.

"You almost had me believing in that kid and his old man, Jim," he said hoarsely. "But you were wrong—wrong." He scowled, waved at Old Mike. "Let's go. You, too, kid. We've reached the end of the line."

Lohr was stiff-faced. "Where are you taking them, Al?"

"Down to the dock." Burke paused and

smiled, a chill hard smile. "We found Bull Nelson. Like we expected. Dead."

**T**HERE was practically no traffic along Front Street. The docks were closed during these early evening hours, all except Pier Nine. There, the gigantic doors were wide open, and the covered wharf blazed with lights. Patrol cars were clumped around the entrance, and a small crowd from the waterfront taverns stood about, watching stolidly.

Burke pulled the sedan right onto the dock, stopped by the office shack. He got out first, motioned to Old Mike to follow him. Danny felt numb inside as he watched his father and Cathy getting out. For a split second, his legs seemed to be paralyzed, and he couldn't move. Then he got hold of himself and got out, aching as if he were being stretched on a rack.

Burke paid no attention to him. He took Old Mike by the arm and hustled him toward a huge pile of jute bales where a group of uniformed policemen and detectives were gathered. Danny was only vaguely aware of Jim Lohr at his side.

Bull Nelson was lying face up in the thick dust behind the pile of bales. The searchlight playing over the gross, fat frame showed him to be even larger than he had been in life, because he had become horribly bloated in the water. His skin was blackish and the stench of death was around him. Danny felt sick to his stomach. He wanted to turn away, but he couldn't move. He could only stare in grim fascination.

"Four holes in him," Burke said flatly. "The doc got one of the slugs out of him. A .38 slug, Mike. It'll match your gun. And we got a witness who'll place you down here night before last. Be smart and make it easy for yourself. Let's have your statement and get it over with."

"But I didn't do it," Old Mike burst out desperately. "Jim—Danny—Danny tell him—"

Danny couldn't meet his father's eyes.

"It's a frame," Lohr said suddenly. "I still think—" He caught himself, turned to Burke. "Al, how did you find the body so quick? Who told you it was here?"

Burke shrugged. "A little birdie—on the wire."

"An anonymous phone call," Lohr said tautly. "That proves it, Danny. Mort Grundy himself tipped us off. He's providing the witness who'll swear your father was here. It all fits. Your father has the motive, he hasn't got an alibi, his gun did the killing. Danny, you've got to tell us what you know. Just give us a lead. It's open and shut unless—"

"Unless I turn rat," Danny finished stonily.

Lohr stepped forward, fists clenched. "Danny—"

"Leave him alone," Old Mike broke in, his voice infinitely weary. "What's the use? J—just tell me what you want me to say."

Horror crept through Danny. Mad panic gripped him. After one scared look at his father he wheeled and started running. Someone shouted behind him, but he kept running. He had to get out of here. He had to get help. They were railroading his father to the chair!

No one tried to stop him. Vaguely he saw the bluecoats as he raced from the dock. They didn't get in his way. A weird exultant feeling went through him. They had nothing on him. They were scared, too, scared because they knew Mort Grundy was his friend.

It wasn't far—two blocks—three blocks—four blocks. His chest was bursting as he turned up the avenue. He slowed, shot a glance over his shoulder. Nobody had followed him. He laughed shakily to himself, sprinted across the avenue to the club.

He went in the side door, took the steps two at a time. The office door was wide open.

## Chapter VI

**H**E STOPPED short in the doorway, trying desperately to catch his breath so he could speak. Mort Grundy was sitting behind his desk, just as he had been before. Duke was at the left of the desk, his long legs stretched out. Over in the corner in a wooden armchair was Nicky, sitting very straight, his face white and tense. Danny gulped and blurted wildly:

"They found him!" he blurted. "They

found Bull Nelson. Down on Pier Nine. Dead. Murdered."

The eyes of the two men were fixed on Danny. Their faces were flat and expressionless.

"They're blaming Pop," Danny hurried on. "Pop's not strong. He's starting to break. You got to get a lawyer for him—right away."

His voice faded into a dead silence. Time seemed to have stopped. There was no sound in the room but Nicky's slow, raspy breathing.

Finally, Grundy sighed and picked up his handkerchief and mopped his plump face. He smiled reassuringly, and Danny relaxed a little.

"Nothing to get excited about, Danny," Grundy said softly. "We'll take care of everything."

Danny rubbed the back of his hand across his mouth and grinned a bit shakily. "Thanks. Only you got to hurry—"

His voice trailed off as he caught sight of Nicky's face. It was white—taut—scared. Danny was puzzled and scared again himself.

"Look, Danny," Grundy said in a low, smooth tone. "Maybe it's best if your old man confesses."

Danny's eyes widened. "But he didn't do it."

"Sure, we know that," Grundy said carelessly. "But look at it this way. Mike's an old man. He's not going anywhere. It won't make much difference to him."

Danny's mouth dropped open. "B—but he didn't do it. Y—you're not saying he should go to the electric chair for something he didn't do."

"He won't go to the electric chair," Grundy reassured him. "We'll get him a good lawyer, the best in the city. He'll get off with a few years."

"A few years," Danny repeated tonelessly. "He's not strong. He wouldn't live . . . He's my father."

"So what?" Grundy asked brusquely. "Somebody's got to take the rap and it might as well be him. He's nothing but a drunken bum. Leave him to himself, and he'll drink himself to death in a few years anyway. So,

nothing's lost." He paused, his eyes narrowing. "Or maybe you—you and Nick—want to take the rap. That would be okay with me. You serve a few years and when you come out, you're sure of a place with me."

Duke nodded emphatically. "A few years would do that kid a lot of good. It would straighten him out."

Danny stood there, stunned. The brutal indifference, the ruthlessness— He met Nicky's eyes, tried to say something, but words wouldn't come.

Nicky jumped up, fists clenched. "Danny, you got to do it. You got to let your old man take the rap. Or you take the rap with me."

"You're willing to take the rap?" Danny asked incredulously.

"Sure, sure, you and me," Nicky said eagerly. "You got to, Danny. I'm the only witness. I saw Duke shoot—"

"Shut up!" Duke barked.

"Yeah, yeah," Nicky jittered. "Don't you see, Danny? If we don't play it their way, they'll kill me. I'm the only witness. They'll kill me—and you, too."

His words were like heavy battering rams smashing at the walls Danny had built around himself. All he had believed in was crumbling to dust.

**I**N THAT moment, Danny's life passed before his eyes in small, sharp quick pictures. At eight—maybe younger—escaping from his mother's nagging tongue and his father's drunken rages, going out to sit with the gang in alleys and plan those exciting five-and-ten cent store raids. He had felt big then, like a man. Safe, secure, understood by his fellows in misery. At ten—listening with open-mouthed admiration to Duke, who was even then a sharp, snappy dresser, a man with money and the right answers. Duke told them how to snatch a purse and where to sell the junk they could steal from abandoned tenements, taught them they were safe, secure, if they stuck together. Sure, as long as he stuck by the gang, the gang would stick by him.

Now Danny saw, for the first time, how it really was. There was no gang. There never had been a gang. There never had been any

loyalty to bind them together. Each one had always been strictly on his own, giving a favor only when a favor was sure to be given back, taking a rap with closed mouth only because he feared the gang's vengeance. Like all the others, he had lived selfishly, for himself and by himself. He had been alone, always alone.

He could see that Grundy and Duke and Nicky were watching him, waiting for his answer. He felt more terribly alone than he ever had been. But the sharpened instincts that had kept him out of disaster this long were with him. He would be safe if he bowed to them. He knew he would win no reward, only a reprieve. He would not be secure, ever.

Caution bells were ringing inside him. He didn't dare let them know what he was thinking. He glanced at the window. There was a fire escape right outside, but he hadn't a chance of making it. They'd shoot him down like a dog no matter which way he tried to get out.

At long last, he nodded slowly. "Okay, I know the score. Take care of me and Cathy, and the old man takes the rap."

Nicky sank slowly back into his chair. Slowly, as if on the other end of a seesaw, Duke rose.

"He's lying, Mort," he said softly. "He's smart. Real smart—he thinks. He's just saying that so he can get out of here alive. If we let him go, he'll head straight for the cops and now he knows too much."

Mort Grundy gazed at Danny for what seemed an eternity. Danny was sweating freely, more even than the hot, humid night was wringing from him, and his knees felt weak and watery.

"The car's out back, Duke," Grundy said silkily. "Better get rid of him right away—and do it right this time. We'll decide what to do with the other kid later."

Duke nodded, drew a gun from his shoulder holster, waved it at Danny. "Get moving, kid."

Danny stood fast. Suddenly, all his fear had dropped away. He wasn't scared any more. He was icy calm inside. An icy calm had taken hold of him. He couldn't be scared of rats, yellow rats, who trampled over the

innocent to get what they wanted. Duke would shoot a man in the back sure, but he'd hesitate to shoot him in the light of day.

"Get moving, kid," Duke repeated.

"Duke," Danny said deliberately, "go to hell."

Duke's eyes snapped wide open, and he glanced at his boss. Grundy's eyelids drooped, but he said nothing.

"Go ahead, kill me," Danny said quietly. "But you got to do it right here. I'm not making it easy for you. You shoot, and the shot will be heard outside. The cops will find my blood on the floor. Go ahead, shoot."

He spat scornfully at Duke's feet.

Grundy rose slowly, opened his desk drawer and reached down, and Danny knew he had a gun in there. Grundy's face was livid with rage. Danny stood stubbornly where he was.

"Slug him, Duke!"

DUKE spun the gun in his hand, lunged at Danny. Danny twisted aside, and the butt grazed his shoulder. He slammed Duke in the stomach, sent him reeling back. He wheeled as he heard a thump over by the window.

"Hold it!" a new voice barked harshly.

He stiffened when he saw that the man was Al Burke!

There was a moment of silence. Danny wasn't surprised. Burke had deliberately let him go, knowing he'd head straight for Grundy. But the nerve of the man, coming in like this with two guns against one.

"The party's over, isn't it?" Burke drawled. "You ready to talk now, Danny—at the station house?"

Danny couldn't help it, but he still felt resentful. "Sure, but not to you—only to Jim Lohr."

"That's good enough for me." Burke's eyes flicked over to Nicky. "How about you, Nick? You're going to tell us all about it, too, aren't you? We're going to have you for our star witness, aren't we?"

Nicky's jaw quivered a moment. Then, "Y—yes. They're gonna kill me, anyway.. I got nothing to lose."

A quick motion to Danny's right made him start. He saw Grundy's hand come up from

the drawer with a gun.

"Burke!" he said sharply. "Grundy's got a gun!"

Burke never flicked an eyelash. He turned, very, very slowly, and faced the plump man. Duke flipped his gun around and leveled it at the detective, but Burke didn't even seem to notice. His gun was on Grundy. The two held steadily level.

"Shoot, Grundy," Burke said in a quiet voice. "Go ahead. We got you cold now, so you're going away for a long, long time. Nelson left behind all the testimony we need. But I think I'd rather see you burn for murder. Shoot, Grundy. When I drop, a thousand men will come after you—a thousand cops—a thousand friends of mine."

The two guns thundered. At that distance, neither could miss. But Danny wasn't watching. He yelled, flung himself at the lean man. No time now for fair play. And Danny played it no-holds-barred. He grabbed Duke's arm, rammed a knee into his groin, twisted and got his teeth into Duke's wrist. Duke screamed like a wounded animal and dropped the gun. Danny shoved him away, snatched up the gun, and leaped back.

Grundy was slumped across the desk, a glistening red pool spreading over the shiny top. Burke was still standing, straddle-legged, his hands over his stomach. Blood was trickling through his fingers. His face was grey and his eyes were glazing. He forced a smile.

"I—I never did want to go that way—the way my old man did. He—he got it—in the back. I—I didn't." He sucked air painfully. "Thanks, kid, thanks."

He toppled forward on his face. . . .

**T**HE station house was very quiet. Danny sat tensely between Old Mike and Cathy on the hard bench alongside the elevated police desk. He looked up when he heard someone coming down the broad marble stairs, slumped back when he saw it was only the swart detective, Sal Largo. The detective

nodded absently as he strode by. Danny watched him go out the back door and get into his car. Fifty—maybe seventy-five bucks a week now—to take a meat cleaver or a bullet. It still didn't make sense.

He felt his father rise, looked around, and saw Jim Lohr coming down. Cathy rose, too. Somehow, he didn't want to see Jim Lohr again. He wanted to run away. But he couldn't. He stood up as Lohr came briskly over to them.

"Nick's going to stay in our custody," Lohr said. "Not in jail, of course, but in a safe place. I don't think they'll dare touch you, so you can go home if you like."

"Home." Old Mike repeated. "Yeah, I guess we'll call that place home for a little while longer, anyway—until we can get something uptown. We—we're making changes, Jim."

"I was sure you would," Jim said quietly. He looked at Danny. "You broke that case for us, Danny. Thanks."

Danny felt himself redden. "I wouldn't be alive if— Don't thank me, Jim. Thank Al Burke."

Lohr's eyes drew off. "Queer guy, Burke."

Danny's lips quivered. "Yeah, queer guy—but a right guy."

Lohr nodded slowly. "He always did want to hear someone say that about him." He paused, shifted uncomfortably. "But we who worked with him knew. He believed in what he was doing and he knew the cruel law of life. He knew the right sometimes has to come out of the sufferings and the sacrifices of those who swear to serve." He blinked, turned abruptly, and walked away.

Danny felt drained out. Then he heard Cathy weeping softly and he mumbled something about wanting some air and he'd see them at the house.

He hurried out into the night, into the blessed darkness. He didn't want anybody to see that he, too, was blinking back tears.

● ● ●

*You'll Like These Too!*

★ TRIPLE DETECTIVE

★ POPULAR DETECTIVE

★ 5 DETECTIVE NOVELS

Arthur Little took the advice of the man he killed as to . . .

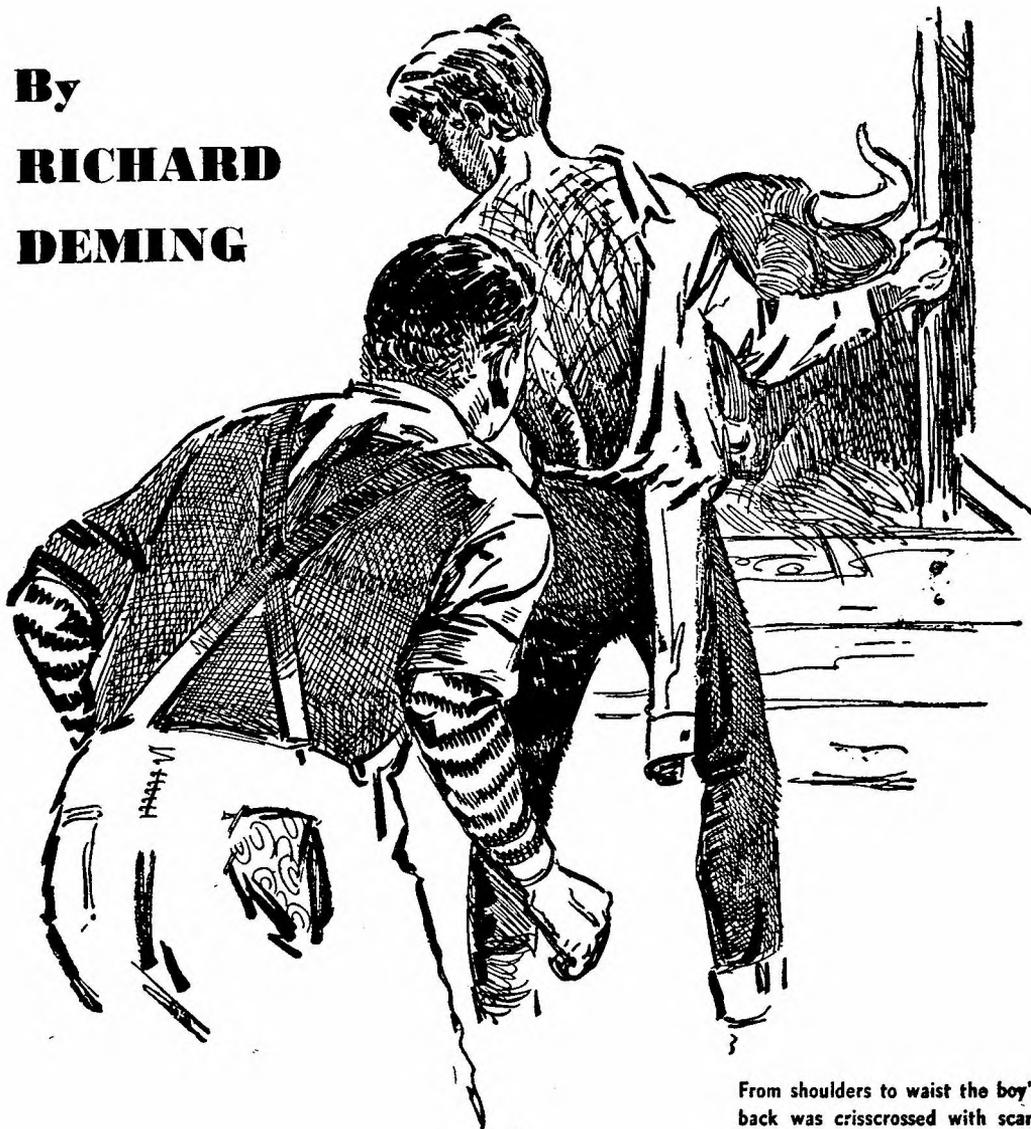
## A PLACE TO HIDE

**A**FTER his nightmarish month of running, the sight of the Conway farm was like the vision of salvation to Arthur Little.

Just as his murdered partner had described it, the farm was situated in a beautiful

little valley with mountains towering on all four sides. A white frame one-story cottage nestled in the center, and fences enclosed approximately fifty acres, of which only about five seemed to be cultivated. The rest were pasture where a few cattle and sheep grazed.

By  
**RICHARD**  
**DEMING**



From shoulders to waist the boy's back was crisscrossed with scars

Though the outbuildings seemed in need of paint, both the house and the land possessed a neat, well-cared-for air.

Best of all, it was isolated. It was rather a good joke on Clarence that almost the last words he ever spoke had directed his murderer to this refuge.

His luck all along had been amazing, he thought. With his picture on every front page in the country, it was little short of miraculous that he had got all the way from Manhattan to Colorado without being captured. It did not occur to him that after a month of riding freight trains, of eating at odd intervals, usually in hobo jungles, of not shaving and rarely washing, no one could possibly have recognized him.

When he left New York he was an immaculate little man who wore a thin mustache and clear nail polish and affected a silver cigarette holder. As a one-word description, "trim" would have fitted him. Now the only visible characteristic remaining was his littleness. His two-hundred dollar suit looked like something third-hand from the Salvation Army, and his custom-built shoes were scratched and cracked beyond repair.

