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DETECTIVE STORIES



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MARCH
1938





Often the best man—never the groom

EVERY year he watched another of his closest friends get married. He envied them. It was bitter medicine to realize that he was still a bachelor; more than all else he wanted to "settle down." But one by one the girls who had attracted him, quickly dropped him to marry men with far less to offer. Arnold never knew why. That's the insidious thing about halitosis (bad breath): You yourself never know when you have it and the subject is so delicate that even your best friend won't tell you.

No Laughing Matter

People no longer laugh about halitosis. Research has established this offensive condition as being so real, such an everyday threat, that only the ignorant and careless fail to take precautions against it. The fastidious, realizing it is the fault unforgivable, are continually on guard.

A Notable Deodorant

There has always been one *safe* product especially fitted to correct halitosis pleasantly and promptly. Its name is Listerine, and it is the pleasantest tasting, most delightful mouth wash you can use.

Many imitations of it have failed either because they could not do what Listerine does; because they did not meet standard requirements for an antiseptic; or be-

cause they were too strong, too harsh, or too bitter to be tolerated.

Of the imitations that remain, a very large number lack Listerine's speedy action and efficiency.

For more than 50 years, Listerine has been used in hospital work because of its marked deodorant and antiseptic properties. When you rinse your mouth with Listerine Antiseptic here is what happens.

Four Benefits

- (1). Fermentation of tiny food particles (the major cause of breath odors) is instantly halted.
- (2). Decaying matter is swept from large areas on mouth, gum, and tooth surfaces.
- (3). Millions of bacteria capable of causing odors are destroyed outright.
- (4). The breath itself—indeed, the entire mouth—is freshened and sweetened.

Don't Offend Others

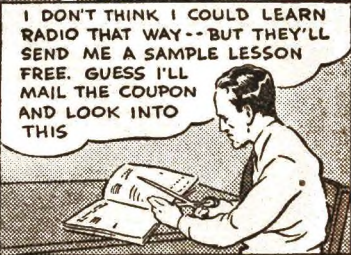
When you want such freshening and deodorizing effect without danger, use Listerine Antiseptic. Use it every morning and every night, and between times before business and social engagements, so that you do not offend.

LAMBERT PHARMACAL Co., St. Louis, Mo.

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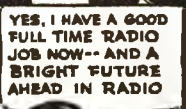
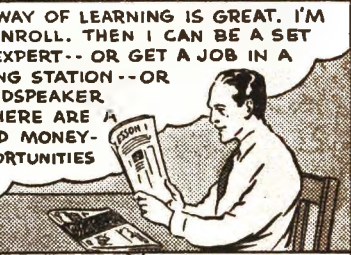
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BLACK MASK

A MAGAZINE OF GRIPPING, SMASHING DETECTIVE STORIES

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F. ELLSWORTH, *Editor*
VOL. XXI No. 1

J. B. MAGILL, *Managing Editor*
MARCH, 1938

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IN APRIL

"MUSCLE OUT"

ED JENKINS BLOCKS A PATH TO WHOLESALE CRIME

By ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

P. C. CODY, President and Circulation Director

F. ELLSWORTH, Vice-President

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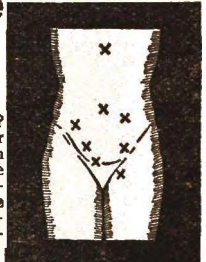


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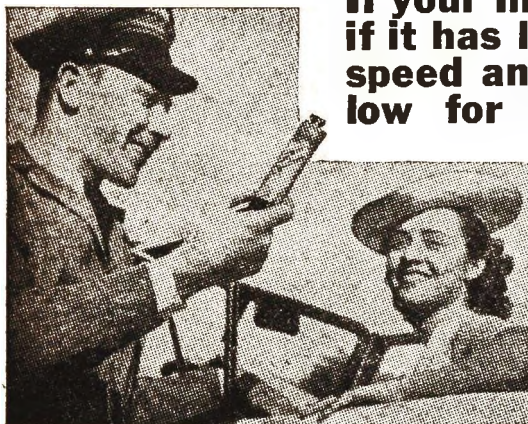
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\$25.25	19	2.95	1.16
\$25.50	20	2.95	1.16
\$25.25	21	3.25	1.16
\$25.50	18	3.35	1.16
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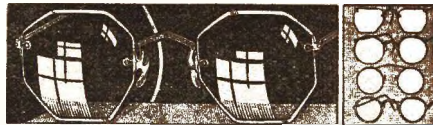
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Meet that implacable, coldly reckless manhunter, Satan

FRANKIE HAINES was big and broad shouldered and swaggered when he walked. But he wasn't walking now. He was leaning easily on the shining mahogany bar. He was setting them up again all down the line and for the little booths along the wall.

When his turn came, he simply held

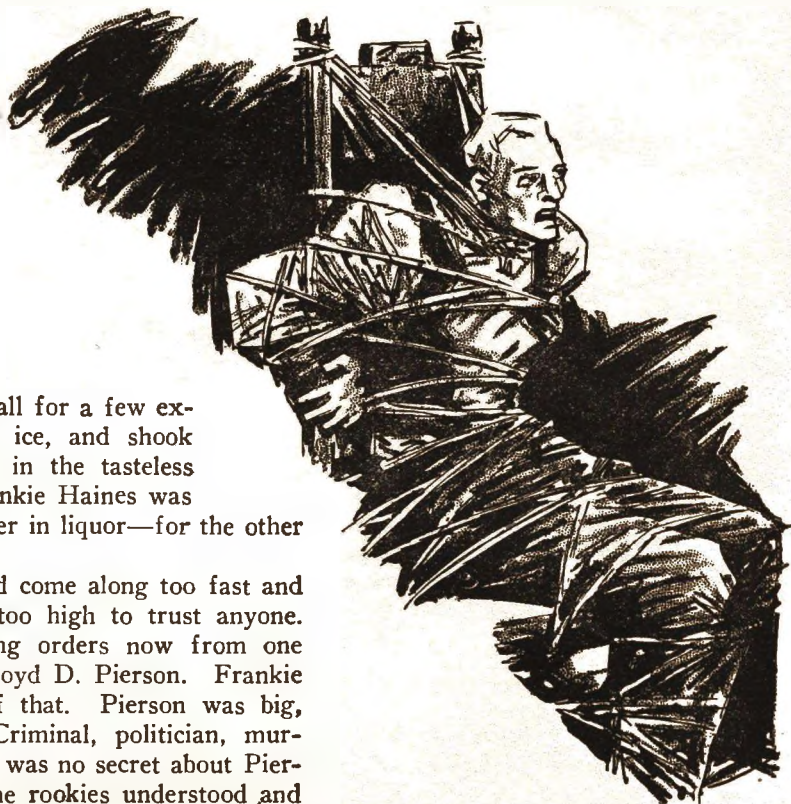
"No favors except to Pierson. . . ."

Frankie was doing his duty in a big way. He was letting the Avenue know just who ran things for Pierson. Who was ace man in telling the boys where they got off. Who the man was that laid the finger on the wrong ones, and saw that they disappeared from the picture.

Frankie looked down at the rat-faced man beside him. The man who drank his whiskey straight, and yet found no

out his highball for a few extra cubes of ice, and shook them around in the tasteless mixture. Frankie Haines was a great believer in liquor—for the other fellow.

Frankie had come along too fast and had reached too high to trust anyone. He was taking orders now from one man only—Floyd D. Pierson. Frankie was proud of that. Pierson was big, influential. Criminal, politician, murderer. There was no secret about Pierson. Even the rookies understood and knew. Fine speeches about good honest law enforcement with "favors toward none" rang back in every cop's ear:

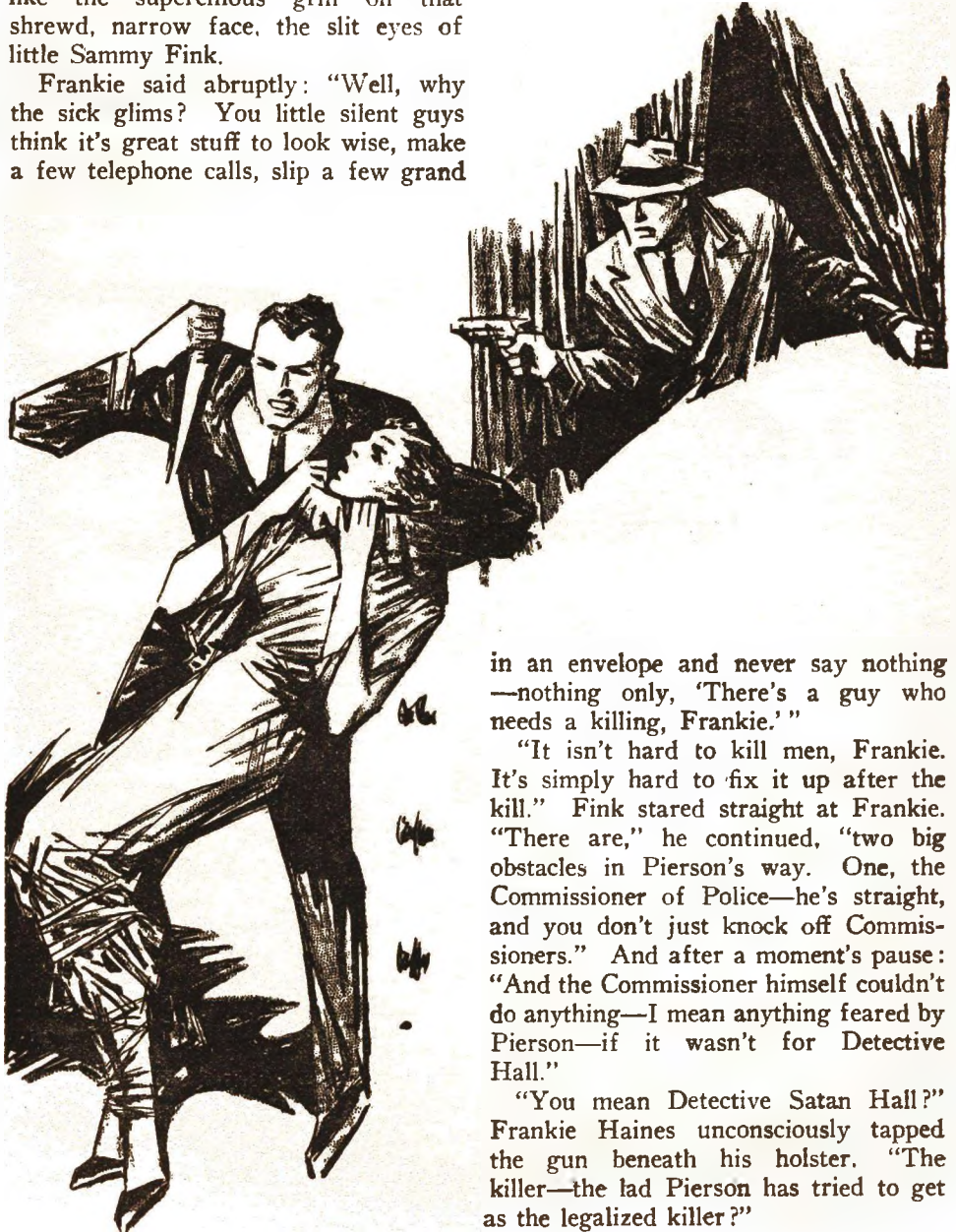


By CARROLL JOHN DALY

Hall, in a story told by the creator of "Race Williams"

more effect in it than water. He didn't like the supercilious grin on that shrewd, narrow face, the slit eyes of little Sammy Fink.

Frankie said abruptly: "Well, why the sick glims? You little silent guys think it's great stuff to look wise, make a few telephone calls, slip a few grand



in an envelope and never say nothing—nothing only, 'There's a guy who needs a killing, Frankie.'

"It isn't hard to kill men, Frankie. It's simply hard to fix it up after the kill." Fink stared straight at Frankie. "There are," he continued, "two big obstacles in Pierson's way. One, the Commissioner of Police—he's straight, and you don't just knock off Commissioners." And after a moment's pause: "And the Commissioner himself couldn't do anything—I mean anything feared by Pierson—if it wasn't for Detective Hall."

"You mean Detective Satan Hall?" Frankie Haines unconsciously tapped the gun beneath his holster. "The killer—the lad Pierson has tried to get as the legalized killer?"

"That," said Fink, "is exactly who I mean—Satan Hall."

Haines said, "The first chance I get, I'll knock him over—that's orders."

"He's not easy to get. He's careful about traps. The boys have tried everything but they all got killed."

Haines laughed. "He'll be surprised when he meets up with me face to face. The boss says the Commissioner stands squarely behind this would-be tough dick. I'm here now to settle Satan Hall once and for all." And with a laugh, "The Commissioner can't stand behind Satan if he's dead."

"And Pierson won't think much more about you, Frankie, if you're dead."

Frankie Haines' laugh was like a coal shovel on a cellar floor. He said: "I strutted myself along the Avenue for weeks. I've played the swanky night spots and the dumps. I've talked Satan up and down the city. I've laughed the cops off, and Pierson did the fix for me. And what happens? Satan knows real stuff when he hears about it. He's heard what I've called him. He's heard what I think of him. And what does he do?"

"But suppose Satan don't bother with you?"

Again came the grating laugh. "Listen, Fink. This is the Golden Raven Club," and pointing, "and that's a telephone booth. Well, I dropped a nickel in the slot and I got Detective Satan Hall out of bed. And I told him who I was and I told him the kind of guys that were here." He swept a hand along the bar at the high class talent of the underworld. He leaned close to Fink's ear. "And sitting over there, at the table where he can see everything, is the Assistant D. A. No, none of them know why they're here. But the boss arranged their presence."

"The boss—Pierson—knew?"

"Not exactly. He just thought I wanted a few guys on the know here when I rap Satan up and down the bar. Me, I'm clean. The cops have nothing on me any place—well, maybe Philly

and San Francisco—but nothing that couldn't be fixed. Besides, I got a private detective license and a license to carry a gun. If this Satan is so tough, he'll have his chance to draw . . . then over he goes. Self-defense."

Fink's mouth hung open, and his eyes bulged. "Are you nuts, Frankie? He'll kill you the moment your gun appears—that's his stock in trade. But he won't shoot until you reach."

"But he'll have to draw. I've got my line ready. I'll give him a lacing down he never received before. I showed you my draw. Have you ever seen a faster one?"

"No." Fink shook his head honestly. "Is Satan's draw faster?"

"I don't know." Fink shook his head. "There is no living man who has ever seen it, and the dead that saw it can't tell. They're alive before you one minute—reaching. Then they're dead. You don't see the gun come even."

Frankie sneered. "I'll knock him around a bit. You know. I'll ask him what's he following me for, get him mad, cuff him, knock him around."

"Not knock Satan Hall around! That's what he—" Fink stopped.

The door of the Golden Raven Club had opened, and a man stood there directly under the light. Frankie Haines, who had never seen the man in person before, clutched at the bar. The thing was too real to be true. It was as if a master of the art of stage make-up had created that face.

Sinister, cruel, narrow lips. Green eyes slanting upward and outward like an Oriental's. Tapering ears. The same peculiar V-shaped cut to his jet black hair. His whole face was one single V. His hands were empty.

Fascinated, held against that bar with a feeling that he had never experienced before, stood Frankie Haines. It wasn't fear, he told himself. His heart pounded against his vest until he thought it would tear a hole through it. But that was not fear. It was elation. Frankie dropped his eyes to those empty white

hands. Why, he could kill Satan easy.

Frankie's right hand moved toward his left arm-pit and it froze there as Fink tugged at his sleeve, whispered:

"Don't do it! Don't do it, Frankie! It'll be self-defense again. Can't you see it! Can't you read it in his eyes? It's Satan Hall, you fool, and he's on the kill!"

Just before Satan reached him Frankie Haines broke through the unseen net that held him. He was going to shoot Satan; he was going to kill him. There was his line—what he had to say. The words burst forth in Satan's face, foul and loud.

"Come on, you big bum!" Frankie screeched the words. "I'm in the city on business, and I don't care if—" Frankie paused for a moment "—if the crooked dame you go with gets it in the long run."

Satan had stopped now, less than five feet from him.

"You're Frankie Haines. You called me an hour ago and told me you were here. You told me it was my last chance to face you like a man, or die like a cat in an alley. Is that correct?"

Frankie hesitated. He hadn't been in the racket for so many years to be caught in a dumb crack. The threat of death—sure, he had made it; would

make it again, but not publicly. So he simply wet his lips and said:

"Sure I'm Frankie Haines."

"And you have a gun, and a license to carry it?"

"Yeah, I've got a gun and a license to use it."

"Then," said Satan, "why don't you?"

"Me." Frankie was feeling better. "I only use guns on lads who draw them."

"I see." Satan nodded. "For five weeks I've laughed you off. I didn't have the time for you. Your threats of violence seemed to be simply a personal matter. But now it has become a threat against the law—the assurance or the selling of your protection to crooks such as—" He looked slowly about the small room. His green eyes rested long and steadily on the young assistant district attorney.

"Such as the prominent people here whom you would convince that they were safe from me under your protection. You wanted to put on a show—a small-time punk setting himself up with the big shots of the city. The outfit here is cheap. They came for entertainment and they're going to get it." And suddenly, "Fink, eh? Why didn't you tell Frankie, Fink?"

Fink drew back. "I told him plenty. I wouldn't be here if I could have—"



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"Shut up!" Frankie flicked his fingers sideways and up. Fink's teeth cracked. He rubbed at his chin.

Satan leaned slightly forward. His words were a hoarse whisper. Only Frankie Haines heard them, and he missed the threat in the softness of Satan's voice. Satan said:

"I wouldn't have come anyway, Frankie, if it wasn't for your last sentence over the phone about the girl."

"Oh, the dame, eh?" Frankie's lips contorted. "She lied to me, but I wasn't thinking of knocking her around to-night. It was you, see? Like that." Frankie's right hand suddenly shot toward Satan's unprotected jaw.

Fink didn't see Satan move his head, but he knew that he must have, for Frankie's blow never reached him. And Satan did it. Did it as he had done it to many underworld characters great and small, and by doing it, ruined their career in crime. Satan was slapping the great Frankie Haines down as if he were the lowest pick-pocket who walked the streets.

Satan's left hand, still open, went back, out, and up with terrific force. It landed flush on Haines' cheek. It hurled Haines' body toward the bar, and lifted his feet from the floor. But Frankie Haines never crashed against that bar. Satan's open right hand prevented that. It swung as had the left, caught Frankie on the left cheek and straightened him up; stood him erect for the single moment that Satan's right hand lowered again, then drove straight upward.

Frankie crashed to the floor. He didn't move. He just lay there. Satan turned and looked down the length of that bar. He said very slowly and distinctly:

"If there is anyone here who objects to the way the self-styled terrific Mr. Haines was handled, let him step forward." And twisting suddenly, "You, Fink!"

Fink, slipping toward the dimness at the rear end of the bar, stopped, froze.

Satan went to him, grabbed him, swung him around. Glanced down at the shrewd, cruel, peaked little face. Then Satan led him out the rear door and slowly down the street.

"I swear to God I wouldn't have been there if I had known, Satan." And as the hand tightened on his shoulder, "Detective Hall. Did the girl have anything to do with it? Cripes, don't!"

Satan loosened his fingers from the little man's shoulders. Indeed, he hadn't realized they were there.

"Don't lie to me, Fink. What do you know about the girl?"

Fink hesitated, but then everyone in on the know knew it. Certainly, Pierson knew it, and Frankie Haines and a half a dozen other guys Fink knew. So he decided to tell the truth. At least as much as he told would be the truth.

"Her name is Mattie Hern," he said, as if he were reading from a book. "No one is certain you loved her—most are against that idea, because—well, I don't believe it, but a lot of the boys say you couldn't, for you're not human. But Mattie is. No one denies that. And she loved you then. Now—Hell, Satan, her father's back in the same business. You must know that."

Satan said slowly, "It would be impossible for me not to know it." Yet for months now he had been denying that truth to himself. Jacob Hern, a few years back, had been the shrewdest fence in the business.

"Gets you, eh, Satan? But he's paying for protection. Why should you worry?"

Satan grabbed Fink viciously. "What's protection got to do with me? What have crooked politics got to do with me? I work alone; act alone. I am the law!"

"Sure." Fink bobbed his head up and down in agreement. "But it took guts to slap Frankie down like a common hood. He's Pierson's right-hand man."

"I know, Fink. I had no intention of slapping him down. I did it with-

out meaning to. I came there tonight to kill him."

Fink gasped. Satan went on:

"Tell him that, Fink. Tell him to leave the city at once. I don't know how Pierson happened to let him know about Mattie. Haines is a woman killer, a torturer. Killed his friends to push his way up. I've hurt his pride now. They all saw him take it. They'll remember him lying on his back. They'll remember his threats to get me; his swaggering along the Avenue; his big mouth."

"He'll have to get you, Satan, to live that down," Fink said. "The story'll travel to Chi before morning. The guy who came on to kill you. He won't go back. Frankie's the kind of a guy who sticks and pays."

"I know a lot about him. He'd murder simply to make a friend. Yes, he buried a young girl alive just because he thought she might talk. He might do the same to another girl. I'm afraid of him, Fink."

"Afraid of him! Gawd, Satan, I never knew you feared any man."

"I fear him," Satan said steadily. "I only feared one other man. Joe Mercer."

"But you killed Mercer."

"That's right." Satan nodded solemnly. "I kill when I fear."



SATAN HALL walked across town and, although the hour was close to one, he pushed the button of the Commissioner's house, nodded at the two quiet-clothes men who appeared suddenly from nowhere.

One of the men said: "Hall! Hello. There ain't another man in the department who'd ring that bell this time of night. The Commissioner likes his sleep."

"He won't like it after I get through talking to him," Satan said as the door opened and he stepped inside.

The Commissioner was a little man who looked even smaller in his long dressing gown.

"Damn it, Satan," he said irritably. "You know I work hard all day and—"

"Day or night was what you said," Satan interrupted.

"Let me have it. It must be pretty bad," the Commissioner snapped.

"It is. It's Frankie Haines. If he's half the man he thinks he is, I'll be shooting him to death."

"Oh come, Satan, come. We can't have it like that, you know."

"Like what?" Satan demanded. "You want him dead, don't you? You want him killed. Why mince words? He's a crook, a murderer, a torturer of women. His number's up."

"You put things rather forcibly. But there's the department, the district attorney's office, even the press."

Satan nodded. "The mayor is straight. He appointed you. He stands behind you and you stand behind me, so I—"

"Yes, yes, I know. You are the law. But there's a law above the death of even a murderer. There's the law to protect a person's goods. This particular person needs the goods. Five hundred thousand dollars' worth of bonds were stolen from this person. Negotiable bonds. Easy to dispose of if put through the right hands."

"Floyd D. Pierson's hands?"

"Yes. I don't think there's a bit of doubt he's in on them. But he's watched day and night. We threw a scare into him, Satan. We let him think you are on his trail. He fears you because—"

"Because of my reputation as a killer. Because I might go to his office and fill him full of lead. Is that it?"

"In a way, yes."

Satan shook his head. "He's too big for that. You're lying to me, Commissioner." And when the little man straightened and took on a certain dignity, "You're lying to me. Did you know that Mattie Hern was back?"

The Commissioner hesitated, then said: "Yes, I knew that."

"And that her father has returned?"

"Yes," the Commissioner said doggedly. "I knew that too. He was a great fixer, a great seller of stolen bonds in his day."

"Is he running this deal?"

"No, no." The Commissioner looked absently toward the ceiling. "His daughter has taken his place."

"Mattie? Impossible!" Satan bit out the words. "She loved her father, but hated the rackets."

"Maybe she hated her father and loved the rackets. The old man fled the country—indictments piling up against him. Then he talked on those who might have helped him. Slowly and carefully he made his arrangements in Europe—until he had a clean bill of health back here. Twelve big men are serving long terms on his secret information. He helped us break up the bond racket here in New York, while he made his European connections stronger. I have nothing on him, Satan.

"I have nothing on the girl. But she took care of her father abroad. Ten times his superior in brains, now ten times his superior in handling bonds or paper of any description. We may think these stolen bonds first reached Pierson. We may think they first reached Mattie Hern. She's come back with a bang after three years in Europe. Secretary to Allison and Conway, to a large brokerage firm, while her father gets the scraps she throws him. Running his old shop over on Sixth Avenue, a little hock shop."

Satan said: "I never saw Mattie after she left for Europe. She had some money, some honest dough." Satan hesitated, then, "She wanted to be honest."

"I know, you told me then. She would slip out of the rackets if you would slip out of the law."

"That's right." Satan nodded. "She talked of marriage and—I think it was a farm."

"She was a beautiful girl," the Commissioner reflected. "But you and she

would never see eye-to-eye on the law. But she's different now. I've got a full report, Satan. Frankie Haines has met her. Floyd D. Pierson has met her. I think she's fooled them completely. Neither of them know how bad she really is."

"She never was bad, couldn't be bad. Who owned these bonds, and why is Haines out to kill me? Why does Pierson fear me?"

"You never loved a woman, Satan. You couldn't. But Mattie Hern was in your life. Pierson knows that. There might be complications. There was one other woman in your life. She owned these stolen bonds. They were everything her father left her when he died."

"Nina—Nina Radcliff, the banker's daughter. She was just a kid—but what a kid." Satan actually smiled. He finally went on.

"She used to play at being a detective, tell me she was going to spend her fortune some day in helping me run down criminals. She's forgotten me by now. It was just after her father died that she quit bothering me. She was just a child."

"She's a woman now. After the bonds were stolen she sold everything to pay her father's debts."

"You were her father's friend, her friend. What was she doing with a half million dollars' worth of negotiable bonds?"

"She wouldn't have them registered. She said she was going to sell them from time to time, go into some business or something. They were safely in a deposit vault. Then one day she walked into that vault and took them all away with her. She took a taxi and was later found unconscious, about midnight, against the wall of the park. She sent for me. I kept it from the papers. Her story is that someone stepped into the cab and sat beside her." A long pause. "She thinks it was a woman."

"Well—" Satan stopped, and when the Commissioner said nothing: "What

did Nina want with all that money?"

"That girl loved you, Satan, and you — She was going abroad and stay abroad. A few days ago I located her. I didn't let her see me. She's a proud girl. She just tried to drop out of everything, neither wanted the pity nor charity of friends."

"Charity." Satan gritted sharp teeth. "That girl risked her life for me. That girl offered me all or part of the money to fight crime. . . . Where is she now?"

"Johnson's department store, over on Third Avenue. She's working there as Nancy Reardon. But I wouldn't bother her, Satan, unless you can locate and return her bonds."

"I can do that." Satan nodded. "If Mattie's in it."

"It's a coincidence, Satan. Only two women in your life and now the one hurts the other so terribly. Mattie Hern knew of Nina Radcliff?"

Satan nodded.

"Then," continued the Commissioner, "the coincidence becomes a premeditated act. A woman scorned, you know."

"Not Mattie." Satan's voice was assured. "She never got a break. I'll talk with her. If she knows about those bonds— Hell, Commissioner, you should have told me earlier."

"I doubt," the Commissioner said, "that I should have told you now. Love and hate are very close. I never knew Mattie as well as you knew her. But I tell you, Satan, there is no more dangerous woman in the city today. And you'll go straight to her."

"The first thing in the morning."

"That was my fear. The bonds, as I said, were not registered, but a list of their serial numbers are held, and none of them have showed up, here or abroad. It may be the vigilance of the police, but I doubt that. It may be the carelessness of Jacob Hern, Mattie's father, but I doubt that, too, for he can move things quickly. It may be the love or hate of a woman. That's why I finally had to tell you. Mattie may be waiting for you

to come. To be killed—or to be forgiven. Forgiven for repudiating the love she once offered you—or to die.



EARLY the next morning Satan went to the offices of Allison and Conway, Brokers. He was surprised at the luxury of the place. But he was more surprised when the girl at the switchboard told him that both Mr. Allison and Mr. Conway were in Europe, but that any one of the staff was quite competent to take care of his business.

"No." Satan shook his head. "Anyone is not. I'm a detective from Headquarters. I'd like to see Mattie Hern."

"Miss Hern? She's in and out, terribly busy. I don't know if she's in. I don't know if she'll see you. Is it of a private or public nature?"

"It's of a private nature at the present moment. In a few minutes, if I don't see Miss Hern, it'll be public. It's about some stolen bonds."

The girl stuck her face into a box at the switchboard. She finally turned. "Miss Hern wants to know if it is important."

"To her, yes. To me, no."

A moment later a boy took him down a long corridor. He entered a door, passed through a reception-room close to another door which bore the lettering: M. HERN—PRIVATE.

"Miss Hern will be some time. You'll have to wait." A stern-faced woman told him.

Satan said, "It's police business. The law never waits."

He opened the door marked private, stepped inside a room hung with mirrors and closed the door softly behind him.

A girl—a woman in a severe navy blue suit—was standing by the window, her back to the door. She was dictating a letter to a little gray-haired man who sat at one side of a huge desk. She was saying:

"We, therefore, cannot recommend this bond for—" She stopped, swung and faced Satan Hall.

Mattie Hern. Satan knew her, of course, though she had changed. There was a new confidence in her every action; in the black eyes she put directly on him; in that easy pose of a woman used to meeting people and handling them.

She was older, yet there were less lines in her face, less worry in her brilliant eyes. It was inside of her Satan guessed he must have looked. He didn't find evil there, but he didn't find the good either that he used to recognize so plainly. But he thought he saw something as that hard face seemed to soften—a sort of gloating far back in those eyes.

"Detective Hall—Frank Hall!" She came across the room and took his hand. Her grip was friendly; her smile more beautiful than warm. "I am so glad you made a point of seeing me. It's like old times. They called you 'Satan' then."

"They call me 'Satan' now," he said slowly. This was no girl now—someone who needed his protection—someone who went about with horror in her eyes, even terror. A girl who expected death to come to her fleeing father any moment, death to herself perhaps. Nothing like a few years back.

"I'm busy, frightfully busy." She looked at the man by the desk, the clock on the wall. "But I'm never too busy to chat. Mr. Starke, will you take down the numbers of the bonds as Mr. Hall gives them? Simply routine, I believe. They were not registered, of course. Is that your business now? Reporting stolen goods? You've been to offices of other established firms, I presume."

"No, just here. And the business is private." He nodded at the secretary. "Send him outside."

"Mr. Starke? Of course not. Besides, he'll be a great help to you."

Satan stared long and earnestly at the girl. "To me maybe, but not to you,

Mattie." And when she would have spoken, Satan ran on: "You know me, Mattie, and I know you. It is just possible that Mr. Starke, though his face is familiar, knows neither one of us as we are. I never mince words. I want him out. Will you send him? Yes or no?"

"No," Mattie said sharply. "I have no business private or public that Mr. Starke cannot listen to. So speak up."

Satan nodded solemnly. He had words to say that he felt sure would even startle the shrewd Mattie Hern. And he said them simply.

"It's about those bonds. At Headquarters we think your father stole them."

The girl stiffened. Her shoulders shot up. Satan waited. She had asked for it and she had got it.

Mattie's face flushed, her hands clutched at her sides. Suddenly she changed. Her eyes were wide, laughing, her mouth open. Raising both hands, she placed them on Satan's shoulders.

"Satan." She shook him. "Same old Satan. But what will Mr. Starke think about your joke? You'll have your way. You may go, Mr. Starke." And as the startled man folded his book and walked toward the door: "Don't speak of the incident, Mr. Starke. Other people might not have your fine sense of humor. But Detective Hall is always saying things like that. Aren't you, Satan?" She was very near to him now, her hands slipping from his shoulders back around his neck.

"Always," Satan nodded as Mr. Starke hurried from the room.

The girl's hands fell at once. She faced the man now; hot color in her cheeks; hot coals back in her eyes. Hot words were snapping out through her lips.

"How dare you come here and bring up my past! Say that my father—What do you want of me? I could hate you for it."

Satan said slowly: "There was once a very wealthy little girl. She was foolish and wanted to live in the life that you, born and brought up in, hated. She was not much more than a child then, and somehow she appealed to me, and I helped her and she thought she was very fond of me."

Mattie Hern faced him squarely. "Why tell me of this love affair? I could tell you of another girl. She wasn't brought up in luxury, but she loved you very much, enough to chuck it all, leave the country, escape from the fears of the death that is dealt to anyone who wants to go straight."

"I know," said Satan. "But one never could tell about you, Mattie—which side of the fence you were on. The thing was in your blood too deep. You lacked sincerity. And I lacked that power to love."

"Lacked it then." She tossed up her chin. Black eyes brightened and clashed with green ones. "Well, do you lack that power now? She's poor like I was poor. But I never walked far out on a great city bridge and looked at the water below thinking as she thinks now."

"You hate her that much?"

"I hate her as much as I loved you. Yes, I did love you, Satan, with a sincerity I never knew I had. They snickered and sneered at me—those big men of a few years ago. They don't laugh at me now. Not Mattie Hern. But this nonsense about my father?"

Satan shrugged his shoulders.

"I slapped Frankie Haines down last night. He knew of our friendship, our former friendship, I mean. I didn't know about the bonds then and don't know if he does. But I came to warn you that he'll take his hatred for me out on you. You can explain to him our little lapse in friendship." Satan's lips drew up. "I guess it doesn't matter, Mattie. I'm going to drill him anyway."

Her cheek was against his shoulder, her arms again encircling him. Look-

ing directly into one of the mirrors he could see her—her eyes—the flash of them as if she gave a signal. And he saw the curtains in the glass, the curtains that must be behind him.

Mattie laughed. "You slapped him down, but you won't live to blow about it. So he spoke of me? Thought you might have something left in your cold inhuman blood for me. And you did. You thought you could even things up by killing him and helping me. And you thought you might find out something for yourself about those bonds and the girl, Nina. Though how Haines knew about her, I don't know."

"He didn't." Satan was swinging her easily around as he talked. "I came to give you a break, Mattie. I came to give you a last chance. I came—"

"You came to your death." She shot the words through her teeth. "He spoke of me and you came here. That's it, Satan—love has turned to hate. Your thought of Nina Radcliff hasn't helped any. Frankie shall have the girl, and you— Oh, God, don't shoot!"

The girl spun like a top, whirled past a chair and struck another. A single roar of a gun splashed noise all over the room.

Mattie Hern and Satan both watched now. Watched the figure that appeared between twin curtains; twin guns in each hand. He stood so a moment looking straight at them, yet he did not see them. The man was dead before he even crumbled to the floor.

Satan said, "Coster, eh? Killer Coster. You flatter me, Mattie. So you helped Frankie Haines trap me, make a sucker out of me. Well, maybe he did. But you'll never get Killer Coster to believe it."

"You knew?" The girl drew back from the advancing man; her hand flashed over to a desk, behind bookends that held six large volumes.

"I knew," Satan nodded, "as soon as I saw the curtain. There—" Satan's right hand stretched out; the nose of

his gun hammered Mattie's hand sharply down. An automatic fell to the floor. Her hand went to her mouth.

"Don't squawk," Satan said. "If I wished I could have broken every finger on your hand. Now—a few sore knuckles only."

She walked over and stood before him. "You'll go as you came. You haven't changed much, Satan. I'll take care of things."

"You mean the corpse," Satan said brutally. "You'll take care of it?"

"I'll take care of it."

"Fine." If there was mockery it showed neither in Satan's eyes nor his mouth. "After all, I came to warn you about Frankie Haines. On the phone he told me if I didn't come to the Golden Raven Club he'd take it out on a woman."

Mattie straightened, stiffened; her lips set hard. She said:

"Frankie either named the wrong woman or, as you said, tried to trap you to come here. I have nothing to fear from Frankie. But Frankie is capable of anything. I don't think you got this real message. But here is a message for you. It's about Nina Radcliff. If you wish her to live, you'll have to give me your word that you will never bother in this bond affair. But I must have your word that you'll leave Frankie alone." Mattie Hern hesitated a long time, then. "Or Nina Radcliff will die rather horribly."

"It would cost Haines his life before I made such a promise."

He turned, walked toward the door, then swung and backed toward it. He opened it very carefully. Mattie was standing there shaking her head at him. But Satan didn't mind. He knew that a bullet in the back killed just as dead and hurt just as much no matter how dainty was the finger that closed upon the trigger.

Satan left. He was not anxious to have the body found while he was there. He reported to no one but the Commissioner, and not always to him.



LOYD D. PIERSON was a heavy-set man, but there was nothing of indolence in that broad, gorilla-like figure now as he came to his feet

and surveyed the two other men in the room. One was slowly sipping a highball as he looked at the man against the door—the man who was taking it from Floyd D. Pierson, who dealt out words of life or death as the whim moved him.

Charlie Furnace tossed a final twisted leer at Frankie Haines and reached for the bottle again. He didn't see Floyd Pierson, the big boss, move his eyes. But he heard his voice, and dropped the bottle back on the table.

Pierson spoke sharply. "Hopped up or full of dynamite, or real classy whiskey if they can get it. That's my organization! That's my boys! Drop it, Charlie. I don't run a saloon. Now let me talk, Haines—don't explain. You had the joint filled with bar flies and an assistant D. A. when you called up Satan Hall, cursed him into coming down, then got yourself knocked around like any other gutter rat. Don't glare at me! I said any other rat."

"Fink told you, eh?" There was real, not feigned determination in his voice. "Well?"

"Well, what about it?" Pierson hammered in. "Fink told me because he'd have had his throat cut from ear to ear if he hadn't. Look out you don't shave too deep some morning."

Pierson's right hand moved slightly up and under his jacket. He said and meant it: "I don't take too much talk from anyone."

Frankie backed against the wall, close to the long window seat. His lips curled, trembled at the ends. His voice shook slightly, but not in fear. He said, "And I don't take threats from anyone. I'll kill Satan for you, don't have any doubts about that."

His mean, narrowing eyes were slits

of fury as they slid toward the third man: "And I'd knock off that puss-faced friend of yours, Charlie Furnace, who drinks only when you tell him to. And I'll do it now if he feels like tossing a gun around."

Charlie Furnace looked toward his boss. Then he laughed. Pierson laughed too. He said:

"Frankie, you must be mad. Do you know how many people there are in this house?"

"No." Frankie was sulky. "But there wouldn't be so many after I blasted a bit. A guy can make a mistake without throat-cutting coming into it."

Pierson crossed the room. He knew men; knew how to handle them. Frankie, properly handled, was a dangerous man for the other fellow; badly handled, a dangerous man for Pierson. He put an arm around Frankie Haines.

"I warned you, Frankie. We weren't looking for anything spectacular with Satan—just a razzing up and down the town. Then a quiet spot on a quiet night, or like this morning at Mattie Hern's."

"Yeah, like that." Frankie grinned. "Some gunman, your Coster. There wasn't any blood in his veins. Don't tell me. I know. He didn't even bleed after he took the dose."

Furnace said, "Maybe the set-up wasn't right. Mattie liked Satan once."

"She hates him." Pierson said. "And she's the smartest woman in the racket today."

"Why don't she produce the bonds?" Furnace was skeptical.

Pierson shook his head. "She was anxious enough to sell them before. Because of knowing the Commissioner and Satan, and even the dame Nina Radcliff, and doing the job herself, she thought them pretty hot. That's why she came to me. Now, it may be fear of Satan that makes her wait. It may be hate of the girl, Nina."

"Or," Furnace said with meaning, "it may be her old man. He'd like to horn in and market them himself."

"No." Pierson shook his head. "I had him call on me. He laughed, getting old and silly. Said he'd advised Mattie to keep them, said they'd go up, and he could push them through Brussels for the full half million in a couple of months."

"What did Mattie say?" Haines asked.

Pierson bit his lips. "Said I'd get them when she brought them, and not before. Mattie's not easy to handle."

"Well." Frankie straightened, turned and as he reached the door said, "I got a little surprise for you. O. K., Flowers."

A man outside opened the door and pushed a girl into the room. Haines grabbed her by the arm, jerked her forward, then smacked her a vicious open-handed blow across the back of the neck. She spun slightly, staggered forward, and fell to the floor almost at Pierson's feet.

Pierson's voice shrilled, "Who's this woman?"

"That," Frankie stepped forward and kicked the prostrate girl, "is Satan's girl friend, Nina Radcliff."

Pierson and Furnace seemed to act as one man. They both moved together. One thrust a handkerchief into her mouth, though she did not make a sound. The other twisted a scarf around her head covering her eyes. Then they dragged her to her feet, thrust her into a chair. Furnace held her down.

Pierson pushed Haines across the room, spoke so low that the girl could not hear. "Why'd you bring her here?"

"Where else?" Frankie Haines' voice was not so low. "I'm no bank president with love nests all over the city. Mattie told me where to find her. Said she'd attract Satan like a magnet. Well, I want Satan. I'll cut that girl apart until he comes—as I want him to come." The man's voice was loud now. Anger, hate, venom in it. "Ruins guys by slapping them down, does he? Makes them the laughing stock of the Avenue.

Well, let him laugh this one off." As Pierson's hand went across his mouth, Frankie's voice lowered to a whisper. "Maybe with Satan out of the way Mattie will do business."

Floyd Pierson's voice was icy and disguised, but he had never met the situation he couldn't handle. He was wondering if he would have to kill the girl. Having her dragged into the house and knocked around like that! And Satan. . . . Pierson continued to question Frankie, was glad that the girl was unconscious when she had first come in. He wouldn't want that girl pointing him out.

Haines was saying: "It was a real cinch. I had her picture, spotted her as she came out of the store, popped my best detective manner on her and told her the Commissioner wanted to see her. I told her the Commissioner had the bonds, and that Satan Hall was there. Pretty wise, eh?"

Pierson looked at that brutal, animal-like face. "Too wise, Haines. Mattie not only gave you the picture. She told you what to say—that word about the bonds got the girl. You never thought of that alone."

Frankie shrugged. "Me and Mattie worked it out together. See the point, Boss? You wanted Satan killed. So, he'll take the dose when he comes for the girl. And he won't talk before because that will mean her death.

"And the girl?" Pierson looked over his shoulder and saw Charlie Furnace binding Nina's hands and feet. Pierson didn't want her there. This house was one of the two he used mostly in the city. He didn't meet his friends of Park Avenue or of his clubs or politicians here. In his other residence, few, very few of his former acquaintances ever visited him.

"It will depend," said Haines without emotion, "how far I got to go with her before he'll come. Most women don't want to live after—"

"I didn't mean that," Pierson cut in. "I mean she can identify you."

"Hell, if Satan's dead, what's her identifying me worth? But there's no sense in keeping her alive even. Who cares? But Satan is different. He's going to have a ride—a death ride. I'm going to hurl his dead body right in front of the Golden Raven Club. Slap me down, eh? I'll slap his body plunk at the door."

"You read too many newspapers," Pierson told him. "You'll take orders from me, Frankie. The girl idea was good if you'd worked alone and not brought her here. You can lay a trap for Satan."

