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MAJOR CRIME

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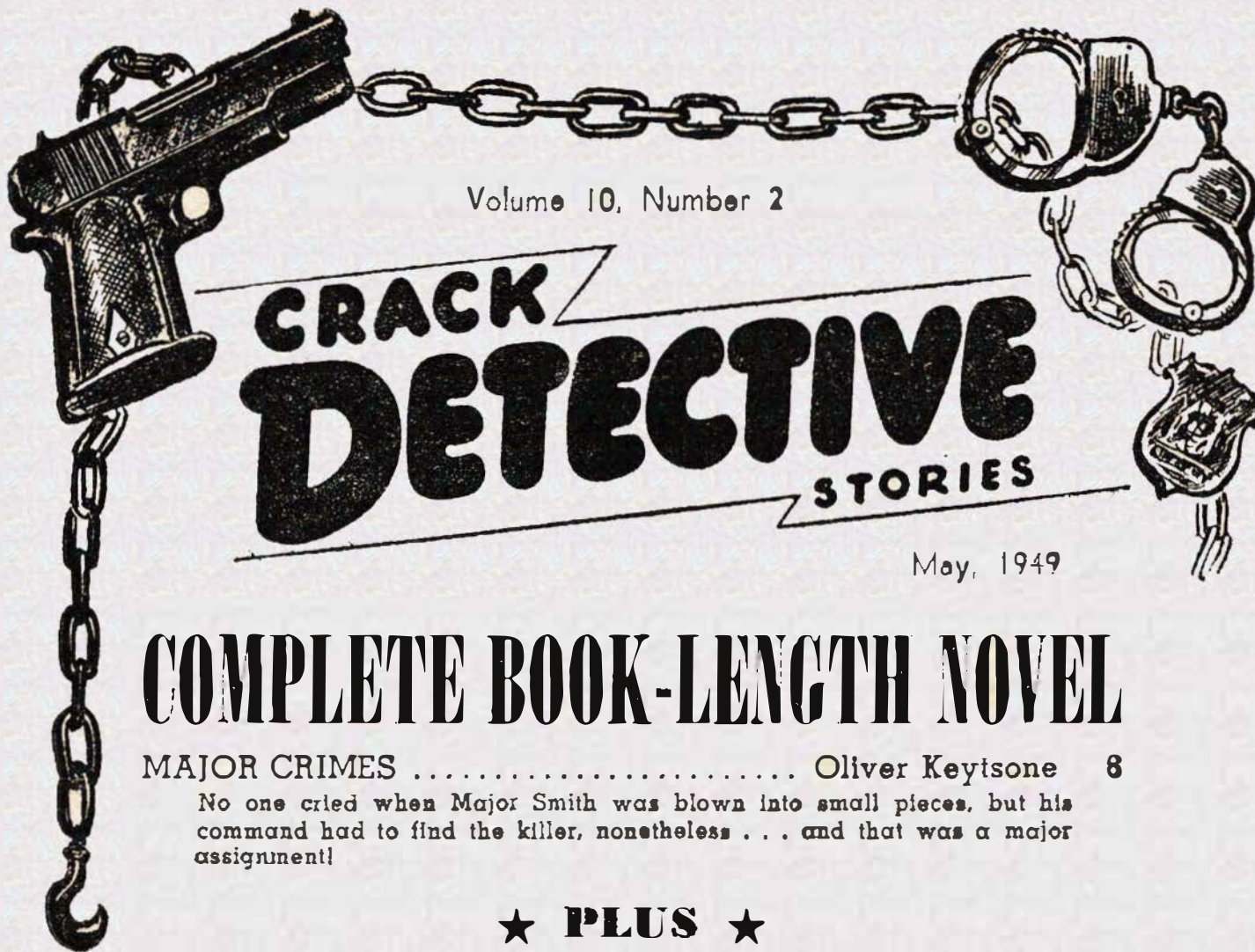
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Volume 10, Number 2

CRACK DETECTIVE STORIES

May, 1949

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

MAJOR CRIMES Oliver Keytsone 8
 No one cried when Major Smith was blown into small pieces, but his command had to find the killer, nonetheless . . . and that was a major assignment!

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YOU CAN'T PREDICT DEATH Glen Peggie 65
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 . . . and Jim Melton didn't like guessing

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 . . . a clue as thin as hair!

EASY MONEY Lee Floren 82
 . . . but not for an ex-pug with a weakness!

YOU REMEMBER JEANIE John D. MacDonald 84
 . . . and I'll never forget her — will you!

Robert W. Lowndes, Editor

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until Viderm helped make my skin clearer in one short week"

(FROM A LETTER BY E. S. JORDAN, DETROIT, MICH.)

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IT DOESN'T PAY to put up with a broken-out face. Your very success in business, love and social life may depend upon your looks. *Handsome and a good appearance usually start with the condition of your skin.* Nobody likes to look at a face that is blemished by blackheads or pimples. **WOMEN ARE ATTRACTED TO MEN WHO HAVE SMOOTH, CLEAR, HEALTHY-LOOKING SKIN.** Business executives don't choose men whose complexions are against them. Don't take chances with your success in life when this inexpensive Viderm formula may help you.

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Don't murder your skin by squeezing it. Skin is delicate. When you break it, you leave yourself open to misery. It's far easier, far safer, to let the Double Viderm Treatment help you enjoy a handsome, clearer, blemish-free complexion.

entirely free of the dirt particles that usually bring out pimples, blackheads and other externally-caused skin troubles.

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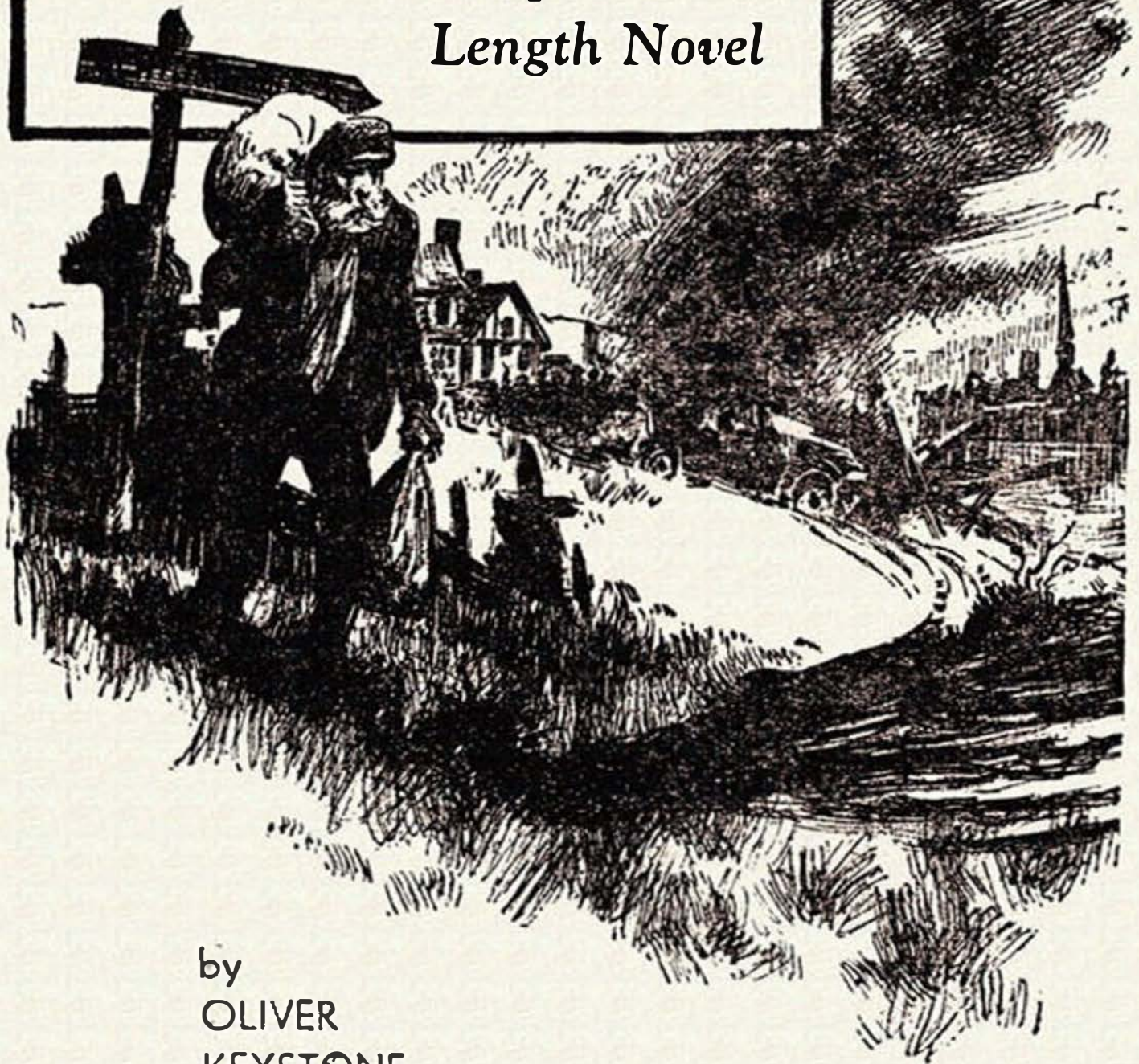
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MAJOR CRIME

Complete Book
Length Novel



by
OLIVER
KEYSTONE

No one would miss the Major, but his removal brought no relief to his command. Because now, they had to find and punish whoever had committed murder, and turning the Major's killer over to the authorities would be no pleasure!

PART ONE
"Of Inhuman Bondage"

UNTERROSSAPFEL

IT ALL BEGAN the night of the big party. Sure, there had been some indications before. Like the time the colonel from Army Group Headquarters was there and the major got so drunk he passed out in

Little was left of the Major's ear but a cloud of smoke . . .



(First Magazine Publication)

the middle of dinner; we had to make up a story about an epidemic of dysentery to cover up. And of course hardly a day went by without two or three members of the detachment getting good and sore at the major and saying something about how much it would please them to kill him. But things like that are all in the course of a day's work; nobody ever thinks very much of them. After all, when eight people live together, eat together and work together for a period of several months, they are bound to start getting on each other's nerves, especially if they come from such widely different environments

as our crew did. But this was different. There was a kind of tenseness in the air after that party. I think everybody knew after that that something was going to happen to the major. The only question was, when?

The party was to celebrate V-J Day. The whole detachment was there, the major and Carter and Ginsberg, the officers; and Troy and Dillon and Robinson and Donovan and myself. Novak was there too, our unofficial courier, "organizer" and "liberator." And a couple of girls from the office, Ilse and Gretel, the interpreters.

It was just an ordinary party.

There was a lot to drink—schnapps, Rheinwein, champagne and beer. And when I say beer, I don't mean the stuff they had in England and France, or even back home; this beat any beer I'd ever tasted. It was real Bavarian dark twelve-per-cent stuff, fresh-brewed in the brewery just outside of Unterrossapfel.

We had come into Unterrossapfel just before V-E Day, to take over the Militarregierung, or M.G. On the whole, things went pretty smoothly, and we were a very efficient detachment; this was in spite of, not because of the efforts of Major Smith. Walter Smith, Major, Infantry, was how he signed his name—when he could write, that is. An officer and gentleman by Act of Congress. Congress has made some pretty bad boners in its day, but this one beat them all!

THE REST of the bunch were okay. Lieutenant Carter, a former deputy sheriff from Oklahoma, was the public safety officer. He was a lanky, quiet fellow with gray eyes. The other officer was named Ginsberg, Al Ginsberg, and he was from New York. He used to be a CPA. He was dark and his eyes had a kind of permanent twinkle, as if he could always see a joke that nobody else could. The other people in the detachment didn't like him so much, but he and I got along first-rate; we used to have long talks about books and music and things...

My name is Paul Plush, Private First Class. I was an instructor in classical languages at a big Eastern university, never mind which, before I was inducted. I used to be very proud of the letters Ph.D. after my name, but it's a funny thing how your point of view changes. Right then, I was much more proud of my ability to understand the impossible Bavarian dialect, and drive a jeep fast through the winding roads and little villages and deep forests of that part of the country.

Sergeant Troy was our chief clerk. He came from Illinois, had a wife and two kids, a job in a bank, and was a very easy guy to get along with.

Also, he was pretty terrific at running an office. He really ran the detachment, and everyone except maybe the major knew it. Sergeant Dillon came from Utah; he was a Mormon and he didn't have much of a sense of humor, but he was a good truck driver. We used to kid him about having dozens of wives, and he always told us, very soberly, that polygamy had been abolished in 1890, or whenever it was.

Frank Robinson was our sanitary technician. He was a stocky, blond fellow with a New Hampshire twang in his voice. He had been a pre-med student; everybody liked him. The last member of the detachment was Patrick Donovan. He came from New York and was the investigator for MG. Donovan was the one who took care of the *Fragebogen*s, or questionnaires, that all the Germans had to fill out. He was a good guy. That's just the thing: everybody in the outfit was a good guy, except the major.

As far as I can remember, it began with razor blades. Funny how little things like that start the ball rolling, isn't it?

Well, there we all were, getting tanked up, when Frank Robinson asked Lieutenant Ginsberg about razor blades. "*Leutnant*," he said—that was an affectation we all adopted, calling the officers and non-coms by their German titles, such as *Oberfeldwebel* for sergeant, *Ubergefreiter* for corporal, *Herr Major* for you know who, and so on—"Leutnant, what ever became of those PX rations? I sure could do with some razor blades."

"Hey, that's right, too," chimed in big Dillon. "Those rations should have been here last Monday. No candy, no smokes, no—"

"What are you worrying about smokes for?" Carter asked.

"He trades his to Donovan and me for our candy rations," I told him.

"Oh," Carter thought this over and it sounded logical to him. "But what is the story on those PX rations, Ginsberg?"

The major looked up from his bottle. "What the hell kind of a PX officer are you, anyway? We were

short on cigarettes on the last rations, too. Something goddam funny is being pertrepat—perpe—is going on here. Well, it's about time you came around. Where in hell have you been?" This last was addressed to Lucette, who had just come into the room.

"Thees ees a question you should nevair ask a woman." Lucette made what I guess is called a *moue*. She had been with our detachment since we left our town in France, was the major's private property. I sometimes wondered why she stuck to him; nobody ever thought for a moment that she liked him. Maybe he had something on her; the Major could be a pretty shrewd operator, as he never tired of telling us. Lucette was very blonde and had nice legs; she had a way of getting people to do things for her, too. "*Oh, qu'est-ce qu'il y a!*" she cooed. "*Du champagne!*"

Troy, who was playing bartender, poured her a glass and she downed it at a draught. Then she went over to the phonograph and put on a record. It was something Viennese and sentimental. Lucette came back to Troy for a refill and it wasn't long before she had caught up with us—with all of us except the major, I mean. When I watched the major drink, I used to think of old Socrates, and how he could drink the flower of the Athenian intelligentsia under the table, and carry on one of those philosophical discussions at the same time. And he was only drinking Attic wine, and diluted, at that. No gin, schnapps, rye, cognac. Socrates must have been the rankest sort of amateur compared with our major.

PRETTY SOON the major began to get nasty again; the entrance of Lucette had only delayed the process for a little while.

"Goddam it, it's just like I keep telling you all the time," he said to his glass. "The only way of getting anything done is to do it yourself. First no cigarettes. Then no razor blades. What the hell are we supposed to be, Ginsberg, a bunch of Old Testament prophets?"

Ginsberg pretended he didn't hear. The only overt sign was a tightening of his jaw muscles.

The major tried to get up. He made it the third time. Glass in hand, he advanced to the center of the room, where he continued his tirade.

"Trouble with this man's Army, too damn much delegation of authority." (Donovan caught my eye and raised his eyebrows as if to say, "Here we go again.") The major went on. Nothing short of coma could stop him once he got going like this. "When you start delegating your goddam authority, you're licked from the start. You might think a man could give a simple command and have a reas'ble expec—expectation it'd get carried out. But no. Not here. Ginsberg"—he turned and confronted the lieutenant—"just what the hell do you think I meant when I delegated the authority of PX officer to you? In an organization like this"—here he waved his free hand in a broad and comprehensive gesture that might have taken in at least a regiment or a division, not a detachment of eight men—"the men and officers have got to be provided with the necessities of life. Who does it?"

He waited for an answer, got none, and continued. "The Army quartermaster and supply outfits does—do it. And who distributes these necessities of life to the men—and to the officers? The PX officer, that's who. Damn it, Ginsberg, do you realize that you, with gross neglig'ence and in—ineffish'cy, you are creating a—"—he looked around for inspiration, saw what he was looking for, and went on—"a bottleneck in the Army logistics system? Now, you lousy sawed-off excuse for an officer, what have you to say for yourself?"

Ginsberg said, and I had to admire the way he kept his temper, "Evidently there was some mistake at company headqu—"

"Evidently!" The floodgates were open again. "Mistake!" He finished his glass in two gulps. "That's all I ever get around here. Evidently and mistakes. I'll tell you who made the mistake. Me. Walter Smith. That's

who." He was beginning to get warm. What with the various internal and external influences to which he was being subjected, so he opened his collar and rolled up his sleeves. I could see the familiar tattooing on his left forearm where he had had recorded for posterity, not an eagle or an anchor or a girl friend's name, but the Statue of Liberty, and, in a sort of bastard Gothic, his name and serial number. I never could make out the connection, even in his mind, between himself and the lady with the torch. "I made the biggest damn mistake of them all when I thought I had a working organization here. And what did I get?" He glared around the room and his eye lit on Troy. "I'll tell you what I got. A bank clerk to run my office, a damn ignorant son of a—of an Okie for my public safety officer"—Carter's fingers tightened on his bottle—"and to top off the lot, a boy from the Lower East Side for my property control and PX officer. That's what I got. And my men don't even have cigarettes or razor blades."

THE MAJOR looked around for a sign of contradiction or disapproval, then added, in a fuzzy voice, "Lucette, let's get out of here. I've had about all the ineffish'cy I can stand for one evening." He left, followed by Lucette, who gave a little shrug and a smile to the rest of us.

When the major went out, it was like the springing of a bear trap, the way the tension eased. And as sometimes happens in such cases, we all began to talk at once, mostly interjections and expletives. The first person whose comment I distinctly heard was Frank Robinson, who said: "And to think I started that by asking about razor blades."

"Aw, you couldn't know he was going to blow his top like that, Frank. If it hadn't been that it would have been something else," said Troy.

Novak said, "Leesten to me. I vas t'ree months in Auschwitz, and ve had a guard dere who was one steenkair. But I am telling you, he vas not steenkair like dat major."

Carter said, "One of these days he's goin' to call me a damn ignorant Okie jes' once too often. An' then, so help me I'll—"

"You won't do a damned thing, Carter," said Ginsberg evenly, "and you know it. That's all he's waiting for, is for one of us to lift up a finger. Don't you see? That's just the hell of this whole set-up; there's not a thing we can do about it."

"But what about the I.G.?" said Robinson. "Or suppose we all apply for transfer at the same time?"

"Now, there's an idea," Dillon said enthusiastically

"Look," I reminded him, "We've been through this whole thing before. Sure, we could all apply for transfers. But the letter has to go through the major. Maybe we'd even get the transfers, though heaven only knows how long it'd take. But what of the meantime? You guys think he's been making us suffer now. Why, it's nothing at all to the way he could; we'd better just let well enough alone."

"Or pray for a miracle," put in Dillon.

"Miracles are funny things," said Carter. "The funniest thing about them is that they sometimes happen."

Chapter Two

M G In Action



SO THAT was how it all began. A man with an abnormally high alcohol tolerance threshold bullying and terrorizing seven other men over whom he had complete authority, as well as twenty or thirty thousand Germans. Two of them had been at the party. I think that was what made me the maddest about the whole thing—that an Army officer should cuss out and bully other officers, not only in front of enlisted men, which in itself is a pretty bad thing, but in front of a couple of German girls and a DP.

I don't remember when I dropped off, but the next thing I knew the sunlight was streaming into the room. I dressed and shaved quickly, and went down to breakfast. The major was just finishing his orange juice, and from the way he relished it, I suspected that orange juice was not the only liquid in his glass. He glared at me, but didn't say anything. Nobody said anything; some of the tension from last night was back with us again. We all ate quickly. When Carter had finished, he started to get up, but the major glared at him and he sat down again. That was something that the major was very fussy about, people leaving the table before he, the C. O., had finished.

When I got to the office, there was already a long line of Germans waiting for us to open. Our offices were on the second and third floors of the *Stadtsverwaltungsgedaude*, or the city administration building. This was a fairly recent building, built sometime during the last ten years, on the town square, just across from the old *Rathaus*, a building from the sixteenth century. Unterrossapfel was an old town, with nothing in particular to distinguish it from scores of other old Bavarian towns. The most interesting feature was the old bridge across the river. This bridge was only partially destroyed by the Nazis at the time of the big break-through, and below it was a steep water-fall, with wicked-looking rocks and debris from the bridge at the bottom. The bridge had been hastily repaired by our engineers to permit the traffic to go through.

The Baedeker for that part of the country also mentioned the old town wall, which dated back several centuries, and a little church on top of the hill, with some rather good frescoes by a well-known seventeenth century artist. It was a nice, quiet little town, and it was hard to see how many of these placid, phlegmatic farmers and Hausfraus had been affected by the war. Their attitude was not one of open defiance, nor was it one of dog-like servility, as I had

noted in other parts of the country, but rather a quiet, surly independence, very much like what it must have been before Hitler or even Bismarck. There was something about these people that defied wars and history. Most of them were farmers and small tradespeople as their ancestors had been for centuries. They took us in their stride much the same as they had taken Hitler—whom they all hated, they said—crop blights, and the Thirty Years War.

Every morning there was a long line of them in front of the office, with various problems, most of which were pretty easy to solve. As the detachment interpreter, I had a desk in the outer office, and I had to interview the people; most of them never got past that office. There was also one of the German interpreters in the outer office, typing letters, and interviewing some of the people, who relieved me when I had to go out on an errand. Most of the people in line were farmers who wanted passes to travel beyond the twenty kilometer limit for business, or to see their families, or old women complaining about GI's who had "requisitioned" eggs and poultry—they would bring in the "requisitions," which were usually signed Donald Duck or Tyrone Power, since this was strictly "*verboten*" by the Army authorities.

ONCE IN a while there was an "American citizen who had just come over to see his family in 1939 and not been able to get back." Some of these may have been genuine, but most of them looked pretty fishy. Then there were discharges. Wehrmacht soldiers on their way home, who stopped to have their passports stamped; DPs who wanted to get home; French officers who wanted to know where they could get billeted, and GIs from various tactical outfits in the vicinity who were looking for billets or liquor or supplies or cars or radios. I only handled the Germans and DPs. It was an interesting job. Frequently I had to go out as interpreter with the major or one of

the officers, or with Robinson when he went to check on the hospitals or doctors.

Sometimes a young girl would come in and want to know why she had been fired from the bank, and I would look up her *Fragebogen*, or questionnaire, find out that she had joined the BDM—*Bund Deutscher Madel*—the female counterpart of the Hitler Youth, as soon as she had come of age. There was a steady stream of these people all day long, each with his individual problem or difficulty. My job was, as the major put it, "to find out what each one wants and tell him no."

The inner offices were grouped around the main one, where Sergeants Troy and Robinson had their desks. Troy had to go over all the correspondence that came from higher headquarters, nine tenths of it just for "file." Carter had the public safety office, and Pat Donovan and a German interpreter worked with him. He could go around interviewing Burgomeisters from the outlying villages, checking on *Fragebogen*s, sending them for screening to the CIC, and so on. The major had the office that had formerly belonged to the Burgomeister; it was beautifully furnished, with private bathroom, oil paintings, and a very expensive-looking carpet. He would receive officers from other outfits there, and sometimes the Burgomeister and *Landrat*, or governor of the district. When he was sober enough, he would sign letters and sometimes even dictate them.

Ginsberg had the property control office. Here were the property records, and bank officials would come there for conferences with the lieutenant. Dillon's "office" was a three-quarter-ton truck. He would go to Munich or other big cities for supplies, or drive the major around.

I was in the midst of trying to get some sense out of the story of an old woman who was having trouble finding her husband, when the door opened and in came Novak. He greeted me with a grin and said he had an appointment with the *Herr Major*. "A

beeg deal," he said.

"Okay. Go right in, you lucky guy," I said. I rather liked Novak; I had tremendous respect for anyone who could go through what he had been through and still laugh. Sure, he did his share of looting, and was probably involved in black-market activities, but who could blame him? Novak came from Prague, had been a dentistry student before the war. He was also Jewish and had been shunted about from one concentration camp to the other. He told me once that the Germans had been about to kill him, when they discovered that he was a dentist, or practically a dentist. Then they gave him the job of extracting the gold fillings from the teeth of the gas-chamber victims.

NOVAK CAME out ten minutes later, looking about three shades paler.

"What's the matter? Didn't the big deal come off?" I asked him.

"Some day something is going to happen to dat major. I think maybe it'll be pretty soon."

"Don't let him get you down." I was about to add some other foolish bromide when I looked at Novak's face again. It was shaking with rage. He then told me that the major had accused him of selling our PX supplies and GI gasoline and other items to the Germans. And that wasn't all. The payoff was when the old s.o.b. told Novak that he suspected that a member of the detachment was in on it too.

"That's some big deal, all right," I said. "It's a wonder you didn't haul right off and pin his ears back."

"Paul," he said, "in the KZ you learn to be patient. I think the *leutnant's* miracle will not be very far now." And with that he went out.

I left Gretel, the interpreter, in charge of the desk and went into the main office. Angry voices were coming from the major's sanctum. Or rather, one angry voice—the major's—and the quiet voice of Ginsberg. I couldn't hear what Ginsberg was saying, but I knew he was keeping his

temper the same way he had the night before. I really had to hand it to that guy.

"What's it about this time?" I asked Troy.

The sergeant looked up from his desk with the pictures of his wife and kids on it and puffed on his cigar. "Oh, something about the control of one of the estates on the river. The whole thing was on the major's desk three days ago, but he never saw it. Now he's claiming Ginsberg is going over his head and that he never knows what's going on; you know, the same old—"

Ginsberg came out and smiled wryly at us. "Paul," he said, "I'm going over to see the bank director at Kuhfladen this afternoon. Want to come along for the ride? I'll need an interpreter," he added to Troy. "My Yiddish doesn't shape up so hot alongside of this damn Bavarian."

I got the nod from Troy, and said, "Sure, *Leutnant*. You look like you need a little air."

"Troy!" the major's fuzzy baritone bawled out from the inner office. "Ask Lieutenant Carter to come in for a minute, will you?"

"Yes, sir." Troy deliberately tipped the ashes off his cigar, reposed it in the ashtray, winked at me, and went in to get Carter. . . . Novak and Ginsberg. That made two already this morning, and it was only—I glanced at my watch—a little after eleven. He was really going on all cylinders.

CARTER CAME in with his long loose stride. This time there were no angry voices. He came out in three minutes.

"That son! Who does he think I am, a damn mechanic? Telling me, real polite-like—'Lieutenant Carter,' he says, 'there's something wrong with the transmission on my car. I'd be much obliged if you'd look into it this afternoon.' 'Me?' I says. 'What's the matter with Dillon? He's the motor pool man in the detachment.' 'Sergeant Dillon is goin' to Munich on an errand for me this afternoon,' he says, cool as you please. 'I'm no mechanic,' says I. 'Lieutenant Carter,'

he says, 'am I to construe this as a refusal to obey a direct command?' 'I was not aware, that such a command was a legitimate one,' says I. I can talk fancy-like too," Carter added with a grin. "I ain't as ignorant as he thinks. 'Legitimate or not, it's a command. I want the car ready by this evening.' And that, my friends, is that. I am now promoted to a mechanic; ain't that one for the birds, though?"

"Where you going now, *Leutnant*?"

"Where am I going?" he said. "I'm going to put on my fatigues!" And with this Parthian shot he left the office. I heard the outer door slam a moment later.

"*Eins, zwei, drei*," said Frank. Not bad for one morning. He stretched, yawned, and put on his cap. "I'm going over to the hospital to see about the new *Gesundheitsrat*. Why the hell can't these Germans talk straight? *Gesundheitsrat*—sounds like what one rat said to another who just sneezed. And the governor—a Landrat! First cousin to a field mouse." He dodged the Training Manual that Troy heaved at him and went out.

Lucette came in as he left, knocked on the major's door and entered. When she came out a few minutes later we could see she'd been crying. And Lucette doesn't cry easily, although you might think so.

"What's the matter, chicken?" I asked her. "*Qu'est-ce qu'il t'a dit, le saland?*"

Lucette launched into a long narrative in French. Something about the major threatening to send her back to France, she had no idea why. And she couldn't go back to France, because they thought she was a collaborationist, and you know what they did to them. I didn't get the whole story, but what there was didn't sound pretty. She was quietly sobbing as she went out through the opaque glass door.

"Three, and one makes four." This from Troy.

I went back to my desk and resumed my interviewing of farmers, DPs and old women who couldn't find their husbands.

Chapter Three

The First Attempt



THAT same afternoon two more interesting things happened. The major put in Hempel as *Landrat*, and someone took a shot at him. At the major, that is, not Hempel.

Conrad Hempel was a little fat guy in his late forties or early fifties. There was something about the way he looked at a person that made me distrust him immediately and cordially. He always smiled, when he was speaking and when he wasn't.

When we came into Unterrossapfel, the *Landrat* was an elderly man named Klug, was a benign, fatherly chap who looked like a minister or country schoolteacher. He had one of the worst possible records—SS, SA, and so forth, leading up to the rank of *Oberscharfuehrer* in the SS; his name was on the first list of war criminals we received from headquarters. So after we had put him in jail, we made Hessel *Landrat*. He turned out to be rather unsatisfactory too, and nobody liked him; the problem of *Landrat* was a constant thorn in our side. He had to be someone with a good record, someone we could work with, and, most important of all, a man that the Germans liked and trusted.

Early in the afternoon I saw a man in black elbow his way past the crowds outside the door and come in. It was *Stadtpfarrer* Mohn. Mohn was the chief Catholic priest of the district. He was universally respected and loved by the Germans and no one could find anything bad to say about him. He looked rather agitated and flustered. "Good afternoon, *Herr* Plush," he said.

"Good afternoon, *Herr* *Stadtpfarrer*. What's the matter?"

"Is this terrible thing true that everyone is saying?"

"I wouldn't know. What is it?"

"Well, you understand, I do not like to spread rumors as a rule, but this seems so outrageous and so many people have been repeating it that there must be something to it. I heard it from the wife of the butcher, who heard it...."

"You forget, *Herr* *Stadtpfarrer*, that I have not even heard what this terrible thing is."

"They are saying that the *Herr* Major has made Hempel *Landrat*."

"Hempel? Impossible."

"But the butcher's wife said...."

"Wait here a moment, please," I said, and went inside.

TROY WAS just lighting his second cigar of the afternoon. The office seemed unusually quiet. "Say, Troy, the priest is outside. He said the major has made Hempel *Landrat*. Is that true?"

Troy didn't answer. He picked up a paper on his desk and showed it at me. I read it hastily and whistled.

"Old man's going crazy. Why, the man's known to have been in the SS. He was hand in glove with Klug. Does Carter know about this?"

"Yeah. He's got the duplicate copy. I just put it in his basket."

"But this is nuts. Why, *Regierungsbezirk* headquarters will be on our necks tomorrow morning. Not only is the guy a...."

Carter came in and slammed the door. "What in hell does this mean. Troy?"

"Means what it says, *Leutenant*."

"Is he busy now?" Carter jerked a thumb contemptuously at the major's door.

"No, you can go in. But take it easy; you know what happens when he starts to blow his top."

"Don't you worry about me. I can take care of myself."

He didn't have to go in. The major opened his door and stood on the top most of the three steps leading to his office. "What in hell is all the goddam noise about?"

"Major, have you gone out of your mind?" said Carter. "You can't put Hempel in; he's worse than Klug. HQ will be on our tails so fast it'll

"Yes, let's go. Want to take the Mercedes?"

"I don't know. I think I'd just as soon take the jeep. It's a pretty nice day."

"Good."

WE FINISHED our business with the bank director in Kuhfladen in about twenty minutes and drove by a roundabout way back to Unterrossapfel, getting there about ten minutes before closing time.

"Everything okay in Kuhfladen?" asked Troy.

"It should only be okay like that here. After all—"

He stopped as the major's door opened. Hempel, the *Landrat*, was standing on the threshold and bowing obsequiously, saying, "*Ja Wohl, Herr Major*," thirteen to the dozen. The major followed him out. "Well, I guess I'll knock off. Busy day. Don't be late for dinner if you want any soup."

He left the office and we began to close up. Frank took down the flag. Suddenly the stillness of the August air was blown to pieces by a shot. It sounded as if it came from the alleyway that led to our hotel. We ran to the window, but there was nothing to be seen. Sergeant Troy went outside into the corridor.

A moment later he came back. The major followed him. The major was puffing with the exertion of running up the stairs; he was as white as I have ever seen a man get. He was holding up his steel helmet: there was a neat round hole through the top of it.

"Some son tried to shoot me," he said.

"Didn't miss by much, did he. Major?" said Frank Robinson.

"Boy, what a close call!" said the major.

"Must have been a sniper or one of the DPs, sir," said Troy. "They've been kicking up quite a bit of trouble lately."

"Let's see." Robinson took the helmet and looked at the hole. "It went in through the back and out the front. About a .38 caliber. I'd say."

"Shall I have the MP's search all the houses again for weapons?"

"Might as well, Troy, to be on the safe side." The major was still puffing a little. His face had got back some of its normal color, but it was still a few shades off. "Not that it'll do any good. They didn't find a god-darn thing last time." He sat down, and passed a hand through his red hair. Suddenly he looked very old and very tired.