Had he deliberately striven for effect, he could not have adopted a more perfect disguise, but fear kept him from realizing it, and he blanched under his dirt at every casual eye.

As he entered the valley, his fear began to depart for the first time since he had crunched the heavy brass ash tray into his partner's skull, then turned to find his horrified secretary watching him from the doorway. In place of fear, resentment at the unreasonable circumstances which had brought him to this state began to well within him.

Nothing had gone right, from the unaccountable downward spiral of Clyde Copper, which gobbled up four hundred thousand dollars of "borrowed" money, to the impromptu murder of Clarence Stone in an attempt to cover his embezzlement. In a way, the latter was Clarence's own fault, for the thought of murder would never have occurred to Arthur had Clarence not suggested a bargain.

"I'm willing to make a deal, Arthur,"

Clarence had said. "There is no chance to save the investment business, and in view of your clever bookkeeping, there is no chance for either of us to escape prison. I know I'm over a barrel. No jury will ever believe you looted our clients' accounts for eight months before I discovered it, and I know you too well to believe you will shoulder the blame alone. You'll try to scoot out from under by assuming the part of the easily-led junior partner and placing the major blame on me. With luck on your side, I'll get the ten years you deserve, and you'll get about five."

Then came Clarence's strange confession that he was not a widower, as he had led Arthur to believe when they had joined forces five years before.

"My real name is Charles Conway," he said. "I deserted my wife and child in Colorado eight years ago. I won't go into my reasons, for you wouldn't understand them. My wife is a wonderful woman in many ways, and I loved my son. Let's say I simply grew tired of farm life."

Arthur's pale eyes had flicked at his partner puzzledly as he tried to imagine how this confession pertained to the present situation. Clarence Stone had a reputation for practical joking, but this hardly seemed a time to indulge a sense of humor.

"About four months ago I hired a private detective to investigate my family's situation," Clarence said. "They live on the farm, and a year ago my wife had me declared legally dead."

"The farm is seventy miles from Fort Collins, in the heart of the Rockies. It's in a beautiful but isolated valley seven miles from Three Corners, which is little more than a trading post for hunters and trappers. The house has all modern conveniences, including running water and electricity. I installed the gasoline power plant myself. But there is no telephone, no radio because the mountains kill reception, no mail delivery, and hardly ever a visitor. A fugitive could hide there for years without detection."

CLARENCE crossed to his desk, drew a rough map in pencil on a piece of scratch paper and handed it to Arthur. "Follow

that, and you should find it easily. The farm badly needs a hired hand, and all you have to do is walk in and ask for the job. I'll guarantee my wife will welcome you, both as a worker and because she must be lonely. I also guarantee she will not turn you in, even if she suspects you are hiding from the law, providing you are able to convince her you aren't dangerous to have around. She's an unusually sympathetic woman."

"Is this one of your jokes?" Arthur asked suspiciously.

"Would I joke only an hour after discovering I'm bankrupt and facing prison?" Clarence asked in a harsh tone.

Arthur shook his head in timid agreement.

"That's the perfect hideout I offer you," Clarence said. "After a year people will have forgotten you in favor of more current criminals, you can change your name and start over a free man. The alternative is at least five years in prison. I'll allow you four days to get there before I break the news of our bankruptcy. In return for all this, I want a written statement from you."

"What kind of statement?"

Drawing another sheet of scratch paper to him, Clarence picked up the pencil again. "I'll draft exactly what I want you to say, and you will copy and sign it in ink."

Arthur rose from his chair to peer over his partner's shoulder. Clarence was writing. "I assume the entire blame for the irregularities in the accounts of the Stone-Little Investment Company. My partner had no knowledge of my illegal procedures or of my false book entries."

Clarence paused, wet the tip of his pencil, and stared at the paper thoughtfully.

It was then the idea struck Arthur, an idea so monstrous it made his knees turn weak. The note his partner was writing, even unsigned, could release Arthur from the whole nightmarish mess, for handwriting experts would be able to identify the writing as that of Clarence Stone.

He glanced at the office window, open to the prematurely warm weather of early June, and visualized the body of his partner crashing to the sidewalk ten stories be-

low with such force that all marks of violence preceding the fall would be obliterated. If Clarence committed suicide—

There would never be another chance like this. In fact, this chance might slip by while he hesitated, for at any moment Clarence might begin to slip into the text names that would disclose for which partner's signature the confession was drawn.

Clarence's thoughtful frown smoothed, and his pencil descended to the paper again. In an almost hysterical reflex action Arthur picked up the brass ash receiver that stood beside the desk, swung it high in the air, and brought it crashing down on top of his partner's head. . . .

As he neared the farmhouse, Arthur shook himself. What was done was done, and no amount of brooding could mend the past. Before him was sanctuary until his crimes were forgotten and he could begin to build a new life. From here on he would look forward only.

He was on the front porch before he realized how exhausted he was from lack of food and sleeping in box cars. After rapping on the door, he had to steady himself against the jamb with one hand.

The woman who came to the door was in her middle thirties, a strong, pleasant-faced woman with a plump figure and a freshly scrubbed appearance. She examined Arthur's disheveled clothing and unkempt beard with neither disapproval nor approval. "Yes?" she inquired crisply.

Now that he was here, Arthur's tongue deserted him, for he had planned no farther than his arrival. He stood licking his caked lips and gazing at his scuffed toes a full minute before the woman spoke again.

"Come in," she said tartly, stepping aside.

Almost staggering, he followed her through a parlor into a kitchen as modern as any you could find in Manhattan. It included a white porcelain sink, indirect lighting, an electric stove, and a refrigerator. But its most interesting furnishing, to Arthur, was a table loaded with steaming food.

A boy of about twelve rose from the table as they entered and stood beside his chair.

"You may meet the gentleman later, Charles," the woman said in her crisp voice.

Then to Arthur, "This way, please."

UNCOMPREHENDING, he followed her past the wonderfully loaded table, through a bedroom, and into a modern bath. She pointed to a wicker hamper in one corner.

"Throw your clothes in that," she said. "All of them. I'll lay some of my deceased husband's things on the bed for you. They'll fit, for he was small too. You'll find his shaving equipment in the medicine cabinet. The razor will need honing, because it hasn't been used in eight years. You may use that towel." She indicated the center of three towel racks.

"Couldn't I have something to eat first?" Arthur asked faintly.

She looked at him in surprise. "I wouldn't allow such filth at my table," she said in such a matter-of-fact tone there was no sting to the statement. "We've nearly finished eating, but I'll keep something warm for you."

Closing the bathroom door, she left him alone.

Such was Arthur Little's (or Arthur Long, as he now rather unimaginatively called him) somewhat unconventional introduction to his late partner's former home. He found Laura Conway, as his partner had said, a rather unusual woman. Briskly businesslike, she matter-of-factly accepted his offer to work for board and room without a sign of curiosity, though she must have suspected at once from his appearance, after the dirt and whiskers were removed, that he was not a farm laborer.

Had his appearance and speech not given him away, his lack of experience would have, for he knew nothing of farming. He was willing to work, in moderation, however, and Mrs. Conway seemed patiently understanding about his lack of knowledge and went out of her way to explain the various duties required of him. But he did note a mild impatience on her part if he failed to grasp an explanation the first time or was slow in picking up such farm skills as milking.

To Arthur's surprise, the work was not nearly as back-breaking as he had always

supposed farm work to be. The hours were long—seven A.M. to five P.M., with a half-hour for lunch—but the work was relatively easy, and he was allowed by Mrs. Conway to pursue it as leisurely as he wished.

Part of the reason for this, Arthur realized, was that both Mrs. Conway and her son, Charles, continued to work in the manner to which they had been accustomed before he had arrived. They continued to do all the work in the fields, while Arthur's duties consisted largely of feeding the livestock, milking, running the cream separator, and churning butter.

The cottage contained five rooms, of which two were bedrooms. Mrs. Conway assigned him to a single bed in Charles's room which was connected by the bath to her room. It was a quiet but not unpleasant existence. For the first two weeks Arthur rather enjoyed it, but then he began to grow a trifle bored.

Once a week Mrs. Conway loaded butter, cheese, eggs, and whatever other farm produce there happened to be, into the station wagon, the only means of transportation on the farm, and drove to Three Corners. She returned with supplies and mail, the latter consisting largely of advertisements, and a weekly rural paper in which Arthur was gratified to discover no mention of himself.

Charles was a puzzle to Arthur. Withdrawn to the point of timidity, the boy rarely said a word, except in answer to a direct question. He was well-behaved and not unintelligent. He did not attend school, for the nearest one was twenty miles away, but his mother, who had spent two years in a teachers' college, tutored him evenings, and his present educational level seemed to be at about seventh grade, which was normal for his age.

What puzzled Arthur about the boy was that he seemed to have no interest in play. Like Arthur he worked from seven A.M. to five P.M., incidentally accomplishing considerably more than the new hired hand. With his evenings consumed by lessons and study, this left little time for play, but still Arthur could not understand the boy's seeming preference for work.

Both hunting and fishing, traditionally favorite pastimes of boys, were available within walking distance of the cottage. Arthur himself found time occasionally for both and met no objections from his employer, but the boy seemed not even mildly interested.

THE woman puzzled him, too. She was an excellent housekeeper and a wonderful cook as well as a tireless worker. She was not large, outweighing Arthur's one-hundred and thirty by not more than ten pounds, but she had the strength and endurance of a man. Yet it did not distract from her femininity, for her figure was soft and full, and her movements held a sort of earthy grace.

Her temper was even, though she was inclined to a slight briskness, and the alacrity with which Charles obeyed her every order indicated her firm belief in parental discipline. All together she impressed Arthur as the type of woman his mother used to describe as "an excellent catch for some lucky man," and he could not quite understand why his late partner had deserted her.

Arthur had been a hired hand three weeks when the subject of romance came up. He was rather surprised when it did, for although he admired Mrs. Conway as a housekeeper and a mother, thoughts of love had never entered his head. However, he did not sidestep it, for he was beginning to grow bored.

It came up quite casually one evening as they sat together on the porch steps after Charles had gone to bed. It was a fine moonlit evening in late July, and Arthur was smoking the second of the two cigars he allotted himself each night. He had grown accustomed to smoking on the porch, having noticed a slight frown on Mrs. Conway's face on the single occasion when he had smoked in the house. She had made no comment, but Arthur felt that as a hired hand he had no right to insist on what might be only a husband's prerogative.

"This reminds me of the first night I spent here with Charles," she said suddenly. "My husband, I mean, not the boy." She laid a hand on his arm. "Look at that moon, Arthur."

He felt a mild shock, for she had always previously addressed him as Mr. Long.

"Beautiful, isn't it—" he said, then finished deliberately—"Laura."

She gave his arm a slight squeeze, and he smiled at her. She smiled back, her strong teeth gleaming in the moonlight, and quite casually he leaned over and kissed her on the lips.

It was a brief kiss. Her lips were cool and pleasant on his, but there was no passion in them. After a moment she turned away, laughed softly, and tucked her arm under his. They sat like that, holding hands and talking unromantically of farm matters, until bedtime. As they separated in front of her bedroom, she matter-of-factly raised her lips for a goodnight kiss which was as brief as the first.

An indefinable change took place in their relationship after that. Laura went out of her way to perform little feminine services for him, such as fixing a pillow to his back and bringing him slippers once worn by her husband. He began to smoke in the house, and not only did she make no comment but no frown appeared on her face.

There was nothing coy about Laura. Sometimes her color momentarily heightened when he smiled at her, and her manner became one of familiar affection, but she continued to manage the house and the farm as briskly as ever, and their love-making did not progress beyond a regular goodnight kiss.

It was, therefore, rather a violent jolt to Arthur when, after dinner one evening, she calmly asked Charles, "How would you like to have a new father?"

The boy's eyes opened in surprise, and he simply stared at her.

She said sharply, "I asked a question, Charles!"

"I heard, Mother," he said quickly. "I was just surprised, kind of. Mr. Long, Mother?"

Her color heightened, and she said with a note of affected gaiety, "Have you noticed any other suitors around lately?"

"No, ma'am," Charles said. "I think it would be fine, Mother, if that's what you want."

When Charles had retired, Arthur said awkwardly, "Laura, I'm afraid maybe you misunderstood me a little. I didn't mean to give you the impression—I mean—" He floundered to a stop when he saw her regarding him with a tolerant and amused smile.

"Perhaps I was a little sudden, Arthur. But it is obviously sensible for us to get married. I know we're not in love as people are in the movies, but that kind of love is for younger people. We're both bound here

Gradually the panic in him subsided. Thoughtfully he puffed his cigar and examined his slippers. There was sense in her reasoning. She would make a pleasant, if not an exciting wife, and marriage might at least relieve the tedium of simply waiting. A year, perhaps two, he must remain here in order to be reasonably safe, and it would certainly be pleasanter to remain as head of the house than as a mere hired hand.

"Do you know why I'm wanted?" he asked finally.



## WHAT— NOT AGAIN!

IN ROME, Luigi Assandro was standing at the church altar with his bride when a little boy ran up to him and said, "Daddy, are you getting married again?" Assandro's face turned a deadly white and naturally there was quite a bit of confusion. In fact, what happened was something in the nature of a riot and police had to come and rescue him. They also learned that an old girlfriend of Luigi's had sicked the boy on him—in a jealous plot to forestall the matrimonial proceedings!—Carter Critz

to the farm. I forever, because I like it here, and you at least for a long time."

"What do you mean by that?"

SHE laughed softly. "I've known who you were since the first week, Arthur Little. Your picture is on a reward notice in the Three Corners post office."

He felt the hair rise along the back of his neck, and the sense of security into which he had been lulled evaporated all at once. When she saw how pale he had turned, she crossed the room and laid a commiserating hand on his arm.

"Don't misunderstand me, Arthur," she said gently. "I'm not blackmailing you into marriage. You're free to leave at any time, and no one will ever learn from me you were here. But where would you go? Those pictures must be everywhere if they have one in a small place like Three Corners."

He shook his head hopelessly.

"You're also free to remain on just as a hired hand if you wish. But both of us are lonely, and we need each other's love."

"For murder and embezzlement."

Fleetingly he wondered what she would say if he told her the man he had murdered was her husband. Then he pushed the thought aside as immaterial.

"Aren't you afraid I might murder you in your sleep?"

She laughed aloud. "I know you very well, Arthur. If you really killed anyone, it was an accident. Too often I've watched you try to kill a chicken to believe you capable of killing a human."

In this she was probably right, Arthur thought ruefully. He *had* killed a human in a moment of hysteria and under circumstances which at the time seemed to involve no risk, but he knew within himself that no combination of circumstances could ever again bring him to such an act, regardless of provocation.

"How are we going to get married, anyway?" he asked. "Whoever married us might recognize me."

"You don't realize how much farm work has altered your appearance," she assured

him. "You are brown as a nut and ten pounds heavier than when you arrived. And with that long hair, bleached by the sun as it is, you look like a typical farmer. You might be recognized if you walked around the streets of a city for a time, but I think we can risk the justice of the peace I have in mind. Both he and his wife are nearly blind." She added casually, "I got the license in Fort Collins last week when I was gone so long on my shopping trip."

He laughed then, and the matter was settled.

They were married the following Friday by the half-blind justice of the peace on the outskirts of Fort Collins. With her usual efficiency Laura combined the event with her weekly shopping tour and drove to the Fort Collins shopping district immediately after the wedding.

She stopped first at a grocery and meat market. Arthur stayed in the car, not wishing to chance recognition, but through the glass show window he could see Laura inside the store. Idly he followed her progress from counter to counter as she filled a self-service pushcart. When she reached the cash register, she was facing directly toward him since the girl cashier was situated with her back toward the window.

What brought about the disagreement. Arthur was unable to tell, but apparently something the cashier did or said offended Laura. One moment her face contained its usual firm but pleasant expression, but the next it was a mask of fury. Her lips twisted as she uttered short, staccato phrases Arthur could not hear, and the girl cashier recoiled against the show window as though she had been slapped. Then Laura swept up her package and strode from the store.

**W**HEN she opened the door on the driver's side of the station wagon, her face was brick red, and her lips formed a thin white line. Dumping her carton of groceries in the rear, she slammed shut the door and backed from the parking place with a vicious jerk. Immediately she swung back in the direction of the mountains, abandoning further shopping.

Too startled even to comment, Arthur

simply sat with his feet braced and his eyes glued to the road as the station wagon hit seventy and stayed there. Ten miles from town Laura relaxed and let the speed drop to fifty. Arthur risked a glance at his bride.

"What, my dear wife, is eating you?" he asked quizzically.

She glanced at him sidewise with a half shame-faced expression. "I'm sorry, dear. I don't often lose my temper. But I can't stand anyone to condescend to me."

He waited for further explanation, but another mile went by, and then all she said was, "That's why I love the farm so, Arthur. In town, you are just one of thousands of nonentities, constantly ordered around by arrogant, self-appointed superiors. But on the farm I am queen. If any orders are given, I give them."

"Yes, your Majesty," he said with mock subservience.

She lifted her eyes from the road long enough to grin at him. "I didn't mean to show my temper until the honeymoon was over, dear. I'll make it up. We're going to have a three-day honeymoon."

"Where?"

"At the farm, of course. We'll do only necessary chores and the rest of the time just relax and hold hands."

"Why three days, particularly?" he asked.

"Isn't that enough?"

"Oh, yes. I'm not objecting. But the way you expressed it sounded so—well, precise. Couldn't you have said, 'A few days,' or 'A day or two,' so that it wouldn't sound so much like an army leave?"

She laughed a trifle uncertainly. "I can't help being precise, Arthur. It's a quality you'll have to learn to tolerate."

She kept her word about the honeymoon. Aside from milking, feeding the chickens, and a few other necessary daily chores, all work which could not be done by the already busy Charles was simply allowed to slide for three days. During this period, Laura pampered the bridegroom like a fowl being fattened for Thanksgiving. In fact, she was such a model of attentiveness and affection that Arthur almost began to believe he *was* mildly in love with her.

On the third evening the honeymoon ab-

ruptly ended. Unmistakably.

The first intimation came as Charles and Arthur were bedding down the cows for the night. A yellow jacket suddenly droned through the open barn door and stung Charles on the shoulder.

"Ow!" yelled Charles, as much in surprise as in pain.

His face dead white, the boy rapidly un-

pered. "Please, Uncle Arthur. You won't tell her you saw!"

Arthur shook his head dumbly. "Get up, Charles," he finally managed to say. "I won't tell."

He stayed out in the barn another fifteen minutes after Charles had gone in, until he judged Laura had had time to treat the boy's sting. Even then he did not re-enter



## SHE HAD NO HEART — NO GUTS!

*Brissk had known many lovely women, but for hot excitement none equalled the girl—whose body was NOT made of flesh!*

# THE DEAD DOLL

by BRUCE ELLIOTT

Plus two other hard-hitting novels of violence and suspense in the WINTER ISSUE of

TRIPLE DETECTIVE • TRIPLE DETECTIVE • TRIPLE DETECTIVE

buttoned his shirt, slipped it off one shoulder, and vainly tried to peer at the hurt, jumping up and down and whimpering with pain all the time.