"A trap if he ain't got guts, yes. That's my only fear, that he won't come."

Almost on those very words, the little door at the rear of the second floor living-room opened. A smallish man cried hoarsely:

"It's me—Welsh. Detective Hall, Mr. Pierson! Satan Hall—he's on his way up the front stairs!"

Excitement, panic, everything in those next few seconds. But through it all Pierson gave his orders; orders that were acted on almost mechanically. He was saying:

"Haines, out the back and away. We can't have shooting with that damned girl trussed up here and we can't yank her out the back. Not now. You, Charlie, beat it to the basement." Pierson had already lifted the top of the window seat. Now with little difficulty he carried the girl from the chair, tossed her into the coffin-like opening and closed the lid.

Floyd D. Pierson sat down behind his desk, lifted his gun from his shoulder holster and let it drop into the thickly filled, high waste-basket so that his hanging hand could grab it without his body bending. Furnace and Haines had gone. Pierson called softly to Welsh:

"How is he coming up?"

"Behind Flowers—a gun in Flowers' back." A door closed quietly. Welsh was gone.

Floyd Pierson took one look toward

the window seat, then squarely faced the door through which Satan must enter. He had lied to Frankie Haines about the house being full of men. But Satan would know better.

But certainly, even if Satan knew the girl had been kidnaped, he would not suspect that Pierson was such an utter idiot as to hide the girl in his own house. And Pierson's slate was clean. As clean as the greatest influence and the highest paid politicians could wipe it. He had never spoken to Satan, but had seen him a few times. He was interested now. He felt, perhaps, he could have enjoyed their talk if it were not for the girl; the damned trussed-up girl in the window seat. She might die, smother from the tightness of the gag.

Now he was to face the man who struck fear through the city. Did he feel a little of that fear himself? Satan, the one-man law who struck without warning, was coming up those stairs—and there was a gun in his hand.

Twice Pierson reached down for his own gun, but never lifted it from the basket. He could fix things tomorrow—but suppose there was no tomorrow?

The door flew open, and Flowers walked straight into the room.

"Flowers!" He lifted his head and spoke sharply, naturally. "Why this intrusion?"

"You can go, Flowers." A crisp voice spoke, then the door closed and the lock clicked. A single man stood at the end of that living-room.



PIERSON played his part well. "Who are you?" His hand went toward his empty shoulder holster.

The figure walked from the dimness by the door, said simply: "I am Satan Hall. Don't reach for a gun unless you intend to use it, Mr. Pierson."

"Satan Hall, eh?" Pierson lifted his hand and caressed his chin. "The menace to the wicked. The Killer Cop.

Why am I indebted to you for this odd visit? It's unfriendly, of course."

Pierson was relieved as Satan sat down in the chair opposite him with his back almost entirely toward the window ledge. But he wasn't relieved when he looked at that face. He had looked into the eyes of killers before, and he knew that he was looking into the eyes of one now.

Satan said, "I am afraid, Mr. Pierson, that my visit is very unfriendly indeed."

"You forced your way into my house and up the stairs to my room." Pierson stretched a hand toward the phone on the desk. "I shall be obliged to call my friend, the district attorney."

"By all means call him."

Pierson hesitated. Surely, he thought Satan would object to that. But he didn't call the district attorney. He could pull plenty of strings there, but he could not explain the girl away if the police came in. But Satan couldn't know the girl was there. He must have come for some other reason. At length Satan said:

"Mr. Pierson, your life rests upon the sincerity I put into my words, and the belief you have in that sincerity."

"You mean," Pierson who had dealt with many men said, "that I must listen to you—believe you or die? Well, that is novel. But I don't think you would be a hard man to make yourself believed. I'll help you if I can. You need my help?"

"I need your help very much." Satan waved away the cigars and ignored the offer of liquor. "You would like, of course, to see me dead. Don't deny it. You brought a man on from Chicago to kill me. Perhaps you heard that he failed. His name was Frankie Haines."

"Oh, come, come, Detective Hall!" Pierson had grown very smooth now, poured himself a drink. "You slapped him down. I heard something about it."

"He was fronting for you. Threatening me, and you behind him."

"You don't believe such stupid prat-

tle. That I sent him after you! Mr. Hall, you're a man of sense! You've been around. This man Haines is simply—" And suddenly realizing that he was admitting even an acquaintance with criminals, said, "You know my life. You know how I worked my way up. You know that my younger days were a disgrace to our fine city rather than to me. Surely, you haven't come to me to discuss a character dangerous to no one."

"No one but you." Satan leaned on the desk as Pierson, falling almost entirely into his Park Avenue personality, was about to demand that Satan leave the house at once. But Satan spoke first.

"It's about a girl. A young girl, Mr. Pierson." And as Pierson opened his mouth to talk down this killer cop who seemed to have turned out to be a simple, windy fellow, Satan said, "Her name is Nina Radcliff." And leaning further forward, "That surprises you?"

"Well, yes." Pierson recovered from his first shock. "I knew her father, I think. He was a banker?"

"A banker," Satan agreed. "And Nina just a kid. That's a few years ago. I liked her. Have you ever liked anyone a whole lot, Mr. Pierson?"

"Why, of course." Pierson started to expand now. He sipped his drink, smiled. "Many people. I daresay I have met the young lady. Her father lost his money, I believe."

"That's right. She had a hard time. Bonds belonging to her were stolen. Frankie Haines has taken the girl to get even with me."

"Oh, no!" Pierson almost bolted up in his chair. "The man would be out of his mind." And leaning confidentially forward: "I'll say a little more than I should, Detective Hall. Frankie Haines didn't do it. I have a reason for knowing."

"Alibis are for twelve men, not one," Satan told him. "I know he took her. I was told. Mattie Hern told me."

"Mattie? Miss M. Hern, the broker? Impossible. I'll call her at once." Pier-

son reached once more for the phone.

"There is no use to call her," Satan told him. "Miss M. Hern is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, quite dead. I know that because I shot her to death less than ten minutes ago."

"You? A woman! Mattie Hern? She tried—"

"She had no chance to try." Satan's words were still calm and clear, but there was a metallic ring in his voice that widened Pierson's eyes. "I held my gun close against her chest and kept a promise I had made. And that, Mr. Pierson, is why I asked you in the beginning to listen to me and try to believe in my sincerity."

"What—what do you mean?" Pierson was slipping back in his chair. His hand was in the waste-basket; then he moved his body forward again. He was holding a heavy automatic below that desk.

Satan didn't raise his voice. "I mean that I want the girl badly enough to kill you. You know Frankie. You control him. You have exactly ten minutes to produce her, then you die."

Pierson tried to laugh. It was all so incredible for any man to sit before him and make such a ridiculous threat. Then their eyes met, held like twin ropes twisted together from one socket to the other. Pierson thought of the woman, Mattie, with her beautiful face and her bright eyes. And his eyes dropped, and his right hand came up. Like the others he had been a fool. He should have shot Satan down when he had first entered that room.

But now when his eyes fell, they encountered Satan's hands, both empty upon the table. He didn't wait then. He didn't talk then. Pierson acted. He had a gun in his hand, and Satan, the deadly killer, had both hands empty upon the table. He wouldn't miss. He couldn't miss.

Pierson thought that his gun was above the desk when he saw Satan's hand move. But that hand had moved

as Pierson started to work his gun slowly up. Pierson didn't see that white hand go in and out. He only saw it move slightly and turn from white to black, felt the pain in his own wrist as his gun shot from his hand and slammed against the wall.

Satan was saying: "The newspapers, the district attorney, and perhaps even the honest citizen might have said it took courage for you to try that with me. But it wasn't courage, Pierson. You played what you thought was a sure thing."

Pierson was holding his hand, saying: "How—"

"I am not a miracle man even with a gun, Mr. Pierson. And you are too sure of yourself. I knew even before I sat down, a man like you would hardly be without a gun. Your coat was open, your shoulder holster was empty. Your right hand hung beneath the desk. When it moved slowly upward I started. Your hand never reached any real speed until my gun was out and under yours. You see, the position of my gun was such that I could have shot you dead."

"And you didn't?" Pierson reflected aloud. "You've always wanted me. The Commissioner has always wanted me. Why didn't you shoot?"

Satan shrugged his shoulders, leaned his thirty-eight revolver on the desk. "Because dead you could not produce Nina Radcliff."

"You don't think I'd have her here!"

"No," Satan agreed with that. "Perhaps you don't even know where she is. I simply wish you to produce her." Satan raised his gun. "I hoped you would believe me absolutely. Mattie didn't believe in the beginning that I would kill her either. I think at the end she did, but it was too late."

The gun moved farther across the table as Satan's elbow bent.

"You have eight minutes, Mr. Pierson. There's an electric clock above your head. I started counting before your little display of bad temper and

bad judgment." He stopped, waiting.

"If I did know—but I don't—it would be impossible for me to produce the girl. I might help you locate her, but that would take days." And as Satan's elbow stretched forward and the gun was now aimed some place at Pierson's broad chest, "Well, certainly hours."

"I am not," said Satan slowly, "a torturer. The clock is there behind you. When the time comes, you won't know."

"But I tell you, man, before God I don't possibly—" The phone rang. Pierson stretched out a hand. "Shall I —" He gulped. It was a long time since Pierson had asked permission from anyone for anything.

"Certainly. On your own time, not mine."

"What do you mean?" Pierson grabbed the phone.

"Perhaps," Satan's voice was low, "I should say on Death's time."

Pierson was talking into the phone, gasping out the words.

"Hello, Fink. Yeah. Mattie? No, no!" He dropped the phone back and muttered, "Three times in the stomach, right in the stomach! They just found the body." And suddenly: "But not me, Satan, not Floyd D. Pierson! Before God, you wouldn't—couldn't." Pierson was half on his feet now. The gun was almost at his stomach.

Pierson struggled on. "You couldn't. They'd know. Flowers would know. Welsh would know. They'd get you at last. They'd—" He stopped; a dry tongue came out and licked at drier lips. It was true, he knew it was true. This man was going to kill him. Just close a finger and put a bullet through him. A half a dozen maybe, just as he, Pierson, had so often. . . . But he couldn't think of that now, didn't want to think of that. He had never feared death. He had laughed when others died.

He gulped out a few words. What would become of him if he'd help find the girl. What would Satan do then?

Satan said, "I am sorry it's this way, Pierson. But you can't live now." Sa-

tan's head moved, his eyes brightened. "She was the single memory of something beautiful in my life."

Satan's body stiffened; his gun shot forward, a red knuckle turned white before Pierson's bulging eyes. A split second and a gun would roar and he—

Pierson raised his hand, pointed with his finger, fairly shouted the words: "No, no! She's there, there! Inside the window seat. Oh, God!"



HE HAD been near death many times, given up by the doctors who'd dug lead out of him in his younger days. But Pierson felt he had been far closer to death now than ever before. Perspiration beaded his forehead. His hand came from his head with water dropping from the fingers.

Fear, horror, call it what you wish, Pierson knew that he had experienced all emotions of terror for the first time in his life. Yet his keen brain was working again. He was helping Satan untie the girl, giving her a sip of brandy that he got from the high closet, massaging her swollen wrists.

But he was regaining his mental balance even if his hands did shake when he helped Satan lift the girl from inside the window seat.

The girl stood stiff-legged before Satan as he held her, then she was clinging to him. And his thought? That she was safe? No, that wasn't Satan's thought. His thought was, had she heard what he said to Pierson about "beautiful memories." Stupid words which he never meant to say. He pushed back her head, ran a hand through her hair. She was very young and very beautiful, and very, very tired. Not entirely tired from tonight either, but very tired of life.

Her arms went about his shoulders, her hair against his cheek. Her soft breathing and the tears that were really from happiness told Satan that she

wanted terribly not to die so young.

Pierson said, "Satan, that girl will tell you I never saw her before. That a mad fool brought her here. It mightn't be hard for me to explain how a girl happened to be here, and it mightn't be hard to get others with respected names like mine to explain the same thing. So, shall we forget tonight entirely?"

Satan smiled. "It wouldn't be funny for you if the truth came out," Satan said. "In your own house too—a gun, and a threat and you blow up." He thought a moment of Nina, of himself; of the power of Pierson. "All right, Pierson," he said. "Neither Miss Radcliff nor I appeared here tonight."

"Good, good!" Pierson rubbed his hands. "We'll forget the whole incident. You don't cross my path again, and I won't cross yours. The young lady was brought into—into trouble because of someone's personal feeling."

The phone rang, and Pierson picked it up. "Yes, yes, *Mattie!*" His voice trembled. "Why you couldn't— Oh, I see. I see. Yes, he's been here. Satan's here now and—"

Satan snatched away the phone and pronged it heavily back in its cradle.

"Could it be possible," Satan thought aloud, "that *Mattie Hern* could have arranged *Nina's* snatch with *Frankie Haines*?"

"So you lied about her being dead. *Fink*, too, he—"

"Never mind *Fink*, He's small-time compared with you. Yet, you talked just as he talked when the hour of death came."

"*Mattie Hern*. And I believed it. Believed if you killed *Mattie*, you would certainly not hesitate to—"

Satan walked toward the desk, stretched out his hand and with hard, quick fingers chucked up Pierson's head. For a full five seconds he looked into now ugly blue eyes.

Satan's voice grated. "The mention of *Mattie Hern's* name was to save both *Nina's* life and your life. It was to build up the story for you. Always re-

member what you read in my eyes was the truth. Yes, very decidedly, Mr. Pierson, I was not bluffing. I intended to kill you, have no doubt of that. Come, Miss Radcliff."

No one stopped them as they went down the stairs and out.

"Miss Radcliff, indeed," the girl said when she was in the taxi. "After the things you said about me to that man back there. Having secrets with a man like Pierson about beautiful memories!"

Feeling Satan draw away from her, and knowing that his face must be going crimson, she put her arm through his and went on.

"I could hear every word and tried so hard to move to attract attention. I liked what you said."

Satan didn't speak. There had been but two women in his life. He didn't understand women, had never tried.

"Nina," he finally said, "you don't look well. You shouldn't have to work as you do. I have some money saved. I have nothing to do with it. You can pay me back when I recover those bonds."

"Then you will recover them?"

"Yes, I will. I want you to stay at the Washington Hotel, a small, respectable family hotel. I will see that the money reaches you there tomorrow."

She looked at him in the darkness, then laughed.

"It's not funny," he started and stopped. She was leaning on his shoulder. She wasn't laughing. She was crying softly.

"You're so clumsy about things, Satan. Once I hated you when my father had you tear me away from the life I led. The class I went with. Then I wanted to help. I wasn't afraid to tell you then that I loved you. But I want no money from you, Satan. I'll find another job so they won't know where I am. If I were sure of getting the bonds, even then I wouldn't unless you made a promise."

"I was thinking of your father, and of you too. What promise?"

"That you'll let me help you—that you'll use my money whenever you need it."

Satan thought for a moment. There was really no promise at all there. But he said: "That's a go, Nina. But it's more than money that's needed."

"Money will buy information, money will put criminals to work against criminals. Isn't that true?"

"Yes, that is true." Satan nodded. "Stool pigeons are the clues of the police."

"But you use more than such clues."

"Maybe. Yes." He nodded his head. "The professors call it intuition. I call it a hunch. I didn't know anything about you tonight, but I knew that the biggest man in the business might. Pierson must have been surprised to see you come there."

The girl told of Frankie Haines meeting her, his story of the bonds, the hit on the head in the taxi. She said suddenly:

"Mattie Hern. You loved her once, Satan. She loves you—now. She came to see me after the bonds were stolen. Seemed to appear on those terrible days when I moved from one cheap apartment to a cheaper one. Once she offered me a job in her office, said I should apply to some man there. But I knew, I knew. And when I took the furnished room she wasn't around."

"Nina," Satan said to her quietly when they reached the hotel, "did you ever go out on a bridge with—with thoughts?"

Her eyes flashed. "She told you then. Why?" And when Satan didn't answer: "Whatever nightmare I had at that time, disappeared when her car passed me and she laughed. Mattie Hern takes what she wants from life. She wants you, Satan."

"Yes—dead. She tried to have me killed today."

"Oh, no! It must have been a joke!"

Satan said grimly: "A man died for it. The joke was on Coster."

"Coster, Coster." Nina thought a mo-

ment. "He was the man who was to give me the job. I don't think she had much use for him."

"She has less use for him now," Satan set his lips tightly. "But we mustn't stand here in the light. I'll call and see you tomorrow. Register under the name of Ruth Rogers. Explain that your bags will arrive in the morning."

"Will it be safe for you?"

Satan laughed. "It will be safe for both of us."

As he started to turn her around and push her toward the hotel she asked:

"About tonight, Satan. How did you know Haines had taken me away?"

"The Commissioner told me where you worked. The girls were leaving for lunch when I got there. I missed you, Nina, but I didn't miss the girl on the corner who had seen Frankie. She was talking about a girl being pushed into a taxi. I went to your boarding house. You hadn't been there."

"And you thought of Haines then?"

"Yes, so I went straight to Pierson. I never suspected for a moment that you'd be there. But I thought he could control Frankie Haines." Satan turned her about and headed her toward the hotel.

In three minutes Satan was on the phone talking to the Commissioner. He was saying:

"And I want you to have her carefully watched. Only the most trusted men, understand? Send them to me at once. Order them to shoot on sight anyone molesting her and practically kill anyone who even tries to see her. Yes, I've got business and it concerns the bonds. It's only a hunch, but I think I know why the bonds have not appeared any place. I'm playing that hunch tonight."

Ten minutes later Satan stepped out on the sidewalk, saw that one man had already arrived, nodded his approval at the Commissioner's good judgment, then spoke to the plain-clothes man.

"She's in room 784, McCarthy," he

said. "And it's a killing job if trouble starts. You wouldn't like to be the dead man, would you?"

"No. Damn it, Satan! Everyone on the Force hates you. The Commissioner's pet, and all that. How do you get away with it? Other cops—well, they'd get killed certain. Every guy ain't got your draw with a gun, I guess, nor your pull with the Commissioner."

"I didn't have any pull when I started out," Satan said grimly. "And it's always hard to pin something on a man doing his duty. This is important tonight—important enough to kill on sight."



ATAN flagged a cab and said to the driver:

"Drive me over to Sixth and down. I'll tell you when I've had enough."

The cab reached Sixth, shot down two blocks and Satan tapped on the window. Satan got out, plodded slowly down the block. Few people walked the silent street.

Satan proceeded to the next corner and looked in the window of the dirty shop. The lettering in both tiny windows was new. It read: The Amsterdam Shop. And in smaller letters in one corner: J. Hern.

"J. Hern. M. Hern," Satan muttered as he studied the lighted window through the dirty glass. Confederate money, old coins, some vases, cheap watches and rings. But Satan could make out no figure in the dimness.

For a full minute, Satan stood back, plainly visible to anyone from that shop. Then he stepped forward, picked up a card that had been shoved under the door. The card read:

"I don't want to see no one. I won't see you, but if you must see me anyway, go to the door on the side street."

Satan nodded and grinned. The same old Jake. It didn't do Jake's business

any good to have a copper calling on him. But it did Jake's business less good if that copper knocked a piece out of the glass door, shot the bolt from inside and entered the shop.

Satan tore the note into tiny bits. Then holding the particles in his left hand, he turned, walked to the corner, passed around it and climbed the steps to the dark vestibule of the old house.

He was very careful as he opened that door; more careful as he entered the hallway and stood at the bottom of the flight of musty, ill-smelling stairs. Passing to the right of the stairs, Satan creaked down the narrow hall to the single door at the back. There he found the slit of steel that served as a mailbox. Into this slit he dropped the torn bits of paper.

Almost at once light popped on and off like a flash. Then the door opened and Satan walked slowly down the four steps. The door closed behind him. Distinctly he heard the click of metal. Inside that rotten wood, then, was a door of steel. Peculiar all this, Satan agreed. But then, J. Hern had always been a peculiar man and a shrewd one. The shrewdest who ever handled stolen goods along the Avenue.

Jake Hern seemed older than he was. His bent little body moved with great effort until Satan stretched out a hand, placed it on his shoulder. Then Jake moved quickly, swung like a cornered rat. But he smiled at Satan and said:

"I might'a known you wouldn't be coming like that, standing there for a man to shoot at, unless it was a friendly visit."

His corded hand gripped Satan's tightly.

"It's good to see you. Sit." And when Satan sat down at the dirty table and took the coffee Jake handed him, Jake went right on talking.

"Mattie's back. You should see her, Satan. Talks about you all the time."

He paused and eyed Satan. "A little high-hat for her old man now. But I'll never forget them days that you turned evangelist and she wouldn't have none of crime—none of it when she owned the fastest moving fingers in the city. I taught her all that so she could work along with her own father."

"And she won't work along now, eh, Jake?"

"I didn't say that. You're clever, Satan. No one is to deny that. After all, I suppose she was some help. You liked her and let me alone."

"My leaving you alone had nothing to do with Mattie."

Jake rubbed his hands. "I like to hear you say that even if it isn't true. I'm old now. Just Old Jake Hern." He tossed an arm loosely about. "Don't think none the worse of Mattie for this old hole. She comes to see me. A grand lady now. Still soft on you, too. I'd ring her up if I had a phone."

Satan knew that some place above or below that shop Jake Hern possessed every luxury in living quarters, which certainly, included a phone.

"Mattie has never forgotten you."

"She tried to have me killed today," Satan said abruptly.

"She did? Well, maybe it was just a fit of temper, Satan. You mustn't mind that." Jake Hern didn't ask for particulars. He didn't need to. There were those who said that Jake knew everything that went on in the underworld. That unsolvable, almost unbelievable system that crooks have to communicate in the underworld was all an open book to Jake.

"Jake," Satan leaned forward, "I didn't altogether pay you a social visit tonight."

Stumps of broken teeth showed. "No one ever does."

"Remember Nina Radcliff? Remember her father? The banker who—"

"I don't remember things any more,"

Jake pleaded. "I'm an old man now. Most times I don't even understand."

"You understand what you want to understand."

"I don't think I want to understand anything from you, Satan—not tonight. You saw Mattie's big offices. She's the whole works there with Allison and Conway who're both in Europe."

"There was a girl," Satan went on. "Nina Radcliff. Her entire inheritance was stolen. Five hundred thousand dollars' worth of bonds. They were highly negotiable, yet not one of them has showed up any place. Pierson is running the deal for Mattie. She took them from Nina—partly because she hated the girl, but I guess she had orders and wanted the money. We have pictures of you down at Headquarters which are not flattering. But we have one of you snapped in Brussels, Jake. Cane, spats, yellow gloves—"

"Ah, I wish it was my picture. I'd be a pretty sight all dressed up like that." Parchment-like skin tightened about Hern's thin face. "Brussels, now, I never been there."

Satan went right on talking. "So you came back to New York and set up in your old place. Nothing against you. Pierson has met you, of course, and through Mattie promises to dispose of the bonds. Right?"

"I never heard anything like it before."

"Then it is not true. There is no use of my talking further."

"Of course it's not true." Jake Hern's voice merely stated words with indifference. "But don't you stop talking on my account. I like to hear your voice, Satan."

There was a sudden click of a key in a lock. Jake Hern jarred up in his chair, waved at Satan who slipped back in the darkness. Satan's breath whistled too. A drawer had opened as Jake drew back; a stumped object seemed to rise out of that drawer and turn itself over in Jake's hand. Jake was always clever. Jake was always mechanical. He was

holding a sawed-off shotgun across his knee.

The door opened. A shadowy figure was poised there. From Satan's position he could not tell if it was a man or a woman. Jake Hern had raised his shotgun. He said:

"Are you alone? Is someone behind you forcing you on?"

"I am alone," Mattie Hern said.

"I'm not much of a shot, Mattie," Jake said. "But this gun would blast up and down and across the doorway. You wouldn't bring someone here of your own accord. Stand aside while I look." Jake laughed then. "I can kill Frankie or all of them, but they can't kill me. They might torture me, but they can't kill me, not yet they can't."

"Don't be silly, Father." Mattie came down the steps after closing the heavy door. "They don't know that you have the—" She stopped, saw Satan, jarred out the words: "What's he doing here?"

"He came to visit me, Mattie, just like he used to. Had your interest at heart. You were sent here by someone?"

"You're talking nonsense. I simply came for my property." Mattie turned suddenly and walked toward a stack of musty old pictures that stood against the wall. She stretched up her hand, gripped the highest in the center of the bunch by the top of its frame.

Jake spoke sharply. "Your property. You mean your pictures." He cast a warning glance toward Satan. "Some other time will be better." He came to his feet, put an arm about her. "I am your father, Mattie. Satan Hall came because he is worried about you."

The girl looked at Satan, said: "Is that why you came?"

"No."

"You came to get information from my father."

Satan's lips parted; his teeth showed. "No one knows your father better than you do, Mattie. You don't get information from him."

"How nice," the girl said. And suddenly looking from Satan to her father

then back to Satan again: "Father thinks Frankie Haines is a danger to me. Will you escort me to my own apartment?"

"With pleasure." Satan grinned. "But, you see, I promised to show your father a new method of forging checks. Come, Jake. I want to talk to you a moment in the front of the shop."

Satan talked fast as they leaned against the dirty glass counter beyond the curtains. Though they were too far away for Mattie to hear, Satan's voice was a low whisper.

"Look, Jake. Mattie's property might be the bonds. They might have let you hide them, and you don't like the deal. Maybe they'll double-cross you; maybe this lad, Frankie Haines, is planning to kill you."

Jake smiled. "Not me, not Jake Hern. I was never safer in my life."

"They'll torture it out of you. Listen, Jake, it's possible that those bonds were given to you to hide away. Everyone trusts you who pays you well. Now suppose you could even get your hands on these bonds. You couldn't sell them, not with Pierson watching, Frankie watching, perhaps the whole underworld trade watching and waiting. But I'll give you twenty thousand in cash for them, Jake. Can't you understand? Then fifty thousand dollars in cash, and no prosecution afterwards. Simply a reward."

"You got the money?" Jake's fingers were trembling against Satan's arm now.

"You've got the bonds hidden here then?"

"No, but fifty grand is a lot of money. Someone might tell me if I had the money to pass around. You have fifty thousand dollars now?"

"No." Satan watched the back of the shop and the curtains that did not move. "You find those bonds now and that's your reward from Miss Radcliff."

"Where does she get the money? She has none and you have no such money."

"The money comes from the sale of some of the bonds. It's the only way."

"Ah, that's different. Too many people have promised me money and— I know you, Satan. I believe you. No criminal charge. I take one hundred thousand dollars cash."

"I can't. I wasn't authorized to offer more. Listen, Jake, there's Pierson. He needs money. There's Haines, not a hireling any more, but a man who demands his share. There's Mattie. What will those bonds bring, Jake? They're hot. You figure three hundred thousand, say, but it will be less now. And he you are with fifty thousand in cash. A daughter who looks up to you and no worry. No fear of Haines. I'll take care of that."

"With so much money, I get him killed myself. These nights I wait in the rear of the shop for him to come. Always I think I do not shoot so quick, so straight, but the shotgun takes care of that. All right! Come around tomorrow night—seventy-five thousand dollars."

Satan settled it at length.

"Sixty thousand dollars cash." Jake put his vein-knotted hand into Satan's great palm. "You are the only man like this I would trust. The money, it comes later. I will have the bonds here at eleven o'clock tomorrow night. Be neither one minute either side of the clock."

"And I'm trusting you too, Jake."

"Me—you trust." Jake laughed. "With what? Satan—" he gripped Satan's arm as they turned from the door—"you have quick eyes, a clever mind. Forget that Mattie played with the paintings, gripped the biggest in the center. But remember that Mattie knows all of this shop, the top and the bottom as I know it myself. Remember eleven o'clock is the right time. A half million dollars' worth of bonds will be here in this house. My interest in them will never cease until sixty thousand dollars' worth are sold and the money delivered to me. Ah—" as Mattie entered. "My child, Satan has had his joke and will take you home."

Mattie Hern said, "I'll wait and talk with you, Father."

"No, no. Go while you have such good company, such good protection. And Mattie, child," he went close to her and held her; she stiffened, but gave slightly when he spoke. "Frankie Haines knows too much about too much money. He does not fear this big man you trust. Do not trust him."

Jake shook his head as he saw them go to the steps and into the dark hall. The door closed. The man and the woman stood in the darkness together. But they were in a taxi before Mattie spoke.

She said, "I was wondering, Satan, if you would ever save my life again, like in the old days."

"It would be a pleasure," Satan said sarcastically, "if it should happen entirely by accident."

"So you wouldn't come if I needed you. But now, will you come up to my apartment? I am giving a party tonight. At least I am having a party for Mr. Pierson."

"I think not. Park Avenue, I suppose."

"Park Avenue, yes." She nodded. "What were you talking about to Father?"

"Mattie!" Satan said sternly. "At your age and with your experience. Such a question!"

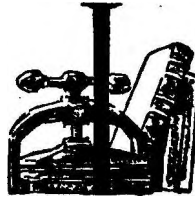
The car came to a sudden stop before one of Park Avenue's highest priced apartments. "Stay out of things, Satan—and take the taxi home."

Satan spoke to her through the window. "Mattie, you don't like Nina. Why?"

"I hate her. I hate her miserable little body. Why? That's a laugh. Everything that was good in her, you saw bad in me. You looked only for good in me until you saw her. Then you looked for the bad in me. Yes, and I guess found plenty." And her face suddenly heightening into a vivid color: "Stay out of her affairs, Satan. Frankie Haines hates the girl because he hates you. In hating you he would cut her to ribbons.

And I hate her too! I hate her!"

Satan didn't say anything as she ran gracefully into the apartment.



IT WAS four o'clock when Satan had exhausted all the haunts he knew in his search for Frankie Haines. In each place Satan let it be understood that he was looking for Frankie, and that the finding of him meant a slab in the morgue.

"I'd like to clean it up in the right way, George," he said casually to a bartender in a particularly unsavory place. "You know how he beefed around about me." And leaning over the bar he whispered confidentially, "You wouldn't believe it, but some of Frankie's baloney actually stirred guys up as if they had hop in them. I had to knock over two or—was it three? Well, it was two anyway. And the way they drew their guns would have made you roll on the floor laughing."

George did not find the incident particularly funny. He was trying to remember how loud Frankie had spouted to him.

Satan punched him friendly enough, said, "Well, they rolled on the floor anyway."

"I guess," George watched Satan out of the corners of his eyes, "that a lot of murders—I mean killings—could be explained if you wanted to talk."

"You'd be surprised yourself, George, if you knew."

George pushed his big head across the bar. "You talk around things sometimes, Satan, like politicians. Now I don't want to get in wrong. Is all this talk a warning I'm to give Frankie if he comes here—a warning to beat it out of the city?"

"No! But I'm going to kill Frankie Haines. Not just meet him and kill him, George. I'm going to hunt him down. This time I'm really on the kill."

Satan left the bar. There was little

doubt in his mind he would kill Haines some day, but he knew that his conversation would go back to Frankie. And he thought that Frankie might keep off the city streets while the warning was fresh in his mind. Indeed, he hoped that Frankie would go into hiding.

Satan frowned. Other men would start pulling strings around the city. But Frankie was not in a position to pull strings, nor did Satan think that Pierson would pull too many for him. Besides, tomorrow night—or rather that very night—Satan would have the bonds. The game would be up then as far as Pierson was concerned. . . .

It was well after four o'clock when Satan arrived at the Commissioner's house. He stood in silence while the Commissioner raged up and down the room. He knew the Commissioner didn't like him to deliberately go on the kill. He would rather have him make excuses or claim that he was obeying orders. But the Commissioner finally ran out of words and said simply: "Well, what is it?"

"First," Satan said very gravely, "I've covered most of the dives looking for Frankie Haines. I intend to kill him."

"Well, why not?" The Commissioner was gruff. "He's been a pain to the city for some time and Pierson backs him."

"I didn't mean that as news. I just want you to cover me if the threat comes out. I've told his friends. He went around threatening me, you know."

"A detective paid by the city! A detective criticized by the papers for too much killing—legal killing. And now you advertise it in advance. There's no excuse, not even your favorite line, the 'lucky break' you had with a gun."

Satan looked very grim. "Frankie Haines," he said, "is one of the few men who fear no one. My message after slapping him down will either fill him with his first fear or strike him with vengeance. One way he'll go into a hole, while I get the bonds. The other way, he'll be looking for vengeance and walk into a belly-full of lead, making

the bonds much easier for me to get."

"The bonds? You know where they are?"

"I'll get them," Satan nodded, "tonight. That's why I've come. It will cost sixty thousand dollars. Yep, a cross in the mob. But if the crosser is offered a hundred thousand by someone else, I'll probably walk into a few pounds of lead."

"The crosser will double-cross you, Satan. Of course, they'll offer him more."

Satan shook his head. "I don't think they'll give it to him in cash. And I don't think he would trust them to pay after the sale. But there's a chance, Commissioner, that I might run into stormy weather. If I do—" Satan shrugged, "I can't see any way of blasting in and out of this job. I came to see you about money, money for Nina."

"She won't take money."

"She'll take this money," Satan hurried on. "It's in the Citizens' Savings Bank, quite a lot of it."

"On your salary as a first-grade detective! An honest cop with money?"

"It doesn't cost me much to live. I never pay any outside expenses. I haven't anything to do with money. My business is hunting criminals. That's my pleasure too. But if I'm killed, I want Nina to have that money. How do I do it?"

The Commissioner stared at that cold, stern face for some time. Even as he looked at it he could not see it soften any, rather harden. The Commissioner's smile faded, the twinkle went out of his eyes.

"Of course, Frank, of course." He forgot the name "Satan" for a moment and used Detective Hall's first name. "You just make a statement that you want what money you have to go to Nina. Here—" The Commissioner wrote rapidly, handed it to Satan. Watched him sign it, waved it in the air to dry.

"I thought," he said, "that it was superstition with you never to make a will."

"It is," Satan said grimly. "But tonight it doesn't seem fair to the girl. A lot of people I never met might turn up as relatives and claim my money."

"She won't take it, Satan."

"She'll have to. She couldn't refuse if I die for her."

"Come, come." The Commissioner took him by the shoulder. "I never heard any such talk from you before. You dying—and for a woman!"

Satan made a face. "I didn't mean that. But it will look that way to her. It's my duty to get those bonds. It's the law."

"That's more like it. Now are you sure this isn't a job for more men; surround the place at—"

The Commissioner paused, but Satan did not fall into his trap and name Jake Hern. He said merely:

"It's a lone job. It's because I work alone that I get results and am trusted. No, if there's an attempt to blast me out, others would get hurt. If you sent men my friend would be afraid to go through with the bond transaction. I'm going alone. I am the law."

But just before he left the house, he said: "Nina's name now is Ruth Rogers. Send her some money at the Washington Hotel. As for me—I'm going home to bed." And Satan was gone. . . .

It was half past six when he called Nina on the phone and was relieved at her voice, the yawn in it.

He would play safe though.

"Hello, Ruth. This is Joe," Satan said, and was a little puzzled at the heartiness of her laugh. "I won't come over until my job is finished. You are to stay in your room. There will be money sent to you."

"But I don't need money now—at least much. Satan, Satan! You're going into some terrible danger for me."

"Quiet," Satan said roughly. "You should hear from me after midnight."

He slammed down the phone, climbed into bed and went to sleep. The strong finger of his right hand which wound

itself around the trigger of a heavy gun never moved.

At twelve o'clock noon, the Commissioner called him and said the girl was all right and that he had seen that immediate cash was supplied her.

"Books, candy, flowers—all such little things have been sent up to her in your name. Things haven't changed any, eh?"

"No, my plans are made."

Satan went back to sleep.

At four that afternoon Satan took another telephone call. The voice was rasping over the wire:

"So you're hiding out at home. You dirty skunk, what do you mean blowing off your wind when everyone is asleep? Yeah, it's Frankie Haines. I'm packing two rods, and I'd like to show you both of them."

"I'd like very much to see them."

"When?"

"Five minutes to dress and the time it takes to get where you are." Satan's lips smacked. Maybe he had misjudged the boastful, threatening Frankie. It would be nice to meet him now. That might save complications later. It would be satisfying to know that Frankie was dead.

"I'm down at the Owl's Nest." Frankie's voice had softened somewhat at the readiness with which Satan accepted his invitation. "Start shooting when you come in. I'm on the kill."

"George's, eh? Is George there? No, no, I just want him to tell me the truth. I can't run blindly around."

A whisper grew louder. Satan recognized the voice. "This is George, Mr. Hall, sir."

"Is Frankie Haines in your place, George? There, don't tell me unless he permits it."

"Yes sir, he is." George's voice grew even softer. "He told me to tell you. I remember you saying—"

"Thank you, George. I appreciate your locating him. And I won't muss up your place—too much. It will be a nice clean job."



THIRTEEN minutes later Satan swung through the door, and pushed himself to the end of George's bar.

"He's gone," said George. "My place,

Mr. Hall. I convinced him for my good that he should go."

Satan leaned far over the bar, spoke softly, but his green eyes and thin lips were most unpleasant.

"George," and to the big bartender Satan's words seemed to creep out of his mouth, "George, you're not very familiar with guns, are you? And you know what happens to fellows who are not familiar with guns. You've been a sore eye in this neighborhood for some time. If you wish to continue to be a sore eye, tell me the exact words you used that convinced Frankie Haines to leave."

"I told him," George gulped, "that you might be around here and smear up the place with him. I got a popular place. Just plain dicks, let alone dicks like you, give it a bad name."

"What did Frankie do when you told him about me?"

"He raged up and down the bar, then he put a nickel in the slot and started talking to you. There were two guys with him before that. Then they left. A tall man and a short one. I never seen either before."

Satan left, ate a late dinner and went back to his apartment. There he sat and waited for the zero hour. He would leave at twenty minutes to eleven exactly. . . . He could trust Jake Hern just so far as sixty thousand dollars bought his trust, and he felt sure it was enough, since Jake would hardly mention their transaction to anyone else. Just one thing made him fear for both the bonds and his own safety. That was the name of Floyd D. Pierson. Pierson wasn't often double-crossed. At the same time, Jake Hern was the shrewdest man to deal with along the Avenue.

At twenty-five minutes of eleven Satan Hall came to his feet, examined both of his guns, carefully adjusted his shoulder holsters. Danger? Of course, there would be danger. There always is when so much money is involved. And a half million dollars is a lot of money—to anyone.

Pierson would watch Hern, or perhaps he wouldn't. Mattie might assure Pierson of the safety of the bonds, but could she or did she so assure Frankie Haines? And Frankie Haines, although he worked for Pierson, was something of a lone wolf. If he wasn't, he would easily become one if he saw a chance at those bonds.

Satan was almost at the door when the phone rang. There was no doubt of the trembling in the man's voice. It was Fink.

"Don't talk, Satan. Just listen."

Satan recognized the terror. "I'm listening," he said.

"It's the girl, Nina. Frankie has her. No, I don't know where he got her. Early today I was told by a certain party that if I didn't hear that party's voice again before ten-thirty I was to give you her message. Frankie Haines is going to torture her horribly about some bonds. You're to go to her at once. Go just where you were going—only go at once if you want to save her life."

"Where am I to go?" Satan demanded.

"Don't you know? I was told that you would know and save her. Go at once."

The phone on the other end crashed home. Fink was telling the truth or else he expected Satan to be killed that night. No one lied to Satan Hall—and lived.

Satan grabbed the phone. The Commissioner's picked men. What had happened? What could happen? He gave the number of the Washington Hotel and a moment later said:

"Miss Ruth Rogers."

"Oh," the clerk said, "Miss Rogers checked out. At 5:45, just before dinner. She said for you not to worry."

"For me not to worry," Satan jammed in angrily. "Who do you think I am?"

"Why, I don't know, sir. She said to give that message to the man who called if any man did call, so I—"

Satan Hall would go where he was going—straight to Jake Hern's. His game was not thinking and planning. His game was his enemy's game, the criminal's game—action, sudden and violent death.

Hat well down, Satan stepped into a cab. Rain was falling, and there were few people on the streets. As he passed Jake Hern's lighted shop his sharp eyes covered both sides of the street. No one was watching—that was certain. A block farther Satan left the cab and doubled back. He didn't hesitate. He didn't believe in creeping up on danger real or imaginary. He turned the corner, went directly into the dark, misty hallway and rapped lightly on the door.

He rapped again, yet the door did not open. Then he jerked out his flat flashlight and looked the door over. Satan's eyes widened—the key was there.

He touched it, turned it lightly. He had a gun in his hand when he opened the door. He stood looking down into the dully lighted back room.

Satan covered the outer shop carefully, but it was no search as compared to the one he gave the inner room with its pictures and old vases.

Satan paused. Distinctly he heard a noise. It was a queer sound like an animal crying.

Satan turned from the door and looked at the dust-covered stack of faded paintings. He remembered Jake referring to them, and remembered Mattie crossing to them, placing her hand upon the highest one when Jake spoke to her sharply. Was a door hidden there that led to Jake Hern's private quarters?

The first picture would not budge. He nodded in satisfaction. All the pictures up to the large one in the center of the top that Mattie had grabbed were bolted together.

Satan gripped the top of the trame as he had seen Mattie grip it; gripped it almost as if he expected something to happen at once. But it was a full five minutes before Satan heard a spring click. All the paintings rolled aside.

Almost at his feet was a trap door, an iron ring on it.

Satan shrugged his shoulders. He hadn't come there to find Jake Hern's hidden apartment, the eccentricity of an old hypocrite who had always posed as very poor. But he lifted the trap, peered down into the blackness.

Satan hesitated. This trap door might prove a trap for him. That might have been why the key was left in the lock. Or that might be why Jake had given him a hint how to reach this place when he said, "Forget that Mattie played with the pictures."

Satan was not a fool. He could sit above there and wait for Jake and the bonds. He gripped the heavy trap to close it again, cocked his head to listen, then jarred erect. Far below him, somewhere in that darkness had come a scream, the scream of a woman in agony. . . .



AT AN HALL thought of Nina, of Frankie Haines and his threat. He slipped with silent speed down those dark steps. At the bottom his light flashed once. He saw the passageway, the open door, the tile floor behind that door—and at the end of that hall, thick, expensive drapes.

Satan's light went out. When he reached the curtains, light had come from between them. He heard a moan and a curse and a harsh voice which said:

"What d'you say, Jake? She didn't like that one, did she?" Another curse and, "By God, you'd sit there and see her hacked to pieces before you'll tell where you put those bonds. Listen, Hern, I'm working things alone tonight.

The bonds for your freedom, huh?"

Satan parted the curtains, looked into the room. He saw Jake Hern was strapped in a chair, almost directly facing the curtains, his arms bound behind him. A rope held his neck erect. His eyes were fastened on the girl. The girl over which a man bent. There was a knife in the man's hand.

The girl was on the floor; her head half under the bed from which she had evidently rolled. One naked arm stretched out. Satan saw nothing but that single arm—and the almost perfect thin line around it. A blue line that was widening and turning red—the same red that dripped from the knife.