"You men can go back now." As I was about to leave, he said, "One minute. Plush; I'd like to talk to you."

"Yes, sir?"

"Sit down, Plush I want to tell you something."

I SAT DOWN. No point in antagonizing him at a time like this.

"Plush, who was in this room when you heard that shot?"

"Let's see. Troy and I, and Robinson had just come back with the flag, and Ginsberg..."

"Yes? What about Ginsberg?"

"He'd just gone back to his office."

"And Carter and Donovan?"

"I don't know, sir. They weren't in here. Dillon was back at the garage checking the new jerricans and gas."

"Plush, I don't think that shot was fired by a sniper or a DP."

"Do you realize what you're saying, Major?"

"Don't you start that now! All day long people have been treating me like an idiot child who didn't know what the hell he was saying. I'm getting just about fed up with it; I know darn well what I'm saying. Why do you think I asked you where everyone was?"

"Why are you telling me this, Major?"

"I dunno, Plush. Everyone else in the outfit hates my guts."

"What made you think I don't?"

"Why, you little—" He stopped. "I don't know, if you want to put it that way." Again he looked tired and old. "Plush, somebody in this detachment is out to get me. I know why and I think I know who; if anything happens to me, I've left instructions with Lucette."

make your head spin. You can't do it!"

"I don't think you read that very carefully, Lieutenant," said the major icily. "It's not a question of what I can or can't do. I *have* done it. Past tense. See?"

"But...."

"Listen, Lieutenant Leroy Carter. I am ordinarily a very patient man, although the trials I've been put through are enough to tax the patience of a Job—he pronounced it to rhyme with mob—"surrounded by such inefficiency. Either I am or I am not running this detachment; correct me if I am wrong. No correction? Very well. I shall proceed. As long as I'm running this organization,"—again the sweeping and comprehensive gesture—"I run it the way I see fit. Understand?"

"Yes, Major."

"Then get the hell back in there with those *Fragebogens*. And don't forget my transmission."

"Speaking of *Fragebogens*, Major Smith, have you seen Hempel's?"

"What would I be doing with it?"

"Beg pardon, sir," put in Troy. "I put in on your desk this morning. Don't you remember? You asked me...."

"Gol-darn you, Troy, when will you learn to mind your own business?" Then, to Carter. "Okay. So I have it. So what?"

"May I please see it?"

"You may not."

"As public safety officer of this detachment, I demand that you leave here at once." Carter didn't say another word as he left the office.

I SUDDENLY remembered the *Stadtpfarrer* waiting outside. He had probably heard the whole thing and he knew enough English to understand what it was all about.

"Major," I began.

"Now what the devil do *you* want?" He gave me the look he reserved for creatures that have just crawled out from under wet stones.

"The *Stadtpfarrer* is outside and wants to know about this Hempel business."

"Well, you tell the *Stadtpfarrer* he can go...." He stopped and a crooked grin broke out on his face. "No, he couldn't, either. Never mind; I'll tell him myself." He motioned for me to call the priest in. I did so.

"*Herr* Major," said the Pfarrer, and made a respectful little bow, "is this true what I have heard about Hempel?"

"Is this true? Is that true? I'm sick and tired of people asking me are things true. Of course it's true."

"But why, *Herr* Major? Surely you must have some reason?"

"It is not necessary for me to relate my reasons to every German who comes along. Now, get back to your church before something really happens, and it won't be to *Herr* Hempel."

Mohn stood there, shaking his head slowly, as if he couldn't quite make out what the major had said.

"Plush, tell him what I said in German."

"*Der Herr Major sagt—*"

"Please, it is not necessary to translate. I understand. But at the same time I do not understand."

"Well, that is really too bad," said the major with consummate irony. Without another word he turned and went into his office.

I accompanied the priest back to the outer office.

"Your *Herr* Major is a very foolish man," he said in German.

"He's a—" I stopped.

"No. He is just a very foolish man; he thinks he can make people do things by using fear and hate as weapons. For a little while he will succeed; we have seen another such man here in Germany."

"I must remember to tell the major. He'll be very flattered."

"Well, *Herr* Plush, I must go back to my work."

"Good day, *Herr* *Stadtpfarrer*. And do not worry about Hempel. He won't last a week."

The priest went out and I told Gretel to take over. I went into Ginsberg's office. "About ready, *Leutnant?*"

"That's kind of irregular, isn't it, Major?"

"Gol-darn right it's irregular. But do you call this regular? One of my own men shooting me?" He stood up. "All right. That's all for now; I'll handle this in my own way."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Plush, you mention a word of this to anyone else and I'll bust you quicker'n you can say Frank Robinson." He went out.

Well, that was the first attempt. Whoever it was wouldn't stop here. I felt as if I were in a ringside seat for something terrific that was about to happen, only I didn't know what or when or where. The only funny thing about the whole business was the major's last threat. Busted from Pfc. Now that was something!

Chapter Four

Major Disasier



NOTHING much happened the next day. The excitement over the shooting at the major died down, though the general disappointment at the bad aim didn't. I thought over what the major had said to me that afternoon. The fact that a thorough search was made of all the houses in town that same evening and revealed nothing in the way of firearms lent weight to the major's theory, at that.

The letter about Hempel must have gotten pigeonholed on some desk at headquarters, because nothing happened about it. I saw Mohn, the priest, a few times, but he said nothing about his outbreak of confidence about Hempel and the major.

The PX rations did not arrive. We were almost all out of cigarettes, and mooching was, by a tacit mutual agreement, outlawed; the razor blade situation didn't get any better, either. And another alarming item—the next morning, Dillon came into the office with a sheaf of grimy and illegible-looking papers in his hand.

I followed him into the inner office.

"Hey, Troy, you know what?"

"Offhand, no. And it's much too early in the morning to be playing guessing games."

"We're eleven jerricans short on the gasoline."

"What's that? Are you sure, Joe?"

"Sure I'm sure. I went over the tallies three times. Here. See for yourself."

Troy took the papers and began to pore over them. If this was true, it was really serious. Eleven of those flat five-gallon jerricans was a lot of gas, and I could think who would give an awful lot of Reichmarks for that much gas. Not to mention the cigarettes. Maybe the major wasn't just shooting off his mouth about the black market. But who was it? I was darned if I could figure it out.

"Yes, the tallies are okay. Eleven short?" asked Troy. "We'll have to take this up with the major."

"Have a heart, Ed," Dillon said to him. You know what that will mean. Ginsberg is the transportation officer too; he'll just get it in the neck again."

"Who do you think will get it in the neck if I don't tell him?" asked Troy. "He's bound to find out sooner or later."

"Well, I got to get back to the garage," Dillon told him. "See you guys later."

"The old man's sure going to blow his top when he hears this," said Frank Robinson, who had been sitting at his desk reading a magazine. "Boy, oh boy!"

"Couldn't you sort of write a report and put it among the other papers in the old man's 'in' basket?" And with that, Dillon left the office.

"I suppose I might as well," Troy said. "No sense asking for trouble, is there?"

PAT DONOVAN came in just then with a sheet of paper which was a crudely drawn map. He laid it on Troy's desk.

"What is it?" Robinson wanted to know.

"That's a San. Tech. for you. Can't

you see? It's a map of the alley where—"

"Oh, I get it. To see where the sniper could have been shooting from?"

"That was no sniper, Frank."

"What makes you so danged sure?"

"Well in the first place, the timing. How could he have known the major would be walking through the alley at that moment?" Pat began. "Then there's the risk. Broad daylight. People might have seen him, although luckily no one did. Besides, if it'd had been a sniper, where did he get the gun? And where could he have hidden it? The whole town was searched several times by the MPs. And why should he wait more than three months after the war was over here? If he wanted to take a shot at somebody, the logical time to do it would have been in the first few days after the break-through."

"And there's one more point, Pat," I said. "If this sniper knew what he was doing, he wouldn't have aimed at the head of a man wearing a GI helmet, and certainly not from the back."

"Well, what's your theory?" asked Troy.

"Look at this map. The major was walking through the alley away from this building. There's only one place where that shot could have come from, don't you see?"

"Well, I'll be darned," said Troy.

"Right. The only place that shot could have come from at that angle was this building. Were you guys all in here when you heard it?"

I had been through this before so I knew the answer. I told him we had been.

"I was in my office. Carter—wait a minute! Carter had just gone to the bathroom—"

"Which also faces the alley," I put in.

"Right. So it *could* have been either of us. Only it wasn't one of us."

"Of course," I said, "It could have been someone else in the building. The finance offices of the city, and some of the Burgomeister's offices are still here."

"Yes, there's that." Donovan sat down, lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply and went on. "And it wouldn't be any

use at all looking for the gun now. Whoever fired it had all last night to get rid of it or clean it or plant it."

"Pat, you know what I think?" I said.

"What?"

"I think that whoever tried it will try again. And this time they'll be a little more careful."

"And as part of the public safety department, my job is to try to stop them."

"I see what you mean," said Troy. "No matter how much we hate the guy as individuals, we are still part of a team, and once one member of the team goes around shooting another one—"

"That's it exactly."

NEXT DAY, Friday, I remember that we were all at the dinner table. Dillon had brought the *Stars and Stripes*, and it was the issue telling about the atomic bomb and Hiroshima. It caused quite a stir, although it was already a few days after the end of the war. There were pictures of the queer mushroom of smoke and varying guesses as to the actual extent of the damage done. The awful immensity of the weapon was just beginning to strike home. And there were pictures of the signing of the surrender. It was a very absorbing issue and we were all more interested in it than in our dinner. That later turned out to be important.

The major was in an almost genial mood. He came out with a few bottles of his private stock of Liebfraumilch. It was a wonderful wine and a good vintage. Most of us had all but forgotten the events of the party and the day after. I hadn't, because of what the major had told me; I don't think *he* had, either.

We were well through the meal when there was a shout in the street. It sounded like the voice of "Cap" Merrill, the company courier, so we rushed to the window. Sure enough, it was he. The company sent the courier around twice a week with the mail, and "poop" from company and regiment HQ. and the PX rations. This was the only way we got our

mail and rations, so it was naturally an event to which we eagerly looked forward. We flocked around the courier; each of us grabbed his mail. Except the major. He didn't have any.

We sat down at the table again, each of us several thousand miles away. Troy had a couple of letters from his wife; I had one from my best friend in the Pacific. We all began to read the letters. The major evidently couldn't stand being the only one with no mail. His geniality disappeared like the sun when a cloud passes over it.

"Gol-darn it, men, how many times have I told you that it is impolite to read letters at the table? Put those letters away before I confiscate them."

Grumbling, we did so. Ginsberg was the only one who didn't. He sat there, deliberately reading his letter. I think it was from his mother. The major just glared at him, drumming his fingers on the table.

Finally he exploded. "Apparently, Lieutenant Ginsberg, a simple order in English is not enough for you. Will I have to address myself in Yiddish to you from now on?"

Ginsberg stood up. He was very white. "If you'll excuse me, Major, I don't feel very well. I'm going up to my room to lie down."

THE MAJOR started to say something else, then thought better of it. Ginsberg left the room unchallenged. Novak, who was sitting next to me, looked at me and shook his head slowly. Novak was often present at our meals; he was practically a member of the detachment by this time. The coolness between him and the major had apparently died down, and the major had made no further reference to his accusation of the other day. That was one thing about him; one minute he'd say all kinds of fantastic things about a person, and the next, they were forgotten.

I looked into Novak's mild gray eyes for some sign of fear, hate, or even disapproval, but found none. Just the slow shaking of his head.

The major lifted his wine glass and

drank deeply. He stood up and dropped his glass on the floor. He began to sputter and choke and one hand went convulsively to his collar; his face went red, then purple.

Frank Robinson did some quick thinking and even quicker acting saved the major's life. He made an emetic of a little mustard and water, forced some of it down the major's throat, and accomplished the desired result. It was pretty messy, but in a few minutes the major could sit up and gasp for water.

Frank took him to the infirmary at the engineer battalion in town, which was only a few hundred yards across the river. I went along to help him. We made it in a little under nothing flat. Fortunately, Lieutenant Kilmer of the medical corps was there. He and Frank consulted briefly about the matter, and the major was put to bed where he "rested quietly." Lieutenant Kilmer went back with us to the hotel to find the pieces of the glass for analysis.

We found the glass, all right. It was in several fragments, but Kilmer got most of them into an envelope. He seemed to think it was an accident or maybe attempted suicide; murder never crossed his mind. I didn't tell him about the shot in the alley. He said he couldn't tell yet what sort of poison it was, if it was poison at all. Might be arsenic or cyanide or any of a dozen things.

WHEN WE got back to the infirmary, the major was much better. He was sitting up in bed. He motioned for the lieutenant and Frank to leave me alone with him.

"You see, Plush," he said, and his voice sounded fuzzier than ever, and weaker, too, "I was right the other day; someone in this outfit is out to get me. He must have put the stuff in my glass when the courier came in. Didn't miss by much, at that. That's the second time. Plush?"

"Yes, sir?"

"If the son tries again, and he's luckier this time, don't forget what I told you about Lucette."

"No, sir, I won't."

"I guess I owe Robinson a promotion for this; remind me to put him in for tomorrow."

I didn't tell the major what I was thinking, that Robinson wouldn't be likely to thank him for having him promoted. Not for a thing like that, if you see what I mean. The major wouldn't understand that Robinson's saving his life in 1945 had nothing to do with T-5 Frank Robinson and Major Walter Smith, Infantry, but with a fellow who'd been dead for maybe twenty-four hundred years; a fellow by the name of Hippocrates.

On my way out, I asked the lieutenant when the major would be back at the office. He said tomorrow, that there was nothing serious. I thanked him and he said that he wasn't the one to be thanked; the young T-5 deserved all the credit, and that he couldn't have done any better if he, the lieutenant, had been there himself.

As I walked back to the hotel, I did some more thinking. All of us had been there, including Novak. Even Ginsberg could have done it, although I couldn't quite see him as that kind of a murderer. But then, I wasn't any criterion. There was only one person I could eliminate for sure; that was me. Maybe I'd know more when I had the report from the analysis.

I went to my room. I didn't quite feel like facing the detachment just then. When Frank became a doctor, he took that oath, and personal feelings about anyone needing medical attention didn't count. Feeling as I did that one of them had just tried to poison a man.

Chapter Five

Precautions



the last few days. His face had lost

THE NEXT morning the major seemed like a different person, partly, I suppose, because he was cold sober, and partly because of what he'd been through

its ruddy tinge and was quite pale; his thick red hair made it seem even more so. He walked more erect, too, and his short, stubby figure seemed to take on added stature and dignity.

During the morning, each of us received a formal memo, to the effect that there would be a meeting of the entire detachment in the major's office that afternoon at two. We usually closed the office on Saturday afternoon anyway, except that there was a charge of quarters, who took care of any GIs or other business, on duty until five.

We were all there promptly at two, even Donovan, who usually made a kind of virtue of being at least fifteen minutes late. The major hadn't shown up yet, though; he was waiting to make a dramatic entrance. I figured. As we waited for him, I looked around at the other members of the detachment, sizing up each one, as a soldier, as a human being, and as a potential murderer.

Lieutenant Ginsberg sat straight in his chair, his dark face almost devoid of expression. His eyes still had that twinkle, hard for a person to tell what was going on behind them. He caught my eye and winked solemnly as if to say: *Hold on to your hats, boys—here we go!* I don't know whether it was because I liked him and respected him, but I couldn't imagine him taking a shot at a man, even the major, behind his back, or putting poison in his drink. Tentatively I crossed Ginsberg off my list.

Carter I wasn't so sure about. He sat sideways in his armchair with his legs comfortably draped over one arm. He was something over six feet tall. There was a frown on his face and his gray eyes looked thoughtful or puzzled, I couldn't tell which. Carter I thought, was a man who knew what he wanted and would not let anything stand in his way. Anything? That took in a lot of territory.

Dillon and Frank Robinson were conversing in low tones. Here and there I caught a word. They were talking about cars and trucks. Robinson kept shaking his blond head in disagreement. I certainly could not picture this stocky New Hampshire

pre-med student who talked about Hippocrates and saved people's lives as the one who—doctors didn't usually kill people; at least not on purpose. In a whodunit, a form of literature to which I confess I am passionately addicted, he would be suspect number one. Saving the major's life by using an emetic would be just the sort of dodge calculated to throw suspicion elsewhere when the murder really occurred. But it didn't add up; unless I was a lousy judge of character. Which was not impossible, either.

Dillon was a big boy. He was tall and broad and he gave the impression of great strength of body, if not of mind—the sort of person referred to in the Army expression "strong back and weak mind." He hated the major too, but not *that* much, I thought. No, he didn't seem like the person I was looking for either.

Sergeant Troy was perusing some of the "poop" that had come down from one of the numerous higher headquarters—the directives and memos and information bulletins that all had to be filed and forgotten, or that required leg work and paper work and dozens of important reports—in triplicate, of course, to be in by such and such a date. Troy was smoking his cigar. His pudgy frame fitted snugly in his chair. I couldn't see the expression in his eyes behind their rimless glasses. Troy was capable, efficient. I couldn't see him killing anyone either. Certainly not in such an inefficient way. Besides, he had been in the office with me when the shot had been fired, so that let him out. Or did it?

Pat Donovan was reading the latest *New Yorker* that had just been sent to him. He was the sort of guy that girls practically swoon over. Not too tall, well built, with curly, light brown hair, always well dressed. Intelligent. Good sense of humor. A swell guy. But what did I really know about any of them, for that matter?

This analysis was getting me nowhere fast. Try as I would, I could not imagine any of these people as a man who would shoot someone, even

his own C.O., in the back, or dilute his wine with poison. "Paul," I said to myself, "you may know a lot about irregular Greek verbs and obscure Latin elegiac poets, but you certainly are one hell of a detective."

I HAD hardly finished making this observation when the major came in. We rose to our feet. He waved us down, muttered, "Rest," lit a cigarette, and stood surveying us. He was, as I have said, cold sober, for the first time since I had known him. He was correctly dressed, with his ribbons and medals on, his tie neatly tied, his face clean-shaven. We sat attentively waiting for him to begin, Troy's report and Donovan's *New Yorker* forgotten. Robinson and Dillon had ceased their argument. Carter was sitting in his chair now.

The major cleared his throat and began. "Men, I asked you here this afternoon because I have some very important matters to discuss with you."

He paused, took a couple of deep drags, and went on. "When someone took a potshot at me in the alley, you thought it was a sniper. I knew darn well it wasn't. Yesterday, whoever it was tried again. Two attempts in three days. Somebody is out to get me; and if whoever it is thinks I'm going to take this lying down, he's got another think coming. I'm not saying anything about who I think did it—I have a pretty good idea—"

HE CAREFULLY avoided looking at any one of us, but his gaze concentrated on one of the rafters in the low ceiling. "But that will come later. I have a pretty good idea of who's in back of this and what he's after. I just want to let you all know that I'm taking precautions from now on; I'm not going to be caught napping a third time. One of you will taste all my food from now on. I want a complete list of the whereabouts of every member of the detachment at all times. I want to be able to put my finger on each and every one of you at any moment of the day—or night. Is that perfectly clear?"

He paused for an answer, but the question was obviously a rhetorical one.

"Just one more thing I want to tell you all. I said before that I have my suspicions. I want to tell the man who tried to kill me that if anything *does happen to me, he'll get what's coming to him. Is that clear?*"

He took one last drag on his cigarette before he flung it into the large open fireplace.

"And when I say if anything happens to me, I mean just that. Anything. I have left full instructions with a certain party in the event that anything does happen. I don't want to appear melodramatic, but this has got to stop. I know damn well that there are quite a few people in this detachment who hate my guts. That's all right; as long as it doesn't interfere with the workings of the outfit, I don't give a hoot in Hell what your personal feelings about me are. But attempted murder of a C.O. doesn't come under line of duty, and it isn't good for the morale. Especially mine. So no more accidents. Okay, that's all. Sergeant Troy, I want a sign-out sheet in the dining room. When anyone in the detachment goes out, he will sign out, saying where he is going, where he can be reached, and how long he intends to stay. One more thing. Until further notice, there will be a ten o'clock curfew for all members of the detachment, including the officers. Anyone who fails to obey this will be restricted to his room. All right. You can go now."

WE FILED out. That was the longest, and certainly the most coherent speech he had made in some time. Donovan was just behind me, and when we were out of earshot, he turned to me. "Well, the old man seems determined to handle this himself."

"Still has the old stage presence, huh?"

"What're you doing tonight, Paul?"

"Oh, I don't know. Nothing much, I guess. Why, what did you have in mind?"

"A little bridge. I'll ask Troy and the lieutenant. Okay?"

"Fine. What else can we do with the curfew?"

"Right. About eight. My room. You might stop by the brewery and get another case of that twelve per cent stuff if you haven't anything better to do." I said I would and took off in the jeep.

On the way to the brewery, which was across the river, I stopped off at the infirmary to see if the report on the poison had come in. Lieutenant Kilmer was not in, but he had left the report in an envelope for me. I broke the seal open, and quickly scanned the paper. It was arsenic; enough arsenic to kill a man. I got the beer and came back to the hotel. As I was parking the jeep, the major stuck his head out of his window and asked me to come to his room.

When I came in, he was sitting at the window pounding away at the typewriter. I suppressed a grin when I saw the tattooing on his arm. "Yes, sir?"

"Plush, the pill-roller lieutenant said he'd have a report on the poison. Would you—"

"I have it here, sir; I stopped on my way to the brewery." I gave him the report.

"Arsenic, eh?" he said. "This bird is playing for keeps. Well, so am I."

"Major," I said, "don't you think it would be better to let the proper authorities handle this thing? This is serious."

"Hell's bells, Plush! Don't you think I know it's serious? That's why I want to handle it in my own way. In a couple more days I'll have all the proof I need, and in the meantime I intend to take damn good care of myself. I wonder—"

Donovan got in touch with Troy and Ginsberg, and a little after eight we were seated around a card table in his room with plenty of cold bottles of beer. We had all signed the sign-out sheet, saying that we would be in Corporal Donovan's room for the evening. The major locked himself in his room with Lucette.

"What do you think of this curfew?" I asked Troy. "Isn't that one for the birds?"

"For once he isn't just being chick-

en, though," Troy said; "he has a reason. Not that I think it'll do any good. Whoever this is seems to have pretty well made up his mind."

"What I said before still goes," said Pat Donovan. "It's my job to try to stop him."

"Are you sure it's a him?"

We all looked at Ginsberg, who had just come out with this rather startling question.

"Well, that is—oh, I see what you mean," said Donovan. "Well, I'm not saying that it's impossible, but on the face of it, she doesn't— Wait a minute. Plush, will you play my hand for me? I want to check on something." He went out. He was back in a few minutes, as the next hand was being dealt. He offered no explanation for his sudden exit and no one asked for one. For my part, I was satisfied that he knew his business.

Chapter Six

Achtung Minen!



HAVE you ever noticed how the lapse of time sort of sifts events and causes and results and allows you to see them in their true perspective? That's what hap-

pened with the events of those days of August. When they were happening to us, they seemed to be all jumbled and hap-hazard, but now, these same events seem to have taken on the precision of a play of Sophocles and the relentless, inevitable logic of a Bach fugue.

The major was taking all the precautions he said he would take. He did not eat from any dish that had not been tasted by one of us. Saturday night, it was Robinson; Sunday breakfast he had in his room, where Lucette did the honors. I was the lucky guy who was allowed to sample the royal banquet at dinner Sunday. The major made it clear that he would not go out alone after dark, and in the sign-out sheet, he had an

adequate check on our daytime whereabouts.

That afternoon it was sunny, but not excessively hot. I wanted to be alone and think. I signed the sheet, saying I was going for a walk on the river bank and would be back in time for supper. Troy and Robinson stayed in their rooms. Dillon had to go to Munich again on an errand. The others had not signed the sheet when I left. Carter and Donovan said they were going to work on *Fragebogens* at the office. Ginsberg had a date with a girl named Marya, a DP he had met at a concert the week before. She was Polish, dark, and very pretty. The major had said, at dinner, that he was going to take a trip to the village of Oberpfannkuchen, fifteen miles away, to see about installing a new Burgomeister. The last one had had the extremely bad taste to die, and over the week-end, at that; according to the major, this was an unpardonable offense. He didn't have to go himself, but he always liked to put on a show of authority when he could.

I LEFT THE hotel shortly after dinner, took a copy of Herodotus along, to browse through. After walking along the bank for over an hour, I sat down on a rock and began to leaf through some of the familiar stories. I don't think there has ever been a story-teller who could beat Herodotus, although possibly a few have equalled him. I was struck by the close parallels between what was happening here and now and the stories of Croesus and Polycrates—the stories of men who had too much money or pride or too much of something, and how this led to the sin of Hybris, and was inevitably followed by the vengeance of the gods. Wasn't that almost exactly the same thing that was happening here? How Herodotus would have loved to tell the story of Major Smith bringing down on himself the wrath of Zeus!

Suddenly I was aroused from these idle fancies by the sound of voices and laughter. In another minute Lieutenant Ginsberg and Marya

came up the path. He was explaining some of the *New Yorker* cartoons to her and she was laughing merrily. They stopped and greeted me.

"Mind if we join you for a while?" asked Ginsberg

"Not at all," said I gallantly.

"I've been trying to teach Marya something about American civilization," he said, waving the *New Yorker*.

They sat down. "How's she doing as a pupil?"

"Not bad. Not bad at all. Better than some members of our organization." And he waved his hand in the major's familiar gesture.

He was referring to the time we had shown one of the Charles Addams cartoons to Dillon—the one with the gruesome nursery, the Dracula-like father playing "This little piggy" with his consumptive-looking daughter, and finishing off: "This little piggy cried 'Wee, wee, wee' all the way home. And *this* little piggy..." Dillon had looked at the cartoon very seriously, scratching his head, and had finally walked away, saying, "I don't see what's so funny about it, unless she has six toes." We had groaned, and the incident had become a sort of classic example of humorlessness.

MARYA took the magazine and began to study it happily. The lieutenant came closer to me and said in low tones, "Say, Paul, who do you think is behind this?"

"The major, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I don't know. It's hard to say. Yesterday, when we were waiting for His Majesty to show up, I tried to visualize each one as the—the—"

"I kind of thought that's what you were doing."

"Hell, was it as obvious as all that?" I asked. "Or are you getting psychic in your old age?"

"A little of each, I guess. As a matter of fact, I was *trying* to do the same thing myself. Tell me, Paul how do I shape up as a murderer?"

Well, *Leutnant*, I dunno. Motive, a plus. Opportunity, a minus. Character—well—

"Oh nuts, Ginsberg, you know I don't think it was you any more than you think it was me," I said ungrammatically.

He became more serious. "Yes, that's true. But, seriously, who do you think it was?"

"Frankly, I haven't been very successful at casting anyone in the role."

"How about Carter?"

"I suppose if it had to be one, he isn't more unlikely than anyone else. But I just can't seem to—"

"I know exactly what you mean." He was silent for a moment. "I bet I know who the Old Man suspects, though."

"Who?"

"Are you kidding?"

"No, really. Who?"

"Me."

I don't know why it should have been so surprising, really, but you could have knocked me over with a blank *Fragebogen*. After a little while, it seemed very logical that he should suspect Ginsberg. "Why, the lousy— What about Novak? Or Troy?"

"Troy? I think not. He wouldn't make such a mess of it. He would never be so inefficient."

"Damn it, *Leutnant*, you are getting psychic! That's exactly what I thought about Troy."

"Novak I'm not so sure about. There's something shifty about him."

"He'd have as good a motive as anybody, too."

"How about the others?"

"I don't know. I just can't see the whole thing. I mean, talking about killing someone is one thing, but shooting him or putting poison in his glass—I just can't—"

"Neither can I. But someone did."

And that summed up the thing pretty neatly. Someone did. We didn't get much further with this conversation, because just then Marya broke in to show us a Peter Arno cartoon. Shortly afterwards the two of them got up and walked off. She was a nice kid.

I went back to Herodotus, but I couldn't concentrate. The immediate problem of Hybris and retribution seemed to be pushing the other out

of my mind. I knocked the ashes out of my pipe and made my way back to the hotel. The river was quite lovely in the afternoon sun, with its lazy, limpid waters near the banks, and the swifter current in the middle. Soon I could hear the dull roar of the falls, and it wasn't long before the rooftops and the little church on the hill could be seen again.

AS I WALKED across the old square, I saw Herr Preisel come out of the Rathaus and run toward the building where our offices were. He seemed to be very agitated. He saw me, and motioned that he was going up to our office. I decided to follow him, partly out of native curiosity, partly because I figured he would need an interpreter. Maybe I had some slight premonition, too. I'm not sure. It all happened so quickly.

I hurried up the stairs, arriving a second or two behind Preisel. He was a tall, grizzled man of about sixty. He had been an ordinary policeman for over twenty-five years, long before Hitler, and had not been promoted. That spoke for his honesty, and since he was an intelligent man with an excellent record, we had made him chief of police.

Donovan was in the office. "What's up?" he asked.

"I am afraid something bad has happened. I have just received a report from Huber, the chief of police in Unterkuhfladen. He was riding on his bicycle and—"

"Herr Preisel," I said, as gently as possible, "you can tell us the minor details later. What happened?"

"Huber says that there has been an explosion—he thinks a mine—on the bridge between there and Oberpfannkuchen."

Oberpfannkuchen! Donovan and I looked at each other. I think we both guessed instantly.

"We'd better go out and take a look-see," said Donovan. "Want to get the jeep, while I get Carter? As public safety officer, this is his baby."

IN LESS than two minutes, Carter, Donovan, Preisel and I were

in the jeep. We made the fifteen miles in about as many minutes, which was pretty good going for those roads. Carter was driving and Preisel and I were sitting in back. Over the roar of the wind in our ears, he told me more of the story.

This Huber had been riding on his bicycle when he heard an explosion. He made his way as quickly as possible to the bridge, an old wooden one between the two villages. There had been a big explosion. The bridge, he said, was demolished. And there had been an automobile on the bridge. Huber said it looked like a Mercedes. That bridge was on the major's road, and he had taken the Mercedes that afternoon.

Prisel had just finished telling me, and I had relayed it piecemeal to Carter and Donovan, when we saw smoke. We came out of the woods to where the little bridge had been. There was the car all right. It was pretty well consumed. Whoever was in it—and there wasn't much doubt who it was—had never had a chance. The explosion, the crash, then the fire—

Carter went to work on the wreckage with the fire extinguisher we had in the jeep, and pretty soon it was under control. There wasn't much left, either of the car or the major.

I can still close my eyes and see that scene in all its horrible clarity, after almost two years. The remains of the car were twisted and charred. Fragments of bridge were all around the place. A crowd of curious Germans had begun to gather. There was an old sign that said *Achtung Minen!* and that had been uprooted and thrown several hundred feet into the air.

After the fire had been put out, we tried to find the major. There wasn't much left of him. Scattered all over the place we found a few pieces of things that at least told us who it was, as if there had been any doubt. His gold leaves. One dog tag. What was left of his helmet, with the little round hole in it that had been made only a couple of days before. And we found something more. We found part of an arm, with tattooing on it.

The last two digits in his serial number were the only parts that could be clearly recognized, but there they were, all right.

That was all we found that could be identified. It was not a very pretty sight, even after some of the other things I had witnessed. We all felt a little sick.

PREISEL said, "Huber thinks it must have been an old mine. This bridge is not much used and Huber thinks—"

"I don't think it was mine, Preisel. The major went over this bridge plenty of times. So did Dillon. Besides, the engineers have been over all these roads and bridges for mines months ago. It wasn't a mine."

Carter said, "Well, I guess this is it. He never knew what hit him."

I didn't say anything about what Carter had said about miracles. It didn't seem in very good taste. Instead, I asked, "There isn't any possibility—I mean, any doubt—"

"None at all," said Carter. The dog tag would be enough. There've been plenty of our boys buried just on the evidence of the dog tags. Besides, the arm with the tattooing—No, there isn't any doubt."

It was a little awkward. I couldn't feel anything at all. No grief, anger, shock; on the other hand, no jubilation either. I think I just felt a little numb.

Carter went on, "Well, I guess that kinda puts me in the driver's seat. Temporary, anyway. We'd better git back to town and break the news to the rest of the boys. Let's put the remains in back."

That wasn't a very pleasant job either. We gathered up all we could, put it in the back of the jeep, and left Preisel there to disband the Germans. The three of us sat in front.

"I think we'd better have a meeting of the detachment in my room after chow," said Carter. "We have a number of things to discuss that won't keep till tomorrow. Plush, will you notify the rest of the men?"

"Okay, sir."

"Never mind that 'sir' stuff. I rock-

on we've all had just about enough of that."

"I guess we have, at that."

"And one more thing, Plush."

"Yes?"

"Take down that darn sign-out sheet. Dont reckon we'll be needing it any more."

PART TWO

Variation on a Funeral March

Chapter Seven

Post Mortem



"**L**IKE I was telling Plush here," Carter began, "things are goin' to be different from now on. A lot different. Sign-out sheet down? Good. For the time being, until we have word to the contrary from higher up, I'm taking charge."

We were grouped around the large table in Carter's room. There was an informality about this meeting that had never marked any previous meetings of the detachment. The seven of us were there. Donovan had gone over to Novak's quarters to tell him to come to the meeting, but he had been unable to find him. No one had seen Novak all day, for that matter.

"I reckon we can relax a little bit on this here military courtesy, exceptin' when there are other officers or men around," Carter said. "We've all seen enough chicken to last us the rest of our natural lives, I guess."