"Here, let me see it," Arthur said, stepping behind him and jerking the sleeve the rest of the way down.

But Arthur's eyes never touched the swelling mark left by the yellow jacket. Instead they fixed with shock fascination on the boy's back. From shoulders to waist it was criss-crossed with the permanently ridged scars of countless floggings.

Jerking from Arthur's grip, the boy swung about and began buttoning his shirt, his pain forgotten in a new terror which suddenly showed in his eyes. When he saw Arthur's fixed, unbelieving expression, he sank to his knees.

"You won't tell her you saw!" he whis-

pered. "Please, Uncle Arthur. You won't tell her you saw!"

Arthur shook his head dumbly. "Get up, Charles," he finally managed to say. "I won't tell."

He stayed out in the barn another fifteen minutes after Charles had gone in, until he judged Laura had had time to treat the boy's sting. Even then he did not re-enter

the house but sat on the porch, smoking a cigar and listening to Laura finish the dinner dishes she had started when he and Charles went after the cows. Finally she came out and sat beside him.

"Tomorrow we start back to work, dear," she said abruptly.

He continued to puff his cigar without replying.

"We'll start on the outhouses," she said. "They need paint terribly. You should be able to complete them in a week."

His mind still on Charles's scarred back, he said detachedly. "Shouldn't take more than three days."

"Oh no. Not at three hours a day."

HE TURNED to examine her curiously and forced lightness into his voice. "Three hours? Is that a new union rule?"

I've been accustomed to seven A.M. to five P.M."

"I mean evenings, silly. There's too much regular work to cut in on your daytimes. With daylight saving it stays light till nearly nine."

His expression became astonished. "You mean after working ten hours, with only a half hour for lunch, you expect me to work three more hours?"

"Of course," she said briskly, as though the question were of no consequence. "We've so many things to accomplish, dear. And our honeymoon is over, you know. The fences all need repair, and the machinery needs a good going over. But the biggest problem is all that land lying idle."

"I guess I never mentioned it, but that two-hundred acre wooded section beyond the south fence belongs to the farm, too. It should be in crops, but the land has to be cleared first and all the rocks dug up. It will take two years of hard work to get it in shape for planting."

"Hard work by who?"

"You and I, dear. I wouldn't ask you to work any harder than I intend to myself."

She rose and entered the house while his mouth was still hanging open.

It took nearly five minutes for his surprise to evolve into indignation. Then he rose and strode into the house, slamming the screen door behind him. He found her in the kitchen, facing the door and awaiting him with an expectant light in her eyes.

Before he could speak, she said, "I've sent Charles down to the barn."

The statement disconcerted him. "Why?" he asked.

"Because I didn't want him to hear, dear."

"Hear what?"

"Our conversation. Didn't you have something to say, dear?"

"You're damned right!" Arthur said hotly. "If you think I'm working my head off the way you've got it figured—"

Abruptly she broke in. "This time I'm excusing you, Arthur. But don't ever use that tone to me again. You may as well understand once and for all that this is *my* farm. *My* farm, not *our* farm. I've wrested this place from soil and rocks with my bare

hands, and it's *mine*. I am queen here, and this farm is my private domain. There is no room in a domain for two rulers. And before I forget it, you are no longer to smoke in the house."

Before his astonished eyes her face took on the same expression of fury he had witnessed through the store window. But instead of the blistering invective he instinctively braced himself for, her voice came as cool and precise as an army colonel's, and its effect was as overpowering.

"You've had your honeymoon, Arthur. And in the event you don't like future arrangements, please reflect on the alternative before deciding to move on. I believe in permanent marriage, and the assurance I gave you that you were free to leave no longer holds. If you ever leave here, it will only be to be hanged, for within the short time it takes me to get to Three Corners after you leave, the police will know who you are. There is only one key to the station wagon, and it will remain in my possession at all times."

She took a step toward him, and he retreated just as the girl cashier had. "I am a fair woman, Arthur, but I will not tolerate disobedience. I will have it completely and immediately. Now go down to the barn and get Charles!"

He drew himself erect, trying to muster some small part of his shattered dignity.

"I mean now!" she snapped.

His body jerked as though she had cracked a whip, and he sidled from the kitchen door.

A few feet from the house he stopped to stare about him with a brand new sense of perception. The valley seemed smaller, somehow, than when he had entered it, and even as he swung his gaze to the four mountains hemming it in, they seemed to be closing in on him like the sides of a shrinking box. With horror and belated understanding he realized that he was the victim of his dead partner's last practical joke.

At a slight noise behind him he turned and saw Laura standing in the kitchen doorway. Her face was expressionless, but her eyes bored into his with almost physical force.

He began to run toward the barn. • • •



He had the medicine dropper in his hand

# HOLDUP AT TWIN PALMS

By ROGER DEE

*The putty-eared guy who came into our service station was on the lam—and we were supposed to help him . . . .*

I COULD tell from the clatter of its motor what was wrong with the big Buick that pulled up under the pump lights of my Twin Palms station. The driver had pushed it too hard and too far without oil, and somewhere out of Tampa it had thrown a rod. It didn't want servicing now. It needed a garage.

I put down the hydrometer bulb I was using to measure acid into a run-down battery and wiped my hands on a piece of waste from the charging rack. I started outside then, but I didn't make

it. The Buick's driver came in fast, blocking the doorway.

"You got a mechanic here?" he asked.

I shook my head and backed up, not liking his looks. He could have been a wrestler once, judging from his putty-lump ears and the thick shoulders that put a strain on his sweat-soiled tropical suit. Also, somewhere along the route, he had lost an eye. I could tell that because his left eye was set and glassy, while his right was red-rimmed and inflamed from long driving. His nose had been broken at least once, and

the sparse red hair that jutted around the edges of his too-small Panama was as stiff and coarse as a boar's bristles.

"Nobody here but me," I told him. "You'll need a garage for that burnt-out rod, anyway."

He came inside, blinking his good eye against the light from the overhead fluorescents. "How about a phone?"

I jerked a thumb at the handset on my desk. "Help yourself, so long as it's not long distance."

He showed me a mouthful of bad bridgework. "I don't want long distance, brother," he said. "Long distance wants me."

He went over and sat on a corner of my desk but before touching the phone, he took a little bottle capped with a rubber bulb out of his pocket and squirted a few drops of liquid into his eye. He blinked a couple of times and shook his head, letting a trickle of the yellow stuff run down the side of his nose and across his stubbled cheek.

Then he put the bottle down on the desk and took up the phone. He didn't dial for operator but gave the handset a yank that snapped the cord like a broken shoelace.

I didn't even have time to yell. Before the phone hit the floor he had a .45 Army automatic out of a jacket pocket and aimed at my navel.

"Shut up and keep your hands down," he said, his voice rumbling out of his chest. "You've got a car, or you wouldn't be operating in these Godforsaken palmetto flats. Where is it?"

I thought of Page for the first time then and started to sweat. She was shopping in Plant City with our car, an old '41 Chevvy, and she was due back any minute. I didn't care about the car, but it was different with Page. I couldn't have her caught here with me. This guy was a killer—or worse.

"I don't keep a car," I said, trying to swallow the thick lump that kept crawling into my throat. "I use the bus when I—"

He didn't bother to let me finish. His

left shoulder twitched, and a fist like a corrugated sledge caught me on the side of the head.

EVERYTHING was hazy after that. I tried once to get up, and he knocked me down again. After he let me have his toe in my ribs a couple of times, I blacked out. I was just beginning to come around again when my Chevvy pulled up out front, and Page came in.

The sound of her scream sliced the air like a knife. I fought my way to my knees somehow, but before I could get up she was kneeling beside me, crying questions and holding me tight.

I looked over her shoulder and saw the big guy sitting on the desk. He had put his gun down by the cash register—he didn't need it in the first place, since he could have broken both of us in two with his hands—and he was busy squirting drops in his eye again. He had us cold, as helpless as two trussed chickens in a carnival snake pen.

"It's all right," I told Page. "We're losing the Chevvy, that's all."

She helped me up and we stood waiting for the next move. Page had calmed down quick. She was always a cool girl, as level-headed as they come, and she was under better control now than I was.

"I'll take the car," the big guy said. He put the bottle on the desk and stood up, teetering on his heels like a circus bear. "And you got something else I need. Open the register."

I patted Page's shoulder and went past the guy to open the cash register, cleaning out everything but the loose change. I was praying he'd take the car and go then, but he wasn't ready for that. He had to cover his tracks first.

He wiggled the .45 at me. "Get out there and start that heap of mine. Drive it into your washing shed and roll the doors shut on it. And don't get any ideas about hailing a car on the highway, unless you want your wife to foot the bill."

I knew then how he would handle it. If he had meant to run for it, he wouldn't have bothered to hide his car. Hiding it showed that he was going to duck pursuit instead of outrunning it, and that meant he wasn't going to leave us alive to put the state patrol on his trail.

But he had us cold, and there was nothing else I could do. I went outside and jockeyed his clattering machine into the washing shed and rolled the trolley

that he was a state trooper.

For a minute I thought the holdup was going to shoot anyway, then he ducked into the men's toilet behind the battery rack and pulled the door nearly shut. The light went out in the john, but I knew his gun was still covering us.

"Stall him," he ordered in a harsh whisper. "One wrong move and I'll come out blasting—and I won't miss!"

The trooper took a quick look around



## HERO—or JERK?

Eddie was a high-school football hero who delighted in torture. One day he bought some mail-order pictures of scantily-clad girls who were bound and gagged, and it gave him the idea he'd like to try out the stunt himself—on one of his pretty classmates.

# ANYTHING FOR A THRILL

*A shocking story of today's delinquents*

by M. E. CHABER

Featured in November **POPULAR DETECTIVE** *On sale right now!*

doors shut. Then I went back into the station and put an arm around Page's shoulders.

"All right, you're clear," I said, trying to sound as if I believed it. "Now hit the road, will you?"

He blinked his good eye thoughtfully, but he wasn't making up his mind. It was made up already.

"Too much traffic," he said. "You'd flag down the next car and have the troopers on my tail in twenty minutes. It's a chance I don't have to take."

His finger was crooking on the trigger when a car pulled off the highway out front and stopped at the pumps. A man jumped out before the wheels stopped rolling, and I could see from the uniform and the flat-brimmed hat

before he came in, and stopped at the doorway to size us up.

"We're tracing a blue Buick sedan with Florida plates," he said. "Driver is a big bruiser with lumpy ears and a broken nose, a roadhouse bandit wanted for murder. Seen anything like that?"

**B**Y THAT time I had pulled myself together enough to shake my head. The feel of that gun pointed at my spine raised goose pimples on my skin and put a frog in my throat.

"Nothing but the usual," I said. I caught him staring at the swelling bruise on my temple and added, thinking fast, "Everything quiet, except with the madam. We just had an argument, and she let me have it with a tire tool."

He turned his stare on Page, who was standing against the charging rack, fingering the bottle of eyewash the hold-up had left on my desk.

"You never know till you marry one, do you?" the trooper said and went out.

I watched him go with the same feeling you get in one of those feet-in-the-quicksand nightmares. It can't happen like this, I was thinking. He'll guess what's up and turn around fast and put a couple of slugs through the door of the john and—

But he didn't. He climbed back into the patrol car, and his partner tooted it away from the pumps. A minute later safety was just a pair of tail lights, vanishing on the dark highway.

The big guy came out of the john, sweating from the heat and blinking his red eye against the light.

"Neat enough," he said and made a grunting sound that could have been a laugh. "Too bad you won't take any curtain calls."

The light still bothered him, and he picked up the eyewash bottle off the desk. A habit like that grows on a man, especially when he has lost one eye and lives in deadly fear of losing the other. It was strong enough in this killer to make him stop now and flush out that precious, irritated eye.

Or maybe, knowing he had us cold,

he was purposely stretching out the suspense and enjoying it. He took his time, switching the gun to his left hand and drawing the little rubber bulb full of eyewash. He put the dropper to his eye and squeezed—

He gave a scream like a woman's, a raw, high sound that tore the nerves like a rasp. The gun clattered on the floor and exploded deafeningly, shattering the front window into a thousand pieces. The big man clapped both hands to his face, still screaming, and lunged headlong into the wall like a blinded bull.

He staggered back and lurched straight for me, one hand over his eyes, the other clawing the air before him. I came out of my funk just in time to scoop up the gun and squeeze off a shot at arm's length.

The slug took him in the middle and slammed him back and down. He didn't get up, and I knew from the slack look on his face that he wouldn't—not ever.

I knew, too, then, what it was Page had done while I stalled the trooper. I wasn't lying about her being a level-headed kid. She realized the instant she saw the hydrometer bulb I had left on the charging rack that it was the only chance left to us, and she'd used it to squirt the big killer's eyewash bottle half full of battery acid. ● ● ●



## ROUGH ON CATS

At Pueblo, Colorado, police dashed to a citizen's home when blood was found on the floor after he had threatened suicide. When they found the man he was very much alive—but wearing a bloodstained coat.

He explained he had killed the family cat, dousing himself with the blood to make it look as if he'd stabbed himself.

"I only wanted to frighten my wife," he told the law officers.

They frightened *him* with a stern reprimand.

—Bill Clegg



One of the murdered women  
had been found in the cellar

# C R A Z Y

By  
MURRAY  
LEINSTER

*What would you do if a strangler had his fingers  
locked about your throat?*

**I**T was only lunch-time, but Johnny came in magnificently, only he didn't come in all the way. He paused splendidly with the door held open by his folded newspaper which he pointed like a rapier. The sun shone brightly behind him. He was slim

and brisk and young and good to look at and he knew it. But the pose was because the two years before he married Dee had been long ones, and spent far away, and Johnny meant to extract every bit of fun out of being alive and at long last married to Dee. He grinned in the doorway, with the sunshine striking over his shoulders.

"The mister," he announced, "is home for lunch. How's for a greeting?"

There wasn't any answer. His voice rang queerly through the bungalow. If Dee had been around, it wouldn't have echoed like that.

He looked startled. He came all the way in, blinking a little as the outside sunshine was cut off. Then his shoulders slumped. Make a picture and a grand entrance and then find out there's nobody around to see, and you feel deflated, sort of. Dee wasn't home. It felt queer.

He went into the dining-room with an absurd lost feeling when he tossed the newspaper on the table, it unrolled itself, and big black printed words seemed to blink at the ceiling: NO CLUES TO STRANGLER KILLER, said the headline.

Johnny took off his coat and put it carefully on a hanger, and settled it just right. He moved to hang it up in the closet, and the headline caught his eye again. NO CLUES TO STRANGLER KILLER. He went on, he opened the closet door.

Then it hit. His hands shook suddenly. It was crazy, of course. Just because there was a loony guy around who'd managed to get three women, separately, to let him in their houses and then he had strangled them just for the hell of it and left them—!

He hung up the coat. He called out:

"Dee!" He called again. "Dee!"

That was crazier still. If she'd been home, she'd have heard him and answered when he came in. He stood still an instant, his hands shaking. He picked up the newspaper and went out to the kitchen.

Empty. All neat and clean as a new pan. He put down the paper and tried the door. Locked. Nothing messed up anywhere. He turned fast and went to into the bedroom. Empty. Everything in place. Everything tidy. Everything was all right. Of course.

But there was that crazy guy who somehow or other persuaded women to let him into their houses and then strangled them with monstrous, powerful hands that left ghastly marks upon their flesh.

The living room was all right, too. Dusted and swept and straightened up. Just—Dee wasn't around. Johnny told himself that she'd be back presently, and that she wouldn't have gone out if she'd known he'd be home at lunch time. But his throat hurt. It seemed to be swelling inside. He swallowed, and it stopped his breath. His hands weren't a bit steadier.

He didn't want to, but he couldn't help thinking of the cellar. There was a basement under the bungalow, and one of the women who'd been killed had been found down in her cellar, and what the cellar looked like had been too bad to put in the newspaper. But Dee was all right. Sure she was all right! It was crazy to be worried about Dee. Nothing could happen to her.

HE found himself at the head of the cellar stairs and he was shaking all over. His breath made a funny, rasping noise as it went in and out. All because of a newspaper headline that couldn't possibly have anything to do with Dee's not answering when he came in the door. Still, he was scared to death when he turned on the cellar light and went down.

But everything was wholly normal down there. Concrete floor. Unshaded electric bulb. Bulky, ungainly furnace. Johnny even looked in the coal-bin. There was nothing wrong anywhere. He'd been in every room in the house and now all through the cellar, and Dee simply wasn't home. She'd gone out somewhere. That was all. Johnny went sick with relief.

Funny how a fellow can get all worked up over nothing at all. No reason in the world why Dee had to stay home all day on the off chance her husband might have an errand in the neighborhood and drop by for lunch. No reason at all. But just because she'd been out when he came in, he'd got all worked up. That and a newspaper headline. Crazy!

He grinned shakily. He wouldn't ever tell her, or she'd laugh at him. Just dumb

and scary. He'd go upstairs and scabble up some lunch and leave an insulting note for her to find when she came back. Something like woman's place in the home and she didn't stay there? His grin was less shaky as he started toward the steps.

Crash! That was glass breaking. Something had smashed upstairs.

He went up the steps two at a time. The glass panel of the outer door was shattered, and a baseball was still rolling foolishly across the kitchen floor.

The tension Johnny'd felt boiled up into a furious anger. But the couple of years before he and Dee were married had taught him to think twice when he was mad. He started for the door, and then stopped. The kids who'd smashed the window would have beat it by now. But if there was no sign of life inside the house, if they thought nobody was home, they'd gather again and speculate about whether they could get their ball back.

He grinned wryly and put the baseball on the table, on top of the newspaper with the headline that had scared him so badly. NO CLUES TO STRANGLER KILLER. Somehow that headline still gave him the shakes. But he started to fix up some lunch for himself, after putting on one of Dee's aprons to protect his newly-creased pants.

There were footsteps on the back porch. Johnny waited scowling. There was a ring of the back-door bell. It wasn't a kid, though. Johnny unlocked the shattered door and confronted a mild-seeming, bulky man in an overcoat. The mild-seeming man said apologetically, very softly and humbly for so big a man:

"My little boy broke the door glass with his ball. I would like to pay for the damage, please, and get back his ball."

"Eh?" said Johnny. He blinked. There could be no quarrel with this. "Oh! There's the ball. I was laying low to see if I could find out which kid did it. Come in."

He opened the door wide. The bulky man came in, stepping cautiously over the pieces of glass still on the floor. He was very meek, extremely abashed. He looked ashamed, like someone who was not accustomed to being in the wrong. He did not once raise his eyes above Johnny's collar. But Johnny felt

queer, wearing Dee's frilly apron over rather sharp and definitely masculine clothes.

"My wife's out," explained Johnny. "I'm cooking my own lunch. She'll be back any minute, though. I don't know what a new pane for the door will cost. A couple of bucks, I guess. It's pretty big."