Jake Hern was saying: "You couldn't let me go free. You'd be afraid I'd talk."

The man turned and Satan saw his face. It was Frankie Haines, and even as he talked to Hern he kicked the girl.

"Do you want to see circles like that all over her body? Do you want to see her die slowly like that? Or will you tell me where those bonds are?"

"Not yet. Not yet." Jake Hern wrenched forward so that the rope bit into his throat and choked his speech for a moment. "I can wait. You were right about my making a deal with Satan, Frankie. I may be dead, she may be dead. But death is waiting for you too."

"So that's how it is. You were stalling, hoping Satan might come. I'll kill the girl first. She knows nothing. I put on the show for you—to make you talk."

"Don't!" Jake's veins looked as if they would burst in his forehead. "I tell you that girl loves Satan and he loves her. He'll kill you." And as Frankie knelt by the girl and lifted the knife: "No, no! The bonds are upstairs, inside those hundreds of roadmaps on the lower shelf in the store."

"That's more like it." Frankie came to his feet. "O.K., Ernie, take a look upstairs, see if he's right. I'll wait here."

Satan straightened. He hadn't seen the other man. Now he saw him come from the far corner of the room. Ernest Trainer. Satan knew him, of course—wanted for many crimes. Satan stepped back down the hard floor to the basement beyond the door.

Ernest Trainer came. He was laughing. He called back: "No toad sticking until I come back, Frankie."

As Ernest turned at the stairs Satan raised his right hand, a gun flashed for a moment. There was a dull thud, a heavier one, then Ernest lay still and silent on the cement floor.

Satan stepped indifferently over his body, and moved silently down the hall.

Jake Hern shrieked: "No, no!"

Satan put his eye and his gun to the curtain and looked into that room. The girl was erect now, her back to Satan. Around her neck was firmly clasped Frankie Haines' left arm. He still had the knife in his right hand.

"So, you two-timing—" And the knife flashed in an arc before her face.

The girl screamed; the old man's eyes bulged and his mouth hung open. Satan Hall closed his finger twice. There were two holes in Frankie Haines' head before the knife fell to the floor and he collapsed on top of it.

The girl dropped to her knees, tried to regain her balance.

"It's over now, Nina." Satan took her by the shoulders. "Come." He lifted her to her feet, turned her around and looked straight into the eyes of Mattie Hern! He tried to speak and couldn't.

Mattie Hern said in a dry voice: "So you saved my life and quite by accident, or did you know?"

Satan shuddered, lifted the knife from the floor and cut the broken ropes from her feet.

Mattie said, "I knew you had a deal with Father. Frankie suspected it too. I came here tonight to force the bonds from my father, and Frankie pulled the double-cross." She placed both hands on Satan's shoulders when he looked down

at her. "But I didn't know about the other man, Ernest. He got in and hid in the front of the shop. You didn't let him get the bonds?"

"No," said Satan. "I didn't. I struck him down."

The girl talked as they untied her father, gave him water.

"Yes, I suspected Frankie, but I did want Father to give those bonds to Pierson. They were my bonds—at least I got them. So I left a message with Fink that if he did not hear from me to tell you that it was Nina who was in danger."

"Yes, I got that message. What happened to Nina?"

"Why, nothing. It was ten when we reached here and I left the key in the outside of the door. I knew my message would send you here at once—because of Nina. You wouldn't have come for me, Satan."

Satan said, "No, it was an accident."

The girl looked steadily at him, then suddenly jumped, cried: "Father! Hold him, Satan. I'll get the heart medicine."

Satan leaned forward, clutched at the old man, then opened his eyes wide.

Jake Hern was saying: "The bonds, the bonds, you fool! She'll get them."

Mattie Hern had the bonds. Satan knew that the moment he heard the trap door close; knew, too, that she would

get away with them the moment he heard the clang of iron as a bar snapped across the door above his head. He tried, of course, but even his great shoulders could not raise that trap. Satan raved in those rooms for an hour.

He kept searching the apartment thoroughly, and he felt he had a stroke of luck. It was a telephone nicely hidden in a bedroom.

This time the Commissioner's voice was not irritable when he answered.

"Satan! Nina has worried about you. Of course, she's here at my house. And the bonds—When they came."

"You've got them?"

"Every one of them. I pretended I didn't know the man who brought them, but it was Fink. You sent him, of course. Besides, there was another person in the car, who held a gun in his hand or her hand—it looked like a woman."

"All the bonds are safe?"

"Yes, yes, I told you that. They came, as you know, marked 'From Satan to Nina.' Didn't you want to send them that way?"

Satan hesitated a long time, then he confounded the Commissioner with: "Perhaps I did. Yes, I think I did."

Another voice came in on an extension. It was the voice of Mattie Hern:

"You can come up and have breakfast with me, Satan, if you'd like."



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YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER ME

By STEVE FISHER

This kid is smart—
so smart he'll die of it!



COULD tell it was Pushton blowing the bugle and I got out of bed tearing half of the bed clothes with me. I ran to the door and yelled, "Drown it!

Drown it! Drown it!" and then I slammed the door and went along the row of beds and pulled the covers off the rest of the guys and said:

"Come on, get up. Get up! Don't you hear Pushton out there blowing his stinky lungs out?"

I hate bugles anyway, but the way this guy Pushton all but murders reveille kills me. I hadn't slept very well, thinking of the news I was going to hear this morning, one way or the other, and

then to be jarred out of what sleep I could get by Pushton climaxed everything.

I went back to my bed and grabbed

my shoes and puttees and slammed them on the floor in front of me, then I began unbuttoning my pajamas. I knew it wouldn't do any good to ask the guys in this wing. They wouldn't know anything. When they did see a paper all they read was the funnies. That's the trouble with Clark's. I know it's one of the best military academies in the West and that it costs my old man plenty of dough to keep me here, but they sure have some dopy ideas on how to handle kids. Like dividing the dormitories according to ages. Anybody with any sense knows that it should be according to grades because just take for instance this wing. I swear there isn't a fourteen-year-old-punk in it that I could talk to without wanting to push in his face. And I have to live with the little pukes.

So I kept my mouth shut and got dressed, then I beat it out into the company street before the battalion got lined up for the flag raising. That's a silly thing, isn't it? Making us stand around with empty stomachs, shivering goose pimples while they pull up the flag and Pushton blows the bugle again. But at that I guess I'd have been in a worse place than Clark's Military Academy if my pop hadn't had a lot of influence and plenty of dollars. I'd be in a big school where they knock you around and don't ask you whether you like it or not. I know. I was there a month. So I guess the best thing for me to do was to let the academy have their Simple Simon flag-waving fun and not kick about it.

I was running around among the older guys now, collaring each one and asking the same question: "Were you on home-going yesterday? Did you see a paper last night? What about Tommy Smith?" That was what I wanted to know. What about Tommy Smith.

"He didn't get it," a senior told me.

"You mean the governor turned him down?"

"Yeah. He hangs Friday."

That hit me like a sledge on the back of my head and I felt words rushing

to the tip of my tongue and then sliding back down my throat. I felt weak, like my stomach was all tied up in a knot. I'd thought sure Tommy Smith would have had his sentence changed to life. I didn't think they really had enough evidence to swing him. Not that I cared, particularly, only he had lived across the street and when they took him in for putting a knife through his old man's back—that was what they charged him with—it had left his two sisters minus both father and brother and feeling pretty badly.

Where I come in is that I got a crush on Marie, the youngest sister. She's fifteen. A year older than me. But as I explained, I'm not any little dumb dope still in grammar school. I'm what you'd call bright.

So that was it; they were going to swing Tommy after all, and Marie would be bawling on my shoulder for six months. Maybe I'd drop the little dame. I certainly wasn't going to go over and take that for the rest of my life.

I got lined up in the twelve-year-old company, at the right end because I was line sergeant. We did squads right and started marching toward the flag pole. I felt like hell. We swung to a company front and halted.

Pushton started in on the bugle. I watched him with my eyes burning. Gee, I hate buglers, and Pushton is easy to hate anyway. He's fat and wears horn-rimmed glasses. He's got a body like a bowling ball and a head like a pimple. His face looks like yesterday's oatmeal. And does he think being bugler is an important job! The little runt struts around like he was Gabriel, and he walks with his buttocks sticking out one way and his chest the other.

I watched him now, but I was thinking more about Tommy Smith. Earlier that night of the murder I had been there seeing Marie and I had heard part of Tommy's argument with his old man. Some silly thing. A girl Tommy wanted to marry and the old man couldn't see

it that way. I will say he deserved killing, the old grouch. He used to chase me with his cane. Marie says he used to get up at night and wander around stomping that cane as he walked.

Tommy's defense was that the old boy lifted the cane to bean him. At least that was the defense the lawyer wanted to present. He wanted to present that, with Tommy pleading guilty, and hope for an acquittal. But Tommy stuck to straight denials on everything. Said he hadn't killed his father. The way everything shaped up the State proved he was a drunken liar and the jury saw it that way.

Tommy was a nice enough sort. He played football at his university, was a big guy with blond hair and a ruddy face, and blue eyes. He had a nice smile, white and clean like he scrubbed his teeth a lot. I guess his old man had been right about that girl, though, because when all this trouble started she dropped right out of the picture, went to New York or somewhere with her folks.

I was thinking about this when we began marching again; and I was still thinking about it when we came in for breakfast about forty minutes later, after having had our arms thrown out of joint in some more silly stuff called setting-up exercises. What they won't think of! As though we didn't get enough exercise running around all day!

Then we all trooped in to eat.

I sat at the breakfast table cracking my egg and watching the guy across from me hog six of them. I wanted to laugh. People think big private schools are the ritz and that their sons, when they go there, mix with the cream of young America. Bushwa! There are a few kids whose last names you might see across the front of a department store like Harker Bros., and there are some movie stars' sons, but most of us are a tough, outcast bunch that couldn't get along in public school and weren't wanted at home. Tutors wouldn't han-

dle most of us for love or money. So they put us here.

Clark's will handle any kid and you can leave the love out of it so long as you lay the money on the line. Then the brat is taken care of so far as his parents are concerned, and he has the prestige of a fancy Clark uniform.

There wasn't another school in the State that would have taken me, public or private, after looking at my record. But when old man Clark had dough-ray-me clutched in his right fist he was blind to records like that. Well, that's the kind of a bunch we were.

Well, as I say, I was watching this glutton stuff eggs down his gullet which he thought was a smart thing to do even though he got a bellyache afterward, when the guy on my right said:

"I see Tommy Smith is going to hang."

"Yeah," I said, "that's rotten, ain't it?"

"Rotten?" he replied. "It's wonderful. It's what that rat has coming to him."

"Listen," said I, "one more crack like that and I'll smack your stinking little face in."

"You and how many others?" he said.

"Just me," I said, "and if you want to come outside I'll do it right now."

The kid who was table captain yelled: "Hey, you two pipe down. What's the argument anyway?"

"They're going to hang Tommy Smith," I said, "and I think it's a dirty rotten shame. He's as innocent as a babe in the woods."

"Ha-ha," said the table captain, "you're just bothered about Marie Smith."

"Skirt crazy! Skirt crazy!" mumbled the guy stuffing down the eggs.

I threw my water in his face, then I got up, facing the table captain, and the guy on my right. "Listen," I said, "Tommy Smith is innocent. I was there an hour before the murder happened, wasn't I? What do you loud-mouthed half-wits think you know about it? All

you morons know is what you read in the papers. Tommy didn't do it. I should know, shouldn't I? I was right there in the house before it happened. I've been around there plenty since. I've talked to the detectives."

I sat down, plenty mad. I sat down because I had seen a faculty officer coming into the dining-room. We all kept still until he walked on through. Then the table captain sneered and said:

"Tommy Smith is a dirty stinker. He's the one that killed his father all right. He stuck a knife right through his back!"

"A lie! A lie!" I screamed.

"How do you know it's a lie?"

"Well, I—I know, that's all," I said.

"Yeah, you know! Listen to him! You know! That's hot. I think I'll laugh!"

"Damn it," I said. "I *do* know!"

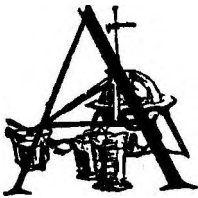
"How? How? Tell us that!"

"Well, maybe *I* did it. What do you think about that?"

"You!" shouted the table captain. "A little fourteen-year-old wart like you killing anybody! Ha!"

"Aw, go to hell," I said, "that's what you can do. Go straight to hell!"

"A little wart like you killing anybody," the table captain kept saying, and he was holding his sides and laughing.



ALL THAT Monday I felt pretty bad thinking about Tommy, what a really swell guy he had been, always laughing, always having a pat on the back for you. I knew he must be in a cell up in San Quentin now, waiting, counting the hours, maybe hearing them build his scaffold.

I imagine a guy doesn't feel so hot waiting for a thing like that, pacing in a cell, smoking up cigarettes, wondering what it's like when you're dead. I've read some about it. I read about Two Gun Crowley, I think it was, who went

to the chair with his head thrown back and his chest out like he was proud of it. But there must have been something underneath, and Crowley, at least, knew that *he* had it coming to him. The real thing must be different than what you read in the papers. It must be pretty awful.

But in spite of all this I had sense enough to stay away from Marie all day. I could easily have gone to her house which was across the street from the campus, but I knew that she and her sister Ruth, and that Duff Ryan, the young detective who had made the arrest—because, as he said, he thought it was his duty—had counted on the commutation of sentence. They figured they'd have plenty of time to clear up some angles of the case which had been plenty shaky even in court. No, sir. Sweet Marie would be in no mood for my consolation and besides I was sick of saying the same things over and over and watching her burst into tears every time I mentioned Tommy's name.

I sat in the study hall Monday evening thinking about the whole thing. Outside the window I could see the stars crystal clear; and though it was warm in the classroom I could feel the cold of the air in the smoky blue of the night, so that I shivered. When they marched us into the dormitory at eight-thirty Simmons, the mess captain, started razzing me about Tommy being innocent again, and I said:

"Listen, putrid, you wanta get hurt?"

"No," he said, then he added: "Sore head."

"You'll have one sore face," I said, "if you don't shut that big yap of yours."

There was no more said and when I went to bed and the lights went off I lay there squirming while that fat-cheeked Pushton staggered through taps with his bugle. I was glad that Myers had bugle duty tomorrow and I wouldn't have to listen to Pushton.

But long after taps I still couldn't sleep for thinking of Tommy. What a

damn thing that was—robbing me of my sleep! But I tell you, I did some real fretting, and honestly, if it hadn't been for the fact that God and I parted company so long ago, I might have even been sap enough to pray for him. But I didn't. I finally went to sleep. It must have been ten o'clock.

I didn't show around Marie's Tuesday afternoon either, figuring it was best to keep away. But after chow, that is, supper, an orderly came beating it out to the study hall for me and told me I was wanted on the telephone. I chased up to the main building and got right on the wire. It was Duff Ryan, that young detective I told you about.

"You've left me with quite a load, young man," he said.

"Explain," I said. "I've no time for nonsense." I guess I must have been nervous to say a thing like that to the law, but there was something about Duff Ryan's cool gray eyes that upset me and I imagined I could see those eyes right through the telephone.

"I mean about Ruth," he said softly, "she feels pretty badly. Now I can take care of her all right, but little Marie is crying her eyes out and I can't do anything with her."

"So what?" I said.

"She's your girl, isn't she, Martin?" he asked.

"Listen," I said, "in this school guys get called by their last name. Martin sounds sissy. My name is Thorpe."

"I'm sorry I bothered you, Martin," Duff said in that same soft voice. "If you don't want to cooperate—"

"Oh, I'll cooperate," I said. "I'll be right over. That is, provided I can get permission."

"I've already arranged that," Duff told me. "You just come on across the street and don't bother mentioning anything about it to anyone."

"O.K.," I said, and hung up. I sat there for a minute. This sounded fishy to me. Of course, Duff *might* be on the level, but I doubted it. You can

never tell what a guy working for the law is going to do.

I trotted out to the campus and on across to the Smith house. Their mother had died a long while ago, so with the father murdered, and Tommy in the death house, there were only the two girls left.

Duff answered the door himself. I looked up at the big bruiser and then I sucked in my breath. I wouldn't have known him! His face was almost gray. Under his eyes were the biggest black rings I had ever seen. I don't mean the kind you get fighting. I mean the other kind, the serious kind you get from worry. He had short clipped hair that was sort of reddish, and shoulders that squared off his figure, tapering it down to a nice V.

Of course, he was plenty old, around twenty-six, but at that his being a detective surprised you because ordinarily he looked so much like a college kid. He always spoke in a modulated voice and never got excited over anything. And he had a way of looking at you that I hated. A quiet sort of way that asked and answered all of its own questions.

Personally, as a detective, I thought he was a big flop. The kind of detectives that I prefer seeing are those giant fighters that blaze their way through a gangster barricade. Duff Ryan was none of this. I suppose he was tough but he never showed it. Worst of all, I'd never even seen his gun!

"Glad you came over, Martin," he said.

"The name is Thorpe," I said.

He didn't answer, just stepped aside so I could come in. I didn't see Ruth, but I spotted Marie right away. She was sitting on the divan with her legs pulled up under her, and her face hidden. She had a handkerchief pressed in her hand. She was a slim kid, but well developed for fifteen, so well developed in fact that for a while I had been razzed about this at school.

Like Tommy, she had blond hair, only

hers was fluffy and came part way to her shoulders. She turned now and her face was all red from crying, but I still thought she was pretty. I'm a sucker that way. I've been a sucker for women ever since I was nine.

She had wide spaced green eyes, and soft, rosy skin, and a generous mouth. Her only trouble, if any, was that she was a prude. Wouldn't speak to anybody on the Clark campus except me. Maybe you think I didn't like that! I'd met her at Sunday school, or rather coming out, since I had been hiding around waiting for it to let out, and I walked home with her four Sundays straight before she would speak to me. That is, I walked along beside her holding a one-way conversation. Finally I skipped a Sunday, then the next one she asked me where I had been, and that started the ball rolling.

"Thorpe," she said—that was another thing, *she* always called me by my last name because that was the one I had given her to start with—"Thorpe, I'm so glad you're here. Come over here and sit down beside me."

I went over and sat down and she straightened up, like she was ashamed that she had been crying, and put on a pretty good imitation of a smile. "How's everything been?" she said.

"Oh, pretty good," I said. "The freshman are bellyaching about Latin this week, and just like algebra, I'm already so far ahead of them it's a crying shame."

"You're so smart, Thorpe," she told me.

"Too bad about Tommy," I said. "There's always the chance for a reprieve though."

"No," she said, and her eyes began to get dim again, "no, there isn't. This—this decision that went through Sunday night—that's the— Unless, of course, something comes up that we—the lawyer can—" and she began crying.

I put my arm around her which was a thing she hadn't let me do much, and

I said, "Come on, kid. Straighten up. Tommy wouldn't want you to cry."

About five minutes later she did straighten up. Duff Ryan was sitting over in the corner looking out the window but it was just like we were alone.

"I'll play the piano," she said.

"Do you know anything hot yet?"

"Hot?" she said.

"Something popular, Marie," I explained. Blood was coming up into my face.

"Why, no," she replied. "I thought I would—"

"Play hymns!" I half screamed. "No! I don't want to hear any of those damned hymns!"

"Why, Thorpe!"

"I can't help it," I said. "I've told you about that enough times. Those kind of songs just drone along in the same pitch and never get anywhere. If you can't play something decent stay away from the piano."

My fists were tight now and my fingers were going in and out. She knew better than to bring up that subject. It was the only thing we had ever argued about. Playing hymns. I wanted to go nuts every time I heard "*Lead Kindly Light*" or one of those other goofy things. I'd get so mad I couldn't see straight. Just an obsession with me, I guess.

"All right," she said, "but I wish you wouldn't swear in this house."

I said, "All right, I won't swear in this house."

"Or anywhere else," she said.

I was feeling good now. "O.K., honey, if you say so."

She seemed pleased and at least the argument had gotten her to quit thinking about Tommy for a minute. But it was then that her sister came downstairs.

Ruth was built on a smaller scale than Marie so that even though she was nineteen she wasn't any taller. She had darker hair too, and an oval face, very white now, making her brown eyes seem brighter. Brighter though more hol-

low. I will say she was beautiful.

She wore only a rich blue lounging robe which was figure-fitting though it came down past her heels and was clasped in a high collar around her pale throat.

"I think it's time for you to come to bed, Marie," she said. "Hello, Thorpe."

"Hello," I said.

Marie got up wordlessly and pressed my hand, and smiled again, that faint imitation, and went off. Ruth stood there in the doorway from the dining-room and as though it was a signal—which I suspect it was—Duff Ryan got up.

"I guess it's time for us to go, Martin," he said.

"You don't say," I said.

He looked at me fishily. "Yeah. I do say. We've got a job to do. Do you know what it is, Martin? We've got to kill a kitten. A poor little kitten."

I started to answer but didn't. The way he was saying that, and looking at me, put a chill up my back that made me suddenly ice cold. I began to tremble all over. He opened the door and motioned for me to go out.



THAT CAT thing was a gag of some kind, I thought, and I was wide awake for any funny stuff from detectives, but Duff Ryan actually had a little kitten hidden in a box under the front steps of the house. He picked it up now and petted it.

"Got hit by a car," he said. "It's in terrible pain and there isn't a chance for recovery. I gave it a shot of stuff that eased the pain for a while but it must be coming back. We'll have to kill the cat."

I wanted to ask him why he hadn't killed it in the first place, whenever he had picked it up from under the car, but I kept my mouth shut and we walked along, back across the street to the Clark

campus. There were no lights at all here and we walked in darkness, our feet scuffing on the dirt of the football gridiron.

"About that night of the murder, Martin," Duff said. "You won't mind a few more questions, will you? We want to do something to save Tommy. I made the arrest but I've been convinced since that he's innocent. I want desperately to save him before it's too late. It's apparent that we missed on something because—well, the way things are."

I said, "Are you sure of Tommy's innocence, or are you stuck on Ruth?"

"Sure of his innocence," he said in that soft voice. "You want to help, don't you, Martin? You don't want to see Tommy die?"

"Quit talking to me like a kid," I said. "Sure I want to help."

"All right. What were you doing over there that night?"

"I've answered that a dozen times. Once in court. I was seeing Marie."

"Mr. Smith—that is, her father—chased you out of the house though, didn't he?"

"He asked me to leave," I said.

"No, he didn't, Martin. He ordered you out and told you not to come back again."

I stopped and whirled toward him. "Who told you that?"

"Marie," he said. "She was the only one who heard him. She didn't want to say it before because she was afraid Ruth would keep her from seeing you. That little kid has a crush on you and she didn't think that had any bearing on the case."

"Well, it hasn't, has it?"

"Maybe not," snapped Duff Ryan, "but he did chase you out, didn't he? He threatened to use his cane on you?"

"I won't answer," I said.

"You don't have to," he told me. "But I wish you'd told the truth about it in the first place."

"Why?" We started walking again. "You don't think I killed him, do you?"

I shot a quick glance in his direction and held my breath.

"No," he said, "nothing like that, only—"

"Only what?"

"Well, Martin, haven't you been kicked out of about every school in the State?"

"I wouldn't go so far as to say *every* school."

Duff said, "Quite a few though, eh?"

"Enough," I said.

"That's what I thought," he went on quietly, "I went over and had a look at your record, Martin. I wish I had thought of doing that sooner."

"Listen—"

"Oh, don't get excited," he said, "this may give us new leads, that's all. We've nothing against you. But when you were going to school at Hadden, you took the goat, which was a class mascot, upstairs with you one night and then pushed him down the stairs so that he broke all his legs. You did that, didn't you?"

"The goat slipped," I said.

"Maybe," whispered Duff. He lit a cigarette, holding onto the crippled cat with one hand. "But you stood at the top of the stairs and watched the goat suffer until somebody came along."

"I was so scared I couldn't move."

"Another time," Duff continued, "at another school, you pushed a kid into an oil hole that he couldn't get out of and you were ducking him—maybe trying to kill him—when someone came along and stopped you."

"He was a sissy. I was just having some fun!"

"At still another school you were expelled for roping a newly born calf and pulling it up on top of a barn where you stabbed it and watched it bleed to death."

"I didn't stab it! It got caught on a piece of tin from the drain while I was pulling it up. You haven't told any of this to Marie, have you?"

"No," Duff said.

"All those things are just natural

things," I said. "Any kid is liable to do them. You're just nuts because you can't pin the guilt on anybody but the guy who is going to die Friday and you're trying to make me look bad!"

"Maybe," Duff answered quietly, and we came into the chapel now and stopped. He dropped his cigarette, stepped on it, then patted the cat. Moonlight shone jaggedly through the rotting pillars. I could see the cat's eyes shining. "Maybe," Duff breathed again, "but didn't you land in a reform school once?"

"Twice," I said.

"And once in an institution where you were observed by a staff of doctors? It was a State institution, I think. Sort of a rest home."

"I was there a month," I said. "Some crab sent me there, or had me sent. But my dad got me out."

"Yes," Duff replied, "the crab had you sent there because you poisoned two of his Great Dane dogs. Your dad had to bribe somebody to get you out, and right now he pays double tuition for you here at Clark's."

I knew all this but it wasn't anything sweet to hear coming from a detective. "What of it?" I said. "You had plenty of chance to find that out."

"But we weren't allowed to see your records before," Duff answered. "As a matter of fact I paid an orderly to steal them for me, and then return them."

"Why, you dirty crook!"

I could see the funny twist of his smile there in the moonlight. His face looked pale and somehow far away. He looked at the cat and petted it some more. I was still shaking. Scared, I guess.

He said, "Too bad we have to kill you, kitten, but it's better than that pain."

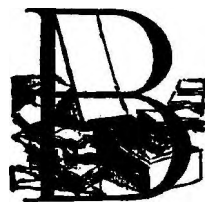
Then, all at once I thought he had gone mad. He swung the cat around and began batting its head against the pillar in the chapel. I could see the whole thing clearly in the moonlight, his

arm swinging back and forth, the cat's head being battered off, the bright crimson blood spurting all over.

He kept doing it and my temples began to pound. My heart went like wild fire. I wanted to reach over and help him. I wanted to take that little cat and squeeze the living guts out of it. I wanted to help him smash its brains all over the chapel. I felt dizzy. Everything was going around. I felt myself reaching for the cat.

But I'm smart. I'm no dummy. I'm at the head of my class. I'm in high school. I knew what he was doing. He was testing me. *He wanted me to help him.* The son of a—wasn't going to trick *me* like that. Not Martin Thorpe. I put my arms behind me and grabbed my wrists and with all my might I held my arms there and looked the other way.

I heard the cat drop with a thud to the cement, then I looked up, gasping to catch my breath. Duff Ryan looked at me with cool gray eyes, then he walked off. I stood there, still trying to get my breath and watching his shadow blend with the shadows of the dark study hall. I was having one hell of a time getting my breath.



UT I slept good all night. I was mad and I didn't care about Tommy any more. Let him hang. I slept good but I woke up ten minutes before reveille remembering that it was Pushton's turn at the bugle again. He and Myers traded off duty every other day.

I felt pretty cocky and got up putting on only my slippers and went down to the eleven-year-old wing. Pushton was sitting on the edge of the bed working his arms back and forth and yawning. The fat little punk looked like an old man. He took himself that seriously. You would have thought maybe he was a general.

"What you want, Thorpe?" he said.

"I want your bugle. I'm going to break the damn thing."

"You leave my bugle alone," he said. "My folks aren't as rich as yours and I had to save all my spending money to buy it." This was true. They furnished bugles at school but they were awful and Pushton took his music so seriously that he had saved up and bought his own instrument.

"I know it," I said, "so the school won't be on my neck if I break it." I looked around. "Where is it?"

"I won't tell you!"

I looked under the bed, under his pillow, then I grabbed him by the nose. "Come on, Heinie. Where is it?"

"Leave me alone!" he wailed. "Keep your hands off me." He was talking so loud now that half the wing was waking up.

"All right, punk," I said. "Go ahead and blow that thing, and I hope you blow your tonsils out."

I went back to my bed and held my ears. Pushton blew the bugle all right, I never did find out where he had the thing hidden.

I dressed thinking well, only two more days and Tommy gets it. I'd be glad when it was over. Maybe all this tension would ease up then and Marie wouldn't cry so much because once he was dead there wouldn't be anything she could do about it. Time would go by and eventually she would forget him. One person more or less isn't so important in the world anyway, no matter how good a guy he is.

Everything went swell Wednesday right through breakfast and until after we were marching out of the chapel and into the schoolroom. Then I ran into Pushton who was trotting around with his bugle tucked under his arm. I stopped and looked him up and down.

His little black eyes didn't flicker. He just said, "Next time you bother me, Thorpe, I'm going to report you."

"Go ahead, punk," I said, "and see what happens to you."

I went on into school then, burning

up at his guts, talking to *me* that way.

I was still burned up and sore at the guy when a lucky break came, for me, that is, not Pushton. It was during the afternoon right after we had been dismissed from the class room for the two-hour recreation period.

I went into the main building, which was prohibited in the day time so that I had to sneak in, to get a book I wanted to read. It was under my pillow. I slipped up the stairs, crept into my wing, got the book and started out. It was then that I heard a pounding noise.

I looked around, then saw it was coming from the eleven-year-old wing.

I walked in and there it was! You wouldn't have believed anything so beautiful could have been if you hadn't seen it with your own eyes. At least that was the way I felt about it. For, who was it, but Pushton.

The bugler on duty has the run of the main building and it was natural enough that he was here but I hadn't thought about it. There was a new radio set, a small portable, beside his bed. I saw that the wires and ear phone—which you have to use in the dormitory—were connected with the adjoining bed as well and guessed that it belonged to another cadet. But Pushton was hooking it up. He was leaning half-way out the window trying, pounding with a hammer, to make some kind of a connection on the aerial wire.

Nothing could have been better. The window was six stories from the ground with cement down below. No one knew I was in the building. I felt blood surge into my temples. My face got red, hot red, and I could feel fever throbbing in my throat. I moved forward slowly, on cat feet, my hands straight at my sides. I didn't want him to hear me. But I was getting that dizzy feeling now. My fingers were itching.

Then suddenly I lunged over, I shoved against him. He looked back once, and that was what I wanted. He looked back for an instant, his fat face green with the most unholy fear I have

ever seen. Then I gave him another shove and he was gone. Before he could call out, before he could say a word, he was gone, falling through the air!

I risked jumping up on the bed so I could see him hit, and I did see him hit. Then I got down and straightened the bed and beat it out.

I ran down the stairs as fast as I could. I didn't see anybody. More important, no one saw me. But when I was on the second floor I ran down the hall to the end and lifted the window. I jumped out here, landing squarely on my feet.

I waited for a minute, then I circled the building from an opposite direction. My heart was pounding inside me. It was difficult for me to breathe. I managed to get back to the play field through an indirect route.

Funny thing, Pushton wasn't seen right away. No one but myself had seen him fall. I was on the play field at least ten minutes, plenty long enough to establish myself as being there, before the cry went up. The kids went wild. We ran in packs to the scene.

I stood there with the rest of them looking at what was left of Pushton. He wouldn't blow any more bugles. His flesh was like a sack of water that had fallen and burst full of holes. The blood was splattered out in jagged streaks all around him.

We stood around about five minutes, the rest of the kids and I, nobody saying anything. Then a faculty officer chased us away, and that was the last I saw of Pushton.

Supper was served as usual but there wasn't much talk. What there was of it seemed to establish the fact that Pushton had been a thick-witted sort and had undoubtedly leaned out too far trying to fix the aerial wire and had fallen.

I thought that that could have easily been the case, all right, and since I had hated the little punk I had no conscience about it. It didn't bother me nearly so much as the fact that Tommy Smith

was going to die. I had liked Tommy. And I was nuts about his sister, wasn't I?

That night study hall was converted into a little inquest meeting. We were all herded into one big room and Major Clark talked to us as though we were a bunch of Boy Scouts. After ascertaining that no one knew any more about Pushton's death than what they had seen on the cement, he assured us that the whole thing had been unavoidable and even went so far as to suggest that we might spare our parents the worry of telling them of so unfortunate an incident. All the bloated donkey was worrying about was losing a few tuitions.

Toward the end of the session Duff Ryan came in and nodded at me, and then sat down. He looked around at the kids, watched Major Clark a while, and then glanced back at me. He kept doing that until we were dismissed. He made me nervous.



RIDAY morning I woke up and listened for reveille but it didn't come. I lay there, feeling comfortable in the bed clothes, and half lazy, but feeling every minute that reveille would blast me out of my place. Then I suddenly realized why the bugle hadn't blown. I heard the splash of rain across the window and knew that we wouldn't have to raise the flag nor take our exercises this morning. On rainy days we got to sleep an extra half-hour.

I felt pretty good about this and put my hands behind my head there on the pillow and began thinking. They were pleasant, what you might call mellow thoughts. A little thing like an extra half-hour in bed will do that.

Things were working out fine and after tonight I wouldn't have anything to worry about. For Duff Ryan to prove Tommy was innocent *after* the hanging would only make him out a

damn fool. I was glad it was raining. It would make it easier for me to lay low, to stay away from Marie until the final word came. . . .

That was what I thought in the morning, lying there in bed. But no. Seventy-three that night Duff came over to the school in a slicker. He came into the study hall and got me. His eyes were wild. His face was strained.

"Ruth and I are going to see the lawyer again," he said, "you've got to stay with Marie."

"Nuts," I said.

He jerked me out of the seat, then he took his hands off me as though he were ashamed. "Come on," he said. "This is no time for smart talk."

So I went.

Ruth had on a slicker too and was waiting there on the front porch. I could see her pretty face. It was pinched, sort of terrible. Her eyes were wild too. She patted my hand, half crying, and said, "You be good to Marie, honey. She likes you, and you're the only one in the world now that can console her."

"What time does Tommy go?" I asked.

"Ten-thirty," said Duff.

I nodded. "O.K." I stood there as they crossed the sidewalk and got into Duff Ryan's car and drove away. Then I went in to see Marie. The kid looked scared, white as a ghost.

"Oh, Thorpe," she said, "they're going to kill him tonight!"

"Well, I guess there's nothing we can do," I said.

She put her arms around me and cried on my shoulder. I could feel her against me, and believe me, she was nice. She had figure, all right. I put my arms around her waist and then I kissed her neck and her ears. She looked at me, tears on her cheeks, and shook her head. "Don't."

She said that because I had never kissed her before, but now I saw her lips and I kissed her. She didn't do anything about it, but kept crying.

Finally I said, "Well, let's make fudge. Let's play a game. Let's play the radio. Let's do *something*. This thing's beginning to get me."

We went to the kitchen and made fudge for a while.

But I was restless. The rain had increased. There was thunder and lightning in the sky now. Again I had that strange feeling of being cold, although the room was warm. I looked at the clock and it said ten minutes after eight. Only ten minutes after eight! And Tommy wasn't going to hang until thirty!

"You'll always stay with me, won't you, Thorpe?" said Marie.

"Sure," I told her, but right then I felt like I wanted to push her face in. I had never felt that way before. I couldn't understand what was the matter with me. Everything that had been me was gone. My wit and good humor.

I kept watching the clock, watching every minute that ticked by, and thinking of Tommy up there in San Quentin in the death cell pacing back and forth. I guess maybe he was watching the minutes too. I wondered if it was raining up there and if rain made any difference in a hanging.

We wandered back into the living-room and sat down at opposite ends of the divan, Marie looking at nothing, her eyes glassy, and me watching and hating the rain, and hearing the clock.

Then suddenly Marie got up and went to the piano. She didn't ask me if she could or anything about it. She just went to the piano and sat down. I stared after her, even opened my mouth to speak. But I didn't say anything. After all, it was *her* brother who was going to die, wasn't it? I guess for one night at least she could do anything she wanted to do.

But then she began playing. First, right off, "*Lead Kindly Light*," and then "*Onward Christian Soldiers*," and then "*Little Church in the Wildwood*." I sat there wringing my hands with that agony beating in my ears. Then I leapt

to my feet and began to shout at her. "Stop that! Stop it! Do you want to drive me crazy?"

But her face was frozen now. It was as though she was in a trance. I ran to her and shook her shoulder, but she pulled away from me and played on.

I backed away from her and my face felt as though it was contorted. I backed away and stared at her, her slim, arched back. I began biting my fingernails, and then my fingers. That music was killing me. Those hymns . . . those silly, inane hymns. Why didn't she stop it? The piano and the rain were seeping into my blood stream.

I walked up and down the room. I walked up and down the room faster and faster. I stopped and picked up a flower vase and dropped it, yelling: "*Stop it! For the love of heaven, stop!*"

But she kept right on. Again I began staring at her, at her back, and her throat, and the profile of her face. I felt blood surging in me. I felt those hammers in my temples. . . .

I tried to fight it off this time. I tried to go toward her to pull her away from that damn piano but I didn't have the strength to move in her direction. I stood there feeling the breath go out of me, feeling my skin tingle. And I didn't want to be like that. I looked at my hands and one minute they were tight fists and the next the fingers were working in and out like mad.

I looked toward the kitchen, and then I moved quietly into it. She was still slamming at the piano when I opened the drawer and pulled out the knife I had used to kill her father.

At least it was a knife like it. I put it behind me and tiptoed back into the room. She wasn't aware that I had moved. I crept up on her, waited.

Her hands were flying over the piano keys. Once more I shouted, and my voice was getting hoarse: "Stop it!"

But of course she didn't. She didn't and I swore. I swore at her. She didn't hear this either. But I'd show the little slut a thing or two.

I was breathing hard, looking around the room to make sure no one was here. Then I lifted the knife and plunged down with it.

I swear I never knew where Duff Ryan came from. It must have been from behind the divan. A simple place like that and I hadn't seen him, merely because I had been convinced that he went away in the car. But he'd been in the room all the time waiting for me to do what I almost did.

It had been a trick, of course, and this time I'd been sap enough to fall into his trap. He had heard me denounce hymns, he knew I'd be nervous tonight, highly excitable, so he had set the stage and remained hidden and Marie had done the rest.

He had told Marie then, after all.

Duff Ryan grabbed my wrist just at the right moment, as he had planned on doing, and of course being fourteen I didn't have much chance against him. He wrested away the knife, then he grabbed me and shouted:

"Why did you murder Marie's father?"

"Because the old boy hated me! Because he thought Marie was too young to know boys! Because he kicked me out and hit me with his cane!" I said all this, trying to jerk away from him, but I couldn't so I went on:

"That's why I did it. Because I had a lot of fun doing it! So what? What are you going to about it? I'm a kid, you can't hang *me*! There's a law against hanging kids. I murdered Pushton too. I shoved him out the window! How do you like that? All you can do is put me in reform school!"

As my voice faded, and it faded because I had begun to choke, I heard Ruth at the telephone. She had come back in too. She was calling long distance. San Quentin.

Marie was sitting on the divan, her face in her hands. You would have thought she was sorry for me. When I got my breath I went on:

"I came back afterward, while Tommy was in the other room. I got in the kitchen door. The old man was standing there and I just picked up the knife and let him have it. I ran before I could see much. But Pushton. Let me tell you about Pushton—"

Duff Ryan shoved me back against the piano. "Shut up," he said. "You didn't kill Pushton. You're just bragging now. But you did kill the old man and that's what we wanted to know!"

Bragging? I was enraged. But Duff Ryan clipped me and I went out cold.

SO I'M in reform school now and— will you believe it?—I can't convince anyone that I murdered Pushton. Is it that grown-ups are so unbelieving because I'm pretty young? Are they so stupid that they still look upon fourteen-year-old boys as little innocents who have no minds of their own? That is the bitterness of youth. And I am sure that I won't change or see things any differently. I told the dopes that too, but everyone assures me I will.

But the only thing I'm really worried about is that no one will believe about Pushton, not even the kids here at the reform school, and that hurts. It does something to my pride.

I'm not in the least worried about anything else. Things here aren't so bad, nor so different from Clark's. Doctors come and see me now and then but they don't think anything is wrong with my mind.

They think I knifed Old Man Smith because I was in a blind rage when I did it, and looking at it that way, it would only be second-degree murder even if I were older. I'm not considered serious. There are lots worse cases here than mine. Legally, a kid isn't responsible for what he does, so I'll be out when I'm twenty-one. Maybe before, because my old man's got money. . . .

You'll always remember me, won't you? Because I'll be out when I'm older and you might be the one I'll be seeing.

THREE APES FROM THE EAST



IM HARPER, Los Angeles manager for International, likes to keep his office as unadorned as a gun turret, his desk as bare as the Mojave desert.

He doesn't believe in doodads, mementoes, bric-a-brac. So I was surprised to see what he had in front of him when he called me in late in the afternoon.

A third of the desk top was occupied by three apes in brass. Everyone knows the three monkeys I mean—one has his paws over his mouth, the second has them over his eyes and the third is holding his ears. I guess every family in the country has acquired one of the things some time or other and the gag

that goes with the knick-knack is: "Speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil."

"That," I said, "is a swell mascot for a detective agency."

The boss said without a smile, "The way our office has been producing lately, you and two other ops must have sat for it."