"Now, there are three things we have to sort of discuss this evenin'— The first, and most immediate is, what are we goin' to do with the remains? The second—wait a second, Troy, we'll discuss each one individually after I get done. The second is, what are we goin' to tell the authorities? Are we goin' to call in the Criminal Investigation Division, or what? The third is—and this, I might add, is the most important— what are we goin' to do about the whole thing? I mean, there's no doubt

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that the old son had it comin' to him. But on the other hand, the means taken aren't exactly in accordance with the most civilized procedures. Well, that's about all I got to say right now. Let's conduct this thing as democratically as possible."

Donovan said, "Does—did he have any relatives or anything that anyone knows about?"

Troy answer, "Not married. No near relatives. I checked up in the files. There's some sort of a distant cousin in Ohio. He'll have to be notified. As far as the immediate disposition of the remains is concerned, I think we'll have to do the same as when a person gets killed in action."

"Yes," said Carter. "We'll bury what's left tomorrow afternoon."

"Also," Troy went on, "Graves Registration Division, QM Department, has to be notified within a specified time of the whole business, location of grave, and so on."

THERE WAS a knock on the door. Carter opened it and there was Lucette. She looked very white. "Ees eet true, what I have hear?"

"I'm sorry, Lucette. He never knew what hit him."

"What are you going to do?"

"Do? Well, I'll be CO for the time being, if that's what you mean."

"No, I mean weeth. . ."

"We'll have a funeral tomorrow. You'd better get some flowers, Lucette."

She nodded dumbly, and went out. I didn't want to speak to her just then about what the major had told me. Not in front of the others. I made a mental note to do it the next day.

"Plush," said Carter, "you'd better contact that priest tomorrow to get him to conduct the funeral. I don't think it matters very much what the major's religion was. Besides, I don't even know. Okay. So much for that part." He paused and lit a cigarette. "Now, what do we tell the Munich people and headquarters and so on? Who has any ideas?"

"Well," said Ginsberg slowly, "I was just wondering. Do we have to tell them all the circumstances of the affair? I mean—well, why couldn't it

have been an accident? There was a sign that said "Beware of Mines" at the bridge. It wasn't a bridge that was used very much. I don't exactly like the idea of washing our dirty linen out in public."

"Yes, I see what you mean." Carter nodded. "How do the rest of you feel about this?"

"I agree with Lieutenant Ginsberg," I said. "I'd like to see if we can find out for ourselves what happened, before we start calling in the C. I. D. and having the place all full of brass."

The others nodded approval. Troy added, "I would want to make sure that we are doing something to find out who killed him ourselves before we..."

"We're comin' to that, Troy," Carter reminded him. "That's the third part. What we want to decide now is what to tell headquarters. Well, if there's no more discussion about this part of it, I suggest that you, Troy, draft a letter in the morning to the Munich team. Tell them about the—uh—deplorable accident that our beloved commanding officer has met with, and what we are doing about it. I would omit any reference to the other two—accidents which predated it. Like you men said, I'd like to make certain about my dirty linen before washing it in public."

Troy jotted down a few words on his pad.

"Now we come to the more important and more difficult problem," said Carter, "of what we ourselves intend to do about it." He inhaled deeply. "What are your ideas on that?"

"I say, good riddance," said Dillon. "Look. We all hated him; no use pretending we didn't. Now someone has saved us the trouble of applying for transfer or sending for the inspector-general. What are we going to do about it? Nothing, I say. Let's just thank our lucky stars it happened, that's all."

"I don't know but what I agree," said Robinson. "I know it sounds funny, my saying this, after what happened the other day with the poison, but that's all past. He's dead and it won't do any good if we hunt down the guy who did it whoever it was,

he's just done us a favor and it would be very ungracious of us to—"

"But you don't see," said Donovan, "it isn't just a question of favors. A man has been murdered; someone else decided to take the matter of life and death into his own hands. However much I approve of the result, I do not approve of the manner or the idea behind it. Just suppose," he turned to Dillon, "that this person, whoever he is, decides next that you, Dillon, are unfit to live and a menace to society. Then what?"

"Well, but that's different," Dillon replied.

"Why is it different? Because it's you instead of the major? What kind of logic is that?" Donovan was becoming more heated than I had ever seen him before. "No. I say we've got to find out who did this. When a person takes the law into his own hands, he is not to be trusted."

"I agree entirely with you. When I said before that I didn't want this to come out into the open yet, it wasn't because I thought it should end here." I said. "I'd like to help whoever is going to investigate the matter. The major told me something about his suspicions before he died. I'd like to check up on one or two things first." Lucette, I meant.

GINSBERG and Troy nodded in accord. Carter said, "Well, I guess that settles it. Before I commit myself about what's to be done, I'd like to have more of the facts of the case. Donovan, you and I will investigate as best we can. Any help from any of the rest of you"—he looked at me—"will be most welcome." He threw his cigarette away. "I have a couple more things to say while I'm on the subject. The major was concerned with the possibility of black market activities; I think that will bear investigation. There are two things we've got to find out. One is who and the other is why. They are both important. I have my suspicions but I don't want to say anything about them yet, because it might be embarrassing if I turned out to be wrong. I want to know where everyone in the detachment, including the secretaries

and Lucette and Novak—where the hell is Novak, anyway? I want to know where each of them was this afternoon when someone took that shot at the major, when was it? My Gawd! Wednesday! Seems like longer. Okay. Wednesday afternoon when the shot was fired at the major. Friday noon. I want to know about the possibilities of getting the poison. And I want a complete check on the activities of all the personnel today—not just in the afternoon, but all day. Got that Donovan?"

Donovan nodded.

The lieutenant went on. "One of us, or one of the girls, or Novak, has murdered a man. This is a very serious thing. I hated the major just as much as the rest of you did." He paused, and a frown came over his face. Maybe he remembered the time he'd had to repair the major's car, or the initial humiliation over the tent. "But it's my job, both as acting commanding officer and as public safety officer, to find out who did it. All of us are under suspicion. I have one or two ideas, but I'm not sayin' anything."

"One more thing," said Donovan, "has to be checked up on."

"What's that?"

"I think I'll wait and do a little sleuthing on my own before I mention it to anybody, Lieutenant."

"Okay. That's up to you, Donovan. But if you have any information, I ought to know about it."

"This isn't information, it's just a hunch. As soon as I know anything definite, I'll tell you, sir."

"Let's cut out that 'sir' stuff. I'm as sick of it as all of you are." Carter lit another cigarette and tossed the match out of the open window.

"Hear, hear!" said Troy.

"Now, before we break up, just for the record, I want to ask if anyone will admit to havin' killed the major. I don't make any promises, but I think I can say it'll go a lot easier than if we have to find it out the hard way. And don't anyone make any mistakes about that; we will find it out. It may take a day, or a week or a month, but we will find out in the

end. I've had a little experience in this kind of thing."

No one spoke. You could hear the leaves rustling in the tree outside the window.

"Well," said Carter, "no one want to confess?"

He waited for perhaps five seconds.

CARTER said quietly, "Any of us could have done it. I could have done it myself, only I didn't. Lieutenant Ginsberg could have done it."

"I didn't. Sure, I hated his guts," said Ginsberg, "but I plead 'not guilty' to that one. Besides, I was with Plush this afternoon."

"That right, Plush?" Carter wanted to know.

"Yes. He was with me."

"Well, that doesn't necessarily let either of you out. We got to check on all these things."

"I could have killed him," Troy volunteered, "but I didn't. I wouldn't have been such a damn fool about it, anyway. If I had shot him, I wouldn't have missed; if I had poisoned him, I wouldn't have had to try again. No, I didn't kill him."

"Don't go getting the idea that I had anything to do with this," said Dillon, "just because of what I said before."

"I'm not gettin' any ideas—yet," said Carter.

"Well, unless you want to make a detective story plot out of this," Robinson said, "you can't possibly think I did it. After all, I did save his life."

"That doesn't let you out either, Robinson."

"Well, for crying out loud—"

"Now look, I'm not accusing you; I'm not accusing anybody. All I said was that nobody has a completely clean slate yet. Any of us could have done it."

"Just for the record," I said, "I didn't."

Donovan added. "Lieutenant, I'll let you in on a big secret. Neither did I."

"Well, that makes six denials. Seven, countin' me. All right. Supposin' every one of us is tellin' the truth, which is possible, who does

that leave? Lucette? Possible. The office girls? Possible, but not at all likely."

"How about Novak? asked Troy. "He was awfully burned up at the old man the other day."

I remembered how Novak had gone into the major's office grinning and how he had come out a few minutes later. What Troy said was an understatement.

"I'd like to know a lot more about Novak. Where in hell is he, anyway?"

"He was there the day the poison—" began Robinson.

"I'm not forgettin' anything," said Carter; "I know damn well he was here; that's why I'm anxious to find out where he is now. That's one more thing we got to do. Find Novak. I'll admit that his bein' gone now it makes him the most likely suspect, but—"

"Let's be fair about this," I said. He isn't *gone*; he's just not in his room. He could be anywhere, could have gone for a walk or visiting, could have had a date, or any one of a dozen things. Just because he isn't there doesn't mean that he's got to be the one."

"Keep your shirt on, Plush. Don't you suppose I know that? I was about to say that he looks like a good suspect, but we'd need a lot more evidence before we try to pin anything on him."

I nodded, but didn't say anything more.

"Well, that's about all," Carter said. "It's gettin' late and I think I'll hit the sack. Don't forget about the letter, Troy, and, Plush, you'd better see the priest first thing tomorrow mornin'. And for Gawd's sake, don't say anything about this to anyone else. The major was killed in an accident; don't anyone forget that. A very regrettable accident. Don't say anything, anything at all, about the other two attempts, or about what we've discussed here this evenin'. Not to the Germans, not to the DPs, not to officers, GIs or anyone. Donovan and I will start investigatin' tomorrow. Better all get a good night's sleep. We got a lot of work ahead of us."

He got up, yawned, and threw his butt out of the window. The rest of us got up, too, and filed out of the room.

Donovan tapped me on the shoulder as I was about to enter my room. "You're not going to bed right away, are you, Paul?"

"No, I'll probably read and listen to the radio for a while. Why?"

"Mind if I drop in on you in about"—he looked at his watch—"half or three-quarters of an hour?"

"Hell, no. What's up?"

"Tell you later."

Chapter Eight

Mozart And Suspicions



AT ten forty-five that evening, I was comfortably ensconced in my armchair with a bottle of beer, listening to the radio. I always used to listen to the programs from Salzburg, especially when they had the annual Mozart Festival. That night they were broadcasting *Don Giovanni*, which is my favorite opera, as well as practically my favorite music. They had just gotten to the part where the Commendatore knocks at the door and the terrified Leporello runs and hides, when someone knocked at my door. I said, "Come in," and Donovan did so.

I motioned him to a chair. He helped himself to some beer and, since he was also a lover of music, he said nothing until some minutes later, when the performance was over, the wicked Don having been snatched away by the spirits of evil for his crimes and his refusal to repent, and the other six having finished off the story by pointing out the moral in a brilliant sextet.

"Reminds me a little of the major," said Donovan.

"What sacrilege!" I replied.

"Superficially, anyway. Both are carried off amid displays of fire-

works, as a result of their misdeeds."

"You've got something there, Pat. I wonder what Lucette would have to say about that analogy."

"Now that," said Donovan, "Is an interesting idea."

"And speaking of Lucette," I said, "that reminds me. I've got to see her in the morning."

"What for? To comfort her in her bereavement?"

"Pat, did anyone ever tell you you have a very nasty mind?"

"Yes, but don't let that stop you. Go on. Flatter me. I love it."

"Besides, where do you get that 'bereavement' stuff? Don't kid yourself. Lucette didn't like him any more trust the rest of us."

"Well, then, what do you have to see her for? Don't you know that she comes under the head of equipment for the detachment commander?"

"Carter, huh? I guess you're right, at that. Well, I have to see her, because the major, may he rest in no peace at all, wanted me to."

"How's that?"

"You heard me. Twice he told me, once on Wednesday, once on Friday. Once after each of the attempts."

"Told you what?"

"That if anything should happen to him, I was to contact Lucette for instructions."

"Lucette, eh? That's queer."

"I thought so too. Guess he didn't trust the rest of us."

"If it comes to that, how come he trusted you?"

"That what I asked him. And he said that the rest of the guys all hated his guts—"

"And you didn't?"

"He seemed to think not, although I believe I mentioned something of the sort to him. Anyway, that's what he said. Twice."

"Hm. Wonder what those instructions are. I guess we ought to tell Carter about this but—"

DONOVAN sat in silence for a moment. "You know, this is a hell of a thing for me to be saying, and I know it won't go any further."

"Heck, of course not."

"But I don't quite trust him. Can't put my finger on anything, but there's something about him that seems a little fishy. How much experience has he had investigating murders, as a 'deputy sheriff,' for instance?"

"I know what you mean. Sometimes I feel the same way about him."

"Well, that's what I want to see you about, Paul. I thought that if we could work on this thing together, you and I, we might really get somewhere. I don't think for a minute Carter will ever figure it out."

"Neither do I."

"Who do you suppose he meant when he said he had his suspicions?"

"I don't know why, but I think it was Ginsberg."

"Yes. So do I. How do you feel about the good *leutnant*?"

"Ginsberg? Nope. He doesn't seem the type to go around poisoning and shooting people in the back."

"Type? What do you mean, type? Some of the worst and most hardened criminals look like Sunday School teachers or—"

"Or Latin professors. Is that what you were going to say?"

"No, but it'll do. Anyway, now that I've said that there's no such thing as a 'type' of murderer, I'll contradict myself and say that I don't think Ginsberg could have done it either. Not the mentality that goes with that sort of crime."

"Now who's being a professor?" I said. "Anyway, we're agreed that it wasn't Ginsberg. Funny—" I broke off, remembering how Ginsberg had told me, that same afternoon, that the major suspected him of the attempts.

"What's funny?"

"Ginsberg knew the major suspected him, too."

"Hm. Well, anyway, Paul, what do you think of my idea?"

"Sounds all right to me. Only I don't think I'll be much use."

"Well, look who's going modest all of a sudden. Come now, Paul. Tell the truth for a change. You know darned well that, deep down, you've always fancied yourself as an amateur Sherlock Holmes. Now haven't you?"

"All right. You win. Only yesterday I decided that I was not such a hot detective; I kept looking at everyone trying to figure out who had done it."

"That doesn't take a detective. It takes a clairvoyant."

"If you think I could be any help, I'll be glad to try."

"Good. The first thing is for you to see Lucette in the morning. Don't tell Carter. We'll meet every night and compare notes."

"You make it sound like Catiline's conspiracy."

"Ha ha. I bet you thought I didn't know who Catiline was."

"Well, I—"

"As a matter of fact, I don't. But getting back to the issue at hand, I'll try to check up on Nowak and the girls in the office. By the way, I was just over to Novak's place. He still hasn't come in. No one there has seen him since yesterday."

"What about Novak? Do you think he had anything to do with it?"

"Oh, so now you're getting suspicious of Novak? And after what you said to Lieutenant Carter?"

I TAPPED my fingers on the radio, reflectively. "Not really suspicious. I'm just wondering. After all, the major as much as said right out that he thought Novak was involved in the black market business. If he thought the major was about to expose him, that would give him a good motive. If anyone needed any special motive"

"Well, I'll try to check on him. Then there's one other thing we have to dig up information about. This black market. See what you can find out about that. Do a little discreet prying among the Germans. You can do that better than any of the rest of us."

"Roger."

"And try not to let Carter know when you speak to Lucette. I don't want him to know too much before we do."

"He isn't going to like this, Pat."

"You're damned right he isn't. That, my dear P., is why he must not find out."

So Donovan didn't trust Carter either. That was very interesting.

Chapter Nine

The Major's Last Word



I AWOKE with a start. It took a little while for the events of the previous day to straighten themselves out in my head. I am not one of those people who can wake up, clear and brilliant, with their minds in perfect working order. It always takes me a few minutes to focus on things. Today it took even longer.

Then I remembered what the major had told me. I must see Lucette, find out from her what the major's instructions were. Also, I must contact the *Stadtpfarrer* and make arrangements for the funeral. Better ask him to get in touch with a gravedigger. And a carpenter. A box. A very small box.

Quickly I dressed and shaved. I left word at the office that I wouldn't be in until later, and told Gretel to take the desk.

I took out the jeep and went over to the *Stadtpfarrkirche*. It was one of the few churches in that part of the country that did not have that onion-shaped top. This one had a plain pointed spire. Inside, the architecture was late baroque—very ornate carved wooden statues, painted ceiling, and so forth. I found the priest inside. He suggested that we go out and sit on the bench under the big shade tree.

"I think I can guess why you have come, *Herr Plush*," he began. "In fact, I was expecting you."

"You have heard?"

"My friend, it is my business to hear what takes place in my parish. Otherwise I should not be an efficient priest." He looked up at the branches of the tree, where a bird was in song. His face looked very kind, but very tired. "Yes, I have heard about the unfortunate accident." Was it my imagination, or did he pause ever so slightly before the word "accident?"

"Everyone has heard of it. News travels fast in a town like this."

"And what do the people say?"

"What should they say? The usual things. That he was a good and kindly and wise man and that they are very sorry for the *Amerikanischen Soldaten*. Then they are saying other things too, things that you, my son, would not wish to hear from me."

"I can imagine."

"Yes. Well, I will not be so hypocritical as to say that I am sorry. I know you would not want me to. You will think it the ravings of a foolish old priest, but I seem to see the workings of God's hand in this affair."

I DID NOT say anything to him to indicate that, if it was the work of the Almighty, He had at least received some very concrete help from a human being. I didn't think it was necessary or advisable.

"What I have to come to see you about, *Herr Stadtpfarrer*, is the arrangements for the funeral. Lieutenant Carter—by the way, he is going to be the new commanding officer—"

"Oh, yes. I do not know the lieutenant. Is he the tall one with the mild gray eyes?"

"Yes. That's the one."

"He seems like a reasonable man."

"He is. He will be a great improvement. Well, he wants us to hold the funeral this afternoon. He asked me to make the necessary arrangement with you."

"Was the major of my faith?"

"I don't think so; but does it matter? Nothing very elaborate. Just a simple service. I'll let you know the location later. Oh, and could you manage to get a grave-digger? And we'll need a carpenter, too. To make the coffin. I'll be around later in the morning, say a little before lunch. Could you please take care of these things for us?"

"Certainly, *Herr Plush*. I shall be most happy to."

I was going to ask him something about the black market, but I thought I'd better wait and get in touch with Preisel first, and see what Donovan had succeeded in digging up.

"How big must this coffin be?" he

asked. I did some rapid calculating and told him.

Well, that took care of the funeral for the time being. When I got back to the office, I went into the major's—I mean to Carter's office and asked him about the location. He called Troy into the office and we discussed various possibilities. We finally decided on a little hill on the outskirts of town. I told them about having seen the priest and about the carpenter and gravedigger.

"Good enough. Troy, have you got that letter to HQ?"

"Yes, Lieutenant. Here it is."

"Tell you what. I think I'll drive into Munich and report in person. May save us getting a lot of brass down here when we least expect it. Have you got the other letter—the one to Graves Registration?"

"That's on your desk."

"On my—Oh, yes, here it is. Troy, what would I do without you?"

Troy didn't answer that one.

"Plush," said Carter, "you'd better stick with this funeral business. See the grave-diggers. See the carpenter about a cross, too. He was a Protestant, by the way."

"How did you know?"

"Hell of a detective you are. I looked at his dog tag, of course."

"And I never thought of that."

"Now, if I was the major, I'd say that that was why you are an enlisted man and I am an officer. Anyway, better take Lucette with you. She wants to pick some flowers, and Troy is tied up here in the office, Dillon's goin' in to Munich with me, and Robinson and Donovan are busy here too. Cheer her up. Talk French to her. But don't try to cut me out, because if you—" He stopped because it was unnecessary to go on. I laughed and said she wasn't my type. Carter called up the hotel and told them to tell Lucette that I'd be around to pick her up in half an hour.

MEANWHILE I went into the public safety office where I found Donovan buried behind a gigantic pile of *Fragebogens*. He was trying to clear some of the more immediate denazification work, to al-

low himself to pursue his sleuthing.

"I had an idea this morning. I'll try to sound out the priest on this black market business. What do you think of that?" I asked.

"Good idea. But don't say anything about it to Carter."

"Of course not."

"Something else we'll have to take care of. Hempel."

"Oh gosh, yes. I forgot all about him. He certainly can't stay in. But who would be the person to replace him?"

"I have an idea about that too. The only really honest and intelligent man in the place. Can't you guess who I mean?"

I thought a minute. "Not Preisel?"

"Why not? I'm going to suggest it to Carter."

"You'll have to wait till he gets back from Munich." I told him briefly about the lieutenant's plans. "And," I added, "he's playing right smack into my hand. He asked me to take Lucette out and cheer her up; this is my chance to find out about the major's instructions."

"That's swell. And you'll be away from the office too."

"That's the beauty of it."

"Well, good luck, Paul."

"Thanks. So long."

By the time I got to the hotel Lucette was ready and waiting for me in the garage. She looked very nice indeed that morning. She was wearing a blue sweater and a kind of checkered skirt. She had almost no make-up on—she didn't need it. There was a wide blue ribbon around her hair.

"Hop in, Lucette." I spoke in French to her. My French was by no means perfect, but it was certainly better than her English.

Before we set out for the country, I went to the church again and told the *Stadtfarrer* about the arrangements for the funeral. It was settled—the location, the time—four o'clock that afternoon. He had taken care of the carpenter and grave-digger. I made a mental note to ask him about black market possibilities later.

Then Lucette and I headed for the open country. We drove a long way out before either of us said anything.

As had been the case the week before with Ginsberg, the fresh air and the wind served to lessen the tension, enabled us to breathe more freely.

We stopped in a little valley about eight or ten miles west of town. Not east, in the direction of Munich, but west. We gathered great bunches of wild flowers—daisies, forget-me-nots, and other flowers whose names I didn't know. After we had filled the whole back of the jeep with the flowers, we sat down on a little grassy hill. I lit my pipe. Lucette undid the ribbon and began to comb her hair. It was a very lovely shade of gold. After she had finished combing it, she didn't put the ribbon back on but just left it loose. It looked swell.

"Lucette," I began, and stopped. I didn't know exactly how to begin.

"I think I know what you want. *M. le Commandant* told me before he—"

"I thought maybe he had. Do you have his instructions?"

SHE NODDED, and picked up her handbag. She produced a large envelope. It was addressed to me, and marked, "*Confidential—to be opened only in case of my sudden death.*"

I broke it open and began to read. It was couched in the usual military communication terms.

SUBJECT: *Black Market*

TO: *Private First Class Paul Plush, etc., etc.*

1. *The undersigned has been aware for some time that there have been certain black market activities taking place in Unterrossapfel. Cigarettes and other supplies have been missing from the post exchange rations. Gasoline has been taken from the detachment motor pool.*

2. *Although I have been suspicious for some time of a certain person in the detachment, I have kept silent, because mere suspicion is not enough in a case like this. I need evidence. Also, I have wanted to wait until I could catch this person red-handed.*

3. *Lately, however, I have been given to believe that this person knows I suspect him. He and the Jew Novak have been working on this together for some time. Although I want no action taken until there is proof, I have taken this means of recording my suspicions, so that if anything happens to me, as is more than likely, you will know who is responsible, or who I think is responsible. If anything does happen to me, do not show this letter to anybody. Keep it in a safe place, until you have some proof. Sooner or later this person will make a mistake.*

4. *I intend to be very careful of myself. I am not a fatalist. I do not want to die for a long time. If, however, I do, you must be even more careful that nothing happens to you.*

5. *The name of the person I suspect is Lieutenant Ginsberg.*

(signed) *Walter Smith
Major, Infantry
Det. Comdr.*

So that was it; Ginsberg had been right. Could I have been wrong? Could it really be Ginsberg? The major must have had some reason for suspecting him. And Novak's disappearance would tie up, too, for Novak was still missing that morning. No one had seen a trace of him since the Saturday before.

LUCETTE shook her hair. "Now you know, Paul."

"Yes. Now I know. Did he—have you seen this letter?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe it is true?"

"Ah, *mon ami*, I do not know. The major he was not a good man, but he was not a stupid man either. He—he—" She stopped. A strange look came over her face. I was not sure whether it was grief or fear or what. But she did not go on.

"What's the matter, Lucette? You couldn't have been that fond of him."

"No—it is not that. I—I—"

"Tell me, Lucette, and maybe I'll be able to help you."

"No, Paul. I cannot tell you, and you cannot help me. No one can. You will understand. Later."

Chapter Ten

DIRGE IN A MAJOR KEY



CARTER was back from Munich in the early afternoon. Headquarters had been, as was natural, very upset at the news, but apparently nothing. I could see right then what the result would be—a fifteen-page memorandum, marked "*File*," on how to avoid being blown up by mines, mentioning in obscure terms what had happened to a certain military government officer who had been careless. Maybe there would be a bulletin from USFET headquarters too. The major was famous. How he would have enjoyed this notoriety, from wherever he was. I could just see him saying, "Goddam it; that's what happens when you delegate authority. The only way to clear away the goddam mines is to do it yourself!" And he wasn't far wrong.

Carter apparently thought it was a pretty good idea to put Preisel in as *Landrat*, said he'd take care of it first thing next morning.

The funeral was very dignified and very simple. The *Stadtpfarrer* made a short funeral sermon, in his broken English, the flowers were beautiful, everyone looked solemn. Lucette was wearing a simple black dress. The little box containing all that was mortal of Major Smith was lowered into the grave, the earth piled up on it, and a wooden cross erected. And that was that.

AS PER arrangement, Donovan came to my room that evening. Reluctantly I turned off the radio and Mozart. There was work to do.

We worked, at first separately, then

together, for a little more than two hours. When we had finished, the following was the result.

Possible suspects: Carter, Ginsberg, Troy, Dillon, Robinson, Novak, Lucette. Also possible but not likely—the secretaries, Gretel and Ilse. Also, theoretically possible, but ruled out for the sake of argument: Plush and Donovan.

The murderer must have been able to (I) fire the shot in the alley on Friday afternoon; (II) put poison in the major's wine glass on Friday; (III) rig up the explosives on the bridge on Sunday. It's still not certain how this was worked. The wreckage is too far gone to be sure. The bridge was not a much-used one, and the murderer may have waited until the last possible moment to complete the connection on the detonation device i.e. when the major's car came within earshot. He—or she—must have known about when to expect the major and that the probability of anyone else using the bridge at that time was so slim as to be almost negligible. The explosion must have taken place *after* the major finished his business in Oberpfannkuchen, because he had accomplished his business there, we learned, at about four-thirty. Huber had looked at his watch when he heard the explosion. It was four-forty-seven. When we arrived at the bridge it was five-fifteen.

Crucial times. Wednesday, about four fifty-five to five-five. A second or two was all the time necessary for the firing of the shot, but it would be impossible to narrow it down any further. Friday. Lunch time. Presumably the poison had been put in the major's glass when the courier came or during the excitement that followed. No one remembers seeing the major drink between that time and the time he drank the poisoned wine.

It is more difficult to establish a chronology for the actual murder. The explosion took place at four-forty-seven, assuming Huber was telling the truth and his watch was right (memo: check on Huber's watch). That meant the bomb or explosives could have been planted any time up to, say, four-forty-six, although that

would be shaving it pretty close. It *must* have been planted after the major crossed the bridge on his way to Oberpfannkuchen, which was about three-thirty. Assuming that the murderer was in Unterrossapfel, allow between three-thirty and five—the it could be done in even less if absolutely necessary—ten minutes to rig up the contraption, and twenty minutes to return. That leaves fifty minutes necessary to complete the job, between three-thirty and five—the time when we set out from town with Preisel and the jeep—or an absolute minimum of forty minutes.

It remains to consider motives and opportunities for each of the suspects, and to consider likelihood on the grounds of character, or temperament.

THE CASE AGAINST SERGEANT TROY

Opportunity: Wednesday. Could be. Carter had just gone to the bathroom, which also faces on the alley. Friday. Best of all. Carter was sitting on the major's right. Could easily have slipped the poison in major's wine glass. Sunday. Carter had left the office, where he'd been working with Donovan, at a few minutes after four. His whereabouts between then and five, when Donovan found him in his room, are unaccounted for. He could have taken out the jeep and made it easily. As a matter of fact, he made it in just about fifteen minutes when we all drove out there.

Motive: Carter hated the major as much as anyone else, if not more. Suppose it were he who had been tampering with supplies—memo: check that angle—and he was afraid the major would find out, or had found out. Also, how about Lucette? It is no secret that he has taken things over in that field. His insistence on carrying out the investigation might be sheer bravado, or it might be because he feels it is expected of him.

Miscellaneous considerations. On the whole, Carter looks like the best bet. He is cool, looks as if he could be ruthless. Familiar enough with police work to be pretty sure of alibis. Ran risk of being seen, but murderers always take some risks.

THE CASE AGAINST LIEUT. GINSBERG

Opportunity. Wednesday. He was in his office when the shot was fired. His office looks on the alley. Friday. Although he had gone to his room when the major actually drank the poisoned wine, that might be a clever dodge. After all, he had practically forced the issue by refusing to stop reading. (Must be fair about this). Sunday. Ginsberg and Marya were with Plush until about four. Exact time not certain. If he had left her twenty or thirty minutes later, he could just possibly, although it looks rather doubtful, have made it to the bridge and back in time. Say, about four-thirty to five-fifteen. This would be very, very risky, because how would he know exactly when the major would be coming back from Oberpfannkuchen? On the whole, not as likely as Carter.

Motive. Remember, the major had thought it was Ginsberg. Ginsberg told me he knew the major suspected him. G. had been baited perhaps more than any of the rest of us by Smith. He, as PX officer, was in the best position to make off with supplies.

Miscellaneous considerations. Ginsberg "doesn't seem like the type"—Plush—to shoot people in the back, etc, but this is hardly admissible as evidence. One must be fair. G. had the opportunity and motive. Intelligent enough to carry out such a plan. Anti-semitic behavior of major added incentive.

THE CASE AGAINST SERGEANT DILLON

Opportunity. Troy would seem to be ruled out on the first attempt. He was in the office with Plush when the shot was fired. But supposing someone else fired that first shot? Supposing that all three attempts were *not* by the same person? Supposing *two* people were in collusion, one with an alibi for one time, the other for the other? Then what? Can it be assumed that only one person is behind all three incidents? That was the first idea, but can it? Not really. Or supposing again that one person fired

the shot and that gave another and completely independent person the idea. Isn't that a possibility? It is. Perhaps not as plausible, but certainly possible. So Troy cannot be ruled out. Friday. He could have put the arsenic in the glass as well as anyone else. Sunday. Troy was ostensibly writing letters in his room all afternoon, until we came back with what was left of the major. But he could have left for forty or fifty minutes, taken the jeep out, returned. Says he didn't leave his room except for a couple of minutes. But if he were the murderer, what else would he say? Can he prove he was in his room all afternoon? No.

Motive. Possible for Troy to have been juggling rations and gasoline. He put the item about the missing jerricans in the major's basket where he had a pretty good idea it wouldn't be noticed for several days. Troy was almost the first to experience the blind, drunken wrath of the major, back there at the chateau in France, remember.

Miscellaneous considerations. Troy efficiency plus. And he himself pointed out, would he have committed a murder in such a blundering fashion? Would he have failed twice and have had to try a third time? Maybe, however, that was what we were supposed to think. Maybe this was meant to look like the work of a bungler, so that everyone would think it couldn't have been Troy—he's much too efficient!

THE CASE AGAINST SERGEANT DILLON

Opportunity. Wednesday afternoon. Dillon was in the garage, checking supplies, when the shot was fired. At first glance that makes him look unlikely. But the same argument mentioned above for Troy would hold true of Dillon. The fact that the shot went through the back of the helmet would seem to indicate that the shot came from the administration building, because the major was walking away from it. But—and this was Donovan's deduction, and we subsequently tested it—it would have been pos-

sible for someone to have been standing on the roof of the garage, watching for the major to come through the alley, as he sometimes did. When the major was about halfway to the garage, this someone—still supposing it could have been Dillon—might have thrown a stone *behind* the major. This would cause him to turn around, and then he could have been shot from behind. Far-fetched? Possibly but still it could have been done. As for Friday, Dillon was there and could have slipped the arsenic in the major's glass. Sunday? Dillon had gone on an errand to Munich, and had arrived back at the hotel shortly before supper time. But the side road with the little bridge was only a few miles off the main highway to Munich. Dillon might have driven off the main road, parked the truck off the side of the road, and waited for the major to cross the bridge. Then he could have installed his infernal machine and come back. Or he could have waited until we had come to the spot, although that would not have been necessary, because we did not take the main road to Oberpfannkuchen.

Motive. Dillon was in almost the best position to juggle the jerricans; in fact, he is the most obvious suspect. He was the one who urged Troy not to tell the major about the discrepancy, "for Ginsberg's sake," he said. Dillon hasn't forgotten those weeks of trying to drive his truck behind the major in convoy.

Miscellaneous consideration. Is Dillon bright enough to carry out such a plan as the stone thrown from the garage roof? Is he really as dumb as he sometimes seems?

AT THIS point, we stopped work and drank some beer.

"We aren't getting anywhere, are we, Pat?" I asked.

"Don't be too sure. At least we're getting the whole thing down on paper. We have all the motives, opportunities and so forth listed. Something'll come out of it. You wait and see."

"More beer? No? Well, let's get back to it." So we did, as follows.