**T**He big man said softly, "I will be glad to pay whatever you think is right. I am glad you are at home, sir. Since these terrible strangling murders, I would feel very strange if I had to speak to a lady. I would be afraid she would be in terror of me."

Johnny frowned, thinking.

"Sure," he said absently. "I'll call up a glazier and see what a new glass will cost. Wait here a minute."

He went into the living room. He discarded Dee's apron and felt better. After he had called the glazier, he went back to the kitchen. The bulky, meek man had picked up the newspaper with its headline: NO CLUES TO STRANGLER KILLER. He looked up—but not all the way to Johnny's eyes—when Johnny came back.

"It'll be two and a quarter," said Johnny. "Installed."

"Yes," said the big man softly. "Thank you, sir. There is no clue at all to the man who committed these horrible crimes, I see. He must be insane. It is terrible to think of someone going about with such a lust for murder in his heart."

"It's bad," said Johnny.

"They say," said the big man in the same soft tone, "that he is a sex maniac. But somehow I do not believe that. I think that his victims have been women simply because it is easier to find a woman alone and off guard than a man. A woman is so easily lulled to confidence by an air of deference! But I think the strangler would as readily strangle a man. Especially a young man."

The newspaper quivered a little as he held it. Still he did not raise his eyes to Johnny's. He looked at Johnny, to be sure, but his glance never quite lifted to Johnny's face.

"There would be," he went on, very softly indeed, "there would be an esthetic pleasure in crushing a woman's soft throat between one's fingers, but there would be pleasure

in strangling a man, too. After all, this criminal must kill for the pleasure of feeling himself irresistibly powerful, omnipotent to destroy. He must know a terrible pleasure when he feels life fluttering away in his grasp while feeble hands clutch helplessly at him. But the greatest pleasure would be in watching his victim's eyes, watching terror grow to horror, the madness before the eyes glazed. Yes, it would be a great pleasure to a madman to watch others go mad as his fingers squeezed their lives away. And of course, a young man would yield that pleasure.—”

“It's two and a quarter,” said Johnny sharply, “for the glass panel.”

He didn't like this talk after the scare he'd had when he came in. But the meek man said he wanted to pay for the damage his small boy had done.

“Ah, yes!” said the big man.

He laughed softly. The sound was quite remote from anything human. Johnny stared, a sudden harsh suspicion leaping into his mind. Then hands darted for his throat, like twin snakes striking. They moved too fast for his eyes to follow and they closed with superhuman, maniacal force.

There was silence for perhaps two seconds. The big man laughed softly and very happily. Johnny's own hands jerked to his throat to tear the strangling hands away. His first impulse was panic. But the two years before he'd married Dee had taught him how fatal it is to get panicky. And in those two years, too, he had learned that nobody can strangle you if you keep your head. Nobody! A strong man's hands can be torn away, perhaps, but he can't strangle you if you put all your strength against one of his fingers at a time.

“And you said,” said the bulky man happily, “that your wife will be back at any moment.”

JOHNNY's throat was utterly closed, but instead of panic his eyes were filled with fury. He did not tear at the madman's wrists. He wrenched loose individual fingers. His right hand gripped the forefinger of the strangler's left hand. His left hand separated and seized a single finger of the strangler's

right hand. The whole strength of each of Johnny's hand was available for use against a single finger of the madman's. He used it. With a violent, ruthless wrench, he bent the two fingers back.

Suddenly the big man screamed. Johnny did not struggle in his grip. He wrenched at two other fingers. He bent them back with terrible abruptness. The man shrieked again. Johnny needed breath, by then, but he wrenched at a third finger on each hand.

The big man in the overcoat loosed Johnny and fled, uttering unhuman cries. He held his hands stiffly, absurdly away from his body. He blundered through the door, uttering animal sounds. Johnny gasped once for breath and then leaped after him.

He struck with his full weight at just the right moment. The big man toppled the three steps from the back porch, and Johnny was on top. And he struck sharply with the heel of his hand, and the madman's head rocked into cracking contact with the concrete walk. He lay still.

Faces appeared at the windows all about. Women's faces, scared and pale. Johnny got up and went back into the house, automatically brushing himself off as he moved. He was deathly white. He made an urgent phone call.

When the police had taken the man away, Johnny changed his shirt. The collar was soiled by the hands that had tried to strangle him. He began to brush his clothes more carefully. But he shook all over.

When he heard Dee's steps on the front porch, he reached the door in nothing flat. He opened it and dragged her in, and, still trembling, held her close.

“Johnny!” said Dee delightedly. “How is it you're home?” Then she realized that he was scared. “You're pale! What's the matter?”

“Oh, my God!” he said shakily. “You weren't home, and—and I got to thinking about things that might happen to you. Not—not only here, but downtown. Anywhere! You could even be run over by a truck! I—I get scared when I don't know you're all right, Dee!”

Dee kissed him. she said fondly, “Crazy!”



*If Helen committed the murder, she would have looked something like this as she held the gun. But Helen claimed this was a scene that had never taken place!*



## *girl* IN TROUBLE

By ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN

**M**ALLON had the smirk he invariably wore when he gave me a stinko assignment. "That's right," he said. "Get a story of her new TV program. Lots of career gal background. A couple of columns will do fine. We got plenty of pics in the morgue."

I wanted to kill him, and it wasn't the thought of the penalty that stopped me. For one thing, Al Mallon was a whiz in the newspaper business, and if I could stomach him for maybe a year I'd learn enough to give me a better than even-money chance of landing a job with some metropolitan sheet, perhaps in New York or Chicago. For another, I honestly and truly

wanted to see Helen James again.

All right, so I must adore getting kicked in the teeth, but you try to explain love. And it was love between Helen and me. That is, it was before Uncle Whiskers selected me for the Korean trip with pay. We were both in the circulation department and had our hopes and dreams. Mallon was on the city desk then, not the big M.E. yet. Then I got my "greetings," and it was the same day Helen won a radio audition singing contest. So the three of us were happy that day. Helen, me, and Uncle Whiskers.

You can probably guess the rest—and you're right. By the time I made PFC, Helen was climbing fast, and her letters got fewer and shorter. By the time they decided my leg wasn't good enough to chase gooks on any more, Helen was right at the top. I came home to her but not to the girl I'd known in the circulation department. This girl gleamed like gold, and was as hard and sparkling as diamonds.

I did my best to knock it all down, but it was no go. The star her wagon was hitched to was jet propelled, and I still had a bit of Korean Red shell in my leg. It was nice dear friends, or else. I blew up and took the else.

"Well, you want it?" Mallon's voice cut through my reverie.

Just a sweet, understanding guy. A real cupid with a knife. I nodded.

"I want it," I said and walked out of his office.

I finished the rewrite I'd left when he'd yelled and looked at the clock. It was two-thirty.

It was three on the dot when I stepped out of the elevator on the fourteenth floor of the swank place where Queen Helen, as they were calling her, held court. I hadn't phoned from the office nor from downstairs. I'd been there before a couple of times and knew the way. Besides I was secretly afraid she might give me the brush and I wanted to see her, a kick in the teeth or not.

Her apartment was toward the rear on the court side of the two-wing building. The door was open an inch, and I was about to jab the chimes button when I heard a man's voice inside.

"Somebody would have to kill her first!"

he said in a flat, toneless voice.

Helen laughed harshly. "So you've got yourself a thought," she said. "Now get out of here, you damned worm!"

I could retreat quick or be the nonhearing bystander. I latched the door silently and jabbed the chimes button. It was opened by a man I knew by sight. His name was Trasker, and he was one of the half dozen so-called directors of Helen's TV program. He looked through me, grunted, and went down the hall to the elevator bank. The next thing I knew I was being yanked into the foyer by Helen's arms around my neck.

"Johnny, darling! You *darling* to come!"

I didn't fight, or stiffen, or even give her just my cheek. I went swimming in the Garden of Eden until she let go and stepped back.

"Still mad at baby, Johnny honey?"

Sweet corn and it cleared my head. I wiped my mouth and put my handkerchief back in my pocket. When I looked at her the temperature went up again.

"Me? I'm your dear friend. Remember?"

**S**HE LOOKED mad for a moment, then thoughtful. Then the golden gleam was there and the polished hard diamond.

"Okay, chum," she said in a voice that made me want to hang five on her. "So we skip it. Why the call?"

"Mallon loves his little jokes," I told her. "I'm here to interview Queen Helen. Our six hundred thousand readers—"

"*You?* What a stinking louse that Mallon!"

"Yes, Queen," I said. "He is also my boss. He gives the assignments. He signs the pay vouchers. I need the job. Period."

She looked at me like six strangers studying a bug. She finally shook her head and sighed.

"You softy," she said and shook her head again. "You don't get any place being soft, Johnny. I know! I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing if I hadn't got hard and tough."

"I know," I said. "You'd be minding the kids while I was out interviewing somebody else."

For a second I thought it hit home. A velvet sadness filled her eyes. Impulsively I reached out, but she saw the movement and

shook her head.

"Okay, let's not stand here," she said, back on the Queen Helen record.

I followed her into a living room that was fixed up exactly the way a queen would fix up a living room. Use your own imagination. She waved me regally to a king size chair and sat down on a sofa. I mean, I thought I saw her wave and I thought I saw her sit down on a sofa, but I wasn't sure. At that instant, I was looking into a glaring white light of about sixteen trillion candlepower intensity. I ducked and stepped from one side to the other but the white glare held me pinned.

"That damned sun!" I heard Helen explode.

A moment later venetian blinds came down over the open french windows, and I could see again.

"That bitch's windows across the court," Helen said, coming back to the sofa. "This time of day they reflect the sun straight in here like a million headlights. I keep forgetting. Sit down, Johnny. A drink?"

I could have stood one, but one would lead to three, maybe to five. And five, I knew, would probably make me try again. My teeth couldn't take it. I shook my head.

"Some newspaperman, turning down a drink!" she scoffed. "All right, the interview. So what can I tell you you don't already know?"

It came out as though I'd had it in my head waiting. "You can start with that character you just left," I said.

Ever see ice burn? That was Helen for about five fast seconds.

"We'll skip him," she said. "Pick another topic."

I picked one I could write about and then a few more. I picked topics for half an hour or so, then closed my notebook and stood up. I thanked her and wished her well, and she walked with me to the door with a funny little smile on her face. At the door she suddenly clinched me but good. My own arms were coming up when she pushed me out into the hall.

"A sofly but *clean!*" I heard her say as the doorlatch clicked.

I walked slow circles to the elevator and rode down with my sinking heart. That eve-

ning I drank a good part of my dinner in a tavern near my rooming house. Of course, it had to be the night Helen's show was on, and of course, a middle-aged party of four had to ask the barkeep to switch it on. I looked at her, and listened to her, and got quietly plastered. That was the last time I, or anybody else, saw Queen Helen on television.

THE next afternoon, around four, I dropped in on Lieutenant Jack Coffey down at homicide. Our paths had crossed a few times in Korea, and every once in a while when I dropped in, he'd let go a hint as to where I might pick up a story. No hints this time, but while I was there his phone rang. When he hung up, he gave me a crooked grin.

"You want one that's hot, come along," he said and was out of there like a shot.

Not until we were in his car, screaming through the streets, did I get the chance to ask where.

"Madison Apartments," Coffey told me. "Guy found his wife with a hole in her head. From a bullet."

"Anybody we know?" I yelled as he touched the siren button.

"Us and a million others," he said, two-wheeling a corner. "Diana Trasker, the TV cutie."

A mule kicked me in the stomach, but I couldn't understand why. Helen lived at the Madison, and Diana Trasker's husband was the lad I'd heard talking to her yesterday, but so what? Why should my insides quiver and sink? I couldn't think of a reason, and then we were in front of the place.

The beat cop in the lobby saluted Coffey and gave him the apartment number. It was on the fourteenth floor. Three men were waiting by the door. One was another cop, one I recognized as the house manager, and the other was Trasker. The TV director gave me a startled look and seemed about to speak but he didn't. The cop touched his cap and opened the door, and we all went in, nobody saying a word.

Coffey started and then I did, too. I guess it was because both of us probably expected to see the dead woman stretched out on the

floor, or a bed, or a sofa, or something, instead of bent over on a desk not two feet from you as you came in the door. She was sitting on a chair, but what you saw first and couldn't take your eyes from was the sticky red hole in the back of her head at the hair line. That and the half-dried trickle of blood that had run down her neck and under the collar of her blouse.

I had time for one good long look over Coffey's shoulder, before the homicide detail arrived. Coffey snapped a few orders that put everybody to work and turned to Trasker.

"Tell me about it," he said.

Trasker told him in the deadest voice I had ever heard. He'd stopped by the apartment for a quick shower and change before returning to the studio for a soap opera rehearsal and discovered he'd lost his key. His wife didn't answer his ring so he sent the elevator boy down for the master key. The manager, name of Farms, brought it up personally, and the three of them found the dead Diana. Farms sent the elevator kid for a cop, and the cop phoned it in to Homicide.

Just as Trasker finished, the medic signified that he had completed his examination.

"She got it quick," he said to Coffey without being asked. "A twenty-two or a twenty-five, dead center. I'll dig it out."

"What time?" Coffey asked.

"Three o'clock, give or take five," was the answer. "I can cut it fine later. All yours, Jack."

Coffey nodded and looked around the room. I took a casual look myself and got brought up short. Directly opposite dead Diana were opened french windows that looked across the court and through the opened french windows of Helen's apartment. I could see her sofa and part of the king size chair I'd sat in yesterday. I don't know why but I instantly realized how simple it would have been for somebody in Helen's apartment to pop somebody in Trasker's apartment with a small caliber automatic and a radio to muffle the sound.

Too obviously simple, however, and I began to feel better until I saw Coffey squinting his eyes to line things up. Unquestionably he was thinking the same thing.

"It's a good fifty feet," I heard myself say. "It would take an expert marksman!"

Coffey looked at me, cocked a surprised brow, and turned back to Trasker. Ever have the certain feeling a catastrophe is heading straight for your lap, and there isn't a thing you can do about it? I had it as Coffey started asking more questions. Trasker answered each one as though it weren't the one he was waiting for. When Coffey asked if he had any idea who had shot his wife, I knew at once that was it.

"Certainly," Trasker answered in a flash and pointed. "That's her apartment across the court. Helen James."

"Now, wait a minute!" I began hotly, but Coffey's look shut me up.

"Why?" he asked.

Trasker looked at his dead wife, but as far as emotions went the guy was all ice. Then he glanced at me, and I could almost see the ice.

"He's a newspaperman," he said to Trasker. "And this is personal."

"Not now," Coffey said, shaking his head. "You've just made a public accusation. Why Helen James?"

Trasker scowled. He didn't like that. But he talked. He went back to the time when Helen's show was first cast. He built it up step by step—how his wife should have had the leading role but that, by pulling every dirty trick in the book, Helen had done her out of it. How Helen drove everybody crazy being the prima donna type, being late or missing rehearsals, drinking and helling around. How the sponsors had decided not to renew her contract for next season. How Helen had threatened Diana before the entire cast—and Coffey could check that if he wanted to.

"Only today, Lieutenant," Trasker said after stopping for a breath, "she threatened Diana's life again. I stopped in this noon at her apartment to check the script for next week's show. It's the last of the series. She was half drunk, and we couldn't get anywhere. She swore again that Diana would never get her job. She'd kill her first. She told me that, Lieutenant. She killed Diana. She's nothing but a trollop with a voice. And

not a very good voice any more!"

I did a stupid thing. I reached for Trasker, jerked him close, and hit him in the face. He slammed back against Farms, and they both fell to the floor.

"What the hell?" Coffer roared at me.

"He's a liar," I said.

He looked as though he were going to slug me. Instead he nodded at the door.

"Out and keep going!" he snapped.

I thought of the story and my job. "I'm sorry, Jack," I said.

"Out!" he said. "Be thankful you're not in the tank!"

I went out and down to the street. One of my knuckles had been cut on Trasker's teeth. While I licked it, I stared at the traffic and called myself a dopy torch bearer. So I'd slugged a guy for tainting Queen Helen's fair name? How the hell did I know her name was fair? I'd seen her only three times since I'd been back, and she certainly hadn't been the sweet, cute thing I'd once known. So how did I know? I didn't. I only felt it the way you feel things like that about the girl you'll love, come what may, until the man pats the dirt down over your pine box.

I walked to the other entrance of the Madison and went up to her apartment. I gave the chimés button a three-minute workout before she opened the door. She looked like hell. She was dressed okay, you understand, but she was higher than six kites. I don't think she even recognized me at first. I didn't bother waiting for her to. I pushed inside, closed the door, and walked into the living room and across to the french windows. I pulled them shut and dropped the venetian blind.

**W**HEN I turned, she was standing in the middle of the room with a silly smile on her face and a hand pressed to her forehead.

"Hello, Johnny honey," she mumbled. A spasm of pain twisted her face, and she groaned. "Oh damn, my head!"

I stepped over and took her by the shoulders and shook hard.

"It's your neck!" I barked. "Come out of it! Did you do it?"

"Cut it out!" she mumbled.

I shook her again. "Did-you-do-it?"

She tried to pull free and smack me, but I caught her hand. Suddenly she gave a little cry and slumped against me.

"I'm tired of it, Johnny, so damned tired," she whimpered against my shoulder. "It's all fight and just rotten. I don't want it any more."

I held her close, kissed her hair, and didn't care if she'd shot everybody in television. Then I got my good sense back.

"Tell me about it, baby," I said gently.

"Nothing to tell," she said in a weary voice. "Just fights, and bickering, and back stabbing. I'm sick of it. Queen Helen! ha! A dumb dilly in the circulation department, that's all. Oh Johnny!"

We were back again in the circulation department. Not the new smooch and hot lips but the old real thrill and the genuine tingle right down to your toes. We clung to each other like a couple of excited freshmen, and there was nobody else in all the world. Except that there was a guy named Coffer.

I hadn't shut the door tight and he was in the room with a couple of his boys before I knew it. He grabbed me from behind and yanked me out of the clinch and spun me around.

"I should have figured!" he blazed in my face.

I knocked his hand off.

"Easy, Jack," I said. "She's my girl."

"The hell!" he exploded. "Since—"

"A long story for later," I stopped him. "Right now she's sick. She needs a doctor. Look, Jack, this smells. She—"

"You tell *me*?" he snarled. "Billy! Take this guy out of this building and *keep* him out!"

"No you don't!" I protested.

Well, I went out with one of his boys on each arm. On the sidewalk they let go, and one went back in. The other lit a cigarette and just looked at me. I didn't know him, and it wouldn't have done me any good if I had.

I wondered if I should call up a good lawyer, or Helen's sponsor, or somebody. I was still wondering when the ambulance rolled up. A doc and a couple of lads went inside with a stretcher. Ten minutes later they came out with Helen. Her eyes were closed,

and I started over, but my watchdog gave me the elbow where it hurt.