Somebody in a chair off to the side of the boss' office giggled. I looked over and it was Sue Jordan, small and

By H. H. STINSON

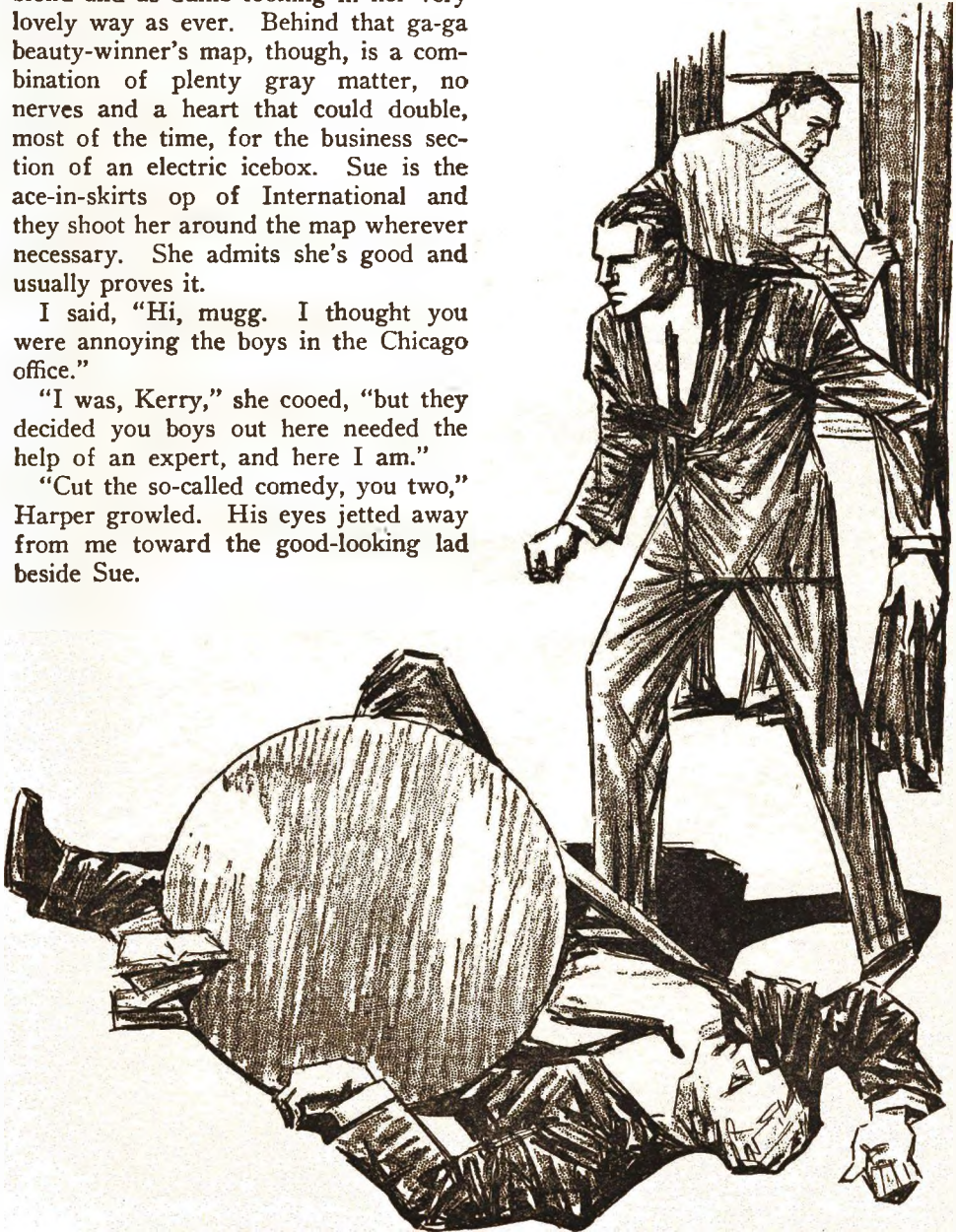
**"Speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil"—
but a killer forgets to do no evil**

blond and as dumb looking in her very lovely way as ever. Behind that ga-ga beauty-winner's map, though, is a combination of plenty gray matter, no nerves and a heart that could double, most of the time, for the business section of an electric icebox. Sue is the ace-in-skirts op of International and they shoot her around the map wherever necessary. She admits she's good and usually proves it.

I said, "Hi, mugg. I thought you were annoying the boys in the Chicago office."

"I was, Kerry," she cooed, "but they decided you boys out here needed the help of an expert, and here I am."

"Cut the so-called comedy, you two," Harper growled. His eyes jettted away from me toward the good-looking lad beside Sue.



The lad was in his thirties, as sleek as an oiled seal. There was a dark sharpness to his eyes, a leanness about his olive-skinned face. He had on snappy clothes, just saved from being too snappy by their sober color.

Tim Harper said, "Mr. Kirkwood, this is Mr. Thorne, one of our better operatives in his serious moments. Between Thorne and Miss Jordan, I believe we can wind up your case."

Kirkwood looked at me with an impersonal and very country-club stare but didn't bother to say hello. I got the idea without much trouble that, so far as he was concerned, I ranked a lot below guys like caddies and locker-room attendants. He probably spoke to them. It was either that or else he was putting on the swank front to cover up a bad case of the jitters. Some lads are like that.

Apparently they had talked the case pretty well out before I was called in. Kirkwood said curtly to the boss: "You understand that you're to use only the threat of publicity but that the papers must not get a whisper of it. If you think you're apt to bungle it. . . ."

The boss starched his voice a little, said, "International knows how to handle a case, Mr. Kirkwood. There isn't a press agent in the organization."

"Very well," Kirkwood said in his down-the-nose manner. "And Miss — er, Jordan is to report to me what has happened immediately afterward."

He spared the boss half a nod as a good-by, didn't include Sue or me and beat it.

I said, "He'll have to take four hot showers to get himself clean after associating with us."

"I think he's too handsome for words," Sue purred.

"Not for some words," I said.

Tim Harper rumbled, "You don't have to fall in love with him. All you have to do is work for him. So get going—or are both of you waiting for wheel chairs?"

"Am I supposed to guess what this is all about, boss?"

"Sue can tell you. Beat it—and take this triple atrocity with you."

I gathered he meant the three apes so I picked them up. They weighed about six pounds. I said, "What'll I do with 'em?"

"Think something up."

In the outer office, I told Sue: "I know I don't catch on very quick but to date this all seems very screwy to me."

"Never mind, darling," she said. "Just leave the brain work to me."

When I put the three apes down on a desk, they tumbled over and the credit line underneath said, "Made in Japan." I said, "That reminds me. I've got an aunt in Japan."

"The Japanese branch of the family?"

"Have your fun. This is Aunt Frieda and she's on one of those world tours. She sends me a carved elephant from every place she hits. The score now is sixteen and I never did like elephants. What's this all about?"

"I'm so hungry, Kerry. I could talk better if you'd take me to dinner."

"Sure," I said. "And we'll make it Dutch."

Over wienerschnitzel at the Bauernhoff, Sue told me. It seemed Kirkwood was married to the daughter of an old dame, named Helen K. Woodring. I knew about her vaguely: A widow with money, more or less social position, and a yen for chasing around with guys half her age. The daughter was blind, Sue told me.

"A break for her," I said. "She doesn't have to look at that smooth slug she's married to."

"Perhaps some of us girls like 'em smooth, you old rough diamond, you," said Sue, surrounding wienerschnitzel in her stride. "Anyway, she married this Paul Kirkwood about five years ago. He came out from the east and nobody knew much about him except that he could make a golf course sit up and beg. He's a broker now but I gather he still golfs better than he brokes."

"Even if he was open champ, I still wouldn't like him."

"He's probably all right, I think. But the point is that the Woodring lady has the protégé complex, provided the protégés are young and good looking. Two years ago she was backing a candidate for Clark Gable's niche; next it was a young second Caruso and now it's the founder of a cult, the cult of Man's Triumph Over Evil."

"It'll be a flop. The name's too long for headlines."

"I gather it hasn't cost her much in the shape of money yet," Sue said, inspecting her beer stein carefully on the theory, maybe, that there was a trap-door in the bottom and she'd find more beer under that. "But I suppose Kirkwood is afraid the cult will operate too heavily on her purse and he's beating trouble to the punch. Anyway, he hired us to find out about this grand lama of the three apes."

"That's where the monkeys came from?"

"They're the symbol of the cult. I bought the monstrosity when I joined up, so I brought it to the office as evidence for my expense account. How about more Pilsener, Kerry?"

"You can have all you can pay for, sweetheart."

We had more and Sue drew the rest of the picture. A lady op had been indicated so Harper had requisitioned Sue and she had dropped out to the cult headquarters in a big, old house on top of Mount Washington where you could see all over the city. The grand lama operated under the name of Doctor Sivaja but his real name was Eddie Levy and he was a disbarred lawyer from St. Louis who had done a rap in Atlanta for abusing the mails. Sue had got his prints by dropping her vanity case practically between his ankles so he had to pick it up and the F.B.I. had done the rest.

That evening we were to see him, put the cards under his nose and tell him we'd wise the newspapers to his real

identity if he didn't fold his turban, steal away in the night and lay off gullible old gals like Mrs. Woodring. Only it had to be all bluff because we couldn't wise the papers and maybe let Mrs. Woodring in for a lot of kidding publicity.

"But I have a hunch," Sue said. "I've a hunch it won't be as easy as that."

"Nuts," I said. "No guy on the make can stand up under the threat of publicity."

"You haven't seen him, Kerry. He's different than the usual faker. He acts as though he really had something."

"So the great Jordan is beaten before she starts."

Sue gave me her poor-chap-you're-so-dumb smile. "No, little man. I merely said it wouldn't be quite as easy as you, in your naïve fashion, expect. I know something about psychology."

Sue can get under my skin more easily than any other dame in the world. I said, "You and your psychology. Five bucks says he'll be traveling inside of forty-eight hours."

"You've made a bet," Sue grinned.

The waiter brought two checks like I'd told him. I picked mine up and Sue took hers, began to fumble in her purse. Her face got apologetic.

She said, "Kerry, you can't guess what I've done."

"Yes, I can. You've left all your money in your other pants. O.K., give me the check."

Walking out beside me, she cooed: "Thank you, Kerry, for the lovely dinner."

"Thank you," I said, "for the lovely buggy ride."



DOCTOR SIVAJA—or Eddie Levy—was a dark-faced, young-looking bird, who wore a black turban and conventional tuxedo. He did a nice, quiet, convincing talk that was half religion, half modern psychology. He talked from a

dais in what had been the living-room of the old house while a circle of about thirty women and five men, who looked sheepish as though their wives had dragged them there, listened piously. The symbol of the three apes was everywhere—worked into the hangings, the decorations, the upholstery of the furniture.

After the talk the doc did a little bow and disappeared through black curtains at one side of the room. The audience came out of its trance and began to straggle from the room.

"He draws a nice house," I told Sue. "The woman in gray is president of a woman's club, the one behind her knocks out two grand a week writing movies and I think the dame with the long nose and jaw is a socialite from the polo set."

"Are you sure of her," Sue wanted to know, "or are you just making that guess because she looks like a horse?"

"Where was la Woodring tonight?"

"Kirkwood promised to keep her home tonight."

We were the only ones left in the room when a girl who looked like Jane College from Bryn Vassar—flat-heeled shoes, horn-rimmed specs and black hair as straight as violin strings—put an eye on us.

Sue said under her breath: "Miss Frake, the doctor's secretary." To the girl as she came over to us, Sue explained that we'd like to consult with the doctor.

Jane College looked doubtful but finally said she'd see and went through the black curtains. She came back in a minute, said: "Doctor Sivaja will see you, but only for a few minutes. He is very tired tonight."

We followed her through the curtains and after a moment came into a long room, a book-lined room. Sivaja—or Eddie Levy—sat in a big chair at a big desk the length of the room away from us. The three apes were everywhere in this room, too, including a big figure on the desk. It was a nice room, a quiet room and the only thing out of place

was a big packing case, opened, at one side.

The doc said, sort of gently, "Thank you, Miss Frake."

Jane College went out and the doc said, "Sit down, Miss Jordan. And you, too, Mister—ah—"

"The name, Eddie," I said, "is Thorne. Kerry Thorne."

I'd expected my approach to get a rise out of him. It didn't—much. He looked sort of interested, not at all upset. He said, pleasantly enough: "I noticed you in the audience, and I had you spotted for a private dick. When I put that together with Miss Jordan's vanity-case stunt to get my prints the other night, I was sure of it. Sit down and get your errand off your mind."

I had to admit he'd thrown the first punch and for a moment it had me backing up. We sat down and I looked at Sue. She was looking at me. The doc smiled.

He said, "Maybe I can help you get started. You're being paid by Paul Kirkwood. Is that correct, Miss Jordan?"

Sue nodded.

"And you've found out that my real name is Levy and that I'm an ex-convict. That's correct, also?"

I said, "You know the answers, Eddie."

He seemed not so indifferent as he was unworried. He said, "And what comes after that?"

Sue pulled out the sympathetic stop in her voice. She said, "Perhaps we're doing you an injustice, doctor. Or should I say Mr. Levy? I have a feeling that you're not up to any particular mischief, that possibly your meetings are doing these people some good. But by faking your identity, you've put yourself in a spot. Mr. Kirkwood means to expose you unless you agree to leave the city and not communicate with Mrs. Woodring any longer."

The guy didn't say anything for a little while. He wasn't looking at me at all and the eyes he kept on Sue

weren't panicky, weren't even unfriendly. His right hand kept tossing a small replica of the three apes into the air, catching it as it came down again.

Finally he said, dryly: "Thanks for the vote of confidence, Miss Jordan. Just tell Mr. Kirkwood for me that I'm not worried. In the first place, I have reasons to believe he won't expose me. In the second place, if he does, it can't really harm me."

For the first time some feeling showed on his dark face. He put down the figure of the three apes, spread his hands and said, "Has it occurred to the pair of you that I may be quite sincere in my philosophy of man's triumph over evil? I'm quite frank in saying that in the past I've been an evil man. I'll even admit that in the beginning I founded my school of thought with something evil—the lust for money—in my mind. But I discovered I had stumbled onto the truth and in convincing others, I have convinced myself. If I don't relish having my pupils know that I am an ex-convict, it is only because it will handicap me in importing my philosophy to them, not because of any fear for myself. For I know that if I refuse to recognize the existence of evil, then no evil can really harm me. Do I make myself clear?" He really sounded as though he meant what he said.

Sue said gravely, "Doctor, I believe you're sincere. But Mr. Kirkwood is just as determined as you are sincere. Why can't a compromise be worked out? I'm sure he'd be satisfied if you merely went on a nice vacation—six months or so. By the time you got back, his mother-in-law would have another enthusiasm and everyone would be happy."

The doc shook his head. "That's quite ridiculous, Miss Jordan. After all, while Mrs. Woodring is a charming woman and one of the most prominent members of my little circle, she is only one of quite a number to whom I am bringing my message. I have no intention of giving up my work and Mr. Kirk-

wood had better think carefully before he exposes me. You can tell him for me that even a good man isn't entirely helpless against an evil man and that he who speaks evil often brings evil upon himself."

I said, "Listen, Eddie, we're using a lot of dollar words here. Can you put that in ordinary English?"

He smiled. "Kirkwood will understand. And I'm like the first of my three little monkeys here: I'd rather speak no evil."

"I still think you're shadow-boxing," I said.

He bowed as though he didn't care what I thought. The conference seemed to be over and I tracked Sue through the curtains, feeling clumsy-footed compared to his quiet sureness. Jane College met us outside the study, flat-heeled ahead of us to the front door.

Under her breath, Sue said, "At least, I win five bucks."

"It was an act," I said. "Wait forty-eight hours and see."

We were half-way through the front door when things started to go *boom-boom* back in the study. There was one shot before I could get around, another while I was turning and a third by the time I got my feet going. Sue was behind me and I had a vague impression that Jane College was under way in our wake.

I got through the black curtains and the picture smacked me in the face. The doc was on his knees by the desk, clawing at the top, trying to pull himself up. He didn't have a chance of making it and while I was still a dozen feet away, he caved and went down in a heap. His clawing hand pulled objects off the desk onto him, among them the large figure of the apes. The phone was already on the floor, receiver off. The three small monkeys, the ones he'd been playing with a few minutes before, lay on the rug beside the phone.

He coughed, retched and the brightness of blood jumped across his chin. And he died while I was easing him

into a less tortured position. No wounds showed in front and I figured he'd been shot in the back, while he was sitting at the desk.

Beside me, Sue said, "The poor guy!"

"Anyway," I said, getting up, "he was right on one angle. He'll speak no evil from now on, not even about the guy that gunned him."

Behind us, Jane College was tuning up with hysterics. She had her hands over her eyes and her mouth open, making lots of noise. I thought what a swell thing it would be if she weren't around, for more reasons than one, and I got ideas. Between her screams, I tried to find out from her if there was another phone in the house. She paid no attention until I grabbed her shoulders, shook her.

"Is there another phone in the house, another outside wire?" I said.

"W-what?"

I said it over and she told me, still looking half-witted from fright, that there was a phone upstairs in the doctor's bedroom.

"Then get on it and call the cops," I said. "We can't use this one. We can't touch anything in here until the cops arrive."

She looked as though she finally understood and I let go of her. She streaked out through the curtains.

I gave Sue a shove, said, "Out there with her. Keep her away from this room as long as you can."

Sue didn't argue. She went. I snapped on more lights, cased the room with my eyes in a hurry. Down the room a door was open, a door that hadn't been open before. I looked through the doorway, saw the room was a small, bare one, furnished only with a big chair, a couple of straight-backed chairs, as though the doc had used it as a sort of confessional for folks who didn't like talking in a big room. The thing that interested me was that the room opened to a patio and the patio door swung gently in the night wind. The picture was clear. Somebody—perhaps they'd

been in this small room while we were talking—had opened the door to the study, shot the doc through the back and beat it through the patio.

As I say, that was interesting, but what I had on my mind were letters, papers, anything that could hook up Mrs. Woodring with the doc. After all, International was being paid to keep her clear. I went through the doc's big desk fast and found nothing I wanted. One of the pictures on the wall looked a little cockeyed and on a hunch I lifted it away. Behind it was a wall safe and I began to believe in luck. The outer door was ajar and keys dangled in the inside door.

Inside I found cash, a sheaf of A-1 bonds and a thick package of letters held together with a rubber band. I got the rubber band off and leafed through the letters. He'd had 'em from socialites, top-flight picture people, even from big-shot business guys. I found five on the stationery of Helen K. Woodring, slid those in my pocket and stuck the others back in the safe. I knew the newspapers would have a lot of fun with those letters and their senders but la Woodring was my only lookout.

When I had the picture back in place, I eased up a little. There might be other stuff around that would tie in the Woodring dame but I'd have needed hours to prowl the entire layout and I had to gamble on the letters being all there was. Just out of curiosity I got down on my knees and put my ear to the phone receiver. If the doc had merely unhooked the receiver by knocking the phone off the desk, I'd have got the dial tone. I didn't. That meant he had been starting to dial a number when he was shot.

While I was down on my knees, the small replica of the monkeys caught my eye. Light shone on the flat, solid bottom of the figures, showed me scratches that looked like letters. I picked the thing up, held it closer to the light. The scratches were letters and numbers reading: HI-M-N-3-7-S13. Underneath

that in raised letters was the mould mark: Made In Japan. I didn't have time to think about whether the letters and numbers might mean something or nothing because just then I began hearing siren noise. But, on the chance they might connect with Mrs. Woodring, I popped the three monkeys into my pocket.



WAS looking wise and doing nothing when two cops came busting into the study like a rash. Jane College was looking a lot more collected than before but as though she could still have the weeps if someone would give her the right signal. Sue was her usual composed self.

A big, red-nosed cop, in the lead, saw the body and started on us. "What's happened here? Who're you people? What're you doing here?"

I recognized the second cop, said, "Hello, Haggarty."

"Hi, Thorne," said Haggarty. He was a thin, mouse-haired guy with uneven, yellow teeth and I'd met him a couple of times out fishing on the live-bait boats. He looked at the doc's body, said, "Suicide or murder?"

"Murder," I said.

"Better call Homicide, Oscar," said Haggarty. His partner went out in tow of Jane College and Haggarty said, without bothering to fuss with the body, "What's if all about, Thorne?"

I gave him a few fragments, not mentioning the letters and the apes that I had in my pocket.

"Umm," Haggarty said. "Well, we'll wait until the Homicide boys arrive. No sense in a dumb flatfoot doing any detecting and getting stuck for a week in court. Done any fishing lately, Thorne?"

Haggarty and I cut up a lot of bait and made a tentative date to go after yellowtail in a couple of weeks. While we were doing it, Oscar came back and

started to prowling the room, heavy-footed.

He wound up at the packing case and I saw him fish around in it. He said, "Jeez, a zoo."

We all took a look inside and the case was full of small figures of the three monkeys, matching the one I had in my pocket. Apparently that had come out of the case because there was one missing from the top layer. I did some quick counting of the top layer and some estimating. There must have been at least six gross of the things in the case.

"Jeez," said Oscar, "what would a guy be wanting with all them monkeys? He musta been up to monkey business."

It was a pretty weak effort but nobody topped it so we let it lay.

It wasn't long before Captain Fisher of the Homicide squad, fat and gimlet-eyed and sloppy in a blue suit that hadn't been pressed for a week, arrived with two dicks named Ahearn and Kirk.

The minute Fisher saw me, he said, "Why'd you do it, Thorne?"

I grinned. "Who's been informing on me, skipper?"

"Nobody. You've just got a naturally guilty look. What're you doing around here?"

That was something that had been on my mind from the moment I knew the situation called for cops. I couldn't say that Sue and I had been putting the pressure on the doc in order to get him out of Mrs. Woodring's pocketbook; the papers would get it and have a holiday with it.

I said, "The dead man was the founder of a new religion, a cult. And the little lady here, Miss Jordan, was one of his followers. She wanted me to meet him and hear one of his lectures. You know how I am about the ladies, skipper, so I humored her even though I did think it was screwy."

Sue gave me a sweet glance and managed to look ga-ga, although I knew she wanted to tie me up by the thumbs. She said in a coy, wounded fashion, "Why,

Kerry, I thought you were really sincere."

Fisher looked as though he believed the act but I wasn't too sure of it. He's a long ways from being dumb. But all he said was, "I see. And what happened?"

I gave him the bare physical facts, how we'd talked to the doc and been at the front door with the secretary when the blasting began. Fisher scouted around a little, looked into the small room, came back. He said, "That door was closed when you were in here first?"

I said it had been.

"All right," Fisher said. "You and Miss Jordan and the other lady wait out in the next room. I'll want to talk to all of you later."

Out in the lecture room I stalled until Jane College had picked a chair near the dais and then I ambled Sue down to the other end of the room. Oscar, the red-nosed cop, stood in the doorway and kept an important eye on us.

"So I'm cult-screwy, am I?" said Sue. She had her voice low so Oscar couldn't hear what she said, but not low enough to seem suspicious. "You'll pay for that crack, Kerry. And, also, how about paying off on that bet?"

"Me pay off? Listen, I bet the doc would be out of town inside of forty-eight hours. He is, isn't he?"

"So you're going to quibble. I'll remember that. Did you find anything in there while I was phoning the cops?"

"You phoned?"

"Miss Frake was too occupied with her jitters to do it. Did you find anything?"

"Some of Woodring's letters."

She smiled. "And three apes on the floor?"

I said, "Damn clever, these Jordans."

"I saw the thing on the floor before I went to the phone. It was gone when I got back."

"It probably didn't have any bearing," I said, "but I didn't know. The way I looked at it, the doc might have

been more stirred up about being exposed than he seemed on the surface. We know he pulled that crack about Kirkwood regretting it and I know he'd started to dial a phone number when somebody let him have it. That call might have been about Kirkwood, and the chicken tracks on the figure of the apes might have counted in some fashion. A lot of 'mights' but I grabbed the apes on the strength of them."

"What chicken tracks?"

I told Sue about the numbers and figures that had been scratched on the bottom of the monkeys. She made me repeat them slowly. I said, "You got any inkling?"

"None. Who do you think killed him?"

"I'm not thinking. That's the Homicide Squad's headache. We'll turn these letters over to Kirkwood and then we're out of the case."

"How about the apes you have in your pocket?"

"On those we'll wait. If it seems the cops should have them, the cops'll get them. Where were you to reach Kirkwood tonight?"

"At Mrs. Woodring's home."

"Oke. As soon as Fisher turns us loose, we'll go out there and turn over the letters."

She looked at me sort of queerly, said, "Suppose we pretend. Suppose we pretend Kirkwood had a lot to do with this killing. It will look swell for International to be playing on his side against the cops."

I chewed over that one. "What makes you think he might have?"

"Nothing. But possibilities are possibilities. We'll have to watch our step, Kerry."

There was some kind of a disturbance at the front door and then Haggarty came through the lecture room, towing a tall, young, blond guy. The blond saw me and nodded, said, "Hello, Thorne."

For a moment I didn't place him.

Then I did. I said hello and Haggarty took him on into the study.

"Who?" said Sue.

"His name is Fred Manners. He's a kid who angled himself a private license some time ago. I ran into him on the fringes of a case a year ago and then never saw him again until now. I thought he'd probably faded into something that was more his speed."

A few minutes later one of the dicks came to the curtains and beckoned to Jane College. She went to the study with him and we waited. We waited some more and then we kept on waiting. It was pretty close to an hour before Fisher came out of the study. He didn't look unhappy when he sat down beside me.

I said, "Don't tell me, skipper, that you've already got it all untangled."

"Not exactly," he said, "but we've got a pretty nice lead. Did you know this guy, Sivaja, was really an ex-con named Eddie Levy?"

"What?" I said. Then I looked reproachfully at Sue. "A nice spot you led me into, Miss Jordan—associating with ex-cons."

Sue choked but she managed to mutter something about she hadn't known and she was sorry.

"Yeah," said Fisher. "An ex-con. We got that out of this secretary gal and the private dick that showed up a while ago. It seems this guy went up for mail fraud from St. Louis after taking some old Dutchman there for his life's savings. The kraut never got over it and he located this Eddie Levy here six months back and took a shot at him. Levy kept it quiet but he hired this shamus, Manners, as a body-guard. The Dutchman hasn't shown around here since then but he's written Levy a lot of threatening letters. We found those in a wall safe in the study. So tonight Manners takes the night off and it looks to me like the kraut took the opportunity to get square. Anyway, we're putting out a teletype on him."

"Here's luck," I said. "And now

how's about letting Miss Jordan and me go places and get some drinks? I need two or three or seven."

"Sure," Fisher agreed. "I can reach you at the agency. And what's your address, Miss Jordan?"

Sue gave him the name of her hotel and we got under way.



S I pulled my roadster around the corner from the side street into North Figueroa, I said, "When we get out to the Woodring place, Sue, we will go—"

"Not 'we,' Kerry."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you can handle it from here. Why should I lose sleep?"

"Oh," I said. "Lone wolfess stuff."

She said sweetly, "Why, Kerry, I don't know what you're talking about."

"Listen, babe, I know all about you and the way you like to show us pants-wearing ops up. You think you've figured out a hot angle on this and you want to work it all by yourself and grab all the credit."

"I'm hurt, Kerry."

"Yeah," I jeered. "Nothing short of a solid crack in the jaw would hurt you. But if you want to make it a contest, we'll make it that way."

"Make what a contest?"

"I don't know but you probably do." I'd been watching the lights of a car in my mirror. When the car behind jogged through the radiance of a street light, I saw it was a squad car. I said, "Some cops are tailing us. I guess Fisher didn't believe everything I told him. Now my feelings are hurt."

I took the next dark cross street, unlatched the door on my side and told Sue to get ready to slide under the wheel. Around another corner, I made the street and let the impetus of my jump carry me across the curb and into some shrubbery. The roadster slowed for an instant and then spurted. The

police car tagged along and as soon as it was out of sight, I walked back to Figueroa, found a drug-store and got on the phone.

I had Sue Jordan on my mind nearly as much as the phone call I was going to make. She had an angle on the fire. I felt pretty sure of that and I wasn't too pleased. She's a nice gal but she has a way of wandering off by herself and "stumbling" onto some hot lead in a case, thereby making the guy who's working with her look and feel like a first-class jackass. Not that she ever hogs the credit with the bosses; but no guy likes to feel he's a jackass.

It took a while but finally a low British voice at the other end of the wire admitted that I was connected with the home of Mrs. Woodring. I told the voice I wanted to speak to Kirkwood.

"That," said the voice, "will be impossible. Mr. Kirkwood cannot come to the phone at the moment. What is it about, sir?"

I asked who was talking.

"This is Osgood, Mrs. Woodring's butler."

"O.K., Osgood," I said. "Just tell Mr. Kirkwood a detective by the name of Thorne has something he'll be interested in and that this same guy named Thorne will be ringing the front doorbell in about twenty minutes."

Another phone call landed me a cab. . . .

The Woodring place was no less than an estate. It stood in an acre of lawns and semi-tropical shrubs out on West Washington, the whole of it surrounded by a high, balustraded wall that had cost as much dough as the average guy's entire home. There were bronze gates in the wall but they weren't closed and between them a graveled drive headed up toward a huge, white blur of house.

A block past the place, I paid the cab off and walked back to the gates. West Washington was fresh out of pedestrians at that hour but a street car clanked along noisily three blocks away and automobiles whirred by at wide inter-

vals, going fast and sucking at the macadam with drawn-out, whining sounds.

Inside the gates I got off the gravel, walked on the grass. Street lights were cut off by the wall, trees and distance, and it was dark, almost completely black. That, I guess, was the only thing that saved me from stopping a nice hunk of lead.

A clump of bushes half-way to the house swayed a little just as I came abreast of them, although there wasn't any breeze. I hadn't been expecting any rough stuff and if I ducked my head and shifted my feet fast, it was due entirely to the involuntary nerve reflexes of being damn good and scared. The clump of bushes snapped a flat, jarring explosion at me, along with a burst of blue and orange flame. The clanking street car was going by at that exact moment, so the shot didn't seem very loud. But it seemed plenty in earnest.

My feet, doing a rumba as I tried to get around to face the clump of bushes and drag out my gun at the same time, tangled with the head of a lawn-sprinkler system. I went into the air, spread-eagled and made a one-point landing on my chin. At least, I think it was my chin because I was picking blue grass out of my teeth for two days afterward.



MY FACE was still nestling in the center of a divot when I began to remember things again. I remembered groggily for a moment and then very clearly and I didn't know whether to be sore at myself or get a laugh out of it.

"At least," I mumbled as I got my feet under me, "I'm probably the first shamus in the history of International that could knock himself out with one dive to the chin."

But when I started to pat my pockets, there wasn't anything to laugh about.

Everything I'd had on me had been lifted—wallet, watch, keys, gun, a pocketful of change. And the Woodring letters and the three brass apes.

It was pretty. And to make things complete, I took three steps in the darkness and put my hoof down on top of my new hat, for which I'd laid out seven bucks just the day before. I swore for a while but there wasn't any satisfaction in it.

"Go on up to the house and take your medicine," I told myself, "you long-eared dope."

I got the wreck of my hat on and headed for the house. It turned into something definite as I got nearer, a big and very white affair of Norman architecture with a long stretch of two stories of blank windows.

Faint light inched through venetian blinds at a lower window and I leaned on the bell-push. After a minute or so, a light went on over the door. The door opened three inches on a chain and a long, white nose and eyes that had all the genial expression of marbles looked out at me.

A mouth under the long nose said, "Yes? Are you the detective person? The detective person who phoned?"

"You weren't expecting any detective persons who didn't phone, were you?"

Osgood couldn't seem to think off-hand of the answer to that one but he didn't take the chain off the door.

I said, "Yes, Osgood, I am the detective chappie, the one that phoned. And I'm here to see Mr. Kirkwood. How about it?"

He finally collected himself enough to get the door unchained and I went in. When I got in, I took a good look at Osgood and he squirmed around a bit under it. In fact, he seemed to be in somewhat of a dither about something. He looked a lot like a fish but a husky fish with good shoulders and big hands that had plenty of bone and muscle to them. He wore a woolly bathrobe but trousers showed below the bathrobe and he had shoes on, not slippers. The

shoes were damp around the soles, the toes.

"Lot of dew on the grass tonight, Osgood," I said.

"Dew? I don't understand, I'm sure," he said. But his eyes couldn't help darting down toward his shoes and then back at me.

"Yeah," I said. "Or did you get your shoes wet running around on these Chinese rugs?"

He licked his lips and tried to go English butler on me. He said, "I went outside a short while ago, it so happens, sir. I thought I had heard a shot somewhere on the grounds and I made a brief investigation." His eyes fastened themselves on my skinned-up face, my wreck of a hat. "I found nothing but it occurs to me that perhaps you might know quite a lot about it."

"Maybe I do," I said. "How about Mr. Kirkwood?"

"Please wait in there."

He showed me a small reception room off the hall and left me there with a reluctant look on his face as though he didn't quite trust me not to walk off with the bric-a-brac.

The room was furnished with Louie-or-something furniture, all very elegant, and the one thing out of place was a big, bronze figure of the three apes on a small table. They made me remember the yarn I was going to have to tell Kirkwood and I felt like asking them to move over and make room for a fourth and the biggest monkey of all.

But it wasn't Kirkwood that showed up. It was two women. One of them I knew must be Mrs. Woodring and the other, the younger one, her daughter. The Woodring dame gave me the impression of a dowager queen, aching to go on the loose. Her hair was brassy yellow and, even at this hour, put up in curls and ringlets and waves. Her negligee was a generation too young for her and gave the world a load of a not-so-small bosom. She had wrinkles in her cheeks and a roll of fat between her shoulders and eyes that had a yen

in them. She looked like October playing at being April and it made you sorry for her and disgusted with her at the same time.

The daughter, Mrs. Kirkwood, was another order. She had a tall, lithe body and blue eyes that would have been beautiful if they hadn't had the blank, expressionless look of the blind. Her face was pale and strong and stopped just short of being pretty. She came into the room, holding onto her mother's arm, but she had so much more to her that she almost gave the impression of leading the older woman.

Mrs. Woodring's voice sounded scared and patronizing and coy, all at the same time. She said, "You wished to see me, young man?"

I said, "No, ma'am. I want to see Mr. Kirkwood."

She arched her bosom a little farther out of the negligée. "Young man, this is my home. You can tell me whatever you have—"

The girl said in a low voice, "Mother, please. Paul will take care of this."

"Nonsense, Anne," la Woodring said. "There are a lot of very queer things going on around here this evening and—"

The girl protested again, "Mother, please—"

"I say there is something mysterious going on. Why was Paul so insistent that I stay home tonight? Why is this young man here at this hour? I insist on knowing what it's about."

But she didn't have a chance to shoot any questions at me because just then the draperies at the door parted and Kirkwood was there. He was immaculate and sleek and casual on the surface but he was breathing a little fast as though he had just stopped being in a hurry as he got to the door of the room.

He slapped a look of pure venom at me and then shifted gears with his face so fast that by the time Mrs. Woodring had her eyes around to him, he was wearing a smile for her that damn near had a caress in it.

She looked back at him the same way, and I thought it just as well that Anne Kirkwood was blind.

La Woodring said, "Paul, what is it that's going on tonight? You're all acting so queerly and what's this man here for?"

"Now, Mother," Kirkwood said, "don't you bother your head about this man. Osgood should have told me at once that he was here instead of disturbing you."

"But, Paul—"

Kirkwood kept on smiling, patted the old lady on the shoulder. The way he did it was sensuous. The old dame beamed horribly.

He said, "You're just imagining things, Mother. This man is here to give me a report on a business investigation. Now you and Anne trot along upstairs and I'll join you there as soon as I've finished with him."

Mrs. Woodring didn't argue. She said, "Very well, Paul dear," as meek as oatmeal, and the two women turned to go. It was pretty apparent that Kirkwood called the shots around that household and no wonder he didn't want Sivaja chiseling in on his territory.

When the women were gone, Kirkwood turned on me and there wasn't any smile in his eyes. He said savagely, "You fool, I told you and that woman detective merely to get in touch with me. The last thing I wanted was for you to show up here. I'll see that your agency hears about this in the morning."

I let it pass. I said, "Have you heard about Sivaja?"

He didn't say anything right away. His eyes bored at me and then he said, more quietly, "What should I have heard?"

"He's dead," I said. "Murdered."

Kirkwood didn't look shocked but he did look surprised. I couldn't tell whether the surprise was real or not and I wished I hadn't led up to it quite in that way, that I had socked him with

the information without any preliminaries. Then, maybe, I could have told whether he was actually surprised or putting on an act.

He found a cigarette and lit it very carefully, his face dark and taut with thought. Finally he said, "That changes things. Or, rather, it accomplishes what I wanted accomplished, although in a different way. Have your agency send its bill to my office."

"You're not interested in who killed him or why?"

"There's no reason why I should be, is there?"

"When I've finished," I told him, "you can figure that out for yourself." I gave him the scenario from the moment we'd walked into Sivaja's study until the time I'd picked my chin out of the blue grass, minus all my belongings, including the letters and the three brass apes.

As I wound up, Kirkwood was looking faintly worried and also pretty sore and not a little contemptuous. He said nastily, "You call yourself a private detective and come to me with a story like that."

"That's my story," I said, "and I'm stuck with it. The point is, are those letters important enough to you so that you want 'em back?"

Kirkwood said, still nasty, "After a performance like this, you think you could get them back?"

"They don't shoot a guy for trying," I said, "except sometimes. Now if it was the letters that someone was after in particular, it spells blackmail. With Sivaja dead, have you any idea who would have blackmail notions in connection with Mrs. Woodring?"

Kirkwood said he didn't. But he looked thoughtful.

I said, "How about the butler?"

"Osgood? That's ridiculous. He's been with Mrs. Woodring for ten years. If that's a sample of your thinking—"

"Maybe it isn't as lousy thinking as it seems," I said. I was getting a little fed up with his down-the-nose attitude.

"It so happens that outside of Miss Jordan, Osgood was the only person I'd informed that I was going to show up here when I did. And it's sort of plain that whoever took the pot shot at me was waiting for me and that he knew who he was waiting for. Also, Ossie has been prowling around outside just this evening. Of course, he might have passed the word to someone else after I'd talked to him on the phone."

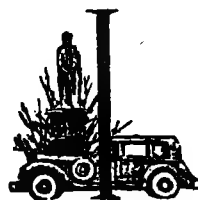
Kirkwood said, "Ridiculous," again but he wasn't so sure of it this time.

I stood up, said, "Whoever got the letters, you want them back. That's the main idea."

"And how do you propose to get them back?"

"Whoever has them will want money for them. In order to get money, they have to ask for it. Just as soon as you or Mrs. Woodring receive any communication about them, let me know. We'll go on from that point."

Kirkwood agreed to let me know but I wasn't too certain whether he meant it or was just "yessing" me to get me on my way. He let me out without benefit of butler and I started a six-block hike to Western and Washington where I figured I could find a cab.



I TRIED to do a bit of thinking while I hiked but, after all, a guy has to have a few facts to build his guesses on. I didn't even feel too sure of my guess about Osgood. If he had been with the Woodring dame for ten years, he must have had plenty of chances in that time to blackmail her if he was that kind of a guy. Maybe, at that, it hadn't been the letters that were wanted when someone let fly the slug at me; maybe it had been the three apes.

Those apes were certainly running through the whole thing, even to the extent of finding counterparts among the people involved. Sivaja had bragged that he spoke no evil and he un-

doubtedly wouldn't speak any from now on. And Anne Kirkwood, poor woman, didn't have to hold her hands over her eyes like the second ape because those blind eyes couldn't see evil right in front of them.

That was stretching the comparison a little, because very probably neither Kirkwood nor la Woodring were what you could call evil. My guess was that Kirkwood was a gigolo who had married himself into a dough-heavy family; and Mrs. Woodring's tired coyness was sickening rather than nasty. But, even so, I wouldn't have wanted either of them before my eyes long at a time.

As for the third ape, the one that couldn't hear any evil, I felt as though I could match that one, myself. If I'd been holding my fingers in my ears all night, I couldn't have known any less about what was really going on. That wouldn't have bothered me too much if I hadn't been working with Sue Jordan. I knew that sooner or later I'd probably find out what it was all about but when I got to that point, I had a hunch, I'd probably discover Sue sitting there and waiting for me.

At Western I found a Yellow and gave the hacker my address. When we got to the apartment where I park my extra shirt, I said, "Listen, cap, I haven't got any money on me."

The hacker stuck a steamboat-jawed face through the door at me and growled, "You're the second ginzo that's pulled that one on me tonight. What do I look like, Santa Claus?"

"No," I said, "although a beard would improve you. But what I'm trying to tell you is that if you'll come upstairs with me, I'll find some dough."

He looked happier and we went inside the lobby. It was dark except for a floor lamp in a corner. Somebody sitting in a chair in another corner got up and started for me. My hand began to go for my gun before I realized I didn't have any gun and then I started backward, getting tangled up with the cab driver.

The guy coming toward me said, "Hello, Thorne. I've been waiting to see you."

He came farther into the light and I saw it was Fred Manners. I said, "For cat's sake, don't do things to me like that. How do you know I haven't got a weak ticker? Have you got a buck?"

"Huh?" Manners said. He had a friendly, kiddish looking face and it was puzzled.

"What I said was, have you got a buck?"

He still seemed as though he was trying to add things up and make sense but he said, "Oh, sure," and fished a dollar bill out of his pocket. I passed the bill to the cab driver.

Up in my apartment I found some Teacher's Highland after knocking over a couple of Aunt Frieda's elephants that I'd parked wherever I could find room. I cussed the elephants, picked them up and poured a couple of drinks. After I had them poured, Manners said he didn't use it, so I slid mine down and held the other one ready to follow when reinforcements were needed.

He scratched one pale eyebrow and grinned uncertainly. He said, "I'll bet you wonder why I showed up here at this hour."

"If you could find anyone to lay the bet with, you'd win."

"Well, it's this way. This little thing tonight does me out of my job as the doc's body-guard."

"I'm sorry," I said. "But that doesn't make me the WPA."

"Sure, I know. I just thought—well, I've had some experience and I thought maybe International might have something."

I said, "It's a lot too late for kidding. Or do you really expect me to believe you stayed up all night just so you could make out an employment application? What's on your mind?"

"That's really it," he said. He spread his knees, put a hand on each knee and looked at me straight. "At least, that's mostly it. I know that in order to get

a job with International, you have to have something more than just a wild desire to please. Well, I've got something more and it's too hot to let lay around forever. Your agency would like to solve tonight's killing, wouldn't it?"

"Not particularly," I said. "That's the police department's worry. What made you think we'd be interested?"

He laughed at me, said, "Now you're trying some kidding. After all, you're working for Kirkwood, aren't you?"

"What would you know about that?"

"Pal-enty, Thorne, pal-enty. Do you want to hear what I've got to tell?"

"Sure," I said. "I like to hear anything. Go ahead."

He shook his head. "I've always wanted a job with a top agency. If this is good—and it will be—do I connect with International?"

I was watching his face and there was youthful confidence plastered all over it; he knew he had something hot. I said, "Tim Harper does the hiring. All I can do is put in a good word for you."

"Fair enough. I've heard your word carries weight there. So here it is. Maybe I'd better start about six months back when the doctor hired me."

"I've been wondering how you happened to hook up with him."

He told me, "Through Gerda."

When I looked blank, he said, "Gerda Frake, who was secretary for Levy. She's my fiancée. I met her when we were both working for the Hunter Medical Lab. That was before I decided I'd have more fun starving as a private dick than as a stock clerk. The lab let her out and she got this job with Levy. So when this Dutchman from St. Louis tried to kill Levy, Gerda recommended me as a body-guard."

"What about this Dutchman?" I said.

"Do you mean, did he kill Levy? It's possible. He certainly hated Levy's guts. It's a funny thing, too—Levy wanted to pay back everything the guy had lost but we couldn't locate him. You see,

Levy was really on the level about this Doctor Sivaja stuff of his. He'd got so he believed the 'no evil' stuff he was dishing out and he was trying to live up to it. However, I sort of doubt this Dutchman did it. From all I've heard, he was one of these guys that has to shoot off his mouth for five minutes before he does something and Levy, so the cops say, was knocked off fast and quiet."

"Go ahead. You're just getting a good start."

"That's right," he said. His eyes were pale gray under the pale eyebrows and very sharp but not hard. "Have you given a thought to Paul Kirkwood as a possibility?"

"No," I said, sounding surprised. "Why should I?"