**THE CASE
AGAINST T—S ROBINSON**

Opportunity. Wednesday. Robinson had just come back with the flag. He couldn't have fired the shot from the office. Same thing applies to him as to Troy. Possibility of collusion or imitation (see above). Friday. It seems pretty far-fetched that a man would try to poison someone, then give him an emetic and save his life, then kill him all over again. He hadn't been seen administering the poison. Why all that trouble and risk? But then, that would provide Robinson with a pretty good psychological alibi, wouldn't it? How did he know so quickly that it was poison? Such clear thinking and immediate action—was that likely? Maybe. As for Sunday. Robinson was in his room, he says, except for the time he took a shower—twenty minutes or so. He also took a nap, and had to be awakened for supper. Not likely, perhaps, but certainly not impossible.

Motive. Robinson hated the major, too; who didn't. Could have been in on the black market.

Miscellaneous considerations. Robinson is nobody's fool. That talk about Hippocrates might also have been blind, as might the saving of the major's life. The fact that he said he was taking a nap on Sunday afternoon proved nothing. Robinson and Dillon, by the way, were the two that said, let the murderer go.

**THE CASE
AGAINST EMIL NOVAK**

Opportunity. Monday. Novak could have been anywhere in the building when the shot was fired. Or *he* could have been on the roof of the garage. (Memo—where the hell is Novak?) Friday. Novak was at the table with us. Sunday. N. has a car, too. Since no one knows where he was all day, he could easily have been to the little bridge. As far as opportunity goes, Novak is a prime suspect.

Motive. After his experiences in the concentration camps, it must have been a terrific blow to Novak to see that there were such people as our major in the glorious Army of the

United States. Enough to make him want to kill the major? Besides, it was pretty much established that Novak had been connected with some black market activities, although there is a difference between that and stealing Army supplies. The major had accused N. of this, specifically.

Miscellaneous considerations Novak will have to be found before one can be sure of anything. Little known about his background and character. Same added incentive of major's anti-semitism as with Ginsberg.

Opportunity. Not so hot. She was not in the building on Wednesday, she was not at the table on Friday. No one knows whether she can drive a car or not. (Memo—check on this.) In any case, it isn't likely she would have chosen such a method.

Motive. She certainly had no love for the major. Plush sure of this. But something funny.

Miscellaneous consideration. Except as a collaborationist, Lucette doesn't figure as a suspect. Could be involved with black market too. Accessory maybe but not murderess. Same goes for Ilse and Gretel, only less motivation.

SUMMARY

<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Motive</i>	<i>Other</i>
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CARTER

Excellent, Ditto, *Good suspect.*

GINSBERG

Doubtful, Good, Anti-semitism.

TROY

No good for first attempt. Good
"Efficiency?"

DILLON

Possible, Fair, Enough intelligence?

ROBINSON

Same as Troy, Fair. Saved M's life?

Why?

NOVAK

Good, Best. Where is Novak???

Nil, Good, poss. accessory.

IT WAS pretty late by the time we had finished this opus. I was ready for sleep, but Donovan said there was one more thing we had to do. I asked him what it was. He wrote for another five minutes, and showed me the result:

**CHECK ON ALL THESE THINGS
—PRONTO**

1. *Is Huber's watch right? Was it on Sunday?*
2. *Could Carter have gained access to supplies? Or could anyone else, besides Ginsberg and Dillon?*
3. *Contact the girl Marya. Find out what time Ginsberg left her on Sunday afternoon.*
4. *Who could have taken out the jeep? Troy? Robinson? Carter?*
5. *Check mileage on truck, compare with known distances. See motor pool records for this.*
6. *The major said on Saturday that he had left instructions. What is to be done about Lucette's note?*
7. *Find out about sources of arsenic. Weed-killer?*
8. *Can Lucette drive?*
9. *Where is Novak?*

"We'll have to do something about item 6 right away," said Donovan.

"Yes, but what?"

"I have an idea. but I want to sleep

on it. Tell you in the morning, Okay?"

"Okay. Think I'll turn in."

"Good night."

Chapter Eleven

A Forgery And A Search



NEXT morning I went into the public safety office, which Donovan had all to himself, now that Carter had moved into the major's quarters.

"Hi, Paul—didn't expect you so early."

"I want to hear what this idea of yours is."

"Well, it's kind of risky, but I think we can get away with it. The thing is, if we show the major's letter to Carter, he'll be on Ginsberg's neck and the poor guy won't have a chance. He may even consider that enough proop for the C.I.D. If Ginsberg is guilty. I'd be the last not to want to see him get what's coming to him. But I think he deserves a chance. Especially—"

"I know what you mean. I feel the same way. Now for heaven's sake quit stalling and tell me what your idea is."

"Okay. Carter expects to hear the major's instructions."

"Yes."

"But he doesn't know who or what or where. My idea is, and of course we'd have to get Lucette to play with us, to forge a letter. Change as little as possible, see? Just the last paragraph where it says Ginsberg's the guy. Of course, we'd have to forge his signature, but that shouldn't be too hard. His signature was never the same when he was drunk, anyway."

"Pat, I think we can get away with it. In fact, it is a damn good idea."

"Aw, shucks, 'twarn't nothin'."

"We have to be sure to contact Lucette before we do it."

"That'll be easy. She's in the office with Carter now. I'll tell Carter

to come in here to look at a bunch of *Fragebogens*, or better still, I'll go into his office. He'll send Lucette out, and then you can give her the low-down. How does that sound?"

Sounds okay to me, I can tell her in French. No one else knows any."

"Fine. Look." as he produced a paper from his drawer. "Here's a copy of the letter. I think it should do the trick."

I looked at it. Essentially it was the same, except in the last paragraph, which was changed to read, "*This person is an officer in my detachment.*" I thought it looked pretty good and said so.

"This way, it's an either-or proposition. Carter won't be so ready to credit the major's word if he himself is accused. Unless, of course, he did it himself. But I think it'll do. All we have to do is forge the signature now."

He worked a minute or two, then held up the paper.

"There. How does that look?"

I compared it with the original. "Donovan," I said, "you missed a great career."

"Never too late for a guy to start!"

As I was about to go, he stopped me.

"Wait a minute. Here's a copy of last night's efforts. I checked it over after you went to bed. I think it's a darned good job. But for gosh sakes keep it on you and don't let anyone see it."

"Oh, draw it mild, as they say in England. Don't you think I have any sense at all? Better not answer that."

DONOVAN WENT into the major's office—I still thought of it as the major's office, because he had so infused the room with his own personality. Lucette came out in a few minutes, and I told her the plan. I didn't tell her why we were doing it, but only that it would be more fair, especially since the major hadn't been sure himself. She looked a little doubtful, but in the end she agreed.

"What are you trying to do, make time with the lieutenant's girl?" asked

Frank Robinson, who had just come in at the end of our discussion.

"Shhh. Don't tell anyone," I said.

Then I knocked at Carter's door, was admitted, and told the lieutenant about the letter. I told him Lucette had just given it to me. I showed him the letter, and suggested that the contents be communicated to the entire detachment. He agreed and sent Robinson to get the rest of the men. Soon we were all in the large office. It was a little like the scene the other day, when the seven of us were sitting waiting for the major. Except now the major wasn't going to come in. Ever again.

Carter slowly read the letter aloud to the detachment. He paused a long time before he read the last paragraph. Ginsberg sat up a little straighter in his chair when he heard that paragraph. I smiled to myself. What would he have said if he had heard the original?

Carter said, "If we take this at its face value, it doesn't look so hot for me or Lutenant Ginsberg here. And if I say I know it wasn't me, then Ginsberg could say the same thing. Couldn't you, Lutenant?"

"You're damn right I could. And would. And do."

"So there we are. My word against yours. Or both of our words against his." He waved the letter. "Which shall it be?"

"Well," said Ginsberg, "he doesn't say he has proof. I knew he suspected me some time ago. In fact, I told Plush the afternoon the major was killed. Didn't I, Plush?"

"That's right, *Leutnant.*"

"Well, let's wait and see what's going to happen the next time we get our rations."

There was a knock at the door. Carter said, "Come in," and a tall MP sergeant entered. He saluted Carter, who put him at rest immediately and told him to take a seat.

"I have here the report on the search for the DP Novak, sir," he said. "We have searched every house in town, as well as all the villages in a ten-mile radius. Also, the woods around town. We didn't find a trace

of him. Not a trace. We'll continue the search, though, through the whole area. We got check posts out on all the roads. If he's to be found, we'll find him, sir. Maybe sooner, maybe later."

"I'm sure you will, Sergeant. Thanks a lot." The sergeant saluted and went out.

"Well, that's that. I'd sure like to know where that guy is. I have a feeling that when we find him, we'll be a whole hell of a lot closer to the answer to this than we are now. As soon as I have anything to report on the results of our investigation, I'll let you all know. All right, men. That's all for now. Donovan, you might stay behind a minute."

WHEN DONOVAN came back to his office I was waiting there for him.

"What was it about?"

"Oh, it's about putting in Preisel for *Landrat*. The old boy is on his way up here now. Carter wants you to be there when he comes. Preisel doesn't know any English."

And so, about fifteen minutes later, the four of us, Preisel, Carter, Donovan and I were all in Carter's office.

With me acting as interpreter. Carter asked Preisel if he thought he could handle the job of *Landrat*. Preisel was amazed, then overjoyed. His old eyes shone as he said he'd do the best he could. Then Carter asked him whom he would recommend to fill his own shoes as chief of police. To my surprise and delight, he suggested Huber, the one who had heard the explosion. Carter said he'd give him a try. He said that they were both being given a try. Preisel thanked him profusely, but not in the toadying, unctuous manner of Hempel. Carter said he wanted Hempel arrested. Then Preisel's face fell.

"What's the matter?"

"*Herr Leutnant*, that is impossible."

"Impossible? I guess you'll have to learn a couple of things, if you and me are goin' to get along."

"Pardon me, *Herr Leutnant*. I did not say it was impossible because I

do not want to; but the man has disappeared."

Hempel, too? That made two disappearances in three days. What the hell was going on?

"Hempel must be found. He must be found, Preisel."

"We will do our best. Perhaps the American Military Police could help us. Their facilities are so much better than ours."

Carter said he'd notify the MPs. Preisel was dismissed with a courteous nod.

As I passed through my outer office, the one I was supposed to occupy, although I actually had been spending very little time there for the last few days, Gretel beckoned to me. I sat down. She sent the old farmer out of the office, telling him not to let anyone else in until she said so.

"What's up, Gretel?"

"Do you—" She hesitated. "Do you believe the major was killed by a mine?"

"Certainly," I lied. "What else?"

"Then you are either a fool or you are lying."

"What do you mean?"

"I would not tell this to anyone except you. The major was a very bad man. He—he—" She bit her lower lip to keep from crying, but it didn't do any good. After a little while she calmed down. "It was the second night after you came. I was out after curfew, to get some food for my baby. The major caught me on the street. First he said he would have me arrested, then he saw that I spoke English and he offered the job of interpreter to me. I needed the money. My baby did not have enough to eat—"

HERE SHE was overcome again. She regained control presently. "So I went to work here. Then he kept trying to make me—to make me—you know. When I refused, he said first that he would arrest me, then that he could delay the orders for my husband's return... My husband has been in an American Prisoners of War camp for nearly a year ..I do not think I really believed

him, but I was so frightened... Because I am not a bad woman. I have been faithful to my husband." I know that this was true from my own experience... "Now everyone is saying how sorry they are! What hypocrites! I am not sorry. And I do not believe his death was an accident. There are lots of people here who hated this major of yours."

"For instance?"

"For instance you, and Sergeant Troy. Oh, you think because I am a German I am stupid. Do not make such mistakes, my friend... I have eyes and ears. I can see what happens... For instance, Lucette—"

"What about Lucette? What do you know about Lucette?"

"The major had some kind of hold over her, too. I think she was a—what do you call them—a—coll—"

"Collaborationist?"

"Yes. And the major has threatened to send her back to France where they will shave off her hair. She has beautiful hair, doesn't she?"

I nodded absently. This Gretel might prove to be a mine of information.

"Gretel," I said, "you are right. He was murdered. And now we want to catch the man who killed him; will you help us?"

"Help you catch the man who killed him? If I live to be a hundred, I shall never understand you Americans. You all hated the man and must have wished he was dead—oh, so many times! Yet when someone grants your wish, what do you do? You catch him and hang him or shoot him. Is this your American justice? Is this your democracy?"

I tried to explain it to her, as I had to Robinson and Dillon. "Gretel, society makes the laws to protect itself. When one man sets himself up above society and breaks those laws, he is betraying that society. He is no longer fit to exist in a free society whose laws he has helped to make, and then broken. Once a person decides that he has the right to pronounce the death sentence on another man, where will

he stop? Who is safe from such a man? Or woman? Do you see what I mean?"

She shook her head. "I think I do, then I am not so sure. Tell me, what do you want me to do?"

"If you can help me find out who is buying American supplies on the black market, and from whom—"

"You would not want me to betray my own people, would you? Like me, how are they called *Stuhltauben*—stool pigeons in your American films? I would not be able to look my people in the face."

"But you would not be betraying anyone. You would only be helping to bring to justice one who has broken the law. But," I added, "think it over. Let me know later what you decide."

"All right, Paul. I will."

Chapter Twelve

Odds And Ends



HUBER came to Unterrossapfel that afternoon. He was a very fat, short and jolly individual, quite bald. He did not look like a good policeman is supposed to look, but you can't judge by appearances, I told myself. Carter and Donovan interviewed him with my help, and he seemed to be satisfactory.

I asked him what time it was, and he told me. I then surreptitiously looked at my watch, which was correct, and found that his was too. Whether it had been right on Sunday remained for us to guess, but it was a pretty fair bet that it had been. And if a police chief trained to observation in matters like these, was not accurate, who would be? That took care of Item 1.

Donovan then accomplished a neat bit of trickery. He pretended he had a sprained wrist, and asked Lucette if she was free. She said yes, and Do-

novan asked her if she would drive the jeep for him. He said he had to go to a nearby town to see the Burgomeister. Lucette—did she hesitate a little before she answered?—said she was very sorry, but she had never learned to drive. Donovan thanked her and said he guessed it would have to wait. He had his wrist bandaged up very impressively and didn't do any driving that day, either. That seemed to take care of the item about Lucette driving. Or did it?

Later in the afternoon, I went around to the church again. The *Stadtpfarrer* was in the garden. He motioned me to a seat. He looked even more tired than usual.

"*Herr Stadtpfarrer*, you are in a position to help me out," I began tentatively.

"Anything I can do—anything at all, *Herr Plush*."

"We are investigating this—this accident," I said. This was in open defiance of Carter's orders not to talk about the business, but I felt justified under the circumstances. "We think that the major was—well—"

"Yes, my son. I know. I did not believe for a minute that his death was accidental." (He too? That made two who were not taken in by the mine story. How many others?)

"Well, as I said, we are investigating his death, and we think that it has to do with the black market activities."

"*Ach*, yes. I have heard about it. It is terrible, this *Schwartzmarkt*. It is undermining the morale of the people. They are not bad people, but when they have a chance to buy some of the things that they have not seen for such a long time—well, some of them are weak and not able to resist the temptation that is set before them. And so they buy. Sometimes I cannot blame them."

"I see what you mean, but this is a little different. Some of the Army supplies have been missing, and we believe that the person responsible for this is also responsible for the death of the major. That is why we are so eager to find out more about it."

HE THOUGHT a minute. "And what do you want me to do about it?"

"You know more about what goes on here than we do. You would help us a great deal if you could tell us something about this black market. I do not want you to violate any professional confidences, you understand, nor to incriminate anyone unnecessarily, but if you would just sort of keep your eyes and ears open, and if you hear of any American supplies like cigarettes and razor blades and chocolate and especially gasoline being sold, let me know. Let me know who is selling it and where. I shall try to make it as easy as possible on the receivers. But remember that they are breaking the laws. Your laws and our both."

"Well, I can promise nothing, *Herr Plush*. You put me in an extremely difficult position. On the one side I would be guilty of not cooperating with the authorities; on the other, of betraying my own people. I can promise nothing. But I shall, at any rate, keep my eyes and ears open, as you ask."

"That's fair enough. Please do not tell anyone at all of these things we have discussed. No one."

"But of course not."

I stood up. The interview was at an end.

As I walked through the old, cobblestoned streets, so ill designed for modern traffic, I was surrounded by the usual band of ragged, dirty children. "*Nix Schokolade? Nix Schokolade?*" they cried in the sort of German baby-talk that they think is easier for foreigners to understand. I shook my head in the negative, remembering as I did so how similar bands of English and French kids had clustered around the GI's and what they had yelled. In England, North England, it had been "Any goom, choom?" In the beginning, it was cute, and we had little or no gum left five minutes after rations were given out. But later it got monotonous, and then downright annoying. Some of the fellows, I remember, made up a little poem, which they used to recite

to the kids, marching in step as they chanted. It went like this:

*"We've got no candy, we've got
no goom,
And furthermore, we're not your
choom.
So beat it, kids, before we get
tough.
D'ya think we're made of the
gosh-darned stuff?"*

That worked for a short while. The kids ran in terror when they heard it—for about two days.

In France, it wasn't the gum they wanted, it was another commodity. "*Cigarette pour papa?*" was the universal plea there. Now, in Germany, "*Nix Schokolade?*" It was a pretty good commentary on the state of things in Europe. In Germany especially. The things an unscrupulous GI could get for a bar of chocolate or a pack of cigarettes!

FROM THERE I went around to Preisel's office. I said about the same to him as I had to the *Stadt-pfarrer*. He was much more cooperative. He had no religious scruples, and was as anxious as we were to stop the black market. He said he would let Donovan or me know as soon as he found out anything.

In the meantime, Pat had been busy too. He was checking up on the black market from the inside, trying to find who had access to the supplies. They were kept in one of the unused rooms of the hotel. The door was never locked. We figured that if we couldn't trust each other, there was not much use trying to get any work done together. As for the German help, they had pass-keys anyway. But apparently the leak was not after, but before the supplies were brought to the hotel. Ginsberg couldn't figure it out either. As for the gas, it was kept in the garage. There was no guard there, although Dillon was usually around, except when he was out on an errand or trip. So that was not much of a help.

The MPs were duly notified of Hempel's disappearance. They doubled all their checkpoints. No trace of

him. Or of Novak either. It was three days now since Novak had vanished without leaving a single sign or clue. His belongings were intact. No clothes or other things seemed to be missing, as a search of his room revealed. The suspicion was beginning to fall more and more heavily on Novak, though there was no means of proving anything. And he certainly did not seem such a fool as to increase the suspicion against himself by running away. It seemed to me that, if he had done it, he would have stuck around and tried to brazen it out. It was pretty mystifying, though, any way you looked at it.

BEFORE supper, Donovan and I went out and spoke with Opa, the old Bavarian janitor and handyman. He was a wrinkled old man of indeterminate age. He might have been anywhere between fifty and seventy. Probably about sixty. He had mild blue eyes, white hair, and was always smoking a foul-smelling pipe. I gave him a package of tobacco from time to time, when I had any to spare. He was sitting on a box out in back, whittling on a dead branch.

"Opa," I said, "tell me something."

"*Ja wohl?*" He spoke with a very thick and guttural Bavarian accent, so that it was quite difficult to understand him. He dropped off the final letters of words. "*Wir haben*" became "*Mir have*." Tacked on to the end of each sentence was the word "*Gel*."

"I want to know if there is any arsenic around?"

"Arsenic? What is this arsenic?"

"Stuff you use to kill weeds."

"Weeds?" A glimmer of comprehension came into the old eyes. "*Ja wohl. Ja wohl.* There is a can in the cellar. You want to kill some weeds, *gel?*"

"Not exactly. Would you please get the can for me?"

"*Ja wohl.*" He got up, shuffled away, and came back after five minutes.

"I am sorry. It is gone. I do not know what has happened to it. It must be that new boy in the kitchen, that Fritz. He is a—"

"Opa, think carefully. When did you last see that can of weed-killer?"

He wrinkled his brow. "Ach, I cannot say exactly. I cannot always remember the time. A week, two weeks. I cannot say. I am getting old, *Herr Leutnant*." That was a favorite trick of the Germans, to address an American soldier by a much higher rank. Not restricted to the Germans, either. People back home used to call a cop "Sergeant" or "Captain" or some higher title. "I am getting old and sometimes I do not remember the days."

"Never mind. Do you usually keep the cellar locked?"

"The cellar?" He always contrived to sound as if the question asked him were on a subject that was utterly new and foreign to him, and he had to do a good deal of deliberate thinking before even trying to give an answer. "Well, I will tell you, *Herr Leutnant*, we used to lock it, but then the key was stolen and we never got a new one. Now we do not lock it any more. But the cellar where the wine is kept, that is different. That is always locked."

I remembered that this was true. The major had kept the key—the only key—to the wine cellar—on his own person. It had not been found. This was a very regrettable circumstance, but the beer from the brewery was some consolation.

That's all we could get from Opa. Well, anyway, we knew where the murderer got the arsenic from.

IT WAS impossible to check on the mileage on the vehicles. The motor pool sheets were all kept in Dillon's room, and we didn't want to raise any suspicions. Besides, suppose there had been an extra ten miles or so registered on the truck, what would that prove? Nothing, except that Dillon had driven around a few extra miles. Besides, if Dillon *had* had the sense to evolve such an elaborate scheme, he would hardly have forgotten to falsify the mileage readings,

After supper, I stayed in my room. I brought the letter to Bob up to date. Donovan came in at about ten. I have

perhaps neglected to mention that the reason we always met in my room instead of his was that his room was right next to Carter's, while mine was away off at the end of the corridor. We had much more privacy in mine. This time Donovan brought the beer, and some onion sandwiches. It was committing social suicide, but what the hell? We both liked onions. We had quite a feast. Then, after about a half-hour, we got down to work.

We compared notes. We went over the check-list. Item 1. Huber's watch was okay. So our timing on the murder was all right. Item 2. Anyone could have gained access to the supplies in the garage, and the PX rations were still a mystery. Item 3. Marya. This was going to be rather difficult, as she seemed to be quite attached to Ginsberg. But Donovan had an idea. He wanted me to carry it out, because Marya's English was not so good. There was a dance at the DP camp the following evening. If I could go, and dance with Marya, I might catch her off guard and find out how long Ginsberg had been with her. Item 4. As far as the jeep was concerned, anyone could have taken it out. Opa had been asleep on Sunday afternoon, and Troy and Robinson had both been in their rooms, neither of which faced the garage. So either of them, or Carter, or Ginsberg—any of them could have taken it out. We drew a blank there.

Item 5. No soap on the mileage records. Item 6. The forgery Donovan had made took care of this. Item 7. Check. Suspicion of weed-killer confirmed. Item 8. Lucette apparently cannot drive. Item 9. Where is Novak? That was the sixty-four dollar question.

I told Donovan about the results of my talks with Mohn, the priest, and with Preisel. He seemed satisfied with our progress.

"I have a pretty hot lead. It's kind of fantastic, Paul, but if it works, it'll tie this thing up."

"What is it?"

"Sorry to be so secretive about this, but I'd rather wait until I'm a little more certain. You have all the facts.

See if you can figure it out for yourself. I'm going out to do a little more checking up tonight. Tomorrow, I should know."

"Well, can I come with you tonight?"

"Sorry, again, Paul. I don't think you'd better. One can do this sort of thing better than two. Besides, if both of us are out prowling around, it might arouse too much suspicion."

"Okay," I said reluctantly. "But take care of yourself."

Chapter Thirteen

FIRST VARIATION: Murder
Da Capo



IT WAS raining the next morning when I came down to breakfast. Donovan was not there. Robinson and Troy were just starting and Ginsberg was almost finished.

"Seen Donovan?" I asked as I sat down.

"He hasn't come down yet," said Robinson.

"This is still a little early for him. You know he never comes down to breakfast until the last minute," Troy said.

"Sometimes not even then. That guy sure does like his beauty sleep," added Ginsberg.

"I think he was out pretty late last night," I said. "He had a heavy date."

"Say, Plush, that reminds me. Will you come to the dance at the DP camp tonight?" Ginsberg wanted to know. "Marya asked me to ask you."

"I'll try to be there." I tried to make it sound as if I were just considering the idea for the first time.

"Okay. I hope you can."

I dawdled over my breakfast, wanting to catch Donovan before we went to the office. The others finished and the waitress cleared away the table. Donovan was the only one who hadn't come down yet. His orange juice and napkin were still intact. I waited until a couple of minutes be-

fore nine. Donovan still hadn't shown up.

Carter came into my office after a few minutes. "Morning, Plush. Have you seen Donovan?"

I said I hadn't. Carter said I should be sure to send him in as soon as he arrived. He looked as if he were in a nasty mood. I felt a little sorry for Donovan. There were more reports from the MPs. They had gone over the whole area with a fine tooth comb, but had found no trace of Hempel or Novak.

There was a steady stream of people that morning. I forgot all about Donovan until Carter came out to the outer office again. It was nearly ten o'clock.

"Where the hell is that guy?"

"He hasn't shown up yet, *Leutnant*. Want me to go over to the hotel and look for him?"

"Yes. I guess you'd better. Tell him that if he isn't over here in ten minutes, he'll be in a sling, and it won't be his arm."

I hurried over to the hotel. I knocked on Donovan's door. There was no answer. I knocked again, louder. Nothing. I tried the door handle. It opened. There was no one in the room. The bed either had been made or not slept in. On his table, much to my surprise, I noticed my copy of Herodotus. I picked it up, thinking I had accidentally left it there. Then I went to my own room. My bed had not been made yet. The maid always began with my room at the end of the corridor. I deduced that Donovan had not slept in his bed. I was really beginning to get a little worried.

I WENT right into Lieutenant Carter's office.

"Well, is he coming?"

I told him. He sat there, blinking his gray eyes for a moment. Then he got up and put on his cap.

"Get out the jeep. We're goin' to look for him."

We had no trouble at all finding him.

As we crossed the bridge, we saw a crowd of people down on the pebble beach. They were gathered around something. We parked the jeep and

ran down to the crowd, who politely made way for us.

It was Donovan, all right.

He looked pretty badly battered. There were a lot of sharp rocks at the bottom of the waterfall. They could easily have accounted for all the ugly wounds, even the one on his head. There was no doubt that he was dead. He'd been in the water for quite a while, too.

We picked him up and carried him to the jeep. We took him to the same infirmary where we had brought the major. Lieutenant Kilmer was there again. He smiled a greeting when we came in. The smile vanished, quickly, when he saw why.

We laid Donovan on a bed in the office. Lieutenant Kilmer looked him over.

"Boy, am I glad I'm not in your detachment," he said to Carter. "That's the second one in four days."

"What happened to him. How did he die?" asked Carter. "Was it drowning, or these?" He pointed to the wounds.

"Looks like there's no water in the lungs. That'd mean he was dead before he hit the water." He reflected a minute. "Where did you find him?"

"Down by the waterfall," Carter told him.

I asked, "What killed him? I mean, was it the rocks, or what?"

"That's pretty hard to say. A fall onto the rocks from that height *might* have inflicted all these wounds. I'm a little doubtful about that one." He pointed to the one in Donovan's skull. "Offhand, I'd say that that was the blow that killed him. It could have been caused by a fall, or it could have been caused by something else. I'd have to do a post-mortem on him. You see," he added almost apologetically, "I'm not a police medical examiner, and I don't have all that equipment here. We ought to take him to the field hospital out there at the airport. They can do a lot better there."

"Okay. I'll take him there."

We took him to the field hospital. They said they'd give us the report. They examined his clothes when we

were there, and found large fragments of glass in his back pocket. They looked like pieces of a bottle, a whiskey bottle. We went back to the bridge. There was nothing the matter with the railing.

"What do you think, Plush?" asked Carter.

"It looks like someone wants us to think he was drunk and climbed or fell over the railing," I said. I wasn't paying the least bit of attention to what I was saying. I was thinking of the last time I'd seen him. How he'd grinned and told me not to worry about him. How we'd had the beer and onion sandwiches together. How we had compared notes, how we had been partners in this game of trying to find out who had killed the major.

Donovan *had* found out. He *had* known who it was; that was why his body was now lying, broken into a million pieces, in the autopsy room in the field hospital. I had asked him to tell me, but he wouldn't. It must have been to protect me from the knowledge that was so dangerous.

CARTER SAID there would be another meeting of what was left of the detachment in his office after lunch. I went back to my room. Idly, I picked up the copy of the Herodotus that I had found in Donovan's room. That bothered me. What had it been doing there? First I had thought I'd left it there by accident, but I was surer and surer I hadn't, the more I thought about it. The last time I'd been reading the book was the Sunday afternoon just before the major got killed.

What was it doing in Pat's room? I began to leaf through the book. I noticed some writing on the front fly-leaf. I looked at it. It was a note from Donovan. It read:

"Thanks for the loan of your book. I found what I was looking for. Be careful. This thing is bigger than we thought. Watch out for Frank E. Altes and Handel's Largo. And remember what Novak said."

The note was not signed, but there was no mistaking that careless scrawl. Donovan had left me a last message. He must have known that something might happen to him, and he left me this message. But what in hell did it mean? I was completely up a tree. Who was Frank E. Altes? I had never heard the name, or anything like it, before. And what, in the name of Lewis Carroll, did it have to do with Handel's Largo? And what had Novak said? He had said a lot of things. I put the book back on my shelf, and lay down on my bed for a while.

AT TWO, we were in Carter's office, looking very solemn. Everyone had liked Donovan. If ever there was a guy without an enemy in the world, it was Pat. And now he was dead, just because he had figured out what I was trying to figure out. Would I be next?

Carter said, "This meeting was called because, as you all know by now, Corporal Donovan was killed last night. We found his body in the river below the waterfall. There was a bottle in his pocket, and he may have been drinking...."

Carter was all wet. May have been drinking! Donovan was no teetotaler, but he certainly had more sense than to get drunk at a time when he was trying to track down a murderer.

I became aware that Carter was talking again.

"...has been working on this investigation with me and we were arriving at a solution. Donovan must have been lured out on that bridge by the killer, hit on the head, the whiskey bottle put in his pocket, and pushed over the railing. The waterfall did the rest. It was dark last night. There was no moon. Plush!"

I jumped. "Yes?"

"You said Donovan had a date last night? Who with?"

"I don't know, *Leutnant*. He just told me he had a heavy date. I didn't ask him any questions. When Donovan wants you to know something, he usually tells you about it...." I broke

off. The mistake in tense brought it all home to me again.

"Well, where were you last night?"

"Reading. In my room. And listening to the radio."

"What were you listening to?"

"A music program that is broadcasted from Salzburg, Austria. It was a program of the works of Mozart. They were play—"

"Never mind what they were playing. What time did you go to bed?"

"About eleven. Maybe a little later."

"How about you, Troy?"

"I was writing letters in my room. Went to bed early, about ten."

"Did you see Donovan at any time?"

"No."

"Dillon?"

"I was in Robinson's room. We were playing cribbage till about quarter to eleven, then we went to the kitchen to scramble some eggs, then we went to bed."

"You didn't see Donovan, either of you?"

Both of them shook their heads.

"Lootenant Ginsberg, would you mind giving me an account of your whereabouts last night?"

"No, if you'll give the rest of us an account of *yours*."

CARTER began to say something, then thought better of it and nodded for Ginsberg to go ahead.

"I had a date with a girl from the DP camp. Her name is Marya. I'm sure she can vouch for my doings. We went for a long walk in the country. The MPs on the checkpoint saw us as we were coming in and going out of town. They may not remember me, but they'll remember Marya."

"You didn't go near the bridge?"

"Hell, no. We were on the other side of town." He stood up. "Now you tell us. Where were you?"

"In my room. With Lucette."

"All evening?"

"That's right. All evening." Carter went over to the window, and looked out on the old town square. The rain had stopped and the sun had come out. He lit a cigarette. "Donovan was

investigating the murder of the major. He was killed for the same reason the major was killed; he knew too much. The question is, what are we going to do about it?"

No one answered.

"Last time we had a meetin'," Carter continued, "some of you thought we should let the murderer go. Thought he'd done us a favor, and that it would be ungrateful of us to try to catch him. Still feel that way? Dillon? Robinson?"

Robinson said, "Not me, *Leutnant*. This is different. Donovan was a buddy of mine. I'd like to see the guy that killed him get what's coming to him."

Dillon said, "That goes for me too."

"Well, we're all agreed about that. We'll have to make out the same kind of report to HQ. I think we'd better admit that maybe we've bit off more'n we can chew. I'm goin' to call in the CID. Any objections?"

If there were any, they were not voiced.

"I'll go into Munich tomorrow. Dillon, you'll come with me. Plush, you'd better make the arrangements with the priest again. Troy, get out those letters to HQ and Graves Registration. Men," he paused and bit his lip, "I know how you feel about this. But it makes it all the more important for us to get to the bottom of this business. I liked Donovan too. He was a good kid. I'm goin' to miss him, just like the rest of you. But we've got to keep at this thing. We've got to get this guy, whoever he is. I'll check on all your alibis for last night. You can check on mine too. Now, for Lord's sake, men, *be careful*. This killer is gettin' crazy with the taste of blood. He won't care if he kills some more people either. He might as well get hanged for a sheep as a lamb. So watch out. Don't go out alone at night. I think we'd better have a curfew again, for your own protection. Keep your doors locked. And if you think you know something, don't wait. Report it to me. Is that clear?" He waited for an answer. Apparently it was clear. "All right.

That's all for now. Curfew at ten o'clock. Dillon, get up early. We leave right after chow in the mornin'."

I DON'T think I ever felt less like dancing in my life than I did that night. But I went to the dance at the DP camp. Went with Ginsberg, as a matter of fact. I finally got to dance with Marya, who was one of the most popular girls on the floor. Ginsberg certainly could pick them.

"I heard about your friend Donovan," Marya said. "I am very sorry."

"Yes. We all are. He was a good guy. He was my friend."

"They say he was drunk and fell off the bridge."

"Marya, I want to ask you something. You don't have to answer if you don't want to, but if you do, you may help us to catch the person who..." I stopped.