They put Helen in the ambulance, closed the doors, and rolled away. Coffey came out with his other boy, but the guy with the elbow was doing his job right down the line. I wasn't able to get close to Coffey until he was in his car. I ran over to him.

"Jack, for crissakes!" I gasped.

He didn't turn his head. Just rolled the window up, letting me get my fingers pinched if I wanted, and nodded at his driver. They rolled away leaving me standing there with maybe twenty or thirty people gaping at me and wondering what it was all about. I started walking and didn't stop until I was too tired to take another step.

I ran out of energy in front of a restaurant-bar so I went in and found an empty booth. It was close to seven then, and I knew I should have gone to the office with my scoop long ago, but I didn't care. It wasn't any scoop for me. It was a mess, and when Mallon found out—which he would as sure as hell—I probably wouldn't have any more job. But I didn't care about that, either. I couldn't think about anything but Helen, and how I loved her, and how it made no difference what she'd done. And she hadn't done anything like shooting somebody else.

That was the crazy twist. I knew as sure as I knew I was drinking beer that Helen hadn't shot Diana Trasker. How? I didn't even have a good reason for myself. I just knew it, that's all. I knew, too—or felt—that unless I did something and did it fast, it was going to be too late. But what could I do?

**I**T WAS around nine when I gave up beating my brains and paid my check. I could think of only one place to go, so I went there—Homicide. I had a hell of a time getting into Coffey's office, but eventually he relented. He was as friendly as an ice pick in your neck when he did let me in.

"Only because I want an answer," he said when we were alone. "What about this Helen James and you? Give me the picture and then beat it."

He listened as if I was reciting nothing more interesting than the alphabet.

"Where is she, Jack?" I pleaded when I

was through. "How is she? What's the story up to now? Give an old soldier a break. I'm sorry about the other thing."

He looked as though he was going to give me the nod to blow, but evidently changed his mind, for he said:

"She's in sick ward and okay. Must have doped herself with the stuff and then went crazy with the gun. Swears she can't remember a thing. Doesn't even remember Trasker walking out on her. She's in one hell of a jam."

"She didn't do it," I said. "Couldn't have!"

Coffey looked at me without sympathy.

"You say!" he grunted. He held up his left hand and started ticking off the fingers with his right. "We found the gun in the field behind the Madison. A woman's toss from her bathroom window that faces rear. It's her gun, she admits it. No prints, but one shot's been fired. A German Walther Twenty-five. The slug in the Trasker woman checks. Part of Trasker's story checks, too. They hated each other's guts. Matter of fact, though, that whole crowd hates each other's guts. We've dug up a dozen motives for killing her and we'll probably dig up more. Diana Trasker was a Grade A bitch. A rich, rich bitch, too. Know who she was?"

I shook my head.

"Gloria Adams. The Fruity Bar Adamses. She's worth about half of Fort Knox. And a first class bitch. Everybody agrees. But she was shot, and we've got a law about shooting people. The D.A.'s in it now. He thinks he has your old flame about cooked, Johnny."

That he spoke my name gave me hope. He wasn't really as sore as I'd thought. So how would that help? I didn't know.

"She didn't kill her, Jack," I said. "It was somebody else. I'll say Trasker."

"Why?"

I shrugged. "I don't know," I said, then quickly shook my head. "Yes, I do," I corrected myself and told him what I'd heard when I went to interview Helen.

"Could have meant nothing," Coffey grunted. "That crowd's all mouth. Say any damned thing they think and not mean it. You know, call somebody darling when

they'd love to cut his or her throat. If it wasn't for the gun, Johnny—but there it is. That part all matches."

I shook my head. "It can't! Too tough a shot. I doubt if I could do it and I got me the expert's bar. Where'd she get the gun?"

"Said a friend gave it to her. A Nazi souvenir. She registered it a couple of years ago when the new firearms law went through. Kept it in a desk drawer. Okay. Somebody else could have known that and swiped it. An expert shot. Wipe it clean and ditch it out back. Who?"

"Trasker," I said.

Coffer smiled faintly. "He's on my list, but so what?" he grunted. "His story checks. He left her apartment around two and went to his office studio. His secretary says he left there at a quarter of three. That would get him to his own apartment when he said he got there. Fifteen minutes after she was shot. Three o'clock she got it."

I thought I had something. "A half hour!" I cried. "A taxi could do it in ten. He walked?"

Coffer nodded. "Said he did. Even admits he didn't meet anybody he knew. So it's a half hour? Say he took a cab and got the extra twenty minutes. What did he do?"

I was really excited by then. "Simple!" I pushed the word out in a hurry. "When Helen passed out, he swiped the gun. Later, during those twenty minutes he had, he sneaked up the service elevator on his side and let himself into his place. He turned on the radio, and— Yes, he must have lowered the venetian blind. His wife was sitting at that desk, so he moves back to the window and goes bang. A Walther doesn't make too loud a bang, either. Then he slips out, tosses the gun where he wants it to go, and walks slowly down and around and comes in his entrance door fifteen minutes later. Simple, see?"

**C**OFFER was looking at me hard, as though he had a thought, too. But when he spoke my heart dropped way down.

"Too simple." he said, shaking his head. "Too risky. He didn't know your girl would stay out cold that long. She could have come to and gone out, or been talking

on the phone, any one of a half dozen things that would put her right in the clear."

"He doped her drink," I said almost before I realized I was saying it. "That's why she looked so terrible. She'd been doped!"

Coffer thought it over, but the expression on his face didn't give me any encouragement. He glanced at the wall clock and pulled a stack of papers to him.

"She didn't do it, Jack!" I said desperately again.

"Okay, okay," he said and waved a tired hand. "She didn't do it, but she's in a jam that says sure as hell she did. And don't ask me if you can see her. You can't. Go home. You look like hell, too. Ring me in the morning. If there's anything new, I'll tell you. Good night, Johnny."

"Good night, Jack," I said and left because staying would only rile him again.

I went home and even went to bed, but I couldn't sleep. I tossed and turned and worked the brain until it seemed to shrivel up on me. I took a couple of stiff hookers, but they didn't help. I sat up in the darkness and smoked until my throat was raw. After a million years, I switched on the light and looked at the clock. I had to blink a couple of times before I could read it. The clock said 3 A.M. exactly. I decided to get dressed and find an all-night place for a bite if only to ease my sore throat.

I was half out of bed when it hit me. It was so nebulous at first that it took me all of a minute to pin it down. When I did, I wanted to yell loud. I grabbed my phone and called Homicide. Of course, Coffer wasn't there, but I worked the emergency routine, and the lad gave me his home number. It rang twenty times before he finally answered.

"Jack, she didn't do it!" was all I could say, I was that wound up. He started to swear but I cut in on him. "No, no, I mean it. Jack. I can *prove* it!"

"In the morning!" he snarled. "Go back to bed."

So I swore at him and made him listen. I didn't tell him anything definite, only got him to promise to meet me in the manager's office at the Madison Apartments at a quarter of three the next afternoon. He promised by way of shutting me up, but any promise Jack

Coffer made was okay.

From then until I met Coffer in Farms' office is a time I don't want to even think of even now. He was there—a couple of minutes ahead, as a matter of fact—but his face didn't show he was happy about it.

"If this flops, keep away from me for good!" he warned.

"It can't." Then I said to Farms. "I want you to let us into Miss James's apartment."

He looked at Coffer and Jack nodded.

"It's okay," he said. "He's going to prove she didn't do it."

Farms looked back at me and smiled.

"I hope so," he said quietly. "She is a lovely girl. Never given us a bit of trouble like some. Very well, come along."

When we got to her door, I looked at my watch. It was still only twelve minutes of three.

Then I had the crazy urge to make Coffer let me go in first—alone. I wanted to make sure of something, but I decided it wouldn't matter.

Farms opened the door and we went in. I ducked through the foyer quickly to the living room and found out what I wanted to know in a single look. The living room window was open, and the venetian blind was up. It was like that in the Trasker apartment window, too. You could see straight through to the wall desk where Diana had died. I went quickly to the window and dropped the venetian blind.

"Now what?" Coffer demanded as I turned back.

"We wait," I said. "Wait right there, Jack. You're going to see something—maybe."

**H**E STARTED to speak, but maybe the pleading in my eyes shut him up. I looked at my watch. Only four minutes of three.

I was pretty sure it had jumped eight minutes. Then when there were but seconds to three, Coffer gave it up.

"Look! What the—"

"*You* look!" I cried and ran up the venetian blind.

The sun's reflection off the Trasker's french windows hit him and Farms just as

it had hit me two afternoons before. They ducked and moved away from it.

"She was shot at three o'clock, Jack!" I shouted. "Make like you were trying it. Can you see over there? See the desk across the room? See *anything*? The sun was shining yesterday, too!"

"Put that damned blind down!" Coffer roared.

I dropped it and grinned at him. "Proof enough, Jack?"

He didn't say anything. Farms said, as though he was losing every one of his tenants, "They all complain on this side of the court. But what can I do? Make the others paint their windows black? Who wants a window painted black? So I say, lower your blinds. It's only for about twenty minutes at the most."

Coffer looked at me, and his smile was lovely to see. "So she didn't do it, Johnny," he said. "Somebody else did."

"Trasker," I said. "It fits."

"We'll see how good," he said and turned toward the foyer.

It fitted real good when Coffer was through, and that was at eight o'clock that night. He broke down Trasker's story in a half dozen places. Finally he broke down Trasker. I was right. He'd doped Helen's drink to keep her out and swiped the gun. Diana was getting to be too much for him, and he wanted out. Also her money. Also he had a babe of his own he wanted to star in that TV show.

The way I'd figured he'd done it checked too.

Jack Coffer gave it all to me first, so I got my scoop after all. I got something else when I went to the office to bang it out—a letter from a New York paper that offered me once and a half what Mallon was paying if I came fast.

But the best part was when I took Helen back to the Madison Apartments. We laughed and cried all night long and polished up those hopes and dreams we had had back in the circulation department. First thing next morning we went down and bought a marriage license.

It's been like it was in the circulation department ever since. ● ● ●

# HE KILLED—

XXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXX

## 31

*A True Story by*

**FREEMAN H. HUBBARD**



**I**N a dark hillside outside the Hungarian town of Biatorbagy, a powerfully built man in knickerbockers watched the Orient Express, en route from Constantinople to Paris, as it roared through the town and onto a stone and steel viaduct two hundred feet above the slumbering valley. It was 11 p.m. When the train was midway across, there was a deafening blast, and the locomotive plunged down with all eight cars.

Then, slashing his cheeks slightly with a pen-knife and smearing dirt on them, the lone spectator ran down the slope to help in the rescue work. Shortly before dawn he disappeared.

While casualties were being counted—twenty-eight dead, scores gravely injured—police talked with survivors. Count Paulffy-Daun related:

“I was flung from my berth and stunned and when I regained my senses, I met a stranger in knickerbockers who said he’d been in the crash. He didn’t look it. There was I, with an arm broken, black and blue, my coat ripped and trousers bagged, while this fellow had nothing to show but two small cuts on the face. He said his name was Matushka and he’d fallen from the third-class sleeper. But everyone else in that car died!”

The train-wrecking career of Sylvester Matushka, wealthy Vienna real estate dealer, was started by an odd circumstance. He had invented a new type of semaphore signal designed to make travel safer but had been unable to sell it to any railway company. Because of this rejection Matushka decided that a great railway disaster, or a series of them, would force the brass hats to reconsider his invention.

In 1930 he began his “mission.” He went to Ansbach, Austria, and picking a culvert as the ideal spot for a wreck, loosened a few tie plates. But a train came by, and he had to retire. Again he visited Ansbach, checked on night trains, and learned that none passed over the culvert between 11 and 11:45.

Being well-to-do, he had funds for travel and equipment. As a realtor with property in various places, his trips did not arouse suspicion. In two different cities he bought clothing and black glasses for a disguise, two vises, and an iron bar about two inches thick. Then he pencil-printed a leaflet designed to blame radicals for his wreck.

On his third trip to Ansbach, also at night, he attached the iron bar to the rail with his vises, hid near by, and waited.

The Vienna-Passan Express jumped the

rails and turned over in a ditch. Three persons were killed and many injured. When the wrecker returned to Vienna he left behind a number of clues; the vises, the bar, cigarette butts and packets, an empty cardboard lunchbox, torn bits of his radical proclamation, and his dark glasses.

Detectives studied these items. They traced the lunchbox to a Vienna delicatessen store, whose keeper gave them a fair description of the customer.

Back in Vienna, the inventor secretly burned his disguise. He could hardly wait to read about Ansbach. But his face fell when he saw how little space this news occupied. He needed much more publicity.

Dynamite, he decided, was the logical weapon. In a friend's stone quarry he learned how to handle explosives. He bought ten pounds of dynamite at one shop and percussion caps in another.

In August, 1931, he went to Juterbog, Germany, and as a promising sight selected a forty-foot hill on which the track curved. He carried a small satchel full of dynamite sticks, some tape, bell wire, and two sections of lead pipe. Methodically he packed dynamite into the lead pipe, then set up his infernal machine in such a way that the thin bell wire would cause a detonation. After fastening one end of the wire to the pipe and the other to a tree, he hid and waited.

At 9:45 P.M. the Berlin-Frankfort Express toppled over and slid downhill. Screams mingled with the hiss of escaping steam. Matushka tacked a page from a radical newspaper to a tree and returned home. The wreck had injured more than one hundred persons but no one was killed. The result was not horrible enough to suit him.

It was a month later, on September 13, 1931, that he derailed the Orient Express by attaching a deadly apparatus to the rails. This wreck brought his death toll up to thirty-one.

Two days later, Matushka walked into the office of the Royal Hungarian State Railways and filed a claim for 200 pengoes (about \$40), which he said he'd lost in a wallet in the wreck. The claim agent demanded proof that he'd been on board the train. Matushka argued in vain.

Next he asked a doctor for a certificate,

stating that he'd been hurt in the wreck. The physician also requested proof. Matushka was enraged.

"Ask anyone who was there," he stormed. "For three hours I helped the survivors."

The doctor reported this occurrence to the police. Authorities in Vienna, Budapest, and Berlin compared notes and circulated a description of the suspect in their respective countries. One reply led them to the handsome residence of Matushka in Vienna.

Preliminary inquiries were made among the neighbors who described him as a hard-working man with a flair for mechanics and chemistry and some remembered that he had once put sulphur on a railway track and danced with glee when a locomotive had ignited it.

Matushka was spending a quiet evening at home with his shapely blond wife, Helen, and their teen-age daughter, Gaby, when officers called and began questioning him.

In support of his alibi Matushka produced a newspaper clipping about his alleged escape.

"We know you bought dynamite several months ago," a detective persisted. "What did you do with it?"

"Oh, that?" came the answer. "I used some to blow up an old chimney on my factory at Tattendorf and threw the rest into a near-by creek."

Dredging the stream yielded no dynamite, however, and Tattendorf folks said Matushka had razed the chimney long before he was known to have bought his latest dynamite supply. Police searched his house. They found the tell-tale knickerbockers which, unlike previous disguises, he had failed to destroy. Grains of dynamite were in the coat pocket. Furthermore, it was known that Matushka smoked only Khedive cigarettes.

Finally he confessed: "I decided to wreck a luxury train in every European country so the world would accept my semaphore."

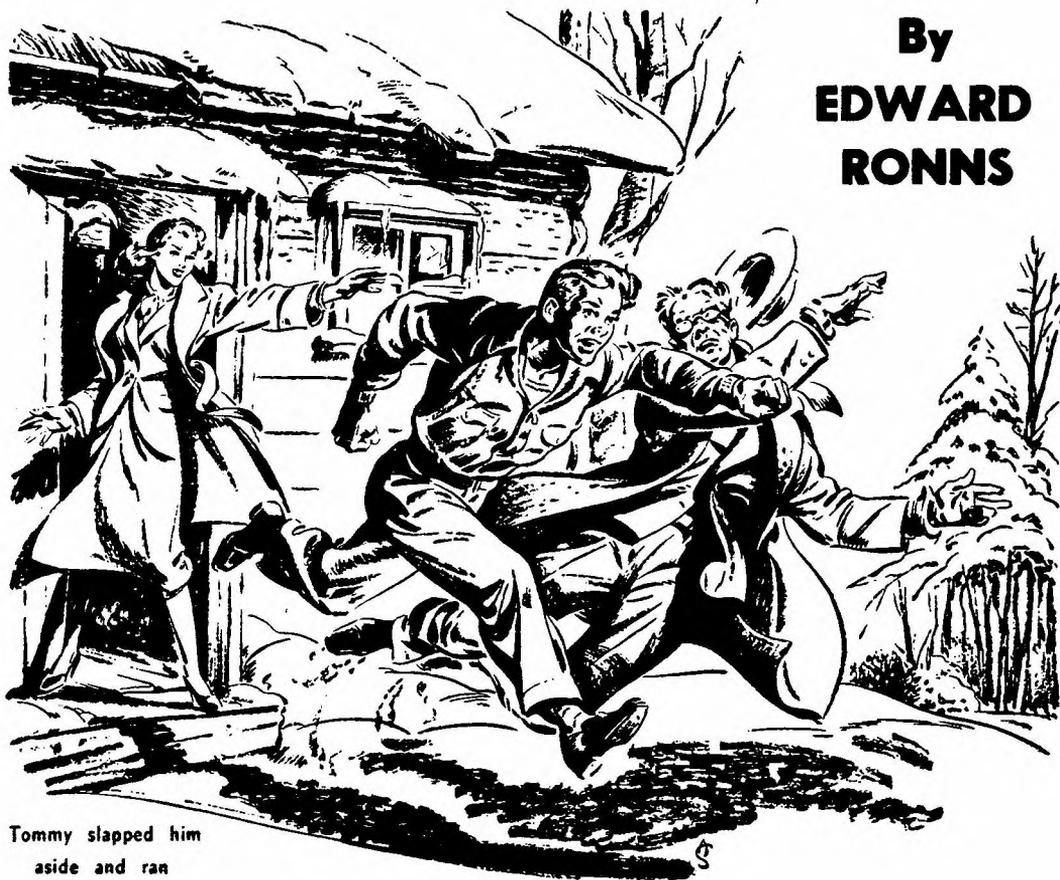
Convicted after a sensational trial, he escaped the death penalty through a technicality but was given life imprisonment at hard labor. Just before his trial ended, the train wrecker noticed that courtroom attendance was smaller than usual.

"How come?" he complained. "Don't I attract people like I used to?" ● ● ●

SH-H-H—

# KEEP IT QUIET

By  
**EDWARD  
RONNS**



Tommy slapped him  
aside and ran

*The blonde was dead—in her bedroom!*

**B**ILL DOOLEY was at the Newbury School when the murder occurred. He was doing a feature story for the *Blade* on how the offspring of the idle rich enjoyed the neo-Gothic splendor of the select prep school, and murder was not what Bill had looked for among the hallowed, ivied walls. Being the only reporter on the premises, he found himself shunned like a leper. Being curious, too, Dooley moved fast when he heard the shots and found himself among the

first to arrive on the scene.