"Because he's a swell possibility. Maybe you work for him but I'll lay odds I know more about him than you do. It so happens he started to put pressure on Levy three months ago to leave the Woodring dame alone. Levy wasn't a sap, even though he had fallen for his own line, and he put me to work checking on Kirkwood."

"It took me a while but I finally got a line and, to cut it short, I found out Kirkwood wasn't any lily, himself. He left New York six years ago just one train ahead of an indictment for embezzlement from a stock firm he was working for. About a year after he married the blind Woodring girl, the indictment was quashed. I suppose he settled up with dough he'd found in the family treasury."

"Did Kirkwood know that Levy had this information?"

"No. Levy wasn't going to use it unless Kirkwood forced him to. Like I told you, Levy was really trying to be a good boy."

"Then," I said, "it doesn't add up. Kirkwood wouldn't have had any reason to do it."

"Maybe I ought to say that Kirkwood didn't know anything about it until just before the meeting tonight."

Levy was tipped off during the day from St. Louis that somebody was checking his record there. He figured Kirkwood must be behind it and he phoned Kirkwood about six o'clock and asked him to come over after the meeting. I didn't hear the conversation but I'm betting Kirkwood got a hint that he wasn't sitting so pretty, himself."

That reminded me that when I'd called the Woodring house, the butler had told me I couldn't talk to Kirkwood. And that when he had come into the reception room later, I'd had the feeling he'd just arrived from some place.

Manners went on: "However, that's just background. I don't think Kirkwood pulled it because I've got two much better candidates. How do you think Levy got himself set up in this cult racket? It took dough."

"I wouldn't know. Maybe he had some."

"He didn't have two nickels to bounce together when he got out of Atlanta. All he had was a swell idea and a couple of pals that were willing to stake him while he put the idea over. Levy never broke down and told me all this, I just picked it up a little here and a little there, and put it together. The idea was that a lot of rich screwballs, particularly women, fall for cult stuff and will let their hair down in private to the high yogi. Levy was supposed to get the dirt, pass it on to his pals and they'd put the squeeze on the saps."

For the first time I felt as though I was getting warm on the case. I said, "Who were these pals?"

"Two cons that Levy met at Atlanta. One is Skip Morris, a racket guy who went up from Chicago for income tax stuff, and the other is Harry Lake, a hot number from New York. I don't know what he was in the can for. As a matter of fact, I never saw the pair except once when I body-guarded Levy over to the Roosevelt and he talked to them there. But I know they were the reason the last couple of months why Levy kept me on."

"How do they fit into last night's caper?" I said, killing my Teacher's. I thought I could guess that but I was willing to let him tell me. I figured also that I knew just about where the Woodring letters had gone, although I couldn't dope out how anyone had managed to be waiting for me outside the old gal's house.

"Levy's idea was a swell idea," Manners said, "except that Levy went holy on these guys. He got plenty of dirt on a lot of suckers but he wouldn't pass it on to Lake and Morris. He paid them back the dough they'd staked him to but they still figured he was double-crossing them. They as much as told him last week they were going to give him the business." He grimaced, wagged his head a little. "And last night they didn't do anything else."

"Why didn't you tell the cops all this?"

"That's easy. I don't want a job on the cops, I want a job with International."

"Yeah," I said. "Incidentally, you didn't happen to knock Levy off, yourself, did you?"

For a moment Manners looked startled. He said, "You serious?"

"No," I said. "That was just to keep conversation going."

"Oh," he dripped sarcasm and I couldn't blame him. "Well, on that basis, sure. I polished him off so Gerda could lose her job at forty a week and I could lose mine at seventy-five bucks. You see, I figured I'd blackmail Kirkwood so the first thing I did was blab all I knew to the dick that was working for him. It was kind of hard for me because I put in the whole evening lifting beer at the Lotsatime Cafe until fifteen minutes or so before I got back to the house. But I managed to shoot him from the cafe, using mirrors."

"Oh, well," I said, "I was just keeping the record clear. If I wanted to locate Morris and Lake, what kind of guys would I look for and where would I look?"

He described the pair, said, "I don't know where they hang out but maybe I can find out for you. Now how about that job?"

I told him I'd put in a word with Tim Harper and he got up to go. I was amused at this kid craving to be a dick.

At the door, I said, "There's one thing I've been wondering about. Levy had a packing case full of the three apes. What was he doing, starting a curio shop?"

Manners grinned. "Levy was as nutty about his cult as any of his suckers. He was going to pass the monkeys out the way Rockefeller did dimes. It might have been a good publicity stunt, at that."

That sounded nutty to me but no nuttier than the rest of the case so I forgot the apes. What I wanted was the letters and I had a notion that if I could locate Skip Morris and Harry Lake, I'd be locating the letters. When I got the letters, I'd toss the mugs to the cops and ease out of the picture.

So I phoned a little redhead who works the cocktail bars on Figueroa and on West Seventh.

She said she knew Skip Morris but she didn't know the other guy. "If I can find out where Morris lives," she said, "I'll call you, Kerry."

I said that would make her fifty bucks better off. . . .

When the phone rang, I'd been asleep for two hours. The redhead said in my ear, "Try the York apartments, Kerry," and hung up without saying anything more.



T TEN the next morning I got Harper on the phone at the office. He sounded grouchy and what I had to tell him didn't make him feel any better and he let me know about it. I said, "Well, maybe things won't come out so badly. I'm going out to the York apartments and prowl around. Inciden-

tally, have you heard anything from Sue?"

"No," Harper said. "And if she hasn't anything better to tell me than you have, I hope I don't hear from her."

The York apartments was four stories of dingy red brick out on Santa Monica Boulevard. There were brass plates on the hallway wall that held the cards of tenants. None of the cards showed me the names of Morris and Lake; not that I had expected it. I pressed the button under the card that said, "Manager."

A woman in a purple wrapper came to the head of the stairs. She was about fifty and very thick through the body and she had a lumpy face, a whiskey-veined nose and blue eyes as hard as agates. When I got up to her I had a card out. The card said that I was Jasper Q. Pahl of the Western Collection Agency.

I gave her the card and said, "Good morning, madame. I'm looking for a man named Morris and another man named Lake."

She backed her thick body away from me and into the open door of an apartment just off the stairway. She looked at the card and back at me and said, "Nobody here by that name."

She started to shut the door and I stopped it with my foot. I said, "They wouldn't be using those names. They skipped with a mortgaged car and it'd be worth ten bucks to locate them."

The pressure came off the door and the woman said, "What do they look like?"

"Morris is tall and about forty with a black mustache and black hair. He's sort of bald on top." I remembered Manners' description.

I hadn't heard feet coming up the stairs until I'd gone on with: "Lake is smaller. His nose has a hump where it was broken and he has one gold tooth."

The woman said hurriedly, "I told you there wasn't anybody named Lake

or Morris in this building," and backed away and slammed the door quickly.

Behind me, about the level of my knees, a man's voice said, "You looking for a fellow named Lake, buddy?"

I turned around and a tall mugg, who had a black mustache and black hair where it showed below a gray Homburg, was just taking the last step upward to the hallway. He was also just taking his hand out from beneath his coat and it was holding a blue-black automatic.

The tall man, who was undoubtedly Morris, said, "Come on, buddy. I'll take you to this guy named Lake."

When I didn't find anything to say, he grinned and said chidingly, "Hell, can't you even say thanks?"

We went up two more flights of stairs to the top floor where there were only two doors along the hallway. Morris knocked on one of them with his left hand while he held the gun on me with his right. He had to knock again before the door opened and a man in his shirt-sleeves looked out at us. The shirt-sleeved man had very square, muscular shoulders and rosy forearms. He had small eyes like shiny licorice drops and the eyes twinkled at me. His nose had a hump and he had a gold tooth.

Morris said, "This guy wants to see you, Harry."

Lake said in a husky baritone, "Bring him in, Skip. We got quite a party now."

We went in single-file, with me between Morris and Lake, into a big living-room. There were two men already in the room. One of them, who was Fred Manners, sat in the exact middle of a big divan. His mouth was bloody and one of his pale eyebrows was torn. He was holding his hands tightly across his stomach and moaning and he didn't look up when we came in.

The other man was Paul Kirkwood. His skin was malaria yellow and he looked scared and a little sick to the stomach. He jerked his head like a startled horse when he saw me and his

mouth opened and closed a couple of times but didn't say anything.

Morris said, "Where did Blondy come from?"

"Don't you remember him?" Lake said. "He's the guy Levy had body-guarding him. When I was coming back here with Kirkwood, I saw the guy just getting out of his car in front, so I brought him upstairs to find out why he was gum-shoeing around."

"Has he told you?" Morris asked, interested.

"He talks but he don't make sense." Lake walked over to the kid with a swing to his walk like a boxer, straightened him up with a light left to his face and then sank his right four inches into Manners' belly. Manners' retching noise was loud in the room and he doubled over again, holding his stomach muscles.

Lake walked back to me and twinkled his shiny eyes at me. He said, "From that nosy look you got, brother, you look like a dick to me."

"You ought to know," I said "You don't have to put on an act for me."

Lake whipped the right at me without telegraphing it. It smacked me high on the cheek and shoved me off balance. I hit the wall and bounced back with my fists coming up. Morris wiggled his gun at me and I put my fists down.

"I'll learn you," Lake said, "to give me funny answers."

Skip Morris said soberly, "We're not getting any place this way, Harry. Let these guys alone and we'll get our business with Kirkwood over and get going."

"We've got plenty of time," Lake said. "It always gives me the creeps when guys follow me around and I don't know just who they are or why. I'll work on 'em a while."

Morris shook his head. "You're nothing but a damn sadist, Harry. You like to beat guys up."

"Yeah," Lake said. "And this blond

kid is perfect for it—not too soft, not too hard.”

He stalked Manners again but even the light tap of Lake's left didn't straighten him up this time. Lake licked his lips and then he reached down and got a fistful of Manners' vest and hauled him upright. The kid fell forward and sideways and Lake pulled him erect again, the rosy muscles in his forearm standing out. He let him go and instantly threw his right from the level of his shoulder. The fist hit Manners' jaw with the sharp impact of a whip being snapped.

Manners' knees didn't even buckle. He went over backward, straight and stiff like a piece of wood. There was a table in the way and the back of his head hit the carved edge of it, making a dull, mushy sound. The table fell over, throwing its legs and its top around Manners' body on three sides like a fence.

Manners' didn't move. Not a muscle twitched and if there was any motion in his chest, I couldn't see it. His mouth sagged wide open and saliva drooled from it; his eyes were wide open, too, but only the whites showed.

Morris made an angry, bitter sound in his throat. He said, “You damned fool, you've killed him. You've fixed us up fine.” But he wasn't upset enough to take his rod off me.

Lake stooped and felt Manners' wrist. After a few seconds, he dropped it and stood looking down at him. He said sheepishly, “Hell, how could I guess the guy was a softy?”

Skip Morris began to storm at him and Lake's eyes got cold and small. They didn't twinkle any more. He said in a soft, nasty way, “Shut up. I'm thinking.”

I noticed that Morris shut up. He kept the gun pointing my way but his eyes were half on me, half on Lake, and they were worried. After a little Lake turned around and went out of the living-room. He came back right away

and he had a wet bath towel in his hands, wringing water out of it as he walked. The drops fell on the carpet, making a damp trail.

“What's the idea?” Morris demanded. His voice was anxious.

“Don't you worry what I'm going to do,” Lake said. He got a gun out from under his armpit and began wrapping it in the wet towel. “There's only one guy here that would do any talking about what just happened, Skip.”

He looked at me and then at Kirkwood. He said, “You wouldn't do any talking, would you, Handsome?”

The malaria yellow of Kirkwood's face was turning to green. He didn't try to speak, merely let his head waggle from side to side. Then he turned around and went wooden-kneed toward a window. He stood there with his back to us.

“See?” Lake said. “Handsome won't talk. He doesn't even want to see things.” He had the gun wrapped in the wet towel now and he looked at me. There were orange lights behind the shiny blackness of his eyes and he looked as though he was enjoying something hugely. Nerves crawled in my stomach and my mouth was suddenly dry and my tongue was stiff. He said, “I'll bet you won't talk either, shamus.”

The towel-shrouded gun was beginning to come up when out of the corner of my eye, I saw movement on the floor by the overturned table. I said loudly, hurriedly, “For cripes sake, hold it! The kid isn't dead.”

Manners was moving his hands, his legs with little jerks as though he were receiving a series of electric shocks. His chest moved convulsively and a long sigh hissed through his mashed lips. Lake started to unwrap the gun, looking disappointed about something.

He said reflectively, “I don't know; maybe the guy might die yet.”

He got the gun unwrapped, wiped off dampness from its barrel and put it away in his shoulder holster.



FIGURED a mask draperies divided the living-room from the small foyer through which we had come and the draperies moved a bit now.

Skip Morris and Lake weren't looking that way so they didn't see Sue Jordan step into sight between the hangings. She had her pearl-handled .32 in her hand and if she had worn wings, she couldn't have looked any more like an angel.

She waited until Lake had brought his hand away empty from the shoulder holster and then she said, "That's much better."

Lake and Morris began to jerk around and Sue's voice was like a whip-lash. "Don't move, gentlemen."

Lake froze but Skip Morris got his head around over his shoulder and stared at Sue and her gun with amazed fascination.

She said, "Take their guns, Kerry."

I did just that in a hurry, saying, "If you had a uniform, Sue, you could double for the Marines at this moment."

She grinned. "I talked to the boss on the phone right after you'd told him you were coming out here. These two playboys fitted right in with what I was looking for, so I beat it out here, too. And when the manager downstairs found out I was looking for you, she got the shakes and finally told me you were up here. I talked her out of a key and here I am."

On the floor Manners was breathing a lot better.

I said, "Can you hold these guys a minute or two, Sue?"

She looked scornful. "Do you think I'm a sissy?"

I got water from the bathroom, sloped some in Manners' face. He opened his eyes. I looked at Kirkwood for the first time in minutes. He'd turned around from the window and was watching me with his eyes sunk deep in his head.

There was a bedroom off the living-room. I started through the room like a northeast gale but I didn't have to go far. The Woodring letters and my gun were in a suit-case under the bed. I stuck the gun in my pocket and, with the other two guns loading me down, I felt like an armory. I went back into the living-room and handed the letters to Kirkwood.

I said, "How much were they asking for them?"

He put the letters in his pocket without looking at them, said dully, "Thanks, but they— This isn't all, there's something else they know."

I got it. "You wouldn't be meaning something like a New York indictment?"

He didn't answer but he didn't have to. I looked at Morris and Harry Lake. I said, "Where did you guys get that information?"

Lake's licorice-drop eyes sparkled hatred at me. He snarled, "You dicks aren't the only guys that find out things."

"Keep your mouth shut," Morris said swiftly. "They haven't got a damn thing on us if you'll just keep that big mouth shut."

"Just like that," I said. "I suppose I didn't have some letters and a gun swiped from me last night and I suppose I didn't just find 'em here?"

Morris's eyes were opaque and crafty. He said stubbornly, "I don't know anything about any letters or any gun."

"You'll remember about them," I said, "when we turn you over to the cops and lay everything in their laps."

There was a little laugh. It was Sue. She said, "You're not really that dumb, are you, Kerry? International is being paid to keep Kirkwood and Mrs. Woodring out of a scandal, not shove them in. We'd be earning our money in a big way, telling the cops about letters and indictments and so on."

She was right. I said, "Yeah," and scowled at Lake and Skip Morris. "But," I said, "murder is murder, after

all. We can't turn these guys loose."

"We don't have to," Sue said quietly. "All that's necessary is to show that they had another reason and a lot better one than blackmail to have killed Levy. The blackmail was just pin money."

Maybe I sounded skeptical. "And I suppose you can show that?"

"I think so. Unless I'm very wrong. We'll know soon, as soon as it will take to get all our friends here out to Doctor Sivaja's—or Levy's—cult place."

Kirkwood was looking very unhappy. He said, "But, Miss Jordan, I'd better not. If this gets into the papers—"

"I think you'd better," Sue said firmly. "Just in case. And don't worry, there'll be no reporters there."

Manners had been on his feet for a couple of minutes. He was leaning against a shiny walnut radio cabinet, looking pretty shaky. Now he stood away from the radio and took three steps in the direction of Harry Lake. His right moved fast and slammed Lake in the face. The punch didn't seem to have been thrown very hard but there was a sound of bone snapping and cartilage smashing and Lake went down as though he had been tapped with a mallet. His broken nose was broken all over again and covered half his face.

Manners slipped brass knuckles off his right hand and dropped them in his pocket. He grinned with his battered face and said, "That makes me feel a lot better."



KIRKWOOD had a big, expensive car downstairs and we all piled into it. Skip Morris and Harry Lake didn't make any fuss about coming with us but maybe that was because Manners and I were holding guns on them.

Kirkwood slid through traffic at fifty as though he was anxious to get the whole thing over with. I was busy clearing up some angles that had had

me winging. Kirkwood admitted he hadn't been at Mrs. Woodring's place when I called; he'd gone over to see Sivaja but he hadn't got there until after the murder, he said, and all the police cars had scared him away. Lake had phoned early that morning, given him a blackmail hint and set a meet for a certain corner. That's how he'd got lured to the York apartment. He admitted he hadn't tried to get me the way he'd agreed; he'd been willing to pay off and forget it all and I couldn't blame him too much for that.

Manners had put out some feelers and had located the York apartment spot the way I had.

"And we both stuck out our chins," he said. "Lake came along with Kirkwood and caught me just getting out of my car in front. He made me right away as Levy's body-guard and the fireworks started." He shook his head, remembering some of those fireworks. "Say, how about that job now?"

I told him I hadn't had a chance to speak to Tim Harper.

Morris and Lake sneered at us largely but they were carefully not having any of the conversation.

And neither was Sue. Whatever she had up her sleeve, she was keeping there. Personally, I didn't think she had very much; the blackmail angle still looked plenty good to me.

In daylight the House of No Evil looked like just what it was: A tired, old-fashioned place that had started out life in good society forty years before and had dropped out of the parade long ago. We went in, Manners and I keeping a peeled eye on Skip Morris and Harry Lake. They were meek as lambs.

Inside the lecture room Cap Fisher was sitting on a chair only half big enough for him, talking to Jane College or Greda Frake, Manners had said her name was when he told me he was engaged to her.

A Homicide dick, named Malloy, was lounging with his hands in his pockets

and there was another guy there that I didn't know.

Jane College looked around and saw Manners and her face went white and anxious. She jumped up, said, "Fred-die, what's happened? Oh, what have they done to you?"

The way she looked at him, it was easy to tell they sort of liked each other.

Manners grinned, said, "I'm O.K., Gerda. I just slipped and skinned my face on a knuckle."

"I'm a little late," Sue said. "I'm sorry, Captain."

Fisher said, "It's O.K. Us Homicide men aren't supposed to get any sleep. Anyway, I wanted to go over some things here with Miss Frake." He smiled, said, "I think I've got your drift, Miss Jordan. It sort of puzzled me when you phoned last night and said not to lose track of that packing case full of monkeys but when this lad—" he gestured at the guy I didn't know "—showed up this morning, I began to figure things out. What made you think of it?"

"It was just a hunch," Sue said. "I couldn't imagine why Sivaja—or Levy—would want six gross of the little figures. Then on the bottom of one of the figures was scratched a sort of a cipher, HI-M-N-3-7-S13."

She didn't say what had become of that particular figure and, fortunately, Fisher was too interested in what was coming to ask.

Sue continued, "I kept wondering and finally it occurred to me that maybe Sivaja hadn't wanted the monkeys but he had wanted something the monkeys brought in with them from Japan—narcotics."

Fisher said admiringly, "You're a smart girl."

"Thanks," said Sue. "This morning I called the Customs at the harbor and found Sivaja had received two other similar shipments in the last few months, one of them aboard the Hideyoshi Maru from Nagasaki. That cleared up the letters HI, M and N, scratched on the

one figure, and the clerk at the Customs said the rest was probably a date, Jap fashion. They date their year, it seems, from the coronation of the living Emperor, which made it read March 7 of Showa Thirteen, or March 7 of this year. And the clerk said the Hideyoshi Maru would be sailing from Nagasaki for Los Angeles about that date. Which indicates another shipment of apes is due to arrive here on that voyage of the Hideyoshi Maru."

The guy I didn't know said, "I want to congratulate you, Miss Jordan, on an exceedingly clever piece of work. I sawed one of the figures open and found it contained approximately three ounces of heroin. If all the rest of the figures contain the same amount, it will be one of the largest seizures made by the Government Narcotic Bureau on this Coast in a long time. Your agency has a nice amount of money coming by way of reward."

He showed a mutilated figure of the three apes and a little bottle full of snowy powder. A chunk had been sawed out of the ape that had its hands over its ears and there were traces of powder inside.

Captain Fisher said, "Swell, but where do I come in? I still got a murder on my hands."

"We even thought of that, Captain," Sue said. "We rounded up some lovely suspects for you. Introduce them, Kerry."

"Huh?" I said, looking up from the three apes. "Oh, yeah, skipper, meet Skip Morris and Harry Lake, ex-cons and pals of Doc Sivaja. They set him up in this racket here so I guess they can tell you plenty you want to know."

"Well, well," said the skipper, putting a hard and happy eye on the two of them. "They're the sort of lads I like to meet."

Harry Lake snarled through his busted nose but Morris was smooth, nonchalant. He said quietly, "We don't know a thing about this, Captain. We've got nothing to worry about."

"There's one thing you won't have to worry about, boys," the skipper told them, heavily humorous. "And that's the dope-smuggling charge. After we run you through the gas chamber for murder, the Feds won't be interested in you any longer."

Skip Morris still looked unworried. He had a very nice front. He said, "You'll need a bit of proof, won't you, before you can convict even two ex-cons of murder?"

Fisher looked at Sue, at me. He said, "How about it? You got any proof these guys pulled the killing?"

"Well," I said, "all I know is they'd threatened to get him because he'd used their dough to set up the cult racket and then double-crossed them by believing his own stuff and turning holy on them. My guess is he'd turned so holy he was even going to tip off the law on the dope smuggling and they had to shut his mouth."

"Yeah, yeah," said the skipper, "but that's guesses. Can't you give me a tighter case than that against them?"

Sue grinned. She said, "Am I to understand, Captain, that you want International to do all the Homicide Squad's work?"

Fisher reddened but he managed a grin, too. "I guess we can find out a few things ourselves from these boys."

He turned on Morris and Lake as though he meant to reach down their throats and drag the truth up.

I listened for a little and looked at the three apes in my hand for a while and thought I had never run into a screwier case. Three apes that could speak or see or hear no evil—and look what they'd accomplished along that line. I looked at them and again saw Levy lying dead on the floor of his study; I felt a slug of lead fanning my face in the darkness outside the Woodring home; I saw a blind girl and her man-crazy mother and her money-mad husband; I saw young Manners on the floor with his face battered to a pulp. The three apes had worked out swell for

everybody—three apes that could speak no evil, could see no evil, could hear no evil. It was all very screwy.

But presently I began to wonder if it really had been so screwy. I got up, caught Sue's eyes and said, "Come here, sweetheart."

I walked her down the length of the room away from the rest of them.

"Listen," I said under my breath as we walked slowly toward the hall, "you were pretty smart. You figured this whole thing out all by your little self. Jordan the Magnificent!"

"Don't be sore," Sue said. "I knew you could handle Kirkwood's case without even drawing a deep breath. When I realized I probably had a big narcotic reward for International by the tail, I had to stay with it. I'd have tipped you off, Kerry, before it was all wound up. Honest!"

"Skip it," I said. "I'm not sore. But I've got to have my fun. I'll give you ten to five I can pull one out of the hat right now that you never even thought of."

Sue said, "You've made a bet."

We had come to the archway between the lecture room and the hall. I said, "O.K. Stand right where you are. Don't turn around."

She didn't turn but I did. Facing her, I could see the group down at the other end of the lecture room. I could see Kirkwood watching us out of the corner of his eye and Gerda Frake talking to Manners and Cap Fisher shaking his fist in Skip Morris's face and the Homicide dick helping him and the Narcotic man watching us in a bored fashion.

I merely wagged my chin and twisted my lips around at Sue for about thirty seconds and Sue said, "You make beautiful faces, Kerry, but so what?"

"Wait and see," I muttered and dodged past her and walked down the room fast. I got half-way down the room before the break came.

Gerda Frake said something to Fred Manners and then she screamed on a

high, sustained note that rippled my spine. Manners spun like an open-field runner, caromed off the Narcotic man and knocked him down. The Narcotic man fell into Gerda Frake, who was running toward the study doorway, and she fell flat on her face.

Manners was already in the doorway. I have to give the kid credit; he could still have made his getaway alone because everyone but myself was paralyzed with surprise. But he wasn't going to leave Jane College.

He stopped in the doorway, his gun out and swinging, and he shouted, "Gerda," and waited.

I made the mistake of continuing to come at him and his gun blasted in the room, the bullet shaving hair off my head just above my left ear. I ducked and the room boomed to another shot and when I looked up, Manners was just beginning to fall forward. He fell on his face beside Jane College but by the time I got there, he had squirmed over on his back.

Fisher stuck his gun, still smoking, back into his holster and looked down at Manners. He said in an amazed voice: "For cripe's sake!"

The skipper's slug had slammed through Manners' belly. I could see a little blood oozing out, staining his shirt front. I said, "I'm sorry, Manners."

"Yeah," Manners said, making heavy weather of it. "I'm sorry too, Thorne. Now—now I—don't get that International job. And, hell, I wanted to be a shamus—with a good—agency. But no job—now, eh?"



ONE HOUR later a deputy jailer let me out of the prison ward at the receiving hospital. On the street I caught a cab and lit a cigarette as the cab started rolling. The cigarette didn't taste good but that was because I didn't feel so good. I never did like seeing guys die.

When I got to the office, I walked to Tim Harper's office, stuck my head in. Tim was there, looking not so sour now, and Sue was there, too.

She said, "Well?"

"As well as you could expect," I said. "Manners died but they got a yarn out of him before he kicked off." I sat down and put my feet on Harper's desk. He was too interested to bawl me out about it. "Manners was the guy who thought up the gag of getting heroin in by ordering the apes, supposedly for the cult, and loading them with dope. Sivaja found out about it when he overheard Manners making a phone call from the house a couple of days ago about the shipment that was due.

"Sivaja beat Manners to the shipment at the Customs and told him he was going to turn him in to the Narcotic folks. So Manners had to shut his mouth. He told us plenty more, too. He was the guy that took a shot at me outside Mrs. Woodring's house. He wanted to get the figure of the apes away from me and he took everything else off me to cover up that it was just the apes he wanted. He told us how he knew I had the figure and that I was heading for the Woodring place."

"I've guessed that all by my little self, now," Sue said. "Gerda Frake is deaf. She reads lips and I remember that she was in the room with us after the murder when we were talking about the letters and the figure of the apes."

"Exactly," I said. "She told Manners and he beat me to the Woodring place. Then, having the letters and knowing about Morris and Lake, he thought up a fast one. His smuggling game was washed up and he really did have a yen to be an op for a good agency, so he figured he'd plant the letters and my gun in their place, tip me off and cinch a job with us. Also, as he doped it out, if the cops had them to play with, it would divert suspicion from him. So he beat it to their place, watched them leave, got in and planted the stuff. Lake caught him outside by

his car but made the mistake of thinking Manners had just climbed out of the car instead of being about to get in. But that made the planted letters and gun just as good as though Lake hadn't caught Manners. And he was willing to take a beating to let it stay that way."

"You didn't have this under your hat all the time," said Sue.

I admitted I hadn't. "I pulled it out of the air just about thirty seconds before I walked you down that room. I wasn't satisfied with the thing as we had it. Morris and Lake were taking it too easy, there were too many loose ends. Why were they wasting time on a shake-down when they should have been worrying about a hundred grand worth of heroin? While I was wondering about that, I kept looking at the three apes who couldn't speak evil, or see evil or hear evil. And suddenly the thing popped out of the blue. We'd had a guy that wouldn't speak evil, a girl who couldn't see evil. So why couldn't we have somebody who couldn't hear evil—a deaf person?"

"Some deaf folks can read lips so well that you'd never suspect they were deaf. If that hunch was on the level, I knew I had something. Kirkwood and the Woodring household certainly wouldn't be in on the dope set up but they were the only ones, outside of you, that I'd told about heading for there.

"Then I began to figure who had seem me talking to you about it and that pointed the finger right at the Frake girl. I started remembering things. She and Manners had worked for a medical laboratory and that put them on the fringes of the drug racket. And Manners had as an alibi only his claim that he was at the Lotsatime Café when the shooting took place and in a crowded joint like that, who's to say just what minute a guy leaves?"

Nobody answered me. I went on:

"Also I recalled how the Frake girl hadn't seemed to hear me when I told her to call the cops, not until I shook her out of her hysterics and made her

look at me. Even then she had finayed it so you did the calling because she probably can't hear well on the phone. So I decided to pull my little gag on them and it worked!"

Sue said, "You certainly made the nastiest faces. What were you saying?"

"I didn't say anything but I made my lips work as though I was saying: 'We've let this thing go far enough. I'm going to put the finger on Manners and the girl and get cuffs on them before they know what it's all about.' I knew she was watching me, and I figured if my hunch was right, she couldn't help slipping Manners a warning and he'd be so startled that he'd do something to give himself away. You know the rest."

Sue got a five-dollar bill out of her purse and handed it to me. She said, "Gee, Kerry, but you're wonderful."

"Thanks, sweetheart," I said. "You're wonderful, too."

Tim Harper had been listening, not saying anything. He growled at us now but he did it with a twist to his mouth. He said, "Wonderful, my eye. All the detective work you both did on this could be put on the end of a sharp needle. Scram and make out your reports."

Sue and I got to the outside office and the office boy lugged a big package toward me and slammed it on a desk. Mailed in the Orient by my aunt.

Sue said, "Ah, another elephant from Aunt Frieda."

"If it is," I said, starting to unwrap the thing, "I'll go nuts. I've already got Aunt Frieda's elephants strung around my apartment like a circus parade. So help me, I'll go nuts."

I got the thing unwrapped and reached in and pulled out three big brass monkeys, holding mouth, eyes, ears.

Sue laughed and laughed. She said, "You lucky, lucky boy! It isn't an elephant, after all. In case you don't know what it is, it's three apes from the East."

"Pardon me," I said, "while I go nuts anyway."

"I'll help you," Sue offered.

DOG SHOW MURDER



THE SECRETARY of the Westfield Kennel Show said to Oliver Quade, the Human Encyclopedia: "The price of a small booth is seventy-five."

"No," said Oliver Quade. "You misunderstood. I don't want to rent this booth for the entire year. I want it only for the duration of the dog show—four days."

"That's what I quoted you on," retorted the secretary. "Some of our larger exhibitors are paying as much as five hundred dollars. What are you exhibiting? Remedies, dog foods?"

"No," said Quade. "Nothing commercial. Mine is an educational exhibit. That's why I can't pay any fancy prices for booth space. How about five dollars?"

Ten minutes later they compromised on twenty dollars. Quade paid the money and stowed away his receipt. Then he said to a burly man who had stood by patiently during the dickering, "All right, Charlie, prepare the exhibit."

Charlie Boston picked up a heavy suit-case and started for the main part of the building. Quade walked along.

"Ollie," said Boston. "You know I'm not terribly happy. I never am around dogs. I can't for the life of me figure out why you want to work this dog show. Last week you wouldn't even work the Elk's Convention in Buffalo."



By FRANK GRUBER

The Human Encyclopedia plots
a suicide



And now," he shuddered, "look at that whole row of English bulldogs. Gosh, if they should get loose—"

"Nothing to it. The only way to handle a dog is to let him know you're not afraid of him."

"I tried that once. That was the time I lost the seat of my pants."

The dog exhibit building had a small arena, containing about two hundred seats, built around a tanbark pit, where the dogs were put through their paces. The rest of the building was crowded with rows of stalls, separated by wooden partitions. Each stall contained a pedi-

greed dog. Around the outer edge of the room were commercial exhibits, dog remedies, foods, supplies, equipment.

Oliver Quade's booth was wedged in between one displaying dog biscuits and another featuring a line of disinfectants and remedies.

Boston set the suit-case on the floor outside the booth. Oliver Quade stepped on to it to the counter. Then he began talking.

"I am Oliver Quade," he boomed in a stentorian voice that rolled out across the auditorium and bounded back from the far walls, "Oliver Quade, the Human Encyclopedia. I have the greatest brain in the world. I know everything. I know the answers to all questions: What came first, the hen or the egg; the age of Ann; the batting and fielding average of every big and minor league baseball player; every date in history. Everything under the sun."

A group of youths had stopped in the aisle before Quade the moment he had started to talk.

"Oh, yeah?" one of them said.

"Oh, yeah?" Quade retorted. "I can answer any question *you* can ask me. On any subject—history, science, mathematics, sports, anthropology. Go ahead, ask me a question and see."

The wise-cracking boy looked puzzled. His pals urged him on. "Go ahead, you started it."

"All right," grinned the youth. "Here's one. How does a fox rid itself of fleas?"

The other boys began tittering, but Quade threw up his hands. "That was supposed to be a brain teaser. But I can answer it correctly. Br'er Fox's reputation for cleverness is justly earned. When he's bothered with fleas he takes a piece of wool or wood into his mouth and lets himself into a pool of water, tail first. The fleas don't like to be drowned so they scramble farther up on his body. Pretty soon only the fox's nose and mouth are above water and the fleas get into the wood or wool he's got in his mouth. Then the fox drops the thing into the water and removes himself promptly from the vicinity."

A roar of laughter swept the crowd that had now gathered in the aisle. Quade's eyes gleamed and he went on: "Try me on something else. Anything, anyone!"

"What kind of dogs are these?" The interrogator was a young woman and she had them on leash; two huge animals, only a little smaller than St. Bernard dogs, and infinitely ludicrous. Long, woolly hair covered their faces, their entire bodies. They looked more like sheep than sheep themselves.

Quade chuckled as he replied, "Those, Madam, are Old English sheep dogs. Once when I was lost in a wild section of England, near the Scottish border, I killed one of those dogs, thinking it a sheep. It was not until later that I learned of my mistake and I haven't been able to eat mutton since."

Again the crowd roared. The questions came fast and furious after that.

Everyone seemed to want to play the new game.

"How far is it to the moon?"

"What is the population of Talladega, Alabama?"

"When was the Battle of Austerlitz?"

"What is ontology?"

Quade answered all the questions, promptly and accurately. The audience applauded each time he gave a prompt answer. Then, after ten minutes, Quade called a dramatic halt.

"Now," he bellowed, "I want to tell you how you can learn the answers to all questions you've asked me. All those and ten thousand more. I'm going to give every one of you the opportunity to do what I did—have at your fingertips the answer to every single question anyone can ask you. Every one of you can be a Human Encyclopedia. . . ."

Charlie Boston opened the suit-case at Quade's feet. He brought out a thick volume and handed it to Quade.

"Here it is, folks," Quade said. "The compendium of human knowledge of the ages. The answers to all questions. A complete college education crammed into one volume. Listen." Quade leaned forward and lowered his voice to a confidential bellow.

"I'm not asking twenty-five dollars for this marvelous twelve-hundred-page book. I'm not even asking fifteen dollars, ten or five. Just a mere, paltry, insignificant two dollars and ninety-five cents. Think of it, folks, the knowledge of the ages for a mere pittance. . . . And here I come!"

He leaped down from the counter and grabbed an armful of books. Then he attacked the crowd, talking as he went through. He sold the books, twenty-two of them. Then, when the remnants of the crowd still lingered to hear more entertainment, Quade blithely walked off. There was no use wasting time on dead-heads. In a little while there'd be a new crowd and Quade would attack them. But now, he had a half-hour intermission.

He was walking through a dog aisle

when a biting voice said to one side of him: "Sheep!"

It was the girl who had asked Quade to identify the sheep dogs. He grinned. She was very easy on the eyes, blonde, and with the finest chiseled features Quade had ever seen on a girl, a complexion of milk and honey and eyes that danced with blue mischief. She was not more than twenty-one or two.

"Sorry I had to embarrass you," Quade apologized. "But I ask you in all fairness, do those creatures look like dogs?"

He pointed at the one in the stall. The girl surveyed the dog critically, "Well," she conceded, "the man I got them from told me they were dogs. Sometimes I'm inclined to disbelieve him. But say, what's the trick about that question and answer stuff you pulled back there?"

"No trick at all, it's on the level."

"Oh, come now, you don't really know everything."

"But I do. I have a smattering of every subject under the sun."

"I don't understand. No one person could know everything."

"You heard my pitch. I sell small encyclopedias. They're pretty good, worth the money. But I didn't get my knowledge from them. I got it from a twenty-four volume set. I've read it from cover to cover, not once, but four times."

She looked at him in awe. "How long—"

"Fifteen years. And I remember everything I read. For example, in the premium list of the Westfield Kennel Show I remember the name of Lois Lanyard as the exhibitor of a pair of Old English Sheepdogs. . . ."

"And you're Oliver Quade. And now we're introduced."

Quade's eyes sparkled. The friendliness of the girl delighted him. He talked for a moment more with her, then a sleek-haired young man in white flannels came up.

"Freddie," said Lois Lanyard, "this

is Mr. Quade, the Human Encyclopedia. Mr. Quade, my fiancé, Mr. Bartlett."

Quade started to put out his hand but Bartlett nodded shortly and turned to Lois. "The judge is going to place the awards on the pointers in a few minutes," he said. "Shall we watch?"

Lois flashed an angry look at her fiancé but Bartlett bluntly took her arm and walked off with her. Quade shrugged and walked down the aisle containing the English bulldogs. He made friends with a couple of the dogs, although he had some uneasy moments while doing so.

"Maybe," Quade said to himself, "they'll judge the pointers today. Then again maybe they won't!"

When he walked away, the snap fastening the biggest bulldog to the wall was loose. The dog, however, didn't know it yet. Later, instinct and nature would take its course.

Quade went quickly back to his booth, climbed up on his stand and began his pitch. And if he had talked loud before he shook the rafters now. The noise was too much for the dogs and they set up a terrific racket. Inside of thirty seconds bedlam reigned in the building. Men and women began rushing about. That excited the dogs even more. And then, Quade, on his perch, saw a big bulldog leap out of his stall. He went no further than the neighboring one, which contained a bulldog almost as big as himself. Also a male.

The fight created a riot in the building. A hundred people clamored, screamed and yelled. A half dozen dog handlers had to use water and burning newspaper to get the dogs apart.

Quade watched the fight, but Charlie Boston was conspicuous by his absence. He had taken flight outside the building the moment he'd heard one of the bulldogs was loose.

When the dogs were back in their stalls and the crowd began dispersing, Quade strolled into the pointer aisle. "Going to judge the pointers today?" he asked Freddie Bartlett.

Bartlett glared at him, "No, some damn fool let one of the bulls loose and it'll take two hours for the dogs to quiet down."

"Next time," Quade said to himself, "maybe Freddie will be more particular who he snubs."

Charlie Boston dashed up, wild-eyed. "Oliver," he croaked. "Come over here a minute. I gotta tell you. . . ."

Quade followed Boston to one side. "In your booth," gasped Boston. "Gawd, a dead man!"

"Hell, I just left that booth five minutes ago."

"Maybe so, but there's a stiff there now."

Quade's lips tightened. He distanced his partner, reaching the small booth a dozen steps ahead of him. He leaned over the four-foot counter, looked down into the small space behind—and caught his breath.

A man wearing white flannels, white doeskin shoes and a black and white striped sweater was lying there in the tanbark. And a dark brown liquid had trickled from a spot over his left eye down over the bridge of his nose.

Quade turned. "Call the show secretary and the police."

"But he's in *our* booth."

"Call the cops," Quade repeated sharply.



HARLIE BOSTON had a policeman at his side and, in their wake, coattails flapping, the dog show secretary.

"Murder!" bleated the secretary. "Murder, here! Oh, my God!"

The dogs started barking again and Quade slumped in disgust. The fool secretary was starting another riot. It lasted for a full ten minutes, then a dozen Westfield police arrived and herded everyone in the building into the aisle before Quade's booth.

Chief Costello of the Westfield Po-

lice Department was in command. "This is your booth, I understand," he began on Quade.

"Yes, it's my booth and you want to know what I know. The answer is, nothing. There was a dog fight and I joined the crowd to watch it. My assistant here, Charlie Boston, found the body and told me about it. That's all I know."

"Zat so?" The chief turned on Boston and put him through a bad few minutes. But Boston defended himself ably. He had left the building when the dog fight started because he didn't like dog fights. When the dogs had quieted he'd returned and found the body here in the booth. He'd gone to tell Quade immediately. He stuck stoutly to that story.

The coroner came and examined the body inside the booth. He came out in a few minutes. "Shot with a .32 caliber bullet, I'd say."

"And no one heard the shot?" the chief said sarcastically. "A hundred people in here, too."

"And five hundred dogs," added Quade. "All of them barking. You couldn't have heard a machine gun."

The chief glowered at him. "I'll talk to you some more." He turned to the coroner. "S'pose you'd better take him to town. We'll give the notice to the papers and someone may come down and identify him."

"That's not necessary," said the coroner. "I know him. His name is Wesley Peters."

"Wesley! My God!"

The scream came from a gorgeously blond young woman in the front of the crowd. Quade stepped quickly toward her, but couldn't quite catch her as she sank to the tanbark. He dropped to his knees and bumped into a slender, dark-haired chap who was also stooping to pick her up.

"I beg your pardon!" the man exclaimed. "It's my wife."

Quade pushed a path through the crowd to a booth with a long table in

it. The young fellow brought his wife behind Quade, deposited her gently on the table. The coroner came through but the woman had already revived and was struggling to sit up. She moaned. "Wesley! He's dead . . . dead!"

Lois Lanyard came up, put her arm around the girl and spoke soothingly.

"I'll take her home," said the young husband.

"Hmm. Guess it's all right," grunted the chief of police. "I know both of you."

But the woman who had fainted protested at being taken home and after a moment insisted she was quite recovered.

"Thanks for trying to help," the young fellow told Quade.

"Quite all right."

"My brother, Bob," Lois Lanyard said. "And his wife, Jessie."

Quade had already guessed the relationship. The family resemblance between Bob and Lois Lanyard was striking, but whereas Lois was wholesome and vital, her brother seemed to be the ascetic, brooding type. His wife was dressed expensively, her hair was burnished gold and her coiffure marvelous. Lois' clothes had probably cost just as much as Jessie Lanyard's but didn't look it. Which was the difference between them. Lois was born to money, Jessie had married it.

The chief of police became brusque. "All right, we know who he is. Now, let's see if we can't find out who killed him. You," pointing at Quade, "you say this is your booth. I don't see nothing in it."

"I do not display samples."

"Naw? What's your racket?"