"Who killed your friend Donovan?" She smiled. "And the major who was, I think, not your friend?"

I didn't answer.

"What do you want to know?"

"Remember last Sunday? When you went for a walk with the *leutnant* along the river bank?"

"Yes. I remember. What about it?"

"Think carefully, Marya." I stopped as the music stopped. It continued. We went on dancing. "After you and the *leutnant* left us, what did you do? Did you walk some more along the river? Did he take you back to the camp? Or what?"

"We walked for a little while, I do not know how long. Then he left me when we got to the bridge. He said he had some work to do. I do not know what time it was. I do not have a watch."

"And how about last night?"

"Last night we went for a walk. We passed some soldiers and they whistled at me." She smiled. She had a very nice smile. I did not blame the MPs. "We took a long walk." I saw Ginsberg elbowing his way through the crowd. He tapped me on the shoulder. "Wait for me," he said, "and we'll go home together. I have the jeep."

Chapter Fourteen

Pastoral Symphony



THE next morning was Thursday. Carter and Dillon left for Munich right after breakfast. Troy had knocked out the official correspondence on the affair

the night before. Lucette told me, at breakfast, that she would like to pick some more flowers for Donovan. I asked Carter if that was okay and he said sure, that came under the head of funeral arrangements.

First thing after breakfast, Frank Robinson and I went out to the field hospital. This was about three miles out of town, near an airport that our air corps had taken over. We spoke to the medic captain who had been in charge of the autopsy.

"There was no water in the lungs. That means that he was dead before he hit the water. This wound crushed the parietal bone, and he was unconscious, if not dead, almost instantly."

That was a hard one to figure out. Donovan had more sense than to let someone creep up behind him and slug him in the head. One more puzzle to figure out....

"What was he hit with, Captain?"

"That's hard to say, son. Any hard, club-like object. Even a rock, maybe. You see, he was pretty badly battered by the fall on the rocks. But I'd swear that he was hit *before* he fell, or was pushed. If he had just fallen, there would be some water in the lungs."

"Thanks, Captain. I guess we'd better take him back. The CID is going to take the case over. May I have a copy of the autopsy report, please?"

"You bet. There was one queer thing," said the captain, scratching his chin. "We found a very elaborate and unprofessional-looking bandage on his left wrist. But I couldn't for the life of me find anything wrong with the

wrist. It was one of the few parts of his body that was *not* battered. No fracture, no sprain, no cuts or bruises...."

I smiled grimly.

We took Donovan back to the hotel. We left him just as he was, and put a sheet over him. Robinson went back to the office and I went to see the *Stadtpfarrer*.

"I am deeply grieved, my son. I did not know *Herr* Donovan well, but he looked like a fine boy. He often came to Mass here."

"He was a very good friend of mine. We used to listen to the Salzburg festival together."

"Ach, so? I am very fond of Mozart, myself. In this one respect, I do not agree with the church."

"That is one thing I could never understand, *Herr Stadtpfarrer*. Why is it that Bach, a Lutheran, is allowed by the church, and Mozart, who was a Catholic, is not allowed? Can you tell me?"

"That is a very interesting question, *Herr Plush*. It seems that the actual outward conformity or non-conformity to a church is not the most important thing. The inner spirit is more important. Bach, a Lutheran, wrote music that has a more deeply religious spirit than old Wolfgang Amadeus, although the latter was a Catholic. Do you see?"

"Yes, I see."

"Enough of these matters. I suppose you will bury *Herr* Donovan. A good Catholic funeral, no?"

"Yes. But we must wait. A man from the higher headquarters is coming to investigate the affair this afternoon. The funeral will probably have to wait until tomorrow."

"So. Well, that does not concern me. Donovan's case is now being investigated by a still higher headquarters. The highest of all." He did not smile and neither did I.

"Will you be good enough to communicate with the grave-digger and the carpenter? A full sized coffin, this time."

"And the location?"

"The same spot, I think."

"Well, the place where the mortal

remains are buried is not what matters. Although they are buried side by side, I do not think that that will bother either of them, now."

I NODDED and cleared my throat. "By the way, *Herr Stadtpfarrer*, have you found out anything about the—uh—other matter?"

"Ah yes, I had almost forgotten to tell you. But I am afraid I cannot reveal the source. Does that matter?"

"Perhaps not. But what have you learned?"

"I found out who was the middle man in these black market dealings."

"Well?"

"It was the Czech, Novak. But my source told me that Novak was not the main figure. He was only a small part of the actual dealings."

"And the main person. The one who was responsible?"

"I do not know the name. But this person thinks it was an officer of the *Militarregierung*. He does not know which one. That is all I can tell you now."

So the major had been right, after all. That narrowed it down to Carter or Ginsberg. On the other hand, the person merely thought it was an officer in the MG. I was not much further along.

I thanked the *Stadtpfarrer* and went back to the hotel, where I picked up Lucette.

It was a beautiful morning. There was a soft wind blowing which did wonderful things to Lucette's hair. Neither of us spoke.

We drove for many miles before we came to a meadow with all kinds of wild flowers. I parked the jeep and we got out. We picked flowers by the armful. When the jeep was full of them, we went for a little walk. As we climbed up a steep incline, I took Lucette's arm. She winced perceptibly. I had not hurt her, I was sure, unless....

We sat down. I pulled up the sleeve of her sweater. There were big, ugly blue bruises.

"Do you want to tell me about it, Lucette?"

"It is very difficult, Paul. I would

like to, but I am afraid.... I am so afraid...."

"But don't you see? If you are the only one who knows, there is reason to be frightened. But if you tell me, I will know, and the officers who are coming, they will know too. The more people who know, the less there will be to fear. Do you understand?"

"I understand, and still I am afraid. Oh, Paul, if I could only tell you.... I have wanted to tell you ever since the beginning.... I have felt that you are the one person I could trust.... but I have been afraid...."

"Afraid of what, Lucette.... afraid for whom?"

"For myself, of course, and also for you.... You know what happened to Donovan. That was because he found out. He knew what happened.... I do not want that to happen to you, Paul, because I like you.... You are the only one here who speaks my native language...."

"But you can't keep this to yourself any longer. You can't. That's why Donovan died. Not because he knew. That isn't the reason. It was because he knew and didn't tell anyone. The more people that know, the more safety there is."

LUCETTE did not say anything. She turned away her face and I could see that her whole body was racked by convulsive sobs. I let her cry. I thought it would do her good. I got up and took a little walk, having first lit my pipe. When I came back to the rock, Lucette had composed herself.

"Are you ready to talk now, Lucette?"

She nodded slowly. "But I cannot tell you all, not even now. I will make a bargain with you. Tomorrow morning, when all the men are together, then I will tell the whole story. I think you are right. As long as you and I know, neither of us is safe. So tomorrow morning, I will tell everything to everybody. Then he cannot harm me any more. He will have to kill everybody, and even *he* would not dare to go so far...."

"But what about you? What's going

to happen to you? You won't be safe. He will want to kill you no matter what happens."

"Paul, *mon ami*, believe me. This is the best way. I know it. It is the only way. If I thought it would be better to tell you now, I would tell you now. But it is not better. Tomorrow I will tell the whole detachment."

"But I still want to know what about you? He will...."

"I do not care what happens to me. I cannot go back to France. Sooner or later they would find out. Then I would be better off dead. No matter where I would go, they would find out. They have ways of finding these things out in France. I have seen what they do there. You think it is just the shaving off of the hair that I am afraid of? Do not be so naive, Paul. That is the very least...."

"Can you tell me any about it?"

She sighed. "It was a long time ago, just after the fall of Paris. There was a German officer....he was billeted in my house....Afterwards, he said he would tell everyone I was his mistress.... He said he would send me back to Germany.... He told me all sorts of things.... He said he loved me, and that he couldn't live without me.... Oh, what a fool I was! I should have killed myself first, but I was young, only eighteen at the time.... I was such a fool.... In the end, I believed him.... He was the first German I had known.... I thought before that they were all beasts, but *he* could be kind and gentle and considerate. In the beginning it was not so bad.... But afterwards, *he* knew that he had me in his power, knew that I couldn't run away. Oh, yes, I tried to run away three times, but he always caught me in the end.... Finally, I just did not care any more.... I did not care what happened to me, or what the people thought and said in whispers every time I passed.... I only wanted to die, but I didn't have the courage to kill myself.... It takes much more courage to kill yourself than it does to kill someone else.... *He* has that other kind of courage.... Oh, God, how I hate him! How I hate him....

And now he has killed your friend Donovan too...."

I ASKED gently, "What happened to your German officer, Lucette?"

"He was killed when the Royal Air Force bombed the town. I was with him when he died. He smiled and said, '*Auf Wiedersehen*,' and then he closed his eyes.... After that I left the town and went to the other town, where I was when the Americans came.... Major Smith found me there and, because I could speak a little English, he gave me the job as interpreter. Interpreter! That is funny! That is a new name for it!" She began to laugh hysterically. "Interpreter! I must remember that.... It is the funniest thing I have heard in five years! Interpreter! Ha ha ha ha...."

She calmed down soon. I asked her what happened after that.

"I do not know how he found out about the German officer. But he found out.... he used to threaten to send me back to France if I would not do what he told me.... And now...."

"He is dead, Lucette. He cannot harm you any more."

"What do you know about the dead? Sometimes they are worse than the living. There are two kinds of dead people....the kind that die and leave you alone, and the kind that never stop haunting and destroying...." She began to weep again.

I looked at my watch. It was getting late. I said, "Let's go back to the jeep, Lucette. It's almost time for lunch and Lieutenant Carter will be back." I watched her face as I mentioned Lieutenant Carter's name, but there was no sign. She was under control now.

Who was this "he" she was talking about? Was it Carter? Or Ginsberg? Or one of the others? There was still a piece missing. There was still something I couldn't put my finger on. I had almost all the pieces.

We walked slowly back to the jeep. Again neither of us spoke. As we were about to get out, back at the hotel, I made one last attempt to get her to tell me.

"Lucette, are you quite sure you don't want to tell me the whole thing now? Are you sure you want to wait?"

"I am sure. I have thought very long and very hard. It is the best way. Tomorrow, I will tell everybody."

I left it at that.

Chapter Fifteen

Enter the C. I. O.



THERE were some new faces at lunch. Four, to be exact. There were the men from the Army Criminal Investigation Division. Lieutenant Andrews was a man of middle height. He wore thick steelrimmed glasses, which gave him an owlish look. He seldom smiled. Corporal Bernstein, his assistant, was a young fellow, with red hair and freckles.

The other two were replacements for the detachment. Our new commanding officer was Captain John Doolittle. He was a man of about fifty, with an air of quiet authority. He didn't exactly relish the idea of taking the detachment over the head of Lieutenant Carter, and this was obvious. Carter had insisted on the captain's sitting at the head of the table.

The other man was Private Angelo. He was short and dark. He did not feel at ease, either. Nobody felt at ease. We all wondered what the new regime under Captain Doolittle would be like. We were a little apprehensive about the arrival of the CID men, too. After all, our noses weren't clean, not by a long shot. It turned out that Lieutenant Carter was being relieved, not only of his command, but also of duty with our detachment. He was going to leave as soon as the business was cleared up. The CID said that they didn't want anyone to leave the town until they said so. A meeting of the detachment, the old detachment, that is, was called for two o'clock in

the lieutenant's—no, now it was the captain's office.

"Gentlemen," said Lieutenant Andrews when we were all gathered, "I don't know how much you know about the C.I.D. But it was created and organized for the express purpose of investigating and solving matters of a criminal nature. The personnel are selected for that reason, and they are carefully trained. They are people who have dealt with crime, and who know how to deal with it. You, Lieutenant Carter, and the rest of you men, have committed a very serious error, if not worse. It has cost you and the Army the lives of two men. If you had contacted the CID right at the beginning, when there was first any indication of trouble, your major and your corporal might still be alive."

He paused to let the effect of that sink in, blinked his owlish eyes, and continued: "That's all past. There's no good trying to undo what has been done. Whatever measures HQ wants to take to insure the correction of the error you have committed, that's no affair of mine. I am here to find out who killed the major and Corporal Donovan. And, gentlemen, I intend to find it out. I will spare no one's feelings; so if any of you are hiding anything because you think it may harm someone else, if any of you are concealing information to help a buddy, wise up. I'll find it out sooner or later, and when I do, if I find you have been holding out on me, it'll go hard on you. Now that isn't a threat. It's just a statement of fact, pure and simple. So, for heaven's sake, play ball with me. Help me and Bernstein here to solve this. Help us if you can. But if you can't help us, please don't hinder us."

SEVERAL of us began to stir uneasily. I lit my pipe.

"I understand," said Lieutenant Andrews, "that there were two attempts on the life of Major Smith before he actually met his death, and then that Corporal Donovan lost his life in the investigation of the circumstances of the major's death. Now ordinarily, I would question you all

individually, but there doesn't seem to be much point in it now that you've all been over this thing by yourselves. So I'll just hop from one to the other. Getting this down, Bernstein?"

Bernstein nodded, his pencil poised, ready to swoop.

"Lieutenant Carter, you, as acting commanding officer, had a great responsibility to these men. You have let them all down, one irreparably. Now I want to ask you a few questions. When did you first know something was wrong?"

"When someone took a shot at the major in the alley."

"When was that, exactly?"

"Let's see—last Wednesday."

"And what action was taken?"

"None; the major wanted to handle it himself. We thought it was just a sniper. All the houses were searched; nothin' was found."

"I see. Then what happened?"

"Two days later—Friday, that is—the major was drinkin' a glass of wine at the dinner table when he suddenly keeled over. Robinson here saved his life by givin' him an emetic."

Andrews turned to Robinson. "How come you knew what to do so quickly, Corporal?"

"Well, sir," said Robinson, "I was a pre-med student. Also, I'm the sanitary technician in this outfit. When I saw the major get all purple and splutter, I thought of poison right away. So I made an emetic and we forced it down him."

"I see. Why was no action taken then, Lieutenant?"

Carter said, "You didn't know that major. He had a kind of habit of gettin' his own way about things. When he came back from the infirmary he said he wanted to handle this in his own way. When Major Smith wanted to handle a thing in his own way, he handled it in his own way."

"And what was he doing about it?"

"He said that he knew someone was involved in the black market. Some of our supplies and gas had been disappearing. He said that he was pretty sure who it was, but he needed proof. He thought he'd have it in a couple of

days. And he said that he was going to take precautions."

"What sort of precautions?"

"Well, he made someone else taste his food. He slapped a curfew on us. We had to sign out any time we went anywhere."

"All right. So much for that. Did he say he was leaving any kind of instructions?"

"Yes. He left instructions with his secretary, Lucette. She was to give them to Private Plush."

"And did she?"

"Yes sir," I said. "I gave the letter to Lieutenant Carter."

"May I see the letter, Lieutenant?"

Carter went over to his desk, took out the letter and gave it to the man from the CID. Andrews read it very carefully, then gave it to Bernstein.

"One of the officers, eh?" said Andrews. "Which one did he think it was?"

"He thought it was me," said Ginsberg. "I was the PX officer. The major didn't like me, for various reasons. I didn't like him either. He thought it was me, but it wasn't."

"I don't want to question individuals about this yet. I just want to get the bare outlines of the case down first."

I BEGAN to jot down a few words to the corporal. I wrote on the back of an envelope, asking him to tell the lieutenant that I had some important information about the murders, and that I would give it to him if he would come to my room after the meeting. I told him the number of the room. I slipped the envelope under the pad he was writing on. This was easy, because he was sitting next to me, and everyone else was listening to the lieutenant. Bernstein waited a few seconds, then took the envelope out and read it quickly. He nodded to me, almost imperceptibly.

Carter was now telling the lieutenant about the death of the major. He told him where each of us had been, and about how we had found the body.

"What state were the remains in?" asked Lieutenant Andrews.

"They were all blown to pieces."

"How did you know it was the major?"

"We found his helmet—the one with the hole in it—and his gold leaves, and one dog tag among the wreckage."

"Was that all you found?"

"No. We also found a badly burned arm with the major's serial number tattooed on it. The last part of his serial number, that is. The major had his name and serial number tattooed on his arm. There's no doubt who it was."

"And then what did you do?"

"Then we had a meeting of the detachment to decide what to do. We decided to bury the remains here. We notified Graves Registration, and I notified headquarters, tellin' them it was a mine explosion. As a matter of fact, Lootenant, it *could* have been a mine explosion. There was a sign in German there by the bridge that said *Beware of Mines*—in German. Then, Corporal Donovan and I proceeded with the investigation. Y'see"—he became more confidential—"I've had some experience in this sort of work. I've been a deputy sheriff for nine years in Oklahoma. And Donovan was the detachment investigator. We were goin' to call in the CID as soon as we had some facts to give you."

"But don't you see, dammit, it's our job to dig up facts?" He mopped his brow, which was becoming quite perspired. "Don't you see that...oh, what's the use going over the same ground again? It's done now. There's no use talking about it any more. So you and Donovan went investigating. What did you investigate?"

"Well, we checked on alibis, we tried to find something out about the black market, we...."

"And where is the result of your investigations? I mean, you *did* write them down?"

"I tell you, Lieutenant, Donovan was doin' most of the investigatin'." Carter was getting more and more uneasy. "I think he kept some kind of record, but I'm not even sure about that."

Bernstein passed the note to the

lieutenant, who glanced at it, and then said, "Well, I think I'd better start asking some questions of individuals. I believe I have the general outlines of the business now. Suppose you all go back to the hotel. Wait in your rooms. Can one of you show Bernstein where the two deaths took place?"

Troy said, "You'd better take him, Dillion." Dillon said okay and the two of them left to get the jeep.

I WENT back to my room. I had been there for perhaps five minutes when there was a knock on the door. I opened it and Lieutenant Andrews came in.

We sat down. He took his glasses off and began to clean them. "All right, Private"—I told him my name—"Private Plush, now what's all this about?"

I told him the whole story. I told him how Pat and I had not been satisfied with the way Carter was carrying on, and how we had started an investigation on our own. I told him of our list, and I showed him the document we had prepared, and I read this over thoughtfully.

"This looks like a careful piece of work. Mind if I keep it?"

"No sir; not at all."

"How about these items on the check list? Have you checked any of them?"

"Yes, sir. Most of them." I told him about Huber's watch, about the general accessibility of the supplies, about the talk I had with Marya, which didn't prove anything either way, since she had been vague about the time. I even told him about the forgery Donovan and I had made. I told him what the original had said.

"You fellows certainly bit off quite a chunk," he said, and I told him how we had not trusted Carter. I even told him of my suspicions.

"There's one thing you left out of this careful summary," said the lieutenant.

"What's that?"

"You neglected to include yourself among the possible suspects."

"Well, Troy was in the office with me when the shot was fired."

"That doesn't let you out, as you have proved here."

"No, I guess your right."

Then I told him about my talks with the *Stadtpfarrer*. I told him what the priest had told me that morning about Novak and "one of the officers." He seemed very interested in this. "Maybe the major was right," he said.

"I don't think so," I replied. "I know Ginsberg pretty well and I don't think he could shoot a man from behind. Besides, he was with me until about four last Sunday afternoon. Then he walked some more with this girl Marya."

"Maybe you're right."

Then I told him about Opa and the weed-killer that was missing. I told him about the missing copy of Herodotus and the message that Donovan had written. He asked me if I had ever heard of Frank E. Altes and I said I hadn't.

"What did Novak say?" he wanted to know next.

"I've been trying to remember. I have a feeling that if I could recall, I might have the key to the whole thing."

"I think I'd better keep this book. I'll give it back to you when I've finished. There are one or two very interesting points about this affair. You say they have been looking for Novak?"

"For four days now, but not a trace."

"I think he's involved in it, but I don't think he's the one we're really looking for."

I hesitated awhile. Should I tell him about Lucette? I decided that, as long as I had told him about everything else, I'd better tell him this too. Just as I was about to, there was a knock on the door. It was Carter.

"Plush, have you seen Lucette? Excuse me, Lieutenant."

"We went out to pick flowers together. I haven't seen her since lunch."

"That's funny. She said she'd be in my room." He left looking very puzzled.

"Now what were you telling me?" asked Andrews.

Quickly, I told him about what Lucette had said that morning and how she had promised to tell the whole detachment tomorrow. He began to get very excited. "Another person trying to take the law into his own hands. I only hope it's not too late this time."

We left the room and began to look for Lucette.

Chapter Sixteen

SECOND VARIATION: Lucette



WE found Lucette in the cellar, in one of the musty, little used rooms with low-hanging rafters that we found her. She was hanging from one of the rafters.

There was a thin cord around her neck, thin, but strong enough to hold her weight. She could not have been dead very long, because she was still warm. Her face looked more peaceful, more resigned than it had looked for a long time.

We cut her down. There was a packing box, moldy with age and damp, turned over under her feet, to make it look like suicide. Andrews gingerly put his foot on the box, and it crumbled to pieces.

"So much for the suicide angle. This box never would have held her weight."

"Even if it had," I said, "it wouldn't have made any difference; she wouldn't have killed herself."

"What makes you so sure of that?"

I told him of the years in France, as Lucette had told me that morning. "If she had been the sort to kill herself, she would have done it long before. Besides, she was going to disclose the identity of the murderer tomorrow, remember?"

"Yes." He blinked a couple of times. "You've got something there. Well, too bad; she could have saved her life if she hadn't been so stubborn and refused to talk."

"Lieutenant," I said, "I don't think she cared much one way or the other.

She was pretty fed up with life in general. She had a hell of a rough time, and there was no future for her. She couldn't have stayed here in Germany, she couldn't have gone back to France. Maybe it's just as well."

"Maybe."

This gave me one more score to settle with the murderer. I didn't really mean that maybe it was just as well. I had liked Lucette, in spite of everything I knew about her

"Well, I guess this lets you out," said the lieutenant, not unkindly. "She was killed during the last half or three-quarters of an hour, and you were talking with me all the time. It lets that sergeant out, too, the one who went out with Bernstein."

"Sergeant Dillon," I said.

"Yes. And it leaves in the two lieutenants and Sergeant Troy, and the T-5."

"And one other person," I said.

"And one other person," he agreed.

"What do we do now?"

"This is pretty irregular, Private Plush, but I think, under the circumstances, it's justified. I'm going to ask you to assist me. I think we can wind up the case pretty soon now. Undoubtedly I have the same idea that you have. I want you to go back to your room now. Lock yourself in and don't leave, whatever happens. I want you to go over all the circumstances of the three attempts on the major's life. I want you to note down what you think the significant features were. Then the death of Donovan. And I want you to work on the note Donovan wrote in your book. I'll leave it in your room. And, most important of all, try to picture in your mind the times when you and Donovan and Novak were together. Try to remember what Novak said. I have a hunch that if you can remember this, it may be the key to the whole thing. I am going to take my jeep and travel back to Munich as fast as it'll take me. I should be back in three hours, if I find what I'm looking for. Now, don't let anyone in. Anyone at all. Do you understand? This is absolutely vital. I'm relying on you a great deal, Plush, maybe more than you know. Don't let me down. For your sake, for my

sake, and for Donovan's sake, don't let me down."

"What are you going to do about the others?"

"Nothing now. Leave them where they are."

"And Lucette?"

"Is there an empty room where we can keep her for the time being?"

I REMEMBERED that there was a room on the second floor that Robinson used as his little infirmary—where he kept the aspirin, bismuth pills and band-aids. We took Lucette there and laid her on the bed. Then Lieutenant Andrews headed for Munich. I went into the kitchen for beer and a couple of sandwiches, as it was getting dark and I was hungry. It is funny how your insides keep demanding sustenance no matter how busy you are, or how worried, or angry, or grief-stricken. The inner man must put his two pfennigs in....

I went back to my room and opened a bottle of beer and started munching on a sandwich. I forget what kind of sandwich it was, but I guess it doesn't make any difference.

And slowly, methodically, I went back over all the things that had happened in the last ten days.

First, I thought about the shot in the alley. I remember what Pat Donovan had said about the reasons it couldn't have been a sniper—the timing, the gun—where would he get it? The risk—broad daylight. And I remembered that I had also mentioned that it would be very unlikely that a sniper would aim at a GI helmet when he could hit a man in the back. Those helmets are designed so they are hard to hit with a bullet, so they ward off pieces of shrapnel and so forth. Why in the helmet? I thought I had the answer to that. I wrote it down as point number one.

Then the second attempt. Arsenic in the wine. I thought about that one. Two things appeared to be significant about it. The manner in which the poison had been administered, and the speed with which it had taken effect.

The same motif was present in the death of Donovan, I then remem-

bered. The same motif that had been running through the whole picture. I should have seen it before. I almost had seen it before, but there had been one thing blinding me.

Then there was the actual murder of the major. There were two things about that also. Why, when he was taking precautions, should he... Yes, that was a good point. How was it that I hadn't thought of that one before? I was going along fine now. Little by little, the pieces were beginning to fit together. It was as if I had had the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle to put together, with no design, no picture on the surface of the pieces, to help me. Now that the picture was beginning to be visible on the separate pieces, though, it was a lot easier to put the whole puzzle together.

A stray thought came into my mind... a story about a man who gave a pair of beautiful riding boots to a soldier to dry.... That fit in, too. This was getting better and better.

I WAS interrupted by a knock at the door. I ignored it. The knocking continued and I heard Troy's voice calling, "Plush? Are you in there?"

"Yes," I said. "I'm in here. I'm busy. Go away."

"What the hell is going on here, Plush?"

"I can't tell you now, Troy. I'm busy doing a job for Lieutenant Andrews. He deputized me."

"Well, don't you want any chow?"

"No. I have a couple of sandwiches here."

I heard Carter's voice outside the door. "Open up, Plush I want to talk to you."

"Sorry, *Leutnant*. Can't talk to you now. I'm under orders from the C.I.D."

"Well, have you seen Lucette? I still can't find her."

I thought that one over for a minute.

"No," I said. "I haven't seen her. I'm sorry, Lieutenant Carter; I have to get back to work now."

I heard their retreating footsteps. Now, where was I? Oh, yes.... the

riding boots. That fitted in, too.

Then the letter that Lucette had given me from the major. I took out of my drawer and looked at it I looked at it for a long time. This was a little doubtful, but there was a point there also... no, wait a minute. There were two points there... I put them down on my list, too. That made how many, so far? The shooting, the arsenic, Donovan, the riding boots, the major's letter. He had actually told me, in that letter who the murderer was, if I had only realized it before! Now it was all so clear. Had Pat Donovan realized this? Had he found these clues, these very tenuous clues that I had overlooked until now?

But why? Why? *Why?* I still couldn't see that....

Another idle thought came popping into my mind. It was what Gretel had told me that morning at the office. Good heavens, was that only Tuesday? Only two days before? It seemed like months. Donovan had still been alive then.... What had Gretel said? She had been stopped on the street by the major, but when he found she could speak English.. This was another point. Not proof, certainly, but a good piece of corroborative evidence....

I still didn't know why. I picked up the volume of Herodotus.... I thought of the afternoon I had sat on the river bank reading, and thinking about the major and Hybris, and the vengeance of Zeus. I turned over the pages, trying to find the answer, trying to find what Donovan had been looking for and had found.... He had said he'd found it.... I came to the part about the Persian Wars, the battles of Marathon.... Salamis.... Thermopylae.

Thermopylae! I suddenly remembered two things and the whole picture was clear, or almost clear.... Thermopylae.... A tiny band of Greeks, under the leadership of the Spartan king Leonidas, had held off the oncoming hordes of the army of Xerxes, until they were betrayed, because one man showed the Persians a pass that led around the mountain and the Greeks were cut off from behind.... What was the name of that traitor? Who was the one who

had sold out his people to the enemy? Again I looked at the flyleaf of the book, where Donovan had written his note. "Watch out for Frank E. Altes...." *Frank E. Altes F.E. Altes....* Phonetically, it was the same as Ephialtes....and Elphialtes was the name of the traitor in Herodotus.... Handel's *Largo*....the name Handel's *Largo* was a popularization of the aris "*Ombra mai fu*" from the opera *Xerxes*, by Handel.. Watch out for the traitor, Ephialtes, and for the conquering forces of *Xerxes*....

NOW I was really getting warm; I was getting hot. Frank E. Altes and Handel's *Largo* were now clear.. I had to smile in spite of myself, as I thought of how Donovan had searched through the history of the Persian Wars for this traitor of Ephialtes. Why had he taken this extremely devious way of telling me something that he could have shown me by simply writing it down in so many words or even telling me right out? Was it to protect me from this knowledge, while still leaving a clue that *could* be deciphered? Was it because he thought it was safer to leave the message deliberately obscure, in case the murderer should get hold of the book? Or was it just Donovan's puckish sense of humor, which had made him pick the two subjects that were closest to me, Greece and music, to deliver the message that was so reverling? I supposed I would never know. more.... *What had Novak said?*

Now there was only one thing....When was the last time we had all been together? At dinner the day of the second attempt. Had Novak said anything then? I could not remember anything, except the way he sadly and slowly kept shaking his head. How about the time at the office, when Novak had gone in to see the major about the "beeg deal?" No, that was no good. Donovan hadn't been there....

How about the night of the party? The drinks, and Lucette, and the major getting all het up and blowing his top about the PX rations...Then the major had gone out, and what

had been said? Robinson had said he was sorry he'd started the whole thing by asking about the razor blades. And Troy had calmed him down and told him that he couldn't help it, and that it had been bound to happen sooner or later....

And then Novak....what had he said? I closed my eyes, and I could hear him all over again.... "*Leesten to me. I vas t'ree months in Auschwitz and ve had a guard dere who vas one steenkair. But I am telling you, he vas not steenkair like dat major.*"

I had it The last piece missing from the puzzle. One word in that speech of Novak's gave the whole thing away. Now I had all the pieces. I knew why, and I knew who, and I knew how....

I sat down at my typewriter. I took out the pages on which Donovan and I had put all our information, inserted a fresh sheet of paper into the typewriter and began to write.

Chapter Seventeen

THIRD VARIATION: One
Bottle Too Many



IT WAS getting quite dark when I finished what I was writing. I took the paper out of the typewriter, assembled the pages, and looked them over. Yes, my case was perfect. Now I knew who had committed the murders and why.

But I still didn't know one thing: What I could do about it. Perhaps he was being detained; perhaps he wasn't coming back until the next day. I felt I could not wait that long. My murderer might escape by then; he might guess that the jig was up and then we might never catch him.

I decided that I would catch him that evening.

Don't get me wrong. I didn't act in a spirit of courage, or bravado, or revenge, or righteous indignation, or

anything like that. It was simply that I couldn't stand this waiting around without doing anything about it.

There was one more thing to figure out. I knew who, and how, and why, but I didn't know where.

Again I read over my case against . . . and I thought maybe I did know where, after all. There was this leit-motif running through the whole story, one logical place where I must look. One place, so obvious that it was right under our noses; so inaccessible that we might never have found it. The MPs had overlooked it in their search for Novak and Hempel.

I wrote a short note to Lieutenant Andrews, apologizing for disobeying orders, but explaining the situation in a manner that he could not fail to understand. I put on my belt with the little .25 caliber pistol I had "liberated." I looked out into the corridor to make sure that no one was around. I tiptoed down the stairs to the cellar. No one was there either.

CAUTIOUSLY I approached the door of the wine cellar. It was a thick oaken door. I listened and heard the muffled sound of voices. I took out my automatic and fired one shot into the door.

"I have a hand grenade here," I shouted. "If you don't open the door in five seconds, they'll be picking you up with a shovel!"

I counted the seconds. On number four, the door was unbolted and slowly swung inward. I saw a large, well ventilated room, with racks and racks of bottles on the walls. A man was sitting at a small table in the center of the room. He had a bottle in one hand. He got up as I entered.

"Well," I said, "if it isn't the late Major Smith!"

"I'll be—Plush? How in hell did you get here?"

"Never mind that now. Keep those hands up or I'll fill you so full of holes that any self-respecting Swiss cheese will be jealous."

"Come now, Plush, there's no need to get all hot and bothered. Sit down and have a drink."

"Sorry, Major. I'm kind of parti-

cular who I drink with. Bums, four-flushers, yes; murderers and traitors, no."

"Don't be too hasty about this, Plush. No one else knows about this except you and me. Why can't we make a little deal . . . just the two of us?"

"Do you really think I'd make a . . ."

I never finished that sentence. In fact, I didn't do any talking for quite a while. Because something came down, hard, on the back of my head, and I collapsed. I wasn't interested in anything for a long time . . .

The first thing I remember was an awful dizzy feeling, and a terrific headache. I tried to sit up, but I couldn't make it. Then I realized that my wrists and ankles were tied. I twisted my head around, although the pain was splitting it and I saw a short, fat man who had an ugly smile on his face.

"I believe you know *Herr Hempel*," said the major. "He is also a member of our little organization."

"So that's how you got Donovan," I said.

"That's it," said the major. He was sitting down. I'm sorry, Plush, because I always thought you were the one guy I could trust in the outfit. I'm sorry it has to end like this; we could have gotten along well together. The organization can use clear-headed men like you. I'm sorry about Donovan, too."

"Well, thanks," I said. "Thanks just awfully. Now will you kindly cut out the mock regrets and get this thing over with?"

"You were always so impulsive, Plush. So damn impulsive. Why can't we have a nice quiet talk, until it gets late enough for *Herr Hempel* here to take you for a little walk, the way he did with your buddy Donovan?"

I saw a chance to stall, by goading his ego. Maybe Andrews would get back from Munich and it would not be too late. Maybe . . . While there's life, and so forth.

"Would you be interested, Major Smith, in knowing that there were at least ten flaws—ten loopholes in your perfect scheme? Would you like to know how I found out who was the

murderer? I'll make a bargain with you. I'll tell you all I know—if I'm going where Donovan went, it won't make any difference anyway—and all I want you to do is answer one question."