The dead man was a Dr. Gregory Flynn, according to the small brass nameplate on the staff cottage door. He had been a stocky, gray-haired man in his late forties, with a florid face that now looked like nothing at all, especially the left side, where the bullet made its exit. His wife, Alice, was having hysterics next door, where she had been rushed by Samuel Taggart, the Director of Newbury School.

Taggart saw Dooley and quickly stepped outside with him into the chill November air. It was late afternoon. It looked like snow. Taggart, a small and pompous man with all the makings of a little Caesar, shivered in the biting cold.

"Mr. Dooley," he said. "Please. We must keep this quiet."

"Not possible," Dooley said. "Murder is news. I'm a newspaperman. It will get out, anyhow, when the police arrive."

"I know, but—"

"I'll wait for the cops," Dooley said magnanimously. "Then I'll take to the telephone. Who did it, Mr. Taggart? And why? Who is this Tommy Long that the widow is screaming about?"

"Tommy Long?" Taggart's eyes jerked about anxiously. "Tommy is a student. Something of a problem—always running away. He's missing now. He and Dr. Flynn had some trouble recently, but it is unthinkable that one of our boys—" Taggart paused. "It must have been a tramp, a sneak-thief."

Dooley shook his head. "No, I won't buy that chestnut. And I know all about your problem boys, Mr. Taggart. Newbury School caters to spoiled brats that no other self-respecting school would accept. I know that Newbury is more of a psychiatric hospital than anything else. A rose by any other name still has thorns, Mr. Taggart. Did Tommy Long put the slug in Dr. Flynn?"

"I—I don't know," Taggart said helplessly.

"But the boy is still missing?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"Last night, when he quarreled with Dr. Flynn over certain liberties that had been rescinded."

"Was Dr. Flynn his proctor?"

"No. Dr. Ericson had charge of him. You can get all the information you want on Tommy from Dr. Ericson."

"Thanks. I will," Dooley said.

"And—uh—"

"I know. Keep it quiet," Dooley said.

"Until the cops come."

HE WENT looking for Dr. Ericson. No expense had been spared in the lavish layout of Newbury School. It nestled on a hillside overlooking the valley and the small New England town that had donated its name. In the gray afternoon, the place had the barren look of a plucked hen. There was a main building, a big clinic, an administration building, and a number of cottages for both staff and students, all of red brick and Gothic arches. It didn't fit too well with the dun-colored woods of New England.

Dooley swung along the administration corridors with a long stride. He might have passed for a college student himself—tall and lanky, with unruly red hair and horn-rimmed glasses that he hoped made him look older and more professional. He had been with the *Blade* for exactly one year, doing feature stories. This was his first chance at some real news.

Dr. Ericson turned out to have soft brown hair, wide gray eyes, a pert and attractive figure, and a most kissable mouth. Dooley swallowed his surprise when she identified herself. She was pulling on warm knitted gloves, and was already dressed in a heavy coat for the outdoors. She looked like a college girl herself. But the sign on her office door indicated that she had her degree in psychiatry, and Dooley stifled the odd stunned feeling he had and got down to business.

"Yes, of course I've heard about Dr. Flynn," Liz Ericson said. "News like that travels like wildfire. But I can't tell you anything, Mr. Dooley, particularly if you are a reporter."

"Call me Bill," Dooley said.

"Please. Mr. Taggart has already given strict orders to the staff concerning newspapermen."

"Consider me as a friend—a very dear friend," Dooley urged.

"This is nonsense," Liz Ericson said.

"Excuse me, please."

"Are you going to look for Tommy Long?"

The girl halted abruptly in her office doorway. Her face was pale. "Why should you assume that?"

"Did he kill Dr. Flynn?" Dooley asked.

"No!" she flared. "I'm sure he didn't."

"Then I'm with you, Doctor. Let me help you find him."

"Good day, Mr. Dooley."

She went out. Dooley waited a moment, then went out after her. It was his honest face, he decided, that kept her from turning to see if he followed her.

She knew where she was going. Dooley kept a discreet distance to the rear while she skirted the administration building and struck off up the hill behind the rows of cottages. Far in the distance, a siren wailed, echoing through the valley. Dooley crossed his fingers and hoped his hunch was right. Morrisey, on the *Blade's* city desk, would skin him alive if he muffed the story.

He felt better when Liz Ericson plunged directly into the woods. It was easier to follow and stay out of sight after that. Obviously, her destination was not a public place. Her tense reaction to his questions about Tommy Long had given her away on that.

It had started to snow before Dooley spotted their destination. They were deep in the woods then, in a primitive world only fifteen minutes from the manicured, civilized grounds of the school. The path skirted a high gray ledge among the bare trees, and then there was the cabin, just beyond.

It was just a log shack, long-forgotten and abandoned, Dooley decided. Nobody ever came this way except an occasional hunter in the autumn. He paused to watch the girl. The door wasn't locked. It creaked inward at her touch and she vanished.

Dooley moved swiftly forward in time to feel the wave of warm, stale air that

had flowed outward for a moment. He waited, listening, and heard Liz Ericson's voice.

"Tommy?"

There was no answer. Dooley moved to one of the tiny windows. A dim blue flame in a kerosene space heater wavered in the gloom within. He couldn't see the girl, but something stirred on a bunk against the far wall.

"It's Dr. Ericson," Dooley heard the girl say. "Don't be afraid of me, Tommy."

The heap of blankets stirred again, and a face peered down fearfully over the edge of the bunk. A boy of about seventeen, but with the mental age of twelve, was Dooley's guess.

"Come down, Tommy," Liz Ericson said.

**H**IS EYES spinning with terror, the boy climbed down out of the bunk. He was tall and hulking, outweighing Dooley by twenty pounds. A child's mind in a brute's body.

"Tommy, they're looking for you," the girl said. "Did you know that?"

"I hid," the boy mumbled.

"Why did you run away?"

"They—they think I hurt Dr. Flynn."

"Were you there in his cottage this afternoon?"

"Yes. But I didn't do it! I didn't!" Tommy Long's face worked with new terror.

Dooley wished he could see better through the dirty little window. He wondered how Liz Ericson could keep her professional calm in the face of the boy's hysteria.

"What do you know about it, Tommy?"

"I—I saw him. He was dead, dead all over. I got scared, Dr. Ericson. So I ran away again. I came here, where you took me before, on those hikes. Remember?"

"Did anyone else see you before you ran away?"

"I—I don't think so."

From somewhere on the hill across

the valley came the sudden sharp, explosive report of a shotgun. Almost at the same moment, there followed a cry and a scuffling sound from inside the cabin. Liz Ericson screamed.

Dooley just had time to wonder what they were shooting at near the school, and then the cabin door burst open. The girl screamed again. The hulking figure of Tommy Long came through the doorway with a rush.

Dooley dived for him, swinging a stiff right. It missed, and the boy slapped him aside with his left arm. It felt to Dooley as if he had been hit by a telephone pole.

He went down and made another wild grab, and missed again. The boy stumbled over him, kicking him in the ribs. Dooley never knew if it was accidental or not.

He was next aware of his head resting in Liz Ericson's lap. There was a distant thrashing in the brush, then silence. Tommy Long was gone. Dooley looked up at the girl's worried face.

"Some child," he grunted.

"Are you all right?" she asked.

"What are a few broken ribs between friends? We were just romping, that's all."

Liz Ericson stood up. Dooley climbed slowly to his feet after her. Her sweet young face was severe.

"You followed me here!" she accused. "And now Tommy's gotten away. Where will he go now? It's all your fault—"

"I thought it was the gunshot that scared him," Dooley said. He felt his ribs gingerly. "I was only trying to protect you, Doctor."

"I don't know what startled him," she answered, "but I could have stopped him if you hadn't added to his fears, Mr. Dooley."

"Call me Bill," Dooley said. "Suppose you tell me about little Tommy on our way back to the school."

"You're not going to inform the police—"

"That depends on what you tell me,"

Dooley grinned.

Tommy Long, Liz Ericson explained, had been under her personal care for six months, ever since he'd been enrolled at Newbury School by his only living relatives, a Mr. and Mrs. Amos Long who lived right in Newbury. There was nothing wrong with him that thorough psychiatric treatment would not cure. It was true she had made little progress to date, but that could be blamed primarily on Director Sam Taggart, who had little patience for what he called "medical folderol." Dooley got the impression that Mr. Taggart was universally loathed by the entire Newbury staff, being inclined toward a pompous, dictatorial attitude.

"Tommy wouldn't kill anybody," Liz Ericson said anxiously. "I *know* him, don't you see? It's true he had trouble with Dr. Flynn over a matter of discipline, but Tommy's really just a child, mentally retarded by some psychic shock in his childhood. He wouldn't harm a fly, actually."

Dooley felt his battered ribs and maintained silence.

"Where will he go now?" he asked.

"I don't know. I hate to think of him wandering in these hills, frightened out of his poor wits. They've already started a hunt for him, I'll bet. It's the first thing Taggart suggested."

"I still think he was frightened by the sound of that gun," Dooley said. "He was tractable enough up until then."

"I just don't know," the girl said. She looked up at Dooley's lean height with lovely, worried eyes that aroused curious impulses in him. "Are you going to tell the police about this?"

"You want me to keep it quiet, too?" Dooley asked.

"I—would you, Mr. Dooley?"

"Call me Bill," he said. "And you're the doctor."

A PAIR of state police cars and a local constable's sedan were parked in front of Dr. Flynn's cottage when

Dooley and Liz Ericson returned to the school.

The snow came down harder now, covering the bare lawns with drifting white.

Liz Ericson had been right about the manhunt. It was already under way. Dooley parted reluctantly with her and sought a telephone to call the *Blade*. But Director Taggart interrupted be-

about this dreadful event for, say, two more hours?"

"Why?" Dooley asked.

"You understand, the reputation of Newbury School may be destroyed by this—this murder. But there is more at stake than the school. The villagers of Newbury have resisted us from the very beginning. Their comments on the type of unfortunate boys we enroll have been

In Springfield, Mass., a "stuffed flats" racket was being worked. An empty apartment is rented, a woman installed as "tenant," and the room filled with furniture. Then an advertisement is placed in the papers that the family has to leave town and must sell their possessions at a sacrifice. Actually, the same pieces, brand new, could be purchased at most stores for less than in the "stuffed flat."

The racket is particularly used to dispose of pianos. Fifteen pianos were sold from one apartment in less than a month.

—Fred M. Maul



CLEVER,

THESE RACKETEERS

fore he got the operator.

"May I see you a moment, Mr. Dooley?"

Dooley followed the stocky man into a sumptuous office in the administration building. There was a huge desk, oriental rugs, and plush drapes over the Gothic windows. There was comfortable leather furniture and a long couch, and a woman sat there, tall and equally plush, a young blonde who kept kneading her fingers together and staring at Sam Taggart.

"May I introduce Alice Flynn—Dr. Flynn's bereaved wife," Taggart said. "This is Mr. William Dooley, of the *Blade*, my dear."

"Sam, I—"

"Mr. Dooley has promised to be discreet, Alice."

"But Sam, darling, I—"

Taggart's voice rode over her anxiety. "Be calm, Alice. . . . Mr. Dooley, the police are still busy in Dr. Flynn's cottage, and I'm taking this opportunity to appeal for your cooperation. Will you postpone notifying your newspaper

—well, rather drastic. There have been rumors and fears about the danger to the community in having these boys here. If it should get out that Tommy Long murdered Dr. Flynn and is on the loose in the hills, there will be panic and a scandal that could ruin us completely."

"I see." Dooley pushed up his horn-rimmed glasses and frowned. "What makes you so sure that Tommy is the killer?"

"A number of things. Tommy once attempted to steal a gun I keep here in my desk." Taggart opened a desk drawer and started into it for a moment. "I caught him red-handed then. Now it is gone once more. I can only assume Tommy took it."

"When did you miss the gun?"

"Not until after the murder. Dr. Flynn had restricted the boy to his cottage dormitory last night, but Tommy disappeared. Dr. Flynn is usually at the clinic at the hour he was killed, but he returned home for some unknown reason, and it is obvious the boy was

waiting for him there."

Dooley turned to the blonde widow. "Were you home at the time, Mrs. Flynn?"

"I—" She looked at Taggart. "Sam, I can't—"

"Answer him, Alice."

"I was asleep in the bedroom." The woman shivered. "I heard the shot, that's all. And I saw someone running away over the campus." She looked at Taggart again. "It was Tommy Long."

"That clinches it," Dooley said.

"Of course." Taggart patted Alice Flynn's shoulder. The woman shivered again. Dooley saw no trace of tears on her spoiled, petulant face. Taggart said, "I appeal to you, Mr. Dooley. to withhold the news of Tommy's escape until he is captured. It won't take long. The police are scouring the hills at this very moment. He can't have gone far, and although Tommy is obviously a dangerous maniac, they will snare him without difficulty, I am sure."

"All right," Dooley said. "I'll wait two more hours."

**L**IZ ERICSON was not in her office when Dooley looked in. One of the state cop cars drove away into the snowy dusk, and Dooley followed a few minutes later, heading down into the valley to Newbury village. At a diner on the highway he bought coffee and information from the waitress. The waitress liked to talk. Dooley drank more coffee and then went out into the snow again, armed with a number of interesting facts about the Longs whose nephew, Tommy, was being hunted in the woods.

It took half an hour to find Potter's Road, where the waitress had said the Longs lived, and another twenty minutes to make the slippery ascent. It was totally dark when he reached the big, rambling house. A police car had already come and gone, and Dooley expected little resistance to his queries.

Amos Long was a tall, dour man who looked as if he had just swallowed a

mouthful of vinegar. His wife, Evelyn, could have passed as his sister, with her stark, bony frame and face. They received Dooley with cool politeness, leading him to a wide, pine-paneled study where a cannel coal fire hissed and crackled on the hearth. Amos Long warmed his back at the fireplace and clasped his hands behind him. His angular wife stood near the window, stiff and hostile.

"We have nothing to say to the press," Amos Long began. "Our nephew, Tommy, has been an unfortunate child ever since the tragic death of his parents. Mentally retarded, you know. We thought Newbury School was the best place for him. But perhaps something like this would have happened wherever we sent him."

"Then you accept the police theory that Tommy killed Dr. Flynn?" Dooley asked.

"We have no choice." Amos Long said stiffly.

"Do you realize this will mean a lifetime in an asylum for Tommy, as a homicidal maniac?" Dooley insisted.

"It is unfortunate," Long murmured.

Dooley tried a long shot, based on the information gleaned from the waitress in the diner.

"Who will manage Tommy's inheritance, then?"

His question hit a hidden mark in the man and his wife. Mrs. Long's mouth thinned and she turned her back to stare out at the dark night and the falling snow. Amos Long cleared his throat.

"My wife and I are the executors of the estate left to Tommy by his parents. We shall continue in that capacity."

"How much money was left to Tommy?" Dooley asked.

"I don't see—" The man paused, then shrugged. "Five million dollars."

Dooley took off his glasses, examined them for a moment, and put them on again. He rumbled his red hair a little.

"You understand," Long went on, "that Tommy was never able to manage his own finances. He was just a child

when his parents died, and has remained at that mental age ever since, with little hope for recovery."

"Dr. Ericson thinks otherwise," Dooley said.

"Dr. Ericson is a meddling, optimistic young woman!" Long snapped. "I've had Tommy to competent specialists, I assure you. There's never been any hope for him."

"But he was normal before his parents died?"

"He seemed to be. It was a shocking thing for a child to witness." Long glanced at his wife, who had turned abruptly to stare at him. "I'm sure your newspaper has files on the story. Peter Long, my brother, accidentally shot his wife while cleaning a hunting rifle. Little Tommy was in the room at the time. I was in the house, too, and just missed witnessing the accident myself. Peter told me what had happened before he turned the gun on himself, in remorse. A shocking thing for a child to witness."

Dooley felt a little shocked, himself. It wasn't until he was shown to the door by a disapproving butler that he realized Mrs. Long had never once opened her mouth to say a word.

**I**T TOOK an hour to return to Newbury School. Dooley, never a good driver at best, found the deepening snow and twisting rural roads too much for him. He went into a skid and landed as softly as if in a pillow in a drifted ditch. It was while he was working to clear the snow from the rear wheels that he saw Amos Long flash by in a big, heavy car. His own headlights, shining on the passing sedan, clearly showed the man's gaunt, dour face behind the wheel.

He dug with renewed energy after that, certain that Long was headed for the school, too. It took five more minutes to clear the rear wheels. Shortly afterward, he pulled into the snow-

[Turn page]

## TO PEOPLE Who Want To Write but can't get started

Do you have that constant urge to write but fear that a beginner hasn't a chance? Then listen to what the former editor of Liberty said on this subject:

*"There is more room for newcomers in the writing field today than ever before. Some of the greatest of writing men and women have passed from the scene in recent years. Who will take their places? Who will be the new Robert W. Chambers, Edgar Wallace, Rudyard Kipling? Fame, riches and the happiness of achievement await the new men and women of power."*



### SELLS FOUR ARTICLES AT BEGINNING OF COURSE

*"Before I had finished the third assignment, I sold four articles that have brought in over twice the cost of the complete course. Had anyone told me when I began the N.I.A. Course, that I could do that, I would have considered him crazy." — Walter F. Roper, 95 Benedict Terrace, Longmeadow, Mass.*

### Writing Aptitude Test — FREE!

**T**HE Newspaper Institute of America offers a free Writing Aptitude Test. Its object is to discover new recruits for the army of men and women who add to their income by fiction and article writing. The Writing Aptitude Test is a simple but expert analysis of your latent ability, your powers of imagination, logic, etc. Not all applicants pass this test. Those who do are qualified to take the famous N. I. A. course based on the practical training given by big metropolitan dailies.

This is the New York Copy Desk Method which teaches you to write by writing. You develop your individual style instead of trying to copy that of others. Although you work at home, on your own time, you are constantly guided by experienced writers. You "cover" actual assignments such as metropolitan reporters get. It is really fascinating work. Each week you see new progress. In a matter of months you can acquire the coveted "professional" touch. Then you're ready for market with greatly improved chances of making sales.

### Mail the Coupon Now

But the first step is to take the FREE Writing Aptitude Test. It requires but a few minutes and costs nothing. So mail the coupon now. Make the first move towards the most enjoyable and profitable occupation — writing for publication! Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y. (Founded 1925)

**VETEPANS: COURSE APPROVED FOR VETERANS' TRAINING!**

*Free*

-----  
Newspaper Institute of America  
One Park Ave., New York 16, N. Y.

Send me, without cost or obligation, your Writing Aptitude Test and further information about writing for profit.

Mr. }  
Mrs. }  
Miss }

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if eligible for Veterans' Training  
(All correspondence confidential. No salesman will call on you.) 94-W-662

-----  
Copyright 1951, Newspaper Institute of America.

covered parking lot behind the administration building.