The show secretary stretched up on his toes and whispered to the chief. There was a light in the chief's eyes when he tackled Quade again. "A book agent, huh!" he snapped in glee. "So you're the bloke who's been making all the racket around here today. Come on now, talk and talk fast."

"Why would I want to kill this man?"

I never saw him before in my life."

"So what? Does every robber and thug have to be introduced first to the people he robs?"

"Has he been robbed?"

A startled look came into the chief's eyes. He turned away hurriedly and pulled the coroner into the booth. He emerged a moment later, crestfallen.

"He wasn't robbed."

"Ah, his money is still on him, eh? How much?"

"Over a thousand dollars," admitted the chief. "And there's a watch and stickpin. But—maybe you didn't have time."

"No? You forget that I was the one who sent for the police?"

The chief swore roundly. "Say, who's the policeman here? You or me?"

"Don't you know?"

"Why you—!" The chief started to swing a punch at Quade, but caught himself with an effort. "Enough of that stuff now. We've got to find the gun."

He signaled to a couple of his policemen and barked orders at them. They scattered through the neighboring booths. And inside of two minutes one of them yelled in discovery. He came back carrying a nickel-plated .32 caliber revolver in a handkerchief. The chief's eyes gleamed.

He sent his policemen scurrying about getting the name of everyone present. Then he allowed everyone to depart. He dispersed the exhibitors, too and posted policemen at each door.

"No one'll be allowed in here until we've had time to go over the building," he announced. "Three o'clock in the afternoon anyway."



LIVER QUADE and Charlie Boston strolled toward a restaurant a short distance from the dog building. "Don't look now," said Boston as they entered. "But there's a flatfoot shadowing us."

"Naturally. The chief hasn't forgotten that it's my booth."

Lois Lanyard, her brother and his wife and Freddie Bartlett were in the restaurant, seated at a large table. The only vacant spot was at a small table next to theirs. Quade and Boston sat down at it.

Lois introduced them all around.

A waitress came to take their orders, then Quade leaned back in his chair and studied the group at the next table. Lois was chattering gaily with Freddie, but every now and then she cast a sharp glance at her brother who was biting his lips and staring moodily at the tablecloth. Jessie Lanyard was trying to make conversation with her husband, but wasn't having much success. She seemed to have recovered entirely from her faint, but her conversation, it seemed to Quade, was high pitched and forced.

Quade sat up. "Look, folks," he said. "I seem to be Murder Suspect Number 1 and the chief of police is going to ask me some mighty embarrassing questions this afternoon. Mind if I talk about it?"

Lois made warning signals with her eyes and Freddie drew himself up stiffly, but Lois' brother came out of his lethargy. "Yes, let's talk about it. We're all thinking about it anyway. Why did my wife faint when the coroner said it was Wesley Peters? Is that what you want to know?"

"No. I want to know why Mrs. Lanyard *pretended* to faint?"

All four of the people at the adjoining table gasped. Jessie's face went white, then red. "What do you mean by that?" she snapped.

"I mean that you were no more faint than I," Quade replied. "I saw your eyes. And your muscles were tensed, not relaxed, when your husband picked you up."

"Mr. Quade," said Freddie Bartlett. "I don't think this is a matter that concerns you."

"But it does," cried Lois' brother. "Jessie put on a scene over there and I

want to know the meaning of it. Jessie, why did you faint? Or pretend to faint?"

Jessie's eyes flashed sparks. "Very well, if you must have a public scene, I'll tell you. You know very well that I knew Wes before I married you. Naturally it was a shock to learn that he was murdered—under such peculiar circumstances."

"Why peculiar?" snapped Bob Lanyard. "The dog show was as good a place as any for him to die. He was a—a dog, you know."

"Bob!" Jessie cried indignantly.

"Why did you have to start this?" exclaimed Lois, looking at Quade.

"Because I wanted to make you all mad," retorted Quade. "When people are mad they tell things, and I think there are some things to be told. Don't you think so, Mrs. Lanyard?"

Jessie Lanyard's eyes slitted. "All right, Wesley was in love with me once. And I almost accepted him before I married you, Bob. I didn't want to tell you that, but you insisted on having it. So take it."

Charlie tugged at Quade's sleeve. Quade turned and saw Chief Costello bearing down on the group.

"Hello, folks," said the chief. "Thought I'd find you here."

"You mean your shadow told you we came here," Quade retorted.

"Still at it, young fella, huh? Well, I got some news for you. I found out who owned the gun that Wesley was killed with."

Jessie Lanyard rose so suddenly that she bumped the table and knocked over a water glass. Quade saw panic in her eyes.

"It was his own gun," continued the chief. "He bought it a year ago, got a license to carry it."

The panic remained in Jessie's eyes. Quade hesitated, then suddenly pointed a lean forefinger at her. "But didn't he give you that gun, Mrs. Lanyard?" he asked softly.

Jessie screamed suddenly. She

pushed back her chair and it crashed to the floor. Her face was suddenly twisted into a weird gargoyle. "Yes, he gave it to me. Yes, and I killed him. I killed him with his own gun! I'd do it again because I hated him!"

Jessie's dramatic confession exploded like a bombshell in the crowded restaurant. The place seethed with excitement. Lois sat up in her chair, her eyes aghast. Freddie was frozen stiff in his chair.

Bob Lanyard sprang to his feet. His arms encircled Jessie and he caught her tightly to him. "Jessie!" he cried in anguish. "You mustn't! You're overwrought. You don't know what you're saying."

Jessie began sobbing as if her heart was breaking. Her husband soothed her.

Chief Costello stood back uncertainly. It was obvious the social standing of these people impressed him, made him uncertain. Then he ordered his policemen to clear the restaurant.

Bob Lanyard's soothing quieted Jessie. In two or three minutes she was able to pull herself together, although she still kept a handkerchief covering her mouth and most of her face.

The chief cleared his throat noisily. "I'm mighty sorry about this, Mrs. Lanyard," he said. "But you understand. . . ."

"You fool!" gritted Bob Lanyard. "Don't you know she said that to shield me? Wesley was an old sweetheart. She knew I was intensely jealous of him and when she knew he was murdered, she naturally jumped to the conclusion that I did it."

"Did you?" the chief asked, taken aback.

Quade almost held his breath waiting for the answer he was sure would come. It did.

"Yes!" exclaimed Bob. "I killed him. I found the gun in Jessie's dresser, took it to the dog show with me and killed him during the excitement of the dog fight. He—he was annoying Jessie again."

"Bob!" That was Lois. "You—you couldn't have! You were right behind me all that time."

"No, you were with Freddie." Bob Lanyard refused to accept the alibi offered him.

Freddie Bartlett blundered in. "Oh, come now, Bob, you know very well we were talking together when the excitement began and I remember your being with us when the dog fight was over."

"Say, what is this?" cried the chief. "Two confessions inside of five minutes. Is there anyone else here who wants to confess?"

"If I wasn't afraid you'd take me seriously I'd toss in my hat," said Quade.

The Lanyards and Bartletts were wealthy local residents who could embarrass Chief Costello in his own bailiwick. He had to treat them with the utmost respect. But Quade, the chief knew, was an outsider and a mere book agent. Fair bait. He turned savagely upon him.

"That's the last damn crack I'm takin' out o' you, fella!" he snarled. "You make just one more yip and I'll not only throw you in the clink but I'll see that you get worked over plenty with the rubber hose. Get me?"

"I get you, Chief." Quade subsided, but his mind worked furiously over the problem. He had a strange hunch that this case had just begun. There had been a hundred or more people in the building at the time Wesley Peters had been killed. And the place had been in an uproar. No one had paid any attention to anyone else because of the commotion. Alibis weren't worth a dime a dozen.

And Wesley was known in Westfield. There could easily have been a dozen people in the building at the time who knew, and perhaps disliked, him. Jessie Lanyard was a neurotic. She might say or do anything under stress of emotion. Her husband was a moody, sensitive type.

Chief Costello made a sagacious de-

duction. "Maybe we'd better not decide anything just yet. All of us know each other and there's plenty of time for getting together. Anyway, it would be much better for all of you to think things over and maybe discuss them with your families and lawyers. If you'll give me your word not to leave town suddenly, I'll make my report and we'll get together later this evening." He departed, taking his policeman with him.

Lois came over to Quade. "I've been greatly disappointed in you, Mr. Quade," she said.

He flushed. "I'm sorry, Miss Lanyard." He rose, turned stiffly and followed Charlie Boston out of the restaurant, although neither of them had been served yet.

Outside Charlie Boston whistled softly. Quade turned angrily on him. "Cut it, Charlie."

Boston stopped whistling. He walked beside Quade without saying a word. After a moment, however, Quade apologized. "Sorry, Charlie. Nerves. I made some fool plays and I'm sore about them."

Boston grunted assent. "We're out of our class, Oliver. That's all that's wrong. Shall we ditch the books and clear out? It's only thirty miles to New York City. Once there no one from here'd ever find us."

"It'd probably be the smartest thing we could do, but you know how I am. I'm too stubborn to quit something I've started."



IN THE dining-room of the Westfield Hotel, Quade and Charlie discussed the case.

"That thousand dollars Peters had, that worries me. It's too much money for him," Quade said between bites.

"I wouldn't know myself," replied Boston. "But I've heard there's lots of folks have a thousand dollars."

"Not ham actors. I read *Variety*,

and I know that Peters hasn't been in a show in four years or more. I wish I knew how he got his money. He dressed well."

"Is that the important thing in this case? Seems to me some of those people haven't told all they know."

"Some of them don't know any more than we do, if as much. Hmm, wonder who that is?"

The head waiter was pointing out Quade to a man who had just come into the dining-room. He would have been more at home in a Greenwich Village bar than the Westfield Hotel. He was perhaps thirty, tall and hollow-cheeked. There was a three days' growth of beard on his face. His cinnamon colored coat didn't match his trousers and his shirt had evidently been washed in some communal bathroom and worn unpressed.

He came up to Quade's table. "Mr. Quade? My name's Renfrew, Felix Renfrew. I read in the afternoon papers about—about Wes Peters and came out here."

Quade said, "Have a seat; you interest me."

Renfrew sat down. "Wes Peters," he declared, "was my best friend. The minute I heard he had been killed I grabbed a bus and came out here."

"You may have been Peters' best friend," said Quade, "but I bet you didn't hear about Peters' death in the city."

Renfrew glared for a moment, then shrugged. "All right, I came out with Wes this morning. What difference does it make? Wes was killed, his body found in your booth. There's a lot of talk going around town about your knowing something."

"I do know something. More than you ever will. What'd you come to me for?"

"To find out who killed Wes, that's why!" snapped Renfrew. "Wes was the best pal I ever had and I'm going to stick around until his murderer is found."

Quade gave Renfrew the once over,

his eyes insolently staring at the unmatched suit and unpressed shirt. "You were Peters' pal, eh? Roommate perhaps?"

Renfrew flushed. "No, we didn't room together. But—"

"You live in Greenwich Village?"

"Yes, but what's that got to do with it?"

"Perhaps nothing. Wes Peters, if you'll pardon the inference, put on the dog. And when he was found this afternoon he had a thousand dollars on him. Would you be knowing how he got that much money?"

Renfrew shrugged. "Peters always had money. We didn't live together but he paid my rent and visited at my place a lot."

"Why?"

"Why? Well, because there was always something doing there. I'm a playwright, you know."

"I didn't know. What plays have you written?"

Renfrew scowled. "I've written eight or ten, but none have been produced. But they're good plays. Only the capitalistic—"

"Oh, so it's like that. Anyway, you always had a crowd of the Village folks at your diggings. Poets and writers and artists. And Peters liked to pose as a big shot. So he paid your rent and hung around your dump. Right?"

"Something like that."

"And you're worried because your patron has shuffled off? Kinda puts you on the spot. Tell me, where'd Peters get his money?"

"He never told me."

"Where'd he come from originally?"

"I don't know. New York I guess. I've only known him four or five years. But I always guessed that he got his money from relatives. Who else would send him money regularly?"

"Ah, he got it regularly?"

"Yes, I happen to know because at times he was broke but he didn't worry about it. And he didn't work. Not for the last four years. Before that he was

on the stage. He played the juvenile lead in 'Hidden Faces,' I know."

"Jessie Lanyard played in that, too, didn't she?"

Renfrew looked puzzled. He said:

"I don't know her."

"Well, that wasn't her name then. She's the woman who fainted when Wes Peters was found dead. Or weren't you around then?"

Renfrew flushed. "No, I left right after—well, right after you got through selling books."

"Because you saw Wes Peters coming in and didn't want him to see you around?"

Renfrew chewed at his lower lip, then suddenly rose. "I've got to catch my bus back to the city."

Quade did not try to detain him. When he was gone, Charlie Boston snorted. "Wonder what the hell Peters saw in that."

"The only difference between Peters and Renfrew is that Peters had money these last few years. Before he got the money, I'll bet, he was just like this Renfrew. Dirty finger-nails and all. Well, I guess it was a tough blow to Renfrew at that. He may even have to go to work now."

"It won't hurt him," growled Boston. "Say what did you say that made him run out so sudden-like?"

Quade grinned reflectively. "I guess I got a little too close. Renfrew had gotten curious about Peters, or maybe, he hoped to find out how and where Peters got his money. So he followed him out here today but didn't want Peters to spot him. . . . You know, this Renfrew interests me."

"Not me," said Boston. "I can find his kind anywhere. What do we do now, go see a movie or something?"

"They've got a crime thriller at the Bijou," Quade said. "But I don't think it'll be as interesting as the one we're in ourselves. Instead, let's go stir up the porridge a bit."

"Back to the dog show?"

"No, I thought we'd brace some of

the suspects and others in their own backyard. The Lanyard house."

"Ouch! After the trimming we took from the Lanyards this afternoon?"



ANYARD, Senior, had money. He must have had scads of it, to keep up the estate that Quade and Boston entered a little while later. It was about a mile out of Westfield and was surrounded by a low, trimmed hedge. The house was Georgian style and contained at least twenty rooms. A smaller house near-by was evidently the servants' quarters. There was also a four-car garage behind the house and a long, low building with wire-enclosed runs in front of it. A dog kennel.

There were a half-dozen cars on the graveled driveway leading up to the house; the smallest a Packard. The cars didn't phase Quade, however. He squeezed his old flivver in between a Packard and a large foreign car and leaped lightly over the hingeless door.

And there was no hesitation in his manner as he rang the front door-bell of the big house. Charlie Boston, had the good grace to hang back a bit.

"They got company, Ollie," he protested. "Listen to the music."

Quade had already heard the music, recognized it, too. Mendelssohn's *Wedding March*. That and the several cars outside told him what it was. A wedding rehearsal. Evidently the scene in the restaurant hadn't been allowed to interfere with the Lanyards' plans.

The door opened and a liveried butler looked questioningly at Quade.

"Mr. Lanyard," Quade said.

"Which Mr. Lanyard?"

"Senior. Tell him it's Mr. Oliver Quade."

"Very well, I'll see if he's at home." The butler closed the door.

"It's the suit," Quade said. "I'll have to get a new one. Can't go around so-

ciety homes with the checkerboard pattern."

The door opened again and a dignified, gray-haired man with a short clipped mustache held out his hand to Quade. "Come in, Mr. Quade. I've heard about you. Glad you dropped out."

Quade winked triumphantly at Boston.

"This way," Guy Lanyard said, leading the way to a room on the right side of the foyer. Quade looked to the left where the organ was playing, but followed Lois' father to the right.

In the library, Guy Lanyard said, "Have a seat, won't you? I presume you want to talk to me about that affair this afternoon. Pretty bad, wasn't it?"

"It was. This is Charles Boston, my friend."

"Ah, yes, how are you, Mr. Boston? You were there too?"

"Me, I found the body," Boston said proudly.

Guy Lanyard winced. "The children have told me about it. And our chief of police left me only a few minutes ago. He's considerably disturbed about the matter. I'm glad to have this chance of talking it over with you, Mr. Quade. From what Lois and Bob told me about you, I gather that you're a man of some—ah, perspicacity."

Quade grinned at the blank look on Boston's face. "Foresaking modesty for the moment, Mr. Lanyard, I'm probably the smartest person in this State. I'm the Human Encyclopedia."

Guy Lanyard didn't seem to know just how to take that, but finally he grinned. "Maybe I'm saying the wrong thing, but if so, forgive me, because I've never met a Human Encyclopedia before. But as I have this opportunity now I'd like to take advantage of it. Can you tell me if Mid-City Service is a good buy right now?"

"I wouldn't know," Quade replied. "I'm not a fortune teller. I impart only *knowledge*, and the devil himself couldn't tell you if Mid-City Service is a good

or bad buy right now. I can tell you that it was a good buy a year ago. That's a matter of knowledge. Anything else I could help you on?"

Guy Lanyard's eyes snapped. "Yes. Who killed Wesley Peters?"

Fortunately Quade was spared answering the question. Lois Lanyard burst into the room. "Dad!" she cried and then came to a stop when she saw Quade.

"Hello," she said.

"I didn't know you were having a dress rehearsal," Quade apologized. "I wouldn't have come out."

"Quite all right," replied Lois. "We're finished now. Dad, the reason I burst in—don't you think Honolulu would be more interesting than Europe?"

"Borneo is charming at this season," Quade volunteered.

Lois Lanyard sighed. "We're at it again. Well, let's entertain the others, too. Come along, Mr. Quade."

Guy Lanyard frowned but Quade was willing. "Fine, I'd like another chance to talk with Freddie Bartlett."

Lois passed him in the doorway. She whispered fiercely, "Don't start any more trouble. I've had enough for one day."

The large living-room was full of people; a half-dozen girls, the minister and several well dressed young men. And Mrs. Lanyard, an older edition of Lois, who still retained most of her youthful beauty. The years had endowed her with added warmth and charm.

Bob Lanyard was walking in and out of the crowd, his ascetic face strained in a frown. His beautiful wife, Jessie, seemed to have quite recovered from the afternoon, for she was chatting gaily, surrounded by several young men.

Freddie Bartlett was in an expansive mood. With most of the girls around him he was expounding on the merits of different honeymoon spots. "Honolulu," he was saying, "has become too common. Singapore is the place today. A month there, then Yokohama in cherry-blossom time."

"How about the county jail?" Quade asked. "I've been told that it's charming at this season."

Freddie Bartlett scowled. "Ah, it's you, Mr. Shade. Always clowning. How's the—what do you call it in the vernacular—the pitching business?"

"Fair to middling," Quade shrugged. "I've forsaken it for the nonce. I'm in the detecting business now."

"Then you'll be interested to know you'll have some competition tomorrow. Bob has engaged a famous sleuth—Christopher Buck."

Quade's eyelids lowered thoughtfully. Christopher Buck had a reputation that was more than local. He had a good press agent too, for there was seldom a week that some mention of him didn't appear in the newspapers.

Quade drifted over to Bob Lanyard. "I understand you've hired Christopher Buck to do some investigating for you," he remarked casually.

Annoyance came into young Lanyard's eyes. "Yes, with all due respect to Chief Costello, I don't believe he knows what it's all about and I don't believe he'll ever find out who killed this—this Wesley Peters, do you?"

"Not unless the murderer confesses voluntarily."

Bob Lanyard winced.

"I'm sorry," Quade apologized quickly. "I forgot."

"It's all right. But that's just why I phoned to the city and engaged Mr. Buck. Unless the case is solved beyond a shadow of a doubt a few people will still have ideas—and I don't want any reflection to hang over Jessie."

Jessie must have heard her name mentioned for she suddenly excused herself from her circle of admirers and came over.

"Oh, Mr. Quade, I'm so glad you dropped in. You know I've been thinking about you."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, you know I was in the show business before I married Bob. Your little spiel out at the dog show this

afternoon; have you ever thought of going on the stage?"

Quade's lips peeled back in a wide smile, too wide. "No, and I'm sorry to say that no Hollywood scout has approached me either."

Jessie Lanyard didn't catch the sarcasm. "Why that act—you know that question and answer stuff—that's great. Properly handled it should be a wow on the stage. I've a friend in Mr. Kent's office and, if you like, I'll give you a note to him."

"Jessie," said Bob Lanyard, "perhaps Mr. Quade doesn't want to go on the stage."

"Why not? With his personality and that gift of gab? Say, I've seen hoofers with less than he's got make good on the big time."

Quade pursed up his lips. "You mean I'd have to take up dancing?"

That was a bit too strong. Even Jessie Lanyard caught the sarcasm. "I'm sorry," she said stiffly. "I didn't know I was being funny." She put her pretty nose into the air and went back to her covey of admirers.

"At it again," said Lois Lanyard.

Quade walked to one side with her. "What's this I hear about your brother employing a private detective?"

Lois frowned. "Bob seemed to think Jessie's reputation had been besmirched and he's determined to clear it. Well, she did throw quite a scene today."

"When's Buck coming?"

"Tomorrow morning. I've heard he's a very astute man-hunter. He comes high, at any rate."

"Hmm. You're really going through with your marriage?"

She looked coolly at him. "Of course I'm going to marry Freddie Bartlett. We've been engaged for almost a year and the date has been set for four months."

"I apologize, Miss Lanyard. Shall we wave the white flag?"

"You'll keep it white?"

"Of course. I'm sorry I interrupted this evening. I must be going now."



CHRISTOPHER BUCK was not burdened with good manners. He banged on the door of Oliver Quade's room at the ungodly hour of eight A. M. Quade, cursing under his breath, climbed out of the bed and opened the door.

"I left a call for nine o'clock, not eight!" he snarled.

"I'm Christopher Buck," the detective announced grandly.

"So what? I'm Oliver Quade and that gorilla yawning over in the bed is Charlie Boston. A good morning to you." Quade started to shut the door in Buck's face.

But the detective must have worked his way through college selling magazines. He put a foot in the doorway. "Hey!" he yelled. "I'm Christopher Buck, the detective."

Quade opened the door again. "A detective?" he pretended to be amazed. "Why didn't you say so? Come in."

Christopher Buck stepped angrily into the room. "Hey, Charlie," Quade called. "Get up. There's a cop from the local police force here."

"I'm not from the Westfield Police," Buck called. "What're you trying to do, rib me?"

Quade blinked. Then: "I'll be damned. Of course, I've read about you in the newspapers, You're the famous detective, Christopher Buck!"

Buck was so lean that he had to stand twice in order to cast a shadow, but he made up for it in height. He was at least six feet four and his huge, bushy eyebrows and stooped figure gave him a sinister appearance.

"I was engaged by Robert Lanyard to solve the murder that was committed out at the dog show yesterday," he said. "I came to you because I've been told you're the chief suspect."

"Right to the point, that's what I like," said Quade. "Have a seat, Mr. Buck. You don't mind if I dress while

you grill—I mean, question me. Take a chair.”

“Ow, oh-wuh!” said Charlie Boston, yawning and stretching.

Quade drew his pajama coat off, then unblushing slipped off the trousers. Nude as the day he was born, he searched around for his underwear.

“Sitting on my drawers, Mr. Buck?” he asked. “No, here they are.” Calmly he began dressing. Charlie Boston scooted for the bathroom.

Christopher Buck drew a stubby pipe from his coat pocket and filled it. “I’ve already talked to Mr. Lanyard and Chief of Police Costello. There seems to be some difference of opinion as to just what happened yesterday.”

“Some of the dogs got loose and raised a ruckus,” Quade said. “Of course everyone in the building gathered around. I left my stand. Then when the dog fight had been stopped and the dogs chained up, I started to go back. Charlie, here, told me then that there was a dead man in our booth.”

Buck grunted. “You say some of the dogs got loose? I hear there was only one loose.”

“Yeah, that’s right. Anyway, he got into the next stall and tangled up with another dog. The second dog was chained, but it didn’t affect his fighting ability. It was a swell fight.”

“I’m not interested in the dog fight,” said Buck, severely. “I’m interested in the man who was killed. He was an old sweetheart of the wife of my client. Tell me more about this Peters fellow. How long had you known him?”

Quade sighed. “He was in the audience when I made my first pitch out there, but that’s the only time I ever saw him alive. I know nothing about the murder. And I think I’ll have breakfast now.”

Christopher Buck scowled. “I don’t like it. No one seemed to know this Peters fellow, yet someone hated him enough to kill him. Why?”

“You said you were the detective,”

Quade reminded him. “Me, I’m only a book salesman.”

“Yes, but I’ve heard about your bragging yesterday. About what a smart fellow you were. Claim to know the answers to everything. Well, who killed Wes Peters?”

“I don’t belong to the detectives’ union.”

Buck started to get up from the chair. It was quite a job, because he was so lean and tall. “You’re not leaving Westfield, are you, Quade?”

“No, I’m going out to the dog show today and make a few dollars. Any time you think you’ve got the goods on me you’ll know where to collar me.”

Christopher Buck closed the door ungrudgingly behind him.

“Nice fellow,” Quade observed.

“I think I’ll blow myself and have about four eggs and some ham.” Boston said, dreamily, coming out of the bathroom.

“O.K., Charlie, better fatten up while you can. It’s been a lean stretch. I think we’ll get us each a hand-me-down, too.”

“Gonna get yourself a nice blue serge?” asked Boston, looking wisely at Quade.

“Why blue?”

“Oh, I dunno. Just thought maybe a loud suit was undignified.”

Quade made a pass at Boston, which the big fellow ducked easily. “She’s getting married today, you sap.”

“Going to the wedding?”

“I wasn’t invited.”

But Quade did buy a blue serge, after all. It fitted him well and changed his appearance considerably. He finished the job by getting some black oxfords, a blue striped shirt and brown felt hat.

He had a good day at the auditorium, running out of books when there were still some prospective purchasers in the crowd. His pockets stuffed with money, he closed his pitch and strolled out of the building.

He saw a hamburger stand near-by and went over to it. As he stuffed the

last or a sandwich into his mouth a voice behind him said:

"Ah, Mr. Quade, I was hoping to find you here this morning." It was Jessie Lanyard, wearing a floppy picture hat and a flowered organdie dress. Her blond hair was smartly coiffured.

"How d'you do, Mrs. Lanyard," Quade greeted her. "Won't you have a hamburger?"

"Why, I don't mind if I do. It's a long time since I've eaten one. Not since I got married." She laughed. "You know, one time, when I was out of work I ate nothing but hamburgers for a solid month."

"They didn't spoil your figure," Quade complimented her. He ordered a couple of hamburgers.

"I've decided to overlook your kidding last night," Jessie Lanyard said brightly. "I really like you, Mr. Quade. You're—you're my sort of people."

"Thanks."

"You know some of the people out here in Westfield are awful snobs," Jessie prattled on. "My in-laws still don't treat me any too well. But I don't care. Even if the in-laws and some of Lois' girl friends give me the turned-up nose, the men like me. You saw them last night."

"I did. You were pretty well surrounded."

Jessie sighed. "Yes, they always rush me. Some of them even—well, that isn't what I wanted to talk to you about. It's about this detective Bob hired."

"Didn't you urge him to do that?"

Jessie smiled prettily. "Well, I did suggest it, I guess. But Bob was so worked up. Seemed to think I had been carrying on with Wes—Mr. Peters. Goodness, I hadn't seen Wesley Peters for a long time. Not alone, that is. Of course he hung around a lot out here in Westfield, but I couldn't very well chase him away, could I?"

"No, of course not. By the way, what'd Peters do for a living?"

"He was on the stage. I played with him in a show about five years ago. I

was just beginning then," Jessie hastened to say. "I started very young, you know."

"Peters came from out West, didn't he?"

"Not that I know of. Why?"

"Oh, I heard he got money from some relative out there."

Jessie was silent for a moment. Then she said, "Wesley was born in New York. His parents are dead. He did tell me though, that he had a brother somewhere. He may have been living out West, for all I know."

Quade took a deep breath. Then he said, "Mrs. Lanyard, how long is it since you saw Bill Demetros?"

Ketchup dripped from the hamburger to Jessie Lanyard's organdie dress, but she didn't notice it. She was staring too intently at Oliver Quade. "Where did you hear about—him?" she asked, slowly.

"I've always been a great newspaper reader and I never forget anything I read. Your name was mentioned with his several years ago. They even ran your photos together. You were Janet Jackson then."

"I haven't seen him—for five years," she said, looking relieved.

"Since he went to jail? You haven't see him since he got out?"

"No and I—I hope I never see him again. I don't even want him to know where I am."

"You changed your name even before you married Bob. Demetros probably wouldn't know where to look for you if he wanted to."

"No, but there wouldn't be any reason for him to look me up. The newspapers were wrong. We were never more than casual acquaintances. I—I must go now."

Quade looked thoughtfully after Jessie Lanyard as she walked to the dog building. Then he left and caught a taxi. Charlie had taken his car to replenish their supply of books.

Quade rode back to Westfield, paid off on the main street of the village, then

stood on the sidewalk for a few minutes. A five- and ten-cent store across the street caught his eye. Smiling grimly, he bought an ordinary toy, shaped roughly like a mature, lethal gun. He had the clerk wrap it in paper and put it in a mailing box. At the stationery counter he bought a box of adhesive address labels.

Then Quade went back to his hotel room. He got a jar of vaseline from the bathroom, smeared a light coat of it on the water pistol, then wrapped it in paper and put it in the box. He tied the package, addressed a label and stuck it to the package.

He walked with it to the post-office, had the box weighed there, then mailed it first-class.

Returning to the dog show he found Boston fuming because he had been unable to find Quade.

"I brought the books back here an hour ago," he exclaimed. "Where you been?"

"Attending to some business," Quade replied shortly.

Quade made a pitch to a small noon-day crowd and took in thirty-five dollars. He and Boston drove to the hotel then and had a late lunch. When they got the key for their room the clerk handed Quade a package. "Mailman just brought this."

"Who'd be sending us a package?" asked Boston as they rode in the elevator to their floor.

"One of my female admirers probably," Quade said.

In the room he cut the string of the package. Quade opened the box, lifted out the paper-wrapped contents and unwrapped it. He exhibited the water pistol.

Boston examined the gun, then snorted. "Someone's ribbin' you!"

Quade scarcely looked at the gun. He was examining the inside of the wrapping paper. The vaseline on the gun had made recognizable outlines on the paper. He nodded in satisfaction.

"Look, Charlie," he said, "run down

to the telegraph office and send a wire to the Blake Publishing Company in New York. Have 'em rush us two hundred more copies of our book. We're going to need them before this dog show is over."

"But what about the gun?" protested Boston. "Why would anyone send it to you? I don't like it, I tell you. Its—it's a threat."

"Don't worry your pretty head about the gun, Charlie. Go ahead, send that telegram."

The moment Boston had left the room Quade took out a knife and scraped the address label from the box in which the gun had been mailed. He addressed another label, glued it to the box, then left the hotel.

He threw the toy pistol into an ashcan a couple of blocks from the hotel. Then he walked three blocks more, entered an alley and sought another ashcan behind the third building from the corner. Into it he tossed the paper box and the wrapping paper in which he had mailed the gun to himself. He'd torn the address label from the box, but left the postmark.

He chuckled. "Maybe a smart detective can make something of a box with a local postmark and paper bearing a little oil and imprint of a gun."

Quade rejoined Boston at the hotel an hour later and the big fellow had his finger-nails chewed half-way to his wrists. "What's all the mysterious stuff, Ollie?" he cried. "You get rid of me on a phony excuse, then you go off somewhere."

"Can't a man attend to his private business affairs?"

"Yeah, sure, but—ah, never mind. What do we do now?"

"You can take the afternoon off, Charlie. I think I'll do some visiting."

"At the Lanyard place? . . . Well, I hope you don't get burned."

"It'd be a cold world without some heat," Quade said, reflectively. "I've just discovered that I've been cold all my life."



COUPLE of cars were parked in the curved drive of the Lanyard estate. Quade parked his own car, then circled the house to the kennels. The dogs started a terrific barking and Quade was about to retreat when Lois Lanyard called from a window in the rear of the house. "Look out! Those sheep dogs bite."

"Ever hear of a man biting a dog?"

Lois disappeared from the window but reappeared at a rear door a moment later. She was dressed in a pink and yellow sport sweater suit and her eyes were dancing with mischief. Quade tightened about the mouth.

"Did you come out to see the dogs?" she asked. "There are more of them at the dog show, you know."

"The dog show? Oh, you mean the dog show where you said you'd be today."

She sobered for a moment. "I couldn't very well get away. Some last minute fittings and—other things."

"Ah! The marriage, of course."

The moment was a tense one, but then a Gordon pointer came dashing out of a dog kennel and bounced up to the wire fence, putting his nose between the mesh. Quade snapped his fingers at the dog.

"Who does he belong to; Bob?"

"Yes, that's Duke, his favorite. I've got the sheep dogs that are at the show. And Jessie has two Eskimo Dogs, huskies. Come, take a look at them."

She led Quade to a pen and whistled. A tawny face appeared in the door of a kennel and after a careful examination was followed by a head. Another dog followed.

"They're beautiful, I think," said Lois. "But pretty shy."

A voice called from the house. "Lois!"

"Yes, Mother?" Lois replied.

"I'm afraid you'll have to come in for that last fitting."

"I'll be right in." Lois turned to Quade. "I have to go now. It's been nice seeing you. Come and see us when we get back."

"From Borneo?" he couldn't help cracking.

She laughed and ran into the house.

Quade drove thoughtfully back to the dog show. Charlie Boston wasn't around the booth and had probably gone to see the rest of the show. Quade ran into Christopher Buck and Chief of Police Costello, engaged in heavy conversation.

The chief did not look cordially at Quade. "Ah, here you are," he said in greeting. "What's the big brain man know today?"

"I know that the prenadilla is a South American fish that travels for hours on dry land," he retorted. "And I know other things. What do you know? About the police business, for instance. Have you pinched the murderer yet?"

"When I do, maybe you won't be so cocky," hinted the chief.

"Still barking up my alley, eh? Well, just for that I'll let you worry over the thing by yourself."

He walked off, but less than two minutes later Christopher Buck popped out in front of him. "Say, Quade, what did you mean about letting us worry by ourselves? You know something?"

Quade looked around mysteriously. "I got an anonymous phone call at the hotel this noon. A man's voice told me to take a look around Bartlett's house—the ashcan for example. What do you suppose he meant by that?"

Buck's lean, lank frame quivered with excitement. "The killer's thrown something away, something important. A clue!"

"What sort of clue would he throw away? The murder gun was found here. It's just an ordinary .32—Peters' own gun. But maybe Peters loaned the gun to someone else and that person loaned it to Fred—to the murderer."

There was no holding Buck after that. He tore off in a lather of excitement. Quade looked at his watch, then sought out Charlie Boston.

"Look, Charlie, in the city the poor people hang around the church door to get a look at the bride. Let's go run down to the church in Westfield and get a gander at the folks."

"I could smell that coming," said Boston. "How about the rice, you want to throw some?"

They drove down. The wedding was scheduled for five in the afternoon but curious townsfolk had gathered around the church at a quarter to the hour. Quade parked his car directly across the street, then, throwing one foot across the car door, settled down to wait.

At ten minutes to five a closed sedan pulled up to the chapel door and several people got out. Quade had a glimpse of Lois Lanyard wearing a black silk cape that did not quite cover the white dress underneath. The party moved quickly into the church.

Five minutes later another car drew up and Freddie Bartlett, surrounded by several of his intimates, climbed out and went into the church. Freddie was quite the picture in striped trousers, cutaway tail coat and silk hat.

Quade bit his lip. The ceremony was due to start in another five minutes—unless there was some unusual delay. He wondered if he would have to make the delay himself. But at two minutes to five an automobile siren screeched up the street.

"Now begins the fun," he said, sitting up.

"It's the cops," said Boston. "Wonder who they're going to pinch?"

"Maybe the bridegroom—or me. We'll see. Ah, Christopher Buck is with the chief."

The police car screamed up to the curb before the church. The lanky Christopher Buck sprang from it even before it stopped. He was clutching something under his arm. Chief Cos-

tello and a uniformed cop piled out after the private detective. They charged into the church.

"Holy smokes!" exclaimed Boston. "They're busting right into the wedding and they don't look like they're going to kiss the bride, either. It's a pinch if ever I saw one."

It was. Almost immediately Chief Costello, Christopher Buck, the policemen and Freddie Bartlett came out. Bartlett's clothing was disarranged and he was handcuffed. Even a Freddie Bartlett will become indignant at being arrested while the clergyman is saying the words of the marriage ceremony.

Behind the arresting party, swarmed the members of the family and the wedding guests.

"I don't think there'll be any wedding today," said Oliver Quade.

"You knew something was going to happen here," Charlie accused. "You were too calm about things. I know you, Oliver."

Quade screwed up his face. "All right, I'll confess, Charlie. I had a tip-off from Buck. He had a hot clue that pointed to Freddie. I had a hunch he would butt right into the wedding ceremony to make his pinch. For a while, though, I was afraid he wouldn't make it in time."

"Afraid? You mean you wanted him to bust up the wedding?"

Quade did not answer. Boston threw up his hands in disgust. "O.K., Ollie, if that's the way she stands that's the way she stands. C'mon, let's beat it, they're looking over here."

Quade saw Lois Lanyard, very lovely in a white satin dress and bridal veil, pointing across the street at him. Christopher Buck, head and shoulders above the crowd, was looking too.

Quade stepped on the starter and shifted into gear. The car leaped away from the curb. "They're yelling at us, Ollie," said Boston.

"Let 'em yell. I've had lots of people yell at me in my day."



IFTEEN minutes later Quade walked into the dining-room of the Westfield Hotel with Charlie Boston. They were on the soup course when the dining-room was invaded by several determined looking men.

"I'd hoped to get a good meal before going to jail," Quade said to Boston, "but such is life. . . . Hello, Mr. Buck, what's up?"

"Your number," Buck snapped.

Freddie Bartlett, no longer handcuffed, pointed a lean finger at Quade. "You cheap book agent! Why'd you send this detective to look into my ash-can."

"Tsk, tsk," Quade clucked to Buck. "A detective should never reveal the sources of information."

"That's the last trick you'll pull in this town, Quade," said Chief Costello sternly. "The idea, trying to throw suspicion on an innocent man just to break up his wedding! Well, it brought out the truth and you're under arrest!"

"What for? For giving information to a private detective instead of a policeman?"

"Cut out the stalling, Quade," snapped Buck. "Miss Lanyard spilled the beans. She saw you unchain that bulldog at the dog show—the dog fight. You started that dog fight to cover up your dirty work."

"The red flag," said Quade half aloud. "Ask no quarter and give none. All right, I'll come quietly."

Charlie Boston pushed back his chair and took up a fighting stance.

"Maybe you could lick them at that, Charlie," Quade said, "but they'd only get me later. I'll go along with them. Look me up after they've booked me."

"I'll get a lawyer. My cousin Paul, in New York. He'll put these small town cops through their hoops," howled Charlie Boston. "He's the smartest criminal lawyer on the east side."

But Quade scarcely heard him. He

was being dragged off to jail. It was the swankiest jail Quade had ever been in; quite in keeping with the town itself. It wasn't a very large jail, neat cells, a wide corridor and a clean, large bull pen where the guests were permitted to exercise during prescribed periods.

The inhabitants of the jail unfortunately were not up to its standards. They were unfortunates from the city who had wandered out to rich Westfield hoping to better themselves and had fallen afoul of the law. There were eight or ten of them. As the cells adjoined one another and were separated only by bars, communication among the prisoners was easy.

The prisoners knew all about Quade by the time he was locked into a cell and they greeted him with the respect due a capital crime violator. . . .

Quade bore up cheerfully enough that first evening in jail. He entertained the other prisoners for an hour or two with his fund of knowledge then pleaded fatigue and they left him alone. Quade examined the bunk and blankets closely and sighed with relief when he found no spots that moved. He threw himself down on it.

An hour later he sat up. "Lord! Why didn't I tumble before?" he said, half aloud. He went to his barred door, cried out loudly. "Turn-key!"

The other prisoners took up the cry and a moment later a uniformed man came clumping into the cell corridor. "What's all the racket about here?"

"It's me," Quade cried. "I want to talk to Chief Costello."

"You wanta confess?"

"Confess, hell," snorted Quade. "I didn't kill that man. But I just thought of something I want to tell the chief."

"Ah, do you now? Well, tell him tomorrow morning. This is the night the chief plays poker and he don't like to be bothered with little things."

"This isn't a little thing. It's important."

"Nuts," said the jailer. "If you keep

up the racket I'll turn out the lights on you even though it's only eight o'clock." He went out through the door and slammed it behind him.

Quade yelled for him to come back. The other prisoners, thinking to help him, yelled also. And then the lights in the entire jail went out. The turn-key had kept his threat. Quade cursed and threw himself on his cot. After a while he fell asleep.



NEW jailer came around in the morning and asked the prisoners if they preferred the regular jail breakfast of oatmeal and coffee or a more complete breakfast sent from a restaurant, at their own expense. Quade stripped a ten-dollar bill from the roll that had not been taken from him and ordered breakfasts for all the prisoners. He was roundly applauded for his generosity.

After breakfast the jailer came into the cell room and distributed a few letters. There were two for Quade. One from Charlie Boston, telling him that he was going to the city to get his lawyer-cousin, Paul, and not to worry about a thing. The other was an unsigned note, written the evening before. It said merely:

"That was a very detestable thing for you to do. I hope you stay in jail for keeps."

Quade winced as he read the note. He had treated Lois Lanyard pretty shabbily, but still he couldn't regret it. Given time to think things over Lois couldn't help but realize that she shouldn't marry Freddie Bartlett. In innumerable ways she'd shown that she didn't love him; she was going through with the marriage merely because it had been rather expected of her and because several people, including her family, had been opposed to it. Quade had taken a high-handed way of helping her out of her quandary and sooner or later,

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he believed, she would appreciate it.

The prisoners' cells were unlocked a little while later and they were herded into the bull pen. The men crowded around Quade then, thanking him for the breakfasts and assuring him that he was the Number One man of the jail as far as they were concerned.

"That's very fine of you, boys," Quade thanked them. "But I'm expecting to get out of here today."

One of the prisoners had not joined in the eulogy to Quade. He was a surly, dark man, who sneered when the others crowded around Quade, but a little later he came up alone.

"Here's something for you," he said.

His hand came out of his pocket and Quade threw himself backwards. The gleaming knife blade ripped his coat sleeve from elbow to shoulder.

The prisoners in the bull pen began yelling, but the knife wielder received the surprise of his life. Quade was totally unarmed, except for his quick wits and lean, strong, body. But even with a knife the attacker was no match for him.

He side-stepped the man's second rush and, snaking out a hand, imprisoned the knife-wrist. He jerked swiftly on the wrist, then smashed the forearm across a raised knee. The knife clattered to the concrete floor and the prisoner yelled in agony.

Quade stepped back from the prisoner and brought up his right fist in an uppercut. The blow caught the man under the chin, lifted him from the floor and deposited him on his back on the concrete.

Quade scooped up the knife. The prisoners crowded around him.

"What the hell's the matter with the Greek? He go nuts?" asked one.