"That sounds fair enough. Ten, did you say?"

"I said at least ten."

"The hell you say. All right. Keep talking. And don't stop, because Herr Hempel here needs exercise, and it's a long time since he's had a workout. And when you get finished, I'll be only too happy to answer any question you may have."

I PAUSED purposely, and grinned slightly. "All right. Here goes. Number one That helmet gag was pretty phony. In the first place, no sniper will shoot like that in broad daylight. In the second place, the way you wear your helmet, a shot at that angle would almost certainly have hit you. Finally, who is going to shoot a man and aim at the GI helmet, when he can hit him in the back."

"Do you call that three points?"

"Three? Hell, no, that's only one. By the way, is that the gun you made the hole with?" I indicated with my head a very ugly and very efficient-looking Luger on the table in front of him.

"Yes. That's the one."

"I figure it was an easy stunt. You just took the helmet off, made sure no one was looking, shot a hole in it, and came back hollering bloody murder."

"All right. All right. What other mistakes did I make?"

"Let's take the poison incident. As soon as I remembered how the poison was administered, in the *wine*, I was suspicious. You were the most likely person to think of that as a medium. That same motif was carried out when you killed Donovan. What did you plant on him. A *bottle*. The same logic applied when I remembered about the wine cellar. The perfect place to hide. And the obvious place that would appeal to a dipsomaniac like yourself."

The major got up and kicked me in

the ribs. I'd feel that for a long time, if I lived. "That's for being insulting," he said. "Kindly confine your remarks to the matter at hand."

I grinned again, meaning it this time; I was beginning to get under his skin. So much the better.

"By all means," I said. "As for the actual murder of the major, I wondered why, when you were taking so many precautions, food-tasters, curfew, sign-out sheet, and so on, you felt it necessary to make this trip to Oberpfannkuchen at all, and especially alone. It was a very poorly traveled road, and anything might happen to a man who was genuinely concerned for his safety."

"Yes," said the major. He sat down again. "I myself wondered about that angle."

"Another point about the poison," I said. "I am not sure, but I don't believe arsenic works that fast. I think it would take a few moments before it began to take effect. But you weren't taking any chances. You probably had an emetic prepared, in case Robinson or someone else didn't catch it in time. And your getting up and spluttering was an act. A very convincing act. Isn't that so?"

"More or less."

"Then the actual mechanics of the explosion. That took someone with a certain amount of technical knowledge. I remembered that you had said you used to be with the engineers. Say, how did you work that explosion, anyway? That was pretty tricky."

"You're the one who knows all the answers; you tell me."

"All right. I'll try. I figure you rigged up the explosives with a detonation cap, put the 'remains' in the car, started it downhill toward the bridge and the explosives, jumped out and waited. It was something like that, wasn't it?"

THERE was a trace of grudging respect in the major's voice as he answered. "Something like that. The 'remains,' as you call them, weren't in the car when I started it downhill; I planted them later. Otherwise it would have been too risky.

The numbers on the arm might have been burned off, and all that work might have been in vain."

"Yes, you really did a job there; that was a very neat piece of work. You must have killed poor Novak, cut off his arm, burned it so that only the last two digits of his Aushwitz brand would show, and put it in the wreckage. That was a very neat piece of work indeed."

"So you saw through that too?"

"I remembered something Novak had said at that party. What he actually said wouldn't interest you, and I have no desire to get kicked again, but he mentioned having been in the Aushwitz camp. Later—much later, I remembered that all Auschwitz prisoners had numbers branded on their left arms. That was quite a break for you, that his last two numbers coincided with yours."

"That was what gave me the whole idea, Plush," said the major. "I've got to hand it to you, though; I didn't think anyone, least of all you, would see through that tattooing."

"Thanks for the compliment."

"Never mind that. Keep talking. It's getting late. Or are you finished?"

"Not quite finished, Major. Those things, the helmet, the poison, the wine, the tattooing, told me that you were the murderer. There were other things that told me what else you were. Not only a murderer, but..."

"He knows too much. Let us stop this nonsense and put an end to his talk at once!" said Hempel in German.

"Be patient, *Herr* Hempel; his time will come soon enough," the major replied in German. He took a long doink. "Not only a murderer, but a *what*, Plush?"

"A traitor. A Nazi and a traitor."

"Traitor is a funny word, Plush. It all depends what your viewpoint is. I can see that you might call me a traitor from where you sit, but look at it from *my* side. I was born in Germany. I left in 1930, on a special mission for the government. While I was abroad, our late Fuehrer came into power, and I was asked to serve *my* country by becoming a citizen of

the United States. That is not treason; that is only loyalty. Loyalty to my mother country. My brother served in the Whermacht, was an officer. He was killed in an air raid over France. I was only serving my country as he was."

"Yes, Major, but there is one difference. When you joined the Army, you were a citizen of the United States. That's where the treason is. Did you say," I added irrelevantly, "that your brother was killed in an air raid over France?"

"Yes. A year ago. Why?"

I did not answer. I thought of what Lucette had told me. So that was how the major knew about her activities. His own brother!

"What were these other things that told you that I am a Nazi, and a traitor, if you like? It does not make any difference. What were they?"

"Two of them were in the letter you gave Lucette for me. You spoke of Novak, not as a Czech or a displaced person, but as the 'Jew Novak.' That was suggestive of the Nazi ideology; by itself it proved nothing—there are loyal American officers who suffer from racial pathology—but added to the other thing, a rather strange use of a word..."

The Major frowned in thought. "What word?"

"In your second paragraph, you said that you had kept silent, although you suspected this person, because mere suspicion was not enough: you needed evidence. Then you said: '*Also, I have wanted to wait until I could catch this person red-handed.*'"

"I don't get it."

"Don't you? You meant not *also*, but *therefore*, or *so*. You used the word *also* in the German sense of the word, not the English sense. That was a dead giveaway."

"Well, Plush, I really have to hand it to you there. That was a tricky bit of reasoning. I knew better, too; the word just slipped out."

"I'm sure it did."

"Any more evidence?"

"The general tone of the letter, incriminating Ginsberg and Novak, both Jews, was also indicative, if not proof. But there is one other thing."

THE MAJOR'S voice was frankly respectful now. "Where did you dig that up?"

"Strangely enough, I didn't dig it up at all. Gretel told me."

"Gretel? But she didn't know anything."

"Didn't she? She told me that you found her on the street and threatened to arrest her. Then, after you found she spoke English, you offered her the job of interpreter. Get that? After you found she spoke English. But that means that you must have spoken to her in German first. And if you knew German, why did you need an interpreter? When the *Stadtpfarrer* was there in the office, you asked me to translate what you said into German for him. Why should you want to hide the fact that you spoke German, unless there was something under-cover about it?"

"Very shrewd. Very shrewd," said the major. "Isn't it, *Herr Hempel*?"

"*Ja wohl*. It is indeed shrewd." Hempel smiled.

"It is really too bad that all this shrewdness, all these deductions and observations will come to nought."

"Please don't waste any sympathy on me, Major Smith. Or is it Schmidt?"

"So you guessed that, too."

"It was obvious. I must really congratulate you, Major. It was a very clever scheme."

"In spite of all the loopholes and flaws? You are too kind. Yes, it was a good plan. And you see, don't you, why it was necessary to dispose of Donovan and Lucette, as well as the dog Novak, and why it will be necessary to dispose of you?"

"Yes, I see. Skip the apologies."

"And now, what was the question you wanted to ask me?"

"What was all this business about the PX supplies?"

"Plush, you astonish me. That's the easiest part of the whole thing. Don't you see? It was a blind—a red herring to withdraw attention from what was really happening. At the same time, it gave me the opportunity to fasten my suspicions on Novak and Lieu-

tenant Ginsberg, and gave him a motive to want to kill me. Killed a whole flock of birds with one little stone.

The major smiled, now. "Perhaps you have realized by this time that a good part of my temperamental behaviour was an act, too. When I had a command in the German army, before 1930, I can assure you that I was not hated as you and the others hated me."

I nodded slowly; yes, the major had gotten away with a first-class deception. "And, I suppose, you weren't as completely alcoholic as you pretended to be.... But let's get back to what you were saying before. What was happening?"

"And what was happening?"

"Plush, I wish I could tell you that, but I can't; if I did, I'd really be guilty of treason. But I'll tell you one thing. Ever hear of Martin Bormann?"

"You mean Hitler's secretary? What about him?"

He is the leader of the organization of which I and *Herr Hempel* here are insignificant parts. We are waiting for him to come, then we shall strike. We shall strike where and when we are least expected. I am sorry you won't be there to see it happen. It will be the biggest coup since...."

"*Herr Major*, it is getting late. Let us get rid of this swine before someone finds the body of the girl."

"Hempel, you get too impatient sometimes. We must not make our guest feel unwelcome."

"How about Lucette, Major?"

HHE SIGHED. "Lucette was a good kid. I was sorry to have to kill her; I really was. She was a good friend of my brother's. When I got to France, I looked her up. She was a big help to me. But lately she began to go soft on me; we have no room for dead weight in this organization. Besides, the CID coming in here spoiled everything; I had to get out. And within an hour I will be out. The MP checkpoints won't question a major with USFET papers, nor his Chaffeur." He pointed to Hempel.

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by Glen Peggie

(Author of "No Punishment For Murder")

Another true fact story about the famous criminal lawyer, William F. Howe — and the man who got away with arson.

ONE OF the most ingenious escapes - from - punishment - through - a - loophole - in - the-law ever to be recorded was worked late in the preceding century by a man named William F. Howe, who was easily one of the most successful criminal lawyers in American history. It made Howe more famous than ever, and caused a great state to alter its statutes.

Early one winter morning, a professional arsonist named Owen Reilly was nabbed in the act of setting fire to a row of stores on New York's lower East Side. Reilly had been earning his living for a number of years by performing this service for eager storekeepers and building owners who felt that they'd get more from the insurance companies than they'd earn from their properties, and he'd always gotten away with it. This time, though, he was caught red-handed—and it looked as though he was due for a striped suit.

The penalty for arson was then life imprisonment. In a panic, Reilly scraped up as much money as possible, and hired high-priced William F. Howe as his attorney.

The first thing Howe did was to study the evidence in the case and decide that it showed his client to be overwhelmingly guilty. He went into a long, careful huddle with his law books—and then, sadly and with defeat plain on his features, he approached the district attorney and the judge assigned to the case.

He heaved a deep sigh. "This is

one time I've got to admit I'm licked," he said. "Caught in the act! What's a defense attorney supposed to be—a miracle worker?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and turned to the district attorney. "Look," he said, "there's no point in spending the State's money for lengthy trials and arguments, and there's no point in wasting my time any more than necessary. If you'll change the charge from committed arson to attempted arson, we'll agree to plead guilty. That's a fair enough compromise: you'll save trial expenses, and my client will get off with a lighter sentence."

Howe was famous for his amazing courtroom tricks, and the district attorney should have known better than to agree. But this looked like a simple enough proposition, and a way to save the State some money—the D.A. agreed. Shortly thereafter, the trial judge concurred.

Owen Reilly pleaded guilty to a charge of attempted arson, and, after due proceedings, was asked to stand and receive sentence. It was then that Howe sprung his bombshell.

"Just a minute, Your Honor," Howe said, rushing up to the bench. "Reilly needn't bother standing—he's a free man."

The judge and the district attorney stared at the criminal lawyer in astonishment. "Have you gone crazy?" the D.A. snapped.

"Not at all," Howe said, blandly.

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The Ebony Cat

by REX WHITECHURCH

(Author of "Just Around The Coroner")

When a miser loans out five grand without security, something is wrong — particularly when the borrower is bumped off within the hour afterwards!

IT BEGAN just outside my door—the door that bore on pebbled glass the following information:

**JOHN RANDOLPH BECKETT
PRIVATE DETECTIVE
SPECIALIST IN SHADOW CASES**

The blonde girl with the black cat in her arms let out a shriek just beyond the said door. Then she lunged through the said door and fell dead across my desk, and the ebony cat streaked away!

"Plain case of murder," said fizzy Police Inspector Gogalvatty, rolling his little piggy eyes into a glare of suspicion. "Plain case of murder right here in the office of this dumb shamus who tries to make us believe she staggered into his presence with a .22-automatic slug under her left arm. Besides, if you heard the shot, why didn't you jump out of your chair instead of, as you say, waiting until too late?"

They carted the blonde's body over to the morgue. Gogalvatty was moving about my office with a magnifying glass in his pudgy fist, hoping he'd find something that would give my story the lie. "It's a good thing you bumped her," he said, "or I would have died for want of excitement; it's been dull so long."

"My dear friend, Gogalvatty," I said depreciatingly, "I did not bump her. It's not a nice thing to say, to say there's anything good about a swell dame like that being bumped. I'd like to know what there is good about it. And for the twentieth time within the small space of two hours I have said to you, my dear friend, Gogalvatty—I did not kill the blonde beauty."

"You could have gotten rid of the gun," Gogalvatty tossed his two hundred and forty pounds of fat out of my Morris. "You could've dropped it out the window. You could've—"

"Swallowed it," I said, with dignified rancor. "You, Gogalvatty, are an ass; you have big ears and a bray and a barnyard smell. Why don't you scam and let me find out in my own way why murder dropped in on me the very day my rent was due?"

Gogalvatty and I were close friends. Business had been below zero the past five weeks. Murderers had stopped murdering; thieves had stopped thieving, and married folks had stopped stepping out on each other. Thus, at the precise moment my landlady, Edyth Widdle, was on her way to my office to collect two months' back rent, my door was wrenched open by the dying young lady from

"Miss Waddle was your only visitor." Gogalvatty's little eyes were smaller than two lone peas on a big dinner plate. "She was the only one who showed up right after the murder was committed by those running feet. Yet Miss Waddle did not see any feet; she did not see anyone running. She did not hear the girl scream. She did not even know there was a girl who had screamed in her building, until she walked in and found her lying across your desk."

"Her name is Widdle, not Waddle," I corrected Gogalvatty. Must I keep reminding you of that? Another thing, my dear Gogalvatty—she is called Twiddle by all her tenants, not Widdle."

"What's the difference?" the fat genius snapped. "Twiddle or Twaddle, Widdle or Waddle, it's all the same; she does not confirm your statement that a woman screamed in this building. Therefore you are definitely a suspect and I must warn you that anything you say may be used against you."

I munched on a peanut, put the bag in my pocket and my topcoat over my arm. "The proper place to begin your investigation is at the studio where the poor kid was booked to sing, and did sing, time after time, right into the hearts of millions of radio fans. Personally, I aim to begin at the morgue; and speaking of morgues—that's where you'll wind up if you insist on being a dumb jack-ass and not bringing your brains home from their extended vacation."

He followed me out into the narrow hall. I locked the door, buttoned my coat and marched to the lift. Old Georgie, the elevator boy some sixty-odd years of age, was waiting; he slammed the cage door, rolled his eyes and said, in a hoarse voice:

"Zickety Zam, there's that black witch's cat—!"

Scrooged up in a corner of the rattling lift was a black Tom. His eyes were like sapphires. His back was arched, and he was watching me with a suspicious gleam in his jungle orb, until I reached down gently, and spoke to him, and picked him up. He didn't sing; he spat a couple of

times; but he didn't claw. Georgie sighed heavily.

* * *

I DROPPED the Tom off at my apartment. I got him a big bowl of milk out of the icebox, patted his head, removed the thin leather collar from around his neck and put it in a bureau drawer, then rushed back to my sedan, headed for the city morgue up Edmond Street, and marveled at the beauty of the first snowfall of the year.

Old Ben's lumbago was at its peak on this day that was so uncondusive to bodily comfort. Between cursing his pains and impudence, he managed to clump his way down the iron steps without dying for want of breath. He conducted me to the big storage room, where a white light shone against a white ceiling, and yanked out a crypt. He pulled it all the way out, and the rollers sounded like the beating of bat wings in pitch darkness.

Just as I bent over the poor kid to see the wound, scuffing heels raked down the iron stairs. "Reporters?" Ben muttered. "Them guys will be the death of me yet."

As long as I had known Ben he was always on the verge of dying. But he was as healthy as any sound man his age.

He turned away, moved his bent form to the door, pulled it shut behind him. Alone with Ruth Cardova, I inspected the wound with the impartiality of a veteran flatfoot. There were no powder burns. The bullet had entered underneath her left arm. The tiny puckered blue hole did not seem capable of causing death; but that was an illusion, of course.

"Strikes me," I thought, "that she was shot as she passed the hidden killer, maybe as she passed an open door. Either that or the culprit was walking beside her. But if such was the way it happened, then there would be powder burns. The corridors of the Ballanger Building are narrow. It isn't necessary to think she was shot by someone in one of those rooms she passed. Maybe there was a loiterer in the hall. Nope—that's out. On account of the narrow

width of the corridor, there would be powder burns around the wound. Only by standing inside an open door could the culprit shoot her without leaving those burns in the flesh or on the clothing."

The sound of low voices disturbed me. I drew the sheet over the girl's face, observing a certain peculiar hardness around the eyes. In death when the features are relaxed, you find traces that reveal plainer than words certain characteristics.

Three men entered the room. Old Ben; Dave Cassidy, a leg man for the *Chronicle* who, on the side wrote an interesting column; and Tom Farris, production engineer for KVVX.

There was nothing particularly striking about these men. Cassidy was short, wide and neatly dressed in a brand new tweed coat over a chalk striped blue suit. He wore a black necktie on a white shirt, and a black hat with the brim turned down all the way around. He was graying slightly at the temples, had a small, puffed mouth and a dimple in a stubborn chin; I could imagine Cassidy getting real fat by the time he was fifty.

Thomas Farris was a writer of soap operas. He was tall, sandy and balding. He wore glasses with heavy gold rim and thick lenses. He was clad in tweeds, even to a tweed topcoat, a black Homburg and a pale blue shirt with a wine colored tie. His shoes were broad, oxblood, and his gloves were black knitted wool. He was about forty years old.

Farris nodded; Cassidy frowned, and old Ben swore under his breath. None of them spoke to me. I stalled near the door, until they had looked at Ruth Cardova. Gogalvatty was coming down the iron steps, with elephantine grace, in a black derby, a plaid brown topcoat that was as big as a circus tent, and carrying a brief case under one arm.

She had no lovers; when she was killed she was being starred in a soap opera by Farris.

GOGALVATTY horned in, "Where did Ruth Cardova come from?"

"A little town west of here called

Cameron," Farris said. "She'd been with us about a year. She wasn't the kind to run around. I had her out to night clubs a few times, and she'd never take more than one highball; at the most two. She was greatly ambitious—vowed to make the hometown folks sit up and take notice, because she thought they'd been unjust in their criticism of her. They'd called her stage-struck, the usual things a small town says about a girl with lofty ideas."

"She didn't have no boy friends hanging around?" Gogalvatty expostulated. "You sure she didn't have no lovers, Farris?"

Farris flinched, his hands shook a little. He was a nervous man, and his cigar had gone out. "I don't think so," he said; he kept his voice down. "Of course we all made a play for her; I admit it. Even Cassidy took her out. But none of us was serious, if that's what you mean."

"She wouldn't play." Fat Gogalvatty made a wry face. "She wouldn't play at all?"

"She was very quiet." Farris looked at me, shrugged. I felt sorry for him. Gogalvatty was an ass. Gogalvatty was a fat monkey; he needed his nose punched. He was criminally sadistic.

Gogalvatty smiled. "She had a reason for going to see this mule-faced shamus. She wanted to hire him. She was either afraid of being murdered, or she was afraid of something else."

"That's what I'd like to know," said Cassidy, who up to now hadn't said a word. "What took her to Beckett's office?"

"And," Gogalvatty supplied cunningly, "who in the heck knew she was going to see him? And who killed her to keep her from talking?"

Farris sighed, stamped his cigar out on the stone floor. "I do not know how to answer your questions," he said coldly. "If I did, it would make me very happy."

ON MY way back to my office, I had time to do some hard thinking. Although I didn't expect to get a fee out of my work, I meant to do my utmost to solve the mystery. I knew Gogalvatty hoped to pin the

crime on me. He was an ambitious donkey and didn't let a little thing like friendship stand in his way.

I began to have an uneasy feeling, like maybe someone was following and watching me, with a sinister purpose in mind. I could imagine a shadow falling aslant my path, a dark, hooded shadow whose eyes gleamed with anticipation. I don't know where I got the idea, but it actually caused a cold sweat to break out on my face. I was used to doing the shadowing and not being shadowed.

I put in a long distance call. Ten minutes later I had Ruth Cardova's father on the phone. He'd already learned of his daughter's demise and in his voice was his deep grief.

I learned one thing of importance to the investigation. Ruth had written home that barring misfortune she would be able to prevent the foreclosure on her father's business. It seemed he was facing ruin. Due to the war he'd been unable to get new cars to keep his auto agency going. He'd held on until he was heavily in debt. It would require an even five grand to put him back on his feet; this sum Ruth had promised she would raise. No doubt she'd had a loan in mind.

For a while I sat munching peanuts, the salty kind. It seemed Ruth Cardova had been a loyal little person, at least where her father was concerned. But I figured she'd been trying to borrow the money from the wrong man. Suddenly I thought of something, called Inspector Gogalvatty:

"Did you look in her purse?" I asked.

"Sure—there's five grand in it. Five one thousand dollar bills." I almost fell out of my chair."

"What would a gal be doing with that much money?" I asked.

"It ain't exactly cornfodder," he said. "When I come to think of it, you're the only one who knows what happened in your office. I should've arrested you hours ago."

"If I killed her" I said, "I could've paid my rent. As it is, I owe two months and I'm going to have to move."

"Which is neither here nor there"

he rapped. "If I can hang Ruth Cardova's murder on you—"

I heard a furtive sound behind me, muttered quickly, "I mightn't live that long" and cradled the phone. Just then the atomic bomb dropped on my head, exploded and blew me into little bitsy pieces.

* * *

SLOWLY I picked myself together put the pieces all back in place, crawled to my knees, then to my brogans and groped along the wall for the cupboard where I kept my whiskey. A deep charge of Scotch and I was able to take cognizance of the situation. A lump on my head as big as a goose egg showed where the bomb had landed but there was no cut place in my scalp and I figured I'd been hit with a flat-black-jack, flat because of the shape of the mountain.

My desk had been ransacked. The rug in the front room was a mess. They'd even looked in the geranium pots for whatever it was they'd looked for. And my desk had been moved at least four feet; on the floor lay the blue advertising blotter.

"The money" I exclaimed. "They knew she had the money and reasoned that I robbed her before the police came. Somebody knew she had that five grand—!"

I whistled, decided not to report the matter to the police and about twenty minutes later I was seated in a glass room, surrounded by mikes, filing-cabinets and other accessories that usually litter up a radio production engineer's office. Tom Farris had before him a stack of manuscripts, and he'd been working hard because his face glistened with sweat. But the room was none too warm to suit me.

"I just dropped around to chat a moment on a new angle," I said. In a deep chrome and red-leather chair I lit a cigarette.

"Glad you did," he said. "Gives me a chance to leave off work. I've been hard at it in here for an hour and a half, writing the latest episode of *She lost him because she loved him.*"

But I observed that the sweat dried quickly on his face and this made me

wonder how he'd worked himself up to that lather in a room as cool as this one. I pulled the ashtray toward me. "Would you mind telling me how much salary Ruth Cardova was paid by your company?"

"Not at all," he said. "One hundred a week, with a raise coming up the day she was twenty-five, which would be next Tuesday."

"Why that?" I asked. "What difference did it make about her age?"

"Just a birthday present," he said. "She was twenty-four, nearing twenty-five and she spoke about it a lot, what she'd like to have when she was twenty-five."

"Oh, yes, of course," I said. "A hundred a week. It would take a long time to save five grand. Did she have any money, Farris?"

"Not much," he said. "I think she was sending home all she could spare. But I never heard her say. It cost her a good deal to live, the way she lived—I'd say around two hundred a month for her Plaza apartment, not to mention the cost of her wardrobe and other things."

"Sure, I see." I got up, went to the window and gazed out at the snow flakes swirling around a nearby church steeple and falling on the already white city. "Did she try to borrow from you?" I asked, casually.

"Never," he said.

"Do you know anyone with whom she could have secured a loan?"

"No," he said. "I do not."

For any girl making one hundred a week, borrowing five thousand dollars without security was next to impossible.

"I had a talk with her father tonight," I said suddenly. "Over at the police station they have her purse and it shelters five one thousand dollar bills. Her father said she'd promised to send that amount home if she succeeded in raising it, which she said she believed she could."

Farris got up slowly and peered down at me. "Beckett, it's funny where she got that money."

"You telling me?" I rose and walked to the glass door. "But I'm quite sure the cops will make it their business to find out where she got

it," I said. "Well, good day, Farris."

A MAN came toward me through the blanket of snow as I approached my apartment which opened upon the sidewalk. I saw Dave Cassidy's blocky face and it was red; he'd been drinking. I led the reporter down the steps of the sunken living room and asked him to take off his topcoat. He declined, didn't even remove his snow sprinkled hat.

The black cat was not in sight.

"I want to talk to you, Beckett." The fleshy reporter sat down. "I think I've got something that will help you find Ruth's murderer. I'm not sure. What do you know about Edyth Widdle?"

I was making him a drink and paused, with the glass in my hand. I set the pink decanter down on the mantel. The fire was roseate in the soft table lamp.

"Edith Widdle," I said, "is my landlady. She owns the Ballanger Building. She is a tight-fisted, youngish woman, a miser who finds bargains and squeezes the eagle until it cries bloody murder. She'd do anything for a dollar, and is the youngest and prettiest miser-lady in the country. They say her father was like that before her."

Cassidy's red face flamed. "Miss Widdle is a money lender," he said. "For good security she will loan you any amount. But the security must be excellent. This afternoon I saw Widdle and Ruth Cardova at the Rendezvous on Edmond Street. This tightwad was spending money lavishly, and Ruth had two highballs. They both wore corduroy slacks and fur coats. From the Rendezvous they crossed the street to the Ballanger. That was thirty minutes before Ruth was killed."

"All right," I said. "What about it? What ice does that cut?"

"Only this." Cassidy took the glass out of my hand drained, it. "Less than a month ago Widdle's office was entered and certain valuables left in her care as security for loans were taken. Mostly they were diamonds."

"I didn't know that," I said. "Anyhow I don't see the connection. I don't see what you're getting at."

"Okay," he said. "Just let this percolate: In Ruth's purse at headquarters the cops found five one thousand dollar bills. I'm guessing she got the money from this female Shylock because she returned her the stolen gems."

I gasped. It was startling. I peered at the pink decanter on the mantel and thought how pretty the cerise light was on it. By no stretch of the imagination could I place Ruth Cardova in the diamond robbery. "You're out of your mind," I said.

He stared at me and his eyes flamed. "Edyth Widdle has no license to do a pawnbroker's business. Think of the lawsuits that would follow her failure to return those valuables to their owners who demanded them and met their obligations to Widdle. Do you get what I mean now?"

"In short," I said, "our little small town heartthrob turned thief, then offers to return the securities if Miss Widdle will give her five grand.

"Beckett, you're a genius." He laughed jeeringly and set his glass down on the Turkish coffee table. "You're a deep, quick thinker; you have got the solution now and there can't be any mistake."

"After paying Ruth five grand, Miss Widdle gets so mad she sees red, shoots Ruth and recovers the money. Is that it?" It still didn't add up. "Nope," I said, "that is not the solution."

Cassidy straightened, rubbed his broad face. I followed him to the vestibule. He regarded me cynically. "Inspector Gogalvatty suspects you of the murder," he said. "He's going to arrest you, says you are the most logical suspect. Ruth had to be shot in your office, for it didn't occur in the hall or there would be powder burns. The hall is entirely too narrow."

I heard him leave the house, went to the street door and watched him enter his car. The little street was filled with a deep hush. The church on the corner was majestic in the white silence. Cassidy's press car vanished and a curtain of snow fell behind it, leaving only pink lamps spearing out at me.

* * *

I HURRIED through the house looking for the ebony cat and I found Mr. Tom, curled up on my bed, under the comforter. I did not disturb his deep slumber, but turned toward the door and stopped. There was a covert movement beyond the threshold. Then the room was filled with a blinding, volcanic explosion. The floor rushed up and smacked me in the face, and all the lamps went out.

I crawled painfully back over a path littered with thorns. I got my hands on the bed, but didn't know it was the bed. I thought I was clinging to the wall of a precipitous cliff, and that there was a vast emptiness below me, and showing in the empty depths, far, far down there, so that I could barely see it, was something. There was a waterfall below me the stream roaring like thunder and a seething mass of clutching trapping hands that tried to pull me down into the depths. I heard something cry out softly, and the bang of a door. The cat was glaring at me, his eyes brighter than any diamonds Ruth Cardova could ever have taken from Edyth Widdle, and he arched his back. Now I knew what it was all about, for the Tom was crawling out from under that comforter where he'd been lying peacefully. A tiny clot of blood on my forehead showed where the bullet had grazed me, and the impact had momentarily knocked me out. I must have frightened away the burglar, because when I grabbed Tom and hurried out into the living room, with my automatic in my hand, the street door was open. Snow whirled and spun in a white magnificence on the vestibule rug.

It was about ten minutes later when I found Edyth Widdle's name in the phone directory and about ten minutes later when I got her on the wire. She was panting in the transmitter.

"Do you own a black tomcat?" I asked. "He answers to the name of Jo-Jo."

"Sure I do," she said, and her voice had a lot of music and pieces of velvet in it. "Who's this speaking?"

"John Randolph Beckett," I said. "I'm one of your tenants."

"You're the private detective whose office is on the same floor with mine," she said. "And you owe two months rent. Sure, I know. But what about my Jo-Jo?"

"I gave him a bowl of cream," I said. "He's all right. We've gotten to be pretty good friends since I found him. Suppose you meet me at your office, and I'll fetch him along; I suppose you're willing to pay a reward?"

"Possibly a small one," she said in a low voice. "How soon?"

"One hour," I said. "It's pretty cold out and I want to make myself a cup of coffee before I tackle this storm."

"I'll be waiting in my office," she said. "You bring Jo-Jo. Don't you dare come without Jo-Jo, Beckett; if you do, I'll move you out into the street." There was a strange anxiety in her voice.

* * *

I KNEW what she looked like. A rangy brunette, with long slim hips and clad always in tweeds. She had a pale, high-cheekboned face, a shapely mouth that looked hungry all the time and a deep bosom that she kept down by tight brassieres. She was stronger and bigger of physique than she looked, but she was quite appealing, despite all that. I imagined she was just past 30 years of age. But she had never been married.

I was beginning to see daylight. When Ruth Cardova ran into my office, she had Jo-Jo locked in her arms. I had just one question yet to answer. What was she doing with Edyth Widdle's tomcat?

But there was something else. I would get around to that later. The little matter of the attempt on my life and the slugging I got at the hands of the same nasty culprit, was still very fresh in my mind. I went back into the bedroom and saw the pieces of the picture of my hunting dogs smashed on the floor, broken by the bullet that had narrowly missed killing me.

What did the nasty culprit want that I had in my possession or that he thought I had in my possession? Could it be—?

I ran to the bureau and dug out Jo-Jo's thin leather collar. Racing through my mind were certain clues

which I was beginning to fit together. What, for instance, had Ruth Cardova been doing with Widdle's black tomcat?

She could have picked him up in the hall. No, that was out. I was sure she would not have picked up a stray cat. Two: She had five grand in her purse when she was shot. Three: She was with Widdle at the Rendezvous where she had two highballs with the miserly young woman. Four: Edyth Widdle hadn't claimed her cat when she came to my office after the killing. Five: She'd heard no gunshot, no woman scream. And six: Edyth Widdle was a money lender.

I could've gone on all night linking Widdle with the murder of the radio canary, but I'm not a patient man. I pocketed the leather collar bearing the ebony cat's name on a thin brass plate, and headed for the Ballanger Building. I left the coveted cat behind, playing safe.

The storm was furious and there'd been a drop of four degrees in temperature since I'd gone home from my interview with Tom Farris, the playwright. I parked a block this side of the Ballanger, on Edmond near the Empire Bank. The clock over the sidewalk said ten o'clock, straight up and down. The chimes began to tinkle musically as I clambered from my car. In the pocket of my trenchcoat was my automatic and the leather collar. The city's ermine coat was studded with gems.

I was cautious as I entered the building. The lift had stopped running, and the vestibule was cold, with the steam turned low. I took the broad wooden steps. The Ballanger's an old building but a big one, and the staircase was steep. I crossed the landing slowly on the second floor, and soon the landing on the third, and finally reached the fourth. A light gleamed at the end of the hall. Beyond this the second door, in the elbow turn, was my office. I knew that Edyth Widdle's suite was the third door on my right as I started up the long corridor. A sudden flash of light gleamed on the fire-extinguisher; this warned me. I braked to a stop and reached for my gun.

Just then a door opened and a

square of saffron brilliance appeared just two jumps ahead of me, on my right. The door of Edyth Widdle's suite had been quietly opened.

Flattened against the wall, I waited not breathing for fear I would be a target for a pistol gripped in a desperate hand. There came no disturbing sound, no sound at all. I edged along the wall, inching my way. When I reached the open door, I heard voices. I had arrived at my destination thirty minutes earlier than I had promised to be there. But the voices were muffled and I could make out none of the words; nor were they loud enough to be distinct so that I could recognize the speakers.

Boldly now, the gun gripped in my hand I crossed the threshold. I saw nothing. The bright lamp blinded me. I made out a desk which stood facing the door, low, modernistic, with greenhouse flowers forming a bouquet in a big vase on the blotter. Just as I put my hands on the desk, the door behind me banged shut.

The next thing I knew I was fighting silently, and desperately, for my life!