There were voices coming from Director Taggart's office—Long and Taggart, engaged in a low, bitter argument. Dooley couldn't make out the words. In the hallway nearby was a public telephone booth. The sight of it stung his conscience. He was sitting on the biggest crime story of the year, but he hadn't called city desk yet. He turned toward the telephone, and at that moment someone called his name with soft urgency.

It was Liz Ericson. This was the first time he had seen her without her cumbersome fur coat. She was slim and dainty in a gray woolen dress that clung to her in all the right places—all of which, Dooley decided, were absolutely perfect.

"Mr. Dooley—quickly, please."

He forgot the telephone and followed her into her office. The girl's face was pale, her eyes wide with excitement.

"You haven't told anyone about Tommy yet, have you?"

"Not yet, Doctor," Dooley said to her. "But we're likely to be charged as accessories after the fact, did you know that?"

"I don't care. At least, I—I'm staking my whole medical reputation on Tommy. I'm sure he's innocent."

"That may be, but—"

"He came back to the cabin," the girl said quickly. "I've just returned from there, too. It was natural for him to come back to the only place he could hide. He trusts me, you see. He'll stay there now, too. I've given him a sedative, and he'll sleep for hours. I couldn't bear the thought of their shooting him down as if he were a mad dog."

Her lips trembled. Her eyes were bright with tears. She was lovely.

Dooley said, "Then what's troubling you, Doctor?"

"I ought to tell Taggart to call off the searching parties," she answered. "It will be safest for Tommy."

"Don't do it," Dooley said. "Wait a

little longer. It seems to me the only way to make Tommy permanently safe is to find out who really did kill Dr. Flynn—and why. Everybody has jumped to the conclusion that Tommy is the killer. The cops aren't looking for anybody else. So it's up to us to do so."

DR. ERICSON looked beautiful and confused. "But I can't imagine who else would kill Dr. Flynn—"

"I can," Dooley said grimly. "I can think of several candidates."

He left her office a moment later, pausing once more outside Taggart's door. But there was no sound from inside. Alice Flynn, the blond widow, wasn't around, either. Dooley scowled and turned up his coat collar against the chill bite of snow outside.

The cops had gone, too. If any had been left on the school premises, they were not in sight. Dooley slogged through the snow toward the staff cottages. He passed two that were dark and then halted at Alice Flynn's. Light shone across the snow from the tall windows of the campus auditorium. Some sort of community activity was going on in there, and the dim hubbub of the boys' voices only accented the silence of the falling snow.

There was no answer when Dooley rang the Flynn bell. Through the diamond pane of glass in the door he could see beyond the foyer to a corner of the carpeted living room, the end of a tomato red couch, and the edge of an aquamarine carpet. He tried the bell again, then knocked, then tried the door handle. It was not locked. He pushed it with his fingertip and went inside.

"Mrs. Flynn?" he called.

The cottage was silent. He closed the door softly behind him, shutting out the swirl of snow. There were two puddles of water on the foyer rug. The only light came from a green vase that had been made into a lamp with a tall, conical shade. Dooley paused with uneasiness crawling inside him. Another pud-

*(Continued on page 108)*

All the thrills  
of the West . . .  
corralled  
into one  
exciting  
magazine . . .



# Subscribe now to Ranch Romances

16 issues only \$3



Everyone who enjoys hard-hitting stories of the Old West will find a payload of thrills in each exciting issue of RANCH ROMANCES.

Every page of RANCH ROMANCES is branded with the rip-roaring action of frontier days as hard-riding men and their glamorous women recreate the pulse-quickening drama of the untamed West. Here is the roar of blazing guns, the lurking danger of the lonely range, the smashing, surging action that leads to excitement and romance.

Yes, all the thrilling adventure of the wild West is yours when you subscribe to RANCH ROMANCES. And what's more, you'll get it at a big saving . . . because if you were to buy 16 copies individually, they'd cost you \$4.00. But as a subscriber, you get them for only \$3.00—a saving of a full dollar. Think of it—for only \$3, less than the cost of the average book,—you get 16 issues of RANCH ROMANCES . . . more than 2200 pages of hard-hitting, pulse-quickening western reading. And remember, all RANCH ROMANCES stories are brand NEW; there's not a reprint in the entire batch.

So, fill in and mail the coupon below with \$3. Do it right now to make sure you don't miss a single copy of RANCH ROMANCES.

.....  
Ranch Romances • Dept. BBD-12 • 10 East 40th Street • New York 16, N. Y.

Count me in, Partner! Please enter a subscription to RANCH ROMANCES in my name at the special rate of 16 issues (32 weeks) for only \$3. My remittance is enclosed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

(Add Postage: Canada 50c, Foreign \$1.00)

dle of water shone on the living room carpet. He didn't like it, not any part of it. The silence was too deep, too empty.

He found Alice Flynn in the bedroom. She lay on the floor, on the opposite side of the twin Hollywood beds, her head cocked at an odd angle against a closet door. A small lamp on the bedside table made the pool of blood from the back of her head glisten and shine on the waxed floor. Dooley didn't have to look twice to see that she was dead.

A baseball bat, thrown carelessly aside, gave ample evidence of having been the murder weapon. Dooley stepped with caution over the woman's sprawled legs and hunkered down beside the bat, but didn't touch it. His eyes darkened angrily as he read the owner's name stenciled on the handle. *Tommy Long.*

"Real pat," he said, straightening.

He wondered if there was anything worth searching for in the Flynn cottage. The police must have gone through the place with a sieve after the first slaying. If anything had been added since then, it would have had to come in with Mrs. Flynn's return from the administration building. Perhaps something on her person—

Two minutes later he carefully unclenched the dead woman's fist and extracted a crumpled check from her tight grip. Her hands were still warm. She hadn't been dead for very long. Dooley smoothed the scrap of green paper and studied it. It was a check drawn upon the account of Amos Long, payable to Dr. Gregory Flynn, for five thousand dollars. It was dated two days ago.

Dooley got away from there fast.

A PAIR of small logs burned in the fireplace in the living room of Liz Ericson's cottage. The place was warm and friendly. Dooley added another log and straightened, turning to face the girl's taut figure.

"Well?" he asked.

It was half an hour since he had found Alice Flynn. He had told no one but the girl about the second murder. She stared at him now with wide, frightened eyes.

"Tommy couldn't have killed her," she said. "I told you, he came back to the cabin, where I found him again. He's sleeping there now."

"The time checks," Dooley said harshly. "He could have killed Alice Flynn before returning to the cabin."

He paced the floor angrily, then paused to light a cigarette and stare moodily at the fire. The flames touched off highlights in his rumpled red hair. Liz Ericson sat still and watched him.

"It's a cinch Tommy is elected the fall guy," Dooley began again. "And it's equally certain that Flynn was being paid off by Amos Long to obstruct your treatments of Tommy. Amos Long never wanted Tommy to recover. It would have meant the loss of five million bucks to him and his wife."

"But I can't believe Dr. Flynn—"

"The check I found speaks for itself," Dooley interrupted. "Nothing would please the Longs better than to have Tommy labeled a hopeless maniac. That's why you've had so much difficulty with your psychiatric treatments of Tommy. Dr. Flynn was secretly sabotaging all your efforts to locate the root of Tommy's trouble."

"It's true that Tommy was frequently disturbed, but—"

"Do you have your files on Tommy's case at hand?"

The girl hesitated, then nodded and went into another room. Her voice drifted back to him. "I usually keep them at the clinic, but I've been so puzzled lately, I brought them home with me here for further study."

For the next ten minutes, Dooley pored over the typed sheets and forms, shooting questions at Liz Ericson that finally struck pay dirt. He snapped the folder shut with a sigh.

"I've got it, I think. But I'm not sure.

It's flimsy evidence." He turned, looking down at the girl from his lean height. "You'll have to tell Taggart where Tommy is hidden. He must be told at once. Tommy is the crux of the whole matter. If the killer succeeds in pinning the guilt irrevocably on the kid, then the case will be closed. The killer will be safe. So we'll turn Tommy in. But—" Dooley paused for emphasis—"but you must make sure that you tell Taggart about Tommy *only* in Amos Long's presence. Make sure Long hears it at the same time. Understand?"

Liz Ericson said tightly, "You're baiting a trap. With Tommy as the bait."

"That's right. But I'll get there first."

"Isn't there any other way we can do this?"

"No," Dooley said. "And the sooner we do it, the better."

**T**HE CABIN was chilly. The kerosene space heater made the air smell dry and exhausted, and currents of cold air swept across the rough board floor from under the door. Dooley waited in the darkness. The heater emitted a wavering blue light, and after a time he could make out the dim shape of the bunk and the heap of blankets on the bunk, shaped to look like Tommy. The boy himself, sleeping soundly under the influence of Liz Ericson's sedative, lay in an opposite corner, wrapped in more blankets and darkness.

Snow, mixed with sleet, rattled against the small windows. Dooley shifted uneasily in the battered chair tilted in a corner of the cabin. He had been waiting twenty minutes already. Nobody had followed him through the dark woods from the school. There was no sound of alarm, anywhere. He breathed on his hands to warm them, and wished he had a gun.

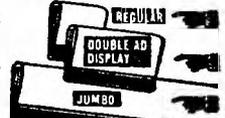
A branch outside cracked under the weight of snow. Dooley jumped, let the chair come level with a thump. Sweat

[Turn page]

## MAKE EXTRA MONEY

### EVERY BUSINESS EVERYWHERE USES UNION LABEL BOOK MATCHES

No experience needed to earn big daily commissions. Be a direct factory representative of the world's largest exclusive UNION LABEL Book Match manufacturer. Prospects everywhere. Feature Glamour Girls, Hillbillies, scenes and dozens of other styles—Double Books—Jumbo Books—nearly 100 color combinations. New, bigger portfolio makes this fastest selling line a real profit maker for you. Write TODAY for full details.



### SUPERIOR MATCH CO.

Dept. H-1252, 7223 S. Greenwood Ave., Chicago 19, Illinois  
West Coast Salesmen, Write Box 1087, San Jose, Calif.

## High School Course at Home Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H. S. texts supplied. Diploma, credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

AMERICAN SCHOOL, Dept. H-958, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

## How to Make Money with Simple Cartoons

A book everyone who likes to draw should have. It is free; no obligation. Simply address **FREE BOOK**

**CARTOONISTS' EXCHANGE**  
Dept. 712 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

## FREE—Amazing Book on RHEUMATISM, ARTHRITIS

If you suffer the aches, pains and discomforts of Rheumatism, as manifested in ARTHRITIS, NEURITIS, SCIATICA or LUMBAGO, send today for the FREE Book. It reveals important facts about why drugs and medicine give only temporary relief without removing causes. Explains fully a proven, specialized system of treatment that may save you years of distress. No obligation. Write for this FREE Book today!

BALL CLINIC, Dept. 504, Excelsior Springs, Mo.

## Secrets of VENTRILOQUISM Now Revealed!

Easy to learn in 60 to 90 days with our Home Study Course. RESULTS GUARANTEED. Make Money! Be Popular! Have Fun! Big Opportunity! Radio, Television, Stage Appearances! For FREE information regarding price and terms, WRITE. You must state your age. Dummy Catalog 25c.

FRED MAHER SCHOOL OF VENTRILOQUISM  
Box 36, Studio TD Detroit 24, Michigan Kensington Station

## "YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!"

There's a Thrill in Bringing a Crook to Justice Through Scientific

### CRIME DETECTION!

We have taught thousands this exciting, profitable, pleasant profession. Let us teach you, too, in your own home. Learn Fingerprinting, Fire Arms Identification, Police Photography and Criminal Investigation thoroughly, quickly and at small cost.

Over 800 of All American Bureaus of Identification employ students or graduates of I. A. S. You, too, can fit yourself to fill a responsible crime detection job with good pay and steady employment. But don't delay—get the details now. Let us show you how easily and completely we can prepare you for this fascinating work, during spare time, in your own home. You may pay as you learn. Write today . . . Now . . . Be sure to state age.

Be A FINGER PRINT Expert

**INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE**  
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 7969, Chicago 40, Ill.

FREE!!!  
Send for Thrilling "BLUE BOOK OF CRIME"

started out on his face. He waited, listening. Nothing happened.

Maybe he was wrong, he thought. Maybe just the cops would come up here, to take the kid into custody.

Tommy Long groaned in his sleep. Dooley stood up, waiting in the darkness, feeling the walls of the cabin around him, and the greater darkness outside, in the woods and the hills where the snow was falling. He was no longer alone. He knew it, as surely as he knew where he was, himself. Someone was nearby, not in the cabin with him yet, but out there somewhere, in the white-dark tangle of brush and rock.

And then he heard Liz Ericson's scream.

It was a short, sharp sound, filled with a sudden spasm of pain and terror. Dooley was moving even before it ended, abruptly, savagely, flinging open the cabin door to plunge out into the dark night. He could see nothing but the white curtains of snow and the dark, lacy tree branches. The scream was not repeated. He ran downhill, along the path, slipping and sliding. It was hopeless to try to find her. And then he halted, fear tying his stomach into a painful knot.

He had been tricked.

Behind him, the cabin door stood open. For just an instant, a man's figure flickered across the white snow in front of the door. And then the man was gone, entering the cabin.

Dooley scrambled desperately back up the hill, losing his glasses, plunging through the cabin doorway. Something slashed at him from out of the darkness, grazing the side of his head. He staggered sidewise, fell over the chair, and landed on hands and knees, his ears ringing. The sound of the shot was thunderous in the little room. Dooley saw the orange flame lancing toward the bundle of empty blankets on the bunk, and then he gathered himself, diving forward. His shoulders hit hard into the man's stomach.

There came a grunt, a curse. Dooley

swung his left, his knuckles crunching into the other's face. Light gleamed on the gun in the other's hand. Dooley grabbed for it. The man gasped and tried to pull free, bringing his knee up. Dooley slid sidewise, still clinging to his precarious grip, and then twisted hard. The man screamed and dropped his gun.

Dooley shoved him back, slamming him against the cabin wall. But when he dived for the weapon, it wasn't there. It had slid under the bunk.

"You missed, Taggart," he gasped. "Tommy is still alive. He wasn't in the bunk."

**H**E COULD see the school director's face now, in the dim, wavering glow of the heater. The stocky man stood flat against the opposite wall, his thick chest heaving, an expression of stunned disbelief on his battered face.

"You—you were waiting for me?" he whispered.

"You came to kill Tommy, didn't you?" Dooley rapped. "You knew you made a mistake after you killed Dr. Flynn. You shouldn't have tried to pin it on the kid. You went too far with it, telling me about the gun he supposedly swiped—and you made Alice Flynn back up your story. *But you knew Tommy Long couldn't possibly kill anybody with a gun!* Tommy's whole trouble stems from the fact that he saw his father accidentally shoot his mother and then commit suicide. Tommy was insanely terrified of guns. He'd never shoot anybody. He couldn't.

"You tried to correct that when you killed Alice Flynn with the bat. That was more in Tommy's line. And to confuse the police, you planted the five thousand dollar check that Amos Long had paid Dr. Flynn to sabotage Dr. Liz Ericson's efforts to help Tommy. But you fell into the trap here. You hoped, by killing Tommy and telling the cops that he'd crazily tried to attack you here, that you could close the case. But Tommy didn't do a thing to you, Tag-

gart. He's asleep in that corner, under drugs Dr. Ericson gave him. She didn't tell you about that, did she?"

"But—I didn't mean to kill—"

"No, you didn't go to Flynn's cottage this afternoon to kill him. You didn't even expect him, because you said yourself he was usually at the clinic. You and Alice Flynn took advantage of that hour to get together, didn't you? It was obvious from the way she addressed you, that you two were carrying on an affair behind Flynn's back. But he surprised you this afternoon, and in the scuffle, you killed him. You had to, to prevent a scandal that would drop you out of your soft job at Newbury School. And then, because Alice Flynn showed every sign of breaking down and spilling the whole sordid story to the cops, you killed her, too."

Dooley paused. "Dr. Ericson and I weren't sure whether you or Amos Long was the killer. That's why she told you both about Tommy being up here. Whoever the murderer was, he had to beat the cops up here and silence Tommy, too. You're the one who showed up and tried to kill him. It's your gun under the bunk, isn't it? The one you said Tommy stole. It will match the slug in Flynn. You're through, Taggart. You've convicted yourself—"

A queer wailing sound came from Taggart's open mouth. The next moment he lunged for the doorway in a desperate effort to escape. Dooley was just an instant too late to block him. Taggart darted out into the snow, with Dooley a step behind him.

Afterward, it took a moment to straighten out what happened. He was aware of Liz Ericson's slim figure, and the sudden group of state troopers converging out of the woods. Something slammed against Dooley's back, thrusting him forward.

There was a crashing pain over his left eye, and he went down, burying his face in the snow, while the earth revolved in slow, sickening revolutions under him. . . .

[Turn page]

## EAT ANYTHING WITH FALSE TEETH

If you have trouble with plates that slip, rock and cause sore gums—try **Brimms Plasti-Liner**. One application makes plates fit snugly *without powder or paste*. Because **Brimms Plasti-Liner** hardens permanently to your plate. It relines and refits loose plates in a way no powder or paste can do. Even on old rubber plates you get good results six months to a year or longer. **YOU CAN EAT ANYTHING!** Simply lay soft strip of Plasti-Liner on troublesome upper or lower. Bite and it molds perfectly. *Easy to use, tasteless, odorless, harmless to you and your plates.* Removable as directed. Plate cleaner included. Money back if not completely satisfied. If not available at your drug store, send \$1.25 for reliner for 1 plate.



PLASTI-LINER INC., Buffalo 11, New York — Dept. 47-J

**BRIMMS PLASTI-LINER**  
THE PERMANENT DENTURE RELINER

## ACCOUNTANT

BECOME AN EXPERT

Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn \$4,000 to \$10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. We train you thoroughly at home in spare time for C. P. A.'s examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Personal training under supervision of staff of C. P. A.'s. Placement counsel and help. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays."

LASALLE Extension University, 417 So. Dearborn St.  
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 12329-H Chicago 5, Ill.



### Learn Profitable Profession in 90 days at Home

**MEN AND WOMEN, 18 TO 60.** Swedish Massage graduates make big money working full or spare time with doctors or in hospitals, health resorts, sanatoriums, clubs, private practice. A dignified interesting career! Qualify for your graduation certificate. Thorough instruction at home as in class rooms. Write for Illustrated Book—FREE!

The College of Swedish Massage  
Dept. 263-R, 41 E. Pearson, Chicago 11

## RUPTURED?

### Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthe. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing FREE book, "Advice To Ruptured," and details of liberal truthful 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write: **CLUTHE SONS, Dept. 33, Bloomfield, New Jersey**

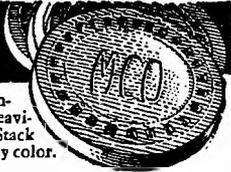


## Free Yourself FROM Tobacco Habit

If you want to stop smoking and just can't, try world-famous **NO-TO-BAC** Lozenges. See how quickly **NO-TO-BAC** may help stop your craving for tobacco. Rush \$1 to **NO-TO-BAC** for 7 days supply. (For heavy smokers—16 days' supply—\$2.) Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. Write:

**NO-TO-BAC CO.**  
DEPT. S HEWLETT, NEW YORK

## POKER CHECKS



Famous Hub Checks, Non-Duplicate, Square Edge, Heaviest Game Check, Cur and Stack Accurately. Supplied in any color.