"Greek, huh?" Quade rubbed his chin. "I think I know what's wrong with him. He got a letter this morning, didn't he?"

"Yeah," replied one of the men. "He tore it up in little pieces and flushed it down the toilet."

Quade filled a tin cup with water and

sloshed it on the unconscious man's face. The prisoner gasped and began moaning. In a moment he sat up.

"All right, partner," Quade said. "Who told you to carve me up?"

"No one," groused the prisoner. "I just didn't like your looks."

Quade reached down, caught hold of the man's shirt and yanked him to his feet. "Fella," he said, glaring into the man's face. "I asked you a question and I want a straight answer. Was it Bill Demetros?"

The prisoner looked at the fist that Quade shook in his face and said, "Yeah. He said you was getting in his hair."

Quade threw the man away from him. "I ought to report you and you'd get a good deal more than you're due to get now, but I can't be bothered with small fry."

The turn-key stormed into the bull pen. "Quade, Mister Quade, you're wanted up front."

Quade brushed off his new blue suit, frowned at the slashed sleeve, and followed the turn-key to the front part of the jail. Christopher Buck and the chief of police were both there and both looking serious.

"I guess we've got to let you go, Quade," Costello said.

"You're convinced that I didn't kill Wesley Peters?"

"Yeah. Bob Lanyard confessed that he did it."

"What? Why, he confessed that a couple of days ago. You don't believe him this time, do you?"

"Got to," groused the chief. "He left a letter."

Quade became rigid. "What do you mean, he left a letter?"

"He shot himself last night."

Quade gasped. "Bob Lanyard shot himself? He's dead?"

Both the chief and Buck nodded. Quade shook his head in bewilderment. "The letter—could I see it?"

Chief Costello pointed to a piece of paper lying on the desk before him.

Quade looked down at it. It was just an ordinary sheet of white bond paper, crumpled, as if it had been clutched in a dead hand. There were two lines of typing on it. They read:

"I killed Wes Peters. He was annoying my wife. Forgive me, Jessie, for making this exit.

Bob."

"When was he found?" Oliver Quade asked.

"About five-thirty this morning," replied the chief. "The caretaker heard the dogs whining and howling and when he went to see what was the matter, there he was. The gun was in his hand."

"He was found in the dog kennels?"

"Yeah, in the vacant stall where Miss Lanyard usually kept those woolly dogs she's got at the show, now."

Quade's forehead wrinkled. Then suddenly smoothed. "Buck, you still interested in this?"

"I've lost my client," growled the cadaverous detective. "But I haven't been paid off yet. What do you want me to do?"

"Go out there and point out things to me."

Buck looked at the chief, who nodded. "My men should be through by now. Let him look around."

They rode out to the Lanyard home in the private detective's expensive roadster. Quade looked at the drawn shades of the house and shook his head. Lois had been fond of her brother. And it would be a terrible shock to the parents, too.

The backyard was still swarming with newspapermen, but a couple of police were keeping them out of the dog kennels. Buck was known to them and they let him pass through with Quade.

The dog house was a long, low building, divided into three individual stalls. There was a door at each end of the building and connecting doors between the stalls. Quade had to stoop to enter and the tall detective had to walk bent almost double. Quade's eyes were

gleaming by the time they had entered by the small door into the wire runs.

They passed through the huskies' kennel to where Bob Lanyard had been found in the vacant woolly kennel just beyond. The body had already been removed but the coagulated blood on the floor was mute proof of where the body had lain.

Quade's eyes made a sweeping, searching tour of the sheep dog stall, then he nodded to Christopher Buck. "All right, let's go."

Buck looked at him with narrowed eyes. "That's all?"

"Yes, I just wanted to make sure he didn't commit suicide."

"But he did," protested Buck. "The gun was in his hand."

"Placed there by the murderer. If Bob Lanyard wanted to kill himself, why would he come out here? He could have done it in his room just as well. Someone forced him in here, probably at the point of a gun. Didn't want the people to hear the shot."

"Quade," Buck said thoughtfully, "there may be something in what you say. That confession note was typed, but not signed. Anyone could have written it. I'm going to check up on the typewriters around here."

"That won't prove anything. Almost all the people interested in this matter could have got to one of the Lanyard typewriters. You forget they almost had a wedding yesterday and there were plenty of guests."

Christopher Buck swore. "I'm still on this case. Christopher Buck never quits until he gets his man, even if his client is murdered!"

Quade almost grinned at the man's dramatic self-appreciation. He left the building and almost bumped into Charlie Boston who was arguing with one of the policemen.

"Ollie!" cried Boston. "I just got back and they told me at the jail that you'd been let out. I brought my cousin, Paul—"

"Jail?" cried a cameraman near-by.

"You're Oliver Quade, the man who was jailed last night?"

Quade gritted his teeth and smiled. "All right, boys, Oliver Quade was never modest. Bring up your cameras."

They did with a will. They snapped Quade from all angles. It was ten minutes before Boston could drag up his lawyer cousin, a mousy looking man of indeterminate age, who was, in Boston's own words, "the best lawyer on the east side."

"Sorry you won't be needed," Quade said to him. "But as you see, I'm a free man. Give me your card though and I'll give you a ring the next time I'm pinched."

"It'll be a pleasure to defend you, Mr. Quade."

The liveried butler came up then and spoke to Quade in a low voice. "Beg pardon, sir, but could you come into the house for a moment?"

"Yes, I could. Charlie, wait out front by the car."

Quade trudged behind the butler to the house. In the living-room, his face strained and white, was Guy Lanyard. And Lois. Lois, in a black dress and clutching a wadded handkerchief in her hand. Her eyes were dry, but they had been wet before, Quade knew. Quade mumbled his sympathies and Guy Lanyard nodded.

"Mr. Quade," Lois said. "I'm sorry about yesterday. I shouldn't have told the police about seeing you unchain that dog."

"I had it coming to me. It was a dirty trick I pulled on you."

Guy Lanyard cleared his throat. "Lois had the idea that Bob didn't shoot himself."

"He didn't," said Quade.

Guy Lanyard gasped. Lois sprang to her feet. "I told you so, Dad. I knew Bob wouldn't do that. He was moody and all that, but I know he'd never take his own life."

"Someone killed Bob," Quade said.

"Mr. Quade," said Guy Lanyard. "My son had employed—that detective

person, who hasn't impressed me much. I wonder if I could persuade you to do some investigating for us. I'd expect to pay, of course."

"That won't be necessary. After the things that have happened nothing could stop me from running down the killer."

Lanyard heaved a great sigh of relief. "That will be some small satisfaction. Even though it won't bring back Bob. Perhaps you suspect someone already?"

"I don't suspect. I know. I've known right from the start, but I couldn't prove it. I can't yet."

"Who is it?" cried Lois. "Tell me and I'll—"

Quade shook his head. "It isn't time yet. I'm going into the city today—on this case—but I expect to be back this evening. Don't worry."



UTSIDE, Christopher Buck pounced on Quade. "What'd the family want, Quade?"

Quade shook his head, continued walking. Buck swore, caught hold of his arm. "Come clean. I just heard through the grapevine about that fellow who tried to kill you in jail."

Quade stopped. "So?"

"Where does this Demetros fit into the picture?"

"Demetros and Wesley Peters were brothers!"

Christopher Buck gasped. "Say, this Peters fellow *was* dark complected. I get the picture now. Lanyard killed Peters because he was hanging around his wife, and then Demetros killed Lanyard."

"Then all you have to do is find Demetros."

"Yes, but where? Where are you going?"

"To the city. To find Demetros."

Christopher Buck ran back to his own car. He would burn up the roads to the

city, knowing that he could get there an hour before Quade could make it in the dilapidated flivver. Quade wondered what Buck would do if he found Bill Demetros, ex-racketeer and ex-convict.

"First though," he said to Boston and the latter's cousin. "I'm going to the hotel and clean up. The facilities in the Westfield jail aren't as good as those at the hotel."

Seated in the lobby of the hotel, a big Eskimo dog at her feet, was Jessie Lanyard. She sprang up when she saw Quade. "I slipped out of the house when you were out there, Mr. Quade," she said. "I want to talk to you."

The hotel lobby was hardly the place for a private talk. "Come up to my room, Mrs. Lanyard," Quade said. He introduced her to Charlie's cousin, then all three of them crowded into the elevator.

Jessie had the husky on a leash, but the dog was skittish and growled ominously. Charlie Boston promptly backed as far away from the dog as he could. Charlie wasn't afraid of anything in the world—except dogs.

In Quade's room, Jessie said, "It's about Peters. You asked me yesterday about him. Well, I came to tell you that he was really George Demetros, the brother of this Bill Demetros."

"If you'd told me that yesterday," said Quade, "it would have been news. But I figured it out for myself last night, in jail."

She sat up stiffly.

Quade said, without looking at her, "Tell me, Mrs. Lanyard, wasn't Peters blackmailing you?"

"That was the other thing I came to tell you. Yes, the dirty rat! He blackmailed me. I gave him thousands of dollars and he kept wanting more and more."

"He threatened to tip off his brother about you. Your new name and your whereabouts. Isn't that it?"

Her eyes dropped. "Bill will kill me

if he finds me. He's that sort. I was afraid to tell Bob about him. And so I paid all that money to Wes Peters, to keep him from talking. Oh, I know Demetros was in prison all these years, but that didn't mean I was safe. He had friends on the outside, members of his gang who'd do anything he ordered them to do, even though he was in prison."

"I can believe that," said Quade. "This morning, here in the local jail, a prisoner got a note from Demetros and inside of a half-hour tried to murder me."

Jessie cried out. "He—he knows then! Oh, I was afraid he did. I hadn't even seen him for five years, but I thought I recognized him yesterday at the dog show!"

It was Quade's turn to be surprised. "Demetros was at the show when Peters was killed?"

"There was a man there I'd have sworn was him. He didn't talk to me and kept his distance but I'm sure it was him!"

Quade looked at her with clouded eyes. Then he sighed. "Thanks for telling me all this, Mrs. Lanyard."

She rose. "I'm going away after the funeral. I couldn't stand it here without Bob—and Demetros loose."

"Perhaps he won't be loose very long. He's known to the police and he'll have a hard time hiding from them. I don't think you have to worry about him, right now. Too much excitement around here and too many police and newspapermen."

"Good-by, Mr. Quade," Jessie said. She smiled wanly at Boston who heaved a sigh of relief when the Eskimo dog padded out of the room.

"What do you make of that?" Boston asked, when the door was closed.

"All roads lead to Athens—meaning Bill Demetros. So I guess we'll have to find him."

"Buck's got a long headstart," said Boston. "But somehow I'm not worried about him. From what I hear this Demetros fellow is a very hard customer, indeed."



BUCK was taking the easy way of finding Demetros. When Quade, Boston and the lawyer, reached the city the newspapers already carried screaming headlines: "Police Seek Demetros in Murder Quiz."

The story mentioned Buck's name in every other line. He had solved, he claimed, "The Westfield Dog Murders" as the papers called them. And he wanted Demetros. The city police knowing that Demetros made his headquarters here, started a search for him.

Quade bought the paper in the Bronx and read it as Boston tooled the car down to Manhattan. "Methinks Mr. Demetros is going to be rather hard to find from now on," he said.

"That dumb dick!" snorted Boston. "What'll we do now? Head back for Westfield?"

"No, drive down to Twelfth Street. Everyone seems to have forgotten Felix Renfrew. He was, after all, Peters best friend."

Renfrew lived on the top floor of a five-story brownstone walk up. He occupied a dingy room containing a studio couch, a couple of chairs, a rickety table and a gas plate. And a typewriter and stacks of manuscript paper.

Renfrew was home, but not overjoyed to see Quade and Boston.

"You knew that Peters was Bill Demetros's brother?" Quade asked.

Renfrew shook his head. "I met Bill a couple of times through Wes several years ago, but Wes never told me Bill was his brother. Said he was just a friend. I knew Wes was a Greek though, but he was touchy about it and I never asked him his real name. After all, my own isn't Felix Renfrew."

"What is it?"

Renfrew reddened. "Obediah Kraushaar, but can you imagine a playwright putting that on a play?"

"Renfrew hadn't brought you any big contracts."

"No but playwrighting is a tough racket. I may quit it and go back to Hamburg, Wisconsin. With Wes gone the landlady may chuck me out any day."

"That's one of the things I wanted to ask you about. Do you suppose Wes got his money from his brother Bill?"

Renfrew shrugged. "I don't know, but I imagine so, now that you tell me Bill was his brother. Come to think of it, it was right after Bill went to jail that Peters began getting his money."

Quade looked thoughtfully at Renfrew for a moment. Then he said, almost casually. "Would it surprise you to know that Wesley Peters got his money from Jessie Lanyard by black-mailing her? Threatening to tell Bill Demetros her whereabouts."

Renfrew's mouth fell open and his eyes bulged. If he had known those facts about Wes before, he was a good actor, Quade thought. "Lord!" gasped Renfrew. "I never dreamed that about Wes. But come to think of it, that's why he was always running out to Westfield. He pretended to me he had some pals out there."

"And that is why you went out there? To learn who his friends were?"

Renfrew's mouth clamped tightly shut. And his bulging eyes suddenly narrowed to slits. "What are you trying to do? Spring something on me?"

"I'm trying to get information, that's all."

"Yeah? Well, get to hell out of here!" snarled Renfrew. "I've said the last word to you. Beat it!"

"Don't get tough, fella!" cut in Charlie Boston. "I used to eat a couple of poets and playwrights for breakfast every morning."

Renfrew backed away from Boston. But Quade held out a hand toward his pal. "We'll let him alone, Charlie, for a while. Let's go."

Outside Quade said to Boston. "I got Peters' address. He used to live near here, on Christopher Street. Let's take a look at his place."

They didn't get into Peters' apart-

ment, however, for the very good reason that a hard-boiled policeman who was parked in it, wouldn't listen to reason or financial coercion. Christopher Buck had sold the New York Police on Bill Demetros.

Quade and Charlie climbed into the flivver, started off. As the traffic light turned red at the corner, a squat, dark complected man stepped out of a doorway, crossed the sidewalk and stepped on the running-board of the flivver.

"All right, boys," he said. "Drive around the corner and park the buggy."

"Ah," said Quade. "You're Bill Demetros?"

"Yep. I been following you around since you left Renfrew's joint. I knew you'd get around there and to my brother's place sooner or later."

The lights turned green. Demetros rode around the corner with Quade and Boston. The latter, his nostrils flaring, looked inquiringly at Quade. Quade shook his head.

They climbed out of the car. "You came to town looking for me, didn't you?" asked Demetros, as they walked together up the street. The gangster kept his right hand in his coat pocket, a fact that Quade had noted from the moment Demetros appeared.

"Yes," replied Quade. "And I guess we had better luck than the cops."

Demetros raised his eyebrow. "Luck? All right, in here." He pointed to a short flight of stairs which led to a saloon just below the level of the sidewalk.

There were two customers and a bartender in the saloon. The three looked at Demetros and his "guests" and went on with their conversation.

Demetros and Boston sat down. The gangster scowled at Quade. "Look, fella," he said, "none of this business had really concerned you, so why do you have to butt in on it?"

"What about the lad in the Westfield jail who tried to stick a shiv into me?"

"You got out of that, so why don't you take the hint and stay out of it to-

day? You know, I never liked buttin-skys. I know of a few out in the ocean with concrete on their feet."

Quade grimaced. "As a purely hypothetical question, what's your own interest in this thing?"

"I just finished a five-year stretch in Atlanta," Demetros said. "I didn't like it there and I don't want to go back. Or worse."

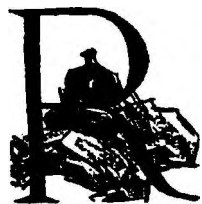
Quade considered that. It sounded reasonable enough, but still, just how much did Bill Demetros know? Quade cautiously ventured to find out. "You know that Wesley Peters was your brother?"

"Of course," snapped Demetros. "The louse! How the hell do you suppose I got into this?"

"I see," said Quade. "Well, I think I'll be going now."

Demetros slammed to his feet. "You ain't going nowhere."

It was a swell fight while it lasted. Charlie Boston was a howling terror. And Quade was no slouch himself. But the addition of the bartender and the two customers, who turned out to be pals of Bill Demetros, was too much. They and the weapons they brought into the fight, to wit: a couple of blackjacks, a bung-starter and a chair or two.



REGAINING consciousness with a splitting headache, Quade groaned and sat up. For a moment he thought he was blinded but then he realized that he was in a dark room. He groped in his pockets and found matches. Striking one, he saw that he was in a dingy, room, littered with old furniture, junk and kitchenware. From the rough beams overhead he guessed that it was the basement of the saloon in which they'd met their Waterloo.

Charlie Boston lay supine upon the floor near Quade. He was twitching and mumbling, although still unconscious.

Quade saw a cord dangling from an electric light bulb and pulled on it. To his satisfaction it sprang into light. He rose and stood for a moment, shaking his head to clear away the cobwebs. He ached in almost every muscle of his body. And his blue suit was now ripped in a dozen places.

There was a dirty sink at one side of the room, beside an old coal range. Quade went to it and ran water. He laved his hands and face, then caught a peek of himself in a cracked mirror over the sink. He grimaced when he saw the mouse under his right eye.

Charlie Boston was mumbling louder and Quade sloshed water on Boston's face. The big fellow shuddered and sat up.

"What the hell!" he gasped as he looked around.

Quade grinned through split lips. "I thought you were a good fighter, Charlie."

Boston swore. "Fists against fists I'd have licked all four of 'em by myself. But those blackjacks and that chair the bartender conked me with!"

"Pipe down," Quade warned.

The thugs had neglected to search them, probably figuring on doing that later. Quade still had his wrist-watch. It showed one fifteen. "We've been out over an hour," he said.

"And we'll probably be 'in' here until tonight," replied Boston. "Then we'll go on a one-way ride."

Quade looked around the room. "There was a trap-door overhead and he guessed that recalcitrant customers had on occasion been unceremoniously dropped through the floor. There was another door at one side of the room, which no doubt led to an outer corridor and upstairs. There were no windows in the cellar. The only ventilation in it came from a narrow vent which led into another part of the cellar. The air was dank and laden with a thousand old smells.

"Looks like they used to do the free lunch cooking here in the old days,"

Quade observed. "And there's an awful lot of trash."

"You mean we could start a fire?"

"We'd probably be roasted by the time the fire department got here. Because I don't think our friends upstairs would dash to our rescue in the event we fired the joint. No, it's got to be something better than that."

He began poking around things in a corner. Thoughtfully he prodded a sack of cement, then a smaller sack containing a white substance. "Lime and cement," he commented. "The boys mix a bit of concrete now and then."

"I got a hunch they don't mix the concrete for no building work," scowled Boston. "You heard what Demetros said about pouring it on guy's feet."

"I remember it well. But lime has many uses. You haven't forgotten, Charlie, that I've read my encyclopedias from cover to cover. There are some mighty interesting things in it. . . . Ah!"

He brought up a sheet of tough fiber board. He broke off a corner, tested it with his tongue. "Sulphur it is, Charlie. They soak this fiber with it to make it tough and waterproof. Lot of these advertising signs that have to hang out in all sorts of weather are first soaked in it. There's just one more thing I'd like to find. Look through those bottles around there and see if you can find a bit of ammonia."

A fifteen-minute search failed to produce any ammonia. Quade sighed. "I'll have to try it without the ammonia. Build a fire in the stove, Charlie, and hope the damn chimney still works."

There were plenty of old boxes and other fire material in the room. Charlie Boston soon had a nice fire going in the old coal range.

Quade then broke up the fiber board into small pieces and put them in a big, old cooking pot.

"With better tools I could do a better job, but this will do," he said to Boston. "If I'd only found some ammonia or naphtha we'd have had some real fun."

The pot on the stove began giving off

a strong, biting odor after a while. Boston sniffed it. "Damn me if it don't smell like sulphur, Ollie."

"It is. I tasted it. Sulphur melts at 113 degrees Centigrade and boils at 444. But I don't think we can get up a hot enough fire here to boil it. But maybe that won't be necessary."

Inside of twenty minutes the pot on the stove was half-filled with a brownish-green liquid in which floated pieces of fiber. Quade fished out the fiber as well as he could, then drained the hot mixture through a handkerchief into another pan that Boston had washed in the sink.

He let the stuff cool for a while then stirred lime into it. The mixture began bubbling but Quade worked cautiously and kept it from bursting into flames. Finally when the mixture was completed and cooling, he poured it out on a sheet of newspaper in thin strips.

"Now, Charlie," he said, "don't spit on those strips or there'll be trouble."

Quade carried a sliver of the stuff to the sink and tossed it in. There was water in the sink and the instant the sliver touched it, it exploded into a bright yellow flame.

"I'll be damned," said Boston.

"If we'd had naphtha," said Quade, "I could have made Greek fire, the stuff the old-timers used in their wars. Thinking of Demetros gave me the idea. But this will suit our purpose." He looked at his watch. "It's after three. Time we got out of here. Tear yourself a leg from that old table there. You may have use for it."

Taking the thin brittle strips of lime and sulphur, Quade stuffed them in the cracks of the door leading to the outer corridor. Boston helped him and soon the wide crack was stuffed completely around.

"This isn't going to be a cinch, Charlie," Quade said. "When that stuff starts burning it's going to be just about hot enough to melt the hinges off. We're going to have to smash down the door then and jump through a regular fur-

nace. If there isn't a staircase or a quick outlet on the other side of the door we're going to get roasted alive."

Charlie Boston scowled. "And if we stay here and wait for Demetros to get back it's a tubful of cement on our feet. I'll take a chance on the fire, Ollie."

"All right then, get ready."

Quade took a deep breath, then, with a pan of water in each hand, suddenly doused the sulphur-stuffed cracks of the door.

The result was astonishing. The sulphur and lime exploded into a roaring thread of bright yellow flame. The fire was so hot that it almost seared Quade's face even though he sprang back quickly. The flame, he knew, was only a few hundred degrees cooler than an oxy-acetylene torch.

Quade and Boston waited at the far end of the room, shielding their faces with their arms. Now and then Quade peered over his arm. Finally, after about a minute, he said, "The hinges are gone now, Charlie. A good stiff wallop or two and the door'll go down. Then we've got to make it. And keep your fingers crossed."

Boston caught up the table leg he had torn off and leaped forward. He struck the door a mighty blow and it fell completely off its melted hinges, dropping out into the corridor.

"Let's go!" cried Quade. He covered his face and leaped straight through the inferno of fire. Scorching heat seared through to his body. For a fraction of a second Quade thought he had lost, but then he stumbled on a stair and began scrambling up it. Behind him he heard Charlie Boston, scuffling and swearing. They fled up the stairs, the fire crackling behind them. Quade beat out sparks on his clothes and he knew that his hair and eyebrows were singed.

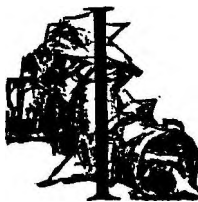
A door at the head of the stairs was closed but not locked. They tore it open and burst into the saloon where they had been defeated earlier in the day.

The bartender and one of the two men who had come to Demetros' aid

were the only occupants of the saloon. The fight this time was all in Quade's favor, Charlie using the table leg to knock both of the utterly surprised men out of the way. He and Quade left the saloon inside of two minutes.

"The building'll probably burn down," he exclaimed outside. "But damned if I care."

Their battered flivver was still around the corner. Demetros hadn't had it removed. Quade and Boston climbed into it and in a few minutes were bowling north along Seventh Avenue.



IT WAS almost six o'clock when they reached the Westfield Hotel. Dirty, their clothing scorched and torn and their hair singed, they caused the hotel room clerk to exclaim in horror when they entered. But they breezed past him to the elevator.

Quade was putting on a clean shirt when someone in the corridor began a sledge-hammer tattoo on their door.

"Christopher Buck, the world's greatest detective," Quade remarked. "I recognize his gentle knocking."

He let Buck into the room. "Where've you been?" Buck cried.

"Talking to Bill Demetros."

"You got him?" Buck cried eagerly. "Where is he, in jail?"

"Not that I know of," replied Quade. "Matter of fact we lost an argument with him."

Buck saw the remnants of Quade's blue suit on the floor. "You were in a fight!"

"No, I got the black eye from a canary. It kicked me."

Boston came out of the bathroom, several strips of adhesive tape on his face. "You shoulda been along, Mr. Buck," he grinned largely. "You would have enjoyed it."

Buck shuddered. "I abhor physical violence. A man with brains doesn't have to resort to it."

"Brains?" exclaimed Boston. "Man, where we were your brains would have got you a concrete block."

Christopher Buck wrapped himself into knots and dropped into a chair. "What're you going to do next, Quade?" he asked.

"Gather in the murderer," Quade replied bluntly. "Before there is another killing."

The telephone tingled. Quade picked it up.

"This is Felix Renfrew," said an excited voice. "I'm over here at the bus station. I just got in. I've got something very important to tell you."

"Come right over," Quade told him. He hung up the receiver and turned to Buck. "Sorry, but I'm having a visitor. You'll excuse me, won't you?"

Buck scowled. "Holding out again, huh?"

"Look," said Quade, exasperated. "You've fooled around on this case long enough. Your client is dead, so why the hell don't you take a powder?"

Buck blustered but Quade shoved him through the door. Quade turned to Boston, his eyes gleaming. "This thing is breaking fast, Charlie. Felix Renfrew is coming up here. I think he's going to give me the proof I've been trying to get."

"That Demetros knocked off young Lanyard? Hell, I knew that long ago."

Five minutes passed, but Felix Renfrew did not show up. Quade fidgeted. "Wonder if Buck ran into him and bought him off to spill it to him. That man would do almost anything to get credit for breaking a case." He held up a hand suddenly. "Listen, isn't that a police siren? Lord, I wonder. . . ."

Quade bounded off the bed and out of the room. He took the stairs to the first floor, three at a time, and burst through the lobby. People were rushing by on the street, heading for a spot in the next block where a large crowd had gathered. Quade caught hold of a man's arm. "What's happened?"

"Man's been shot!"

It was Renfrew, of course. Quade found Chief of Police Costello and his entire force herding the curious back from the huddled body.

Costello was very unhappy. "More killings!" he snapped. "It's getting to be an epidemic around here."

"How'd it happen?"

"No one seems to know exactly. He was crossing the street and someone took a shot at him from an automobile. Only one or two people around and they thought at first the noise was just a backfire. Only natural. Up to now, people haven't been in the habit of firing off guns on our Main Street. What happened to you?"

Quade touched the mouse under his eye. "I got tough to the wrong man. Well, you still satisfied that Bob Lanyard committed suicide?"

The chief cursed roundly. "I been out to the Lanyard house. The old man and his daughter claim it was murder. This Renfrew killing makes me wonder now."

Quade saw the lank figure of Christopher Buck forcing through the crowd and slipped away. He walked to the hotel and climbed into his disreputable flivver.

Ten minutes later he rang the bell at the Lanyard home.

"Miss Lois Lanyard," he said to the butler.

"I'm sorry, she's not at home."

Quade frowned. "Mr. Lanyard then."

The butler led Quade into the living-room where Guy Lanyard was sitting by the rear window, moodily looking out toward the dog kennels.

"Where'd Lo—Miss Lanyard go?"

"To the dog show. I thought it best for them to get out a while."

"Them?"

"She and Jessie both went. Poor girls."

Quade left abruptly and drove to the dog show—fast. It was around dinner-time and attendance was slight. Quade went swiftly from aisle to aisle but saw

neither Lois nor Jessie Lanyard. He did, however, run into Freddie Bartlett. The wealthy playboy gritted his teeth at sight of Quade. "Here you are, I've been looking for you all day." Freddie spoke as he would to a servant.

"The hell you have," snapped Quade. "Where's Miss Lanyard and her sister-in-law?"

"What business is it of yours?" sneered Bartlett. "You've been around them just about enough. I was looking for you today to see that you didn't annoy any of us any longer."

"Oh, hell," snorted Quade. "Are you going to try to lick me?"

"Someone seems to have started the job," Bartlett said ominously, "but I'm going to finish it. You didn't know I was light-heavyweight champion of my university, did you?"

Quade sighed, stepped forward and smashed Bartlett a terrific blow on the point of the jaw. Bartlett staggered back against a dog partition. His eyes rolled wildly as he struggled to keep his feet.

"So you want to fight?" Quade asked. He lashed out with a left hook and Freddie Bartlett hit the wooden partition and slid down it to a sitting position. He wasn't out, but he sat there goggle-eyed. "And now," Quade said, "where's Lois?"

Bartlett looked up stupidly. "I—I don't know," he mumbled. "They were here, then they said they were going for a drive up River Road. Jessie said something about going where it was quiet. Woods down there—"

Quade left Bartlett sitting there. He dashed to the exit of the building, then on sudden impulse ran back. He found the Old English sheep dog aisle and stepped into one of the stalls, the one occupied by Oscar, Lois' first-prize winner.

The dog was a bit skittish, but Quade spoke soothingly to it and unchained it. Leading it by the chain, he started again for the exit.

The show secretary was coming in

just then. "Here, here you!" he cried. "You can't do that."

Quade did not even answer. He brushed the man aside and rushed out to his car. He put the dog in the front seat and climbed in beside it. In a moment he was scooting out of the fair grounds.

Quade didn't know the section of the country around Westfield, but during the last few days he'd seen the river several times and instinctively headed toward it. The road beside it was a winding one. There were a few houses and farms on both sides of the road, near town, but when he got out a mile or two, the farms gave way to thick woods. Quade cursed furiously. There was no fencing along the side of the road and every now and then there was a winding wooded lane or road, cutting off from the main drive. Jessie and Lois could have turned down any of these roads and he would miss them.

Quade stopped the flivver beside a small road and listened. There were fresh tire tracks leading into the road, but it did not necessarily mean anything. This was a populated country and someone used these roads every day. He stepped on the starter, but suddenly switched it off again. He strained his ears, but heard nothing. The dog beside him growled deep in his throat. Quade looked at it and his eyes flashed.

"Bark!" he cried, in a sudden command. The dog was startled and barked warningly. "Louder!" Quade cried, making a pass at the dog. The dog barked and bared his teeth threateningly.

And then Quade heard it—a wolf-like howl rising to a mournful note and dying out. It came from the woods ahead and not so far away. Quickly Quade stepped on the starter of the flivver and slipped the gears into second. He stepped on the throttle and the car leaped into the narrow winding road.

As he drove he bore down on the horn. The noise excited the dog beside him even more and it barked. And

from ahead, came the answering howl of a dog. The flivver burst into a clearing and Quade brought it to a stop in a cloud of dust. Ahead was a bright yellow roadster, Lois' own car. Oscar, the sheep dog, began barking excitedly and tried to get out of the car. Quade, sighed in relief, kicked the door open beside the dog.

He saw the girls then. They were in the back of the clearing, near an old stone house. Jessie had the big Eskimo dog with her. It was bristling at the approach of the sheep dog and Jessie had to speak to it to keep it from attacking the woolly as the latter bounded across the clearing to his mistress.

"Hello, there!" Lois called as Quade approached. "How'd you happen to find us?"

Quade jerked his head toward the husky. "The dog. He howled."

Lois looked at him in surprise. "You mean you recognized his howl? But you've only seen him once or twice."

"I know, but this happens to be the only dog in this neighborhood that doesn't bark. You're a dog raiser; you ought to know that an Eskimo dog, being descended from the wolf, does not bark—he howls."

"The Human Encyclopedia himself," said Jessie.

Quade looked at her. Jessie was unsmiling. "Yes," he said, "I got that information out of the encyclopedia. It was a good thing to know."

"We were just about to start home," said Lois. "Jessie wanted to explore this old house first. It's deserted."

"Some other time," said Quade. "Let's go back to Westfield now."

"Why, has something happened?" Lois' eyes clouded.

"I'll tell you later." Quade held out his hand to Jessie. "Let me have your bag."

Her eyes widened, but he took the hand-bag firmly from her grasp. It was heavy and he could feel the outline of something hard in it.

Lois' forehead was creased as they

walked to the cars. Something seemed to be annoying her. Quade's rudeness, no doubt. At the cars he maneuvered to hand Jessie into the seat first, then took hold of Lois' elbow.

"I'll drive," he said firmly.

He handed her into the car, then stowed the two dogs into the rumble seat, chaining each to a side, so they would not be forced together too much.

Quade walked around and slipped in under the wheel. He could feel Jessie beside him, her body tensed. She knew that he knew.

No one said a word until they reached the Lanyard house.

"Your father's in the living-room," he suggested, guessing that the old man would still be by the window overlooking the dog kennels. He was. By the look on Guy Lanyard's face Quade knew that he had guessed the truth during his absence.

"Renfrew, Wesley Peters' pal, is dead," Quade said.

Lois gasped. "Dead!"

"The police captured this Demetros," said Guy Lanyard. "Costello phoned just a few minutes ago. He resisted and is in a bad way. Probably won't live. He'd come to Westfield to—"

Lois suddenly looked sharply at her sister-in-law. "Jessie," she said, slowly, "who was that dark man you talked to at the dog show this morning. I asked you about him before and you didn't answer."

"I'm going to my room," Jessie said.

Guy Lanyard looked at Quade. The latter held his gaze for a moment, then looked at Jessie's hand-bag in his right hand. He extended it to her. "Here's your bag."

Jessie's teeth were sunk into her lower lip. She took the bag, turned and walked out of the room. Quade heard her heels as they clicked on the stairs going up.

"Thank God you got to Lois in time," Guy Lanyard said.

Lois turned to Quade. "What does he mean? What's the matter with her?"

Why wouldn't she answer me about that man? Was he—"

There was a sharp explosion upstairs. Quade relaxed. Guy Lanyard slumped into his chair.

"It's best this way," Quade said.

"That was a shot!" cried Lois. Her eyes were wide. "Jessie! Jessie!"



AN HOUR later Quade dropped wearily onto the bed in his room at the Westfield Hotel. Charlie sat on the other bed, biting his finger-nails. "The dame!" he swore. "You knew it was her all the time?"

"Not all the time, Charlie. She fooled me there at the start. That confession of hers. It was on the level and that's what threw me off the track.

"If she'd stopped with Peters' death she'd probably have got away with it."

"What mistakes did she make?" asked Boston. "I didn't get any. Hell, I never even suspected her."

"But I knew she killed her husband the minute I read the suicide note he was supposed to have left. Remember what it said? 'Forgive me for making this exit.' Making an exit is an actor's expression. Bob might conceivably have picked up such a phrase from his wife, but his speech ordinarily was scholastic and precise. In his most tragic moment he would not have used slang.

"But aside from the note, Jessie gave herself away by killing Bob in the dog kennels. Remember the layout?"

Boston considered that for a moment, then shook his head. "What's wrong with that layout? She didn't want to kill him in the house maybe on account of the noise."

"It would have been far safer for her to have done so. Don't you see, Charlie? The dogs are loose in their kennels. She could have forced Bob past the pointers, but after shooting him she could never have gone back that way.

The pointer, Duke, would have torn her to pieces. Dogs smell blood quickly and sense death. And Bob probably cried out when she shot him. No, after shooting him she left by way of the husky kennels, her own dogs.

"Get it now. *No one* could have killed Bob and left by the pointer kennels. And *only Jessie* could leave by the Eskimo kennels. Those dogs are half wild and in the middle of the night would have attacked anyone but their mistress. So it had to be Jessie."

"I'll be damned!" exclaimed Boston. "But why did she have to kill Bob?"

"Perhaps, perhaps not. But one murder leads to another and after she killed Peters she had to kill her husband. You see, Jessie made her big mistake years ago when she tried to throw over Bill Demetros. Demetros wasn't the sort of man who liked his women to leave him, at least not until he was through with them. And he wasn't through with Jessie. She changed her name, but Bill would have caught up with her probably, except the Government caught up with him about then and sent him on that five-year visit to Atlanta.

"Then Jessie got into that show with Wes Peters. That was a bad break for her, because he turned out to be Bill Demetros' brother. When Jessie found out she threw him over. Or maybe she met Bob Lanyard about that time. Lanyard meant real dough to her. And safety.

"She married Bob. And then it turned out that Peters, even though he was supposedly not like his gangster brother, was even worse. He blackmailed Jessie about her former association with a gangster and threatened always to tell Bill where she was unless she paid plenty."

"You mean she paid heavy sugar just to keep that rat Peters from writing his brother that Jessie had married a rich guy?" demanded Charlie.

"That's about the size of it. Jessie knew Bill pretty well. She knew that he would get word to some of his pals

on the outside and it would be too bad for her. So she paid off . . . and then Bill got out. In as much as Wes had played around with his brother's girl he figured he'd better skip. He needed money for that. So he went to his mint, Jessie and demanded one last big roll.

"She couldn't get enough money. So she gave Peters that thousand that was on him when he was found dead and stalled him. She got an opportunity and gave him a lead slug instead of more money. She might even have taken to carrying the gun figuring to kill herself with it. But when she got such a swell chance in the dog show she up and let him have it.

"It was her first murder and she was pretty shaky about it, so when we went after her hot and heavy there at the start, she broke down, admitted it. Then when her husband tried to take the blame and she saw that no one really wanted to believe she had done it, she began covering up.

"But Bill Demetros must've got to her, because all of a sudden I found Demetros on her side. Which wasn't at all according to Hoyle. Took me a little time to figure out. Demetros had been away for five years and I imagine his lawyers and fixers had come high, so the old safety deposit box was probably pretty empty. He knew Jessie was scared stiff of him. So he showed her how she could come into a big chunk of

dough and by splitting with him, live to spend it.

"It was smart figuring on Demmy's part. By knocking off her husband Jessie could come into a half million or so. Then Lois happened to see Jessie with Demetros and questioned her. That made Lois next on her list. I didn't know the reason when I went after Lois and Jessie today, but I knew Jessie was desperate and I wasn't taking chances on Lois being the next victim."

"That all sounds pretty straight," said Boston. "But where'd this guy Renfrew fit into the picture?"

"Renfrew finally figured out Wes Peters' soft thing, or maybe he didn't see it until after we told him about it. Anyway, he suddenly got the bright idea of taking up where Wes had let off, not knowing that Demetros had shuffled a new deal. Renfrew phoned Jessie to put the squeeze on her. Which signed his death warrant. Demetros got to him and told him a few things and then Renfrew got panicky and wanted to come to me, to blow up the thing and save his life. So Demmy killed him.

"Uh-uh," said Boston. "What about Lois' romance you busted up?"

Quade's ears turned red. "Why, she gave me an invitation to come out some time— What the hell you grinning about, you big ape?"

"Nothing," said Boston, his face as sober as a Kansas prohibitionist's.

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THE SILENT WITNESS

By MAX BRAND



A
Short
Short
Story

RIDDLE pressed the Bentley bell and then held the door-knob while he stared through the glass into the downstairs hallway. It had the nakedly expectant look of all entrances to push-button apartment houses. The lock began to click rapidly; it kept on clicking after he had entered the hall and pressed the elevator button.

Everything happened very slowly. He heard the elevator door slam shut above him, a deep-voiced humming began in the throat of the shaft and descended gradually toward him. The lighted elevator slid past the diamond-shaped peephole. It halted. The inner door was pushed clanging back by the ghostly fingers of the machine.

He entered, pressed the button of Number 6, and watched the door slowly roll shut, obeying the electric mind. With a soft lurch the elevator started up the shaft.

At the sixth floor the automatic brake

stopped the car softly and the inner door rolled gradually back. This mechanized precision, this mindless deliberation, screwed up Riddle's nerves to a breaking tension. He had to set his lips and his lean jaw and make ready to endure what he knew was ahead of him.

Then the outer door of the elevator was snatched open by Gay Bentley. She leaned against the edge of it with her eyes so big and dark that she looked like a white-faced child. Riddle put his arm around her and closed the door while she clung to him, saying: "Dick. . . . Dick. . . . Dick. . . ."

He took her through the open door into the living-room of her apartment. It was exactly in order, disappointing the horrible expectation with which he had entered. The floor lamps cast two amber circles on the ceiling and two white pools on the floor. The huge litter of a Sunday newspaper lay scattered on the davenport and on the table there was a tall highball glass, almost full.

"Where?" asked Riddle.

She pointed toward the bedroom door. "I'll come with you," she said.

He shook his head. "You sit here. No, lie down."

"I'll go mad if I lie down," said Gay. Her lips began to tremble and her eyes rolled, so he picked her up and laid her on the davenport amid the rustling of the newspaper.

"You be quiet. Will you be quiet? Close your eyes!" commanded Riddle.

She closed her eyes and he crossed the floor with the sense of her light, firm body still making his hands feel strong. He needed that strength of spirit when he entered the bedroom and saw Tom Bentley lying on the bed, far over against the wall with his right arm stretched out, pointing an automatic at his friend in the doorway. But Bentley's half-open eyes were drowsily considering something on the white of the ceiling instead of Riddle, and a spot of deep purple appeared on his temple with one thin, watery line of blood running down from it.

Riddle went back into the living-room where Gay Bentley already was off the coach and sitting on the piano stool with her face in her hands. She started up to face Riddle. He wandered to the table and picked up the unfinished highball. When he tasted it, he found the whiskey good but the drink was tepid; it had come to the room temperature.

"The police?" whispered the girl. "Do we have to call the police?"

He sipped the tepid highball again before he put down the glass.

"I want a drink, Gay," he said.

"Take this. It's mine but I don't want it."

"This? *This* is yours?" he asked, looking suddenly at her.

"Ah, but you like a man's drink," she nodded, unobservant. "I'll make you a fresh one."

She passed him on the way to the pantry, and clung close to him again for an instant.

"Oh, Dick," she whispered, "think what animals we are! When I found

him, my mind stopped, and all I could do was to come out here and go through the motions of mixing a drink. . . . Think of that! And then I remembered you. Thank God for you! Thank God for you!"

She went on to the pantry.

"How do you want it?" she called.

"Just like yours," said Riddle. He saw his own pale, thin face in the glass above the fireplace and stared at the gloomy image entranced.

"Just like mine?" she repeated, surprised. "But two lumps of ice, you always take."

"No. Just like yours. One lump. That will do," said Riddle.

She brought the drink back to him, and he sank down into a chair at the table. He put his chin on his fist and stared at nothingness. The girl stood behind him with her hands on his shoulders.

"Poor Tom!" she said. "I know you loved him, Dick, but try not to take it too hard. He *was* unhappy, you know."

"I knew," said Riddle, "and I kept away from him for a month. . . . Was it money, Gay?"

"No," she answered.

"It had to be debts that drove him to it. There was nothing else," insisted Riddle.

"There was something else," she replied.

"What under heaven?" asked Riddle, jerking up his head so that his face almost touched hers.

"Jealousy, Dick," said the girl.

"Jealousy?" cried Riddle. "Jealousy of you, Gay?"

She made a pause, with her face still close to his, before she answered carefully and gently, as though to a child: "You know we haven't been so very happy together, lately."

"After a few years, the bubble and zip goes out of most marriages," said Riddle.