MY HAND, clutching the automatic, was pinned to my side before I could make use of the weapon. Somebody was fumbling with the front of my coat, and the buttons were torn away. I pushed this person back with my left hand, and strove hard to use the gun. I got away, but was followed closely by the man who'd tried to disarm me. I saw him looming straight in front of me, lifted the gun quickly and squeezed the trigger. There was a blinding red flash and the explosion of the little automatic. The form that loomed in my startled eyes, stopped coming at me and began to run away on his heels. He must've struck the desk hard, for the bouquet of flowers rolled off and crashed on the floor.

I skewed about quickly, but could not see my other antagonist. But hands were on me now, and I knew that I was going to have a hard time getting away this time. Something brushed against my face, and I felt

the warm silkiness of a woman's hair. Edyth Widdle!

I don't know how she got hold of my wrist but she was so strong that she succeeded in twisting the automatic out of my hand. I heard it clunk on the rug. Then she must have tripped me, for we soon were rolling about on the floor. I felt the softness of her bosom, and the bareness of her, when she rolled up to sit down on me, and began to pound my head up and down on the floor. Only the thickness of the rug kept her from hammering my brains out through my skull.

I reared up and found that she was heavy enough to keep me pinned. I tried to grasp her hands, her fingers being buried in my hair. I got hold of one wrist, and tried to loosen her hold on my hair, but failed. She kept bumping my head. I threw my left arm out and the back of my hand hit my lost gun. Quickly I closed my fingers upon it, pulled it to me, and by bending my elbow was able to get the weapon close against her side.

Too late she discovered what I'd done, and she shifted her hold to my throat. But I had the gun against her ribs now on the right side, and I gently pressed the trigger. The savage crash of the gun left everything still for an immeasurable interval, then I felt the softness of the woman harden, and stiffen and then she just rolled off on the floor, still with one heavy leg thrown across me.

I scrambled to the phone, called headquarters. Gogalvatty answered. "Okay," he said, "I'll be over. But I hope they've made mincemeat out of you by the time I get there."

He was sore because I'd beaten him to the solution of the case. Funny how men who are big enough to hold jobs like this are just boys when it comes down to their personal feelings.

* * *

GOGALVATTY sat facing me across his desk. He toyed with the leather collar and pulled the black cat's ears. Tom seemed to enjoy it, but I didn't. He'd held me there two hours, just talking and not saying anything new or fresh enough to hold my interest.

"Of course the credit for the so-

lution goes to our friend, Cassidy," he said. "Cassidy tipped you off and put your brain to working. You figured the rest out from the start he gave you; it didn't take a lot of sense to do that. Edyth Widdle wanted her jewels back, that Ruth Cardova stole. Ruth had seen where Widdle kept them in her desk, when she was there to get a small loan from the woman. Widdle didn't know she was the thief, and when Ruth approached her on the subject of recovering them for her, she promised to give Ruth five grand. She kept her word. Then she decided to get her money back, and as Ruth was leaving with the money, Widdle jumped her. The black cat was there and took a hand in the struggle. He must've jumped into Ruth's face and she held him to keep him from clawing her. And she didn't put him down even after Widdle shot her.

"Ruth ran around the bend in the the hall, to your office. She knew you had an office there because when she stole the gems she looked around on the fourth floor. She figured you'd protect her. She didn't know Widdle had wounded her fatally. Then Tom

Farris, who was hooked up with Widdle in the money lending business, figured he'd better get Widdle's black cat with the collar, away from you. He was in a tight spot, too. When he jumped you in the office he supposed you had the cat there, then when he tried to kill you in your apartment, he failed to find the cat that was sleeping under the comforter." He sighed. "But I'll say one thing for that Widdle woman; she's not bad to look at, and when she gets well, I'm going around to see her. Of course she'll get the chair, but I'll take her some flowers. You see, Miss Waddle is the only one who's ever given you a good beating."

"Her name's Widdle," I said. "Not Waddle."

"Well," croaked the fat genius, "Twiddle or Twaddle, Widdle or Waddle, she has my sincerest best wishes for a quick recovery.

I gave him a cussing, took Tom and went home.

THE END



Guest Again



by JOHN THOMAS URWIN

Unfortunately for him, Jim Metton's aunt didn't plan things out as carefully as he did.

HE WASN'T nervous. He was never nervous. The whole thing was planned pretty neatly. The cops could prove that Jim Metton was within driving distance of his aunt's place tonight, but he'd out-fox them; he'd admit it before they tried to prove it. He'd take the news pretty hard about the old lady getting knocked off. Then he'd tell them that he'd been on his way to pay his respects to her, and that he and Merrylee had stopped off at this tourist court for the night.

Oh he'd lay it on good. The wandering nephew arriving one day after his beloved aunt was brutally murdered. He'd be quiet and dignified about it, but he'd do it good. Just like those friends of his aunt, he'd be—distracted, broken up over the whole thing. And Merrylee would swear that he hadn't left her bed. She'd be embarrassed about it all, *very* embarrassed when the cops asked her if she had really stayed with him at the camp. Just modest enough she'd be, and just blushing enough and just sentimental enough in telling them they were going to be married *anyway*. That it ought to make a pretty good alibi; the sweet young thing admitting her indiscretion to prove his alibi.

That's why he liked Merrylee, he decided as he pulled the car in under the trees along the quiet road. She could turn it on and off when she wanted to; she could see things his way. None of this sentimental stuff his aunt was always pulling. This rigamarole of pleading with him to let her lend him enough money to start up a business and settle down. Well, he had humored her; he had taken several hundred bucks at a time to start a "business".

The business had always gone

broke. "Dishonest help". as he had told her one time.

But now he was after big stuff, with no obligations. He knew his aunt kept lots of dough handy, knew where she kept it; and to make sure she'd have plenty on hand he had written saying he was coming on the seventh. Well, this was the sixth, and he was here. He had made it clear, very clear, because his aunt was always getting things like that mixed up. She was always giving him birthday presents ahead of time, and sending people things on the wrong dates for anniversaries. She sure was bugs on that sentimental pap, parties, or birthdays and all that.

Well, this would be a party, all right, all *right*. This would be her last one.

HE HAD walked the quiet road, and in the darkness turned into the drive he knew so well. Far down the road he had left he saw the faint light from somewhere on the lustrous paint of parked cars. Probably somebody down at Metton's was having a card-party, playing pinochle or something. Holy Snake-eyes! Pinochle! Well, they were far enough away, he wouldn't have to worry about anything but pure bad luck, and he had planned most of those things ahead.

And he had planned just the way he'd do it too. No fooling around. He'd go up the steps as he was now, looking, as he ascended for any last minute thing that might change his plans; seeing, as he was seeing now, that there was only a dim light in the room downstairs where she always sat to save electricity. She was probably knitting something for one of her friends, and she'd be sitting in

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Death Trail

by RAY CUMMINGS

(Author of "Publicity Plus")

It was a beautiful metal, so ductile it could be spun out thin as a spider-web. And it became the web for a killer.

GEORGE Barrington sat in the stern of the small, green canvas canoe, paddling swiftly with sweeping, skillful strokes. The moonlight had faded from the lake. Out to the south, over the line of wooded hills, summer storm clouds had risen to obscure the moon and make the placid lake surface a dim expanse of purple. Now as Barrington rounded the point, the lights of the summer hotel in the cove beyond the cottage where he lived with Bruce Arton, were vaguely visible through the trees. It was nearly midnight and there were only a few lights. Some of them winked out as Barrington stared at them. He was following the shore now. In a moment the lights were obscured. No one would notice the tiny blob of his canoe, merging with the shadows of the shoreline.

It occurred to Barrington as a thing very strange that he should care whether or not anyone saw him returning home from the dance at Woodhaven across the lake. George Barrington liked dancing. He was fond of all the lighter, gay things of life. At twenty-seven now he was a

tall, dark, sleek and handsome fellow. Always well dressed, perfectly groomed. His manner was suave, sophisticated; his personality charming, especially to women. He knew all that, but it didn't make him conceited. From a business point of view, he had to be personable. His looks, his manner, his soft cultivated voice were all part of his stock in trade. Because some day George Barrington would be recognized as one of the country's great actors. Recognition had been a little slow coming—but it would come. Underneath his light gayety, there was the real Barrington; a cool, calm, perhaps ruthless sort of fellow who knew what he wanted, and was determined to have it. You had to be that way, or life would side-track you. . . .

Now he was tense, and he hoped that his canoe wouldn't be seen. More than that, he was making sure that it wouldn't be seen. He tried to tell himself that there would be no trouble with his cousin, Bruce Arton. He had determined to have the showdown now, tonight—because he and Arton would be alone tonight; and

tomorrow Arton's fiance was coming and the housekeeper would be back and there would be other friends in, the next day. After tonight it would be too late. Too late for what? Barrington didn't face the question. He set his handsome mouth more grimly, put more power into his strokes of the paddle, as though suddenly there was a tense urgency in what lay ahead.

The lake darkened. Overhead the clouds were spreading. Now there was only one light visible at the ragged, wooded shoreline—the light in Arton's cottage, one of his windows of the chemical laboratory where he was undoubtedly working. Barrington silently swept his frail little craft up to the small dock; he pulled the canoe up on the incline and put on his jacket. Quietly he ascended the little trail that led up through the trees and along the edge of a ragged gully, from the dock to the house. The Death Trail. The name, from a hundred years ago, still clung to it—this little trail that led from the lake up into the hills where once an Indian brave had met his young betrothed here in the summer moonlight and killed her and then himself. Barrington knew little of the legendary story and cared less. But he thought of the name now as he followed the trail up to Arton's cottage. He thought of it with a queer, vague feeling like a shudder.

ARTON HAD built a south wing on the house last summer, equipped it as his private laboratory so that he could continue his experiments in research chemistry during the months he was up here from the city. Barrington entered through the little side door. He closed it after him.

"Oh, you George?" Arton greeted. "You're back early. Have a nice time?"

"Yes, thanks."

Barrington sat down on a little stool, here by the door, midway of the room. It was a narrow, oblong room, with bench tables and shelves littered with bottles and what to

Barrington was a meaningless maze of chemical apparatus. The place glowed with dim eerie light; it was redolent with queer smells. A place of mystery. Interesting maybe, if you liked that sort of thing. Barrington didn't. The realm of chemistry was worse than Greek to him, a thing for the fussy type of mind like Arton's.

Certainly no two men could have been more wholly different than the handsome, fun-loving, suave George Barrington and his older cousin. Arton who was busily at work now. He was standing in the narrow glare of a hooded light at a table across the room. The steady droning hum of an electric motor came from there. Two tiny spindles a few feet apart were whirring, with a big metal arm very slowly oscillating between them. Arton, in his shirt sleeves and baggy trousers, with his thin sandy hair ruffled, had turned briefly to greet Barrington; now he was back, intent on his work. Bruce Arton was thirty-five—a smallish, slim, wirey fellow with a grave and solemnly intellectual face. He was in business for himself, what he called a research chemist with several big manufacturing concerns for his clients.

"You look busy," Barrington said into the moment of silence.

Arton turned around again. He certainly seemed in a good mood; there was an air of quiet triumph about him. "I solved it," Arton said, "and by Jove I believe it's the most important thing I've ever done in my life." He added something about the great Bell Telephone Company, and what his client, some National Wire Company, would have to say to them when this new Arton Process was patented. A lot of Greek to Barrington. He hardly listened to it; he was thinking of Marjorie. He had telephoned down to the city tonight, but hadn't gotten her.

"Oh," Barrington said. "Well, that's fine, Bruce." It sounded as though there might be a lot of money in it for Arton. Good enough. The prospect of that would have him in a receptive frame of mind. Now was the time to cinch the thing.

"Fine?" Arton echoed. "Yes, I'm very gratified, of course. I've certainly worked hard enough on it this summer." The electric hum had suddenly stopped. The little spindles were motionless. Arton looked at a dial, nodded to himself and smiled. He was full of quiet enthusiasm, just in the right mood.

"You'd say I've just discovered the real secret of ductility," he added. "The ability to draw metal out, into an infinitely fine wire. I've got it, George. A more perfect ductility than has ever been achieved before. A gossamer metallic thread, yet so strong you couldn't snap it with your fingers. Can you imagine how nice that will be for the intricacies of telephone switchboards? For—"

"Sure, that's grand," Barrington said abstractedly. How was the best way to broach the thing? Arton had been stalling these past weeks, of course.

ARTON now had one of the tiny spindles in his hand. He was saying, "A metallic alloy, quite the usual thing, and then I added a totally new compound. And that did it! You'd never believe—"

Barrington managed a grin. "I sure wouldn't, whatever it is. Bruce, listen—"

"I could put thousands of yards of it in a thimble," Arton went on. "And it's so strong—I've just been measuring its length and strength. You—"

"Bruce listen, that little matter we were discussing—"

"Eh? Oh, what's that, George?"

Barrington tensed. The thing suddenly seemed more important to him than ever before. A turning point in his life, with his future stretching ahead—a future that could be drab, full of frustrations like his past; or flushed with victory, expanding like a snowball, rolling up into the success of fame and riches.

"My new show, Bruce," Barrington was saying. "You can't lose backing it, there's no possible way."

The enthusiasm faded out of Arton's thin, studious face. "Oh, that again."

"Yes, that again." Barrington tried to talk quietly. "We've been all over it, and I had you convinced—"

"Did you?"

"To be frank, Bruce, we need the first five thousand, well, tomorrow. And another in a month should see us through. You said—you see, we've been relying on—"

"Have you?" Arton's thin lips went grim. He was getting angry—a queer fellow, like a little chimney, to be heated in a moment. "I never said a damn thing, just listened to you talk," Arton said. "And now I realize you didn't give it to me straight, George. Crooked, like all your thinking, like everything you do as a matter of fact. You didn't tell me about this Marjorie LaMotte—is that what she calls herself?"

Marjorie! How in the devil did he know about—

"I've heard of her, naturally," Arton was saying. "She was doing fine in burlesque until the Mayo closed down all that sort of stuff. So now you want me to angel a show that's going to put my cousin over as a great actor! Some day you'll be another E. H. Southern or like Maurice Evans, maybe? That's what you tell me! So I'm supposed to risk ten or fifteen thousand in a honky-tonk for you and this LaMotte woman! Don't make me laugh!"

It wasn't going to work!.. Arton had never any idea of helping... just a damn little double-crosser... The thoughts, with no process of thinking back of them, stabbed at George Barrington. Arton was engaged to marry a damn snobbish society girl. He'd discussed the thing with her, of course. And she'd queered it! She'd queer everything, once he married her—for instance, the present arrangement of Arton's staking his cousin to three thousand a year allowance until he got started in business. And any chance at big money—

BARRINGTON was on his feet. Arton was angry and sarcastic. Well, two could play at that! "I don't like to hear that kind of stuff," Barrington heard himself saying. "When

Coming Next Issue

A Complete "Johnny
Liddell" Novel

by FRANK KANE



The Chief dropped his cigarette to the floor, stamped it out, and applauded sarcastically. "Go ahead, Sherlock. Tell him the rest and save him the price of a correspondence course."

"I was there when we fished her out of the drink", Lewis continued without looking in the chief's direction. "She was nude. All her clothes were piled on the pier."

"And the m. e. was willing to consider it an accident?"

"He didn't see the body until it was in the morgue," the sergeant explained. "I guess he took for granted it was fully dressed when we fished it out."

Liddell nodded thoughtfully, transferred his gaze to the police chief. "But your office was willing to write it off as an accident anyhow, eh Chief?"

"Why not?" Connors growled. "What's the sense of branding the girl a suicide? Call it an accident and let the poor girl rest in peace. Besides, what's the use of looking for any scandal?"

Johnny Liddell failed to be impressed. "Just like it wasn't an accident, it wasn't suicide." He tossed the soggy butt of his cigarette in the general direction of the wastebasket. "It was murder." Johnny ignored the chief's angry growl and continued. "No doll who's worked herself up to the state where she's going to knock herself off takes the trouble to call in a private eye the day before she does the job."

"Listen, Liddell." Connors' voice was low, loaded with menace. "I tried to reason with you. You're stubborn. Okay, I'll put it on the line." He pulled himself out of his chair, walked around the desk and stood facing the private detective. "This is my town and I don't want any private peepers coming up here fouling things up. We got enough on our hands right now without any phoney murder cases. Don't start something you can't finish."

DON'T MISS

GREEN LIGHT FOR DEATH

The big July issue goes on sale May 1st

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you talk about Marjorie LaMotte—anyway, how did you—”

“She phoned me today,” Arton snapped back. “You told her everything was fixed, I suppose? And when she found it wasn’t—” Arton smiled wryly. “She—what you’d call turned the heat on a little. You’re my cousin, see? And I’m going to be married, get the idea? You’re my closest relative—I wouldn’t want any scandal. Seems it isn’t all just business between you and LaMotte, George. And if you don’t come across now, she’s liable to turn on you, and on me!”

What a fool thing for Marjorie to do, jumping in like this! Barrington stood speechless. He was across the room now, leaning against a work table a few feet from Arton. He gasped, “Marjorie didn’t mean—”

“Oh yes she did!” Arton retorted. “A refined sort of blackmail. That’s what you’d call it! My closest relative, well thank Heaven you’re no closer than a cousin. I had a talk with Alice about it last night. We’re going to wash our hands of you, George. You go right ahead—”

“Why you—you rotten—”

“Sure! And now you’re showing your true colors, aren’t you? Alice warned me! You go ahead, George—do your worst—”

Prophetic words! Arton couldn’t guess. . . It was only a vague blurred thought in the tumult of Barrington’s mind. He was beyond reason, with the eerie laboratory room swaying before him and his right hand reaching for a little globular object on the table beside him. Then Barrington’s cold fingers closed over it—a heavy retort, like a jug. Barrington hardly knew that he had flung it. Then he saw it strike Arton on the side of the head, and as it crashed to the floor Arton was tottering on his feet.

But he wasn’t dead. He screamed when Barrington leaped upon him. It was a horrible, piercing scream. It filled the laboratory room. It surged out the open window, echoed out through the trees into the darkness of the sullen night. . . . Shut him up! You’ve got to shut him up! Silence

him now forever! Barrington’s thought blurred. Everything seemed dim and far away. But he knew that his fingers were gripping Arton’s throat, his fingers strangling so that the scream died. . . .

Barrington panted through an eternity, holding his grip tighter, with the lunging body under him, the flailing arms and legs gradually weakening; until at last the crumpled thing which had been Bruce Arton lay motionless.

Barrington jumped to his feet. That scream still seemed echoing, though it was long since a memory. Somebody would have heard it! Somebody might be coming from the nearby hotel across the wooded promontory! Worse than that! *They were coming already!* The terrified Barrington could hear them—the shouts of men out on the shortcut path down the hill!

IN THAT instant, Barrington had only the wits to snatch up the retort and wipe it off. Then he turned and ran, ducking out the side door the way he had entered. Now the laboratory wing was between him and the path down to the hotel. It shielded him; and then the darkness enveloped him as he fled down the trail, under the trees to the lake. Barrington was winded, breathless and covered with sweat as he crouched in the darkness of the little dock with his canoe on the incline beside him.

The shouts were up by the laboratory now. Then in the night silence he could hear that the men had discovered Arton’s body. . . . Barrington fought for calmness. After all, he was in no danger. No one had seen him arrive from Woodhaven in the canoe. He could take it now and paddle away. No! He would be seen, out there on the lake. But suppose he had just arrived now? He would have heard the scream, just as the other men did, down at the hotel. He’d hear it, and he’d shout and run up to the house, just as they had!

Everything was all right! Queerly a sort of calm triumph began enveloping Barrington. His heritage

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the old chair with the high back. He was pretty sure of that.

He was perfectly right, of course. She was sitting just there, scrunched up against the chair-back to get the best of the light from the dim bulb. Well, he wasn't going to give her a chance to start any blabbering. She would hear him come in, as he was coming in now, but before she could get up, he would have the rope over her head. He would be twisting the ends tight before she could get up and kiss him and cry on his shoulder with that sentimental stuff.

It would better be swift. He let the door swing wide. He had the noose tight around her when the door hit the old cast-iron door-stop with a clang. That didn't bother him, that noise, it would probably be the last thing she ever heard. That, and his foot-steps.

He pulled hard on the rope ends, saw the old, worn hands come up and claw at the coarse fibres. A moment would do it with such an old and feeble thing. Then the money. Then away and back to Merrylee. He was quite pleased with himself. He felt no qualms, no sentimental twinges of remorse. He had only to hold on a moment longer and then he'd have his hands on some real dough.

He held on. The thin hands picked almost idly at the coarse fibre of the rope. Now, perhaps it was done! He'd hold on, though, best to make a good job of it.

And in that last moment that he felt was the perfection of making sure he began to look toward the place he knew the money would be hidden. That was why his head was turned away when the bright overhead lights came on. That was why he didn't see the gay onrushing group till they were on top of him. But he heard the shouts of "Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!" And he *did* turn his head in time to see the laughing faces of his aunt's friends in all their sentimental party gaiety. In fact, big Jim Metton's face didn't have time to change as his eye did, and Sally Carver's scream wasn't as fast as her husband's fist. The big fist travelled just slowly enough to let Jim realize that he hadn't quite done the thing he had come to do, and just time enough to curse all the soft and mushy people who gave surprise parties and then got their dates mixed on top of that. He tried to scream something like that, but his teeth were in his throat then, and there wasn't time.

THE END



EASY MONEY

by LEE FLOREN

*A flight manager can't be fooled by one of his oldtime boys,
even in disguise!*

WHEN JAKE entered his hotel room at midnight he almost bumped into the black snout of the automatic. Behind the automatic was a slim man who wore a mask.

"How'd you get in here?"

"Through the window. I want ten grand."

Jake had seen plenty in twenty-some years as a fight-manager but the suddenness of this holdup had him surprised. He glanced at the window.

He stalled. "What ten grand?"

"You're managin' Kid Watson. The Kid outpointed Inky Stevens tonight at Grand Arena. Kick through."

Jake looked at the gun, tried to pull his surprise into a studied calmness. He didn't like the looks of that gloved finger around that trigger. This looked like an amateur to him.

"I haven't collected yet."

"You got the money," the man stated.

Jake mentally cursed Muggy Wilson, the Grand promoter. Muggy always paid off in cash right after a fight. And tonight he'd shoved ten crisp one-grand bills into Jake's fist. But that had been in the secrecy of Muggy's office. Jake looked at the finger again, thought he saw it tremble under the glove.

"Go easy," he said. "Those things have been known to kill people. The dough is in my coat pocket."

The stickup had him turn to the wall, brace his hands over his head, and put his legs out wide. Jake felt the hand go into his pocket and felt the notes leave. When he had turned the man had put the gun in his coat pocket on top of the bills.

"The bulls'll have you in ten minutes," Jake prophesied.

"I figure otherwise."

Jake had his nerves calm now. Did he know that voice? No, the fellow talked low, as though he were disguising his voice. He had a sudden idea.

"If it wasn't for your gat," he said, "I'd whip the hell out of you!"

"Come ahead," the man invited.

Jake went forward, fists up. Years ago he'd been a leading contender for the lightweight crown. He had some of his ring-knowledge left. He showed it as he shot out a left.

It was fast, wicked, true. But the stickup's right shoulder bobbed down, and the blow slid over him. Jake glimpsed his right hand cock, come in.

Most fighters hit straight. But this right hand looped, curved a little, then straightened. Jake knew than who the stickup was.

He tried to slip the punch, but the right hit on the jaw and the lights came down and hit him, too.

* * *

WHEN HE woke up he was tied to a chair. His gag made his jaws ache. He looked at the clock and guessed he'd been out around fifteen minutes. He looked at the phone, head buzzing.

Ten minutes he'd jumped his chair across the room and had the receiver down. The bellboy released him.

"What happened?"

"Now and then I feel mad spells coming on," Jake informed him solemnly. "So I gag myself and tie myself to a chair to keep from hurting people."

The kid accepted the four-bits but not the story. Jake rolled into bed. Morning found him eating a hearty breakfast at the Greek's.

He caught the Fifth Street bus and

left it at Grand, walking up Bunker Hill. The sun was bright and warm. He was in the old tenement district, the flop-house section. He climbed a set of porch steps, entered an old rooming house, and went directly to Room 21.

No answer.

He knocked again.

Finally, "Who's there?" Sleepily.

"A friend."

A key turned. Jake went in. Pinky Malone sat on the edge of his bed, rubbing his eyes with a fighters' hands. A few years back Pinky had been in the chips but he'd broken his right fist on Tiny Jeffers, the Central Avenue boy.

"Haven't seen you for two years," Jake said. "Heard you were up in Frisco?"

"They run trains," Pinky said. He dug into his left eye again. "How did you know I bunked here?"

"An ex-fighter can't keep away from the old bunch. They told me down at the Greek's."

Pinky quit rubbing. "You got a scrap for me, Jake?"

"You'll never fight again with that mitt, kid. I came after my ten grand."

Pinky looked at him. "Your ten grand? Hell, I don't owe you nothing. When we busted up we were even-steven. You said that yourself."

"You know what—ten grand. After the Watson fight last night you was waiting for me in my hotel room. You wore gloves so you wouldn't leave any prints and you wanted to hide your hands from me. But two things gave you away."

"Jake, you're dreamin'."

Jake rubbed his jaw. "Well, if I was, the old mare sure throwed me. Look out the window, kid?"

Pinky did. He came back. He kept standing there, face serious. "You got bulls down there, huh?"

Jake twisted his wrist and looked. "In three minutes they come up, Pinky. Cough up the ten grand and I'll forget it."

The bed looked lumpy and the carpet didn't hide the floor in spots.

"I spent forty of it," Pinky said suddenly. "I paid room rent and I bought a few drinks."

"Where is it?"

Pinky had it under the big washbasin. He handed it to Jake who put it in his coat pocket.

"Damn it, Pinky," Jake said, "I managed you for six years. We bunked together. You shouldn't've done this to me."

"I was flat, Jake." Pinky looked at the window. "Where did I slip up?"

"Your voice, for one thing. You tried to disguise it and you did a good job—I didn't recognize it. But you slipped when you let me take a poke at you. If you hadn't done that, I'd never have known it was you. Your disguisin' your voice told me you were an old friend who didn't want me to recognize him. But I didn't know who you were until I saw your right coming."

"What's wrong with my right?"

"You don't hit straight."

"I've chilled a few with that." Pinky's voice was uncordial. "I can handle it." Pinky's professional pride was hurt.

Jake found a stance "Now come in, and I'll show you."

Pinky shuffled in, head down. Jake shot his left again; only this time, he held it Pinky's right looped, straightened. This time Jake rode under it. His own right came up and Pinky went down.

Jake's knuckles throbbed. "I didn't know I could still hit that hard," He told the worn carpet.

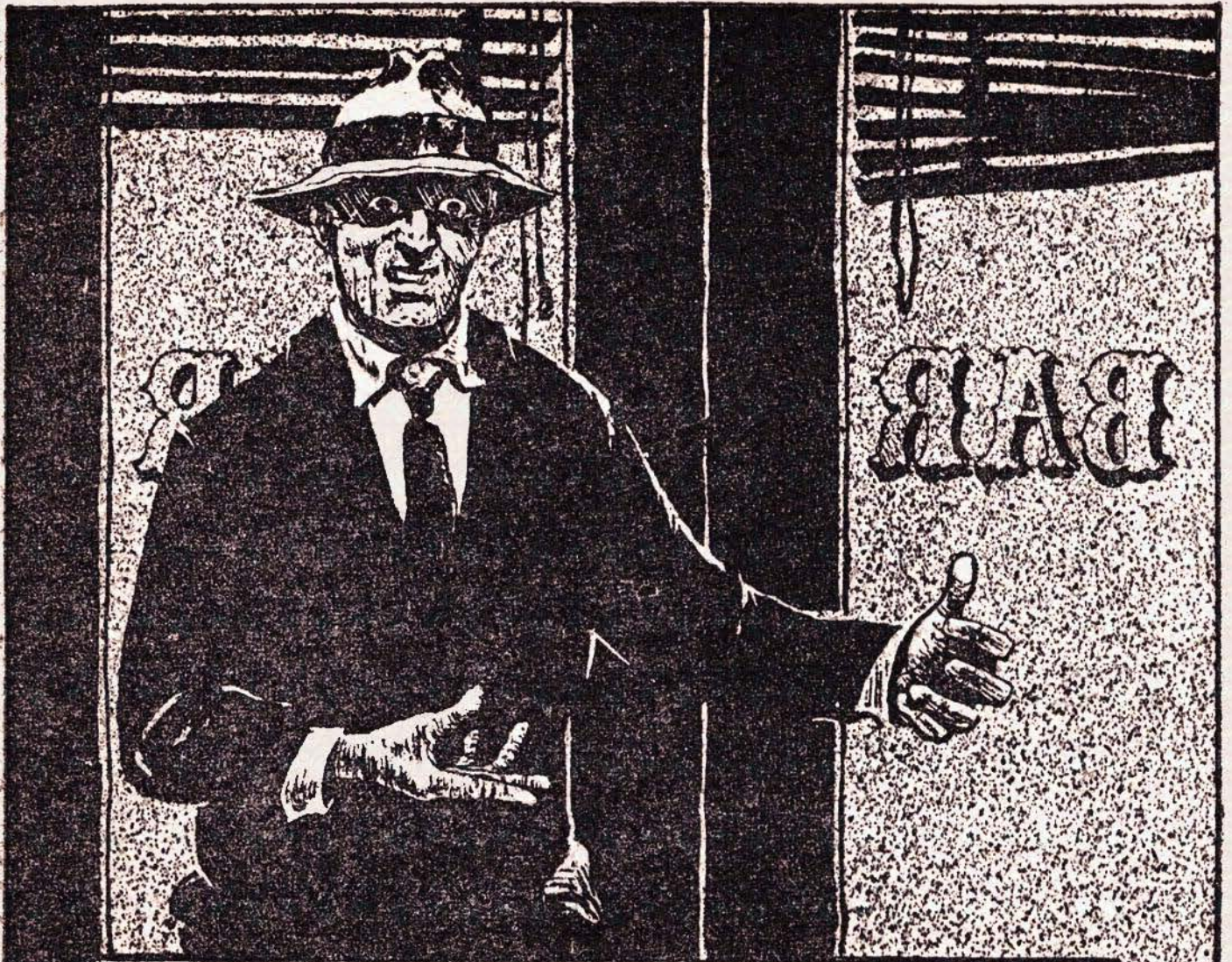
He took a fin from his wallet and laid it in Pinky's hand. "When you come to, Kid, drop around and I'll find a job for you." But Pinky didn't hear that, of course.

Outside, the bull asked, "Everything work out okay, Jake?"

"Everything's okay, Casey."

PINKY kept looking at him. Jake looked at the cheap room.

THE END

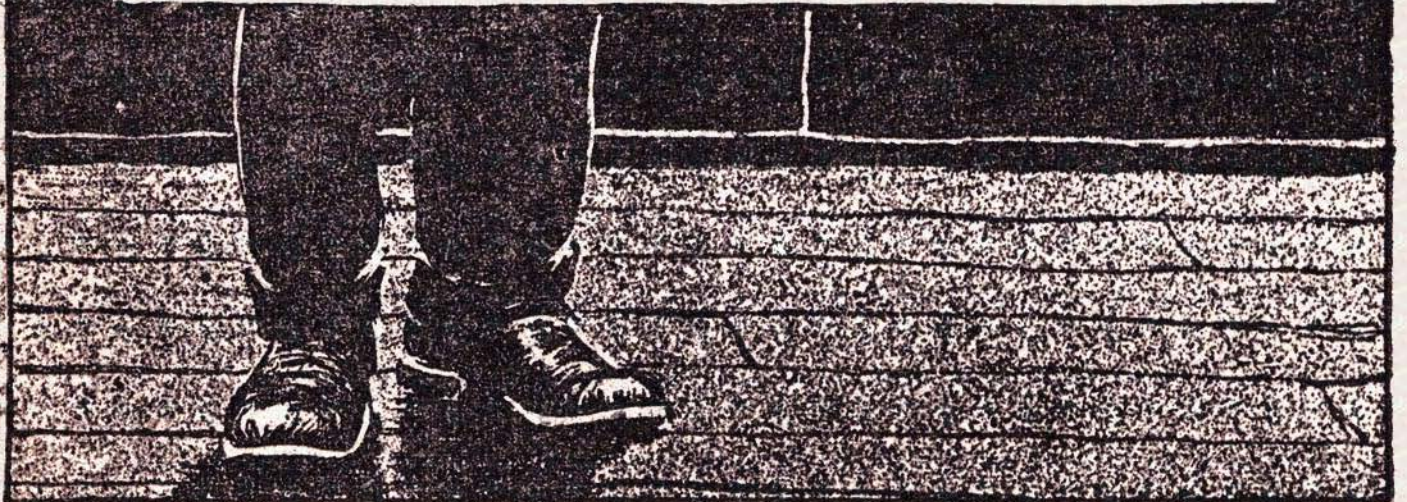


You Remember Jeanie

by JOHN D. MacDONALD

(Author of "Blonde Bait for the Murder Master")

He'd been a good cop once, then, when Frank Bard's wife was killed, he went off his nut — became an alcoholic bum who thought Jeanie was still with him all the time — until . . .



There was Bard, acting as if his wife were beside him . . .

FOR MANY years Bay Street was the place. Bar whisky for eight cents a shot or a double slug for fifteen. Waterfront street. The dirty gray waves slapped at the crusted piles and left an oil scum. A street to forget with. A street which could close in on you, day to day, night to night, until you maybe ran into an old friend who slipped you a five, and somebody saw you get it; there at dawn an interne from city hospital would shove your eyelid up with a clean, pink thumb. "Icebox meat," he'd say. "Morgue bait." And maybe, as he stood up, he'd look down at your hollow grey face and the sharp bones of your wrists and wonder how you'd kept alive so long. So very long.