**FREE CATALOG** Expose: The Open Book, Sealed Book, Scientific Betting, Master Key System, How to Control Fair Dice, Runup System, Plastic "The Old Reliable" Playing Cards for Club Use.

**K. C. CARD Co., 843 S. Wabash, Chicago 5**

## Success-Winning VOICE!

Sound like the HE-MAN you are

STRENGTHEN your voice this tested scientific way. Yes—you may now be able to improve the POWER of your speaking and singing voice . . . in the privacy of your own room! Self-training lessons, mostly silent. No music required.

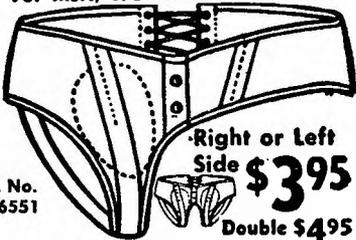
**FREE BOOK** Write TODAY for Eugene Feuchtinger's great booklet "How to Develop a Successful Voice." It's absolutely FREE! You must state your age. Booklet mailed postpaid in plain wrapper. No salesman will call. Send your name and age RIGHT NOW! Prefect Voice Institute, 210 S. Clinton St., Studio MY-6, Chicago 6, Ill.



AMAZING COMFORT—NO SPECIAL FITTING

## RUPTURE-EASER

Reg. in U.S. Pat. Off. (A Piper Brace Product)  
for MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN



Pat. No.  
2606551

Right or Left  
Side **\$395**  
Double **\$495**

A strong, form fitting washable support. Back lacing adjustable. Snaps up in front. Adjustable leg strap. Soft, flat groin pad. No steel or leather bands. Uneexcelled for comfort. Also used as after operation support. Mail orders give measure around the lowest part of the abdomen and state right or left side or double. We Prepay Postage Except on C.O.D.'s.

Over 400,000 Satisfied Users! 10 Day Trial Offer

Money-back guarantee if you don't get blessed relief

Delay may be serious—ORDER TODAY!

**PIPER BRACE CO.**

811 Wyandotte Dept. TF-122 Kansas City 6, Mo.



SEND FOR THIS **FREE!**

Make money. Know how to break and train horses. Write today for this book **FREE**, together with special offer of a course in Animal Breeding. If you are interested in Galting and Riding the saddle horse, check here ( ) Do it today—now.

**BEERY SCHOOL OF HORSEMANSHIP**  
Dept. 8212 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

## INVENTORS

Learn how to protect your invention. Specially prepared "Patent Guide" containing detailed information concerning patent protection and procedure with "Record of Invention" form will be forwarded to you upon request—without obligation.

**CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN & HARVEY JACOBSON**

Registered Patent Attorneys

28-K District National Bldg. Washington 5, D. C.

ONCE again, he was aware of his head resting on Liz Ericson's lap. There was a confusion of voices all around him as the troopers subdued the struggling, frantic figure of Sam Taggart. Dooley felt tired and comfortable. Liz's gentle fingers soothed the pain in his head.

He opened one eye and stared up into her concerned face.

"Doctor, what hit me?" he breathed.

"I—I'm afraid I did. I swung at Taggart with a stick—and hit you instead."

"Why did you scream before?"

"He forced me—to lure you out of the cabin. He—he made me tell him about the trap you'd set for him. But he had no choice except to come here, anyway. He took me along with him, and after I screamed, he knocked me down, and I guess he thought I was safely unconscious. But the police were following us, too, and it all came out all right, anyway, Mr. Dooley."

She smiled down at him. Dooley made no effort to change his position. He felt wonderful.

"I've got to call my newspaper," he said.

"I've already done that for you," she said. "And as for Tommy, now that we know the whole reason for his trouble, I'm sure he'll be normal in a very short time."

It occurred to Dooley that he'd better get on the phone and contact the *Blade*. Morrissey would be having kittens at the city desk. But, somehow, he felt no greater urgency. Looking at Dr. Liz Ericson, he knew he was going to be a frequent visitor to Newbury School for some time to come in the future.

"Doctor," he said. "I have curious symptoms. I feel dizzy and faint."

"I know, Mr. Dooley."

"My heart is going pit-a-pat, Doctor. Call me Bill."

"Mine, too, Bill." Her eyes laughed into his, and gave him the answer he sought. "And you'd better start calling me Liz"



LINE  
O'  
CRIME

by JACK BENTON

In the latter part of the 18th century the gallows of New York was in a gaily painted Chinese pagoda.

The skulls of murder victims in the Dunda tribe of Africa are kept on display until their killers are apprehended.

The State of Delaware has no state prison.

In Colombia, prisoners get intoxicated by smoking cigarettes made out of spider webs.

When someone breaks the laws of the Kodunis tribe of South America, he is placed in a "portable prison." More exactly, he is bound up in straw and feathers and walks around breathing through a periscope-like reed.

When a liquor underworld character acquired an estate, someone suggested that he name it Alco Hall.

Organized in 1873, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was first known as the North West Mounted Police.

Twenty times as many murders are committed annually in the United States as in Great Britain.

In early Hawaiian history, it was an offense punishable by death for men and women to eat together.

Bloodhounds are capable of following a trail thirty hours after it has been made.

J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, sang in a church choir as a boy and had intended to enter the ministry.

The first individual electrocuted in Sing Sing was a horse. It was done in an experiment to show that the electric chair was practical!

**EYE GLASSES** by MAIL As low as \$1.95

WRITE for FREE CATALOG with 14 LENS SAMPLE CARD

Thousands of Customers  
Est. 1939



QUALITY READING-MAGNIFYING OR BIFOCAL GLASSES FOR FAR AND NEAR

**ADVANCE SPECTACLE COMPANY, Inc.**  
537 S. Dearborn St., Dept. T-3 Chicago 5, Illinois

**FINISH HIGH SCHOOL AT HOME!**

No classes to attend. Easy spare-time training covers big choice of subjects. Friendly instructors; standard texts. Full credit for previous schooling. Diploma awarded. Write now for FREE catalog!

**WAYNE SCHOOL** Catalog HAN-2  
2527 Sheffield Ave., Chicago 14, Illinois



**EAR ACHE?**

**DENT'S**

**EAR WAX DROPS** for fast temporary relief of accumulated wax condition

**TOOTHACHE?**  
ask your druggist for DENT'S TOOTH GUM, TOOTH DROPS or POUltICE

**OLD LEG SORES**

Easy to use Viscose Application. Heals many old leg sores caused by leg congestion, varicose veins, swollen legs and injuries or no cost for trial if it fails to show results in 10 days. Describe your trouble and get a FREE BOOK.

**T. G. VISCOSE COMPANY**  
140 N. Dearborn St. Chicago 2, Ill.



**BE A DETECTIVE**

WORK HOME or TRAVEL. Experience unnecessary. DETECTIVE Particulars FREE. Write **GEO. T. H. WAGNER**, 125 W. 86th St., N. Y.

**BE A Nurse**

MAKE \$50-\$60 A WEEK

Practical nurses are needed in every community... doctors rely on them... patients appreciate their cheerful, expert care. You can learn practical nursing at home in spare time. Course endorsed by physicians. 53rd yr. Earn while learning. High School not required. Men, women, 18 to 60. Trial plan. Write now!

**CHICAGO SCHOOL OF NURSING**  
Dept. 4212, 41 East Pearson Street, Chicago 11, Ill.  
Please send free booklet, and 16 sample lesson pages.

Name.....  
City..... State..... Age.....

When You Visit Your Favorite Newsstand, Look for the Slogan

**A THRILLING PUBLICATION**

ON THE COVERS OF THE MAGAZINES YOU BUY!

Reducing Specialist Says:  
**LOSE WEIGHT**

Where  
It  
Shows  
Most

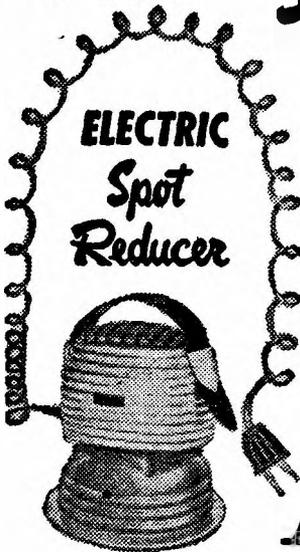
**REDUCE**

MOST ANY  
PART OF  
THE  
BODY WITH

UNDERWRITERS  
LABORATORY  
APPROVED

**Spot Reducer**

Relaxing • Soothing  
Penetrating Massage



**ELECTRIC  
Spot  
Reducer**

PLUG IN—  
GRASP  
HANDLE  
AND  
APPLY

Take pounds off—keep slim and trim with Spot Reducer! Remarkable new invention which uses one of the most effective reducing methods employed by masseurs and turkish baths—MASSAGE!

LIKE a magic wand, the "Spot Reducer" obeys your every wish. Most any part of your body where it is loose and flabby, wherever you have extra weight and inches, the "Spot Reducer" can aid you in acquiring a youthful, slender and graceful figure. The beauty of this scientifically designed Reducer is that the method is so simple and easy, the results quick, sure and harmless. No exercise or strict diets. No steambaths, drugs or laxatives.



FOR GREATEST BENEFIT IN REDUCING by massage use Spot REDUCER with or without electricity—Also used as an aid in the relief of pains for which massage is indicated.

**TAKE OFF EXCESS WEIGHT!**

Don't Stay **FAT**—You Can Lose  
**POUNDS and INCHES SAFELY**

Without Risking  
**HEALTH**

With the SPOT REDUCER you can now enjoy the benefits of RELAXING, SOOTHING massage in the privacy of your own home! Simple to use—just plug in, grasp handle and apply over most any part of the body—stomach, hips, chest, neck, thighs, arms, buttocks, etc. The relaxing, soothing massage breaks down FATTY TISSUES, tones the muscles and flesh, and the increased awakened blood circulation carries away waste fat—helps you regain and keep a firmer and more GRACEFUL FIGURE!

**Your Own Private Masseur at Home**

When you use the Spot Reducer, it's almost like having your own private masseur at home. It's fun reducing this way! It not only helps you reduce and keep slim—but also aids in the relief of those types of aches and pains—and tired nerves that can be helped by massage! The Spot Reducer is handsomely made of light weight aluminum and rubber and truly a beautiful invention you will be thankful you own. AC 110 volts. Underwriters laboratory approved.

MAIL THIS 10 DAY FREE TRIAL COUPON NOW!

**TRY THE SPOT REDUCER 10 DAYS FREE IN YOUR OWN HOME!**

Mail this coupon with only \$1 for your Spot Reducer on approval. Pay postman \$8.95 plus delivery—or send \$9.95 (full price) and we ship postage prepaid. Use it for ten days in your own home. Then if not delighted return Spot Reducer for full purchase price refund. Don't delay! You have nothing to lose—except ugly, embarrassing, undesirable pounds of FAT. MAIL COUPON NOW!

**SENT ON APPROVAL—MAIL COUPON NOW!**

**SPOT REDUCER CO., Dept. B-129**  
1025 Broad St., Newark, New Jersey

Please send me the Spot Reducer for 10 days trial period. I enclose \$1. Upon arrival I will pay postman only \$8.95 plus postage and handling. If not delighted I may return SPOT REDUCER within 10 days for prompt refund of full purchase price.

I enclose \$12.98. Send DeLux Model.

Name .....

Address .....

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

SAVE POSTAGE — check here if you enclose \$9.95 with coupon. We pay all postage and handling charges. Same money back guarantee applies.  I enclose \$12.98. Send DeLux Model.

**ALSO USE IT FOR ACES AND PAINS**



**CAN'T SLEEP**

Relax with electric Spot Reducer. See how soothing its gentle massage can be. Helps you sleep when massage can be of benefit.



**MUSCULAR ACES:**

A handy helper for transient relief of discomforts that can be aided by gentle, relaxing massage.

**LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE**

**USED BY EXPERTS**

Thousands have lost weight this way—in hips, abdomen, legs, arms, necks, buttocks, etc. The same method used by stage, screen and radio personalities and leading reducing salons. The Spot Reducer can be used in your spare time, in the privacy of your own room.

**ORDER IT TODAY**

**LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE**

**\$100<sup>00</sup> A WEEK in CASH**  
**PAID DIRECT TO YOU**



# FAMILY HOSPITAL PLAN

**SAVE MONEY!**

There's a big advantage to buying this policy by mail. This method of selling is less costly for us—and that's another reason why we are able to offer so much protection for so little money.

**Policy Pays for a Day, a Week, a Month, a Year—just as long as**

*necessary for you to be hospitalized!*

**JUST LOOK**  
**The Large Benefit This Low Cost Policy Provides!**

The Service Life Family Hospital Plan covers you and your family for about everything—for every accident, and for all common and rare diseases after the policy has been in force 30 days or more. Very serious disease such as cancer, tuberculosis, heart disease, diseases involving female organs, sickness resulting in a surgical operation, hernia, lumbago and sacroiliac conditions originating after the policy is in force six months are all covered. . . . Hospitalization caused by attempted suicide, use of intoxicants or narcotics, insanity, and venereal disease is naturally excluded.

The money is all yours—for any purpose you want to use it. There are no hidden meanings or big words in the policy. We urge you and every family and also individuals to send for this policy on our 10 day free trial offer—and be convinced that no other hospital plan offers you so much for your \$1.00 a month!

**TWO SPECIAL FEATURES**

**MATERNITY**

**Benefits At Small Extra Cost**  
 Women who will some day have babies will want to take advantage of a special low cost maternity rider. Pays \$50.00 for childbirth expense either in the hospital or at home, after policy has been in force 10 months. Double the amount on twins.

**POLIO**

**Benefits At No Extra Cost**  
 In lieu of other regular benefits policy pays these benefits if polio strikes—  
 For Hospital Bills, up to \$500.00  
 For Doctor's Bills while in the hospital, up to \$500.00  
 For Orthopedic Appliances, up to \$500.00  
**TOTAL OF \$1,500.00**



## 3c A DAY IS ALL YOU PAY

for this outstanding new Family Protection

Wonderful news! This new policy covers everyone from infancy to age 70! When sickness or accident sends you or a member of your family to the hospital—this policy PAYS \$100.00 PER WEEK for a day, a month, even a year . . . or just as long as you stay in the hospital. What a wonderful feeling to know your savings are protected and you won't have to go into debt. The money is paid DIRECT TO YOU to spend as you wish. This remarkable new Family Hospital Protection costs only 3c a day for each adult 18 to 59 years of age, and for age 60 to 70 only 4½c a day. This policy even covers children up to 18 years of age with cash benefits of \$50.00 a week while in the hospital—yet the cost is only 1½c a day for each child! Benefits paid while confined to any recognized hospital, except government hospitals, rest homes and clinics, spas or sanitariums. Pick your own doctor. Naturally this wonderful policy is issued only to individuals and families now in good health; otherwise the cost would be sky high. But once protected, you are covered for about every sickness or accident. Persons covered may return as often as necessary to the hospital within the year.

**This is What \$100.00 a Week Can Mean to You When in the Hospital for Sickness or Accident**

Money melts away fast when you or a member of your family has to go to the hospital. You have to pay costly hospital board and room . . . doctor's bills and maybe the surgeon's bill too . . . necessary medicines, operating room fees—a thousand and one things you don't count on. What a Godsend this READY CASH BENEFIT WILL BE TO YOU. Here's cash to go a long way toward paying heavy hospital expenses—and the money left over can help pay you for time lost from your job or business. Remember—all cash benefits are paid directly to you.

**Examine This Policy Without Cost or Obligation — Read It — Talk It Over — Then Decide**

**10 DAYS FREE EXAMINATION**

You are invited to inspect this new kind of Family Hospital Plan. We will send the actual policy to you for ten days at no cost or obligation. Talk it over with your banker, doctor, lawyer or spiritual adviser. Then make up your mind. This policy, backed by the full resources of the nationally known Service Life Insurance Company of Omaha, Nebraska—organized under the laws of Nebraska and with policyholders in every state. SEND NO MONEY—just your name and address! No obligation, of course!

**REMEMBER—\$100.00 A WEEK CASH BENEFIT IS ACTUALLY \$14.25 PER DAY!**

**FREE INSPECTION . . . MAIL COUPON**

The Actual Policy Will Come to You at Once Without Cost or Obligation

The Service Life Insurance Company  
 Hospital Department K-17, Omaha 2, Nebraska  
 Please rush the new Family Hospital Protection Plan Policy to me on 10 days Free Inspection. I understand that I am under no obligation.

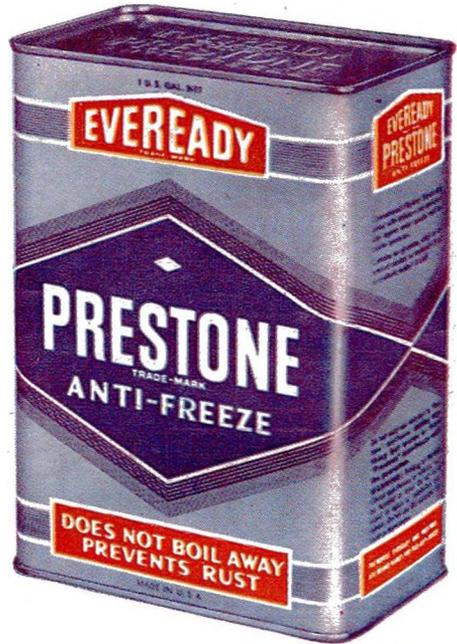
Name.....  
 Address.....  
 City or Town..... State.....

**SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**

Assets of \$12,700,000 as of January 1, 1952  
 Hospital Department K-17, Omaha 2, Nebraska



No other  
anti-freeze  
gives your  
car the same  
complete  
protection!



WITH **PRESTONE** BRAND  
**ANTI-FREEZE**

You're **SET**

Just put "Prestone" anti-freeze in and forget it till spring! No "boil-away" worries... no repair bills — its special inhibitors give the world's best protection against rust, clogging and foaming.

You're **SAFE**

High compression engines and car-heaters make non-evaporating anti-freeze more important now than ever. There's not one drop of boil-away alcohol or methanol in "Prestone" anti-freeze.

You're **SURE**

With "Prestone" brand anti-freeze in your car, you're sure you've bought the best. It's America's No. 1 brand. No other anti-freeze gives your car the same complete protection. It's guaranteed!

**NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY**

A Division of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation  
30 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.

The terms "Prestone" and "Eveready" are registered trade-marks of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation

**\$375** PER GAL.

**\$100** PER QT. IN QUART CANS