"Ah, it was more than that," she answered.

"You mean there *was* a definite reason for his jealousy?" demanded Riddle. "You mean that there was another man?"

She was silent again before she answered just above a whisper: "Ah, Dick, you blind, blind fellow!"

Riddle reached up and caught one of her hands from his shoulder. "What the devil do you mean, Gay?" he asked.

"He knew I loved someone else," said the girl.

"Who?" asked Riddle.

She pulled to get free. "I don't want to talk about it. I can't talk about it," she said. "Not to you."

Riddle let her hand go.

"You mean that I'm the man?" he said.

She gave him no answer but walked across the room to the window and stood there looking out. A breeze came in from moment to moment and set her bright hair shimmering over the smooth and soft of her neck. She stood there an eternity of minutes. The silence between them—between her beauty and his friendship with the dead man—that silence sang on for minutes.

He tasted her drink on the table then, quickly, took a small swallow from his own glass. After that he glanced at his watch. The silence drew out in length like a dark thread. . . .

"You know that Tom was my best friend?" he asked.

"I know everything," said the girl. "It was because he cared about you so much that I first began to care—too. . . ."

Her voice broke a little. Riddle went to her and took her by the shoulders. He seated her firmly in a chair.

"That's all to be talked about afterward," he told her. Then, walking up and down the room, he said: "Tell me what you know about it."

She lay back in the chair with her head partly turned away from him and her eyes almost closed and sometimes a smile that was characteristic of her when she talked appeared on her lips. Now, at thirty, wrinkles pinched her eyes a

little at the corners but her smile was still very lovely. She talked slowly.

"I went out just before five. I couldn't remember but I thought I had a tea engagement with Martha Gilbert and I couldn't get her on the phone. I didn't find Martha. I ran into Jud Mowbray a little later and he insisted on cocktails. I didn't want one, but I sort of had to. . . . After a while I left him and got back here at around a quarter to six. And I found Tom—like that; and then I telephoned to you."

Riddle nodded.

"You saw Tom and he was dead—of his own hand. Then you poured yourself this drink and then you telephoned to me."

"What does the drink matter?" she asked, with a sudden curiosity.

"The police always want to know everything," said Riddle. "They eat up every detail. And I'll have to ring them in a moment. You poured yourself this drink about forty-five minutes ago, let's say?"

"Yes. Almost exactly."

He sipped her drink, carefully, and then tried his own. He said nothing—endlessly.

"Then by the time I arrived," he finally said, "your drink hadn't been standing more than twenty minutes, had it?"

"No. Of course not! . . . Dick, what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," said Riddle, standing up and seeing the white of his face in the glass again. Then he glanced at his wrist. A half hour had come—and gone.

He went to the telephone but paused there for a long moment until she asked: "What's in your mind, Dick?"

"I was thinking of the first days out of college when Tom and I were fighting our way up."

"You fought your way up," said Gay Bentley, "and Tom kept sliding back in spite of all his scratching. He was a derelict before the end and the only thing that drew him along was the tow-

line you threw to him, Dick, darling. . . ."

He picked up the receiver and began to dial.

"I want the police," he said.

"Not so soon, Dick!" cried the girl. "I don't want their dreadful, blunt faces near me. I couldn't stand them!"

"This is One 42 East Hargreave Street," said Riddle. "On the sixth floor, apartment D, Thomas Bentley is dead. It is murder. . . ." He hung up.

"Murder? Murder?" cried the girl. "Dick, what are you talking about?"

"About a man I loved, and a woman I used to love, too," said Riddle, "and an alibi rotten all the way through."

He sipped from the glasses on the table, one after the other.

"This drink of mine has been standing here for half an hour, but it's still cold," he said. "It still will be cold when the homicide squad arrives and hears me testify that your glass was room temperature when I came in. . . ."

"Dick, what do you mean?" she gasped. "What crazy idea is in your head?"

"My idea," said Riddle, "is that you were out of the house to collect your

alibi, but you poured your drink, here, before you left, and all the time you were away the highball was going ahead like an automatic machine gathering warmth and registering murder. *You* killed Tom."

She went to pieces, flew at him, beggingly.

"Dick, throw the stuff out of the window! Dick, you wouldn't kill me, would you? Not like a rat; you wouldn't kill me, Dick, would you?" she sobbed to him. "I needed a drink—to do it! But, Dick, because I love you—Oh, throw it away!"

He covered the glass with his hand. He could not look at her but he knew she was shrinking away from him now—toward the door. And then that she had slipped out into the hallway, running.

Now she would be pressing the button of the elevator frantically; but he knew with what an unhurried steadiness it would respond.

A siren screamed out of the distance and turned loose its howling in Hargreave Street. Riddle opened his eyes as he listened, and in the mirror the white image stared back at him in astonishment and horror.

APRIL AWAITS YOU

Is there a **BLACK MASK** reader who doesn't know **Ed Jenkins**? We doubt it—but if any of you hasn't met the Phantom Crook, you will get to know him in the April issue. Old readers and new will enjoy "**Muscle Out**," a novelette in which the author, **ERLE STANLEY GARDNER**, has put to exciting use his knowledge of the West Coast Chinese and of the underworld.

An innocent limerick landed **Jerry Tracy** in the midst of a racket war. If you want to find out what Tracy did about it—and incidentally learn that limerick—read "**No More Limericks**" by **THEODORE TINSLEY**.

In "**The Widow Regrets**," published in the January number, **Beek** won a trailer in a card game. In "**Murder in the Family**," the story coming up, he journeys with it down the California coast to visit some good-looking girls. Mystery greets him and murder stalks him. **DWIGHT V. BABCOCK** is the author.

There was apparently "**No Motive**" for the first two murders, but the third one told the tale, in an astonishing story by **FRANK GRUBER**.

There will be other unusual and interesting stories to add to those above, making a perfect


APRIL BLACK MASK

BANK NIGHT KILL

By JOSEPH CSIDA

A contest dick guns out a theater racket



**HUNDRED** and ninety pounds of guy, even if it's spread out over six foot two, looks silly bawling. I suppose I did, too, but there was the Mouse. Dead. And there was his wife, Mary Meeker, with no tears in her eyes, but with that look a woman gets when she hurts like hell inside. And four-year-old Mike—named after me—riding the rocking horse I'd sent him from Chi three days ago. Every once in a while he yelled something that

sounded like "Kree" and whacked on the horse. Some of the people sitting around the room looked a little shocked. They thought Mary ought to stop the kid, but she didn't. The Mouse wouldn't have wanted her to. He'd always liked to see kids having a good time.

Somehow it was even harder to check the bawling when I looked at little Mike than when I looked right at the Mouse. The undertaker hadn't been able to do much for his face. The side of the head, where it had been smashed, hardly looked like the Mouse.

Dick Sands, who's on the Homicide detail and an old friend, came in while Mary and I were still standing by the Mouse. I took Mary out to the kitchen.

I said, "What was it, Mary?"

I'd been in Chi checking on the \$50,000 first prize winner in a contest a big soap manufacturer'd run. When Mary's wire: "Tom in accident, please come," reached me, I'd come back fast. The Mouse was the best friend I'd ever had. Among a lot of other good turns, he'd got me in the contest investigating business. I'd been on the city cops, second-grade dick. Then I'd opened an agency and worked as a private gumshoe until I found out a guy can scarcely make a living these days in that racket unless he has a taste for strike-breaking.

The Mouse was a little guy, but the smartest investigator I've ever run across. He could learn more about people, quicker and without letting them know they were being checked, than any man I've ever seen anywhere. I guess that was why he did so well with this business of investigating big money winners in all kinds of contests.

I didn't even know there was such an animal as a contest dick until the Mouse tipped me to it. It seems people will do a lot of tricky things to grab off the ten, twenty-five, fifty and even a hundred thousand dollar prizes that various big companies pay out in contests. And that's where contest dicks like the Mouse and me come in. The Mouse had got

me into the business and showed me the ropes and I got by. Now he was dead. I wanted to know how it had happened and who was responsible. Especially who.

The tears that weren't in Mary's eyes were in her voice.

"Yesterday morning about three o'clock. A policeman found him in West 70th Street. He'd been knocked down by a car. It must have been going pretty fast. His head had—hit the curb."

Dick Sands came in. I took Mary back to the Mouse. She seemed to want to be with him, even now. I went back to the kitchen.

Dick and I didn't say anything for a minute. He rubbed his coat sleeve across his face and I blew my nose. When he talked he said words kind of all in one breath.

"We found the car, Mike, over in Astoria. There was dried blood on the hood, some on the windshield. And a piece that ripped off the Mouse's coat was caught between the fender and the hood."

"Who owned the car?"

"It was stolen from a guy who owns a restaurant on Broadway and 74th. He's in the clear. He reported it three hours before we found the Mouse."

There was something like hopelessness in Dick's face. It burned me.

"What the hell *have* you got?"

"The Mouse was working for the Loring Theater Chain. Some kind of an investigation on the Bank Night thing. There's nothing there either. I talked to the Loring Chain's general manager, Stan Boagland. He hired the Mouse. Says he was going to drop the investigation the day after the Mouse was hit. He's sure there's nothing to it."

"Did you get the Mouse's stuff on the case?"

"Yes, but this was all," he said.

He handed me a sheet of paper with names and addresses of theaters in a column on one side. Next to each

theater's name there was a date and an amount of money. Like: "Majestic, — Seventh Avenue, N. Y. C., Wednesday, \$715."

I said, "These are the theaters with the dates of their bank nights and the amount of money the winner gets?"

Dick said that's what they were.

The theaters were grouped into localities. First were theaters in Brooklyn, then the Bronx, then Manhattan, and finally Morris County in Jersey.

"What are these crosses?"

"The Mouse marked them, Mike, but they don't mean a thing as far as we can find out. We've covered two of the theaters but it all added up to nothing; just the usual bank nights. The manager of the theater gets up on the stage, calls on someone in the audience to come up and pick a number out of a drum. The number is picked and the manager looks in the book where all the customers are registered under different numbers. He reads the winner's name out of the book and whoever it is, comes dashing up to the stage to collect the dough.

"We checked the two winners and they were oke. We even checked a couple of the theater managers." Dick wagged his head. "Like Boagland says, Mike, there's nothing to the bank night angle."

Dick was wrong. He had to be. I knew how the Mouse worked. He wouldn't put crosses against the names of two theaters on a list of more than fifty if the crosses didn't mean something. One of these crosses was against: "President, — West 84th Street, N. Y. C., \$725, Thursday. That was today. And the other cross was against: "Gem, — Elm Street, Montclair, N. J., Friday, \$475."

I said, "All right, Dick. The bank night angle is out. The guy who owns the car is out. What's left?"

He looked at me kind of funny. I knew my voice was hard with hopelessness. He said, "I know how you feel, Mike. I liked the Mouse, too."

Sure he liked the Mouse. I knew that. He knew him almost as long, almost as well as I did. "What's left, Dick?" I asked, quieter.

"A set of prints on the steering wheel. The damn yellow-bellied hit-and-run driver's. We checked them and sent them to Washington. But there's no duplicates on record."



BANK NIGHT angles still bothered me and I had to find out more about how the Mouse'd been killed, so I went to see Boagland, the guy he'd been working for. He was a short guy, fat-bodied, fat-faced. The creases in his forehead, just below his sparsely haired dome and the squint of his watery brown eyes gave him a perpetually worried look. Yet he had an air of forced joviality about him. He must have been a good cloak and suit salesman in his day, and now he was a big shot with the Loring Theater group.

"About your friend," he said, with this phony-hearty boom in his voice. "I'm sorry, Mr. White. But accidents will happen."

Accident, hell! I felt like pushing his face in. I said:

"Why'd you hire Meeker? What made you think there was anything crooked going on in connection with your theater's bank nights?"

He spread his palms.

"Just the theater business, White," he said. "Mr. Loring is the head of the chain. His brother-in-law is the manager for our Bijou in Brooklyn. The president's relatives have to make a living, too, don't they? Ha. Ha! Well, he got a couple of complaints that the bank nights are a gyp from some customers who didn't win. So he sent in a suggestion that we should conduct an investigation on bank night winners.

"Personally I realize it's just a waste of time and money. How could anyone gyp the bank night money? But I had

to do something about the suggestion. So I hired your friend, Mr. Meekly."

"Meeker," I said.

"All right, Meeker. And I paid him twenty-five dollars a day to find out how anyone could gyp us on our bank nights."

"Did he ever give you a report?"

"Sure, sure. For twenty-five dollars a day he should! Ha! Ha! He came here Tuesday. He said, 'Mr. Boagland, I've got something. Give me another ten days and I'll show you how the smoothest bunch of crooks I've ever run into is taking thousands of dollars a week from your theaters.'"

"The Mou—Meeker said that?"

"Sure. Why not? Twenty-five dollars a day for another ten days is two hundred and fifty dollars. Why—"

I didn't punch. I slapped him hard across the cheek as I stood up. My fingers left broad red stripes. He tried to struggle out of the swivel chair he was in. I laid my palm on the top of his round head and pushed. He and the chair crashed over backward to the floor.

"I'll sue you. I'll sue you. Miss G., call my lawyer," he was screaming as I walked out the door, sore as hell.

So there was nothing to the bank night angle, huh? The Mouse certainly wouldn't have asked for another ten days unless he knew he had something. And something pretty hot.

WEST 70TH STREET, where the Mouse had been hit, was lined with brownstone rooming-houses. I didn't know what I could get there but I had one hunch. The cop had found the Mouse about three A.M., Wednesday—that was yesterday. Dick and his men hadn't been able to find anyone who'd seen it happen. I didn't expect to, either. But the tobacco shop I was looking for was on the corner.

The owner was an old, hump-backed guy. He said, "Good evening," and gave me the Blue Ribbon pipe tobacco I asked for. I don't smoke a pipe. But

the Mouse always did. And Blue Ribbon, a brand that you didn't find many people smoking, was the only tobacco he used.

"Get much of a call for Blue Ribbon?" I asked.

"Very little. Only in the last few days I've been selling a package every day to a nice friendly little man. . . . It's a good smoke, though."

"You liked the man who's been buying Blue Ribbon?"

The old gent looked puzzled, but he nodded yes.

"He was my best friend," I said.

"Was?"

"He's dead. He was hit by a car up the street yesterday morning."

"My God," the old gent gasped, "Was that him? I heard about a man being run down by a car, but I didn't know it was him!"

There was more than just shock in the old man's eyes. He'd only known the Mouse casually for two or three days and he'd grown to like him. That was the kind of a guy the Mouse was.

"It was him," I said.

"What a terrible thing for his wife," the old gent said. "She looks like such a sweet child."

"His wife?"

"Yes," he looked at me suspiciously. "Don't you know his wife, that blond girl? Twice we were standing in front of my store and he was watching one of those houses up the street. A little while after this blond girl came along, he would leave and go over to the house. The second time, I kidded him about it. I said, 'Maybe this time she'll give you a date.' He was embarrassed. He said, 'Oh, that's my wife.'"

The Mouse was always shy about women. Mary'd had to propose to him, and that after he'd been keeping company with her about three years. I knew that the Mouse, rather than be taken for a chaser, had said that to protect both the girl and himself.

I said, "Look, mister. Which house?"

The look he gave me said plainly

enough he thought I was a hell of a friend not even to know which house the Mouse'd lived in. But he hobbled to the front and pointed out the sixth house up on the other side of the street. I said thanks and went over there. It was one of the brownstone front rooming houses.

I got inside the little foyer before I asked the landlady who opened the door whether there were any rooms vacant. She was a skinny, sour-pussed old dame. She said no there weren't and rushed back to the smell of frying chops that came from the rear.

In the foyer, just under the pay telephone, was a table with the roomers' mail on it. I picked up a pile of letters and shuffled through them. None of them were interesting. But a fairly bulky package I picked up was. It was addressed to: "A. Sinnott, Mgr., Royale Theater, — West 70th Street, New York, N. Y." It came from an Acme Printing Co. in Denver. This was that number on West 70th all right, but if it was a theater, I was a Russian wolfhound.

I laid the package down quick when I heard a key turning in the lock of the outside door. Even from the corner of my eye, as I pretended to be a roomer looking for mail, I could see that the girl who came in was one in a million. I mean for looks. She had a face. And a figure.

I stepped away from the pile of letters, and mumbled, "Excuse me," as she began to sort through the mail. Her nose was small and turned up just a little. It gave her a kind of pert look that blended nicely with the firmly rounded line of her chin. But her eyes, liquid dark brown, and her lips, beautiful and drooping just a little at the corners, looked sad. Honey gold hair with dark brown eyes! And all her curves were in just the right places.

She picked up the theater package, turned and caught me looking at her, hesitated just a second and put it down on the table again. She turned to the

stairs and I watched her trim silk legs running up the first flight. She did look like a sweet child. But years of gumshoeing have taught me one thing. You never can tell by looks. Some of the nicest people I've known have turned out to be murderers. And I *didn't* like the way the blonde had hesitated over that screwy package.

If the package meant anything to her, though, I'd find out soon enough. She'd probably be down for it, as soon as she thought I'd beat it.

I left the foyer and flattened against the wall of the outside vestibule and waited. Through the lace curtains on the window I could see pretty clearly. I didn't have to wait long. In maybe three minutes a tall, lean guy, handsome in a swarthy way, came down. There was powder on his cheeks and jaw, like he'd just shaved. He had on a pair of gray slacks. He was in his undershirt and I saw a blue eagle with an American flag tattooed on his left forearm as he reached for the theater package.

He trotted back upstairs with it. Because he hadn't even looked at anything else on the table, I know the honey-blonde had told him about the package, sent him down for it.

What I wanted now was a look at the blonde's room. Probably the blonde's and boy friend's. I figured a good looking guy like him and a nifty blonde like her could generally find better things to do with their evenings than hang around a crummy ten-dollar-a-week room, and since he looked freshly shaven I thought they might be bargaining out.



THOUGHT right. I hadn't been at the corner tobacco shop a half-hour, chewing the rag with the little old gent, when I saw them come out of the house. They looked around before they started to walk west, but they didn't see me. I waited ten minutes

even after they turned the corner, however.

Walking up to the house I tried to figure out how to get in without letting the sour-pussed landlady get a look at me again. But at the foot of the high stoop was a stocky guy just opening the door. I ran up and caught it before it closed.

Inside, tacked to the wall next to the telephone was a list of the roomers with their room numbers. This told me "Sinnott, 9." Nine was on the second floor, just off the winding staircase. The fourth one of my keys opened the door. I locked it behind me, pushed the light switch.

The room was big, high-ceilinged, filled with the usual boarding-house furniture. A few pots of geraniums were on the window-sill. In one corner, behind a screen, was a little gas stove. On the studio couch, piled one atop the other, were three large suit-cases.

They were all locked, so I went to the dresser, then to the desk. All the drawers had been cleaned out completely.

I went back to the suit-cases, worked on the locks with my penknife. The largest one was full of the man's clothes, the gaudier type. Way down on the bottom of the pile I found the package from the Acme Printing Company in Denver. One end of it had been ripped open. I slid the bunch of slips in it onto the couch. Numbers were printed on them. Bank night numbers.

What good were the numbers though? Each theater had its own set of numbers and they were thrown into a big drum and someone from the audience volunteered to come up and pick a number from the drum. What good would it do the handsome guy and his blonde to have these duplicate numbers? They could only register under one name apiece. I wondered if Dick had checked those two theater managers thoroughly. The only way I could see the thing being worked was through the manager.

Even then I wasn't sure how it could be done.

I put the numbers back, relocked the big suit-case, opened one of the others. This was full of the blonde's belongings. Jars of beauty creams, brassières, frilly doodads. That was all, except for three very screwy items. They were pink, circular celluloid bands, about a half-inch in diameter and three-quarters of an inch high.

I rolled them around in my palm for a minute, trying to figure out what they were. Maybe some new kind of hair curler or something, I guessed, but I put them in my own pocket.

I was just starting on the third bag when footsteps sounded on the stairs. I set the suit-cases back the way I'd found them, doused the light and ducked behind the screen, where the little gas stove was. Breeze came in from an open window behind my back.

A key turned in the lock. I heard someone open the door, walk in. When he pressed the light switch I saw it was Handsome. He went straight to the suit-cases, picked them up and started for the door again. My .45 was in my fist when I stepped out from behind the screen.

"Stay where you are, Handsome," I said.

His dark face turned a dirty yellow. He stammered. "Geez, you. Er, you got the wrong guy."

I walked over to him fast, grabbed a handful of his coat, yanked him toward me and shoved the .45's nose into his stomach. Fear sparkled in his dark eyes.

I said, "You killed Meeker, didn't you?"

He screamed, a high-pitched silly: "No!"

I said, "Pipe down or I'll blast you. Who did kill him?"

"I'll tell you. Don't shoot. I'll tell you."

I flung him away from me and he tripped over the suit-cases he'd dropped and landed with his arms and legs wind-

milling, on the couch. I stuck the gun in front of his face.

"Talk fast and don't skip anything."

"We're in this bank night racket, see," he started and he talked so fast I had to listen hard so I wouldn't miss anything. "It's a smooth gag. We get this dough and we don't hurt anybody. We lay out a route of theaters and find out when they run bank night. Then I go and register. We don't hurt nobody. It's smooth. And nobody misses the dough."

"Get to Meeker." I growled.

"This little guy. Meeker, I guess—"

The side of the building or something cracked against the back of my head. Sand and dirt exploded around my face, went down my neck. A whiny voice kept saying, "This little guy. Meeker . . . this little guy. Meeker . . ." like a broken phonograph record, while lights danced to the words.

Then I was sitting up, with my back propped against something soft. I thought I'd lost my sight. Everything was pitch black. My hand was on the floor and I felt something like a ball of dirt. I picked it up and walked to the switch. When the lights went on I was standing there, rocking from side to side, with a pretty little geranium in my hand. It was wagging its red head from side to side. In my other hand I still held my .45. I slammed the geranium to the floor.

The suit-cases and the blonde and her boy friend were all gone. On the floor were dirt and the shattered fragments of a flower-pot. The pieces that weren't there on the floor were probably in my head. That was how it felt, anyway. But inside I felt a hell of a lot worse. Here I'd had the Mouse's killer, or a damn good lead to his killer, right in my hands and I'd let a flower-pot-hurling blonde take him away from me.

Handsome must've come up for the suit-cases while she waited downstairs. And when he didn't come right down she'd guessed there was something wrong and had come up the fire-escape.

Or maybe she heard him yell, "No!" that one time. Anyway, she'd come up and picked this flower-pot off the window-sill and conked me with it. What was it the old tobacco shop gent had called her? A sweet child?

I looked up Boagland's home address in the phone book and I went there. His Jap butler looked at me as if he didn't think I was real. I was pretty messed up with geranium mud and my own blood.

"Who wish to see Mr. Boagland, please?" he managed finally.

"I'll tell him," I pushed past the Jap, through a huge foyer into a sumptuous library. Boagland's overstuffed body, draped in a silk robe, oozed from his chair. When he saw me, he leaped as though there'd been a tack on the seat. He got the chair between him and me.

"Moru!" he yelled for the Jap. "Moru!" He turned to me, said, quickly, "Now listen, Mr. White. I'm not going to sue. I was only joking."

The Jap grabbed one of my arms and I shook him off.

"It's all right, Boagland. I only want to talk to you."

He came out from behind the chair cautiously, waved the Jap away.

"Boagland, your theaters *are* being swindled out of their bank night money. And my friend was killed because he got too close to the bunch that's doing it. You've got—"

"I can't believe it!" he broke in. "How do you know?"

"Where do you get your bank night numbers?"

"From the Acme Printing Company in Denver," he said.

"Well, some guy I found this afternoon is getting the same numbers from the same company. Does that mean anything to you?"

His face showed surprise or fear or both. "Who?" he said. "Did you catch him? And how could the—"

"A guy by the name of Sinnott. I didn't get him, but I will. What I want to know now is whether Mr. Meeker

told you anything else about the set-up? I kind of interrupted you this afternoon, while you were telling me."

He was so upset he didn't even: "Ha, ha." He just said, "No, Mr. Meeker said he didn't want to tell me anything until he had some definite evidence. He asked me to take his word that something fishy was going on. I should have believed him."

Impatient and disgusted with him, I said, "Yeah, you should have," and left.



HE NEXT morning was the funeral. Mary's eyes were red when I called for her. . . . When the Mouse was lowered into his grave I bawled again, too, right along with her and little Mike.

We went back to the Mouse's apartment. I sat around for a few minutes talking to Mary, but I was wondering where I could start looking for the blonde and her boy friend. Finally I decided to go down to Headquarters and see what Dick had found.

Dick was down at the morgue. He was standing by one of the slabs. There was a sheet, that gray white they use in the morgue, thrown over the stiff. One of the arms hung down limply at the side. It looked like it'd been broken.

I said, "Hello, Dick. Anything new?"

Dick said hello and there was nothing new on the Mouse. He made a motion at the stiff, said, "Guy jumped or fell out of a sixteenth floor window of the Worth Hotel an hour ago."

I looked at the arm again. The blue eagle with the flag tattooed on it looked limp, too.

I swore and threw back the sheet. It's not easy to identify a guy that'd fallen sixteen stories, but there was enough left of A. Sinnott to make me certain it was him.

Dick said, "What's the matter? What is it, Mike?"

"Who is he?"

"Registered last night with a blond

eye-full under the name of Mr. and Mrs. A. Stoneham," Dick said. "The blonde's missing. We've got an alarm out for her. But it looks like an accident or a suicide. The blonde went out early this morning and no one went up to the room as far as we could find out."

"It looked like the Mouse was killed in an accident, too, Dick."

I told him about the blonde and A. Sinnott yesterday.

He said, "So this guy killed the Mouse."

"Maybe," I told him. "Or maybe somebody else killed the Mouse and the same somebody killed this guy."

"We've gotta find that blonde!" he said.

He was telling me.

I went over to the Worth Hotel to see whether I couldn't dig up something that Dick's men might have muffed. There wasn't anything. Accident? Sure. And then I got to feeling that probably I'd wind up in some hospital with an accidentally fractured skull and investigation'd show I'd slipped on a banana peel. But who'd put the banana peel under me? Who'd hit the Mouse with a stolen car? Who'd shoved tall, dark and handsome out the window? Who's afraid of the big, bad wolf? I was going nuts!

Then I thought of the list of theaters the Mouse had left us and the crosses against two of them. The second theater he'd crossed, the one in Montclair, was marked "Friday." That was today. I decided to go over there. Maybe if I watched one of these bank nights again, I'd get some idea how the racket worked. Up till now I felt like Boagland did about it. I couldn't believe it even though I knew it was being done.

I bought my ticket and signed the Bank Night Register. The number next to my name was 1035. The picture was "A Day at the Races" with the Marx Brothers. It must have been pretty funny, the way the audience howled. But I just sat there, looking

at the screen, but thinking of a lot of other things.

If anybody ever waited a lifetime for something to happen, I waited one for that bank night business to start. It finally did. All the lights in the theater went on and the manager came out of the left wing. Under his arm was the Bank Night Registry Book. An usher walked on with a drum, which contained the numbers of everyone registered. Everybody started to applaud. The prize was \$475 and I guess a lot of those people could have used that dough.

The manager had a loud, leathery voice. He used it to call for a volunteer from the audience to come up on the stage and pick the winning number.

About a dozen people jumped up and waved their hands at him. But he was calling somebody from way down in the front of the house. I didn't have to stand up and look to know it was the blonde. Naturally she had caught his eye. They like a pretty girl up on the stage and if she's sitting up front, she'll get called nine out of ten times. It gives the thing more audience appeal.

The blonde walked down the aisle, up to the stage. A bunch of Jersey sheiks cracked at her all the way down. "You know me, beautiful." "Blondes are always lucky for me." "I'll take you instead of the dough, honey. . . ." Stuff like that.

The manager kibitzed with her, too, when she got up on the stage and the audience kept yelling and laughing. He finally told her to show her hands to the audience and she did and you could see she had nothing in them.

Then she stuck her right hand into the drum, fished around a little and handed the manager a folded slip with the winning number on it. He opened it up, kind of slow, building suspense. You could hear a couple of people with asthma breathing hard, the audience was so quiet now.

The manager held up his hand with a slip in it. He read, "Numbah ny-an, ny-an, two! Numbah ny-an hundred

and ny-anty two!" Then he opened the register and read: "Mr. George Lane, 83 Cedar Grove Road, Denville, New Jersey. Is Mr. Lane in the house?"

According to the rules, the winner had to be up on the stage within two minutes after his name was called. If he wasn't the prize was held over until the next week and another \$50, \$75 or \$100 added to it. George Lane didn't need two minutes. The manager had hardly finished reading his address, when he took the three steps up to the stage in one jump.

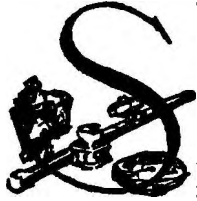
He stood there on the stage, a giant of a guy, about six six, panting from his run down the aisle. The manager gave him the theater's check for \$475 and shook hands with him. Then the big guy shook hands with the girl and the manager asked him what he was going to do with his money.

It was just about the time he was half through saying some silly thing about buying a butcher shop that the blonde saw me. I wasn't so far back that I couldn't see the widening of her eyes as they met mine—nor the look in them that somehow gave me the feeling she was very glad to see me. The way she sort of extended her hand toward me made me certain she was pleading for help. Then her eyes darted over toward the side of the house and stark terror came into them. It was so plain, a guy next to me said to his girl, "That dame looks like she's scared."

Her hand dropped back to her side. The big fellow had stopped talking now and the manager'd made an announcement about another bank night next week. The blonde and the big guy came down off the stage. And I started to squeeze my way out of my pew. The blonde turned her head toward me and desperation gave an unnatural brightness to her eyes. I thought I saw the big guy's shoulder move—as if he were jabbing a pocketed gun into her ribs.

Darkness flooded the theater. And their silhouettes, the blonde's and the big guy's, black against the artificial

dusk of the house, marched to the side exit and went out. Another man, who'd apparently been seated on the end of the aisle, up front, slipped out with them. I didn't get a good look at him. A bunch of other people were starting out now and by the time I elbowed my way through them, the girl and her two companions had been swallowed up by the Montclair night.



STANDING there on the sidewalk I tried to figure the thing. The blonde had been scared stiff. That was plain. She was probably being forced to work the bank night racket. And after watching it I knew just how it was done. Those flesh-colored celluloid bands I'd found in the blonde's suit-case were rings of the type magicians use when they pluck silk handkerchiefs and stuff like that out of the empty air. The handkerchief is stuffed beneath the celluloid band, which is worn on the finger like a ring. And since the band is flesh-colored you never know it's there.

The girl's accomplice—the big guy, undoubtedly—registered at the theater, and noticed the number next to which he wrote his name. Then the blonde took this number from the bunch they'd gotten from Denver and slipped it underneath the celluloid band. When she was called up on the stage, instead of picking a number from the drum, she just slipped out the phony number and handed it to the manager. It was slick all right.

But what about her now? If she was in the racket, why did she want to see me? About two minutes of frantic thinking gave me part of an answer. The Mouse had met with an accident. So had the blonde's partner. And now she knew or suspected that she was next for the banana peel.

But how? Another hit-and-run gag would create suspicion. And so would another suicide leap. But this killer

worked carefully. There was a possibility he'd take her somewhere to work the accident out properly. Where? Not to the Worth. The cops were still snooping around there. Not to his own place. There was just one other spot I could think of. I hailed a cab, gave the driver the address of the rooming house on 70th.

"And there's five bucks extra for every minute you make it under a half-hour," I told him.

The guy made ten bucks extra on me. On the wild ride in I wondered if the blonde had met with her accident yet. I hoped she hadn't. I hoped the play I was making was the right one. If I muffed it, her accident would probably pass for just that and so would the Mouse's and the handsome guy's. There wasn't any evidence. That was why I needed her so badly. Alive!

When we got to 70th there was a car parked across the street from the house but I didn't pay any attention to it. The cabbie grinned as I gave him his dough. "Wait for ya, buddy?"

I said, "Sure," and ran around to the side of the house.

Three precious minutes went to hell while I played monkey getting up onto the first floor fire-escape. I kept running up the iron steps hoping that no one in the rooms of any of the windows I passed would see me. What a yell they'd put up, seeing a big guy like me with a .45 in his hand and, I suppose, murder in his eye. I was within yards of the Mouse's killer . . . unless I'd guessed wrong.

The window on the second was closed, the shade drawn. Light crept out on the sides, though. I smacked it dead center with my gun, kicked in the rest of the glass and leaped through. If that screen hadn't been in front of the window it would have been just too bad. The way it was, I don't think those bullets missed me by an inch. I shoved the screen over and jumped out on one side of it. And what a grand suicide set-up the blonde was fixed for!

They had her tied to a big, carved chair. But not just with rope. At every point—arms, legs, breasts, thighs—where the rope could have touched her body they had placed a heavy padding of towels between her flesh and the rope. They weren't taking any chances on rope marks spoiling the effect. They were even going to shoot her with a woman's gun, a .22.

The giant, who'd won the \$475 in Montclair, raised his hands when I crashed the party. He said, "Who—who—!"

The other guy popped at me again with the .22 in his gloved right hand. He missed, but I didn't. I made a hole in his wrist. A big hole, like .45's always make. The .22 fell from his fingers as he yowled in pain. Then he started to whimper.

I said, "Ha, ha." Just the words with no laugh in my voice.

It was Boagland all right. Back there in that theater in Montclair I'd begun to think it was him. I held the .45 on the big guy and Boagland both, playing no favorites. I hoped Boagland'd make another move so I could shoot him dead. Maybe it's better I didn't. Guys like him always suffer a lot more waiting those last few days, those last few hours before squatting on the hot chair, than from just plain killing.

With my left hand I took my penknife, cut the ropes off the blonde. You should have seen the look in those dark brown eyes when she said, "Thanks, mister."

I was facing the big guy and Boagland and the first I knew anything was wrong was when the blonde let out a short: "Eeee. . . ." Then it was too late.

The Jap butler, who I suppose chauffeured for Boagland, too, had seen me leap out of the taxi, had come in the same way I had. Only he didn't have to break any windows or knock down any screen. My back was still to him when he said on top of the girl's scream,

"You will please to drop gun now."

You can tell a guy is dangerous when he talks calmly at a time like that. I guess the blonde didn't know that. I'd just dropped my hand, loosened my fingers on the .45 but the girl made a wild grab for the pottery bowl with the artificial flowers in it on the table. It was a damn fool play, but she made it. There was only one thing for me to do. I gripped the .45 again, whirled toward the Jap.

He didn't know who to shoot first, the girl or me. He'd started to swing the gun toward her and now he changed his mind and swung it back on me. The dope! I've been shooting a long time. He was dead before he hit the floor. I swung back to face the big guy and Boagland before I'd had a chance to look, but I would've bet even money there was a bullet hole between the Jap's eyes.

The big guy didn't need any facing. He was a heap on the floor with a gash in the back of his head and pieces of pottery and artificial flowers all over him. Boagland was bending over—a tough trick with his fat stomach and the blonde on his back—trying to pick up the .22 with his good hand.

I swung my right foot hard. I wanted to kick him in the teeth, but the point of my size twelve landed on his temple. He keeled over sideways and the girl kneeled on his head, struggling to her feet.

We tied up the big guy with the rope they'd used on Lil. That was the blonde's name. We didn't use the towels. Boagland came to in a little while, whimpering more than ever. Between him and the landlady's yelling for cops we had ourselves a time.

I gave Lil the gun and she led Boagland downstairs to the cab, while I threw the big guy over my shoulder and carried him down. Just out of curiosity I turned the Jap over on his back before we left. The bullet hole wasn't directly between his eyes. It was about an inch higher.

I told the cabbie, "Police Headquarters."

DICK was there when we walked in. I gave him a sketchy picture of what'd happened and he called in a police stenographer to take down the whole works. Lil was dying to tell it.

She started right from the beginning and she certainly gave that shorthand copper writer's cramp. Everything checked. Boagland, as general-manager of the chain, had all the numbers they needed to work the racket. He had Sinnott working for him. Sinnott was Lil's husband. She'd married him when she was just a kid and, although she'd soon found out it was a mistake, she'd stuck with him. You know, he was weak, easily led, and he needed her. She was like that, Lil was. Loyal.

Sinnott had tumbled to the fact that the Mouse was on their trail and he'd got panicky and called Boagland. They'd caught the Mouse, knocked him unconscious and Boagland had ordered him tossed in front of the speeding stolen car, driven by George, the big fellow at the Jersey theater. George hadn't even bothered to wipe his prints off the steering wheel, the dope.

Sinnott hadn't liked the rough stuff and when Boagland had the Mouse killed, he decided to pull out and work

the bank night racket himself—without murder. He'd ordered the numbers from Denver and probably would have got away with it if I hadn't tipped Boagland about the duplicate numbers. Anyway, Boagland'd found him and either he or George, or both, had shoved Sinnott out of the window.

Just as Lil was finishing her story, a cop came in and said to Dick, "The wagon's here with that Jap stiff."

Dick said he'd be right down. Then he waved at the cop to take Lil along. I said, "Wait a minute, Dick. Will you release this prisoner in my custody?"

He grinned at me and said, "It's not regular, but I guess you'll bring her back." I said sure I would. With her handing the State all that evidence on a silver platter she ought to get a medal instead of a jail sentence.

Going out, I said, "I'm hungry, Lil. How's for a midnight supper?"

She said all right and I took her up to Danny's on 45th Street.

We walked to a booth in the rear and got cozy and ordered. The waiter was moving away when I called him back.

"Here," I said, "take this away."

He thought I was crazy. None of the other customers in the place seemed to mind the red flower bowls on their tables. But he took ours away.



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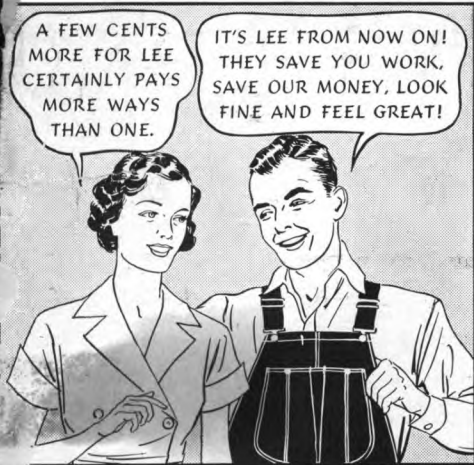
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 Kansas City, Mo. Salina, Kans. Trenton, N. J. Minneapolis, Minn.
 South Bend, Ind. San Francisco, Calif.

UNION-MADE **JELT DENIM**
Lee OVERALLS
 SANFORIZED SHRUNK

FREE! MAIL THIS MONEY-SAVING COUPON

THE H. D. LEE MERC. COMPANY
 Dept. N-3, Kansas City, Mo.

Please send me "How to Save on Overalls", a sample of Jelt Denim, and the name of my nearest Lee dealer.

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____

Copr. 1938, The H. D. Lee Merc. Company

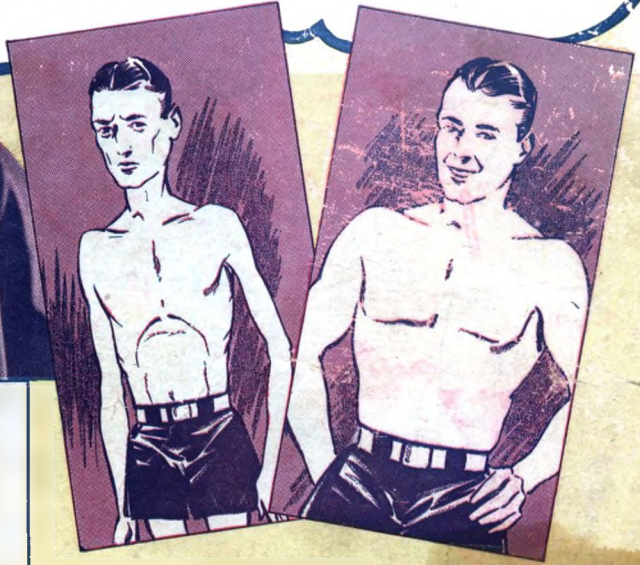
SEE THE DIFFERENCE WHEN SKINNY PEOPLE GAIN POUNDS



GIL CREIGHTON

One of New York's best-known
Poster Artists and Art Consultants

*Shows by Dramatic Comparison
How Extra Pounds Can Trans-
form a Skinny, Unattractive Figure
to Normal, Manly Good Looks*



Why Thousands Gain 10 to 25 Pounds Quick—with new **IRONIZED YEAST** tablets

If you look like the picture on the left—skinny, run-down, unattractive to the other sex—don't think for a moment that your case is hopeless. Thousands of men and women who never could put on an ounce before have gained 10 to 25 pounds of good, solid flesh in a few weeks with these wonderful new Ironized Yeast tablets.

They've also gained naturally clear skin and ruddy color, new health and strength—new pep, new popularity and joy in life they never knew before.

Why they build up so quick

Scientists have discovered that hosts of people are thin and rundown simply because they do not get enough Vitamin B and iron in their daily food. Without these vital elements you may lack appetite and not get the most body-building good out of what you eat. One of the richest sources of marvelous health-building Vitamin B is the special yeast used in making English ale.

Now by a new costly process this rich yeast is concentrated 7 times, taking 7 pounds of yeast to make just one pound of concentrate—thus making it many times more powerful in Vitamin B strength than ordinary yeast. It is then combined with three kinds of strength-building iron (organic, inorganic and hemoglobin iron); also pasteurized English ale yeast. Finally, every batch of this Ironized Yeast is tested and retested biologically for its Vitamin B strength. This insures its full weight-building power.

The result is these new easy-to-take but marvelously effective little Ironized Yeast tablets which have helped thousands of the skinniest people who needed

these vital elements quickly to gain normally attractive build, natural development and peppy health.

Make this money-back test

To make it easy for you to try Ironized Yeast, we do better than offer you a small sample package. We offer you a FULL SIZE package, and you don't risk a penny. For if with this first package you don't begin to eat better and get more benefit from your food—if you don't feel better, with more strength, pep and energy—if you are not absolutely convinced that Ironized Yeast will give you the pounds of normally attractive flesh you need—the price of this first package will be promptly refunded. So get Ironized Yeast tablets from your druggist today.

Only be sure you get the original Ironized Yeast. There are many cheaper "Iron and Yeast" tablets on the market. Insist on the genuine Ironized Yeast.

Special offer!

To start thousands building up their health right away, we make this valuable special offer. Purchase a package of Ironized Yeast tablets at once, cut out the seal on the box and mail it to us with a clipping of this paragraph. We will send you a fascinating new book on health, "New Facts About Your Body." Remember, results with the very first package—or money refunded. At all druggists. Ironized Yeast Co., Inc., Dept. 783, Atlanta, Ga.

WARNING: Beware of the many cheap substitutes for this tremendously successful formula. Be sure you get the genuine Ironized Yeast.