But something happened to Bay Street. It acquired glamor. Reading the trend, the smart boys came down and bought up the property and built long low clubs with blue lights and bright music and expensive drinks. The shining cars lined up along the curb, and the people with the clean clothes gave ragged kids two bits to make certain the tires weren't slashed while they were inside the places with the bright music and the soft women. The doormen at the new places had no time for the men in broken shoes who were living out the last years of addiction.

So the men of Bay Street moved to Dorrity Street—one block over. Many of the displaced little bars moved over. The red, blue and green neon flickered against the brick flanks of the ancient warehouses, and, in the night, the steaming chant of the juke boxes, the hoarse laughter and the scuff of broken shoes was the same as always.

Frank Bard sat on the stone front step of an abandoned warehouse and stared at the street, shining in a light misty rain. The rain made pink halos around the neon of the place across the street. "Allison's Grill."

Bard thought vaguely that if the rain increased, he'd have to get under shelter. He didn't want to go inside; he had come out because he had been sick. The muscles of his diaphragm still ached with the violence of his

retching. He turned the ragged collar of his dark blue suitcoat up around his neck. He wondered if he ought to walk down the alley and see if anybody had tried to move in on him. Two weeks before, he had found a sturdy packing case and, at dawn, had dragged it down the alley and put it under a fire escape. The effort had left him weak and panting. He had filled it with clean burlap and it made a snug bed. The fall rain was chill; the packing case wouldn't be any good in the winter. He forced that thought out of his mind.

He was a dark man, with a sullen face. Once he had been solid, almost stocky, but the flesh had slowly melted off him during the past year. He was still capable of sudden, explosive bursts of energy. His hair was long and his square jaw was dark with several day's beard. His cheeks were hollow and there was a dark wildness in his puffy eyes that the shadows concealed.

Across the street an old man with matted white hair lurched out of Allison's and fell on one knee. He got up and went on, limping and cursing in a thin, high voice, watered down by age.

Frank Bard heard the slow tock, tock of heels, heavy heels, coming down the sidewalk on his side. He knew who it was without looking. He scowled down at the sidewalk. The slow steps stopped.

HE LOOKED up. Patrolman Clarence Flynn, tall and solid, stood looking down at him. Flynn's raincoat had a cape effect across the shoulders that made him look larger than life size.

He said softly, "You okay, Frankie?"

"Give me a cigarette, Flynn," Bard said hoarsely.

Flynn handed him one, lit it. Over the match flame the two men glanced briefly into each other's eyes—and looked quickly away.

In the same gentle tone, Flynn said, "When are you going to straighten out, Frankie?"

"I like it this way."

"You were a good cop, Frankie.

You straighten out and you could come back in; your record's good."

"I like it this way."

"You look sick, Frankie."

"I'm fine. You got a beat to walk."

Flynn shrugged. He handed the half pack of cigarettes to Bard and walked on. He stopped ten feet away and said, "She wasn't worth this, Frankie; no woman was worth this."

Bard called him a foul word and snapped the half smoked cigarette into the street. After he could no longer hear the sound of Flynn's heels, he tried to light another one. His hands shook so badly that he couldn't do it. The matches were damp. They sputtered and went out quickly.

He felt in his side pocket to make certain that the fifty cent piece was still there. It was cool against his fingertips. He stood up, swaying slightly, and then walked across the street, pushed his way into the heat and smell of Allison's.

The bar was of plywood laid over some heavier substance. Naked bulbs were laid behind the bottles on the back bar, and the light glowed through—amber. The place was narrow and rectangular—with the bar on the left and booths on the right. A juke box sat against the far wall, bubbles rising endlessly up through the colored tubes. Arthur Allison, a small trim man with Truman glasses and a grey Colman mustache, in a spotless white shirt, waited on bar, his quick eyes flicking ceaselessly from face to face. Allison was a watchful, careful man. Jader waited on the booths and, on occasion, acted as bouncer. Jader was tall and heavy with weak eyes that watered constantly. He too was watchful. Underneath the bar, to the left of the beer taps, was a small drawer. There were usually a few small packages in that drawer. Summer and winter a small hot coal fire burned in the basement. In the winter, the fire heated the building; in the summer the radiators were turned off. On the under edge of the drawer containing the packages was a small loop of wire. Either Jader or Allison could, by yanking on the loop of wire, drop

the bottom of the drawer. The little packages would then drop down a chute into the fire. It was safer that way. For every package held and relayed to the proper pickup men, there was a small fee of ten dollars. Five for Jader and five for Allison. On some days as many as eight packages spent varying lengths of time in the drawer.

Allison and Jader were very watchful and cautious men.

When Frank Bard walked in, there were four men at the bar. He knew three of them by sight; the fourth was a stranger. Two of the booths were occupied. In one were two Swedish merchant seamen, and a thin painted girl with hair the color of ripe tomatoes and a wet, smeared mouth. In the second booth were two quiet men wearing dark topcoats. Bard glanced at them and guessed that they were waiting for one of the packages to arrive.

Bard did a curious thing. He held the door wide, and, as he walked over to the bar, he smiled down over his right shoulder. He said something in a low voice.

He stepped up beside the stranger, still smiling down at a point about six inches from his right shoulder. Allison moved over toward him and said, "You got the money, Frank?"

He took the fifty cent piece from his pocket and said, "The usual for me and Jeanie, Arthur." Allison poured two straight ryes and smiled tiredly as he put one in front of Bard and one in front of the empty space. Bard said, "You wouldn't rather sit in a booth, would you, Jeanie?"

"What the hell do you keep asking her that, for?" Arthur said. "She never wants to sit in a booth; she always stands up here at the bar with you."

Bard looked vaguely indignant. "It's polite to ask her, Arthur."

The stranger, a lean man in work clothes with a pinched, bitter mouth, looked with pained disgust at Frank Bard and then at Allison. "What the hell goes on?" he asked.

Allison looked amused. "Oh, Frank comes in here all the time with Jeanie."

Frank Bard turned and looked at the stranger. "Jeanie and me, we like this place. She likes to come here even if she did have a little bad luck here a little over a year ago."

The stranger looked into Bard's eyes and moved back a few inches. "Bad luck?" he inquired politely.

"Yeah. Jeanie was in here late one night and some lush hit her with a bottle. Hit her right over the left ear. I guess my Jeanie hasn't got such a tough skull. Funny how it didn't break the bottle, hey Arthur?"

JADER CAME over, his pale eyes watering. He said, "Damn it, Arthur, what did you let this dizzy punk come in here for?"

Arthur grinned. "Nervous?"

"No, the guy drives away trade." He turned to the stranger. "Mister, a drunk bashed her head in with a bottle and got clean away. We give the cops a description but they never found the guy." He paused and glanced at Bard, who was talking to Jeanie in a low voice, almost a whisper. He continued, "And this thing used to be a cop. Jeanie was his girl. He's been on the skids for nearly a year, and every time he comes in here he's got that damn imaginary woman with him. I tell you, it's enough to drive me nuts."

Arthur grinned tightly. "Where's your sense of humor, Jader?"

Jader looked again at Bard, cursed and wandered off. The Swedes were pounding on the table.

Frank Bard bent low over his glass of rye. He lifted it with a quick motion, and downed it. It caught in his throat. He gagged, but it stayed down. He stood for a moment, savoring the glow of it, feeling immediately stronger, more confident. He glanced at the wall above the back-bar, whistling softly. His lean hand, dirt stained into the knuckles, reached slowly out, shoving the empty glass over toward Jeanie. The hand hooked around her full glass and brought it back. He glanced down, as though surprised to see the full drink in front of him. He drank it with steadier hand and smiled at Jeanie.

"Taste good to you, honey? If I

had the dough, I'd buy you another." He looked down at his dime change. He glanced over and said, "What was that, honey?"

He beckoned to Arthur. "Arthur, Jeanie says...."

"Yeah, I know. She wants a beer chaser." He picked up the dime, drew one beer and set it in front of Jeanie. Bard whistled again, while his right hand stole out and slid it over. He drank it quickly and, again looking at the wall, shoved the glass over in front of Jeanie.

The stranger said, "You were a cop?"

Bard looked at him and drew himself up, looking for a fraction of a second, out of the wise, confident policeman's eyes. The expression faded and his eyes once more looked hot and wild. "What's it to you!" he demanded hoarsely. "I don't see you buying me and Jeanie no drinks; buy 'em and we'll talk to you, Mister."

The man took hold of Bard's shoulder with what was almost gentleness. He turned him so that he faced him directly. The work-hardened hand came across, smacking solidly, fingers open, across Bard's jaw, knocking him against the bar. The hand came back in a backhand blow that straightened him up again, splitting his underlip at the corner.

Frank Bard stood unsteadily, his hands at his side, grinning foolishly at the stranger, his eyes filling with tears from the burning pain in his lip.

Arthur said, "Take it easy!"

The stranger said, "That's for being a lousy cop; that's for nothing. You there, set up drinks for Prince Charming and his lady."

"Thanks," Bard said humbly.

"Think nothing of it, Prince." The man turned his back.

Bard drank the two drinks and stood holding onto the edge of the bar. His face greyed and he said, "Excuse me, honey."

He lurched off to the men's room and was ill. He came out in a few minutes, still shaking, his clothes soiled and stopped by the bar. He said, "Come on, Jeanie." He walked toward the door. Jader crossed close beside him. With wild fury, Bard

grabbed Jader's arm and spun him around. He said, "Why the hell don't you watch where you're going?"

He bent over suddenly, as though helping someone up from the floor. He snarled at Jader, "Okay. Okay. Go around knocking women down and don't apologize. You all right, honey," he said softly, making brushing motions in the air. Jader grunted, balled a large white fist and slowly drew it back, his wet eyes narrowed.

Arthur snapped, "Jader! Cut it!"

The big hand unclenched and Bard walked to the door, held it open with a small bow and then walked out.

Jader said, "Arthur, I'm not going to stand for..."

"Shut up!" The grey eyes were cold behind the lenses, the mouth a thin tight line under the mustache. The girl with the Swedes giggled shrilly. Jader turned and walked toward the back of the place.

In the alley Frank Bard stood, his hand on the corner of the packing case, looking up at the night sky. The rain had stopped and small clouds scudded across the moon. Bard dropped to his knees and crawled into the box. He lay with his face against the damp wood and tears ran down through the thick stubble on his cheeks. He reached awkwardly into his side pocket and pulled out a small package. He unwrapped the paper. It contained a small cool metal tube that still contained lipstick. Her lipstick. He held it close to his nose. It held the elusive scent of her. His fingertips touched the little skein of hair. Her hair. Long and pale and delicate—amazingly golden. He wrapped the package and replaced it in his pocket. After a long time, he slept.

* * *

JADER WAS in a good mood. The drawer was almost full of packages and the first pickup was due in an hour. Arthur Allison had gone to the races. It was the first time Jader had been alone in the place in many months. He liked the feeling of being trusted. The sun was hot on Dorrity Street. It slanted through the smeared front window,

lighting the dim interior. One old man was asleep, his head on the booth table. Jader planned to wake him up and get him out soon.

He glanced across the street and his cheerful smile faded. He saw Frank Bard coming diagonally across the street in the sun, looking down at a spot six inches from his right shoulder. Jader could see his lips moving. Jader's lip curled as he saw Bard's grey, shapeless shoes, the tired scuff of his walk, the stained, baggy trousers.

He stepped over into the doorway as Bard opened the door. Jader didn't move. Bard said, "Hey! Let us in!" He took a dollar out of his side pocket and held it up.

"I don't want no screwballs in here," Jader said sullenly.

"Where's Arthur? Arthur lets us come in. Get out of Jeanie's way, Jader."

"You're not coming in."

Bard stared at him for a few seconds. "Arthur won't like to hear about this. You got a public place here."

"You stand up to the bar and talk to the other customers. The hell with that noise; you drive away business."

Frank Bard considered that statement solemnly. "Okay. So Jeanie and me, we'll take the back booth in the end and we won't talk to anybody, will we Jeanie?"

Jader glanced down the street, saw a familiar sedan coming. It would be best not to delay pickup. He moved aside. "Okay, come on in and take the end booth. I'll be with you in a minute."

Bard stood aside as though to let someone come in, and then followed. Jader waited until Bard was out of sight in the booth before slipping the package across to the slim, dark man who had ordered the beer. The man drank up and left.

Jader poured two ryes and walked back to the booth with them. Frank Bard smiled up at him. "No, she's sitting right there across from me, Jader. Maybe we should take a booth oftener. It's nice and private back here in the end. Jeanie says it's nice and clean. Clean ashtray and every-

YOU REMEMBER JEANIE

thing. She don't mind being in the booth where she got hit. Do you, Jeanie?"

Jader scowled. "The place is good and clean because I clean it. Stop the chatter and give me the buck; there's a dime extra for table service."

"But you made me come back here!"

"It's a dime extra."

"Okay, Jader. Okay."

Jader rang up the half dollar and took the change back. He threw it on the table. Bard said, "The front way is the only way out, huh?"

"Yeah," he answered and walked away.

He went behind the bar and stood with his fat arms on the bar, looking gloomily across at the old man sleeping. Some of the flavor had gone out of the day with Frank Bard's arrival. He seldom showed up in the afternoon. It was just damn bad luck that he had to pick that afternoon, Jader thought.

He scowled as he heard the low sound of Bard's voice. Jader couldn't imagine why Arthur permitted Bard to come around, in fact, why he seemed amused to have Bard around. It was the type of wry joke that Jader couldn't savor.

When he heard Bard call him hoarsely, he pushed away from the bar, drew two more ryes and walked slowly back to the booth.

He stood in front of the booth and reached out to set one rye down across from Bard. The big white hand stopped in midair and Jader stared at the ashtray. There were two butts in the ashtray. The tip of one was crimsoned with lipstick. For a moment he thought wildly that he hadn't cleaned it. And he suddenly remembered Bard's saying it was clean. The shot glass slipped out of his white fingers and dropped, overturning on the table.

"Whers'd that come from?" he said in a high, thin voice.

"The cigarette butt? Jeanie smoked it."

"Don't say that!" Jader said wildly.

"Don't you like women smoking."

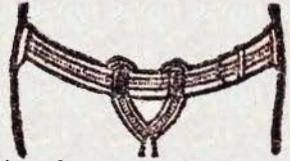
(Continued On Page 90)

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CRACK DETECTIVE STORIES

(Continued From Page 89)

"That's old fashioned," Bard said severely.

"Where'd it come from?" Jader demanded again.

"I told you, from Jeanie." Bard suddenly leaned his dark head over and looked at his shoulder. He chuckled mildly. "She was sitting right beside me here with her head on my shoulder when she smoked it. Look here." From the surface of the dark blue coat he plucked two long strands of shining gold—held them up.

Jader's mouth worked and the other glass dropped at his feet.

Bard said, "You see, Jader, you only thought you killed her." His tone was quiet, as though explaining to a child.

Jader made a strangled noise. His wet eyes widened. "I killed her. She couldn't.... She couldn't...."

HE TURNED then and looked into Frank Bard's eyes. His underlip hung away from his teeth and he took a slow step away from the booth. Somehow Bard was in front of him. Jader clenched his white fists and struck blindly. He missed and went off balance as Frank Bard's thin, dirty fist smashed his mouth. He fell heavily to his hands and knees, going over onto his side as one of the grey, broken shoes landed against the side of his head. One of the white hands lay, as still as lard, against the floor. Frank Bard set his heel on the fingers and swiveled his entire weight, slowly.

He walked quickly to the front door and locked it. The old man still slept. He went behind the bar and carefully opened the drawer. Allison and Jader were cautious, watchful men—but who suspicions or fears a mad alcoholic? He set six neat packages on the top of the bar, opened the cash register and took a nickel.

"Sergeant Sullivan, Police Headquarters."

"Sully, this is Frank Bard.... don't interrupt me.... I'm at Allison's Grill on Dorrity Street. I've just taken over the joint. Jader confessed to killing Jean Palmray. The angle is that she was trying to do

YOU REMEMBER JEANIE

some independent spying to help me along and they got wise and Jader killed her; I think he only meant to stun her. I've got a bunch of junk here. Six small packages. Send the boys. And have Arthur Allison picked up out at the track. Yeah."

He hung up, walked back and looked at Jader. The man was beginning to stir. Bard kicked him in the head again and walked back to the bar. He was suddenly enormously tired. He still held the small golden tube of lipstick in his fist. He slipped it into his pocket.

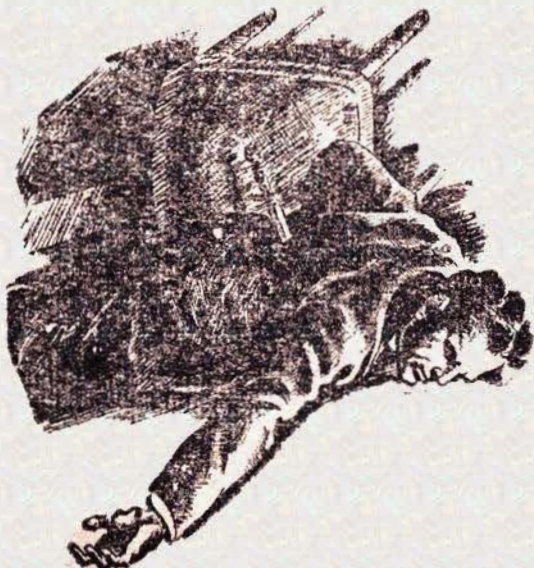
'They wouldn't take a lush back on the force, even if he had done what he set out to do one year before.

Too late.

He took a bottle off the back bar and pulled the patent gimmick out of the top of it and tilted it up to his lips. Drunk or sober, he had remembered to pretend that Jeanie had been with him. That was what had counted. The buildup. And after a year of buildup, Jader had cracked wide open. It had been tough, pretending that she was always beside him, looking at him.

He tilted the bottle, and as the sharp liquor filled his mouth, he felt a soft touch on his arm. He spun quickly, spraying the liquor onto the bar.

The old man was still asleep in the booth and Jader was still silent on the floor. The door was locked. In the distance an approaching siren moaned softly. The bottle slid from his nerveless fingers and shattered on the floor.



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(Continued From Page 63)

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"But how did you always know what we were planning? How was it that you were always a jump ahead of us?"

"Planning, my friend, planning. And a microphone in the office. I knew Carter'd take over, and I suspected he'd have meetings there too. That reminds me, Hempel"— he laughed softly—"we must stop and pay our respects at my grave on our way!"

"You must have your little joke."

"Now, Plush, as Hempel here keeps reminding me, it is getting late. So if you have anything more to say..."

"If he hasn't, I have!" The voice of Lieutenant Andrews came from outside the door, in the dimly lit cellar. "Drop that gun, Major, and drop it fast!"

"That must be the CID," said the major. "You wouldn't dare; the first move you make, I let Plush have it right through the heart. And I mean it. The first goddam..."

The word "goddam" was, appropriately enough, the last word the major ever uttered. Scarcely was it out of his mouth when something came flying, *Whoosh*, through the air, and caught him on the wrist of his gun hand. He screamed with pain and dropped the Ludger. He was making a grab for it with his other hand when Andrew shot him, three times, through the middle. Once would have been enough; he died on the way to the hospital, without regaining consciousness.

"It was self-defense," said Andrews, as he untied me and helped me to my feet. "And anyway, it'll save the government the cost of a big trial. Lucky we got here in time."

"How much did you hear?" I asked him.

"Enough to put a rope around his neck." He indicated Hempel with a contemptuous gesture from his gun. "How did he get you?"

"I had him covered when Hempel came up from behind and slugged me. I had forgotten all about Hempel; that must be what happened to Donovan, too."

"Well, under the circumstances.

MAJOR CRIME

I guess I can overlook your flagrant violation of orders," said Andrews.

Then I saw what had come sailing through the air. It was a bottle. A bottle of twelve per cent Bavarian beer. And I saw who had thrown it. It was Carter.

"I always said he'd have one bottle to many," said Carter. "I guess this was it."

Chapter Eighteen

Letter To The Pacific



DEAR BOB: Quite a lot has happened since I last wrote to you. I am now at a replacement depot in France, waiting to get shipped home. I left Unterros-

sapfel two weeks after the end of the case of "Who Killed Major Smith?"

It's all so long ago that I keep forgetting that you don't know what's been hapening....

Walter Schmidt was born in a little German village, and became an officer under the Weimar Republic. He grew up in Germany between the two World Wars. He must have caught the national disease fairly early—say, the mid twenties. (Part of this I learned from Hempel, who thought that it might help his case if he told everything; part Andrews picked up in the files at USFET and other places; part is just guesswork. But it all adds up.)

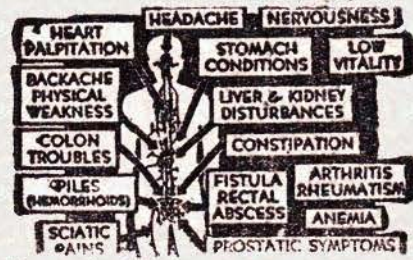
Rather than stay in a Germany whose future was, at best, uncertain, Schmidt came to America in 1930. He changed his name to Smith and took out his first papers. The disease he had caught in Germany was slowly eating away his insides, although, as is the usual case with this disease, one couldn't see anything from the outside.

As soon as he had become a citizen, Smith joined the Army. With his background, he rose rapidly, even in the regular Army. He never did anything obvious, like joining the Bund;

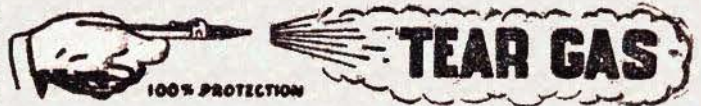
(Continued On Page 94)

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CRACK DETECTIVE STORIES

(Continued From Page 98)

but he was in constant contact with Nazi agents.

When the war broke out, Smith was a captain in the Infantry. There was no trace of his origin in his speech and mannerisms, and only a little in his attitudes; his instructions were to play the role of a loyal and fairly capable American officer until other behaviour was needed. He was promoted to major and sent overseas with the Military Government.

It is not certain when or how he evolved this plan of his. He was in touch with what was left of the Nazi Party, through men like Hempel, and Lucette. His brother had been an officer in the Wermacht and had died in an air raid over France. Lucette, by the way, had been his brother's mistress; and when the major got to France, he looked her up.

Briefly, his plan was this. He killed Novak and destroyed the body beyond recognition, leaving only the part of his left arm with the Auschwitz brand's last two numbers showing. These were the same as the last two numbers of his own serial number. He said that this gave him the whole idea.

After two phony attempts on his life, one with a gun, the other with arsenic, he wrecked his car and planted his dog tag and other things, including Novak's left arm, in the wreckage. It was perfect. He had retained the only key to the wine cellar and this became his headquarters. Hempel and Lucette were his assistants, the former willingly, the latter unwillingly. He held the knowledge of her past as a club over Lucette's head, and threatened to send her back to France if she did not comply with his wishes.

THEN Donovan began to smell a rat. He traced the major to his wine cellar, and while he was talking to him, Hempel sneaked up from behind and knocked him out. That night, they planted a whiskey bottle in his pocket and they dropped him over the falls, where we found his body the next morning.

Meantime, Lucette was beginning to get jumpy. The arrival of the CID

(Continued On Page 90)

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CRACK DETECTIVE STORIES

(Continued From Page 94)

(and major Smith knew exactly what was going on, as he had taken the precaution of putting microphones in the offices) made him decide to leave in a hurry. Lucette was disposed of, and we found her hanging from a rafter.

It took me a long time to catch on. For some time I was blinded by the tattooing on the arm, as was everyone else. When I finally saw the whole plot, I went down to the cellar.

Why did I go alone? Why didn't I take Carter or Ginsberg? Well, that is hard to say. I guess it just didn't occur to me. Maybe, subconsciously, I still suspected Carter, and was not even too sure about the others. The major had done his best to make the suspicion fall on Ginsberg and Novak, for obvious reasons. I thought I could handle him alone, and I could have, too; but I had completely overlooked the possibility of Hempel's being there.

Ironically, it was Carter who saved my life. He was rewarded for his pains by being relieved of his duty with the detachment, and made assistant fine arts and monuments officer in one of the big detachments in northern Germany.

The detachment has a new commander. Captain John Dooittle seems like a quiet, dignified and efficient officer—the type who gets results without a fanfare.

Hempel's evidence enabled the authorities to nip the underground plot in the bud, although they never found Bormann. Maybe he is still alive in some obscure corner...who knows?

See you some day.

Private Paul Plush.

P.S. Oh, yes. I forgot one thing. There were three orders in from Headquarters about me, all on the same day. The first was my shipping orders. The second awarded me the Bronze Star for my work in uncovering the plot. That was from USFET. The third was from Regiment HQ, busting me to private for unauthorized meddling in affairs that did not concern me. That's one prediction of the major's that did come true, after all.

YOU CAN'T PREDICT DEATH

(Continued From Page 65)

"I've just been reading my law books, that's all..."

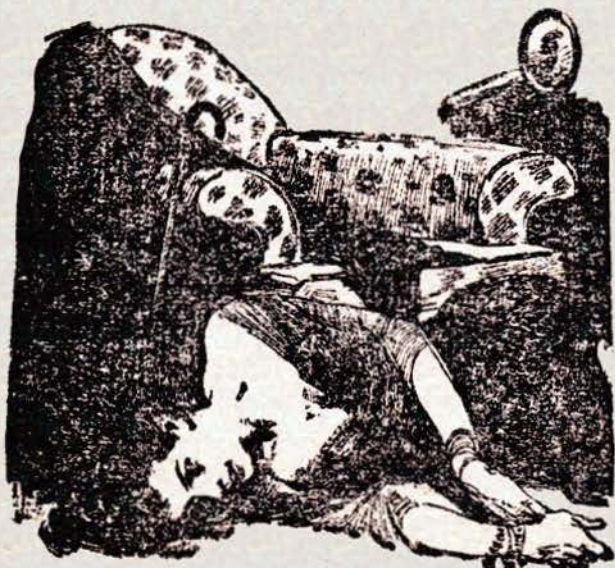
"If you'll read yours, Mr District Attorney, you'll find that the specified sentence for any crime attempted but not actually committed is half the maximum imposed by the law for the actual commission of the crime. But the maximum penalty for the commission of arson is life imprisonment."

His eyes swept the courtroom, and he grinned impudently. "I defy you, Mr. D.A., or you, Your Honor, or anyone else in the courtroom, to measure half a man's life." He waved an arm. "Scripture tells us that we knoweth not the day nor the hour of our departure. Will you, then, sentence the prisoner to half a minute or half the days of Methuselah?"

There was a moment of dead silence, then the District Attorney rushed over to the judge and began to whisper frantically. But it was no use: the judge had to admit that the measurement of half a man's life span was beyond the court's powers.

Owen Reilly left the courtroom a free man, and William F. Howe had performed another miracle of legal juggling. Shortly afterwards, the newspapers carried a story to the effect that the New York State Legislature had altered the arson statutes and placed a specific time-sentence on the crime of attempted arson.

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(Continued From Page 80)

from Arton was ten or fifteen thousand at the least; Arton had been making a lot of money lately. Barrington realized that subconsciously he had been thinking of that all evening. His ace in the hole. It had been in his mind when he wanted not to be seen arriving. Money to put over the show and fix things up with Marjorie. And that chemical invention of Arton's—there would be his notes on it, of course. Barrington could get them, hold them dark for a couple of years, and then tackle those big companies himself. Maybe there'd be a fortune in it for him. What luck!

Barrington stood up on the dock. And then he saw that the time had come for him to shout his arrival. Two or three of the men suddenly appeared up on the trail. Their voices floated down. And then Barrington shouted back, ran up the trail a few feet, stopped and called.... It was so simple! Breathless, confused exchanges.

"I was just paddling up to the dock!" Barrington was shouting. "Heard somebody screaming! What is it? What happened!"

"Bruce Arton! He's dead—"

"Dead! Bruce dead—"

"Somebody got in there and killed him!"

These men were four or five of the hotel guests. Barrington knew some of them. He met them a little way up the trail, where Barrington had stopped and was standing speechless, breathless, shocked by the news.

"Why—why that's horrible—" he gasped. "I thought it was his voice screaming— I paddled hard as I could—then I heard you people—"

Overhead pallid moonlight was straggling down through the rifted clouds now. It struck on the frightened faces of the men, and on the trees and on the naked rocks here along the gully brink.

AND NOW here was big Johnson, the hotel detective. He was coming down the trail with one of the men. But they weren't walking or

running. They came slowly, bending down, and Johnson was holding his flashlight.

"Where the devil you suppose it goes?" the man with Johnson muttered.

"Here it still is," Johnson said. "Quicker if we lift it up."

Lift what up? What the devil was this?

"Oh, hello Barrington," the hotel detective said. The man with him muttered something, and Johnson turned. "Shut up! Maybe so. We'll soon see, come on, keep going."

Barrington and the men with him blankly stared as the detective and his companion went past them. Slowly they went down to the dock and then began coming back.

"Well I'm damned!" the man said.

"It's him—"

"Shut up! Make sure!"

Cold with puzzled apprehension, Barrington stood silent. And now he saw that the stooping detective was holding his light to follow something that lay along the ground.

Then Johnson pounced. "There's the end of it! Take a look everybody! Got him like we found him chained to the corpse!" He was gripping Barrington now, pointing. "Here is the killer, we got him!"

Barrington's mind swept back.... Arton in the laboratory, winding his new gossamer wire from one spindle to another, measuring its length and its strength.. Then Arton with one of the tiny spindles, much smaller than a thimble, in his hand.... And then Arton down on the floor, hands flailing as Barrington crouched over him....

Now Barrington saw the tiny spindle with the gleaming gossamer thread trailing from it, where it had caught in one of the big ornate leather buttons of his summer sport jacket! It was the empty spindle; and its tiny thread of wire stretched from here back to the laboratory where the other spindle had been unwinding as Barrington ran! Like a death trail—damnable little gossamer that you couldn't break, connecting this murderer with his victim!

Let's Go, Pal!
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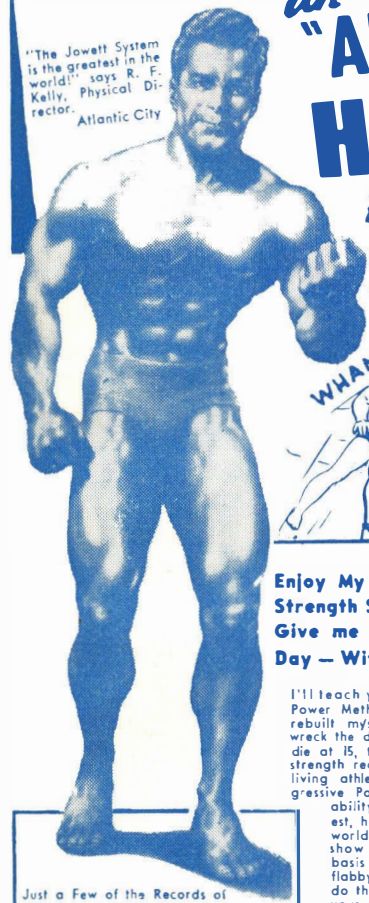
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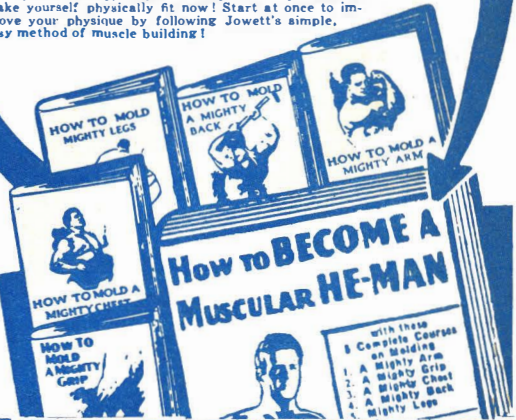
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Customers everywhere eager to buy these unique "Zip-On . . . Zip-Off" shoes **RIGHT NOW!** Top quality glove-soft leather . . . Mason craftsmanship . . . astonishing Zipper shoes lead record-breaking Mason line of over 150 superb styles of dress, work, sport shoes for men and women, with Leather Jackets, Raincoats, and other fast-selling items. A line that maintains Mason's 45-year reputation for **LEADERSHIP.**

POWERFUL NATIONAL ADVERTISING

Powerful National Advertising in **SATURDAY EVENING POST, GOOD HOUSEKEEPING, . . .** scores of other powerful National Magazines . . . *paves* the way for you.

SALES POTENTIAL TRIPLED

Cash In NOW. Help the people in your territory get highest quality, most comfortable exclusive Feature footwear they can ever buy for the money. Give them exclusive Personal Fitting Service and help yourself to a sweet, steady, ever-growing income!

GET SAMPLE OUTFIT FREE!

Sell the great Mason ZIPPER Shoe and hundreds of other newest styles and models! Get Big **FREE** Sample Outfit! Be first in your territory!

MEN AND WOMEN WELCOME COMFORT OF

Air Cushioned Velvet-Eez

Show men and women exclusive Air-Cushioned Velvet-Eez shoes that cradle-foot on 10,000 tiny air bubbles! Many report they sell on six out of every ten calls!



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CLIP and MAIL COUPON NOW!

MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
Dept. M-258, Chippewa Falls, Wis.
RUSH me your great New Free Sample Outfit. Include your Automatic Selling Plan and send the hook 5,000 Salesmen wrote for me. I want to become a Foot Expert and Certified Shoe Expert . . . and start making big money fast. Send everything **FREE** and Prepaid.

(My own shoe size is.....)
Name

Address

Town..... State.....

MASON **SHOE MANUFACTURING CO.**
Dept. **M-258** Chippewa Falls, Wis.